

A Women entrepreneurial spirit and success: entrepreneurial start-up programme

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Abstract--- *The paper aims to identify factors that can cultivate women entrepreneurial spirit and/or entrepreneurial orientation through the execution of entrepreneurial start-up program in the context of local community. This paper is a qualitative analysis of action research on a new farming entrepreneurial start-up program designing for women entrepreneurs in rural community context, based on observations, photos and interviews. The results reveal that the entrepreneurial start-up program has a positive effect on entrepreneurial spirit/orientation and entrepreneurial success. The emerging of entrepreneurial support system helps in the development of women entrepreneurs to start-up and develop their business. Sufficient resources and supports; entrepreneurial intrinsic values and business opportunities are essential for the entrepreneurial success. This study has been made in a rural community context, which can be adapted to different sectors for future research and applications therefore it contributes to the organizational and entrepreneurial in general through new approaches to entrepreneurship model that fosters healthy women entrepreneurial spirit/orientation. Government should aware that entrepreneurial start-up program can nurture and inspire the healthy entrepreneurial spirit/orientation that leads to entrepreneurial success. The study provides directions to policy makers and academicians to focus on innovative development programmes for women entrepreneurs. The study predominantly focuses on practice rather than theory, and establishes an entrepreneurship model for nurturing women entrepreneurial spirit and/or entrepreneurial orientation through entrepreneurial start-up programme.*

Keywords--- *women entrepreneurship; support system; entrepreneurial start-up; entrepreneurial spirit; rural community, small business*

I. INTRODUCTION

In the increasing complex and dynamic global economy, farming entrepreneurship becomes imperative for the rise of demanding halal and nutritious food from the global halal consumption (Karia, 2018) that is enormous about US\$7.9 trillion by 2019 (Global Islamic Economy 2014–2015 Report). Farm entrepreneurs hence, play a vital role in the growth of halal food industry and/or agro-food industry subsequently increases the nation economic growth. Currently, Malaysia agriculture has, indeed contributes 8.2% to Malaysia GDP in 2017 (Fauzi, Karia, Mokhtar, 2017). In line with the Eleventh Malaysia Plan (11th MP:2016-2020), government encourages entrepreneurship and acknowledges small businesses by launching various initiatives to stimulate and support the creation and growth of new ventures halal food and agro-food industry growth which, may increase farmers' income and productivity.

Despite the crucial farm entrepreneurs, the existing entrepreneurs are small-medium farmers where 84 percent dominated by men, women involvement are relatively small, and have faced many problems and constraints (Asaari and Karia, 2010) that delay women entrepreneurial development or turn them to a different careers. Asaari and Karia (2010) state that the lack of practical knowledge (e.g. managerial and entrepreneurial competencies), self-capital and resources are

major obstacles for farm entrepreneurs to engage in large farming. Given many barriers to women entrepreneurship, government and agencies have created and nurtured more women entrepreneurs and yet women in rural Malaysia are still constrained by cultural barriers, gender inequality, lack of spousal support, lack of confidence, lack of social and business networking, financial limitations and limited entrepreneurship educational.

Although plenty of studies about entrepreneurial model (Korber and McNaughton, 2018; Roundy, 2017), yet there is no comprehensive model to nurture women entrepreneurial spirit and explain entrepreneurial success, in particular the study of farming entrepreneurial (Grande et al., 2011; Gellynck et al., 2015). Traditional research concentrates on the entrepreneurial intentions (Esfandiar et al., 2019) using quantitative analysis (Misoska et al., 2016). Many resource-based scholars have contributed to understand entrepreneurial factors that might determine entrepreneurial growth and success for large and established firms (Carraresi et al., 2015; Barney, 1991) but neglect small-medium firms and women entrepreneurship in particular.

Recent research has pointed the important of entrepreneurial support system to predict entrepreneurial success. Beside the positive effects of managerial and entrepreneurial factors, skills and spirit, a creative, conducive and support environment or entrepreneurial support system (entrepreneurial ecosystem) is highly required in order to inspire and nurture entrepreneur start-up (Brekke, 2015) which, in turn leads to entrepreneurial success. Entrepreneurial success hence, is achieved through bundles of skills, resources, supports and business opportunities, they complement and connected each other and work in a complex and dynamic environment across supply chain networks e.g. farmers, suppliers, traders, transporters and processors; combination of a variety of industries in an ecosystem (Moore, 1993). In real life environment, however, many small businesses are unaware and unable to access to those entrepreneurial support systems without help, and not all are benefiting from government program designed to develop opportunities and women entrepreneurship.

