



## The Factors Influencing Entrepreneurs' Performance among MADA Entrepreneurs

Mohamad Shafiq Mohamed Nasaruddin<sup>1\*</sup>, Zahiah Shadin<sup>2</sup>, Tan Yee Fean<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Commerce, Politeknik Mukah, KM 7.5 Jalan Oya, 96400 Mukah, Sarawak, Malaysia

<sup>2</sup>Muda Agricultural Development Authority, Ampang Jajar, 05990 Alor Setar, Kedah, Malaysia

<sup>3</sup>Penang Royal Malaysian Custom Department, Kompleks Kastam Seberang Jaya, Seberang Perai Tengah, 13700 Alor Setar, Penang, Malaysia

\*Corresponding author: mshafiq@pmu.edu.my

Please provide an **official organisation email** of the corresponding author

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### Abstract

Entrepreneurship is recognized as a crucial factor in the transformation of nations politically and socio-economically. Despite growth in MSME contribution to Malaysia's GDP, the pandemic has reversed the trend, and various government agencies are working to revitalize the MSME ecosystem. This study aimed to investigate the relationship between market network, family support, government policy, and entrepreneurs' performance among MADA entrepreneurs. Data were collected through a survey questionnaire from 145 entrepreneurs operating in MADA region. Correlation and multiple regression analyses were conducted to analyze the data. The results showed that market network, family support, and government policy had a significant positive relationship with entrepreneurs' performance. Among these factors, government policy had the highest impact on entrepreneurs' performance. These findings suggest that policymakers and entrepreneurs should pay attention to the role of government policy in supporting and promoting entrepreneurship. Furthermore, this study provides a basis for future research to investigate other variables that may influence entrepreneurs' performance, such as education, experience, and financial factors.

**Keywords:** - *Entrepreneurs performance, Dasar Keusahawanan Negara 2030, COVID-19, MADA*

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### 1. Introduction

*Dasar Kemakmuran Bersama 2030* introduced by the Malaysian Government in 2019 lays the foundation for the nation to be a developed country sustainably in line with fair, equitable and inclusive economic distribution at all levels of society with the main pillar of strengthening business and industry ecosystem especially among micro, small, medium enterprises (MSME). Entrepreneurship scholars mutually agreed that entrepreneurship activities generate employment, create wealth, and stimulate developing economies (Ahmad & Xavier, 2012). Realising the significant contribution of MSME towards national development, *Dasar Keusahawanan Nasional*

2030 launched by the Ministry of Entrepreneurs Development in 2019 outlined one of the strategic pillars which is to strengthen the ability and the performance of local MSME. However, the catastrophic effect of COVID-19 Pandemic has severely impacted the nation path towards developed country via empowerment of entrepreneurs. Hazim in 2021 reported the Youth Co:Lab survey which co-led by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Citi Foundation found that series of lockdowns and the falling in customer demand has forced young entrepreneurs to fully if not partially close their business as the last resort after the shrinkage of cash flow and even laying off some of the workers subsequently. In a larger perspective, despite the positive

and continuous increment in MSME contribution to Malaysia's GDP from 37.0% in 2015 to 38.9% in 2019 which was amounted RM 553.4 billion, COVID-19 Pandemic has reversed the trend where contribution of MSMEs' GDP to national GDP only marked at 38.1% in 2020 and continues to fall in 2021 with only 37.4% which was RM 518.1 billion (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2022). Recognizing the need to revitalize the MSME ecosystem in Malaysia, various government agencies related to the entrepreneur's development have initiated several strategic agendas to rejuvenate entrepreneurial mindset especially the among the young generation. However, government initiatives alone cannot determine the entrepreneur's ultimate success as it is defined by many other factors that need to be accessed simultaneously. Therefore, this study aimed to scrutinize the critical success factors which impact entrepreneurs' performance.

The factors determining the performance of entrepreneurs have been greatly debated recently as entrepreneurial performance can be accessed by looking into several distinction of theories and knowledge and disciplines. Entrepreneurial performance can be defined as the capacity to accomplish predetermined entrepreneurial objectives. This entails leveraging available business opportunities to maximize efforts (Sariwulan, 2020). Performance is associated with meeting business objectives by capitalizing on available opportunities. Such circumstances entail quantifiable risks that an entrepreneur must analyze and anticipate. There are several factors that need to be considered while preparing for entrepreneurship.

