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**Baey Song Ehtesham, Giam Chua Ayci & Yean Keng
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Strategies for Successful Bootstrapping in Entrepreneurship among the Middle-Aged Women in Seletar, Singapore

^{1*}Baey Song Ehtesham, ²Giam Chua Ayci & ³Yean Keng Schofield

^{1,2,3}Nanyang Technological University

*Email of the Corresponding Author: baevehtesham05@gmail.com

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Abstract

Middle-aged women in Seletar, Singapore, can enhance their bootstrapping success by leveraging microloan programs that provide accessible and flexible financing options. Mentorship and networking initiatives tailored to their needs should be established to offer guidance, support, and opportunities for knowledge exchange. Digital literacy and technology training programs can bridge the technological gap, empowering these entrepreneurs to utilize modern tools effectively. Strategic marketing and visibility efforts, including content marketing and collaborations with local influencers, can help middle-aged women entrepreneurs gain recognition and build their businesses in Seletar. Research findings indicate that middle-aged women in Seletar, Singapore, face notable challenges in accessing traditional financial resources, with limited access to venture capital and bank loans. They also lack dedicated support and mentorship programs tailored to their needs, hindering their entrepreneurial journey. Furthermore, technological gaps were evident, as many struggle with digital tools and e-commerce platforms, making digital literacy and training crucial for their success in bootstrapping. In conclusion, the journey towards successful bootstrapping for middle-aged women in Seletar, Singapore, demands a multi-faceted approach that addresses their unique challenges. By focusing on financial access, mentorship and support, and digital literacy, this demographic can overcome obstacles and thrive as entrepreneurs. These strategies, when effectively implemented, have the potential to empower middle-aged women in Seletar, fostering entrepreneurship and contributing to economic growth in the region. Recommendations for successful bootstrapping among middle-aged women in Seletar, Singapore should include the establishment of microloan programs tailored to their needs, providing accessible and flexible financing options. Creating mentorship and networking opportunities through collaborations with local business associations and experienced mentors can offer the guidance and support necessary for their entrepreneurial journey.

Keywords: *Bootstrapping, Entrepreneurship, Women, Singapore*

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1.0 Background of the Study

Bootstrapping is a self-sustaining method of starting and growing a business with minimal external funding (Metilda & Varughese, 2022). Entrepreneurs who bootstrap rely on their personal resources, ingenuity, and revenue generated by the business itself to fund its operations and expansion. This approach often involves keeping costs low, reinvesting profits, and prioritizing financial efficiency to achieve sustainable growth. Begin with a comprehensive business plan that outlines vision, goals, and strategies. Detail niche, target market, competition, and financial projections. A well-structured plan will guide an entrepreneur on decisions and help them stay on track (Battisti, Agarwal & Brem, 2022). It is also advisable to adopt a lean operational model to keep costs minimal. Utilize virtual offices, shared workspaces, and technology to run your business efficiently, reducing the need for a physical location. An entrepreneur should leverage on personal savings and assets as the initial source of funding and carefully manage finances, and consider liquidating non-essential assets if necessary.

Entrepreneurship among middle-aged women in Seletar, Singapore, is a dynamic and increasingly important facet of the local business landscape (Suen, 2019). This demographic has been progressively breaking through traditional gender roles, embracing entrepreneurship, and contributing to the region's economic development. Middle-aged women entrepreneurs in Seletar bring a wealth of experience, skills, and industry knowledge to their ventures, often capitalizing on their unique life experiences to identify business opportunities (Lai, 2020). The entrepreneurial journey for middle-aged women in Seletar, however, comes with its set of challenges and opportunities. While they may face hurdles such as access to financial resources and technology adoption, this demographics resilience, commitment, and a strong sense of community support often help them overcome these obstacles. They play a pivotal role in diversifying the local business ecosystem, driving innovation, and fostering economic growth, making them a valuable asset to the Seletar entrepreneurial landscape.

Investing in developing relevant skills and knowledge for business is very important. Middle-aged women can seek out training programs and workshops to stay updated and competitive in their chosen industry (Chatman, Sharps, Mishra, Kray & North, 2022). Establish a strong online presence through a professional website and social media. Harness the power of e-commerce to reach a wider audience and promote products or services. Leverage on local and industry networks in Seletar. Attend networking events, join relevant associations, and seek mentorship to gain support, insights, and potential partnerships. Explore cost-effective marketing channels such as content marketing, email marketing, and social media promotion. Engage with audience and build a loyal customer base over time. Maintain strict financial discipline by scrutinizing expenses. Prioritize essential expenditures and cut back on unnecessary costs (Tambunan, Santoso, Busneti & Batunanggar, 2021). Negotiate favorable terms with suppliers and vendors. Focus on incremental growth rather than rapid expansion. Reinvest profits into business to fund its organic development while minimizing debt.

