

## Enhancing Women Entrepreneurship Development Framework: Policy & Institution Gap and Challenges in the Case of Malaysia

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### Abstract

This study emphasizes that, in developing countries, the subject of women entrepreneurship development, particularly at the grassroots level, has been largely ignored both by the government and in society. Most women entrepreneurs in rural areas are very informal, unregistered, unorganized and are generally less supported and empowered. Therefore, the majority of them face problems such as lack of access to capital, entrepreneurship and business skills, bargaining power within the market and lack of inclusiveness on major decisions to entrepreneurship development. Although there exist many efforts to improve entrepreneurship development among them by both government and non-government actors, the problem remains. This paper extensively reviews the literature and government reports in the context of Malaysia. Based on prior work done by scholars, only a few studies addressed the formation and implementation of the SME policy on women entrepreneurs. In Malaysia, there is no specific policy to address grassroots women entrepreneurship, as a result of poor and weak institutions, and poor interventions and supporting programs. However, this is currently under the purview of the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development (MWFCDD) and SME Corporation Malaysia. It is suggested that the establishment of policy interventions and affirmative programs to support grassroots women entrepreneurs is increasingly important and necessary, particularly in assisting the unemployment issues and poverty reduction initiatives among poor grassroots. There is a need for a new strategic framework to support grassroots women entrepreneur development and sustainability.

*Keywords:* Women entrepreneurship; Entrepreneurship development; SME; Entrepreneurship framework

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### ■ 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The phrase women entrepreneur is defined as a women or group of women who initiate, organize, adopt business activity and run a business enterprise. According to Schumpeter (1947), women entrepreneurship is based on female participation in equity and employment of a business enterprise. The paper emphasized that the subject of women entrepreneurship in rural development, particularly at the grassroots level, has been largely ignored both in government and in society at large, in the developing countries, including Malaysia. Most women entrepreneurs in rural areas are very informal, unregistered, unorganized and are generally less supported and empowered. Rural areas are non-metropolitan areas, with low populations and low densities. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) developed a typology of urban and rural areas based on three criteria, namely, population density; percentage of people living in rural communities; and size of urban centers; which are used to identify the following three regional types:

- Predominantly rural regions, in which over 50% of the population live in communities with a density below 150 inhabitants per sq. km;

- Significantly rural, in which between 15-50% of the population live in communities with a density below 150 inhabitants per sq. km; and
- Predominantly urban regions, in which less than 15% of the population live in communities with less than 150 inhabitants per sq. km.

The related literature has continued to emphasize the role of policy strategies and institutional frameworks as key instruments to support the grassroots women entrepreneurs. Thus, the current debate that discusses the importance of entrepreneurship with regards to developing countries mainly focus on the question of how to foster and support entrepreneurship development among women as a primary concern of policy makers. Therefore, increasing efforts have been carried out to support women's economic empowerment as a prerequisite for sustainable development and pro-poor growth as stated by Hung et al., (2012).

This paper focuses on the challenges and opportunities of developing women entrepreneurship in rural areas, so the community can contribute to the development of policies to regenerate rural areas. Malaysia currently faces several challenges that affect its rural areas, such as declining employment opportunities in primary industries, mainly agriculture. This stems from the result of structural change intensified by changes in policy and aging population, and the association with an outmigration of young people and an in-migration of retired people, which affects the supply of potential entrepreneurs the maintenance of infrastructure and facilities to support economic development.

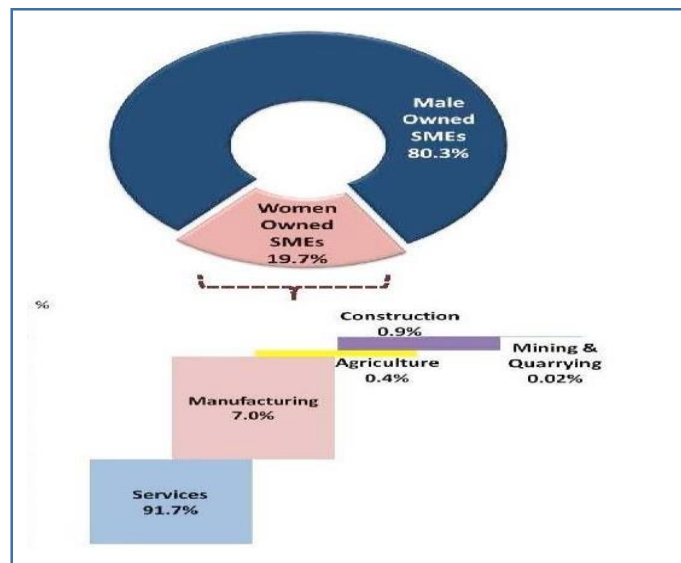
In addition, there is no proper and systematic communication channel being established. The business owners in rural areas manage their businesses in ways that are consistent with rural socio-cultural values, demonstrating the considerable influence of rurality on small business activities, for example; owners place on word-of-mouth reputation and on the primacy of relations with family, friends and neighbors to the successful operation of their businesses.

