

Empowering Women Entrepreneurs: Enhancing Competency and Capacity Through University Education

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Abstract – This research aims to explore the potential of human capital, competitive advantages, and women entrepreneurship innovation in Indonesia and Kuala Lumpur, as well as to provide academic policies to the government by establishing a cluster of human resources (HR) expertise and enhancing the development of women entrepreneurship, resulting in regulations to improve human capital and women entrepreneurship. The research problem is how female entrepreneurs can transform HR expertise in their business. The survey sample of active female entrepreneurs in various cities were selected using a multi-stage random sampling method, totaling 47 female entrepreneurs, consisting of 39 respondents from Medan and Deli Serdang, 5 from West Sumatra, and 3 from Kelantan, Malaysia. The qualitative descriptive research and a comparative analysis were applied to this research. This research proves that female entrepreneurs who act as housewives must continue to develop their human resource potential, competitive advantages, and innovative abilities in entrepreneurship to produce superior products, be competitive, increase economic income, and improve the welfare of their families.

Keywords – Human resources, competitive, innovation capability, potential, female entrepreneurship.

1. Introduction

Indonesia, with a population of 278.5 million people, is the fourth most populous country in the world after China, India, and the United States. The significant number of people living in the country leads to a large workforce [1]. A qualified and large workforce can provide a competitive advantage to the country and contribute to its growth. However, if the workforce is significant but unqualified, it can become a disaster for the country. Unfortunately, a large workforce has a negative impact on Indonesia, especially in terms of unemployment. The Central Bureau of Statistics [2] reports that the unemployment rate in Indonesia was 5.86% in 2022.

Unemployment has a long-term impact on social issues and can cause losses for the country due to high poverty rates and crime. Poverty is a complex phenomenon faced by almost all regions of Indonesia, including the province of North Sumatra (SUMUT). As reported by BADAN PUSAT STATISTIK (BPS) SUMUT (2021), the percentage of poor people in SUMUT in March 2021 was 9.01%, which is lower than the national poverty rate of 10.14%. However, SUMUT is ranked 17th out of 34 provinces in terms of poverty rates. To reduce poverty rates, improving the quality of human resources (HR), especially for entrepreneurs, can help develop strong businesses, particularly for female entrepreneurs [3].

Entrepreneurship is a human resource that is creative and innovative, capable of establishing and developing businesses [4]. One factor that drives Indonesia's economy is the increasing number of women willing and able to engage in entrepreneurship.

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Currently, women's interest in entrepreneurship is growing due to the resources they possess, the availability of labor, the advancement of information technology, and the easy accessibility of simple technology equipment. The increasing number of women entrepreneurs will reduce unemployment, create job opportunities, and boost economic growth [5]. As a result, women entrepreneurs can become the driving force in the development and economy of regions in Indonesia, especially those engaged in small and medium-sized enterprises.

Women entrepreneurs create jobs and contribute to national economic growth and social progress worldwide [6]. The involvement of women entrepreneurs starting from the initial idea, throughout the gestation process, and to business operations and venture growth, their entrepreneurial initiatives are embedded in a complex and multilayered cultural environment. Thus, gender and culture dynamically interact, shaping gender role expectations and identities as well as the economic and social environment in which women's entrepreneurship is embedded.

Given the importance of quality and competitive entrepreneurs for a country, it is crucial to conduct studies on HR and entrepreneurship, especially women entrepreneurs. Various studies on entrepreneurship have been conducted, but research related to HR needs to be further explored to determine the characteristics of HR that are suitable for becoming strong and competitive women entrepreneurs. Therefore, the need for studies on women entrepreneurs is essential for the development of stronger capacities for women entrepreneurs in universities [7].