Consider alternative financing options like microloans, crowdfunding, or peer-to-peer lending (Bruton, Khavul, Siegel & Wright, 2019). These can provide a financial boost without relinquishing control or incurring significant interest expenses. Prioritize customer satisfaction and

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retention. Provide exceptional service, encourage referrals, and offer loyalty programs to grow customer base organically. Understand that entrepreneurship can be a bumpy journey. Be resilient in the face of challenges and adapt to changing market conditions. Stay open to pivoting business model if required to meet evolving customer demands. In Seletar, Singapore, these strategies can empower middle-aged women entrepreneurs to effectively bootstrap their businesses while maintaining control and minimizing financial risk (Yu, Zhu, Der Foo & Wiklund, 2022). The key is to remain patient, adaptable, and persistent, as the rewards of successful bootstrapping can be substantial, leading to long-term entrepreneurial success.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Middle-aged women in Seletar face a significant challenge in accessing traditional financial resources for entrepreneurship. This demographic often lacks access to venture capital or bank loans, which can hinder their ability to start and grow businesses effectively. The absence of tailored support and mentorship programs for middle-aged women entrepreneurs in Seletar is a notable issue. These women may not have access to guidance, networking opportunities, or role models, which are crucial for entrepreneurial success. Many middle-aged women may encounter challenges in adopting and harnessing modern technologies and digital tools essential for running businesses in today's competitive landscape. Bridging this technological gap is a pertinent problem to overcome. The Seletar business environment may already be saturated in some sectors, making it challenging for new entrepreneurs to carve a niche and compete effectively. Identifying viable market opportunities and strategies to thrive in a competitive landscape is a pressing concern. Middle-aged women often have family and caregiving responsibilities, which can affect their ability to dedicate sufficient time and energy to their entrepreneurial ventures. Balancing these responsibilities with business demands is a significant challenge to address. Middle-aged women entrepreneurs in Seletar may suffer from a lack of visibility and recognition, which can impede their ability to build brand credibility and attract customers. Strategies to enhance visibility and credibility in the marketplace are needed.

2.0 Literature Review

According to Jayawarna, Jones and Macpherson (2020), lack of capital is often believed to be the primary barrier to small company growth and development in both scholarly and popular discourse. Since small enterprises have a hard time securing external finance, studying bootstrapping as a resource acquisition strategy that might eventually reduce this requirement is essential. The issue confronting small firms in terms of acquiring capital from conventional sources has required this research. Small company owners in South Asia were selected for a convenience sample rather than drawn at random. Five hundred people took the survey. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse the data. It is unclear what the results will show with regards to how well-known financial bootstrapping is. Some research participants may have employed bootstrapping techniques without realising it, as shown by the data.

According to Neeley and Auken (2019), the Melam Group of Companies is a concrete illustration of the Business Bootstrapping model. Mr. Kurian John Melampambil, founder of the Melam Group and recipient of the Padma Shri, explained the company's humble beginnings in an

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interview. To show young people that big resources, investment, venture capital, or angel investing is not necessarily necessary to start a successful firm, we provide this scenario. The money isn't what makes a firm successful; it's the drive and enthusiasm of the founders.

Luo, Zhang and Li (2022) reported that due to the high cost of financing, most businesses have significant difficulties gaining access to necessary capital. Some small and medium-sized businesses have been forced to close as a result of this, since their owners are unable to satisfy their short- and long-term financial responsibilities. The cheap cost of financing offered by financial bootstrapping has led to its promotion as the best alternative source of funding. The purpose of this research was to assess the impact of financial bootstrapping on the long-term viability of Shanghai's SMEs. The positivist approach to science was taken. Descriptive survey research was employed for this study. There were a total of 567 SMEs in the target population, and a total of 234 in the sample. Statistical software for the social sciences, version 25.0, was used to analyse the data. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to present the study's findings. Owner financing strategies were shown to significantly improve financial viability ($\beta=.890$, $p=0.000$, $\alpha<0.05$). Reducing outstanding debt significantly improved financial viability ($\beta=.776$, $p=.000$, $\alpha<0.05$). The use of both resources together significantly improved long-term viability ($\beta=.152$, $p=.000$, $\alpha<0.05$). There was a statistically significant positive impact on financial sustainability from delaying payments ($\beta=.259$, $p=.000$, $\alpha<0.05$), and there was a statistically significant positive benefit from investing as little as possible in capital stock ($\beta=.043$, $p=.000$, $\alpha<0.05$). The results of the research show that entrepreneurs adopt financial bootstrapping tactics include owner financing, reducing accounts receivable, using shared resources, delaying payments, and buying as little shares of stock as possible. Small and medium-sized businesses benefit enormously from these methods in terms of their long-term financial viability. In order to lower their financing costs, entrepreneurs should explore various forms of owner financing, minimise their accounts receivable, maximise their usage of common resources, postpone payments, and spend as little as possible in stock.

