

Strategic Foresight for Micro Entrepreneurship Growth: A Study on Empowering Marginalised Women in Penang

YUSNIDAR ABD. RAHMAN^{1*}, DEWI A. SAPUAN^{2*}

¹ School of Business Administration, Wawasan Open University

*Corresponding Author: yusnidar09@gmail.com, dewisapuan@wou.edu.my

ABSTRACT

Women entrepreneurship has been the backbone of many economies in both developed and developing countries. The reality, however, still paints a grim picture as a significant proportion of women, in general, continue to remain economically marginalised and on the receiving end of discrimination. The chances of the underprivileged thriving as businesswomen are typically slim to none due to their limited financial capacity, making it possible for them to only enter a market that requires small or no capital. Their business pursuits often become gradually daunting as reports have shown that this minority category is characterised by low aptitudes and minimum foundational business knowledge. There is a strong inverse correlation between the scale of success for enterprising women and the number of women entrepreneurs; the bigger the firm, the lesser the number of women representatives in higher positions or as owners. This research aims to focus on finding a solution on a more domestic front, specifically for Penang, by designing the change needed for sustainable growth in micro-entrepreneurship for marginalised women. The objective of this study is to solicit insights through the multiple lenses of stakeholders in order to derive the 1) possible; 2) plausible; 3) probable, and 4) preferred futures in entrepreneurial empowerment. The futures study approach and strategic foresight tools will be employed in this qualitative inquiry. The overarching research question seeks to understand the different realities of stakeholders are with regard to their respective initiatives in helping marginalised women become enterprising. Subsequently, more specific research questions will help to probe further on the gaps in the working dynamics and collaborative efforts between government agencies, non-governmental organisations, and private entities in helping women out of poverty. The collection of data will be carried out via focus groups interviews. Effectively, the strategic forecast tools will be used during the focus group where informants will work collaboratively to design future scenarios based on their respective past and present realities, and future policy horizons to address the overarching research questions. Five focus groups, each with a minimum of four representatives of a type of organisation, government, or/and regulatory body, will be facilitated in the foresight session of testing assumptions against plausible futures. This will be followed by each group brainstorming to identify their own policy challenges and opportunities. Findings from this exercise will then be used to design a semi-structured interview instrument. Three key informants who are at the state or national strategic level of policymaking will be identified for an in-depth interview to gain rich narratives about the complexities in the current system. More interviews with additional key informants will be pursued if required to ensure that data saturation is met. It is hoped that this research will be able to inform policymakers in designing robust strategies that would enable all stakeholders to function synergistically toward the preferred future of marginalised women thriving in micro-businesses.

Keywords: strategic foresight, marginalised women, micro-entrepreneurship, women entrepreneurs