Based on the observation and interview results, the research problem formulation in this study is as follows: (1) The low competitiveness of women entrepreneurs is evident from their declining performance amid the decrease in purchasing power and the COVID-19 pandemic conditions. (2) Women entrepreneurs have minimal experience in developing a business that requires knowledge and art in managing the business, such as managing finances, managing HR, digital marketing, and producing effectively and efficiently. (3) The innovation capability of women entrepreneurs is still very low, such as being less able to create new ideas, cautious in taking risks in implementing ideas, having a hesitant attitude in making decisions, and being less explorative in new things to create. (4) The majority of small business owners have a very low educational background and inadequate work experience to run their businesses. As a result, they only have motivation and entrepreneurial spirit [8].

The research focuses on female entrepreneurs in North Sumatra, Padang, Indonesia, and Kota Bharu, Kelantan, Malaysia. The study aims to empower women to improve their family's economy. However, in practice, they face challenges such as low-quality HR, limited income, low education, low managerial skills, and lack of entrepreneurial abilities [9]. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct further research on the need for female entrepreneurs to transform their HR to support entrepreneurial activities in order to improve the family economy and manage local economic potential.

This research is a collaborative study aimed at improving economic and social well-being and changing community behavior through the transformation of HR in female entrepreneurship. The transformation of HR is highly necessary for implementing knowledge about human resources (HR) and women entrepreneurship. This has the goal of enhancing the potential and innovation capabilities of female entrepreneurs, such as creating new ideas, taking risks in executing them, having the courage to make decisions, and being able to explore new things for creativity. Additionally, entrepreneurship education can help reduce risk and increase the benefits for entrepreneurs, indirectly influencing their decision-making [10].

2. Literature Review

Based on a literature review of previous studies examining the factors influencing the empowerment of women entrepreneurs, this section delves into an exploration of these factors and provides a framework for understanding how they interact. The theoretical framework has been developed to elucidate the various factors that impact the empowerment of women entrepreneurs.

2.1. Transformation of Human Capital

Human resources (HR) play an important role in planning, combining, coordinating, and utilizing the resources around them [11]. One significant consequence of globalization and technological trends is that entrepreneurs increasingly depend on the potential of their employees, such as their knowledge, education, training, skills, and expertise to develop their human capital [12].

In facing the uncertain business situation due to the pandemic and digital advancement, a company's ability to transform its HR has become crucial, given the significant digital literacy gap among generations of workers. Moreover, the quality and productivity gap between workers with digital skills and those with minimal digital abilities almost reach 75 percent [13].

Professional human capital transformation is the ability of employees to adapt to current and upcoming changes. In the process of human capital transformation, managers will collaborate with talented and potential employees to improve innovation, scientific capacity, and implement changes effectively [14].

Transforming human capital is focused on shifting from administrative functions to more strategic and integrated functions in business [15]. Identifying the mapping of human resource functions requires creativity, innovation, the utilization of technology, and collaboration in entrepreneurship to change the pattern of human capital that is professional and outstanding in the success of companies or social organizations.

2.2. Competitive Advantage

The key to winning the competition lies in the ability of entrepreneurs to create competitive advantages by understanding market needs and constantly innovating so that the products produced align with market development and needs.

Competitive advantage is a situation where an organization is able to maintain its position in the market while competitors exist. Competitive advantage can be obtained through strategic capabilities where companies choose to compete in targeted markets [16]. In addition, competitive advantage is achieved through the development of internal and external conditions to obtain the right competitive strategy [17]. To achieve a competitive advantage, small business owners must be open to culture, work processes, and technology that enable creativity to apply new work systems and embrace new challenges enthusiastically [18]. Moreover, entrepreneurs are perceived as more risk-prone than other people [19].

2.3. Innovation Capability

Innovation is often the foundation for entrepreneurship as it provides a competitive advantage. Innovation-based work is key to achieving competitive advantage in a highly dynamic environment [14]. Innovation capability is the willingness and ability to adopt something new, create something new, and execute something new to achieve organizational goals. Innovation capability is the main driver of economic growth in every country. Lack of knowledge is a barrier to innovation, as this obstacle comes in various forms, such as a lack of quality HR, a lack of information about technology, a lack of information about the market, and the difficulty in finding partners for innovation [20].

