

Differences in Gender: Does It Exist in Bumiputra Entrepreneurs?



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Abstract In recent decades, despite the acceleration of women participation and improvement in the economic, social, and political sphere which has heralded a new close-up to gender equality, yet the world scenario still leaves women at a less favourable position. Similarly, literature has indicated the weakness of female-owned enterprises in terms of performance and sustenance. Hence, this study intended to identify if there exists any statistically significant difference in *Bumiputras'* entrepreneurial persistence by gender. Therefore, data from micro entrepreneurs in Terengganu was collected. Eventually, an independent t-test result revealed that no statistically significant difference in entrepreneurial persistence between male and female *Bumiputras* is found. Therefore, this finding asserted that Malaysia acknowledged as one of the fastest developing economies was determined in strengthening women entrepreneurship development. Equally, with a staggering number of the female population which is almost same as the male, Malaysia is tending towards a balanced society where females are allowed significant roles in the society.

Keywords Gender · Entrepreneurial persistence · *Bumiputra* · Independent t-test · Women entrepreneurship · Entrepreneurship development

1 Introduction

Towards the end of the twentieth century, despite the acceleration of women participation and improvement in the economic, social and political sphere which has heralded a new close-up to gender equality; yet the world scenario still leaves women at a less favourable position. Hence, gender equality was being emphasized in the Millennium Development Goals, and equally in the succeeding Sustainable

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Development Goals (Stotsky et al. 2016). The number of women getting involved in entrepreneurship has drastically risen over recent decades, thus, signifying variations in gender stereotyping these days (Hughes et al. 2012; Haus et al. 2013). However, the numbers for men still remain higher (Haus et al. 2013).

Particularly, in Malaysia, the society values are often seen to be influential on the women, where men are regarded as being more competitive, vigorous, connected and prepared to meet the challenges in the environment (Roddin et al. 2011). Generally, working class women involvement in the economy is lesser in the majority of countries, even though, in some other countries the gap between male and female is almost close (Stotsky et al. 2016). Meanwhile, recently in the Malaysian context, the women labour participation rate indicated an appreciative figure than that of the men (Department of Statistics Malaysia 2016).

Similarly, according to Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) Global Report (2012) Malaysian entrepreneurs generally fall short of confidence in running business, as less than one third of them only are regarded as being capable of sustaining their businesses. It was equally noted that fear of failure rate in Malaysians is high just as it is in other Asia Pacific and South Asian nations. Meanwhile, women are perceived to have higher fear of failure rate than men because they appear to lack the confidence in their self-efficacy (Kelley et al. 2011). Though, recent findings surface that women's rate of entrepreneurship measure higher than the men in Malaysia (GEM 2017).

Notably, scholars found that female folks consider the entrepreneurial environment more pleasing and encouraging to men, and assume that entrepreneurship does not suit the women personality (Díaz-García and Jiménez-Moreno 2010; Nair 2016). Equally, differences in gender stereotyping are said to exist even between Europe and US. It was suggested that European settlements tend to breed deeper cultural gender stereotyping viewing the women as more suitable for domestic engagements, which is however contrary to US women that are seen to be assuming independent leading roles (Haus et al. 2013). Hence, Haus et al. advised that future studies need to focus on cross-cultural differences in gender stereotypical behaviour and the effect of entrepreneurial activity.

Equally, there are negative gender stereotypes about women entrepreneurs in the society, which in turn has an adverse effect on entrepreneurship activity on gender. Recent findings proved societies place less value, or attribute women as non-or-lesser entrepreneurs (Nair 2016). This negative perception does create unnecessary fear of failure in women as has proven to be a hindrance to women entrepreneurship development (Wagner 2007).

Conversely, in recent years, the world is witnessing an upsurge of women involvement in entrepreneurship especially in developed worlds; thus, making significant input to the economy. Similarly, Malaysia is no exception, the encouragements from the government have produced a significant contribution delivered by the women folks to the growing economy accounting for over one fifth of the active SMEs in Malaysia (Hamzah 2012; Rosmah 2010). Various supports offered to create and encourage vibrant women entrepreneurship are made through agencies like the Department of Women Development and the Malaysian Trust Initiative by

