



AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL CAPITAL ON THE DIGITAL ENTREPRENEURS' PERFORMANCE DURING THEOMICRON VARIANT WAVE (SARS-CoV-2: B.1.1.529)

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Abstract:

This study empirically scrutinises the relationship between social capital and entrepreneurial performance during the Omicron variant (SARs-CoV-2: B.1.1.529) spread in Malaysia. This study focused on spousal social support, social network, social media usage, and the digital entrepreneurs' performance. This research applied quantitative methods to yield empirical results and substantiations to answer the research questions. Data was collected using a questionnaire through Google Docs. A total of 313 digital entrepreneurs operating their ventures in West Malaysia contributed the data for this study which led to the discoveries, reasonings, and final judgments. The results attained in this study reveal statistically significant relationships among spousal social support, social network, and social media usage with the digital entrepreneurs' performance during the onslaught of the silent enemy (Omicron variant), which is spreading at an alarming rate. Additionally, this study's breakthrough will undeniably give the digital entrepreneurs assurance to form a formidable relationship with their spouses, create and increase the social networks between all stakeholders of the business, and use social media extensively to gain resources and customers during the Omicron shockwave. Moreover, by improving the relationship with their spouse, optimising the social network, and augmenting social media usage, the digital entrepreneurs can heighten their business performance and endure the challenges that they are subjected to during the assault of the Omicron wave in Malaysia.

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1. Introduction

Entrepreneurs did not give up their quest to enhance their business performance in the current turbulent environment, which is also plagued by the silent killer known as the Omicron variant (SARs-CoV-2: B.1.1.529). Many entrepreneurs turned to digitization to enhance themselves and survive in this unpredictable business environment. When the Omicron variant was detected in Malaysia on the 2nd of December 2021, entrepreneurs were preparing to meet another challenge (The Star, 2022). The unceasing marathon to achieve the highest performance has produced various challenges for the entrepreneurs. As the Malaysian economy strives to become highly knowledgeable, it is creating more and more hurdles for entrepreneurs to withstand various adverse environmental forces. Entrepreneurs need to focus on ways to satisfy their customers' varying requirements and anticipations. To realize these objectives, it is crucial that entrepreneurs seek ways to overcome inefficiencies and strategies that could enhance performance. According to (Ahmed & Seed, 2009), the most common failures are the inability to form social networks and maintain close ties with customers. Additionally, (Burt, 2000) elucidated that forging network ties with the most vital contacts outside of the organization would create opportunities for the entrepreneur to gain access to all other resources to enhance business performance.

One of the traditional traditions of all races in Malaysia is keeping familial ties together. This tradition is also followed by many Malaysian entrepreneurs irrespective of race or religion. Based on the relational lens introduced by (Flemons & Cole, 1992), who advocated the significant function of the distinctive affiliation of the entrepreneur with his or her spouse leads to better entrepreneurial performance. The intricacies of spousal relationships and business activities were scrutinized by scholars (Marshack, 1994; Kanter, 1977), who implied that spousal relationships and business activities are in unison. Therefore, spousal relationships can be rightfully examined in a way that has been conventionally ignored within the entrepreneurial study.

Currently, the SARs-CoV-2 contagion has devastated many entrepreneurial ventures. Therefore, entrepreneurs need to find contemporary ways to address customers' expectations. Entrepreneurs could indulge in social media to create social networks and relationships with customers, utilising many social media platforms available in Malaysia. According to (Chikandiwa et al., 2013), social media would enable entrepreneurs to associate, collaborate with others, interrelate, and manipulate mutual intelligent crowdsourcing for marketing purposes which heightens entrepreneurial performance.

Therefore, the purpose of this research is to examine the influence of spousal social support, social networks, and social media usage on the performance of digital entrepreneurs in Malaysia during the Omicron variant wave.

1.1 Research Problem Statement

The SARs-CoV-2 contagion gave a devastating blow to many businesses and had a catastrophic impact on many entrepreneurs. However, the acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 is also a blessing in disguise for entrepreneurs who could swiftly adopt the technologies available to them in Malaysia. Many entrepreneurs were also forced to change their business style and have learned to use digital technologies.

