

Research on Developing a Comprehensive Characterization Framework for Behavioral Traits of Rural Womenpreneurs in Sabah, Malaysia

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Abstract: *Rural womenpreneurs in Sabah, Malaysia, play a pivotal role in local economic development and social transformation. However, a lack of understanding of their behavioral traits hinders the design of effective support systems. This research explores the impact of developing a comprehensive characterization framework for these traits, focusing on how it enhances policymaking, program design, and the overall entrepreneurial ecosystem. By integrating psychological, socio-cultural, and environmental dimensions, the framework provides actionable insights to empower rural womenpreneurs and promote sustainable development.*

Keywords: rural, womenpreneurs, entrepreneurship, Sabah, Malaysia, success factor, behavioral, male entrepreneurs

1. Introduction

Entrepreneurship development among rural womenpreneurs in Sabah plays a crucial role for sustainable economic development that is in line with the goals of inclusive education, reducing the economic and social gap between rural womenpreneurs and the community. Therefore, this study aims to develop a comprehensive characterization framework to understand the behavioral characteristics of rural womenpreneurs in Sabah and uses qualitative research, questionnaire surveys, and field observations to uncover the narratives faced by rural womenpreneurs throughout their responsibilities as mothers, wives, families, and growing businesses in rural areas. In summary, (Pattanayak et al., 2023; Josep and Thomas et al., 2021; Rahman et al., 2020) support the main focus of this study is to identify factors that influence resilience, creativity, learning observation, motivation, and unique challenges faced by rural womenpreneurs in the local socio-economic and cultural context in Sabah, Malaysia. In conclusion, the results of this study indicate that the behavioral characteristics of rural womenpreneurs such as resilience in the face of resource constraints, community support, adaptation to change play an important role in the success of rural womenpreneurs (Yap et al., 2023; Sorayah and Khan et al., 2021). Therefore, the proposed framework can be used as a guide to stakeholders including educational institutions, policymakers, local entrepreneurial agencies and NGOs to design holistic and high-impact support programs that meet the needs of rural womenpreneurs while at the same time offering a unique perspective from rural areas

in Sabah, Malaysia, thus supporting the theme of "Bridging the Inclusive Education Gap for a Sustainable Future".





Global Gender Gap Index, 2022 Malaysia Gender Gap Index (MGGI) 2022; 0.681 Rank 103rd Out of 146 Countries	
<p>Labour Force Participation LFR for women was lower than men</p>  <p>WOMEN: 51.19% MEN: 77.5%</p>	<p>Estimate Earned Income Gap between women earned income \$11,380 was less than men</p>  <p>WOMEN: \$20,630 MEN: \$32,010</p>
<p>Legislators, Senior Officials and Manager Almost a quarter of total Legislators, Senior Officials and Manager were women</p>  <p>WOMEN: 24.85% MEN: 75.15%</p>	<p>Professional and Technical Mentors Percentage of women as Professional and Technical Mentors were less than men</p>  <p>WOMEN: 45.97% MEN: 54.03%</p>

Figure 1.1: Global Gender Gap Index (2022), Malaysia Gender Gap Index (2022)

2. Literature Review

Rural womenpreneurs (women entrepreneurs) are a critical driver of economic development in Sabah, Malaysia. Despite their importance, limited research has explored the behavioral traits that influence their entrepreneurial success. This study seeks to develop a comprehensive framework to characterize these traits, providing insights into the unique challenges and opportunities faced by rural womenpreneurs. The framework integrates psychological, cultural, and environmental factors, offering a holistic perspective on their entrepreneurial behavior. The findings aim to guide policymakers and support organizations in tailoring interventions to enhance the entrepreneurial ecosystem in rural Sabah.

3. Methodology

This study employs a mixed-methods approach to develop the characterization framework and the data collection involves qualitative analysis, focus group interviews were conducted to local agencies, and face-to-face interviews to rural womenpreneurs in Sabah, Malaysia to validate findings and gather additional insights on socio-cultural influences. Furthermore, the purpose of qualitative interviews using semi-structured interviews with rural womenpreneurs and local agencies is to explore their experiences, challenges and motivations. However, the data collection sample includes rural womenpreneurs from diverse sector including handicraft, small-scale retail, fishery and agriculture, ensuring a representative understanding of the rural womenpreneurs landscape in Sabah, Malaysia.

