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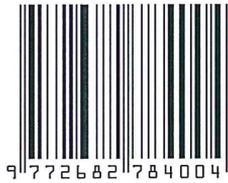
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# THE IMPACT OF NETWORKING AMONG WOMEN ENTREPRENEURIAL SUCCESS

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## ABSTRACT

*The success among entrepreneurs are said to be influence by many factors which is one of the main contribution is their networking. Networking play a major role in determining how far the business can expand. Women entrepreneurs are usually considered nearby friends and family in their circle of network. Thus, the study would examine either the networking gives impact to the success among women entrepreneurs in Malaysia. The result revealed that networking is very important to help women expand their business. Besides, through networking, women entrepreneur also gained so much benefits in terms of entrepreneurial activities such as learned skills and also support from people surround them. Therefore, the study results are significant to guide researchers with hope that it will enhance their understanding on the important of having good network in order to become a successful entrepreneur.*

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## 1. Introduction

According to the report conducted by the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) 2015, women's entrepreneurship played a big role in contributing to the development of economy and poverty reduction all over the world. In fact, the involvement of women is very important to mobilize the economic model that indirectly creates more opportunities for them through the involvement in entrepreneurship, which is more competitive and profitable (Utusan Malaysia, 9th March 2014). The increase of women's involvement in entrepreneurship is a good development where it shows that women have start to take the opportunity to empower themselves to become a national economic contributor. In another word, the development of the country will remain stagnant without the involvement of women in entrepreneurship field (Karim, & Azmi, 2008). However, most of women companies are still in small or micro size (Yusof, 2017). In fact, women's businesses are likely to be unregistered under micro enterprise which operate in the home or temporary premises with fewer or no employees and the business usually has limited capital for expansion (The Star, 24th Oct 2016). Since the success among women entrepreneurs is still considered as low, there is a need to investigate the factors that might contribute to their success in order to alleviate the numbers of successful women entrepreneur.

In another study, Chitra (2014) has argued that by having strong and effective network, it

will encourage women to be more successful. In fact, networking appears to be very important for the growth of women-owned business (Jiang et al., 2012). Practically, the development of women entrepreneurs in Malaysia is delayed because of the networking issue (Utusan Malaysia, 9th December 2016). However, due to the multiple roles and overloaded responsibilities with business and families, women entrepreneurs do not have enough time to join beneficial activities. As a consequence, it will limit their knowledge of surroundings, networking and reduced their opportunities to exploit advantages, which will make them far from becoming successful entrepreneurs. Due to that reason, there is a need to study the relationship between networking involvement and nonfinancial outcomes (Pollack, Coy & Green, 2013).

## 2.Literature Review

### 2.1 Networking

Network can be referred to formal or informal links to resources or individual, while networking is a process which individual or organization connect with others for ideas or resources (Jack et al., 2010). According to Mitchell (1969) cited by O'Donnell, Gilmore and Cummins (2001), networks involve potential members who expectedly to give specific support or services to the entrepreneurs. The potential members may be someone they know in their circle or they might not know. Network ties can be either weak or strong tie, whereby the tie strength involves the intensity of the relationship between people in that network (Kheng, 2012). The network ties help entrepreneurs to run business smoothly as the strong ties refer to those who have close relationship (friends and family) with the entrepreneurs (Lutz, 2014). It is supported by Fischer (2010), which stated strong ties of networks are referred to the immediate circle such as friend and family and it indicates the survival of business. On the other hand, weak ties referred to the people/group that entrepreneur seldom contacts or interact with (Kheng,2012). Informal networking is usually formed unofficially, accidentally or spontaneously. Informal networks are also called social networks, which comprise of the relation with family, friends or colleagues (Bird, 1986). Besides, the informal networks are usually associated with strong ties among entrepreneurs such as a connection with family and friends (Smith & Lorke, 2008). According to Kheng (2012) informal/social network referred to personal contacts that help entrepreneurs not only to maintain their social identity but also gives them emotional support, information, services as well as new social contacts. As mentioned earlier, women seem to face more difficulties in business compared to male entrepreneurs due to their multiple roles and responsibilities. It is supported by Fischer (2010) who stated women are more difficult to join any formal networks since the biggest inhibitor is time constraints. Similarly, Bari (2015) claimed that women tend to include social network such as family, friends and relatives in the business, because it provides them with emotional and social support. Even though strong ties have been said as women's drawback (Foss, 2010), yet it has been proved that strong ties did help women in achieving their success (Chitra, 2014). As for this present study, networking refers to informal networking, which consists of friends and family members. It is because women entrepreneurs usually use their informal contacts such as family and friends as the sole source for their support in business (Lutz, 2014).

### 2.2 Women Entrepreneurial Success

The easiest way of defining entrepreneurial success is through tangible elements such as profitability, sustainability, personal wealth creation, revenue or a firm's growth as well as turnover (Perren, 1999). According to Thompson (2004), successful entrepreneurs have the ability to create a strategic position by managing their resource to meet and satisfy the expectations of stakeholder.