Sellers and buyers were shifting to online transactions using social media, fearing the covid-19 virus infection. Entrepreneurs' worst nightmare has just begun as the silent and invisible killer virus swept through the nation. Many entrepreneurs who operated conventional brick-and-mortar businesses had to switch to e-commerce. However, just switching to a contemporary business style using digital means or social media platforms would not ensure that their business would succeed or their performance would get better. The entrepreneurs must build relationships with the current and new customers as the customers will not appear physically during purchase. Therefore, entrepreneurs must build a strong network with their customers. This could only be achieved if the entrepreneurs adapt and build social networks, use the social media available to them and get social support from their family, primarily social support from their spouse, to achieve entrepreneurial performance.

Spousal social support is customarily in the form of emotional and practical support. This social support is usually swapped between the spouse and the entrepreneur, impacting the entrepreneur's performance based on the findings (Gorgievski et al., 2011; De Maris 2010). Parallel to these findings (Parasuraman et al., 1996) discovered that spousal social support (emotions and physical) rendered by the entrepreneur's spouse would enable the digital entrepreneur to devote time to the business, subsequently heightening the entrepreneur's performance. Additionally, (Rowe & Hong, 2000; Mattis, 2004) quoted that a working spouse's financial aid provided to a digital entrepreneur was a crucial social support factor. On the contrary, husbands and wives who are business partners also confront work-family disagreements according to (Foley & Powell, 1997).

Entrepreneurs with superior social networks can gain new prospects and ideas (Pindado et al., 2018; Aldrich & Zimmer, 1986). According to (Mamun et al., 2016), entrepreneurs use their social networks to handle various problems they encounter in their business environment. Moreover, (Kim & Chung, 2016) have demonstrated that digital entrepreneurs with good network affiliations and trust that they have built will be able to achieve entrepreneurial performance and financial stability. Additionally, (Weiss et al., 2019) explicates that entrepreneurs' social networks create entrepreneurial competency, thus augmenting their performance. On the other hand, mainstream scholars (Allen et al., 2007; de Bruin et al., 2009) have challenged this biased belief by

indicating some adverse effects of social networks on entrepreneurial performance. According to (Klyver et al., 2011), social networks can cause anxieties, and some affiliations are unnecessary and even destructive.

Recently, several mainstream researchers have highlighted the positive consequence of using social media by entrepreneurs (Kanapathipillai, 2021; Celebi & Terkan, 2020; Pratono, 2018). According to (Nakara et al., 2012; Stockdale et al., 2012), entrepreneurs employ social media to spawn values in their ventures. Additionally, (Schaupp & Belanger, 2014) agreed that entrepreneurs increase their marketing efforts through social media. Contrarily, (Ahmad et al., 2019;) have uncovered that social media does not significantly impact entrepreneurial performance. Additionally, research undertaken by (Grimmer et al., 2018) revealed that information gathered through social media platforms leads to an adverse impact on entrepreneurial performance.

Differing views have been illuminated regarding the influence of social capital factors on the performance of entrepreneurs. Therefore, to bridge the gap in the varying previous findings, this research was conducted to give substantial knowledge on the effect of spousal social support, social network, and the use of social media on the performance of digital entrepreneurs in Malaysia.

1.2 Research Questions

The research questions of this study are as follows:

RQ1: Is there a statistically significant relationship between spousal social support and the digital entrepreneurs' performance?

RQ2: Is there is a statistically significant relationship between social network and the digital entrepreneurs' performance?

RQ3: Is there a statistically significant relationship between social media usage and the digital entrepreneurs' performance?

1.3 Research Objectives

The research objectives of this study are as follows:

RO1: To analyse if there is a statistically significant relationship between spousal social support and the digital entrepreneurs' performance.

RO2: To scrutinise if there is a statistically significant relationship between social network and the digital entrepreneurs' performance.

RO3: To examine if there is a statistically significant relationship between social media usage and the digital entrepreneurs' performance.

2. Literature Review

This section covers the literature, which is relevant to achieve the purpose of the study.

2.1 Spousal Social Support and Entrepreneurial Performance

As with other family members, a spouse's social support also plays a significant role in driving his or her partner to achieve higher entrepreneurial performance. According to (Baines & Wheelock, 1997), businesses with husband-and-wife owners account for between 21 and 30 percent on average. Spousal social support is usually in the form of emotional and practical support, which is commonly exchanged between the entrepreneur and his or her spouse which influences the entrepreneur's performance according to (Gorgievski et al., 2011; De Maris 2010; Mahastanti & Nugrahanti, 2010; Rosenblatt et al., 1985). Furthermore, (Guihua & Linping, 2021; van Auken & Werbel, 2006) discovered that spousal commitment in the form of social support influences entrepreneurial performance.