conducting and executing training programs (Teoh and Chong 2014). Micro credit, awareness campaigns, rebranding programmes, public relations programs and networking skills are given to build the entrepreneurs and help them keep going on with the business in order to develop their businesses efficiently. Notwithstanding, the Women Exporters Development Programme (WEDP) under the Malaysian External Trade Development Corporation (MATRADE); the Malaysian Women in Export Directory; Women Entrepreneurs Network Associations (WENA) had not only been supporting Malaysian women and female owned establishments to venture out of Malaysia, but had helped boost their confidence to take up challenges. As the Malaysian government is set to grow the participation of women in business by almost 300% by 2020 from previous decade, thus, intensified efforts were needed much more to produce capable women (Teoh and Chong 2014). Data from the Labour Force Survey, Department of Statistics, Malaysia (2015) indicated that labour force participation by gender was quite impressive as the difference was not too wide; as the participation by male folks was 80.6%, while females' participation was 54.1%.

However, literature has indicated the weakness of female-owned enterprises in terms of performance and sustenance (Nair 2016). Similarly, there exist limited empirical evidences to explain differences with regard to certain variables such as motivation or personality characteristics (Kepler and Shane 2007; Karimi et al. 2017; Sabiu et al. 2017) especially entrepreneurial persistence. Previous researchers affirmed that personality characteristics of the different genders influence the way they respond to situations in the environment (Croson and Gneezy 2009). These differences in gender may as well affect the ways they formulate actions to tackle issues, challenges or even opportunities (Teoh and Chong 2014). significantly, Haus et al. (2013) meta-analysis elaborated on the issue whether gender differences in entrepreneurial intention cause gender variations in entrepreneurial processes, and if these differences help explain the male dominance in entrepreneurship.

Notably, several studies have indicated differences in gender by motivations, risk-taking orientation, form of business, entrepreneurial opportunity, magnitude of business, inputs in nurturing the business, capabilities in nascent stage, nascent issues, performance and outcomes (Kepler and Shane 2007; Van der Zwan et al. 2016). However, prior studies used gender as control variable in demographic information of respondents, therefore not ascertaining the direct impact of gender on entrepreneurial behaviour, which only few studies explored that connection (Wilson et al. 2007; Díaz-García and Jiménez-Moreno 2010). Thus, this study contributes to the limited literature on gender differences in entrepreneurial behaviour. More so, the researches that investigated the connection between gender and entrepreneurial behaviour (Reimers-Hild 2005; Santos et al. 2016; Van der Zwan et al. 2016); their insights on the entrepreneurial behaviour were based on Western findings and which may not be applicable in developing countries like Malaysia. Hence, this study intended to identify if there exists any statistically significant difference in Bumiputras'1 entrepreneurial persistence by gender.

2 Literature Review

Several previous literature have discoursed on: gender differences; challenges posed to women entrepreneurs; their struggles and impediments towards their entrepreneurial development; misconception about their capabilities; and, biased generalisation on the women folks by findings based on men data (Nair 2016; Parvin et al. 2012). In essence, though the discourse started much later compared to the evolution of entrepreneurship researches, but in recent decades, growth of interests spreading across various themes related to women entrepreneurship and gender emphasises the relevance of this field to the current dispensation (Jennings and Brush 2013; Klyver et al. 2012).

Interestingly, Goyal and Yadav (2014) composed a review in a wider perspective using content analysis to evaluate the impediments imposed against female entrepreneurs in developing countries. Eventually, it was gathered that female entrepreneurs in developing nations encounter obstacles in sourcing finance, societal prejudice, personal characteristics, and institutional deficiencies in strengthening female entrepreneurship as well as minimal experience in business. Though, some of these obstacles affect men as well, but not as much intensified and complicated as that of women. Generally, entrepreneurship is encircled in gender related phenomenon, whereby, entrepreneurial engagement is influenced by the mainstream perception, culturally accepted and general stereotypical assumptions of the functions, attributes and actions of the man as well as the woman (Jennings and Brush 2013).

But, research on women entrepreneurship has been quite negligible. Report from all papers reviewed by Yadav and Unni (2016) in the field revealed that only 185 papers published from 1900 to date; which conspicuously protrude forth the dearth of works in that field coupled with fewer journals available. This topical debate is further emphasised by Jennings and Brush (2013) that highlighted that the historical emergence of entrepreneurship occurred when its first publication premiered in 1934, while publication for women entrepreneurship was being acknowledged scholarly only around 1976. Hence, this is a clear sign how the demarcation line has been marked even by scholars and researchers around the globe and for a long time regarding the two gender groups. Hence, according to Jennings and Brush's (2013) panoramic view of prior scholars' contributions to entrepreneurship, they had been regarding it as male dominant ambit, or just basically assumed them to be same.