The ability of women entrepreneurs to transform will facilitate the process of accepting new experiences called innovative performance. This is because they have creative ideas for running their businesses and a desire to learn from their experiences in producing quality and valuable products by utilizing online marketing. Additionally, the professional aspirations of young people and their desire to work for themselves provide a solution to the social problem of employment growth in manpower-surplus, as well as boost the innovative development of regional economies [21].

This study uses the framework that if women entrepreneurs perform human capital transformation, the quality of HR will improve, the competitive advantage will increase, and innovation capability will increase. These three aspects, which include HR, competitive advantage, and innovation capability, will influence the quality of domestic activities within the family and social activities carried out by women entrepreneurs. Furthermore, this study also aims to prove that the division of roles between men and women is also influenced by innovative performance in creating an HR transformation. In summary, this framework can be illustrated as Figure 1.

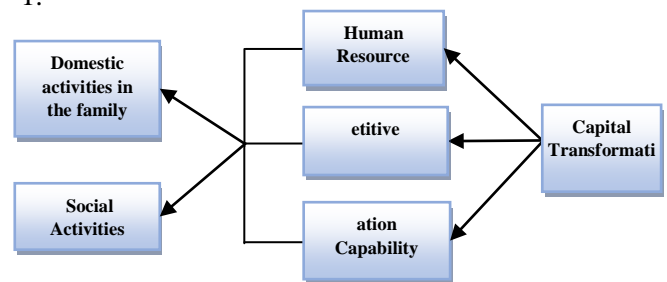


Figure 1. Theoretical framework

3. Research Methodology

The type of research conducted in this study is qualitative descriptive research and a comparative analysis of the roles of men and women. This is because the research delves deeper into how female entrepreneurs are able to transform HR, and it is hoped that this study will produce new ideas in utilizing the economic, social, and cultural potential of the community in forming clusters of expertise in the field of HR and female entrepreneurship. The research sample consists of female entrepreneurs in North Sumatra, specifically in the cities of Medan and Padang and the district of Deli Serdang and Kuala Lumpur. The survey sample of active female entrepreneurs in various cities will be selected using a multi-stage random sampling method, totaling 47 female entrepreneurs, consisting of 39 respondents from Medan and Deli Serdang, five from West Sumatra, and three from Kelantan, Malaysia.

The purpose of this research is to increase the knowledge and business progress of female entrepreneurs, especially the potential of students and lecturers to become new entrepreneurs and to develop existing female entrepreneurship. After the Focus Discussion Group (FGD) activities, the respondents were given a questionnaire guided and observed to ensure unbiased and effective filling. This study also used secondary data such as the performance reports of female entrepreneurs and the number of female business practitioners in North Sumatra. Secondary data were obtained from the cooperative and small business agencies in the province, district, and city as well as data from BPS. The research was conducted from November 2022 to April 2023, with a total of 47 female entrepreneurs in North Sumatra, West Sumatra, and Malaysia, selected based on predetermined criteria. Figure 2 shows the flowchart of the research conducted:

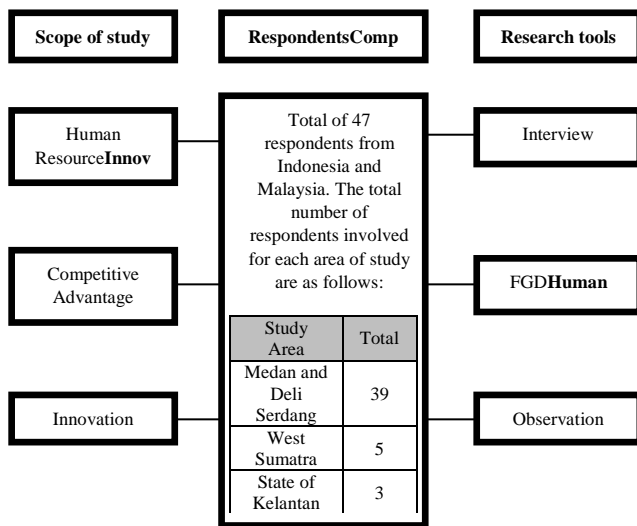


Figure 2. Research flowchart

4. Results and Discussion

The results of this study are as follows:

