Empowering Vulnerable Demographics through Digital Entrepreneurship: A Case Study of the Single Mother and Housewife Entrepreneurship Program in Selangor, Malaysia

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.101100234

Received: 10 November 2026; Accepted: 19 November 2026; Published: 24 November 2026

ABSTRACT

The rapid digital transformation of the global economy presents unique opportunities for wealth creation yet often heightens inequalities for at-risk demographics lacking digital literacy and access to capital. This case study examines the efficacy of a targeted, community-level intervention: The Single Mother and Housewife Entrepreneurship Program conducted in Andalas, Klang, Selangor, Malaysia. Focusing on the low-barrier entry models of dropshipping and affiliate marketing, the program aimed to transition marginalized women from digital consumers to active digital entrepreneurs. Through a structured, three-part workshop series, eleven participants were trained on e-commerce fundamentals, platform navigation (specifically the Komuten platform), and digital marketing strategies. The study utilizes a qualitative assessment of the program's pedagogical approach, module effectiveness, and immediate participant outcomes. The findings suggest that localized, hands-on digital entrepreneurship training, combined with peer support and industry mentorship, significantly increases the digital fluency and entrepreneurial confidence of single mothers and housewives. The study concludes that such micro-interventions are critical for fostering economic independence among vulnerable populations and offers strategic recommendations for ensuring the long-term sustainability of these nascent home-based enterprises.

Keywords: Digital Entrepreneurship, Dropshipping, E-commerce, Women Empowerment, Single Mothers, Malaysia, Capacity Building.

INTRODUCTION

The contemporary economic landscape of Malaysia is undergoing a profound digital transformation, characterized by the exponential growth of e-commerce and digital marketplaces. While this shift offers unprecedented avenues for income generation and business expansion, it simultaneously risks marginalizing segments of the population that lack formal digital literacy training and access to traditional financial credit (Dy et al., 2016; Ughetto et al., 2019). Among the most vulnerable are single mothers and full-time housewives, demographics often constrained by compounding socio-economic barriers, including limited mobility due to childcare responsibilities, financial instability, and a lack of formal business education (Dy et al., 2016; Ughetto et al., 2019).

Addressing these systemic hurdles requires innovative, targeted interventions that leverage the accessibility of the digital economy. The concept of "digital entrepreneurship," particularly through decentralized, home-based models like dropshipping and affiliate marketing, presents a viable solution (Nambisan, 2017; Ughetto et al., 2019). Unlike traditional retail models that necessitate significant upfront capital for inventory procurement,

warehousing, and complex logistics, dropshipping allows individuals to act as digital intermediaries (Li et al., 2019; Nambisan, 2017). Entrepreneurs can market and sell products directly to consumers while a third-party supplier handles inventory and order fulfillment (Li et al., 2019). This risk-averse model is uniquely suited for individuals who must balance domestic responsibilities with the urgent need for flexible income generation (Ughetto et al., 2019).

This paper presents a case study of the "Program Keusahawanan Ibu Tunggal dan Surirumah" (Single Mother and Housewife Entrepreneurship Program), an initiative conducted in the suburban enclave of Andalas, Klang, Selangor. The program was designed to equip a cohort of marginalized women with the necessary tools, knowledge, and practical skills to participate actively in the digital economy. By examining the program's structure, pedagogical methodologies, and immediate outcomes, this study aims to contribute to the growing body of literature on digital capacity building and women's economic empowerment in developing economies (Al Omoush, 2024; Ughetto et al., 2019).

METHODOLOGY AND PROGRAM STRUCTURE

The intervention was designed as a highly structured, progressive capacity-building initiative. Recognizing the specific constraints and learning curves of the target demographic, the program was deliberately spaced across three distinct sessions over a three-month period: July 25, August 15, and September 19, 2026. This staggered scheduling approach was critical to the program's methodology, providing participants with essential intervals to digest complex digital marketing concepts, experiment with e-commerce platforms independently, and return to subsequent sessions with practical questions derived from real-world application.

The study focused on a cohort of eleven highly motivated individuals from the Andalas community. The intimate size of the cohort was a deliberate pedagogical choice, allowing facilitators to provide personalized attention and foster a safe, collaborative environment where participants felt comfortable expressing anxieties regarding technology and business management (Kelly & McAdam, 2022). Baseline digital literacy among the cohort varied significantly, ranging from rudimentary smartphone usage to intermediate social media familiarity.