Niu (2023) clearly stated entrepreneurial performance encompasses both financial and non-financial aspects. Financial performance comprises corporate revenue and profits, while non-financial performance includes corporate innovation capabilities, market share, and customer satisfaction. Additionally, entrepreneurial performance can be categorized into financial performance, survival performance, and overall performance. Additionally, entrepreneurial performance can be measured by using financial indicators as well as considering the business growth in term of annual increases in sales and number of employees (Mould, 2013).

Recognizing the importance of entrepreneurship education in promoting entrepreneurship development and the economy, Malaysia has taken the initiative by implementing entrepreneurship programs and activities under some of the ministries. One of the organizations is Muda Authority Development Area (MADA). MADA stands for the Malaysian Agricultural Development Authority, which is a government agency under the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industries in Malaysia. MADA's role in entrepreneurship is to support and promote entrepreneurial activities in the Muda Agricultural Development Authority (MADA) area, which covers a large part of the state of Kedah and Perlis in Malaysia. MADA provides various forms of assistance

to entrepreneurs in the area, including funding, training, technical support, and access to markets. Currently, MADA has 1,261 entrepreneurs include the business of snack processing, beverages, traditional cakes, handicrafts, herbs, cosmetics as well as other business projects such as sewing, livestock projects, crop projects and aquaculture. According to MADA, there is only 10% of the total entrepreneurs in Muda Area are categorized as successful in their business. MADA measures entrepreneurial success by looking at the entrepreneurs' financial performance and their business viability and sustainability.

Extending the prior study of entrepreneur's performance (Small, 2017; and Obaji & Olugu, 2014), this current study is focusing in examining the market network, family, and government policy as the contributing factors to the entrepreneur's performance and their relationships among MADA entrepreneurs. Thus, the following hypotheses were proposed:

H1: There is a significant and positive relationship between market network and entrepreneurs' performance.

H2: There is a significant and positive relationship between family factor and entrepreneurs' performance.

H3: There is a significant and positive relationship between government policy and entrepreneurs' performance.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Entrepreneurs Performance

Researchers were varying in defining the entrepreneur's performance and its indicator as the study of entrepreneur's success is multifaceted which may incorporate either individual, organizational, external antecedent, or the combination of them. Namwambah et al. (2021) found that entrepreneurial training, networking, technology adoption, and financial access positively correlated to entrepreneurs' performance. Henley et al. (2011) has investigated several variables (passion for work, tenacity, self-efficacy, interpersonal control, and new resource skill) to determine entrepreneurial success. In the early study, Schein (1978) stated that the entrepreneur's performance is measured by organizational performance which is subject to the environment where the organization exists.

According to Hilali & Abousaid (2023), performance is a complex concept that encompasses various dimensions. It is commonly understood as the fulfillment of a company's objectives and the efficient execution of activities. However, this broad definition is challenging for companies to operationalize. Nowadays, it is widely acknowledged that company performance should consider multiple dimensions, including economic, social, and environmental aspects, leading to a more comprehensive understanding of overall performance. Firmansyah et. at. (2023) study was more focused on examining the firm performance by arguing that the model should also considering the digital transformation, digital literacy, and

market orientation influences on firm's performance. The study defined entrepreneurial performance as it reflects the capability of a business to sustain its operations or decide to cease operations. Key indicators of entrepreneurial performance include management expertise, product/service offerings, customer and market relationships, quality standards, business methods and collaborations, financial resources, marketing strategies, and the external environment. Thus, this study is conducted to explore the effects of market network, family, and government policy towards the performance of MADA entrepreneurs.

## **2.2 Market Network Factor**

Market networks play a crucial role for business success and economic growth for a nation nowadays. According to Schaefer (2016), market networks have stronger retention and engagement than marketplaces. According to Hani (2014), networking is one of the most important skills that one must learn to make his or her business grow and success. This is because networking will help to generate new business through referrals, opportunity to get advice from experts, and built-in source for marketing. Besides that, Small (2017) stated that networking is also the strongest and most powerful marketing tactic to accelerate and sustain success for any individual and organization.

According to the research study by Boso et al. (2013), network ties were found to play a crucial role in shaping the complex relationship between firm's entrepreneurial orientation and market orientation activities and business success for entrepreneurs. Social network ties and business network ties (suppliers, customers, distributors, and competitors) maximize the performance benefits of aligning high levels of entrepreneurial orientation and market orientation. Therefore, authors encourage entrepreneurs to leverage their external ties to earn greater rewards for their entrepreneurial and market-oriented activities to be more successful. Effective utilization of networking can enhance a firm's financial performance and expand its market share by identifying new business prospects, facilitating skills transfer, and garnering positive industry ratings. Therefore, it is crucial for MSMEs to enhance their networking efforts to boost performance. Understanding the impact of networking on entrepreneurs' performance is essential for achieving this objective Namwambah et al. (2021).

