

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

**THE MEDIATING ROLE OF
ENTREPRENEURIAL
COMPETENCIES BETWEEN
WORK-LIFE BALANCE
STRATEGIES AND GROWTH
INTENTIONS AMONG WOMEN
ENTREPRENEURS IN MALAYSIA**

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ABSTRACT

Women entrepreneurs in Malaysia continue to encounter significant challenges in balancing business operations with family responsibilities, particularly in competitive environments. These difficulties are exacerbated by limited access to financial resources, dual roles, and low productivity, which hamper business growth and long-term sustainability. This study investigates the predictors of entrepreneurial competencies, which consist of commitment, conceptual, opportunity recognition, organizing, relationship, and strategic competencies that mediate the relationship between work-life balance strategies, specifically Work-Family Enrichment (WFE) and Family-Work Enrichment (FWE), and growth intentions among women entrepreneurs in microenterprises. Employing a quantitative research approach, the study gathered survey data from 372 women entrepreneurs within Malaysia's Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) sector. Utilizing purposive sampling, Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was applied to test the proposed conceptual framework. The results reveal that entrepreneurial competencies significantly mediate the relationship between work-life balance strategies and growth intentions. WFE and FWE positively impact entrepreneurial competencies, thereby enhancing growth intentions among women entrepreneurs. These findings highlight the crucial role of entrepreneurial competencies in enabling women to effectively balance work and family demands while pursuing their business activities. Strengthening these competencies can empower women entrepreneurs to navigate socio-economic constraints, maintain competitiveness, and achieve sustainable business growth. The study supports the development of flexible business policies, targeted entrepreneurial training, and enhanced institutional support, including government initiatives, to help women entrepreneurs succeed in business. Ultimately, this research offers valuable insights into how entrepreneurial competencies intersect with personal and professional careers, fostering growth intentions among women entrepreneurs and contributing to broader economic development in Malaysia.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Women entrepreneurs are crucial to the economy, making significant contributions to national growth, particularly as many have established and expanded their businesses during the post-endemic phase with the intention of growth. Nowadays, most businesses operate in a dynamic and competitive environment that inherently challenges their growth. According to Mokopanela (2024), women entrepreneurs exhibit slower improvement during periods of economic uncertainty, reflecting their inherent competencies compared to existing businesses that demonstrate greater performance and growth. Women entrepreneurs in small businesses are classified as micro and small enterprises (MSMEs). They are involved in a small-scale business, operating full-time and part-time from home, in small shops, and alongside street stalls.

From 2015 to 2023, the annual growth rate of women-owned businesses was 2.3%, resulting in 187,265 businesses, as reported in the 2023 Economic Census. This census involved a detailed examination of businesses that women wholly or partially owned. In 2022, the Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM) reported that women owned 20% of all businesses in Malaysia, primarily within the small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) sector. In 2022, there were 219,015 women-owned firms, with 185,582 categorised as small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), representing 17% of all SMEs in Malaysia. The analysis indicates that the services sector comprised the majority of these enterprises, at 93.6%, with manufacturing accounting for 3.9% and construction for 1.8%. The wholesale and retail trade accounts for 45%, while the food and beverage sector comprises 31.1%, representing over 76% of women-owned businesses. The wholesale and retail sector has experienced notable growth, driven by the expansion of e-commerce, the fast-moving consumer goods market, and advancements in technology and fashion. The growth is attributed to increased internet usage and heightened demand for electronics, automobiles, apparel, and