Pedagogical Approach

The program employed a blended pedagogical approach, transitioning from theoretical foundations to intensive, hands-on practical workshops. The curriculum was designed to demystify the e-commerce ecosystem and systematically lower the barriers to entry (Kelly & McAdam, 2022; Nambisan, 2017). The modules were structured to guide participants through a logical progression: understanding the digital market landscape, evaluating available platforms, mastering a specific e-commerce tool (Komuten), and finally, executing the technical setup of their own digital storefronts.

Comprehensive Module Breakdown And Implementation

Module 1: The Landscape of Dropshipping in Malaysia

The inaugural module served as the theoretical bedrock of the intervention, designed to elucidate the macroeconomic shifts driving the Malaysian e-commerce sector. Facilitators provided an in-depth analysis of evolving consumer purchasing behaviors, emphasizing the psychological shift required to transition from a passive consumer to an active digital entrepreneur. The mechanics of dropshipping were detailed, focusing on how value is created within a digital supply chain without the need for physical inventory ownership (Li et al., 2019; Nambisan, 2017).

Crucially, the module explored the specific advantages and potential pitfalls of dropshipping within the localized context. Discussions centered on identifying reliable suppliers, understanding local shipping logistics, and managing customer expectations in a competitive digital marketplace (Li et al., 2019). The use of case studies highlighting successful local dropshippers who initiated their ventures with zero capital was instrumental in instilling confidence and demonstrating the attainability of e-commerce success.

Module 2: Platforms Available for Dropship and Affiliate Marketing

Transitioning to practical infrastructure, the second module provided a comprehensive audit of digital platforms available to Malaysian entrepreneurs. The curriculum differentiated between pure dropshipping and affiliate marketing, illustrating how participants could strategically combine both models to diversify income streams. The module analyzed the unique algorithms, audience demographics, and operational requirements of major regional platforms, including Shopee, Lazada, and the emerging TikTok Shop ecosystem.

Furthermore, the session emphasized the nuances of "social commerce." Participants were instructed on strategies for organic marketing utilizing existing social networks, such as Facebook groups, Instagram reels, and WhatsApp business catalogs (Camacho & Barrios, 2021). The core takeaway was that successful digital sales are driven not merely by marketplace infrastructure, but by compelling content creation, strategic pricing, and the cultivation of trust with a digital audience (Al Omoush, 2024; Camacho & Barrios, 2021).

Module 3: Introduction to the Komuten Platform

To streamline the technical learning curve, a significant portion of the training was dedicated to a singular, robust ecosystem: the Komuten platform. This platform was selected for its user-friendly interface, localized support system, and curated selection of high-margin products suitable for the Malaysian market. Facilitators provided a deep dive into how Komuten bridges the gap between extensive supplier networks and independent dropshippers (Li et al., 2019; Nambisan, 2017).

Participants were guided through the platform's architecture, learning to navigate product catalogs, analyze supplier ratings, and comprehend the intricacies of wholesale versus suggested retail pricing. The module heavily emphasized the platform's automated fulfillment features, demonstrating how technological leverage can handle complex logistics (packing and shipping), thereby allowing the entrepreneur to focus entirely on marketing and customer acquisition (Li et al., 2019; Nambisan, 2017).

Module 4: Setting Up the Platform (Practical Workshop)

The culmination of the training was an intensive, hands-on practical workshop dedicated to the technical setup of the participants' digital storefronts. Recognizing that technical implementation represents the highest barrier to entry for marginalized demographics (Dy et al., 2016; Kelly & McAdam, 2022), facilitators provided direct, one-on-one assistance. This rigorous process encompassed account registration, identity verification, and the integration of secure payment gateways.

Beyond initial setup, the workshop trained participants in digital merchandising. Instruction covered the importation of products from the Komuten catalog to personal stores, the drafting of persuasive, SEO-optimized product descriptions, and the formatting of product imagery to maximize conversion rates. By the conclusion of this module, all eleven participants had successfully activated fully functional digital storefronts.

Industry Insights And Interactive Mentorship

A critical component of the program's success was the integration of real-world industry insights. During the inaugural session, the founder of "Amy's Glider Pet House" was invited as a guest speaker. This session provided a localized, highly relatable proof-of-concept. The founder shared her trajectory of transforming a niche interest (exotic pet care) into a thriving online enterprise. This narrative was particularly resonant, as it demonstrated the viability of monetizing personal hobbies and interests.