Factors Contributing to the Disparity Between Male and Womenpreneurs

Rural womenpreneurs in Sabah currently face multiple challenges, including societal norms, limited access to resources and cultural expectations to balance business, household and family responsibilities. The study highlights how traditional gender roles restrict rural women's

participation in entrepreneurial activities, resulting in lower levels of economic empowerment compared to their male counterparts. Other than that, barriers such as limited access to financial support, inadequate training opportunities and lack of exposure to networks and markets exacerbate these inequalities. In conclusion, the dual responsibilities of managing both domestic tasks and business operations severely limit the success of rural womenpreneurs, especially when compared to their urban counterparts or womenpreneurs.

Identifying Success Factors of Rural Womenpreneurs

The results of the researcher's study show that the main success factors of rural womenpreneurs are having strong family support and having access to microfinance and digital marketing knowledge to help rural womenpreneurs face unique challenges when running a business. In addition, the researcher also emphasised that the participation of rural womenpreneurs in skills programs and workshops helps to expose rural womenpreneurs to utilising existing local resources, including cultural heritage, to create their own businesses and enable rural womenpreneurs to remain in the business world in rural areas. Therefore, the characteristics give a unique advantage to rural womenpreneurs' businesses by inspiring and actively opening up opportunities in social networks and collaborations that have the potential to overcome entrepreneurial barriers and achieve sustainable business growth in rural areas in Sabah in the long term.

Behavioural Traits and Characteristics of Successful Womenpreneurs

In summary, the results of the researchers' study stated that behavioural analysis to identify the key characteristics of successful rural womenpreneurs are sustainable capabilities including resilience, adaptability, creativity, strong commitment, rural womenpreneurs' willingness to contribute to the community and achieve success in business. Therefore, to overcome the challenges of the unique rural entrepreneurial landscape, researchers and local agencies should emphasise the importance of supporting rural womenpreneurs to build their confidence, enhance their leadership abilities, expose them to digital marketing training and promote financial literacy workshops.

Implication towards Policy Maker – Formulating Gender-Sensitive Policies for Rural Womenpreneurs in Sabah, Malaysia

According to the study, objectives are to identify the factors that cause the gender gap between rural womenpreneurs and male entrepreneurs and to analyse the barriers that cause rural womenpreneurs to lag behind male entrepreneurs in Sabah. And this includes examining cultural norms, financial constraints and policy gaps. Subsequently, it aims to identify critical success factors that enable rural womenpreneurs to thrive, such as access to microfinance, skills development and support networks, to develop a comprehensive understanding of the behavioural characteristics of rural womenpreneurs in Sabah by considering perspectives from both rural womenpreneurs and local agencies. Based on the findings, the following gender-sensitive policies are proposed, including improving financial access through the establishment of a specific microfinance program for rural womenpreneurs. The researcher's recommendations are to simplify the loan application process and reduce collateral requirements. Other than that, to provide accessible and context-relevant training programs on business management, digital marketing and financial literacy, facilitating mentoring programs that pair rural womenpreneurs with experienced urban men and womenpreneurs. Therefore, governments and local agencies are improving market linkages, investing in digital infrastructure to enable e-commerce for rural womenpreneurs, and organising trade fairs and networking events to connect rural womenpreneurs with a wider market.

In short, the researcher proposes to provide a Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) framework to understand that human behaviour is shaped by the dynamic interaction of personal factors, environmental influences, and the behaviour itself. Through SCT, the researcher believes that rural womenpreneurs must increase self-efficacy to build confidence in their own ability to achieve success in business. Therefore, through training programs held by local agencies in accordance with the capacity of rural womenpreneurs in rural areas, the researcher believes that the program will increase the skills and confidence of rural womenpreneurs and facilitate observational learning. Role model programs can inspire rural womenpreneurs to demonstrate practical strategies that are appropriate to the resources and cultural heritage in their communities. In addition, through capacity-building programs and observational learning, it promotes reciprocal determinism. Therefore, the policy should create an environment where personal growth and external support systems reinforce each other, enabling sustainable rural womenpreneur's entrepreneurial practices. Briefly, designing gender-sensitive policies requires a nuanced understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by rural womenpreneurs. By using Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) to develop a comprehensive characterization framework, policymakers can create targeted interventions to build capacity to establish market linkages and impact financial capability. Through the efforts of these researchers and policymakers, they not only aim to empower rural women entrepreneurs in Sabah but also contribute to the broader goals of achieving gender well-being and economic development in Sabah, Malaysia.