As women comprise approximately half of the population, their social position greatly affects the countries. At the same time, the role of women entrepreneurs has been increasingly noticed in today's global business. According to the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM), there are 126 million women starting or running new businesses in 67 economies around the world, and an estimated 98 million were running established businesses. Many women entrepreneurs have not only created jobs for themselves and their co-founders, but they also employed others (Kelly et al. 2011). This indicates that the role of women entrepreneurs in the global economy is significantly increasing. One of the most important factors in the global market place is the aggressive growth in the number of women entrepreneurs.

However, the support and strategies directed to them do not match their efforts. Therefore, the recognition of their economic contribution, particularly in developing countries, is an issue to be deliberated. Government intervention also needs to look into ensuring and strengthening women entrepreneurs' safety and security, promoting their leadership and participation in decision-making concerning investments and business ventures, assisting in accelerating their economic empowerment, and providing fund and training for knowledge and skills advancement for their businesses to grow, sustain and become global players.

## ■ 2.0 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

The majority Malaysian women started their business either as petty traders, unpaid helpers in family business enterprises, or as operators of micro-enterprises. Lately, they are either owners or have control over businesses providing services such fashion, beauty, cosmetics, skin care, food production, restaurants, training and consultancy, child-care and pre-school, and even extending to sectors which were dominated previously by men, namely, property management, insurance, construction, oil and gas and industry. Figure 1 show the current situation of SME ownership by gender, where women entrepreneurs own only 19.7% of SMEs.



**Figure 1: SME Ownership by Gender – Malaysia;**  
Source: Department of Statistics, Malaysia (DOSM, 2014)

### ■ 3.0 THE HISTORY OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN ISLAM

Before Islam, Mecca played a major role in domestic and foreign trade. The Arab society in the Arabian Peninsula relied heavily on trade, and formed in that period the backbone of the Arab trade. After Islam was introduced, Hejaz prospered in the Prophet's era in terms of trading, works, crafts, and industries that people practiced. It was considered the main source of income for the communities those days. In fact, we noticed that trade was the main source of income for the Quraysh in Mecca, where they traded with the Levant and Yemen, as stated in surah 106 verse 1-2:

لَا يَلْفِ قُرَيْشٍ ۝١ إِيَّاهُمْ رِحْلَةَ الشِّتَاءِ وَالصَّيْفِ ۝٢

“For the accustomed security of the Quraysh. Their accustomed security [in] the caravan of winter and summer”  
(106: 1-2)

Mecca took the lead of Arab trade, which moved from the Arabian Peninsula to the outside, and linked their economic interests to the interests of the tribes by the name of “Elaph”. As a result, their trade expanded and hit a huge success. At this point, we cannot ignore the role of Muslim women in trading and commercial activities; they tended to compete the men, supervise the traders and the caravans between Mecca and Medina, and send their “golamah” to get out of their business.

Indeed, the Muslim woman was able to build a future for her and her family in the era of the Prophet. They used to learn and ask the Prophet about the nature of the work that made them great women in the Muslim community. It is not surprising that women participated in many activities that made them essential in our religion. Therefore, the subject of women's entrepreneurship in Islam is not disputed; they show their ability and talent in various fields that are difficult to enumerate (Al Khatib, 2009).