Accordingly, this paper aims to contribute to practical knowledge and research in farming entrepreneurship in the context of women rural community. With this paper, the study predominantly focuses on learning in practice instead of theory, and looking for ways to establish a better model related to farming entrepreneurship that can cultivate women entrepreneurial spirit and/or entrepreneurial orientation through execution a farming entrepreneurial start-up program. Specifically, to nurture and inspire the healthy entrepreneurial spirit or orientation in rural community, women participants will be equipped with farming entrepreneurship through entrepreneurial start-up program. Women participants need strong and established entrepreneurial support system in order to start-up their business. By being participative in this new farming entrepreneurial start-up program, women participants will be involved and experienced in the real life of entrepreneurship.

The findings could contribute to the literature and industry about women entrepreneurs' empowerment and its effect on women entrepreneurial orientation and spirit. This study has been made in a rural community context, which can be adapted to different sectors for future research and applications therefore it contributes to the organizational and entrepreneurial in general through new approaches to entrepreneurship model that fosters healthy entrepreneurial spirit/orientation and entrepreneurial success subsequently.

AI. LITERATURE REVIEW

The term 'entrepreneurial' or 'entrepreneurship' means efforts of innovative behaviour that transforms dreams into values or benefits; or a process of creating values and/or benefits through bundles of resource-capability configurations to exploit business opportunities (Rosairo and Potts, 2016). The study refers the term 'farming entrepreneurial' as farming activities that are business-oriented either producing crops, agriculture products or providing services for obtaining halal income (yield and profits), in accordance with the Shariah which benefits the prosperity of the self, the ummah and the universe.

According to Al-Qaradawi (2001), entrepreneurs are those who endeavour to meet their own needs and families as well as to realize the well-being of the community, and with these efforts, he can spend his wealth in the God's way. In other word, 'farm entrepreneurs' are those who engage in farming or agriculture aspects as a business or income

generation, willing to take risk and exploit business opportunities; or the determinants of business opportunities exploitation and key factor for success of the small scale farming.

In general scholars acknowledge several influential factors of entrepreneurial success, including entrepreneurial factors of psychological and non-psychological; entrepreneurial spirit/orientation and entrepreneurial intrinsic values. Entrepreneurial literature has supported that the entrepreneurial factors of non-psychological (Bjorklund and Krueger, 2016) and psychological are associated positively with entrepreneurial success (Begley and Boyd, 1987, Hosseini and Eskandari, 2013) and has confirmed by the study on 400 small farmers in Malaysia (Asaari and Karia, 2010). According to Asaari and Karia (2010), the key influential factors of entrepreneurial success are entrepreneurial intrinsic values, entrepreneurial skills and resources e.g. knowledge of management and marketing, technological and relational resources (formal and informal), education and customer focus.

Scholars have acknowledged that women entrepreneurship have associated significantly to the nation economic growth (Allen et al., 2007). Specifically, women commence to a business for various reasons such as self-realization, status, financial success, autonomy, personal development, women early socialization experiences, interest, life impulse, environmental and skills. According to Rashid et al. (2015), the factors of environmental, family and personal attributes determine the successful business ventures among women entrepreneurs in Malaysia.

In brief, barriers to women entrepreneurship development in Malaysia have been identified e.g. cultural barriers, lack of spousal support, gender inequality, lack of confidence, lack of social and business networking, neglected women entrepreneurs in cottage industry. Given many barriers to the development of women entrepreneurship, government should address those barriers by providing the environments that support the start-up business of women entrepreneurs. To secure women farm entrepreneurs' continuance, academicians and policymakers need to know how to nurture and inspire women entrepreneurs towards the healthy entrepreneurial spirit or orientation in rural community (Teoh and Chong, 2014).

BI. CONTENT

The new farming entrepreneurial start-up program is a community project commenced by the project leader of AP Dr.NK and team members from the School of Management, USM. The Community Engagement Department, Ministry of Higher Education has initiated the fund under the community project in rural area. The relevant agencies involved are Agriculture Department, mushroom-based entrepreneurs or agencies. The project is located in the northern part of Malaysia and the women participants include newcomers, small farmers or those already operating a small business.

