

Motivational Factors of Women Entrepreneurs in Agribusiness Entrepreneurial Development in Malaysia

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Received: August 24, 2022 Accepted: September 29, 2022 Published: October 12, 2022

doi:10.5296/jas.v10i4.20352

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5296/jas.v10i4.20352>

Abstract

Successful women entrepreneurs are recognized through their strong motivation, desire, and capabilities to enhance economic development and increase entrepreneurial diversity in a range of various economic contexts. Motivation comprises biological, emotional, social, and cognitive components that drive behavior and agribusiness entrepreneurship. Given the important role played by women in contributing to the development of entrepreneurial activities in agribusiness, this study therefore aims to examine the motivating factors for women involved in agricultural entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial development in agribusiness. An online survey was conducted among women entrepreneurs in Malaysia, and descriptive analysis and multiple regression analyses were employed to analyze the data quantitatively. The findings revealed that women in the study area mostly received support from implicit and explicit motivation, such as psychological characteristics and competencies to achieve their business goals and boost their efforts in uplifting economic wellbeing and developing the agribusiness sector. Women who engaged in community development were highly influenced by connections and attitude motivational patterns that predict entrepreneur behavior. Hence, activities that led to increased motivation for women to improve their competency, power, and involvement in agribusiness should be fully supported. These factors enhanced job creation and built their credibility in agricultural entrepreneurship development.

Keywords: entrepreneurs, entrepreneurial development, motivation, women, attitude

1. Introduction

The importance of women in the workplace, whether as business owners or employees, has grown significantly in recent decades throughout the developed world. Such an expansion necessitates a review of the situation of women in business (as entrepreneurs) and how their social and family context (as conditioned by gender) facilitates or hinders their work or entrepreneurial activity (Chandrakant, 2017). Women's economic participation in the

developing world is primarily limited to the informal sector. In most cases, women are significantly overrepresented in the most vulnerable areas of employment, such as unpaid family work, seasonal agricultural labor, and domestic servants (FAO, 2011). Female entrepreneurs face significant marginalization and disempowerment in developing-world economies' formal sectors (Solesvik, 2019). This event is exemplified by the patriarchal system, which assumes that women were naturally inferior to men (Sola et al, 2008).

Women are actively involved in a variety of activities, both inside and outside the home. They constitute half of any economy's potential human capital. Women have always paid an active role in agriculture by performing a wide range of cultivation-related tasks (Amran and Abdul Fatah, 2020). Presently, more women are actively involved in agriculture-related entrepreneurship activities. Malaysian women entrepreneurs have grown significantly since the country's independence (Isa et al, 2019).

The major sector for rural small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) operates in agribusiness, also known as the agro-enterprise. This vertical commodities system comprises suppliers, farmers, assemblers, processors, and distributors, as well as final local and foreign consumers. Agribusiness SMEs are vital to the economy as they contribute to economic growth and development, and provide a business solution to rural poverty (FAO, 2017).

Various research on entrepreneurship has found some common aspects among entrepreneurs in terms of motivation, such as the desire to achieve, the willingness to take risks, and the perception of locus of control (Christian et al, 2016; Farrukh et al., 2018; Sari et al., 2018; Asante et al, 2019). Likewise, these studies revealed that motivational variables influence people's decisions to start their own businesses (Hefer et al, 2015). Many people have mistakenly perceived that motivation is a personal attribute that some people possess and others do not. In practice, it is typical to hear that people lack drive because they are sluggish. However, motivation is a personal and emotional feeling that stems from a desire to want something, which is capable of encouraging others to achieve their objectives. Motivation arises out of a felt need and triggers individual behavior to act towards the specific objective or goal that needs to be fulfilled, sustained, and grown until the level of satisfaction or reduction of the need occurs (Sabir, 2017). The study of motivation among entrepreneurs stated that 'motivation is the result of the interaction of individual and situation' (Svinicki and Vogler, 2012). The motivating factor influencing individuals to take up entrepreneurship varies between individuals and within individuals at different times (Marcin and Katarzyna, 2015). Since most studies on women entrepreneurs had focused on the demographic, family, occupational, and educational background, and the differences between male and female entrepreneurs (Ward, 2019; Khan et al, 2021), the present research was designed to identify the motivational differences between women entrepreneurs and non-entrepreneurs.