Based on (Parasuraman et al., 1996; Marshack, 1993), an entrepreneur's contribution towards the family is also crucial. However, concentrating on the family means sacrificing their business. Therefore, their spouse's social support (emotions and physical) would enable the digital entrepreneur to spend more time on the business, consequently increasing the entrepreneur's performance (Cruz et al., 2015; Matzek et al., 2010; Parasuraman et al., 1996).

According to (Owens et al., 2013), entrepreneurs also quoted the significance of having socially supportive spouses in terms of love and services. Additionally, research conducted by (Rasool et al., 2020; Adjei et al., 2019; McDonald et al., 2017; Vадnjal & Vадnjal, 2013; Danes et al., 2010) confirmed that social support of the spouse is significant to achieve entrepreneurial performance and psychological well-being. Digital entrepreneurs who experience increased performance have their spouse involved in their businesses, and significant others who were not involved in the businesses were nonetheless providing invisible social support in the form of love and services. According to (Das, 1999, Vадnjal & Vадnjal, 2013), the social support from the digital entrepreneur's spouse seems to be crucial, giving the digital entrepreneur inspiration to make final business decisions. Additionally, (Vадnjal & Vадnjal, 2013) elucidated that an entrepreneur generally discussed business decisions with their spouse and expected a particular 'blessing' from them before making the final decisions, and this leads to heightened entrepreneurial performance.

The economic assistance provided to a digital entrepreneur by a working spouse was cited as essential social support in a study by (Rowe & Hong, 2000; Mattis, 2004). Additionally, (Rowe & Hong, 2000) further established that the wives of digital entrepreneurs provided vital economic support to the family whether the business employed her or not. Furthermore, she would often help her entrepreneurial spouse by managing the family's expenses, backing her entrepreneurial husband by playing the role of a free employee for the firm, and occasionally exploring and expanding her networks to enhance the entrepreneurial performance of her husband. Moreover, in a study conducted by (Kim and Ling, 2001), a spouse who supports the entrepreneurial activities contribute to the families' budgets and decreases the digital entrepreneur's

responsibilities of being a sole family provider, which results in better digital entrepreneurial performance.

On the contrary, according to (Foley & Powell, 1997), business partners' husbands and wives also encounter work-family conflicts. According to (Bird, 2014), spousal relationships have both adverse and favourable impacts on the performance of entrepreneurs. Moreover, according to (Miettinen, 1986), 65 percent of the husbands of female entrepreneurs do not take part in the business, while on the other hand, about 40 percent of men-owned businesses have no help from their wives. According to (Burke & Belcourt, 1989), entrepreneurs do not wish to have help from their spouses as this could be a blessing in disguise because having their spouses in the business means there may be less dependence on the business's profits to support the family (Carter et al., 1996).

Moreover, according to (Werbel & Danes, 2010; Danes & Olsen, 2003), a spouse who is involved in a business commonly create tensions and conflicts, which often results in unclear roles, confusion over authority, unfair workloads, and compensation which finally leads to poor entrepreneurial performance. Furthermore, (Kurniawan & Sanjaya, 2016) mention that spousal social support can create an adverse effect on the performance of entrepreneurs when there is a work-family conflict between the spouse and the entrepreneur.

2.2 Social Network and Entrepreneurial Performance

Digital entrepreneurs are individuals who seek new opportunities and ideas to set up their businesses utilising digital technologies. The abundance of opportunities and ideas will only be available to digital entrepreneurs if they form social networks using digital technologies. Therefore, entrepreneurs with greater social networks can exploit new opportunities and ideas (Dimitriadis & Koning, 2021; Ibrahim et al., 2021; Pindado et al., 2018; Sparrowe et al., 2001; Aldrich & Zimmer, 1986). Additionally, (Hsiao et al., 2016; Thomas et al., 2009) mentions that social networks help entrepreneurs obtain a lot of intelligence and support from different professionals to strengthen their weaknesses and increase opportunities. Consequently, digital entrepreneurs' performance will be heightened, and they will be able to withstand all tribulations they may encounter during their entrepreneurial undertakings.