Equally, it was discovered that most literature on entrepreneurship from the beginning majorly reckoned that men and women did not differ in entrepreneurship, hence, scholars treated them as all identical sample in empirical studies, not until 1970s with the emergence of women entrepreneurship (Yadav and Unni 2016). The implicit supposition in entrepreneurship research is that women and men entrepreneurs share common traits. This was further asserted by Brush (1992) that:

Women business owners are similar to males across some basic demographic factors, problems, and business characteristics, but they differ widely from male business owners across individual dimensions related to education, work experience, skills, approach to venture creation/acquisition, business goals, problems, and performance. (p. 24)

Similarly, Henry et al. (2015) carried out a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) of existing works about gender and entrepreneurship. Their conclusion indicated that studies on female entrepreneurship were being submerged in the domain that focused on elaborating differences between male and female entrepreneurs. Therefore, Jennings and Brush (2013) in their review of literature on women entrepreneurship opined that most of the studies focused on: the procedure in which some female entrepreneurs evolved; their outcomes thereafter; the psychological aspects; or some contextual elements that stimulated or hampered their entrepreneurial activity; and ascertained whether the male entrepreneurs experience was different.

Generally, there had been accord between scholars in the judgement about gender-based entrepreneurship. Considering Jennings and Brush (2013), empirical researches dwelling upon the scope of women entrepreneurship have been dealing with these fundamental questions: whether between male and female, which one exhibits more propensity to get involved with entrepreneurial behaviour (Hughes 2005; Klyver et al. 2012); or how the gender differs in sourcing for finance (Coleman and Robb 2012; Fairlie and Robb 2009); or differences by the manner they apply strategic plans, organisational and management skills in the workplace (Garba 2011); or is the performance of female controlled firm at par with that of the man's (Jennings and Brush 2013). Coincidentally, all of their eventual findings almost agree on the stark differences between the genders, with the favour mostly accruable to the man side. However, on the last question of performance and survival, findings were not consistent in terms of survival. While in performance, some findings gave support to women being equal to the task or even ascending in some cases (Jennings and Brush 2013).

Furthermore, Haus et al. (2013) investigated the connection between gender and entrepreneurial intention through meta-analysis, and the extent to which some variables influence possible gender differences in entrepreneurial intention. The findings suggested that differences surface while in the event of undergoing entrepreneurship, as the female may seem to be energized by perceived facilitators and minor hiccups, but, may find greater hurdles as more challenging to them than the male. Verily, the outgrowth of studies identifying gender differences in entrepreneurial activities emphasises the significance that gender studies have in entrepreneurship (Costa et al. 2001; Díaz-García and Jiménez-Moreno 2010; Goyal and Yadav 2014; Haus et al. 2013; Parvin et al. 2012).

In particular, in a civilized culture, real gender difference may surface when males and females compare themselves to each other. While in a traditional culture, greater gender difference is realized when both genders are asked to compare to each other (Costa et al. 2001). Significantly, gender and entrepreneurial behaviour relationship produced different outcomes between samples; from Europe and USA, and equally among students and non-students (Haus et al. 2013). Equally, Cross and Markus (1999) suggested that distinctive gender difference may be realized in collectivists' society due to the fact that personality characteristics are perhaps not pertinent among the people in the society. More so, in individualistic and egalitarian society, they attribute certain act to natural disposition of that person, while same act in a collectivistic traditional society may be associated with the sex role of the individual

culturally known of that person (Weiner 1990). It is therefore imperative that gender inequality is breached to appropriate women roles; as Sandberg (2013, p. 161) opined that “. . .Equal opportunity is not equal unless everyone receives the encouragement that makes seizing those opportunities possible”.