For instance, Khadija Binti Khoiled (May Allah be pleased with her) was a woman who worked in foreign trade; she had a large commercial network, and many workers, among the men who worked with her was the

Prophet (peace be upon him). Subsequently, Um Mubashir Al-Ansari was working in her palm. According to Ibn Saad: “Rita bint Abdullah bin Mu'awiyah” was a skilled woman in making pottery. It was also narrated that Zaynab bint Jahsh, the wife of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was a skilled woman. She used to taw, shake, and sell what she made. In addition, Al-Rabee 'bint Mu'awad ibn' Afra said: "the famous perfume dealer was Asmaa bint Makhrabah whose son Abdullah ibn Abi Rabia used to send her perfumes from Yemen and sell it to us on installments, and we buy from her.” In fact, Al-Hulaa (God be pleased with her) was also a perfume seller; she used to sell in Al-Madenah. It was also reported in the "History of Women" that “Aisha Ajamiyah was a merchant in the eighth century AH, and tended to travel to Mecca for trade.” Based on all this evidence, it is realized that the eligibility of women to work is a fixed value, and does not interfere with ethics, attitude, and behavior of Islam. In fact, Islamic spirituality does support and proactively develops and sustains models of Muslim women entrepreneurship.

Since women in this era constitute almost half of the population of the world, 49.3% in the case of Malaysia, acceptance of the “Muslim” women in the workforce to be entrepreneur is rapidly becoming the norm. Nonetheless, perceptions linger regarding their capabilities, proficiency, potential and promise for local economies. It's indicated by Fadila Grine et al., (2015), that Muslim women in Malaysia have made significant inroads into entrepreneurial decision-making through the capitalizing of religiosity and spirituality, both of which provide them with guidance, support, satisfaction and balance. Therefore, arrangements that promote the welfare of women would have a significant impact. This situation therefore might require the government and other stakeholders to introduce opportunities for advancing women entrepreneurs, such as vocational education training facilities, micro credit entrepreneurship training facilities, and the promotion of rural financing institutions. In addition to that, the government should upgrade technological and managerial capabilities; develop entrepreneurs and human resources; provide access to markets; strengthen financial support systems; provide conducive business environments; and develop networking among women entrepreneurs and the SMEs sector.

#### ■ 4.0 THE HISTORY OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN MALAYSIA

The Sixth Malaysia Plan (6MP) (1991-1995) was the first time that a five-year development plan had incorporated a chapter detailing programmes and projects for the development of women, and recognized women as an important economic resource. The chapter also contains specific strategies to effectively incorporate women in the process of development in accordance with the objectives of the National Policy on Women (NPW). This aims to ensure equitable sharing in the acquisition of resources and information, and access to opportunities and benefits of development, for both men and women. Another aim is to integrate women into all sectors of national development, in line with their abilities and needs in order to improve the quality of life, eradicate poverty, abolish ignorance and illiteracy, and ensure a peaceful and prosperous nation.

At the same time, the constraints which were inhibiting the involvement of women in economic activities were also identified. These included; the dual and often competing responsibilities of family and career restricting the mobility and increased participation of women in the labor market; gender differences in schools not only translate into occupational differentiation later; social norms and prejudices regarding the role and status of women in society, and in the labor market restrain their involvement in economic activities; women with children, who are financially dependent on their husbands, are particularly vulnerable in cases of domestic violence. The lack of skills very often limit their options, thus preventing them from securing alternative sources of income; women are often perceived as secondary earners who only supplement family incomes rather than as co-earners whose economic activities are crucial to the family.

Consequently, income-generating programmes targeting women generally reinforce their home-maker roles, providing few opportunities for the acquisition of new and more marketable skills; the lack of appropriate management training and the consequent absence of professionalism, inadequate access to credit and a scarcity of relevant market information; and the working environment is generally not conducive to the sustained employment of wives and mothers. This limits the training opportunities available, and hampers career development. The

separation of home from the workplace and the fixed hours of work constitute additional drawbacks that preclude prolonged female participation in the labor market.

In the Seventh Malaysia Plan (7MP) (1996-2000), the government's efforts address these constraints and commitment to include women as equal partners in nation building. The areas included in the Action Plan under the 7MP are:

- i) Strengthening the national machinery for the integration of women in development;
- ii) Raising public awareness and sensitivity towards issues related to women;
- iii) Mobilizing the NGOs to increase their efficiency and effectiveness in undertaking socio-economic programmes;
- iv) Encouraging positive action for the advancement of women in various fields; and
- v) Promoting the role of women in family development.