Based on (Ibrahim et al., 2021; Mamun et al., 2016), entrepreneurs use their social networks to deal with the various crises they face in their business environment and achieve success and higher performance levels. Through their excellent affiliations and the trust, they have built with their networks, the digital entrepreneurs will achieve entrepreneurial performance and economic wealth (Kim & Chung, 2016). Moreover, (Weiss et al., 2019) elucidates that entrepreneurs' strong intentions and social networks create entrepreneurial competence, thus enhancing the entrepreneurs' performance.

According to (Ibrahim et al., 2021; Schleppehorst et al., 2020), when entrepreneurs use their social networks, their entrepreneurial performance will be uplifted because of the new prospects that the network introduces, which entrepreneurs would not be able

to obtain within a short time to create a barrier to overcome the competition and business rivalries.

This is parallel to the findings of (Dimitriadis & Koning, 2021; Akintimehin et al., 2019; Vega-Redondo et al., 2019) that social networking provides effortless access into various vital resources such as human, financial, innovation, technological, cultural, and intellectual which are significant for digital entrepreneur's performance. Likewise, (Yani et al., 2020) illuminates that social network is highly significant for entrepreneurs. This statement substantiates that social networks and technologies need to complement one another to enhance the performance of digital entrepreneurs. When the digital entrepreneur's performance is heightened, the digital entrepreneur will be able to meet challenges faced during the post-Covid-29 pandemic, leading to competitive advantage (Nasip et al., 2017).

Additionally, digital entrepreneurs are likely to gain better performance if they develop their social network during the early stage of their digital business. Previous research by (Hansen, 1998) indicated that an entrepreneur who created a social network early during business creation could facilitate business development and amplify entrepreneurial performance.

Moreover, (Chen et al., 2007) states that vital social network elements, explicitly network interactions, quality of the relationship, and external links, benefit entrepreneurs to attain significant resources and influence entrepreneurial performance. Additionally, social network literature generally acknowledges that social networks are a significant factor for entrepreneurial performance.

Contrarily, some scholars (Bruderl & Preisendörfer, 1998; Allen et al., 2007; de Bruin et al., 2009; Hakansson et al., 2009) challenges this biased opinion by implying some of the adverse effects of social networks on entrepreneurial performance. Social networks can be a problem; some affiliations are unnecessary and even destructive, according to (Klyver et al., 2011). The social networks of some entrepreneurs were seen to act as an impediment to entrepreneurs' performance (Ettl & Welter, 2010). Some entrepreneurs tend to have very few network connections (Allen et al., 2007). Moreover, (de Bruin et al., 2009) illuminate that an entrepreneur's social networks might not offer precious information concerning business prospects.

Studies conducted by (Bean & Bell-Rose 1999; Gargiulo & Benassi, 1999; Portes, 1995) has indicated that social networks can become social liabilities that restrain entrepreneurs from achieving their business objectives and diminish their performance. Moreover, (Light & Isralowitz 1997; Podolny & Page, 1998; Uzzi, 1997) have also demonstrated that social network forms stringently controlled relationships that create social commitments and expectations between entrepreneurs and their contacts. These social compulsions and anticipations act as constraints when entrepreneurs are identifying resources.

2.3 Social Media Usage and Entrepreneurial Performance

Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, Pinterest, and LinkedIn are used by all entrepreneurs. Digital entrepreneurs are no exception as they expect to gain maximum benefits by using social media to increase their performance. Based on (Michaelidou et al., 2011), previous research could not prove that social media enhances entrepreneurs' performance. Recently, several scholars have illuminated the positive outcome of using social media by entrepreneurs (Bhattacharya, 2022; Fan et al., 2021; Kanapathipillai, 2021; Olanrewaju et al., 2020; Celebi & Terkan, 2020; Qureshi et al., 2020; Pratono, 2018; Alarcón-del-Amo et al., 2018; Charoensukmongkol & Sasatanun, 2017; Scuotto et al., 2017; Hitchen et al., 2017; Nambisan & Zahra, 2016; Parveen et al., 2016; Quinton & Wilson, 2016; Schaupp & Bélanger, 2014).

According to (Bhattacharya, 2022; Kanapathipillai & Mahbob, 2021; Fan et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2017; Nakara et al., 2012; Stockdale et al., 2012), entrepreneurs employ social media to generate values in their ventures. Additionally, (Park et al., 2017; Parveen et al., 2016; Hopkins, 2012; Schaupp & Belanger, 2014) acknowledged that entrepreneurs increase their marketing and sales efforts and enhance the internal operations of their business through social media. Furthermore, (Lehmkuhl & Jung, 2013; Hitchen et al., 2017; Scuotto et al., 2017) elucidated that the value of entrepreneurs is boosted as the utilisation of social media lowers transaction costs, improves access to information, and allows the implementation of sound strategies.