Implication towards Local Agencies

Entrepreneurship has long been considered a key driver of economic growth and social progress. However, the entrepreneurial landscape in rural Sabah reveals a gap between male and rural womenpreneurs, with rural womenpreneurs often lagging behind their male counterparts. Therefore, the implications of these findings for local agencies, particularly for the development of a comprehensive characterisation framework of the behavioural characteristics of rural womenpreneurs, using Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) as a guiding perspective, are discussed. Through understanding the factors that hinder or drive success, this research aims to support local agencies in empowering rural womenpreneurs and fostering sustainable economic development in rural Sabah, Malaysia.

In summary, local agencies in Sabah play a key role in shaping the entrepreneurial ecosystem for rural womenpreneurs. Based on the research findings, several key implications emerge, including capacity building and training programs, access to resources and networks, promoting gender-inclusive policies, and monitoring and evaluation. Firstly, local agencies must design and implement training programs that address the specific needs of rural womenpreneurs. These programs should focus on developing technical, managerial, and financial skills while incorporating flexible schedules to accommodate the domestic responsibilities of rural womenpreneurs. Next, it also focuses on addressing the resource and networking gap between rural womenpreneurs and male entrepreneurs. As a result, local agencies should establish microfinance initiatives and partnerships with financial institutions to provide affordable credit options. By creating networking opportunities for rural womenpreneurs, we can enhance knowledge sharing and collaboration. Thus local agencies must support policies that promote gender equality in entrepreneurship. This includes offering childcare support, providing incentives for businesses led by rural womenpreneurs and ensuring equal representation in decision-making processes. Similarly, developing a comprehensive characterisation framework for behavioural characteristics will enable local agencies to effectively monitor and evaluate the progress of rural womenpreneurs, and the

framework should be based on the principles of SCT, emphasising the dynamic interaction between individual characteristics and environmental factors.

However, empowering rural womenpreneurs in Sabah is not only an economic necessity but also a step towards achieving gender equality and social development. By addressing the factors that hinder rural womenpreneurs progress and leveraging their existing strengths, local agencies can create an environment that allows rural womenpreneurs to thrive. This research highlights the importance of a collaborative approach, where rural womenpreneurs and local agencies work together to overcome challenges and unlock the full entrepreneurial potential of rural womenpreneurs in Sabah.

Implication towards Rural Womenpreneurs in Sabah, Malaysia

Currently, this study aims to explore the characteristics and behavioural factors that influence the entrepreneurial performance of rural womenpreneurs in Sabah, Malaysia. It is also focussed on addressing the significant gender gap in entrepreneurship by identifying why rural womenpreneurs still lag behind their male counterparts, while highlighting the success factors and unique behavioural characteristics that enable rural womenpreneurs to thrive. Therefore, the research gathers perspectives from both rural womenpreneurs and local agencies to ensure a holistic understanding.

Firstly, the objectives of the study are to identify the factors that contribute to the gender gap in entrepreneurship and delve into the socio-economic, cultural and institutional challenges faced by rural womenpreneurs in Sabah. Furthermore, the findings reveal that these rural womenpreneurs often face limited access to resources such as capital, education and business networks compared to their male counterparts. Similarly, cultural norms and expectations regarding the role of women in the household further restrict the ability of rural womenpreneurs to fully engage in entrepreneurial activities. In addition, structural barriers such as inadequate infrastructure and limited government support hinder the business growth of rural womenpreneurs. Despite the challenges, this study aims to identify several success factors that contribute to the achievement of rural womenpreneurs, including key enablers including resilience, adaptability and a strong sense of community support. Thus, rural womenpreneurs who are actively involved in local entrepreneurial networks and receive guidance from experienced entrepreneurs are more likely to succeed. In addition, access to microfinance initiatives and capacity building programs offered by local agencies also emerged as critical factors in empowering rural womenpreneurs in Sabah, Malaysia. In addition, this study highlights distinctive behavioural traits among successful rural womenpreneurs, including perseverance, creativity and collaborative thinking. As such, these rural womenpreneurs exhibit a strong ability to balance family responsibilities with business demands, often leveraging their social connections to market their products and services. Therefore, these findings highlight the importance of understanding these behavioural traits to effectively tailor support programs.