The speaker provided candid insights into the practical realities of digital entrepreneurship, including customer relationship management, mitigating shipping delays, and establishing brand identity. She emphasized that exceptional customer service and deep product knowledge are the primary differentiators for small businesses in competitive e-commerce spaces (Al Omoush, 2024; Camacho & Barrios, 2021). This session effectively bridged the gap between theoretical instruction and practical application.

Furthermore, the program's methodology prioritized extensive interactive discussion and business consultation periods. Rather than relying solely on unilateral lectures, later sessions were structured around collaborative brainstorming and individualized mentoring (Kelly & McAdam, 2022). Facilitators assisted participants in conducting rudimentary market research, analyzing competitor pricing, and identifying unique selling propositions within varied niches (e.g., modest fashion, halal cosmetics, educational toys). These sessions also addressed critical psychological barriers, such as fear of failure, fostering a supportive community environment (Kelly & McAdam, 2022; Ughetto et al., 2019).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The cumulative impact of the three-series intervention was significant. Quantitatively, the program achieved a 100% success rate in digital onboarding; all eleven attendees successfully established their dropshipping infrastructure via the Komuten platform. This metric indicates that targeted, hands-on technical assistance is highly effective in overcoming the initial barriers to digital entry for demographics with varying levels of foundational digital literacy (Dy et al., 2016; Kelly & McAdam, 2022).

Qualitatively, the transformation in the participants' confidence and digital fluency was pronounced. Individuals who initially exhibited hesitation regarding basic digital navigation were, by the final session, engaging in sophisticated discussions regarding profit margins, shipping logistics, and customer acquisition strategies. The staggered structure of the program proved vital, as it allowed participants to apply learned concepts independently and return to the group to troubleshoot real-world challenges (Kelly & McAdam, 2022).

The program successfully challenged the prevailing perception that complex business operations are the exclusive domain of the highly educated or heavily capitalized (Dy et al., 2016). By democratizing access to e-commerce knowledge, the initiative provided these women with a viable, sustainable pathway to supplement household incomes (Ughetto et al., 2019). The foundational skills acquired positioned them not merely as competent digital sellers, but as empowered individuals capable of navigating the digital economy (Al Omoush, 2024; Kelly & McAdam, 2022).

Strategic Recommendations.

While the immediate outcomes of the intervention are highly positive, ensuring the long-term sustainability and profitability of these nascent enterprises requires ongoing support. The rapidly evolving nature of digital marketing necessitates continuous learning.

It is strategically recommended that a structured post-program mentorship framework be established (Kelly & McAdam, 2022). Future capacity-building interventions for this cohort should focus on advanced e-commerce competencies, including:

Advanced Digital Marketing: Training on paid social media advertising, advanced search engine optimization (SEO), and data analytics to drive targeted traffic to their storefronts (Al Omoush, 2024; Camacho & Barrios, 2021).

Financial Literacy and Bookkeeping: Providing foundational training in cash flow management, profit tracking, and basic accounting to ensure long-term financial sustainability (Tanggamani et al., 2024).

Community of Practice: Establishing a formalized peer-support network (e.g., a digital forum or regular meetup) to facilitate ongoing knowledge sharing, collaborative problem-solving, and emotional support (Kelly & McAdam, 2022; Wenger, 2001).

CONCLUSION

The Single Mother and Housewife Entrepreneurship Program in Andalas, Klang, demonstrates the efficacy of targeted micro-interventions in fostering economic empowerment among vulnerable populations. By leveraging the low-risk nature of the dropshipping model (Li et al., 2019) and utilizing robust, user-friendly infrastructure

like the Komuten platform (Nambisan, 2017), the program successfully equipped eleven women with the tools to redefine their economic realities. The resilience and dedication demonstrated by the participants, coupled with a comprehensive, hands-on educational framework, indicate that such localized capacity-building initiatives can have a profound and lasting impact on community resilience and individual economic independence. This case study underscores the importance of prioritizing digital inclusion strategies that address not only infrastructural access but also targeted skill development and ongoing mentorship for marginalized demographics (Dy et al., 2016; Kelly & McAdam, 2022; Ughetto et al., 2019).

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