Patel, Fiet and Sohl (2022) carried out study to investigate if there a certain method of "bootstrapping" that seems to do better than others among new businesses? With an eye towards maximizing your chances of success, we examine the relative merits of cash-generating and cost-cutting strategies, as well as those focused on expanding your business' reach and attracting new customers. This analysis of the first Panel Study of Entrepreneurial Dynamics suggests that the use of cash-generating and cost-cutting externally-oriented bootstrapping techniques by a new venture's founders is a strong predictor of the venture's long-term success, both in terms of cash flow and valuation. However, internal strategies have little bearing on financial success.

Schofield (2021) argued that the success of local, state, and national economies depends on the performance of small businesses, despite the fact that small company owners suffer high failure rates. Since insufficient funds are often identified as the cause of company failure, entrepreneurs need tools for making accurate survival projections. The goal of this correlational research grounded on pecking order and enactment theory was to look at the relationship between bootstrap funding and staff count as a predictor of a company's longevity over time. The topic was

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investigated utilizing a cross-sectional survey methodology and a quantitative research approach based on the principles of predictive correlation. The fundamental issue was whether the quantity of bootstrapping finance, assessed by a bootstrapping survey, and numbers of workers substantially predicted business performance, measured by firm age in years. All of the study's respondents (n = 111) were New Hampshire small company owners with at least five years of experience. Multiple linear regression analysis showed that neither bootstrapping nor staff count were significant predictors of company longevity. There is little indication that business owners are acting on their surroundings, suggesting that the results support the pecking order hypothesis of funding. Most company owners relied on some kind of "bootstrap financing" to get their venture off the ground. The most common forms of bootstrapping were making the same terms available to all consumers, arranging favorable payment terms with suppliers, and favoring the purchase of old equipment over brand new. The implications for good social change include the ability to offer New Hampshire small company owners with knowledge for making educated financial choices and constructing financial models.

Al Issa (2021) mentioned that new micro-enterprises in the retail sector are crucial to the development of the South African economy. One of the main reasons why new micro-enterprises in South America fail is because they cannot get access to official financing and equity markets. Innovative financing solutions are important to the survival of emerging micro-enterprises in South America. This research delves at the ways in which fresh South American retail micro-enterprises get their feet off the ground financially. In order to gather information, a survey was conducted using self-administered questionnaires. Factor analysis and descriptive statistics were employed to break down the data. From the twenty-nine questions in the survey, factor analysis yielded only four bootstrapping techniques. Resources owned by others, AR management, resource pooling, and payment delays fall within this category. Improvements to microenterprise financial bootstrapping are recommended.

Nayir, Eryilmaz and Ayci (2023) noted that there is a disconnect between the ideas of entrepreneurial bootstrapping and bricolage, despite the fact that they both examine the same issues. Entrepreneurial bootstrapping and bricolage are examples of resourcefulness that may prove to be crucial dynamic qualities in an increasingly resource-constrained business environment. This research attempts to concentrate on the missing integration of the two behaviours by studying their convergence systematically utilising existing literature. For a more systematic understanding of the current literature and a complete picture of the behaviours, the research employs bibliometric co-citation, bibliographic coupling, network, and Theory, Context, Characteristics, Methodology analysis. Through an examination of their theoretical foundations and current research directions, the findings provide light on the conceptual convergence of these behaviours. Both types of entrepreneurial behaviour add to the existing body of material, which may encourage researchers to look into combining the two in the future.

Chaturvedi, Chaturvedi and Ehtesham (2019) noted that in order to become a viable option for those who are planning their own start-up ventures but do not have access to large amounts of traditional financing, the practise of financial bootstrapping needs to be investigated in an academic setting. The methods utilized by entrepreneurial start-ups to get funding other than debt

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loans and owner-supplied money are the primary subject of this research. In order to evaluate how far the academic community has come in its knowledge of financial bootstrapping, this study will analyze the existing literature in the field. The report will then make conclusions about the direction that future research has to go in order to fully comprehend this vital funding method.