The program is focusing on the women rural entrepreneur start-up with grey oyster mushroom cultivation. The rise of future demand for grey oyster mushrooms is enormous and estimated to increase exponentially in the domestic and global market (Amin and Harun, 2015), thus, this is the business opportunity for women rural entrepreneurs to generate income. Malaysia's National Agro-Food policy (2011-2020) has acknowledged mushroom as the high-value commodity. Currently, the mushroom industry is still developing, not yet able to meet the demand from domestic market. Thus, the farming entrepreneurial start-up program is essential for fostering the mushroom industry in Malaysia.

The researchers/consultants plays a key role in helping women participants to identify, investigate and provide the right business opportunities. Due to many barriers to women entrepreneurship, the program designed addresses such barriers and provides an environment that supports women participants to start-up their business. Within this program, the women participants of rural entrepreneur start-ups learn entrepreneurial, technical and managerial competencies in practice or learn by doing. Women participants attend workshops, trainings; receive resources, supports and materials for mushroom cultivation to initiate their small businesses. Participants have field trips to successful local business and workshops and trainings in a mushroom cultivation from local entrepreneurs. They are responsible for taking care the mushroom house and mushroom bags and manage and market mushroom production as well as provide financial and activity reports.

This farming entrepreneurial start-up program aims to achieve three objectives. First objective, it attempts to provide awareness, business opportunity and practical knowledge through training, education and a real entrepreneurial

experience. Second objective, the entrepreneurial start-up program attempts to provide and improve women farmer's accessibility to entrepreneurial support system. Final objective, the start-up program attempts to establish the emergence of entrepreneurial supporting system, which can enhance the personal, social, knowledge, skills, incomes, success and competitiveness of women participants.

IV. METHOD

The action research has proved useful in understanding how to improve rural community, how to do things better in a given environment or how we can change our program or policy to affect entrepreneurs (McGrath and O'Toole, 2016; Ferrance, 2010). It involves participants and data driven research process targeted to improve specific problems. Researchers/consultants are working with their own participants, on entrepreneurial activities that affect them directly in their environment. Action (change, practice) and research (understanding) intersect (at the same time) in a real entrepreneurial experience context. Results of actions can be seen first-hand.

For operationalization, action research is more appropriate to understand and establish a better model related to farming entrepreneurship that can cultivate entrepreneurial spirit and/or entrepreneurial orientation through execution a farming entrepreneurial start-up program in the context of rural community. The action research engages a collaborative engagement among ministry and university with rural community seeking for solutions to real problems experienced in farming entrepreneurial and involves participants to develop their entrepreneurial skills, techniques, strategies, spirit and success as well as community achievement.

The research examined the first twelve months (October 2016 to September 2017) of the farming entrepreneurial start-up program, focusing on the initial formation and development of the women rural entrepreneur start-up. It recognizes researchers/consultants to be involved in making more decisions in the operations of entrepreneurial and in assessing entrepreneurs' needs, documenting the steps of inquiry, analysing data and making informed decisions that can lead to the desired outcomes.

Researchers documented entrepreneurial activities and progress quantitatively and qualitatively. Qualitative data involved reports, observations and photos of participants' interactions within the program. Researchers conducted interviews to understand about learning experiences with the business start-up of farmers. Quantitative data involved sales and operations costs of mushroom production.

V. RESULT

The new farming entrepreneurial start-up program commenced in October 2016 by briefing participants about the project and the role of USM and Ministry of Higher Education. Of the 55 present, 32 local residents attend workshop and 16 women participants in the rural entrepreneurial start-up program have exploited mushroom cultivation. Many participants are newcomers, some already operating a small business but first time entering farming (young and middle age).

In early March 2017, the project began to build mushroom house and completed within a month; and by early April, the participants received their mushroom bags. The total three workshops planned for participants were in 26 March (USM and specialists: entrepreneur of mushroom and mushroom bag), 9 April (USM and specialist) and 8 May 2017 (USM and Agriculture Department). Participants have involved in mushroom production and harvesting during May until end of December 2017 for the first production batch.

