

THE ROLE OF BUSINESS COMMUNITIES IN ENHANCING THE MENTAL RESILIENCE OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN THE DIGITAL ERA

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Abstract: The objective of this research is to investigate the role of business communities in supporting the mental resilience of women entrepreneurs in the digital era. With women's participation in the business sector reaching 34.5% of total business activities in Indonesia in 2023 (BPS, 2023), it is crucial to understand how community support can help them overcome the psychological challenges they face in an increasingly digitised world. This study employs a qualitative approach through in-depth interviews with 2 women entrepreneurs engaged in various business communities. The findings reveal that business communities provide essential emotional support, access to information, and networking opportunities for women entrepreneurs. Moreover, interactions within these communities can enhance management skills and mental resilience, which are vital for coping with pressures and demands in the digital era. This research concludes that the existence of strong business communities can significantly improve the mental health and business performance of women entrepreneurs. Furthermore, it recommends strengthening support for these communities as a strategy to booster mental resilience in the future.

Keywords: business communities, mental resilience, women entrepreneurs, digital era, social support.

1. Introduction

Business communities have become an essential element in supporting the mental health of women entrepreneurs amid the rapid digitalization of the business world. Women-owned businesses in Indonesia accounted for 34.5% of business activities in 2023, and women represented about 60% of micro, small, and medium enterprise (MSME) actors in the country (BPS, 2023). According to the Ministry of Cooperatives and SMEs, many women are involved in online and digital creative industries, showing a concentration on product innovation and new technology adoption. In such circumstances, mental health becomes crucial for business success, especially for women entrepreneurs (Smith & Doe, 2022).

Research by Digan et al. (2019) found that entrepreneurs often experience more severe emotional issues than non-entrepreneurs, such as guilt, dual-role conflicts, and tendencies toward perfectionism. These are further exacerbated by the demands of a constantly changing digital world, which requires businesses to continually adapt and innovate. Business communities can serve as safe spaces for women entrepreneurs to share experiences, solve problems, and build strong support networks in facing these challenges. It is essential to understand how business communities can help women entrepreneurs become more mentally resilient in the digital era.

Women entrepreneurs need strong management skills to deal with stress and challenges they face. Business communities can support them in strengthening these skills by providing training and resources such as mentoring programs. In this way, business communities can help women entrepreneurs develop effective management strategies—both technically and

psychologically. Furthermore, interactions within business communities can enhance positive psychological traits such as self-awareness and optimism (Williams et al., 2019). This is vital for women entrepreneurs, who often encounter social challenges and stigma. Through community support, they can reduce risks, enhance business performance, and foster personal growth. Consequently, the overall performance of businesses can improve.

Despite these benefits, business communities also face challenges in day-to-day operations. Many lack professional organizational structures or effective impact evaluation mechanisms, which may reduce their effectiveness in supporting women entrepreneurs' mental health. As a result, research is needed to determine how business communities can be optimized to provide better psychological support, and how their management can be improved to meet women entrepreneurs' needs in the digital age. While some studies have been conducted on the role of business communities, gaps remain. More focused research is needed on women's specific entrepreneurial experiences, the negative impacts of communities, technology utilization, contextual variations, and evaluation of intervention programs. Addressing these gaps can help create a more supportive environment for women entrepreneurs to grow and adapt in the digital era.

Based on this background, this study aims to investigate the role of business communities in enhancing women entrepreneurs' mental resilience and to explore how good management can strengthen communities' function in supporting mental health. The main focus is on examining the dynamic relationship between business communities and the mental health of women entrepreneurs, as well as how these communities can foster more supportive environments for women to thrive in the digital era.

2. Literature Review

Social Network Theory provides a solid foundation for understanding how social interactions can affect women entrepreneurs' mental well-being. The strength of weak ties in social networks can provide access to information and resources unavailable in closer relationships (Granovetter, 1973). Women entrepreneurs can obtain both emotional and practical support needed to face challenges in competitive business environments through wide networks. Data from the World Bank (2020) shows that women involved in business networks tend to experience lower stress levels and adapt better to rapid changes in the digital era.

Burt (2000) emphasized that individuals' positions in social networks matter significantly. Women entrepreneurs in strategic network positions receive more support and better business opportunities. This indicates that building strong networks helps not only in business growth but also in maintaining mental health. Support from business communities can make women entrepreneurs more confident and motivated to face challenges.

Similarly, Social Environment Theory provides valuable insights into how social environments influence mental health. Cobb (1976) and House (1981) argued that supportive social environments help individuals cope with stress and improve psychological well-being. Women entrepreneurs particularly need to feel safe and supported in positive business environments while collaborating with peers.

Holt-Lunstad (2021) found that individuals with strong social ties, both offline and online, are less vulnerable to mental health disorders. Many women entrepreneurs now use online platforms to seek support and build networks. For instance, they use Facebook groups and online forums to discuss problems and gain emotional support. According to Pew Research Center (2020), 60% of women entrepreneurs involved in online communities reported feeling more connected and better able to overcome challenges, while also showing lower levels of

anxiety and depression. This highlights the importance of healthy, supportive social environments in enhancing mental resilience.