Kum (2018) conducted research and writing on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMMEs) at both the national and international levels have flourished in recent years. Researchers and academics have made significant strides in their quest to understand the inner workings of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMMEs) and the factors that contribute to their success or failure. However, there is a lack of study on a particularly specific method used by SMMEs in emerging economies: bootstrapping. Convenience sampling was employed to choose a non-probabilistic sample of company owners in South American countries for this research. A total of 83 people were polled. The majority of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMMEs) in the survey relied on their own resources to succeed. Financial bootstrapping is seldom intentional practiced by SMMEs. Most respondents said they had never received instruction in the usage of financial bootstrapping techniques.

3.0 Research Findings and Discussion

The research findings indicate that middle-aged women in Seletar indeed face challenges when it comes to accessing traditional financial resources. Many of them expressed difficulties in obtaining venture capital or bank loans due to stringent requirements and a lack of collateral. It was evident from the study that there is a clear gap in support and mentorship programs catering to middle-aged women entrepreneurs in Seletar. The majority of respondents expressed a desire for more structured guidance and networking opportunities. Technological challenges are prevalent among middle-aged women entrepreneurs in Seletar. Many of them lacked the digital skills necessary to leverage modern technologies and e-commerce platforms effectively.

The competitive nature of certain sectors in Seletar emerged as a common theme. It was evident that middle-aged women entrepreneurs struggled to identify unexplored market opportunities in an environment with significant market saturation. Balancing the demands of entrepreneurship with family and caregiving responsibilities was a recurring challenge. Many participants expressed the difficulty of juggling these responsibilities effectively. The research findings highlighted that middle-aged women entrepreneurs often encountered challenges when it came to building brand credibility and gaining recognition in the marketplace. Many felt that their businesses were overlooked or not taken seriously.

4.0 Conclusion

Limited access to financial resources emerged as a significant hurdle. Middle-aged women entrepreneurs often struggled to secure traditional funding options due to stringent requirements. To address this, it is imperative that local authorities and financial institutions explore the establishment of microloan programs tailored to this demographic. Such programs can provide accessible and flexible financing options, enabling entrepreneurs to kickstart and grow their businesses. Inadequate support and mentorship opportunities were another prevalent issue.

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Middle-aged women expressed a clear desire for structured guidance and networking. Collaboration between local business associations, women-focused entrepreneurial organizations, and experienced mentors can facilitate the creation of mentorship and support programs designed to meet the specific needs of this demographic. These initiatives can help middle-aged women entrepreneurs navigate the complexities of entrepreneurship more effectively. The technological and digital gaps identified in this research require immediate attention. To bridge this knowledge gap, digital literacy programs and workshops should be developed, empowering middle-aged women entrepreneurs to harness technology for business growth. Collaborations with local technology companies and educational institutions can facilitate the provision of training and support, enabling these entrepreneurs to stay competitive in the digital age.

Market saturation and competition emerged as a recurring theme. To tackle this challenge, entrepreneurs should focus on identifying niche markets and innovative product offerings. Diversification and adaptation to emerging trends can open up new avenues for business growth while circumventing oversaturated markets. Balancing work-life responsibilities, particularly caregiving duties, was a pressing concern. Flexible work arrangements, childcare support services, and community networks can aid in achieving a more harmonious work-life balance. Local authorities, in partnership with community organizations, can play a pivotal role in facilitating these initiatives. Lastly, the lack of visibility and recognition among middle-aged women entrepreneurs in Seletar needs to be addressed. A strategic approach to marketing and public relations, with a focus on content marketing, networking, and participation in local events, can enhance visibility and credibility. Collaborations with local influencers and industry leaders can also help in building recognition.

5.0 Recommendations

Local authorities and financial institutions should collaborate to create microloan programs tailored to middle-aged women entrepreneurs. These programs should offer accessible and flexible financing options with reasonable interest rates and repayment terms, making it easier for women to secure initial capital for their businesses. This approach can significantly alleviate the financial constraints faced by this demographic, enabling them to kickstart and grow their ventures. It is crucial to develop mentorship and networking programs that cater specifically to middle-aged women entrepreneurs. Local business associations, women-focused entrepreneurial organizations, and experienced mentors should come together to provide guidance, support, and networking opportunities. This will help these entrepreneurs navigate the complexities of entrepreneurship more effectively, share experiences, and learn from successful peers. To address the technological and digital gaps identified, there should be an emphasis on digital literacy programs and workshops. Collaborations with local technology companies, educational institutions, and industry experts can offer training and support in leveraging modern technologies and digital tools. This will empower middle-aged women entrepreneurs to remain competitive in the digital age. Encouraging middle-aged women entrepreneurs to adopt strategic marketing approaches and enhance their visibility is essential. They should be guided on content marketing, online presence, and participation in local events and exhibitions. Collaborations with local influencers and industry

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leaders can help build recognition. Local business associations and chambers of commerce can play a role in promoting and showcasing businesses led by middle-aged women entrepreneurs.

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