At the beginning of this 21st century, the social and economic status of women relative to men was still not satisfactory, and the disparity may become greater due to the effects of globalization and use of information and communication technology (ICT). In view of these gaps, strategies to enhance the role of women in development were included as one of the key policy thrusts of the National Vision Policy (NVP) (2001–2010). Entrepreneurship among women will be promoted actively by providing greater access to information, financial and technical resources. To operationalize the NVP in the medium term, strategies and programmes are contained in the Eighth Malaysia Plan (2001–2005). The strategies for the advancement of women focused on the following:

- i) Increasing female participation in the labor market;
- ii) Providing more education and training opportunities for women to meet the demands of the knowledge-based economy and improve their upward mobility in the labor market;
- iii) Enhancing their involvement in business;
- iv) Reviewing laws and regulations that inhibit the advancement of women;
- v) Further improving their health status; and
- vi) Reducing the incidence of poverty among female-headed households;

In 2001, the government established the Ministry of Women and Family Development, which marks the peak of efforts to assign women's development and issues to a specific ministry. The establishment of this new ministry represents an important change in the mindset of policymakers who have become more gender-sensitive. This Ministry is responsible for the integration of women in the national development process through coordination, monitoring and evaluation, planning and policy formulation, and reporting to the Government. Its major objective is to mainstream women in nation building and strengthen the family institution by integrating gender into all aspects of planning and development.

There are also major organizations implementing women development agendas such as the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Rural and Regional Development, Ministry of International Trade and Industry, and their respective agencies, such as the Department of Agriculture, Federal Land Development Authority (FELDA), Community Development Division (KEMAS), SME Corporation, and Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation (MATRADE).

## ■ 5.0 WOMEN IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Many governments in the developing world, including Malaysia, have undertaken an important reforms measure of improving business environment and placing efforts on the World Bank initiative of 'Doing Business'. Yet, grassroots women entrepreneurs remain in stabbing (Hasanov et al., 2009). Currently, women everywhere are becoming entrepreneurs in greater numbers than ever before. They are stepping away from traditional economic roles and venturing out to start to their own businesses in order to pull themselves from poverty. Yet, their efforts

and the support from the respective government in developing countries do not match (Coughlin, n.d.). The challenge is to upgrade the level of entrepreneurship, venturing into business in areas that offer opportunities such as educational and training services, food business, health care, financial services, personal services or in new services such as electronics and communication technology.

In the Strategic Plan 2013-2017 of the Ministry of Women, Family, and Community Development, empowering women to increase their contribution in the socio-economy is the primary strategic thrust of the Strategic Plan. This strategic thrust was prepared according to the National Women Policy and Action Plan to ensure development and empowerment of women in Malaysia. Among the strategies that have been implemented are elimination of policies, laws and procedures that discriminate women, empowerment of women's economic status by increasing their participation in employment and entrepreneurship, and to increase the percentage of women involved in decision making posts to at least 30 percent. Some of the programs targeted to have at least 1,000 women involved in entrepreneur development programmes every year, implementation of flexible working arrangement and to increase the availability of child care facilities for working mothers. Subsequently, the Department of Women Development has initiated various programmes to improve the socio-economic level of women. The women development programs undertaken are summarized and explained in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Women's Development Programs

| No | Programme   | Purpose  | Grant (RM)                        | Remarks  |
|----|---|--|-----------------------------------|--|
| 1. | Inkubator Kemahiran Ibu Tunggal (I-KIT) (Single Parent)               | Provide intensive skills training & entrepreneurship assistance for low-income single mothers to start their own business.   | 750,000                           | 290 participated in 15 training sessions in the areas of tailoring, beauty therapy, cooking, crafts, childcare, and travel.              |
| 2. | Inkubator Keusahawanan Wanita (I-KeuNITA)                             | Provide intensive skills training & entrepreneurship assistance for low-income women to start their own business.  |                                   | Targeted to increase the income of 90 women participants by 50%.   |
| 3. | Jejari Bestari  | Provide knowledge and skills in sewing or handicrafts that can be commercialized. This program is aimed to benefit the women living in rural areas.  |                                   | Upon completion, participants are eligible to apply for additional capital to their new and current businesses.                          |
| 4. | AZAM Khidmat: Residential Management                                  | Provide professional training in the management of the household to women.   |                                   | Able women to venture into new industries as 'home managers'.  |
| 5. | Women Entrepreneurs Start-Up Grants                                   | Provide Start-up grants for those women who are ready to start a business after participating in a training. To implement 31 programmes targeted at particular groups for specific niches & to encourage entrepreneurship. | 3.8 billion (Relevant Ministries) | RM500 to RM5,000 per person. Available to all entrepreneurs without any gender discrimination.   |
| 6. | Ikhtiar Financing Scheme. Include i-MESRA, i- Srikandi, and i-Wibawa. | Reduce poverty rate in Malaysia by providing financing to poor households to enable them to undertake viable economic activity and upgrade their household income.   | 2.5 billion                       | Target to help 95% of members get out of the poverty income line and transform 1,000 micro enterprises into small and medium-sized ones. |
| 7. | Tabung Projek Usahawan Bumiputera-i (TPUB-i)                          | Provide financing to 200 Bumiputera entrepreneurs who have been allotted projects or contracts but were unsuccessful in obtaining financing from Financial Institutions.   | 220 million                       | To ensure business continuity of SMEs.   |
| 8. | PNS Franchise Scheme under KPDNKK                                     | Promote Middle-Level Bumiputera Entrepreneurs in franchise   | 58 million                        | Targeted to assist 160 companies and create 640 new jobs and   |