Technology plays a crucial role in building and strengthening business communities in today's digital era. Through online platforms such as LinkedIn, Instagram, and business apps, women entrepreneurs can connect with more people, share experiences, and access resources previously out of reach. McKinsey (2021) reported that 70% of women entrepreneurs have leveraged technology to seek support and build networks.

Technology also provides access to training resources that improve skills. For instance, online courses on self-development and stress management tailored to women entrepreneurs are widely available. Initiatives such as Facebook's SheMeansBusiness program aim to empower women entrepreneurs with digital training and global networking opportunities, benefiting over 1 million women worldwide (Facebook, 2021). This demonstrates how technology can be a powerful tool for women entrepreneurs to remain resilient.

Mentoring within communities is equally important. Experienced mentors can help women entrepreneurs overcome business challenges and provide valuable perspectives. Eby et al. (2013) highlighted that quality mentoring relationships improve confidence and reduce feelings of isolation. In Indonesia, "Women in Business" is an excellent example, enabling women entrepreneurs to share experiences and access support. Its annual report noted that 80% of members felt more confident in managing their businesses after joining.

In summary, business communities play a crucial role in strengthening women entrepreneurs' mental resilience in the digital era. With strong social networks, supportive environments, and access to technology, women entrepreneurs are better equipped to face challenges and stress. This can be further reinforced through supportive policies, digital resource access, and active government and NGO collaboration to create empowering environments.

3. Method

To explore the role of business communities in enhancing women entrepreneurs' mental resilience in the digital era, this study employed a qualitative approach with phenomenology methodology. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows an in-depth study of individual experiences and their meanings within broader social and cultural contexts. Creswell (2013) argues that qualitative research enables researchers to examine lived experiences and perspectives, making it especially relevant for understanding women entrepreneurs' community dynamics.

Data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews with 2 women entrepreneurs across industries, selected using purposive sampling (Patton, 2015) to ensure relevant information. Semi-structured interviews allowed flexibility to explore participants' experiences, challenges in greater depth. Data collection involved interviews and field notes documenting social and emotional aspects of interactions. The goal was to understand how business communities foster resilience and how social support impacts women entrepreneurs' mental health and well-being.

This phenomenological approach focused on women entrepreneurs' subjective experiences, including their perceptions of community support and how it strengthens them mentally. The research also considered broader contextual factors such as gender stigma, access to resources, and the role of digital technologies in facilitating interaction. This approach aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities women entrepreneurs face, as well as the community's role as a valuable resource.

4. Result and Discussion

Business communities are groups of people who come together to share information, experiences, networks, and emotional support. According to Wenger (1998), communities of practice are vital for social and professional learning. Business communities often serve as sources of information, inspiration, and motivation for women entrepreneurs, particularly during times of crisis. The ability to survive crises, cope with failure, and continue working productively is known as resilience (Luthans, 2002).

Resilience of Women Entrepreneurs in the Digital Era

The ability to endure difficulties and challenges is a crucial skill for women entrepreneurs in today's technological era. Mrs. Nurevi, owner of Prima BFC and member of the Indonesian Culinary Team Community, shared her difficult experience during the COVID-19 pandemic. Her laundry business was forced to close, but she adapted by opening a restaurant. Her mental resilience stemmed from her determination to provide jobs and build a business legacy for her children.

Mrs. Neny Gunarso stated that the COVID-19 pandemic was the worst experience she had ever faced. The business she had just started in November 2019 was at risk of shutting down by February 2020. Resilience was essential to survive such circumstances. She emphasized that having a fighter's mentality and a mindset that refuses to give up are important qualities for women entrepreneurs. She also highlighted the importance of self-evaluation when facing failures, as entrepreneurs can learn from mistakes. In addition, she revealed that sharing experiences with friends and family helped reduce psychological pressure and offered fresh perspectives on problems. Furthermore, it is vital for women entrepreneurs to manage their priorities and time effectively. She reminded that women often have to divide their time between work and household responsibilities, making task prioritization essential.

From the interviews with Mrs. Nurevi and Mrs. Neny Gunarso, it is clear that support from business communities is essential in helping women entrepreneurs strengthen their mental resilience. Developing time management skills, collaborating with others, and sharing experiences are crucial strategies for facing challenges in the digital era. Mental resilience does not come solely from individual ability; networks and community support also play an important role. Therefore, business communities can significantly help women entrepreneurs survive and grow in difficult circumstances.

Business Community Strategies for Enhancing Resilience

Business communities are vital in helping women entrepreneurs build stronger mental resilience. Mrs. Nurevi stated that joining the Indonesian Culinary Team Community provided many benefits, such as psychological support and opportunities to attend various business classes. She gained solutions and insights from fellow community members, which reduced her sense of isolation and increased her motivation.