Research scholars (Bhattacharya, 2022; Kanapathipillai & Mahbob, 2021; Nambisan & Zahra, 2016; Park et al., 2017; Quinton & Wilson, 2016; Fischer & Reuber, 2011; Gustafsson & Khan, 2017; Mack et al., 2017) have illuminated that social media can influence entrepreneurial opportunity recognition which is a crucial factor for entrepreneurs in this digital age. Parallel to this research (Kanapathipillai, 2021; Quinton & Wilson, 2016; Delerue & Sicotte, 2017; Hatammimi & Sharif, 2015; Mohajerani et al., 2015;) have demonstrated that the use of social media by entrepreneurs has led to enhanced entrepreneurial innovation and networking which in turn increases entrepreneurs' performance.

Social media has also become a fundamental factor when entrepreneurs create new businesses. Social media was identified as a significant element that aids in attaining economic improvement, financial and non-financial performance (Bhattacharya, 2022; Alarcón-del-Amo et al., 2018; Nord et al., 2017; Steel, 2017; Beninger et al., 2016).

Contrarily, researchers (Ahmad et al., 2019; Gavino et al., 2018) have found that social media usage does not significantly impact entrepreneurial performance. Additionally, research undertaken by (Grimmer et al., 2018) discovered that information gathered through social media platforms leads to unfavorable impacts on entrepreneurial performance. Based on the study conducted by (Gavino et al., 2018), low funding in social media leads to unfavourable entrepreneurial performance.

2.4 Proposed Conceptual Framework

This study aims to examine the influence of spousal social support, social network, and social media on the performance of digital entrepreneurs in Malaysia. Figure 1 shows the proposed conceptual framework developed based on the critical literature review to enlighten the relationship between this study's independent and dependent variables.

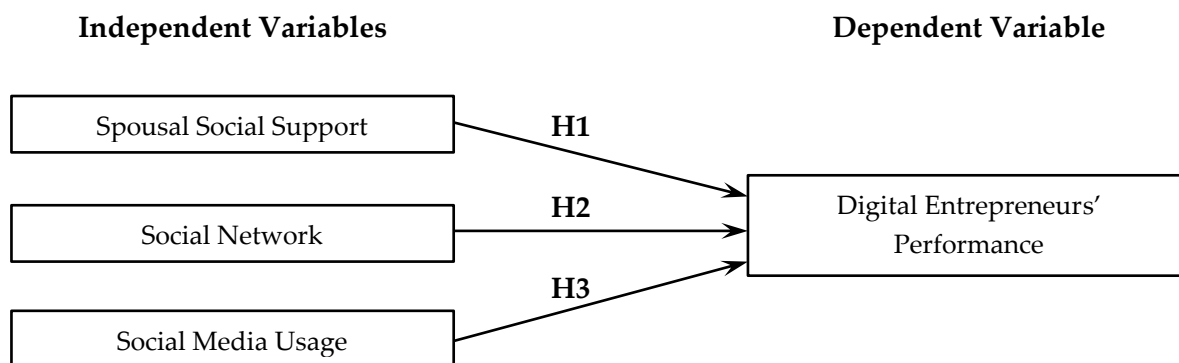


Figure 1: Proposed Conceptual Framework

2.5 Research Hypothesis

Based on the critical literature review presented, the following hypotheses were developed.

H1: There is a statistically significant relationship between spousal social support and the digital entrepreneurs' performance.

H2: There is a statistically significant relationship between social network and the digital entrepreneurs' performance.

H3: There is a statistically significant relationship between social media usage and the digital entrepreneurs' performance.

3. Research Methodology

This study aimed to gather the responses from the entrepreneurs in Malaysia and acquire an insight into entrepreneurs' performance due to the influence of social capital. A total of 860 self-administered structured questionnaires were distributed to the digital entrepreneurs in Malaysia. The questionnaires used Likert's 5-points scale varying from "Strongly disagree (1)" to "Strongly agree (5)". The survey instrument is comprised of five sections. The first section intended to obtain information about the digital entrepreneurs' demographic profile, the second section generated data on spousal social support. The third section generated data on the social network, and the fourth section provided data on social media usage. Finally, the fifth section provided data on the performance of digital entrepreneurs.