Research has shown that networking positively affects the performance of small businesses in various ways. It grants them access to valuable resources like information and funding while fostering partnerships and collaborations. A specific study conducted in the West Java province confirmed the positive association between networking and financial performance. This relationship was demonstrated through increased sales growth and enhanced profitability among small businesses (Nugroho, 2023).

## **2.3 Family Factor**

Ironically, only few attentions have been put to see how the family as a specific social institution give the impact to the entrepreneurial outcomes, although most entrepreneurs have families that highly influence their business activities (Jennings et al., 2013). Some studies in the field of entrepreneurship have highlighted the pivotal role of the family in the entrepreneurial journey. This is due to the significant connections observed between entrepreneurial activities, outcomes, and the involvement of family members in the business. The perspective of family embeddedness focuses on the interpersonal interactions between entrepreneurs and their family members. It explains the significance of family and its associations in the entrepreneurial context (Neneh et. al., 2022). The family domain contributes to the provision of essential resources, such as physical, human, financial, and social resources, which are crucial for entrepreneurial startups and their success. However, there are varying findings regarding the impact of different types of family support on different business outcomes and in different contexts.

In more dated studies, for example research conducted by Adjei et. al. (2019) proved that family relationship constellation positively impacted the entrepreneur's performance in term of productivity. Earlier Putnam (1993) proposed that social networks provided by extended family- or community-based relationships are likely to amplify the effects of education, experience, and financial capital. This leads to the fact that participation in social networks benefits individuals involved in start-up activities. Previous study stated that, other factors such as age, education, and family status also influence individual's entrepreneurship development (Renzulli et al., 2000). However, Hossain et. al. (2009) states that family responsibility of individuals is a potential constraint to their business activities. Contrary to this, family support can be a pillar of their business success. For example, Bhunia and Siddika (2023) in their new study on women entrepreneurs revealed that various factors influence the success of women in entrepreneurship, both internal and external. Internal factors such as education, experience, and personal relationships were found to play a significant role. Additionally, external factors like access to loans, financial stability, and family support were identified as crucial determinants.

## **2.4 Government Policy Factor**

Recently, it has been established that entrepreneurship is a very important component of job creation as well as economic development. To be an entrepreneur, the success of income generation for the major group depends on government involvement. According to Ariffin et. al. (2020), there are several ministries established for instance the Ministry of Entrepreneurial and Cooperative Development (MECD) in 1995, the Ministry of Women,

Family and Community Development (MWFCD) in 2001 and other supporting government agencies provide support to entrepreneurs including funding, physical infrastructure, and business advisory services. In fact, various incentives programs and activities have been developed by the government to enable the entrepreneurs gain enough capital to start and develop their business (Zainol & Daud, 2011). Therefore, the government has been actively involved and concerned about entrepreneurship development. This is to ensure that the entrepreneurs can develop their business successfully and not be left out from the process of national and economic development.

Entrepreneurship is an important engine of economic growth (Minniti, 2008). To develop successful entrepreneurs, the government policy needs to be strengthened to ensure that the entrepreneurs are receiving supportive programs from the government. However, according to GEM's finding on Malaysia's entrepreneurial environment, the result was negative relationship between performance and government policy factor. They found that the government policies disfavour new firms and the government bureaucracy, regulation and licensing requirements delay the new firms from expanding (Teoh & Chong, 2007). Recent study by Alkahtani et al. (2020) suggested a similar finding where the density of government support exhibits a substantial and favorable impact on sustainable competitive performance. However, the success factor of entrepreneur's performance not merely depends on the tremendous amount of government support and policy alone. The other important element which plays a crucial role in the implementation of government policy as entrepreneurs success catalyst is how well the related information is being conveyed and disseminated to the entrepreneurs at the bottom as the latest finding suggested not all entrepreneurs were well-informed regarding the supporting policy which affecting them (Musabayana et al., 2022).

### 3. Methodology

The participants in this study are entrepreneurs from MADA. To determine the appropriate sample size, Roscoe's rule of thumb, as cited in Sekaran and Bougie (2013), was adopted. This rule suggests that the sample size should be greater than 30 and less than 500. Additionally, for multivariate research, the sample size can be determined by multiplying the number of variables by ten or the number of items by five. As this study investigated four variables with a total of 14 items, a sample size of 70 was considered appropriate. However, 145 respondents participated in this study, exceeding the recommended sample size.

