

Single Mother Entrepreneurship: Empowering Women through Enterprise

Rusnani binti Yahya, Rohayu binti Roddin

Faculty of Technical and Vocational Education (FPTV), Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2025.907000227>

Received: 02 July 2025; Accepted: 09 July 2025; Published: 08 August 2025

ABSTRACT

Entrepreneurship plays a pivotal role in empowering women, particularly single mothers who often face significant economic and social challenges. This paper aims to explore entrepreneurship as a mechanism for empowering single mothers through a structured training program, hands-on activities, and continuous mentoring. Grounded in key theoretical frameworks including Empowerment Theory, the Social Entrepreneurship Model, Adult Learning (Andragogy), and the Business Model Canvas, the program is designed to enhance participants' self-confidence, business knowledge, and resilience in managing entrepreneurial ventures. The training modules cover business planning, basic financial management, digital marketing, and personal leadership, delivered through interactive and practical approaches. The program is expected to increase single mothers' participation in entrepreneurship while reducing dependency on external financial assistance. This paper proposes that such empowerment-focused entrepreneurship programs be scaled nationally as a sustainable strategy to foster economically independent, productive, and resilient communities of women.

Keywords: *Entrepreneurship, Single Mothers, Women Empowerment, Adult Learning, Socioeconomic Development*

INTRODUCTION

Single mothers represent a segment of society that often faces various economic, social, and psychological challenges. The loss of a spouse due to death, divorce, or separation significantly impacts the well-being of women who must assume the role of head of the household. In such situations, the ability to generate income independently becomes a top priority for the survival of both the children and the mother herself.

Aligned with the national agenda to empower women and promote inclusive economic participation, entrepreneurship serves as a highly relevant medium to support single mothers. Entrepreneurship not only offers income opportunities but also acts as a catalyst for self-empowerment, skills enhancement, and the development of a resilient identity. Thus, a dedicated entrepreneurial development program for single mothers is urgently needed to help them build a more stable and productive life.

The Need to Empower Single Mothers

Statistics from the Department of Social Welfare show an increasing number of registered single mothers each year. Most of them face constraints such as the absence of stable employment, lack of skills, and high dependency on child care. Additionally, some single mothers experience emotional stress due to societal stigma and limited social support.

Empowering single mothers is not merely about providing financial assistance. Instead, a more sustainable approach is required, such as skills education, entrepreneurship training, and continuous guidance, enabling them to become self-reliant and generate income through legitimate and sustainable business ventures.

Entrepreneurship as an Empowerment Instrument

Entrepreneurship provides a platform for single mothers to explore their potential and independently generate

income. Through micro or small-scale entrepreneurship, single mothers can start businesses from home, manage their time flexibly, and leverage existing skills such as cooking, sewing, urban farming, handicrafts, and digital marketing.

Moreover, technological advancements and digital platforms such as social media, e-commerce, and online payment systems have opened broader and lower-cost opportunities in entrepreneurship. This enables single mothers with limited capital to start businesses on a small scale with the potential for expansion.

Empowerment Strategies Through Entrepreneurship

To ensure the success of single mothers in entrepreneurship, several support strategies must be implemented:

1. Entrepreneurship Training and Education

Providing basic entrepreneurial training covering business planning, financial management, marketing, and digital technology is essential. This training can be conducted by institutions such as Community Colleges, GiatMARA, and women's NGOs.

2. Soft Skills Development

In addition to technical skills, single mothers need to develop soft skills such as self-leadership, confidence, communication, and stress management, which help them become more resilient in business challenges.

3. Mentoring and Coaching

Mentorship programs involving successful entrepreneurs, advisory agencies, and professional trainers can provide continuous guidance, motivation, and monitoring to single mothers in managing their businesses.

4. Access to Capital and Financial Support

Microloans, seed funding, and special grants for single mother entrepreneurs, such as those offered by Tabung Ekonomi Kumpulan Usaha Niaga (TEKUN), Amanah Ikhtiar Malaysia (AIM), and Bank Simpanan Nasional (BSN), can support them in starting their businesses more confidently.

5. Support Networks and Collaboration

Collaboration between government agencies, educational institutions, NGOs, and industry players can create a comprehensive support ecosystem for single mothers, including marketing opportunities, additional training, and business consultancy services.

TABLE 1

Programme Content (Module)

No.	Module Title	Practical Activities
1	Fundamentals of Entrepreneurship: This module provides a comprehensive introduction to the concept of entrepreneurship, types of businesses (formal and informal), as well as the roles and key characteristics of an entrepreneur. Participants will be exposed to the importance of entrepreneurial mindset such as being proactive, creative, innovative, and willing to take risks in starting and managing a business.	Simulation exercise: 'I Am an Entrepreneur' and group discussions.
2	Generating Ideas & Business Planning: This module emphasizes techniques for generating creative business ideas based on personal interests, skills, and	Duration: 2 hours

	market needs. Participants will be introduced to planning tools such as the Business Model Canvas and will be guided to write a simple and practical business plan.	
3	Basic Financial Management: This module focuses on essential financial skills. Topics include estimating start-up capital, operating costs, pricing, profit and loss calculation, and basic bookkeeping using a daily cash book.	Budget planning exercise, profit/loss calculations and bookkeeping practice. Duration: 2 hours
4	Digital Marketing & Sales: This module guides participants to understand basic marketing principles and digital sales techniques for promoting products/services via social media.	Create promotional posters and simulate sales campaigns on Facebook/Instagram. Duration: 2 hours
5	Motivation & Self-Leadership: This module strengthens participants' inner resilience to manage stress, build confidence and communicate effectively in business.	'Know Yourself' activity, communication drills, and inspirational sharing. Duration: 2 hours
6	Individual Mentoring Clinic: This session provides one-on-one or small group mentoring to refine business ideas and action plans.	Individual coaching and business idea pitching simulation. Duration: 2 hours