|     |   |  |   |  |
|-----|---|--|---|--|
|     |   | businesses.  |   | managed by Perbadanan Nasional Berhad.   |
| 9.  | Financing to Indian Community Programme     | Provide financing to 50 eligible Indian entrepreneurs to ensure sustainability of their business.  | 50 million                                | This between SME and the Secretariat for Empowerment of Indian Entrepreneurs (SEED).                       |
| 10. | Skim Anjakan Usahawan. SME Bank             | To assist entrepreneurs, particularly small Bumiputera companies that have been in operation for a minimum of two years to expand their business.  | 20 million                                | Targeted 80 entrepreneurs.   |
| 11  | Rural Economy Funding Scheme (SPED).        | To provide financing for rural entrepreneurs in services, manufacturing, agriculture & countryside tourism.  | 15 million                                | Targeted 300 entrepreneurs. SME Bank & Bank Kerjasama Rakyat Malaysia Berhad (BKRM).                       |
| 12  | DanaNITA, under Majlis Amanah Rakyat (MARA) | To promote, honor, and empower Bumiputera women in entrepreneurship, help to increase total household income and provide capital injections for women entrepreneurs' business performance to a higher level. | 35 million<br>RM5 million<br>RM30 million | Focused on training and counseling and followed by special funding. Target to involve 5,000 entrepreneurs. |

Meanwhile, the Credit Guarantee Corporation Malaysia Berhad (CGC) remains as the main institution to provide guarantees for SMEs, which may have otherwise not succeeded in obtaining financing from FIs. The institution continued to leverage on FIs as the key channel to market and provide products and services to SMEs, while forging alliance with non-FIs to further expand its outreach to SMEs. Besides the various guarantee schemes, CGC also plays the role of a catalyst for new growth areas by providing direct financing schemes to start-ups and women entrepreneurs, as well as for SMEs involved in green technology and undertaking intellectual property. During 2015, more than 8,225 new financing schemes valued at RM3.4 billion were approved. In 2016, the institution is targeting a loan approval of 8,650 accounts valued at RM4 billion.

In 2015, CGC launched two new schemes for niche target groups, one of which is BizWanita-i. This scheme is targeted at women entrepreneurs (women-owned businesses), as well as businesses and companies that are managed and operated by women. It aims to reduce the accessibility gap for women. Within two months of its launch in October 2015, CGC approved RM10 millions of financing to 76 SMEs. FIs have been supporting microenterprises through Skim Pembiayaan Mikro. This scheme allows microenterprises to receive financing up to RM50,000 for business purposes in an easy, fast and convenient manner, without the need to put up collateral. Since its inception in 2006 until end-2015, a total of 185,000 microenterprises have received RM3.1 billion financing schemes via 10 participating FIs. Total financing outstanding by the scheme stood at RM912.5 million as of end-2015, and grew further to RM940.8 million as of end-June 2016.

## ■ 6.0 RESEARCH ON WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN MALAYSIA

In addition to the above, there are many works carried out by scholars on women entrepreneurship, the majority of which are from local universities in Malaysia. Table 2 presents the last six years of development and the findings that have been published by various scholars. Most of the works discussed the motivation factors of successful women entrepreneurs, and challenges and barriers they faced. In our review, only Fatimah Hassan et al. (2014) worked on policy implementation and monitoring for women entrepreneurs, particularly those in rural areas.