The Likert scale is used to measure the scale of the study, where respondents are asked to express their level of agreement or disagreement with a series of statements related to the variables. The scale consists of five response categories ranging from "strongly disagree" to

"strongly agree". In this study, a convenience sampling technique is employed, which involves collecting information from readily available members of the population (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013). To analyze the data, IBM SPSS was utilized as the statistical tool. The variables were assessed for reliability through Cronbach's Alpha tests. The Cronbach's alpha value for the Government Policy Factor variable was 0.703, indicating that its reliability is acceptable. However, the other two variables, namely market network and family factor, were found to be poor in terms of reliability, as their Cronbach's alpha values were only 0.591 and 0.592, respectively.

## 4. Finding and Analysis

### 4.1 Respondents' Demographic Profile

Table 1 shows the frequency and percentage of demographic profile for the total 145 respondents. Out of all the respondents, 64.1% were female and 35.9% were male. Most of the respondents were aged above 40 years, accounting for 37.9%, followed by those aged between 36-40 years, accounting for 21.4%. The frequency analysis of academic qualification showed that most respondents had SPM/STPM qualification, with 97 respondents accounting for 66.9%.

Table 1. Respondents' demographic profiles

| Profile                       | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|-------------------------------|-----------|----------------|
| <b>Gender</b>                 |           |                |
| Male                          | 52        | 35.9           |
| Female                        | 93        | 64.1           |
| <b>Age</b>                    |           |                |
| 16 – 20 years old             | 1         | 0.7            |
| 21 – 25 years old             | 8         | 5.5            |
| 26 – 30 years old             | 23        | 15.9           |
| 31 – 35 years old             | 27        | 18.6           |
| 36 – 40 years old             | 31        | 21.4           |
| More than 40 years old        | 55        | 37.9           |
| <b>Academic Qualification</b> |           |                |
| SPM / STPM                    | 97        | 66.9           |
| Diploma                       | 26        | 17.9           |
| Bachelor                      | 10        | 6.9            |
| Masters                       | 2         | 1.4            |
| PhD                           | 0         | 0.0            |
| Others                        | 10        | 6.9            |

The respondents were also asked whether they have prior working experience with government or private sector and if their parents have experience as entrepreneurs.

Table 2. Respondents' profile

|   | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|---|-----------|----------------|
| <b>Prior Working Experience</b>               |           |                |
| No  | 70        | 48.3           |
| Less than 1 year                              | 16        | 11             |
| 2 – 5 years                                   | 32        | 22.1           |
| 6 – 10 years                                  | 27        | 18.6           |
| <b>Parent have experience as entrepreneur</b> |           |                |
| Yes   | 79        | 54.5           |
| No  | 66        | 45.5           |

The number of respondents with no prior working experience is 70, which is the highest among the categories, followed by those with 2-5 years of experience in either government or private sectors. 27 respondents, accounting for 18.6 percent, reported having 6-10 years of working experience. In addition, out of the total respondents, 66 stated that their parents had experience as entrepreneurs, which is 45.5 percent, while 79 respondents, which is 54.5 percent, stated that their parents had no experience as entrepreneurs.

In this study, correlation analyses were performed to measure the strength of association between two metric variables. The Pearson Correlation index was used to determine whether there is a linear or straight-line relationship between the two variables. The values of the Pearson Correlation range from -1 to +1, with negative numbers indicating a negative correlation and positive numbers indicating a positive correlation. The interpretation of the correlation results is as follows:  $r = 0.10$  to  $0.29$  indicates a small correlation;  $r = 0.30$  to  $0.49$  indicates a medium correlation;  $r = 0.50$  to  $1.00$  indicates high correlations (Hair et al., 1998).

Table 3 displays the correlation between the dependent variable, entrepreneurs' performance, and each independent variable. It reveals that there is a relationship between the variables. The market network factor and family factor have a medium correlation yet significant relationship with the dependent variable, as indicated by their  $r$ -values of .362 and .336, respectively. On the other hand, the government policy factor demonstrates a stronger relationship with the entrepreneur's performance, with an  $r$ -value of .533, indicating a high correlation. Additionally, all the relationships between the dependent and independent variables are positively related, as shown by the positive  $r$ -values.

Table 3. Relationship between independent variables with entrepreneurs' performance

| Variables         | Significant value (p) | Pearson Correlation ( $r_s$ ) |
|-------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|
| Market Network    | 0.000                 | 0.362                         |
| Family Factor     | 0.000                 | 0.336                         |
| Government Policy | 0.000                 | 0.533                         |

Note: Significant value with  $p \leq 0.05$

Table 3 reveals that all  $p$ -values are below 0.01, indicating a significant relationship between the independent variables (market network factor, family factor, and government policy factor) and the dependent variable (entrepreneurial performance). As a result, the proposed hypothesis can be accepted.