4.1. Characteristics of Respondents

The sample size in this study comprised 47 people, consisting of 39 respondents from Medan and Deli Serdang, 5 from West Sumatra, and 3 from Kelantan, Malaysia. The majority of the respondents in this study were women aged 41-50 years, with the majority of their educational backgrounds being high school. The average length of entrepreneurship experience ranged from 0-5 years and 6-10 years. Therefore, the majority of the respondents were aged 41-50 years, and it can be concluded that they already have mature age to start a business, work experience, and knowledge in running a business.

The majority of respondents in this study had a high school education or equivalent, and those with a high school background had sufficient knowledge to start a business with the knowledge gained from high school. Furthermore, the majority had been in business for 0-5 years and 6-10 years, suggesting that the number of people starting a business increases yearly. As for funding sources, the majority of respondents obtained them from their savings. Moreover, the majority of respondents were home-based cake entrepreneurs, with 27 people accounting for 69.2%, while the least-owned type of business was a restaurant, with only one respondent.

4.2. Respondents Descriptive Analysis

The results of the questionnaire and interview conducted with respondents on the profile of division of roles in domestic family activities can be seen in Figure 3.

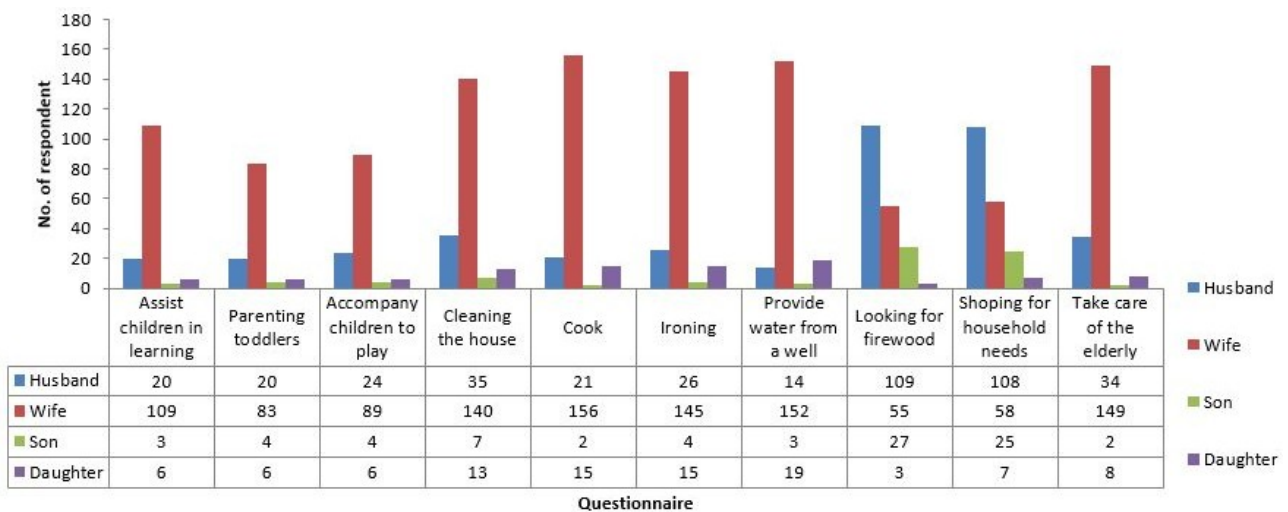


Figure 3. Profile of role division in domestic activities of the family

Based on the data in Figure 3, it is evident that female entrepreneurs who play the role of wife and mother have a noble and important role in domestic activities in the family, ranging from accompanying children in learning, cooking, washing, ironing, cleaning the house, accompanying children in doing homework, accompanying children in learning, and

accompanying children in playing. Almost all domestic roles in the household are carried out by wives. Meanwhile, the husband's role is very limited in domestic activities because husbands usually spend more time outside the home working to earn a living and meet the household's needs.