**Table 2:** Literature Review on Women Entrepreneurs in Malaysia

| No | Title   | Author                    | Year | Findings   | Remarks   |
|----|---|---------------------------|------|--|---|
| 1. | The Transition from Corporate Careers to Business Ownership: The Case for Women Entrepreneurs in Malaysia | Siri Roland Xavier et al. | 2011 | Worked on factors that spur women leaving the corporate world into business ownership. 51 women entrepreneurs responded. The finding identified the influential factors included to achieve personal growth, independence and economic payoff.<br>The most possessed personal skills were passion for the business, listening and communication skills and self-discipline, and the prime entrepreneurial skills were indicated strongly included showing confidence, leadership skills, creative thinking in problem solving, efficient and effective in executing plans, entrepreneurial knowledge, being analytical, balancing skills between personal and business life, and flexibility to change. The challenges faced by the respondents were shortage of professional staff, shortage of staff, issues of development and growth, financial constraints due to heavy overheads, and less consultation help from experts. | Recommendation to conduct further research so that it may capture more and richer aspects of women's entrepreneurship as a whole, and not specific to women entrepreneurs in rural areas. Also, no policy and framework on women entrepreneurs was discussed and proposed.  |
| 2. | An Empirical Study of Success Factors of Women Entrepreneurs in Southern Region in Malaysia               | Syed Shah Alam et al.     | 2011 | The study investigated the key factors affecting the success of women entrepreneurs in the Southern region (Melaka & Johor) of Malaysia, and involved a total of 199. The majority of respondents having problems when they entered into the business. The findings indicated that family support, social ties and internal motivation affect positively and significantly the success of women entrepreneurs in small businesses.   | No policy matter was discussed. Suggested further studies to conduct cross-cultural and/or cross-national in different parts of the world and to investigate similarities and distinguishing characteristics of the entrepreneurs from various nationalities.   |
| 3. | Development of Women Entrepreneurs: The Case of Malaysia  | Chee Hee Hoe et al.       | 2012 | Working on the development model of successful Malaysian women entrepreneurs. A total of 11 successful Malaysian women entrepreneurs of diverse ethnicities, namely, Bumiputeras, Chinese and Indians, were selected. The major findings revealed that the factors which contributed to the success of the women entrepreneurs included individual factors, organisation and the environment, as well as the element of interest, passion, risk takers, self-confidence and positive attitude, were the most important factors.  | As the head or leader, an entrepreneur needs to be able to engage in strategic planning, creative in decision-making, process, good relationship with employees and wanting to be different from others.<br>Only discussed successful Malaysian women entrepreneurs and proposed a model. Limited discussion on policy framework. |
| 4. | Entrepreneurial   | Rosli                     | 2013 | The study examined the mediating effect  | These findings may be of  |



|    |  |                                |      |   |   |
|----|--|--------------------------------|------|---|---|
|    | Orientation and Business Performance of Women-Owned Small and Medium Enterprises in Malaysia: Competitive Advantage as a Mediator.         | Mahmood and Norshafizah Hanafi |      | <p>of competitive advantages on the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and performance of women-owned SMEs in Malaysia. Two hypotheses were formulated; Significant relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and business performance, and competitive advantage mediates the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and performance.</p> <p>The questionnaires developed from prior research were used to measure the entrepreneurial orientation and competitive advantage of the firm while performance measurement was based on subjective evaluation involving self-reported measures.</p> <p>The findings revealed that significant relationships exist between entrepreneurial orientation and performance, while competitive advantage was found to partially mediate the entrepreneurial orientation and performance relationships.</p>        | help to women owners to be more entrepreneurial oriented and develop a competitive edge to survive. This study hardly touched the policy of women entrepreneurship in rural areas.  |
| 5. | Women Entrepreneurship in Malaysia: An Empirical Assessment of the Challenges Faced by Micro and Small Business Owners in Kuching-Sarawak. | Anisiobi et. al                | 2014 | <p>This study assessed the challenges faced by Malaysian women entrepreneurs, who own micro and small businesses, specifically in Kuching, Sarawak. Interviews and observations were used to collect data from 31 respondents and focused on two sectors, the retail and service sectors. The findings showed five different challenges, which include 'intense competition, excess family responsibility, unreliable suppliers, credit management and the inability to employ skillful workers'.</p>   | This study hardly touched on policy of women entrepreneurship in rural areas.   |
| 6. | Rural Women Entrepreneurs in Malaysia: What Drives Their Success?  | Fatimah Hassan et. al          | 2014 | <p>This study examined the entrepreneurial characteristics (risk taking, ability to explore, confidence and determination, willingness and initiative, vision, creativity and innovation, social networking and strategic thinking) that influence the success of rural women entrepreneurs in business. It involved a total of 80 rural women entrepreneurs in the northern region of Peninsular Malaysia. Findings revealed that confidence, determination and vision are the main variables that influenced the business success of women entrepreneurs in rural settings. The findings can help the parties concerned in the design and implementation of the agenda to stimulate the performance of entrepreneurs to a higher level. It turns out this effort can contribute towards the development and transformation of the economy to achieve a developed nation status by</p> | This study discussed policy implementation relevant to the national objective of National Key Result Areas (NKRA), Economic Transformation Program (ETP) and New Economic Models (NEM), which strive to produce innovative entrepreneurial activities. It also proved that the activity was indeed able to improve the economic and better life of the local residents as well as contribute towards development and economic transformation of the |