As shown in Table 4, the model summary of the multiple regression analysis indicates that the R square value is 0.339, implying that entrepreneurial performance is affected by the 33.9% of the variation in three independent variables (market network, family factor, and government policy factor).

Table 4. Result of model summary

| Model | R                 | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|-------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 1     | .594 <sup>a</sup> | .353     | .339              | .50121                     |

a. Predictors: (Constant), MeanGF, MeanFF, MeanMN

Based on the multiple regression analysis coefficients shown in Table 5, it is evident that government policy factor has the highest impact on the performance of entrepreneurs as its beta value is the highest ( $\beta = 0.437$ ,  $t = 5.966$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). This is followed by the family factor, with a beta value of 0.200,  $t = 2.812$ ,  $p < 0.05$ , indicating that it is the second independent variable that affects the performance of entrepreneurs. On the other hand, the market network factor has the lowest beta value among the three independent variables, with a small but significant relationship to the performance of entrepreneurs ( $\beta = 0.145$ ,  $t = 1.947$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Overall, the multiple regression analysis coefficients demonstrate that government policy factor has the strongest impact on entrepreneurial performance, followed by the family factor and the market network factor.

Table 5: Coefficient table of the regression analysis

| Model        | Unstd Coefficients |            | Stdd Coefficients | t     | Sig. |
|--------------|--------------------|------------|-------------------|-------|------|
|              | B                  | Std. Error | Beta              |       |      |
| 1 (constant) | .956               | .379       |                   | 2.519 | .013 |
| MeanMN       | .183               | .094       | .145              | 1.947 | .053 |
| MeanFF       | .173               | .062       | .200              | 2.812 | .006 |
| MeanGF       | .433               | .073       | .437              | 5.966 | .000 |

a. Dependent Variable: MeanPER

### 5. Conclusion

There are various factors that influence the success of an entrepreneur. These factors can include personal traits and characteristics, such as perseverance, innovation, risk-taking, and adaptability. Additionally, external factors such as market conditions, competition, government policies, access to financing, and networking also play a crucial role in determining the success of

entrepreneurs. Both internal and external factors must be thoroughly investigated as they both affect the entrepreneur's performance in business.

The investigation of the relationship between market factor and entrepreneur's performance in this study was supported by Namwambah et al. (2021), Small (2017), and Boso et al. (2013) studies, which found a positive and significant relationship between these variables. The same output was observed for the family factor and the dependent variable, which is consistent with the previous studies by Jennings et al. (2013) and Adjei et al. (2019). Moreover, the findings are in line with the prior research by Alkahtani et al. (2020), and Musabayana et al. (2022), which investigated the significance of government policy in entrepreneurial success.

These studies provide evidence that market factors, family factors, and government policy are crucial determinants of entrepreneurial success. Market factor refers to the support provided by the market in terms of opportunities, resources, and networks, which can facilitate entrepreneurs to achieve their goals. Family factor is the social capital that entrepreneurs can leverage in the form of financial and emotional support, knowledge sharing, and business advice. Government policy, on the other hand, includes regulations, tax incentives, and other support programs that can impact entrepreneurial performance positively. Overall, these studies highlight the importance of considering multiple factors to understand and support entrepreneurial success.

The study on the factors influencing entrepreneurs' performance among MADA entrepreneurs is significant in several ways. Firstly, it provides insights into the factors that affect the performance of entrepreneurs in the context of MADA, which can help policymakers and business owners to develop effective strategies to support entrepreneurship and enhance its contribution to economic development. Secondly, the study contributes to the existing literature on entrepreneurship by providing empirical evidence on the relationship between market network, family factor, government policy factor, and entrepreneurs' performance. Thirdly, the study adds to the knowledge base of entrepreneurship research by exploring the factors that influence the performance of entrepreneurs in the agriculture sector, which has been relatively under-researched. Overall, the study has significant implications for policy and practice, as well as for future research on entrepreneurship in the context of developing countries.

This study only covers a limited number of factors that can impact the performance of MADA entrepreneurs, and it is important to note that there may be other factors that were not considered. The findings of this study can serve as a reference for future researchers who wish to continue studying the performance of MADA entrepreneurs or related areas. Researchers in the future are recommended to consider additional variables beyond those examined in this study, such as an entrepreneur's background, education, and financial situation. These variables could also play a role in determining an

entrepreneur's performance, and further research is needed to fully understand their impact.

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