In addition, input from local agencies provides valuable insights into systemic challenges and potential interventions to empower rural womenpreneurs. Subsequently, the agencies emphasised the need for policies that prioritise gender-inclusive training, better access to financial services and infrastructure improvements. And, collaborative efforts between government bodies, NGOs and the private sector are recommended to foster a conducive environment for rural womenpreneurs led businesses. In conclusion, this study outlines the complex interplay of sociocultural, economic, and institutional factors that influence the entrepreneurial journey of rural womenpreneurs in Sabah. By identifying both barriers and

enablers, this research contributes to the development of a comprehensive characterisation framework to understand and support rural womenpreneurs. However, it requires targeted interventions and collaborative efforts to address gender gaps, increase resource accessibility, and foster the unique behavioural characteristics of women entrepreneurs. Furthermore, such measures are essential to unlock the full potential of rural womenpreneurs and foster inclusive economic growth in Sabah.

Implication towards Academician

Exploring the behavioural characteristics and entrepreneurial challenges faced by rural womenpreneurs in Sabah, Malaysia, has significant implications for academics. This research, based on Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), emphasises the interaction of personal, environmental and behavioural factors in shaping entrepreneurial outcomes. By investigating the factors that cause rural womenpreneurs to lag behind their peers and identifying the success factors and behavioural characteristics that enable rural womenpreneurs to thrive, the study contributes valuable insights to academia to broaden the understanding of gender differences in entrepreneurship, advances the application of Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), develops a framework for behavioural characteristics and insights for policy-oriented research and encourages interdisciplinary research for academic contributions and future research directions. To be specific, differences in socio-economic conditions, government policies and cultural norms may result in different entrepreneurial behaviours and challenges in other regions. However, the sample size, although sufficient for qualitative analysis, may not be fully representative of the diverse population of rural womenpreneurs in Sabah. This is because the variables such as age, educational background, business type and ethnic diversity may have influenced the results, limiting the ability to capture the full spectrum of experiences and behaviours among rural womenpreneurs. Furthermore, the reliance on self-reported data introduces potential biases, such as social desirability bias, where respondents may present themselves more positively and some participants may also have had difficulty articulating their challenges or achievements, leading to incomplete or inaccurate information. Additionally, the limited time frame of this study further limited its ability to conduct longitudinal research. As a result, the findings offer a snapshot of current challenges and behaviours but do not take into account how these may evolve over time. Thus, the researcher's suggestion for a longer study period may facilitate the observation of behavioural changes, intervention effects and long-term outcomes of rural womenpreneur's entrepreneurial endeavours more thoroughly.

Firstly, this study sheds light on the socio-cultural, economic and institutional challenges faced by rural womenpreneurs, providing academics with a nuanced understanding of gender differences in entrepreneurship. This understanding therefore enables scholars to develop gender-sensitive frameworks and theories that address the unique constraints and opportunities experienced by rural womenpreneurs, particularly in rural contexts. By integrating these findings into academic discourse, researchers can inspire more comprehensive studies that consider gender as a critical variable in entrepreneurship research. This can therefore lead to the development of gender-specific interventions and policies that aim to bridge the entrepreneurial gap between rural males and rural womenpreneurs in Sabah, Malaysia. In addition to broadening the understanding of gender differences in entrepreneurship, the study's reliance on SCT highlights the dynamic interactions between personal traits, environmental influences and entrepreneurial behaviour. For academicians, this offers a solid theoretical foundation for studying entrepreneurship. Through SCT, academics can use it to examine how factors such as self-efficacy, observational learning and social support networks influence the entrepreneurial decisions and behaviour of rural womenpreneurs. Academics are therefore

encouraged to expand on SCT by exploring its applicability across diverse cultural and economic settings. This can deepen the understanding of how rural womenpreneurs overcome unique challenges and leverage their strengths to succeed in rural Sabah, Malaysia. Next, to develop a framework for developing behavioural traits, this research emphasises the importance of behavioural traits such as resilience, creativity, adaptability and collaboration in the success of rural womenpreneurs. These findings provide a starting point for academics to develop a comprehensive framework for understanding entrepreneurial behaviour. Such a framework can inform curricula in entrepreneurship education, particularly in developing countries, by highlighting the most critical characteristics and skills for rural womenpreneurs. Therefore, academics can also use this framework to conduct comparative studies across different regions, allowing for a global perspective on rural womenpreneurs' entrepreneurship and their behavioural dynamics.