More so, a number of studies proved that the culture of an environment is influential in either stimulating or hindering the development of several groups to act entrepreneurially or their entrepreneurial behaviour (Zahra et al. 1999). The gender-belief system holds that favouritism of the male gender and its masculine attitude to the opposite female. Significantly, gender differences were said to be discernible in aspects such as: prior start-ups experience; purchasing own business; employability of business; preferences of risk/return; time spent on business; business opportunity and so on. Thus, it becomes necessary for studies to take cognizance of such differences, while studying both gender in order to produce genuine results. Equally, gender role stereotyping is said to have seemingly a strong influential factor directing behaviour, even though, this happens mostly in the subconscious minds (Díaz-García and Jiménez-Moreno 2010). The way entrepreneurs perceive themselves and the circumstances around them do affect their choice to persist towards the realisation of their dreams (Gatewood et al. 2003). Some cultures deter women from venturing outside their locality, meanwhile, lack of self-esteem in women contributes to women avoiding entrepreneurship, or thus not achieving the desired result (Goyal and Yadav 2014; Parvin et al. 2012).

Gender difference surfaces and is often emphasized by how the significance of sex roles is looked upon in the culture. Williams and Best (1990) asserted that in traditional societies like Pakistan and Nigeria, sex role differences are quite obvious, while in modern ones like Netherlands and Finland, they are covered. The social role model proposed that these differences in attributes or behaviours cause differences in personality.

Noteworthy, there were theories that offered explanations to the gender differences in personality: the biological and social psychological theories. The biological theory proposed that differences by sex results from the inborn dispositional differences between the sexes that are developed naturally. Sexes may vary according to the different situations that affected them in their environments during their developmental process. While, some biological theorists explained that sex related differences were due to hormones or genetical composition, and influence of those differences on temperament and personality (Buss 1995). Meanwhile, Costa et al. (2001) explained that social psychological theories argued that gender differences occur from the assumption of gender roles that dictate the behaviour patterns of both sexes. Men and women nature or social conducts are guided by the expectation by the gender roles that is attributed to them from their initial development in life. The difference perhaps is culturally made or by natural disposition.

Psychological approach examines the process through which entrepreneurs' psychological characteristics translate into success in entrepreneurship (Kalkan and Kaygusuz 2012). Equally, Shaver and Scott (1991, p. 39) made significant point to the integration of the psychological perspective. They noted “. . .we need

a person, in whose mind all the possibilities come together, who believes that innovation is possible, and who has the motivation to persist until the job is done”.

More significantly, in entrepreneurship research, the cognitive process is assessed mainly to ascertain the persistent behaviour of the individual in actualizing the business dream (Shane and Venkataraman 2000). As Kalkan and Kaygusuz (2012) opined that individuals with persistent attitude can struggle to devise means to win over challenges and constraints vigorously in the business competitive environment. Persistence is then considered as one of the most powerful characteristics of entrepreneurs in keeping pace with struggles even during bad times.

Researchers had found a relationship existing between personality characteristics of locus of control, persistence and success in the distant learning (Wille et al. 2010). Likewise, personality characteristics affect not only the entrepreneurial choice of business but the persistence in the business process (Patel and Thatcher 2014). More so, Buang and Yusof (2006) in their study of Bumiputra contractors in Malaysia noted need for achievement motivation and persistent behaviour as characteristics for successful entrepreneurs, and equally psychological factors.

Haines and Townsend (2014) interviewed high-tech innovators in Silicon Valley on the negative impact of constraints faced in business, and the outcome indicated that the entrepreneurs employed their entrepreneurial agency in countering obstacles and persisted in businesses, signifying that persistence was found to be positively related to business performance. Similarly, Carayannis and Stewart’s (2013) qualitative study of founding technological entrepreneurs in USA found that other behavioural characteristics, with personality attributes, motivations and intentions are related to the entrepreneurial persistence in business.

According to Kalkan and Kaygusuz (2012) the studies focusing on entrepreneurial behaviour and its effect on enterprise argued that individuals possessing entrepreneurial characteristics affect enterprises more significantly. Personality characteristics affect not only the entrepreneurial choice of business, but the duration taken to persist against prevailing adversity in the business (Wille et al. 2010; Patel and Thatcher 2014). Therefore, persistence seems to be so imperative for entrepreneurs in business pursuit.

More significantly, theoretical frameworks on entrepreneurship were generated and used on the male respondents majorly, thus views on the female entrepreneurial characteristics and behaviour may therefore not be studied therein. Hence, studies involving different sex other than the male in order to comprehend fully their entrepreneurial behaviour is highly recommended (Goyal and Yadav 2014). Just as Du Rietz and Henrekson (2000) found that male entrepreneurs tend to excel more than the females regarding the established business performance standards, though, Chell and Baines (1998) did not find significant difference between the performance of man and woman sole enterprises.