The participants documented their progress and success at generating sales and incomes from their start-up business. Figure 1 presents the flow of farming entrepreneurial start-up program for mushroom cultivation. Participants were experiencing sales range from RM400 to RM900 per month, and generating income with an average of RM300 per month



Figure 1. Flow of entrepreneurial start-up program for mushroom cultivation

Beside success, women participants also have faced several challenges during the mushroom cultivation. First challenge is related to the quality of mushroom bags and seeds. The low quality mushroom bags produced a low quality and small size mushrooms and not produce as expected. The mushroom bags were infected with fungus, pests and disease (Figure 2). The source of suppliers supplied low-quality seeds. Second challenge is related to the mushroom house system and condition. The mushroom house needs specification for its humidity and temperature hence, needs to be monitored accordingly. Final challenge is related to the natural disaster. Disastrous such as weather, climate and flood may cause a negative impact on the growth of mushrooms e.g. disease.



Figure 2. Infection of disease and fungus

The consultants have visited the mushroom house. They helped participants to overcome those shortcomings by suggesting to (1) upgrading and improving the system of air circulation flow, the channel systems and water showers; and frequently monitored the temperature and humidity of mushroom house, (2) select new supplier for high-quality seeds and mature mushroom bag; and (3) provide helps from relevant agencies to assist entrepreneurs facing such risks.

Furthermore, participants share about their views, attitudes towards, and experiences with the entrepreneurial start-up. Prior becoming entrepreneurs, participants were unaware and unable to access about the rural entrepreneur start-up program, trainings and entrepreneurial support system available. However, participants have received such information during the briefing, and further, received and enjoyed the benefits during involving in the rural entrepreneur start-up such as entrepreneurial support systems, supports from specialists, professional and mentors. Participants have acknowledged their accessibility to entrepreneurial support system including knowledge, education and training, materials, equipment and facilities required for starting-up their business into mushroom production.

Researchers observed the participants in action, with attention to the participations, negotiation and leadership. The positive outcomes on the entrepreneur start-up program is that it has stimulated the mind-set of participants and develop entrepreneurial spirit. Participants realize what they want to achieve in their life, objectives and belief. Although having sufficient entrepreneurial support systems, the entrepreneurial intrinsic values become the most essentials source for cultivating the entrepreneurial spirit and predicting the entrepreneurial success.

Researchers interviewed participants and asked their views on how of farming entrepreneurial start-up helped them to become an entrepreneur and successful entrepreneurs. Participants confirmed that they need the full supports for start-up their business but they should self-made entrepreneurship to access the emergence of entrepreneurial support system and experience and realize the business success. The entrepreneurial start-up program provides resources, supports and business opportunities for participants to experience real entrepreneurial (Figure 3). Such entrepreneurial support system is meaningful for enhancing farming entrepreneurial spirit/orientation and causes a great impact on business success of farmers.

New entrepreneurial start-up program

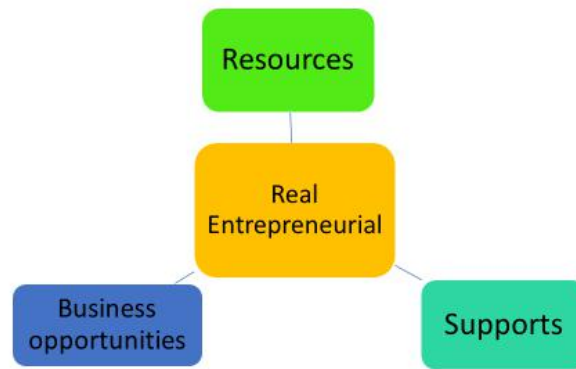


Figure 3. Operational Model

The start-up program hence, has a significant impact on participants and USM team in acquiring knowledge, education, skills and real entrepreneurial experience in mushroom cultivation through workshops, training, education and hands-on learning. Figure 4 presents the women entrepreneurial success model of farm entrepreneurs in rural area validating Asaari and Karia study's (2010) on the 400 Malaysian small farmers.

Entrepreneurial Success Model



Figure 4. Success model

Participants also confirmed the benefits of entrepreneurial start-up program. The benefits are manifold. First benefit is the practical aspects of knowledge concerning mushroom cultivation in general, production, seeding, and harvesting mushroom in particular. Second benefit is the business opportunities and a good rapport with mushroom entrepreneur or engagement with other farmers that can help for ideas and other business opportunities. Final benefit is the all know-how that assist to support their business, financial support from the Ministry of Higher Education; and suggestions/non-financial supports from USM experts, agriculture department and insights from related-entrepreneur.