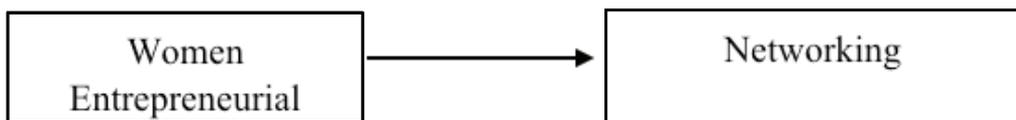
Simpson, Tuck and Bellamy (2004) revealed that most literature mentioned that entrepreneurs have their own perceptions of what success means to them for example they can regard themselves as successful even though looking from outside and measuring with traditional financial meters. Many factors can be reason the success of entrepreneurs but they themselves are the most determinants of their business success (Olakitan & Ayobami, 2011). In referring to women studies, there is wide-ranging description of what success meant to them. However, for women entrepreneurs, majority of them choose to classify the success in terms of non-economic perspective. Similarly, most of the study on women entrepreneur success also stress that women define the success as the ability in balancing multiple roles, which are including their work and family (Fenwick & Huttons, 2000; Orser & Riding, 2004; Dyke & Murphy, 2006; Cheung & Halpern, 2010). As mentioned by Alam (2010), women entrepreneurs would not view themselves as a successful entrepreneur if their success is measured by economic perspectives because women often owned business that is small in size and slower growth. Fenwick and Huttons (2000) in their study highlighted that many women described success in terms of family and works such as the freedom to choose daily activity, contribution to the community, reputation, children and the quality of life that they achieve. It is supported by Cheung and Halpern (2010), who also have been defined successful women as the ability to balance between work and family, whereby even if they worked for long hours, they still have time for families.

### **2.3 Social Network Theory**

In entrepreneurship, social network has been distinct as a set of personal relationships through individual, which maintain their social identity, receive emotional support, material and services as well as introduce new social contacts (Walker et al., 1977 cited by Mustapa, 2003). Generally, social networks are very significant because it helps entrepreneurs to identify more opportunities for their business. According to Barnes (1954), Social Network Theory described how people behavior are affected by the social structure of relationship that exists around a person, group or organisation. As mentioned by Kheng (2012), this theory focuses on the relationship between people rather than their characteristics or attribute. In addition, previous literature claimed that network that creates by entrepreneurs are very important in order to help them to access information and find resources for the business (Ekpe et al., 2010). For the growth and success of the business, this theory proposed that entrepreneurs also should know how to develop, manage and maintain the relationship with people that can provide external resources for them (Kheng, 2012).

### **2.4 Research Framework**

The research framework proposed to investigate the relationship between networking and women entrepreneurial success in Malaysia.



## **3. Research Objective**

RO1: To identify the relationship between networking and women entrepreneurial success.

#### 4. Research Methodology

The respondents are women entrepreneurs in Malaysia who have been registered with women associations (Usahanita and Peniagaawati). The number of respondents for this study is 341 entrepreneurs, yet, as suggested by Hair et al. (2010), in order to take care, the issue of non-response rate, the sample size is double up and a total number of 682 questionnaires have been distributed. A total of 177 questionnaires were completed and returned representing 25.9% response rate. This study is a quantitative approach and it is conducted cross-sectionally. It is a cross-sectional study because the respondents (women entrepreneurs) have been studied at a given point of time. Besides, the study also applied a survey method because it is the most widely used approach in business research (Fuad and Bohari, 2011; Aziz and Mahmood, 2011; Hanafi, 2012; Katongole et al., 2014; Rani, 2014; Aliyu et al., 2015; Mustapa and Mahmood, 2016; Rashid, 2017) as well as the most appropriate method for this study. The analysis in this study has been done by using SmartPLS 3.0 by Ringle et al. (2014). PLS has several advantages, such as it is able to test a structural model even with single-item measures besides being able to handle large numbers of measured variables or constructs easily (Hair et al., 2010).

#### 5. Result and Discussion

Table 1 shows the result of the path coefficients, t-statistics and P-value of the direct relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable. The networking (ZNW) had a significant relationship on women entrepreneurial success (ES) ( $\beta=0.311$ ,  $t=3.278$ ,  $p<.01$ );

Table 1  
Results of Hypothesis Testing (Direct Relationship)

Hypothesis	Path	Beta sample	Sample Mean	Standard Deviation	T-Statistics	P-Value	Decision
H1a	ZNW → ES	0.311	0.310	0.095	3.278	0.001***	Supported

\* $p<.0.1$ ; \*\* $p<.0.05$ ; \*\*\* $p<.0.01$

Networking is found to have a significant relationship towards entrepreneurial success among women entrepreneurs in Malaysia. The result also confirmed the previous evidence, which suggests entrepreneurial success can be influenced through networking (Watson, 2012; Jain & Ali, 2012; Peprah, 2011; Chittitaworn et al., 2011; Kheng, 2012; Khan, 2014; Kader, Mohamad & Ibrahim, 2009; Fischer, 2010). Furthermore, this result also supports the previous finding which found that without networking, entrepreneurs will be unable to find resources which they need to survive in entrepreneurship such as financial, knowledge and business maintenance (Kheng, 2012). Similarly, Makhbul (2011) stressed that personal and professional support also allow entrepreneurs to gain new information. Due to the importance of networking, entrepreneurs need to have a good network in order to access relevant and significant information which is important for entrepreneurs making a decision, resolving problems etc. Previously, the significant role of networking was also supported by Xavier et al. (2012) who stated that women with networking advantage will gain benefits in their entrepreneurial activities such as enhance their management and financial skills besides helping them in scanning, recognizing and exploiting more business opportunities.

## 6. Conclusion

As a conclusion, women are found to always include their social network as their networking such as family, friends, relatives and colleagues that might provide them with social and emotional support. The findings from this study also will serve as a guide to the government and women associations in order to take proper action to increase more successful women entrepreneurs in Malaysia, which is not the only concern in terms of profit, but the women should be more concerned on their ability to find satisfaction in balancing between life and business.

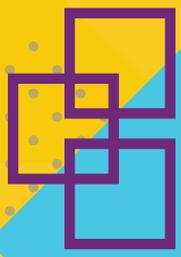
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