Table 1. Social activities of husband

Social Activities	Husband												Total	Mean
	0		1		2		3		4		5			
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
Social gathering	26	67	4	10	6	15.3	2	5.1	0	0	1	2.5	39	0.69
Religious study group	18	46	3	7.6	5	12.8	11	28	1	2.5	1	2.5	39	1.41
Women community rogup	29	74	3	7.6	3	7.6	3	7.6	0	0	1	2.5	39	0.59
Community services	16	41	1	2.5	9	23	10	26	1	2.5	2	5.1	39	1.62
School Committee														
Becomean administrator	30	77	1	2.5	5	12.8	2	5.1	0	0	1	2.5	39	0.56
Attending meeting	28	72	1	2.5	5	12.8	3	7.6	1	2.5	1	2.5	39	0.74
Participationingiving opinion	30	77	0	0	5	12.8	3	7.6	1	2.5	0	0	39	0.59
Organization Involvement														
Becomean administrator	39	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	39	0
Attending meeting	39	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	39	0
Participationingiving opinion	39	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	39	0
HeadofVillage/BPD														
Becomean administrator	31	79	0	0	3	7.6	3	7.6	1	2.5	1	2.5	39	0.62
Attending meeting	30	77	0	0	4	10.2	2	5.1	1	2.5	2	5.1	39	0.72
Participationingiving opinion	31	79	0	0	4	10.2	2	5.1	1	2.5	1	2.5	39	0.59
Traditional Institutions/KAN														
Becomean administrator	32	82	0	0	4	10.2	2	5.1	1	2.5	0	0	39	0.46
Attending meeting	31	79	0	0	4	10.2	3	7.6	1	2.5	0	0	39	0.54
Participationingiving opinion	32	82	0	0	4	10.2	2	5.1	1	2.5	0	0	39	0.46

Wives tend to engage in more social activities than their husbands, such as social gatherings, religious study groups, women community group, and community service. Especially in terms of organizational involvement, wives have a significant role and are active as leaders, attending meetings and actively providing input during discussions.

This is because female entrepreneurs, who are primarily wives, must actively participate in social communities or business groups to increase connections, expand their network, and engage in social activities. This is to contribute to the welfare of the surrounding community through social entrepreneurship rather than solely focusing on profit-oriented activities.

Table 2. Social activities of a woman

Social Activities	Wife												Total	Mean
	0		1		2		3		4		5			
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
Social gathering	16	41	0	0	2	5.1	7	18	3	7.6	11	28.2	39	2.36
Religious study group	12	31	1	2.5	10	25.6	5	13	3	7.6	8	20.5	39	2.26
Women community group	25	64	0	0	3	7.6	3	7.6	3	7.6	5	12.8	39	1.33
Community Services	16	41	1	2.5	9	23	7	18	2	5.1	4	10.2	39	1.74
School Committee														
Become an administrator	29	74	0	0	2	5.1	5	13	1	2.5	2	5.1	39	0.85
Attending meeting	26	67	1	2.5	2	5.1	6	15	1	2.5	3	7.6	39	1.08
Participating in giving opinion	28	72	1	2.5	3	7.6	5	13	0	0	2	5.1	39	0.82
Organization Involvement														
Become an administrator	19	49	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	20	51.2	39	2.56
Attending meeting	18	46	0	0	0	0	3	7.6	0	0	18	46.1	39	2.54
Participating in giving opinion	21	54	0	0	0	0	2	5.1	0	0	16	41	39	2.21
Head of Village/BPD														
Become an administrator	30	77	1	2.5	3	7.6	3	7.6	0	0	2	5.1	39	0.67
Attending meeting	29	74	1	2.5	2	5.1	4	10	0	0	3	7.6	39	0.82
Participating in giving opinion	30	77	1	2.5	2	5.1	4	10	0	0	2	5.1	39	0.69
Traditional Institutions/KAN														
Become an administrator	31	79	1	2.5	2	5.1	4	10	0	0	1	2.5	39	0.56
Attending meeting	30	77	1	2.5	3	7.6	4	10	0	0	1	2.5	39	0.62
Participating in giving opinion	31	79	1	2.5	2	5.1	4	10	0	0	1	2.5	39	0.56