Therefore, the role-congruity theory as suggested by Eagly and Karau (2002) explains that there exists a particular perception in male and female folks about their traits, or characteristics and how these elements suit to the entrepreneurial behaviour or actions required for excellence. Particularly, entrepreneurship involves wide range of characteristics such as conscientiousness, authorization, freedom in control,

hurdles, and high risk taking; which are characteristics that are closely associated with masculine features than the feminine (Haus et al. 2013). Hence, role-congruity theory opines that men and women are inclined to engage themselves in occupations whose attributes conform to their personal characteristics. Though, the female counterparts feel that they do not really fit into some characteristics that are defined exclusively for excelling in entrepreneurship (Eagly and Karau 2002; Haus et al. 2013). Interestingly, GEM (2012) reports indicated that women are more inclined to adopt entrepreneurship as an option as a reflex to difficult times than men, and this case is more prominent in developing or lesser economies, whereas the situation changes as the development level fluctuates (Jennings and Brush 2013).

Therefore, based on several reviews and meta-analysis being carried out on gender and entrepreneurship, we could discern that a wide disparity exists regarding the focus and scope. Most of the studies dwelt on developed countries, while studies like Haus et al. (2013) intentionally weeded out studies from developing countries like Malaysia specifically from their sample of meta-analysis. Hence, based on the extensive supporting literature above, and particularly taking cognizance of the statistics of gender composition in Malaysia; which is approximately fifty-fifty share (male: 50.7%; female: 49.3%) (Department of Statistics 2016), hence, this study proposed the hypothesis as thus:

H1 There is no statistically significant difference between male and female Bumiputra entrepreneurs by their entrepreneurial persistence.

3 Methodology

This study was based on micro Bumiputra entrepreneurs an East Coastal state of Terengganu, Malaysia. Data was collected from the Entrepreneurship Development Foundation (known as YPU) which is the leading coordinating agency for entrepreneurship development agencies in the state from February 2015 to March 2015. The database of the agency served as the population of the study, which consisted of 2000 Bumiputra micro-entrepreneurs registered in the database. Unit of analysis is the founder/owner/manager of the business which must have been in operation for at least 3 years and above in order to understand the persistent behaviour of the founders.

Consequently, a pilot study with 100 questionnaires was conducted. Then, the sample size was guided by Hair et al. (2010) formula which suggests that a study with less than five variables and more than three items measuring each variable, should select a sample of 100. However, following the central limit theorem (CLT), the sample size was increased as this helps to reduce the degree and impact of sampling error (Awang 2012) hence, 250 questionnaires were distributed to the Bumiputra micro entrepreneurs based on simple random sampling. Eventually, a larger chunk of these questionnaires were not returned (48 pieces) representing 19.2%. These constituted mostly the questionnaires mailed to far places in Terengganu. The next large number was 17 questionnaires (6.8%) that comprised those questionnaires not

eventually included in the analysis as they did not meet the criteria (3 years and above only considered in the study). Similarly, nine questionnaires (3.6%) consisted of those not properly filled in or had missing values in them. The last category consisted of those either doubled ticked or totally ambiguous which were five only representing (2%). Thus, the final total usable data was 171 questionnaires (68.4%) from the sample, and this is satisfactory for the study (Abdullah 2010, unpublished observation). Eventually, an independent t-test was run on the sample of 171 whereby 70 were males and 101 females.

4 Results and Discussion

In general, Zamberi Ahmad et al. (2014) asserted that socio-demographic variables such as gender, status, age, education and so on contribute to predicting the entrepreneurial behaviour of the respondents. Hence, the results of the demographic information of the respondents were given in Table 1.

Furthermore, an independent t-test was chosen to investigate the difference in gender as this statistical tool is devised in order to evaluate the differences in mean scores between two different groups (Reimers-Hild 2005). However, the result from the independent t-test revealed that the mean for Entrepreneurial Persistence (EP) as the dependent variable in the male was (6.075), while the mean for the female was (6.0792). These figures signify that the mean in the male respondents do not differ significantly from the mean in the female respondents. Thus, this indicated that there is no much gap in their mean as shown in Table 2.

Equally, the question whether there is statistically significant difference is assessed. Hence, referring to Table 3, there was a check whether the variance across the two groups is equal: that is assumption of homogeneity of variance.