To obtain data regarding spousal social support, social network, and social media usage, which are the independent variables, the 5-point Likert's scale was based on the literature by (Guihua & Linping, 2021; Rasool et al., 2020; Adjei et al., 2019; McDonald et

al., 2017; Dimitriadis & Koning, 2021; Ibrahim et al., 2021; Pindado et al., 2018; Kanapathipillai & Mahbob, 2021; Fan et al., 2021; Kanapathipillai, 2021; Olanrewaju et al., 2020). Next, to attain data on the dependent variable, the performance of the digital entrepreneurs, the questions were adapted from (Aladejebi, 2020; Abbas et al., 2019). The demographic profile contained 5 questions to identify the digital entrepreneurs' backgrounds.

Upon testing the reliability, the Cronbach's Alpha values were all between $0.7 < \alpha < 0.8$, which showed the internal consistency of the questionnaire is good. Table 1 shows the reliability of the instrument used in this research. The validity test was also conducted as the questionnaire was self-conducted. The validity of the questionnaire was certified by 3 digital entrepreneurs and 3 professors, and the committee agreed with minor alterations in the constructs. For the pilot study, 120 questionnaires were distributed to digital entrepreneurs operating their businesses in Malaysia. The feedback aided in altering some questions in the survey instrument used.

Table 1: Reliability Analysis

Variables	No of items	α -value
Spousal social support	5	0.788
Social network	5	0.863
Social media	5	0.801
Digital entrepreneur's performance	5	0.792

3.1 Population and Sampling

The population of this study is digital entrepreneurs in Malaysia. The total number of entrepreneurs in Malaysia is 2.61 million (DOSM, 2021). Out of this, 38% or 1 million businesses have adopted digital technologies, or traditional entrepreneurs have become digital entrepreneurs (DOSM, 2021). The (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970) population and sample size tabulation were employed to obtain an appropriate sample size for this research from the population. Therefore, according to (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970) computation, the representative sample size of digital entrepreneurs is 384.

The snowball sampling technique was used to achieve the objective of this study. The digital entrepreneurs voluntarily partook in the survey without any coercion. A total of 780 questionnaires were distributed to the digital entrepreneurs in Peninsular Malaysia. A total of 329 questionnaires were received, which is approximately a 42.2% return rate. While collation, it was revealed that 16 out of 329 questionnaires that were collected were not thoroughly answered. Therefore, a total of 313 questionnaires were able to provide the data for this study. The analysis of the demographic factors was presented using percentages and frequencies. The regression procedure was used to analyse the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. Additionally, the correlation procedure was utilized to determine the strength of association between the variables.

4. Findings and Interpretation

The following sections present the results obtained from the study on the digital entrepreneurs in Malaysia.

4.1 Demographics of Digital Entrepreneurs

Table 2: Entrepreneur's Profile (N=313)

Demographics	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	< 21	73	23.3%
	21 – 30	107	34.2%
	31 – 40	66	21.1%
	41 – 50	42	13.4%
	> 50	25	8.0%
Academic Qualification	SPM/STPM (Secondary)	16	5.2%
	Diploma	115	36.7%
	Undergraduate Degree	149	47.6%
	Postgraduate Degree	33	10.5%
Type of Business Sector	Service	106	33.9%
	Manufacturing	91	29.1%
	Retail	116	37.0%
Years of Experience	< 5	26	8.3%
	6 – 10	51	16.3%
	11 - 20	167	53.4%
	> 20	69	22.0%
Ethnicity	Malay	103	32.9%
	Chinese	138	44.1%
	Indian	29	9.3%
	Others	43	13.7%

A majority of 107 (34.2%) respondents were 21-30 age groups. Based on the academic qualification, a majority of 149 (47.6%) digital entrepreneurs have attained their undergraduate degrees. In terms of the type of business sector, a vast majority of 116 (37.0%) respondents were involved in the retail sector. A majority of 167 (53.4%) digital entrepreneurs have between 11 to 20 years of business experience. In terms of ethnicity, the majority of 138 (44.1%) digital entrepreneurs are Chinese descendants.

4.2 Social Capital Factors (Spousal Social Support, Social Network and Social Media Usage) and the Performance of Digital Entrepreneurs

This section provides the outcome of the social capital factors which are spousal social support, social network, and social media usage.