Women contribute significantly to their households daily as wage earners, entrepreneurs, and caregivers to their families and elders. Nevertheless, female entrepreneurs are less likely to succeed than their male counterparts as a result of several setbacks, such as a lack of equal access to seeds, credit, extension services, and technology. Female entrepreneurs are also less likely to own land, as women account for only 20% of landowners worldwide. In cases where

women intend to inherit family properties, the law or social conventions and traditions may simply favor their male relatives. Several studies have been conducted over the years to determine the impediments to women participating in agricultural activities (Paula, 2019).

The most visible of these impediments is the gender disparity encountered by women in all aspects of life. Customs, beliefs, and attitudes that confine women primarily to the domestic sphere, women's economic and domestic workloads that place significant time demands on them, and laws and customs that restrict their access to credit, production inputs, employment, education, or medical care are examples of systemic gender biases (Baba et al, 2015). Several factors weigh against African women's efforts to participate in agriculture and reap the greatest benefit from their contributions (African Development Bank, 2015). These factors include, but are not limited to, socio-cultural and economic issues faced by women at home and in society. Most of these barriers are deeply ingrained in societal norms, which become overwhelming for women to overcome. While women make significant contributions to agricultural output overall, they have received little benefits from agricultural incentives and innovation due to economic suppression, and social and traditional practices that are in direct conflict with the Constitution's provisions on gender equality. Women's underrepresentation in agricultural initiatives and projects is justified by gender discrimination rather than by a lack of knowledge about agriculture (Ogunlela and Mukhtar, 2009).

This study adds to the existing knowledge of the factors influencing women's participation or motivation in entrepreneurship, particularly in the agricultural sector. Women's economic empowerment in agriculture significantly increased their participation in commercial, value-added agribusinesses, which is vital to increasing the productivity and prosperity in the agricultural sector (Asif & Sanzidur, 2021; C. Leigh Anderson, 2021). However, only a few studies have been conducted to investigate women's motivation toward agribusiness entrepreneurship. Hence, this study aims to examine the motivation of women entrepreneurs in entrepreneurial development in agribusiness and the influencing factors.

2. Method

2.1 Population and Sample Size

This study focused on women entrepreneurs who were involved in agriculture given that the sector is perceived to be challenging and male-dominated. This survey used the population lists published by the Malaysian Agricultural Research and Development Institute (MARDI) containing information on women entrepreneurs in agriculture and agro-based products in Malaysia. Accordingly, the total number of available women entrepreneurs in the sector was approximately 252.

Using Sekaran Table (Sekaran, 2003), a sample size of 122 was drawn from the aforementioned population. A random sampling technique was then used in selecting the sample size. This study used primary data, and data were collected by utilizing standardized questionnaires. The survey and interview data were collected and recorded using an online medium – Google forms, from February to April 2021. The questionnaires were available in dual languages, English and Malay. The questionnaire was then distributed using an online platform: a WhatsApp application.

2.2 Research Instrument

The research instrument was constructed using both multiple-choice and Likert scale questions. The 5-point Likert scale was used, where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree. Overall, the questionnaire consists of four parts: part A, part B, part C, and part D. The first part comprised demographic characteristics, such as gender, age, education level, experience in entrepreneurship, the number of years of being involved in the agriculture sector, and income. Part B comprised questions that were developed to examine the motivation of women entrepreneurs in entrepreneurial development in agribusiness. The section comprised five questions. Meanwhile, Part C consists of questions designed to determine the factors influencing women's motivation in entrepreneurial development in agribusiness. Lastly, Part D contained seven questions regarding the constraints faced by women in agribusiness entrepreneurial activities.