Concepts and Theoretical Frameworks

In designing entrepreneurship programs for single mothers, several key concepts and theories serve as the foundation for training module development, learning approaches, and intervention strategies:

1. Empowerment Theory

Introduced by Julian Rappaport (1987), this theory emphasizes helping individuals or communities gain control over their lives through capacity development, knowledge, and self-confidence. In the context of single mothers, it is applied through skills training, social support, and economic development that enable autonomous decision-making.

2. Social Entrepreneurship Model

This model views entrepreneurship as a tool to address social issues such as poverty and inequality. Single mothers are not only trained to earn income but also to contribute to community well-being through ethical and inclusive business practices.

3. Adult Learning Approach (Andragogy)

Popularized by Malcolm Knowles, this approach highlights that adults learn differently from children. It emphasizes self-directed learning, experiential knowledge, and problem-solving orientation. Thus, training modules for single mothers are designed to be practical, flexible, and interactive.

4. Schumpeter's Entrepreneurship Theory (Innovation and Change)

Joseph Schumpeter posits that entrepreneurs are agents of economic change through innovation and value creation. For single mothers, innovation in business allows them to adapt to market demands and compete effectively.

5. Business Model Canvas

Developed by Alexander Osterwalder, this visual tool helps entrepreneurs plan their business structures by identifying nine core elements including customer segments, value propositions, channels, and revenue streams. It is particularly useful for single mothers to visualize and develop their businesses in a structured and accessible way.

All these theories and models are applied integratively in the single mother entrepreneurship program to ensure a holistic, participant-centered, and impactful approach in building entrepreneurial capacity and resilience.

Impact of Entrepreneurship on Single Mothers

A successful entrepreneurship program not only increases the income of single mothers but also yields several positive outcomes, including:

1. Economic independence and reduced reliance on government aid
2. Improved self-esteem and confidence in life decision-making
3. Establishment of family legacies by setting a positive example for their children
4. Contribution to community development through social enterprises

Numerous success stories of single mothers rising as entrepreneurs in areas such as food services, mobile spas, and digital products prove that this effort is not a dream, but an attainable reality with the right support.

Pilot Study and Preliminary Data

To validate the proposed training modules, a pilot study will be conducted with a sample of 20 single mothers. Pre- and post-assessments will be administered to measure changes in business knowledge, entrepreneurial confidence, and monthly income levels. Preliminary results will be analyzed using descriptive statistics to demonstrate the program's real-world impact.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Research Questions:

RQ1: How does participation in the entrepreneurship training program affect the business knowledge of single mothers?

RQ2: What impact does the program have on their confidence in running a business?

RQ3: To what extent does the program influence participants' income levels?

Hypotheses:

H1: There is a significant increase in business knowledge after the training.

H2: Entrepreneurial confidence improves significantly after participation.

H3: Participants experience a measurable increase in income levels post-training.

Participant Profile

The program specifically targets single mothers aged 25 to 50 years who:

1. Have at least secondary school education
2. Belong to the B40 income group (monthly household income below MYR 4,850)
3. Are unemployed or underemployed
4. Show interest in business and entrepreneurship

Limitations and Barriers to Implementation

Despite its potential, the program may face several limitations:

1. Time constraints among participants due to childcare responsibilities
2. Limited access to digital tools and internet connectivity
3. Inconsistent motivation or fear of failure among participants

Strategies to Overcome Barriers:

1. Flexible training schedules example weekend or evening sessions
2. Provision of internet or data support and access to shared digital devices
3. Incorporation of motivational sessions and peer support groups

Evaluation and Scaling Strategy

1. Evaluation Plan: Pre- and post-assessments using validated instruments

CONCLUSION

Single mother entrepreneurship is not merely about income generation, but rather a long-term form of empowerment for women who serve as family pillars. In building an inclusive and prosperous society, no one should be left behind. Therefore, entrepreneurship programs for single mothers must be strengthened and expanded nationwide to cultivate more independent, innovative, and entrepreneurial women.

With the right combination of training, support, and opportunity, single mothers can not only transform their own lives but also shape a brighter future for their families and communities. This is the true essence of empowerment through entrepreneurship.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author would like to express sincere gratitude to all individuals and institutions that contributed to the development and implementation of this paper. Special appreciation is extended to the Department of Community College Education (JPPKK), the Community College Segamat, and the lifelong learning coordinators who have continuously supported entrepreneurship development initiatives, especially those targeting marginalized groups such as single mothers. Heartfelt thanks also go to the participating single mothers who generously shared their experiences, challenges, and aspirations. Their courage and determination have inspired the direction and purpose of this programme. The author also acknowledges the valuable insights and support received from colleagues, trainers, and field practitioners who contributed to the development of the training modules and empowerment strategies. This initiative would not have been possible without the collective efforts of those who believe in the transformative power of entrepreneurship to uplift lives and communities.

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