To determine the relationship between social capital factors which are spousal social support, social network and social media usage and the performance of digital the entrepreneurs, social capital factors (spousal social support, social network and social media usage) were regressed on the performance of the digital entrepreneurs and the

standardized regression coefficients (Beta) was examined to determine the size and the direction of the relationship and whether it was statistically significant. The regression equation used to measure the relationship is as follows:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X + \varepsilon,$$

where,

β_0 is the intercept,

β_1 is the slope and

ε is the residual term (Chinna & Choo, 2015).

X = Independent Variable (Spousal Social Support, Social Network, Social Media Usage)

Y = Dependent Variable (Digital Entrepreneurs' Performance).

The pertinent results are summarized in Table 3, 4 and 5.

Table 3: Regression Results based on Spousal Social Support and the Digital Entrepreneurs' Performance

Model Summary, ANOVA and Coefficients					
a. Model Summary					
R	R Square	Adjusted R Square		Std. Error of the Estimate	Sig. (2-tailed)
0.834 ^a	0.695	0.694		0.501	0.000 ^a
b. ANOVA					
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	Sig.
Regression	178.024	1	178.024	710.202	0.000 ^b
Residual	77.957	312	0.250		
Total	255.981	313			
c. Coefficients					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.367	0.061		22.410	0.000
Spousal Social Support	0.555	0.021	0.834	26.429	0.000 ^c
Predictor variable: Spousal Social Support					
Dependent Variable: Digital Entrepreneurs' Performance					

The results in Table 3a Model Summary show the Pearson's Bivariate Correlations performed on the predictor (spousal social support) the R-value was 0.834, which is more than 0.3 and between -1.0 and +1.0. The p-value < 0.001. Thus, this model implies a positive association between spousal social support of the digital entrepreneur and the performance of the digital entrepreneur. This predictor (spousal social support) shows (R² = 0.695, with an adjusted R² = 0.694; p-value < 0.001), which means that the predictor spousal social support can explain 69.5% of the variation in digital entrepreneurs' performance. The model also shows a strong significant relationship between the

predictor variable (spousal social support) and the dependent variable (performance of the digital entrepreneurs) in this model.

From the ANOVA model in Table 3b the 'F' statistics to test the hypotheses for the sample population (N= 313), $F(1, 312) = 710.202$, $p\text{-value} < 0.001$. The Table F statistics is 3.871. The F calculator (710.202) is greater than the F table statistics (3.871). Therefore, the model as a whole show that there is a statistically significant relationship between spousal social support of the digital entrepreneur and the performance of the digital entrepreneur.

Based on the coefficients model in Table 3c, for the predictor spousal social support ($B = 0.555$, $t = 26.429$, $p\text{-value} < 0.001$, $\beta = 0.834$), which indicates that as the spousal social support increases by 1 unit, the performance of the digital entrepreneur increases by 0.555 units.

From the regression result, the final predictive linear regression equation formed based on the model in Table 3 is as follows:

$$\text{Performance} = 1.367 + 0.555 (\text{spousal social support}).$$

Thus, the model in Table 3 supports that for every 1 unit increase in spousal social support of the digital entrepreneur, the digital entrepreneurs' performance increases by 0.555 units.

Table 4: Regression Results based on Social Network and the Digital Entrepreneurs' Performance

Model Summary, ANOVA and Coefficients					
a. Model Summary					
R	R Square	Adjusted R Square		Std. Error of the Estimate	Sig. (2-tailed)
0.730 ^a	0.533	0.531		0.620	0.000 ^a
b. ANOVA					
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	Sig.
Regression	136.388	1	136.388	354.674	0.000 ^b
Residual	119.593	312	0.383		
Total	255.981	313			
c. Coefficients					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.739	0.067		25.955	0.000
Social Network	0.483	0.026	0.730	18.577	0.000 ^c
Predictor variable: Social Network					
Dependent Variable: Digital Entrepreneurs' Performance					

The results in Table 4a Model Summary show the Pearson's Bivariate Correlations performed on the predictor (social network); the R-value was 0.730, which is more than

0.3 and between -1.0 and +1.0. The p-value < 0.001. Thus, this model implies a positive association between the social network of the digital entrepreneur and the performance of the digital entrepreneur. This predictor (social network) shows (R²= 0.533, with an adjusted R² = 0.531, p-value < 0.001), this means that the predictor social network can explain 53.3% of the variation in digital entrepreneurs' performance. The model also shows a strong significant relationship between the predictor variable (social network) and the dependent variable (digital entrepreneurs' performance) in this model.