VI. DISCUSSION

The high demand on mushroom has energized the project to commence on the new farming entrepreneurial start-up program in the rural community context. Despite the significant demand on mushroom, many Malaysian farmers have faced problems and constraints due to many barriers to entrepreneurship. Although the concept of entrepreneurial is not new, the new farming entrepreneurial start-up program is a critical need for women small farmers to becoming

entrepreneurs. Specifically this study finds that the entrepreneurial support system is emerging rapidly. Thus, the study emphasizes on women participants (newcomers or small farmers) to become entrepreneurs that need supports from the government and agencies e.g. entrepreneurial support system in order to start-up their business.

The evidence presents the impact of established entrepreneurial start-up program on women entrepreneurial success. The start-up program provides the environment for supporting the start-up business of women participants. So far, this study has achieved its main objectives. First, the awareness about the program and business opportunity help participants (newcomers or small-scale farmers) becoming an entrepreneur start-up. They actively involved themselves in the entrepreneurial start-up for mushroom cultivation that nurtures and boosts their entrepreneurship. Second, the practical knowledge through training, education and real entrepreneurial experience helps in the development of personal, social and skills in terms of technical skills, management skills and entrepreneurial skills. For example, participants are managing their own mushroom production, willing to learn and actively looking for new knowledge and all the production skills needed to produce a good quality mushroom; and know the most profitable and sustainable way to produce. Participants seek for markets that are more profitable and adapt to take advantages of new marketing opportunities. Third, participants have accessed and acquired the emergence of entrepreneurial support systems, which have improved their knowledge, skills, incomes, success and competitiveness. The successful participants, with the available resources and emergence of entrepreneurial support system have generated profits and incomes, indicating they have capitalized and utilized those resources and support systems effectively and efficiently.

Apparently, the results reveal some novel contributions. First novel contribution, the entrepreneurial start-up program provides the best context for women participants to learn and develop entrepreneurial knowledge, skills and behaviour in the real setting environment, indicating entrepreneurial effective learning hence, is by doing and practicing instead of learning in theory. Second novel contribution, the start-up program (1) allows women participants to have a better access to the emergence of entrepreneurial support system for starting-up their business and obtaining entrepreneurial success; and (2) increases their accessibility to emergent entrepreneurial support system. Third novel contribution, the start-up program helps women participants to establish business opportunities and industry networks by building up good rapport with entrepreneurs, suppliers and customers. Fourth novel contribution, the current study provides a better entrepreneurship model for nurturing women entrepreneurial spirit/orientation as well as success through established farming entrepreneurial start-up program. It advances support on empirical evidence concerning the impact of start-up program on entrepreneurial success of farmers at rural community context. Fifth novel contribution, the study provides the operational model of real entrepreneurial justifying the emergence of entrepreneurial support system namely resources, supports and business opportunities are a crucial aspects for women entrepreneurial spirit, that can have effects of on knowledge, skills, incomes, success and competitiveness of participants.

Significantly, the study provides some of the first evidence that the entrepreneurial start-up program creates a positive impact on women entrepreneurial spirit and/or orientation, entrepreneurial success, mushroom production and subsequently improve a sustainable halal food and agri-food industry. This expands previous entrepreneurial research by performing action research on the entrepreneurial start-up program and entrepreneurial support system that empowers healthy entrepreneurial orientation and entrepreneurial success of women in rural community context. This confirms that women have acquired strong entrepreneurial support system in order to start-up their business and obtain business success. This contemporary start-up program hence provides novel contributions on the new entrepreneurial model in the dynamic and Industry 4.0 era.

The findings confirm that besides entrepreneurial factors of non-psychological and entrepreneurial support system, psychological factors and belief system are also essential for women entrepreneurial success, suggesting those aspects are complement and connected to predict entrepreneurial success. The research discovers that participants have appreciated more on the program after being participative in the real entrepreneurship. When participants are in the reality of entrepreneurial, they learn from direct experience that empower them to the entrepreneurial success or not, is dependent on their strengths and weaknesses. Women participants have recognized their own strengths and weaknesses by assessing

their own self-capital in terms of values, personality, capabilities and resources. The study also reveals that participants at least possess entrepreneur's values such as the intention to become more market-oriented, profit-oriented, take risks (responsible for both profits and losses), exploit business opportunities, improve and adapt changes of managing their farms, be innovative and forward-looking. These justify the important elements for entrepreneurial orientation and hence, support previous studies (Korber and McNaughton, 2018; Roundy, 2017; Brekke, 2015).