In conclusion, the need for research to bridge the gap between academia and policymaking, highlighting systemic barriers such as limited access to resources and infrastructure. Through the collaboration between researchers and agencies to use insights to support evidence-based local policies that prioritise the development of rural womenpreneurs, researchers also can contribute to the design and evaluation of programs that address the barriers highlighted in this study. Therefore, such collaborations not only strengthen academic research but also enhance practical performance and societal impact, and future researchers are also encouraged to collaborate with experts in sociology, economics, psychology and gender studies to explore the complex factors that influence rural womenpreneurs using a more holistic approach and using innovative solutions that impact entrepreneurial development.

Limitations of Study

Based on Bandura's (1977) Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), this research emphasises the dynamic interaction of personal, environmental, and behavioural factors that shape entrepreneurial outcomes, explores the factors that contribute to the entrepreneurial gap between rural womenpreneurs and male entrepreneurs and identifies factors that influence the success and behavioural characteristics of rural womenpreneurs in Sabah, Malaysia.

Through research findings, the study results revealed that rural women entrepreneurs face significant systemic barriers and challenges, including limited access to financial assistance from local agencies, lack of entrepreneurship education and training tailored to the skill needs of rural women entrepreneurs and the societal norm perspective in rural areas that rural women entrepreneurs' roles as mothers, wives and family members are obstacles to the business growth and success of rural women entrepreneurs thereby limiting the ability of rural womenpreneurs to compete with male entrepreneurs. Other than that, rural womenpreneurs also face challenges in balancing responsibilities at home and running a business operation at the same time, this study also highlights key behavioural characteristics of rural womenpreneurs, such as resilience, adaptability and self-efficacy, which enable rural womenpreneurs to navigate and overcome existing barriers. In addition, rural women entrepreneurs demonstrate remarkable flexibility and resourcefulness in managing their businesses despite limited access and financial resources. In addition, the study findings also indicate that the definition of rural womenpreneurs success goes beyond financial metrics and profit margins, encompassing the ability to balance responsibilities as mothers, wives and community members to achieve a sense of personal empowerment. The success of rural womenpreneurs should be recognised as the ability of rural womenpreneurs to create sustainable businesses that contribute to community development and economic growth in rural Sabah. Therefore, the results of this study call on academics to prioritise research on

underrepresented groups in the field of entrepreneurship, such as rural womenpreneurs in Sabah. In addition, exploring the role of digital and technological advancements in empowering rural womenpreneurs to provide valuable insights and help the academicians contribute to a richer body of knowledge and support the development of an inclusive and equitable entrepreneurial ecosystem. For this reason, this study has provided valuable insights into the behavioural characteristics and challenges faced by rural womenpreneurs in Sabah, Malaysia; it is not without its limitations. So, to acknowledge these limitations is important to contextualise the findings and guide future research. Firstly, the geographical scope of the study was limited to rural womenpreneurs in Sabah, a region with a distinct cultural, economic and infrastructural context. While this local focus provides insights, the findings may not be fully generalisable to rural womenpreneurs in other parts of Malaysia or other countries.

In addition, other than the limitations of geography, sample size and time constraints, this study faces limitations in capturing the perspectives of male entrepreneurs; limited engagement with male entrepreneurs limits the ability to make comprehensive comparisons. Investigating the experiences and strategies of male entrepreneurs could provide a deeper understanding of gender-related differences in rural entrepreneurship. However, the scope of this research focuses primarily on behavioural characteristics, potentially ignoring external factors such as market dynamics, technological advances and macroeconomic conditions which can significantly influence rural womenpreneurs' entrepreneurial success. Although the study addressed institutional and policy barriers, it may not have comprehensively examined the broader policy landscape, including national-level policies and international trade agreements that may impact rural womenpreneurs.

Finally, other than the limitation of geography, the language and cultural differences posed challenges during data collection and interpretation because academicians needed the use of translators and culturally sensitive methods; subtle nuances in communication may have compromised the accuracy and depth of the data collected. The findings of this study also highlight the complexity of researchers conducting research in regions with diverse cultures and languages during the time this study was conducted. In addition, the researcher also stated that this study lays a valuable foundation for understanding the unique behavioural characteristics and challenges faced by rural womenpreneurs in Sabah. Therefore, in recognising the constraints faced by rural womenpreneurs, the importance of identifying the existing gaps is very important for future research. The researcher also suggests that future researchers should broaden the geographical scope to understand the unique challenges and barriers faced by rural womenpreneurs, using a longitudinal approach and combining multiple perspectives to obtain rich data to explore and support the empowerment of rural womenpreneurs in Sabah, Malaysia.