Therefore, the Levene's Test for Equality of Variance as depicted in Table 3 shows ($f = 0.143$, $sig. = 0.706$, $p > 0.05$ signifying not significant). Hence, this makes us to accept the null hypothesis, and assume that the variances are approximately equal. Equally, this shows that the test is not significant because the significance value is bigger than 0.05. Then, conclusion can be made that the variances across the two groups of the males and the females are not particularly different. Subsequently, the t-test for Equality of Means shows ($t = -0.037$; $sig. (2-tailed) = 0.970$ for variance assumed; 0.971 for variance not assumed; $p > 0.05$ (not significant)). Equally, the significance (2-tailed) results showed $p > 0.05$, which is also bigger than the standard alpha value. Therefore, this means that there is no statistically significant difference in entrepreneurial persistence between Bumiputra male and female (Reimers-Hild 2005).

Table 1 Results of the demographic information

| Profile description | Category/Range | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Gender | Male | 70 | 40.9 |
| | Female | 101 | 59.1 |
| | Total | 171 | 100.0 |
| Age | Below 20 | 4 | 2.3 |
| | 21–35 years | 145 | 84.8 |
| | 36–50 years | 19 | 11.1 |
| | 51–65 years | 3 | 1.8 |
| | Total | 171 | 100.0 |
| Education | Primary | 4 | 2.3 |
| | Secondary | 79 | 46.2 |
| | Diploma | 51 | 29.8 |
| | Degree | 33 | 19.3 |
| | Certificate | 4 | 2.3 |
| | Total | 171 | 100.0 |
| Work experience | Less than 1 year | 45 | 26.3 |
| | 1–5 years | 90 | 52.6 |
| | 6–10 years | 19 | 11.1 |
| | 11 years and above | 11 | 6.4 |
| | None | 6 | 3.5 |
| | Total | 171 | 100.0 |
| Years of operation | 2–3 years | 1 | 6 |
| | 3 years and above | 170 | 99.4 |
| | Total | 171 | 100.0 |
| Number of employees | None | 62 | 36.3 |
| | 1–3 | 63 | 36.8 |
| | 3–5 | 21 | 12.3 |
| | 5 and above employees | 25 | 14.6 |
| | Total | 171 | 100.0 |
| Business sector | Services | 53 | 31.0 |
| | Wholesale\retail | 92 | 53.8 |
| | Manufacture | 18 | 10.5 |
| | Agric\mining | 4 | 2.3 |
| | Construction | 4 | 2.3 |
| | Total | 171 | 100.0 |
| Business status | First business | 128 | 74.9 |
| | Second business | 25 | 14.6 |
| | Third business | 18 | 10.5 |
| | Total | 171 | 100.0 |

Table 2 Descriptive statistics

| Instrument | Gender | N | Mean | Std. deviation |
|----------------------------------|--------|-----|--------|----------------|
| Entrepreneurial persistence (EP) | Male | 70 | 6.0750 | 0.74740 |
| | Female | 101 | 6.0792 | 0.71145 |

Table 3 Independent t-test

| | Levene's test for equality of variance | | T-test for equality of means | |
|-----------------------------|--|-------|------------------------------|----------------|
| | F | Sig. | t | Sig (2-tailed) |
| EP Equal variances assumed | 0.143 | 0.706 | -0.037 | 0.970 |
| Equal variances not assumed | | | -0.037 | 0.971 |

5 Discussion

As studies such as Bönnte and Jarosch (2011) and, Haus et al. (2013) recognized differences in gender by entrepreneurial behaviour; on the other hand, Costa et al. (2001), Ismail et al. (2009), and, Zamberi Ahmad et al. (2014) did not realise any difference. Notably, the finding of this current study was in consonance with what previous literature discovered (Boulgarides 1984; Carland and Carland 1992; Costa et al. 2001; Ismail et al. 2009; Zamberi Ahmad et al. 2014). First and foremost, Carland and Carland (1992) supported this argument in their study in USA. They found no significant distinction between male and female entrepreneurs in terms of personality characteristics as opposed to their manager counterparts. Similar to that, Kepler and Shane (2007) found no disparity in female and male business performance. Equally, Ismail et al. (2009) found no significant difference between male and female with regard to entrepreneurial intention. Though, Boulgarides's (1984) earlier work disputed this in his assessment of personal values and decision making of business managers in USA. However, he finally arrived at the conclusion that the significant difference in gender did not appear in business managers as well.