2.3 Data Analysis

This study employed quantitative research or an approach for data analysis. Specifically, descriptive and multiple regression analyses were utilized to analyze the data. Descriptive analysis was computed for all sociodemographic variables, which provides a summary of the sample and findings. The descriptive analysis enables a meaningful simplification of vast volumes of data. Each description simplifies a large dataset into a concise summary. Therefore, descriptive analysis allows the researcher to display relevant information in a form that simplifies the data analyzed (Zikmund et al, 2010).

Multiple regression is an extension of simple linear regression. Linear regression is used to evaluate the relationship between two or more independent variables and one dependent variable. Multiple linear regression was employed in this study to estimate the regression model as expressed in an equation below:

$$Y = \alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \beta_5 X_5 + \beta_6 X_6 + e \quad (1)$$

where:

Y = Motivational factor of women entrepreneur

α = Constant

X₁ = Explicit and implicit motivation

X₂ = Competence motivation

X₃ = Attitude motivation

X₄ = Achievement motivation

X₅ = Incentive motivation

X₆ = Power motivation

$\beta_1 - \beta_6$ = Coefficients to be estimated

e = Error Term

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Descriptive Analysis

A total of 122 women entrepreneurs under MARDI that were registered with SSM were contacted to participate in this survey. However, 116 respondents completed the questionnaire. The rest were not available or could not be reached due to internet connectivity or unwillingness to participate in the survey during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 1.1 depicts the respondents' demographic profiles. Most of the respondents were below 25 years old (33.6%) and the least was above 51 years old (6.9%). The majority of them (37.7%) completed bachelor's and higher degrees, whereas 1.7% of the respondents were primary school certificate holders. A higher proportion of the respondents had less than one year of experience in entrepreneurship (45.7%), whereas 13.8% already spent 5 to 10 years as an entrepreneur. Furthermore, 36.2% of the respondents earned less than RM 1, 500 monthly compared to 16.4% that earned more than RM5, 000 monthly.

The majority of the respondents were married (52.6%). Meanwhile, similar proportions stayed in semi-urban areas (37.1%), urban areas (32.8%), and rural areas (30.2%). More than half of the respondents had up to 3 years of experience in agriculture (56.9%) and were involved in the agricultural sector (55.2%). On the other hand, 37.9% were involved in the agro-based product sector while less than 1.0% were from the agro-tourism sector.

Table 1.1. Respondents' Demographic Profile

Variables	Description	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age	< 25 years	39	33.6
	26-30 years	24	20.7
	31-40 years	24	20.7
	41-50 years	21	18.1
	>51 years	8	6.9
Education Level	Primary level	2	1.7
	Secondary level	29	25
	STPM/Diploma	39	33.6
	Bachelor's Degree and higher	46	39.7
Experience in Entrepreneurship	<1 year	53	45.7
	1-5 years	30	25.9
	5-10 years	16	13.8
	>10 years	17	14.7
Monthly Income	<RM 1500	42	36.2
	RM 1500- RM3000	26	22.3
	RM 3000-RM 5000	29	25
	>RM 5000	19	16.4

3.2 Multiple Regression

Table 1.2 depicts the results of the motivational factors for women's entrepreneurship development. Most of the respondents strongly agreed (33.9%) that they need the motivation to succeed in business. A higher proportion of the respondents (34.2%) agreed that a lack of motivation could ruin their business goals. Most respondents (42.2%) agreed or strongly

agreed (44.8%) that motivation builds determination to achieve something.

Table 1.2. Motivational Factors of Women Entrepreneurs

Statement	Description	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	Mean
Did you need motivation to succeed in business?	Strongly Disagree	4	3.4	3.7586
	Disagree	18	15.5	
	Neutral	19	16.4	
	Agree	36	31.0	
	Strongly Agree	39	33.6	
Does not being motivated to achieve a goal can ruin business?	Strongly Disagree	5	4.3	3.7241
	Disagree	16	13.8	
	Neutral	20	17.2	
	Agree	40	34.5	
	Strongly Agree	35	30.2	
Does motivation build determination to achieve something?	Strongly Disagree			4.2845
	Disagree	1	.9	
	Neutral	14	12.1	
	Agree	52	44.8	
	Strongly Agree	49	42.2	

Table 1.3 reflects the coefficient of determination (R^2 value), which is 0.704 or 70.04%. This result depicts the variability of the dependent variable (motivational factors for women entrepreneurs) that can be explained by the independent variables (power motivation, incentive motivation, explicit and implicit motivation, attitude motivation, achievement motivation, and competence motivation) in this study.