Suggestion for Future Research

The purpose of this study is to explore the factors that contribute to the entrepreneurial gap between rural womenpreneurs and male entrepreneurs, as well as to identify factors that influence the success and behavioural characteristics of rural womenpreneurs in Sabah, Malaysia. Based on Bandura's (1977) Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), this research emphasises the dynamic interaction of personal, environmental and behavioural factors that shape the entrepreneurial outcomes of rural womenpreneurs in Sabah, Malaysia (Bandura, 1977). In collaboration with local agencies, this study aims to contribute to the development of a comprehensive characterisation framework and deepen understanding of the behavioural characteristics of rural womenpreneurs in the region.

The findings from the research reveal that rural womenpreneurs face significant systemic barriers and challenges. These include a lack of entrepreneurship education and training tailored to their needs, limited access to financial assistance from local and government agencies and societal norms in rural areas that prioritise women's roles as caregivers of the home, children and family. The challenges faced by rural womenpreneurs limit the growth and success of rural womenpreneurs to compete with male entrepreneurs, although the study highlights key behavioural characteristics of rural womenpreneurs, such as resilience, adaptability and self-efficacy that enable rural womenpreneurs to navigate and overcome these unique challenges, to manage responsibilities at home and to carry out their roles as entrepreneurs. Also, rural womenpreneurs demonstrate extraordinary flexibility and resourcefulness in managing businesses with limited access and financial resources.

By integrating insights from SCT and focusing on behavioural characteristics and systemic challenges that are faced by rural womenpreneurs, academics can contribute to theoretical advancements and practical solutions as a call for academics to prioritise research on underrepresented groups in entrepreneurship, such as rural womenpreneurs. To emphasise the importance of culturally and contextually relevant research that addresses the unique challenges of rural environments, future research could investigate comparative analyses between rural and urban womenpreneurs, including longitudinal studies to track behavioural and entrepreneurial changes over time, to explore the role of digital and technological advances in empowering rural womenpreneurs, which can provide valuable insights and help academics contribute to a richer, more inclusive and equitable entrepreneurial ecosystem. This research not only enriches academic discourse but also has the potential to inform policies and interventions that empower rural womenpreneurs, driving inclusive economic development in Sabah and beyond.

4. Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to explore the factors that contribute to the entrepreneurial gap between rural womenpreneurs and male entrepreneurs, as well as to identify factors that influence the success and behavioural characteristics of rural womenpreneurs in Sabah, Malaysia. Based on Bandura's (1977) Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), this research emphasises the dynamic interaction of personal, environmental and behavioural factors that shape the entrepreneurial outcomes of rural women entrepreneurs in Sabah, Malaysia. In collaboration with local agencies, this study aims to contribute to the development of a comprehensive characterisation framework and deepen understanding of the behavioural characteristics of rural womenpreneurs in the region.

The findings from the research reveal that rural womenpreneurs face significant systemic barriers and challenges. These include a lack of entrepreneurship education and training tailored to their needs, limited access to financial assistance from local and government agencies and societal norms in rural areas that prioritise women's roles as caregivers of the home, children and family. These challenges create barriers to the growth and success of rural womenpreneurs, limiting their ability to compete with male entrepreneurs. However, the study also highlights key behavioural characteristics of rural women entrepreneurs, such as resilience, adaptability and self-efficacy that enable them to navigate and overcome these obstacles.

In conclusion, support from local agencies, policymakers and researchers to recognise the unique challenges faced by rural womenpreneurs will help to address gender-specific barriers,

develop rural womenpreneurs, and foster the growth of sustainable business operations to promote wider economic empowerment of rural communities, because rural womenpreneurs demonstrate remarkable flexibility and resourcefulness in managing their businesses despite limited access and financial resources. In support of this, through their definition of success, it goes beyond financial metrics and profit margins, encompassing the ability to balance responsibilities as mothers, wives and community members while achieving a sense of personal empowerment for rural womenpreneurs in Sabah, Malaysia.

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