In brief, the impact of entrepreneurial aspects and entrepreneurial intrinsic values on women entrepreneurial success is more meaningful when merge and associate with the entrepreneurial support system. This implies that they are complement each other to affect business performance, which hints why entrepreneurial obtaining success. The impact on business success is negligible if entrepreneurs have insufficient resources and supports; and operate in isolation.

The study provides insightful knowledge for entrepreneurs and women entrepreneurs in particular, university, government and related agencies. Government plays a crucial role for a sustained performance of entrepreneurs, indicating government should develop and establish an innovative and established entrepreneurial start-up for future program. To achieve women entrepreneurial spirit/orientation and success, it is imperative for government to have established women entrepreneurial start-up program that emphasizes not only on entrepreneurial factors but on also the emergence of support systems, as they are changes and complex over time. The present study illustrates the business performance of women entrepreneurs is achieved by nurturing their entrepreneurial spirit as well orientation when entrepreneurial aspects, intrinsic values and support system are synergized and complement each other through entrepreneurial start-up program.

Creating farming entrepreneurial start-up that offered real entrepreneurial experience in farming is meaningful for nurturing women farmers-entrepreneurs. This implies that government, university and related agency should provide accessibility to emergent entrepreneurial support system that might be hard to access or unaware by women farm entrepreneurs. The present study provides evidence on the importance of providing women rural entrepreneurs first-hand and real experience and practical knowledge in farming opportunities. The entrepreneurial start-up program should provide sufficient entrepreneurial support system in order to obtain business success as entrepreneurial is a risk taking. Resources, supports and opportunities should synergy and complement to create the competencies of business performance. Hence, these insights give a new approach to understand the women entrepreneurial success as different aspects will influence different success.

VII. CONCLUSION

In spite of many studies about entrepreneurial, this contemporary study provides findings on the new entrepreneurial model in an era of industry 4.0 that can foster women entrepreneurial spirit/orientation. The study reveals the emergence of women farm entrepreneurs by providing a new farming entrepreneurial start-up program. This entrepreneurial start-up program helps in the development of women entrepreneurial spirit/orientation of rural farm entrepreneurs.

So far, the entrepreneurial start-up program has gained its objectives to reach the bottom billion in the rural community. Farmers, women in particular in rural area are struggling for survival. This start-up program has accomplished the objectives to reach the bottom billion by providing entrepreneurial support system to women participants to becoming entrepreneurs. Such supporting systems enable to stimulate and inspire their entrepreneurial spirit/orientation.

The results justify that the start-up program is meaningful, suggesting women farmers' entrepreneurial orientation are enhanced when entrepreneurial support system is fully available. Specifically, the study confirms that government support system can foster farming entrepreneurial orientation, thus providing solution and empirical evidence concerning women entrepreneurial development. The findings indicate that women farm entrepreneurs in rural area highly depend on entrepreneurial support systems that might be necessary for achieving a sustainable halal and agri-food industry.

The women entrepreneurs possess the resource-capability embedded in the entrepreneurial support system that can empower them to exploit new business opportunities in farming. Further, women entrepreneurs with fully entrepreneurial support system can work independently in mushroom cultivation. Meanwhile, women entrepreneurs with

effective entrepreneurial can have the power to put a plan into effect and with adaptive entrepreneurial can manage any changes and challenges.

The study suggests that the government should continuously develop and inspire farming entrepreneurial orientation. To achieve women entrepreneurial orientation, it is important for government to gain robust entrepreneurial start-up programs that emphasize on different entrepreneurial aspects that might have different effects on women entrepreneurial success in long term.

The important from the study is that government should realize the effect entrepreneurial support systems have on women entrepreneurial orientation. Government should not anticipate that entrepreneurial support system could always foster women entrepreneurial orientation; suggesting government should focus on identifying and inspiring women entrepreneurial orientation instead of seeking factors for influencing women performance outcomes. The excessive emphasize on influential factors of entrepreneurial orientation may delay the creative design of robust and dynamic programme of entrepreneurial and the identification of most valuable resource-capability and supports for the entrepreneurial success.

Despite its novelty, the paper has some limitations for future programme or research. This paper reveals the emergence of entrepreneurial support system and its effects on business success. It is interesting to discover the results in different context of entrepreneurial or methodological. Future research should examine the extent to which entrepreneurial support system can have an impact on a business success by using statistical analysis.

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