Table 1.3. Multiple Regression Analysis

Factors	Coefficients	Std. Error	t	Sig.(p)
Constant	.261	.350	.746	.458
Explicit and implicit motivation	.294	.101	2.896	.005
Competence motivation	.064	.101	.641	.523
Achievement motivation	-.082	.099	-.830	.409
Attitude motivation	.653	.067	9.803	.000
Incentive motivation	-.096	.075	-1.282	.203
Power motivation	.057	.084	.674	.502
R^2	.704			

Note: The dependent variable is women's entrepreneurship motivation

Based on the regression results, only two independent variables have positive and significant relationships with the dependent variable ($p < 0.00$). Specifically, attitudes exhibited the most significant influence on women's entrepreneurship motivation. In other words, attitude was the most significant determinant influencing women to enhance their motivation in entrepreneurship development in agribusiness. According to Gohar et al (2019), attitude is an

expression or feelings toward a person or thing, which shows the favorable or unfavorable evaluation related to the particular object. It can be considered as the behavior precursor with an emotional intention to direct goals. A positive attitude indicates that someone will put in their best in discharging their responsibilities (Sukadi, 2002). This signifies that attitude can affect behavior at different levels. Consequently, attitude enables people to make decisions quickly (Shelly et al., 2009). The result corroborates the finding by Kim-Soon et al (2018) in which attitude positively affected women in their behavior and beliefs. An individual with a higher attitude towards certain behavior is expected to be more likely to take the action being monitored. Another study by Abduljalil and Zainuddin (2015) also stated that attitude in the form of motivating users plays a mediating role in enhancing their behavioral intention in Libyan SMEs to adopt AIS (Accounting Information System). The statement was also supported by Grisna and Wawan (2016) as attitudes were influenced by the internal factors of an individual, such as psychological characteristics and competencies.

The next variable is explicit and implicit motivation, leading to women engaging in agro-entrepreneurship ($p = 0.005$). Implicit motivation predicts behavior that is subjected to conscious thought and deliberation, such as self-reflective appraisals, judgments, and deliberate choices. In contrast, explicit human motives predict behavior that is subject to conscious thought and deliberation, such as self-reflective appraisals, judgments, and deliberate choices. In the present context, motive-goal incongruence is viewed as a conflict that requires self-control. Hence, most women entrepreneurs have their goals to achieve. Slabbinck and Van Witteloostuijn (2020) in his findings articulated that such cases arise due to different forms of incentives that could induce implicit and explicit motivation. Task-intrinsic incentives stimulate implicit reasons and influence entrepreneur behavior, whereas social-extrinsic incentives raise explicit motives. However, William et al (2019) opposed that explicit prosocial motivation is substantially more susceptible to motivation crowding than implicit prosocial motivation when performance expectations allow material self-interest to be maximized more easily. In this study, it can be concluded that while implicit motives have been demonstrated to be related to affective memorable experiences for women in developing their businesses, explicit motives seem to be related to routine memories and may also influence women's entrepreneurship.

Next, the rewards as an incentive motivator for women involved in agribusiness depicted only moderate influence on women's motivation ($p = 0.203$). According to a study by Marina et al. (2019), women are restricted in terms of self-expression in countries with extensive cultural and social pressures and may turn to business creation to increase their self-realization. Our findings revealed that in emerging countries, financial rewards are the primary motivator in women's efforts to be both entrepreneurial and engage in the international community. This assertion is supported by Luttenberger et al. (2019), indicating that individuals can be encouraged by interns. This event completely contradicts the case in the study area as most women entrepreneurs were likely to be immaterialistic but develop their own businesses in line with their satisfaction.