Nonetheless, Bönnte and Jarosch (2011) found that cognitive and psychological factors differences between male and female in entrepreneurship were visible and also have significant impact on them. Barba-Sanchez and Atienza-Sahuquillo's (2012) survey of a cohort of Spanish manufacturers found out that significant difference exists between groups of entrepreneurs when assessing their motivations for engaging in entrepreneurship, and the impact of the motivation on their entrepreneurial behaviour. While, Hisrich and Brush (1983) argued that females are prone to start business in the service and retail sector.

Arguably, Lynn and Martin (1997) suggested that difference in gender by testing from personality characteristics tend to be prevalent and significant in underdeveloped worlds. This difference could happen due to sex inequality or gender roles in the society. Significantly, Malaysia adopts modern civilized system encouraging gender equality in virtually all significant economic sectors. Though, it shares some of the characteristics of most developing economies of patriarchal setting, yet we noticed otherwise in our finding.

Equally, Costa et al. (2001) supported that gender differences may be concealed by the magnitude by which either sex roles are emphasized in a society. According to Hofstede (1980), in a masculine society, gender differences are more visible. Hence,

in Malaysia, with a staggering number of the females population almost same as that of the males, therefore, it is said to be tending towards a balanced society where females are allowed roles in the society (Roddin et al. 2011). Thus, the significant difference in gender not realized in the analysis could also have emanated from this basis. Therefore, that supports the raised hypothesis of the study that there is no statistically significant difference between male and female Bumiputra entrepreneurs by their entrepreneurial persistence.

6 Implications and Recommendations

In conclusion, the finding of the study supports this; Malaysia as acknowledged as one of the fastest developing economies was determined in strengthening women entrepreneurship development, and is equally optimally utilising its human capital base. Therefore, with a staggering number of the female population almost same as that of the male, Malaysia is tending towards a balanced society where females are allowed to take significant roles in the society. This is a factor most considerable to why this significant difference in Bumiputras' entrepreneurial persistence does not exist.

Additionally, this finding was an interesting one as it heralds the era that Bumiputra entrepreneurs proved to be equal to the task in meeting up the challenge in the business environment and persist to ensure sustenance of their businesses. It was evidenced that entrepreneurially inclined individuals consider feminine attributes as crucial in becoming a successful entrepreneur regardless of the gender. This obviously may lead to women involvement and active participation in entrepreneurship in time to come.

Equally, the finding is monumental and significantly reflects the outstanding virtue of the entrepreneurship agency used for this study, as they refused to breed the usual male predominance ambience characterised by most agencies in areas of support, loan and others. Because the database of the agency consists of a fair share of female entrepreneurs' beneficiaries, hence, this could as well be replicated by other agencies. Furthermore, this may serve as reaffirmation to the government, policy makers, stakeholders, as well as credit houses to dispel the stale notion of the women as weaker versions of the men in entrepreneurship, so that they can believe more and invest more in strengthening the women's entrepreneurial capabilities. More so, this may go a long way in consolidating the government's aspiration in keeping a firm grip on the acceleration of SMEs aggregate contribution of 41% to the national GDP by 2020 as well as achieving developed nationhood same year.

More importantly, it is recommendable that the society needs to balance the social values imposed on women, which necessitates the need for cultural change. Equally, confidence should be boosted in women more to support their self-efficacy. More so, access to loans to all parties should be enhanced, meanwhile, bureaucracy need to be reduced. Similarly, since there are a lot of working mothers in Malaysia, family roles need to be supported by spouses. Meanwhile, it is pertinent to incorporate the

education of entrepreneurial culture and equality among the youth to help them realize the importance of gender roles significance in entrepreneurship in the society. As women constitute a greater percentage of university graduates and hence, the unemployed too, emphasis on essence of entrepreneurship as preferred choice needs to be elaborated to them in order for it to assume much significance.

7 Limitations and Future Research Direction

In as much as this study was able to ascertain that there was no difference between men and women *Bumiputra* micro entrepreneurs in their persistence, and the population cut across different sectors of SMEs, however, the finding may not be generalisable to all forms of small, medium or large enterprises and other states in Malaysia. Hence, future studies could endeavour to fill this vacuum, as well as investigate assumed similarities shared between men and women *Bumiputra* entrepreneurs, while, the phenomenon could also be investigated qualitatively to explore rich data from the sample.

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