Based on the data in Tables 1 and 2, a comparison is made between social activities between husbands and wives. Wives tend to engage in more social activities than their husbands, such as social gatherings, religious study groups, Family Welfare

Movement (PKK), and community service. Especially in terms of organizational involvement, wives have a significant role and are active as leaders, attending meetings and actively providing input during discussions.

Table 3. Entrepreneurial performance

Entrepreneurial Performance	Value										Mean
	1		2		4		5				
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%			
The business I'm running is not gaining increased profits every month	3	7.6	16	41	14	35.8	6	15	3.1		
The capital I spend every month does not increase	4	10	18	46	12	30.7	6	15	2.9		
The business profits I earn every month are unstable.	2	5.1	14	36	16	41	7	18	3.31		
The number of customers doesn't significantly increase each month.	4	10	15	38	15	38.4	5	13	3.05		
I am trying to empower the resources I have in my business activities.	1	2.5	2	5.1	18	46.1	18	46	4.28		

The data in Table 3 shows that the highest entrepreneurial performance among women entrepreneurs is their efforts to empower the resources they have in their business activities, as HR are the key to creating sustainable and growing businesses. However, it appears that every month, the capital spent by women entrepreneurs does not significantly increase, and the business profits earned every month are also unstable, resulting in less-than-optimal businesses. Therefore, there is a need for training or development for HR who are business practitioners so that the businesses can grow rapidly and have higher turnover.

4.3. Focus Group Discussion (FGD) Findings

A Focus Discussion Group (FGD) was held with 35 participants, including 10 lecturers from several universities, such as the University of North Sumatra, Medan State University, Andalas University, and Universiti Teknologi MARA Malaysia. Additionally, there were 10 representatives from women entrepreneurs, 1 small and medium enterprise (SMEs) observer, namely the Department of Women Empowerment, Child Protection and Family Planning of North Sumatra Province, and 12 students. This is because there needs to be a deep discussion about the perspectives of students, lecturers, women entrepreneurs, and SME observers to generate competitiveness and innovation for entrepreneurs in Medan and Deli Serdang, especially for women who currently have dual roles as mothers and entrepreneurs. It is expected that from the results of this FGD activity, a knowledge cluster of human resources and women entrepreneurship can be formed at each university.

HR are a crucial resource in an organization or company, especially in business. The competencies possessed by HR greatly influence the level of performance produced. The same applies to the competencies possessed by female entrepreneurs who are members of business communities in society. To improve business performance and the necessary competencies, the formation of an HR science cluster based on female entrepreneurship is needed, which is a cluster that can explore and optimize potential and competencies through exchanging information. HR are the most important aspect in running a business, and therefore, they need to be optimized so that female entrepreneurs can improve their competencies through the HR and female entrepreneurship science cluster.

SMEs in Medan have great potential and prospects for women, especially housewives and new entrepreneurs. The situation in Deli Serdang is more towards a trading area, making women's SMEs more directed and optimal.

In contrast to women in Medan, Minang ethnic women in Padang have a strong position in entrepreneurship because they are supported by a material system that makes women important practitioners in entrepreneurship, with 80% of entrepreneurs in West Sumatra dominated by women. From the tourism aspect, it is necessary to establish a Creative Tourism Center so that women entrepreneurs can have more experience not only in the culinary field but also in crafts and fashion.

So far, the government's SME policy has focused on developing home industries. With the establishment of the knowledge cluster, it is hoped that new entrepreneurs will emerge who are capable of competing and advancing, not only by producing goods in home industries but also by creating high competitiveness in the national and international markets by adhering to the SME regulations imposed by the North Sumatra province, which provides facilities such as business license training, BPOM (Food and Drug Administration) registration, and Halal certification (MUI). Building upon these facilities, it is necessary to establish a collaborative program for the year 2024 to foster and facilitate cooperation among women SME entrepreneurs.