The achievement motivation reflected no significant relationship with women's entrepreneurship ($r = 0.409$). A study by Collins et al, (2004) indicated that achievement

motivation is linked to both occupational choice and entrepreneurial performance, implying that the demand for achievement is linked to action. Hence, their findings are directly related to achievement motivation. According to Marina et al. (2019), females are often unknowingly more socially responsible than males in their businesses and the internal atmosphere and pleasure of employees and consumers are at least as important to them as reaching profitability goals. This means they are less likely to make risky decisions about employees and have a higher level of involvement in the employer-employee relationship.

Finally, competence motivation is fundamental for women either to choose or persist in agribusiness, but the factor exhibited no significant influence ($p = 0.523$) on women's entrepreneurship. Sunil and Harold (2018) elaborated that an individual's decision to start an entrepreneurial career depends on competency factors, such as professional training. This result corroborates the finding by Kemkar and Sharma, (2016) who found a significant positive association between entrepreneurial competencies and the success of enterprises managed by women, and between innovativeness and success of the enterprise. Meanwhile, the correlation between risk-taking behavior, power motivation, and success of the enterprise was moderate and significant ($r = 0.502$). Power motivation is a desire to have an impact and to be strong and influential to women in establishing agribusiness. A strong desire to accomplish something positive is a powerful motivator for women who intended to be entrepreneurs and contribute values in both their personal and professional lives (Khan et al, 2021). Most societies view women entrepreneurs as less powerful compared to men and difficult for the former to achieve their goals in life. However, the opinions have challenged many women to be motivated to open up, grow, develop, exceed and excel in their lives. According to Ismail et al (2021), one of the main driving elements for women entrepreneurs is their family. This statement is supported by Alam et al. (2011), where familial support, strong social relationships, personal motivation, and information and communication technology were the significant motivating factors for Malaysian businesswomen. Mitwali et al. (2013) also expressed that women are inspired to establish a business based on their interests, have the requisite abilities, and are influenced by their environment. Indeed, the primary motivator for women to start a business is a desire to execute what are interested in, especially among those involved in agribusiness entrepreneurship in the present study area.

4. Conclusion

Women's entrepreneurship is an essential component of human resource development. Women's participation in economic progress is unavoidable. Women enter the business world for various reasons, including income generation, economic independence, interest, self-sufficiency, family encouragement, social status, and self-prestige. The study revealed that women entrepreneurs under MARDI have a moderate motivational pattern regarding the mastering of business goals through peer support, and are yet to receive any rewards for executing an encouraging task to boost their effort in reducing poverty and developing the agribusiness sector. The average responses show the enthusiasm women have in engaging in community development in the study area through connections and power motivational patterns. The moderate response values could be a result of attitudinal evaluation and achievement motivational instances that are inherent in the environment, making it difficult

for businesses to survive even more women farmers are playing a central role in the growing small-scale agriculture business since a decade ago.

While the factors that influence women's entrepreneurship include explicit and implicit motivation that may lead to their involvement in agribusiness entrepreneurship and the attitude motivation that affects their behavior and beliefs. An individual with a higher attitude towards the behavior is more likely to take the action that is being monitored. This in turn will assist women to develop their motivation in entrepreneurship development in agribusiness.

To reach their goals and meet changing trends, and obstacles and be competent to flourish in the entrepreneurial field, women entrepreneurs must be appropriately molded with essential entrepreneurial traits and skills. Government support for women farmers would aid hundreds of millions of people in their struggle against hunger, poverty, and climate change. They also have to ensure women have secure land rights and provide women with vital funding and support for farming, by providing the right plan or giving a platform to highlight products from women. Other than that, creating more courses, seminars, and campaigns that can open the eyes of women to grow their businesses should be fully encouraged.

In conclusion, more diverse study areas should be considered in future research given that entrepreneurial practices or agribusiness activities might differ between locations. Conclusions based on a regional study or focus area might not represent the whole picture of the agribusiness industry in Malaysia. The present data are also limited by the cross-sectional study design and relatively small sample size. Future studies should consider gathering data from samples from other states in Malaysia to provide more compact and detailed information. Finally, given that this study only focused on motivational aspects, future research could examine other aspects, such as institutional, psychological and cultural factors that may influence entrepreneurial behavior among women in the agribusiness industry.

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