|    |  |                           |      |  |   |
|----|--|---------------------------|------|--|---|
|    |  |                           |      | 2020.  | country. However, it did not discussed the policy and framework for women entrepreneurship.   |
| 7. | Challenges of Muslim Women Entrepreneurs in Malaysian SMEs | Ihaamie et. al            | 2014 | This paper studies the challenges faced by Muslim women entrepreneurs in Malaysia. There were 150 respondents. Challenges faced by the respondents are lack of finance, lack of demand and location problems. These challenges are similar to what has been faced by Muslim businesswomen in other Muslim countries. The proposed solutions are a mix of observing their religion, to have a good relationship with customers, businesswomen organizations, suppliers, competitors and workers and to obtain more information on business development and personal levels. | This study discussed the challenges faced and provided solutions. The majority of the solutions are in conjunction with Islam. This proves that religion or culture can influence one's business practices.<br><br>Also, it did not mention policy or framework of Muslim women entrepreneur in Malaysia. |
| 8. | Success Factors Among Women Entrepreneur in Malaysia       | Kartini Mat Rashid et. al | 2015 | This study explored the success Factors among women entrepreneur in the state of Kelantan, Malaysia. About 300 respondents of women entrepreneur were selected. The findings indicated that all the three selected variables are able to explain 30 percent of its significant influence of their contribution towards successful women entrepreneurs.   | Even though The The findings provided some ideas on how to assist women entrepreneurs to become more competitive and successful in their future; no recommendation of policy formulation and monitoring.  |

## ■ 7.0 CONCLUSION

The related literature regards entrepreneurship policies as a key driver for the development of women entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurship policies are supposed to focus on the entrepreneur, and therefore, are directed to encouraging socially and economically productive activities by individuals acting independently in business (Ramlogan et al., 2012). However, the implementation of the policy should be directed to address entrepreneurs' needs such as business advice, education, capital access, and programs. It is suggested that increasing entrepreneurship and economic growth rates is essential. Nevertheless, this is insufficient, and requires the quality of growth its sustainability, inclusiveness, composition, and equity among gender (OECD, 2012). In that sense, entrepreneurship policies and SMEs policies should both aim at causing two different kinds of effects in the economy. The first is to improve the performance of economic actors across the gender perspective. The second is to focus on the key actors in the business, the entrepreneur, and increase the competitiveness (Ramlogan et al., 2012).

Achieving the goal of women entrepreneurship policy requires effective partnerships and inclusiveness that are able to address the policies and institutional constraints that currently exclude or disadvantage most female small entrepreneurs from accessing public goods and business opportunities. Achieving women's economic empowerment requires sound policies, a holistic approach and long-term commitment; and gender-specific perspectives must be integrated at the design stage of policy and programming (OECD, 2012).

Generally, improving women's enterprise sector in Malaysia needs an overall enabling environment that allows development opportunities for women entrepreneurs. These include: a conducive political and social stability; physical infrastructure; macroeconomic stability; efficient financial system; competitive market; change in the private sector; adequate legal framework; supportive policy framework; and access to resources and support services. In all successful economies, entrepreneurs are seen as essential for growth, job creation and social progress and the virtues of small business. Therefore, governments and non-governments should put their efforts more strongly to ensure that women entrepreneurs, particularly in rural areas, are well supported and enhanced.

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