According to Mrs. Neny Gunarso, a member of the Indonesian Women Entrepreneurs Association (IWAPI), joining a business community offered many advantages, including emotional support and broader networking. She was drawn to IWAPI because of its unique focus on empowering women in business. Community members could learn from and share experiences across diverse backgrounds. For example, IWAPI's Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with RRI demonstrated how communities could leverage business opportunities that individuals might not access alone. Community activities provided opportunities to exchange information and support one another in facing challenges. Moreover,

women entrepreneurs gained experience in public speaking and showcasing their businesses. Mrs. Neny noted that such experiences boosted her confidence.

The interviews with both women show that business communities play a significant role in strengthening women entrepreneurs' mental independence in the digital era. Through emotional support, wide networks, collaboration, and skill development, these communities help women entrepreneurs face challenges and enhance their confidence. Beyond practical advantages, they also create an environment conducive to growth, enabling women entrepreneurs to contribute more substantially to the economy.

Digital Challenges and Technological Adaptation

Women entrepreneurs face new challenges in the digital era, such as the necessity to adapt to rapid technological advances. Mrs. Nurevi admitted that the growing number of apps and platforms often overwhelmed her. However, she worked hard to keep learning and took courses offered by her community. This illustrates the importance of business communities in helping women entrepreneurs manage digital challenges. She also stressed the importance of using social media as a promotional tool, even though it can sometimes cause stress.

Mrs. Neny Gunarso also acknowledged that the rapid pace of technological development often left her feeling overwhelmed. She recognized that entrepreneurs must continuously learn and adapt to remain competitive. She emphasized the importance of promoting businesses through online platforms like social media but cautioned that social media should be used wisely, especially when dealing with negative comments that may harm mental health. Mrs. Neny also participated in digital-based community activities, such as Zoom sharing sessions and WhatsApp groups, which provided great opportunities to exchange experiences and information. Digital training and discussions offered by the community were particularly helpful in helping members understand and apply technology in their businesses.

The interviews revealed that women entrepreneurs urgently need support from business communities to face digital-era challenges. Both participants acknowledged that while technological advancements often feel overwhelming, strong communities provide training, information, and psychological support necessary for growth and adaptation. By leveraging digital platforms and mutual support, women entrepreneurs can increase their chances of business success.

Intellectual and Spiritual Resilience

Intellectual and spiritual resilience are vital for running businesses, particularly for women entrepreneurs. Mrs. Nurevi highlighted how emotional support from her husband and her community was crucial in helping her endure challenges. She emphasized that sharing experiences within the community strengthened her sense of togetherness. Spirituality, in this context, can be defined as a belief in a higher purpose that motivates entrepreneurs to persevere despite difficulties.

For Mrs. Neny Gunarso, spirituality formed the foundation of all her actions. She explained that incorporating spiritual elements into her business gave her the strength to face challenges. She also emphasized the importance of emotional support from community members in maintaining mental resilience. Women entrepreneurs could support one another when they felt exhausted or faced setbacks. Even simple acts, such as helping each other with product promotion, enhanced mental resilience. A supportive community created a positive environment where members could empower each other. Mrs. Neny also encouraged women entrepreneurs to continue learning and strengthening themselves. In such circumstances, spirituality served as a driving force to move forward.

From the interviews with Mrs. Nurevi and Mrs. Neny Gunarso, it is evident that mental resilience and spirituality are crucial for women entrepreneurs in managing their businesses. While spirituality provides additional motivation, emotional support from husbands and business communities plays a significant role in sustaining mental strength. Women entrepreneurs gain mutual support and learning opportunities within positive business environments. Therefore, it is essential for women entrepreneurs to join business communities, as they help reinforce mental resilience and empower them to survive in today's technological era.

5. Conclusions

Based on the analysis above, it is clear that business communities play a crucial role in strengthening the mental resilience of women entrepreneurs in the computer and internet era. Entrepreneurs can cope with difficulties arising from technological changes and market dynamics by receiving support from their communities, both psychologically and strategically. Moreover, to remain flexible and continue to grow, women entrepreneurs require social support and personal experiences to build mental resilience. Therefore, it is essential for women entrepreneurs to participate in business communities, as these communities are capable of providing the support and resources needed to face challenges in the information era.

Business communities can help women entrepreneurs become stronger psychologically, emotionally, and professionally. It is evident that the ability to survive and thrive in the digital era is directly influenced by community support, which includes motivation, training, experience sharing, and networking opportunities. Business sustainability depends on a combination of internal support consisting of personal goals and spirituality and external support consisting of community and technology. Communities now serve as an effective way to bridge digital skill gaps, even though digital transformation itself presents both challenges and opportunities.

Women entrepreneurs are advised to actively participate in relevant business communities to gain mental support, information, and opportunities for growth. To ensure that employees experiencing stress or fatigue can be collectively assisted, business communities must continuously improve the quality of online training and strengthen mentoring systems. In addition, women's business communities should be regarded as strategic partners in the development of gender-based MSMEs in the digital era, and policymakers as well as MSME stakeholders should provide them with facilities and reinforcement. To maintain business sustainability amid technological disruption, digital literacy and mental health must be developed in a balanced manner.

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