Regarding policies or regulations applied to women entrepreneurs, the government targets the emergence of 100,000 new entrepreneurs with a fair distribution per district that can create a competitive advantage in their business. The program is called "chasing the deposit", with various facilities offered in the form of complete packages such as *Nomor Induk Berusaha* (NIB) and high-class standardization and optimization of the "Youth Center" creative industry. In making regulations or policies, universities also play a role in creating these entrepreneurial regulations.

To keep female entrepreneurs productive and empowered, the Department of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (PPPA) has created a new program called PUSPA. PUSPA is a community institution that focuses on specific activities in the field of entrepreneurship programs for home industries, thus establishing collaboration between entrepreneurs and the government. The activities conducted are in the form of training and mentoring. One example of their activities is marketing training, providing skills for online marketing through TikTok, as female entrepreneurs usually only promote their products through e-commerce and social media platforms.

SMEs have the largest contribution to global economic growth. This also applies to Medan and Deli Serdang, which are major cities in North Sumatra. With the formation of this knowledge cluster, it is hoped that it will greatly help in developing their businesses.

To achieve this, the role of universities must be optimal in assisting the formation of knowledge clusters of human resources and women entrepreneurs in supporting their businesses.

Furthermore, to boost economic growth, the government needs to formalize SMEs because everything must be systematic and structured in the era of Industry 4.0. If SMEs are still considered non-formal organizations or activities that do not fall into the system, then the role of SMEs will not be counted as part of the increase in women's economic growth. Therefore, one of the important tasks of the government today is to increase the formalization of SMEs to boost the economic growth of families, regions, and provinces.

Despite the role of universities and the government in increasing and developing women-owned SMEs, the main key lies within the SMEs themselves. How can women-owned SMEs or entrepreneurs commit to developing their interests and competencies in running their businesses? Commitment comes from family support and student business interests should be encouraged and developed to create a conducive environment and form a sincere intention to become entrepreneurs. To form a strong commitment, perseverance, determination, and a serious attitude are needed to realize sustainable business development in the long run.

5. Conclusion

The results of this study prove that in both Indonesia and Malaysia, wives play a crucial role in domestic activities within the family. This role includes assisting their children with studying, cooking, washing, ironing, cleaning the house, and accompanying them in their playtime, with the help of their daughters and sons during school holidays. As for the role of husbands, it is very small in domestic family activities because husbands usually spend more time outside the home working to earn a living and meet the needs of the household.

The social activities carried out by wives are more dominant than their husbands, such as social gatherings, religious study groups, PKK, and community work. Especially in women's organizations, wives have a significant role and actively become an administrator, attending meetings and providing opinions during discussions.

This is because wives, who are also active female entrepreneurs, participate in communities or business groups that are not only profit-oriented but also contribute to the community's welfare through social entrepreneurship.

The highest performance of female entrepreneurs lies in their effort to empower the resources they possess in their business activities since HR are the key to creating sustainable and developing businesses. However, it turns out that every month, the capital spent by female entrepreneurs does not experience a significant increase and the monthly business profits obtained are unstable, making their businesses still suboptimal. Therefore, there needs to be training or education for HR as business practitioners so that the businesses they run can grow rapidly and have higher turnover.

Universities must consistently play a role in optimizing the entrepreneurial abilities of female students, transforming them into HR capable of analyzing new opportunities, creating unique businesses, innovating, utilizing online marketing, and building competitive advantages. As an institution responsible for developing the quality of HR, universities must have a clear concept of building transformation in female entrepreneurial HR that is excellent and innovative, as every university has an entrepreneurship incubator. Lecturers significantly contribute to entrepreneurial students through knowledge transfer, motivation, and building excellent and innovative entrepreneurial thinking. In addition, universities, governments, and private sectors regularly conduct socialization to introduce products produced by students to the public.

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