From the ANOVA model in Table 4b the 'F' statistics to test the hypotheses for the sample population (N= 313), F (1, 312) = 354.674, p-value < 0.001. The Table F statistics is 3.871. The F calculator (354.674) is greater than the F table statistics (3.871). Therefore, the model as a whole shows that there is a statistically significant relationship between the social network of the digital entrepreneur and the performance of the digital entrepreneur.

Based on the coefficients model in Table 4c, the predictor social network (B = 0.483; t = 18.577, p-value < 0.001, b = 0.730) indicates that as the social network increases by 1 unit, the performance of the digital entrepreneur increases by 0.483 units. From the regression result, the final predictive linear regression equation formed based on the model in Table 4 is as follows:

$$\text{Performance} = 1.739 + 0.483 (\text{social network}).$$

Thus, from the model in Table 4, it is supported that for every 1 unit increase in the social network of the digital entrepreneur, the digital entrepreneurs' performance increases by 0.483 units.

Table 5: Regression Results based on Social Media Usage and the Digital Entrepreneurs' Performance

Model Summary, ANOVA and Coefficients					
a. Model Summary					
R	R Square	Adjusted R Square		Std. Error of the Estimate	Sig. (2-tailed)
0.773 ^a	0.598	0.597		0.575	0.000 ^a
b. ANOVA					
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	Sig.
Regression	153.050	1	153.050	462.436	0.000 ^b
Residual	102.930	312	0.330		
Total	255.981	313			
c. Coefficients					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.391	0.074		18.797	0.000
Social Media Usage	0.521	0.024	0.773	21.708	0.000 ^c

Predictor variable: Social Media Usage Dependent Variable: Digital Entrepreneurs' Performance
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The results in Table 5a Model Summary show the Pearson's Bivariate Correlations performed on the predictor (social media usage); the R-value was 0.773, which is more than 0.3 and between -1.0 and +1.0. The p-value < 0.001. Thus, this model implies a strong positive association between social media usage of the digital entrepreneur and the performance of the digital entrepreneur. This predictor (social media usage) shows (R²= 0.598, with an adjusted R² = 0.597, p-value < 0.001), this means that 59.8% of the variation in digital entrepreneurs' performance can be explained by the predictor social media usage. The model also shows a strong significant relationship between the predictor variable (social media usage) and the dependent variable (digital entrepreneurs' performance).

From the ANOVA model in Table 5b the 'F' statistics to test the hypotheses for the sample population (N= 313), F (1, 312) = 462.436, p-value < 0.001. The Table F statistics is 3.871. The F calculator (462.436) is greater than the F table statistics (3.871). Therefore, the model as a whole shows that there is a statistically significant relationship between social media usage of the digital entrepreneur and the performance of the digital entrepreneur. Based on the coefficients model in Table 5c, for the predictor social media usage (B = 0.521; t = 21.708, p-value < 0.001, b = 0.773), which indicates that as the social media usage increases by 1 unit, the performance of the digital entrepreneur increases by 0.521 units. From the regression result, the final predictive linear regression equation formed based on the model in Table 5 is as follows:

$$\text{Performance} = 1.391 + 0.521 (\text{social media usage}).$$

Thus, from the model in Table 5, it is supported that for every 1 unit increase in social media usage of the digital entrepreneur, the digital entrepreneurs' performance increases by 0.521 units.

5. Discussion

This section enlightens the results and discussions concerning the relationship between the independent variables (spousal social support, social network, social media usage) and the dependent variable, which is the (digital entrepreneurs' business performance).

5.1 Spousal Social Support and the Digital Entrepreneurs' Performance

The first objective of the research was to establish the relationship between spousal social support and digital entrepreneurs' performance. To realize this objective, it was hypothesized (H1) that there is a statistically significant relationship between spousal social support and the digital entrepreneurs' performance.

To determine the relationship between spousal social support and the digital entrepreneurs' performance, linear regression was first conducted. Then, Pearson's

correlation coefficient was examined to determine the size and direction of the relationship and whether it was statistically significant.

The model as a whole was significant to predict that the digital entrepreneurs' performance was affected by spousal social support: The ANOVA model in Table 3 shows that $F(1, 312) = 710.202$, $p < 0.001$. The R^2 for the overall model was 69.5%, with an adjusted R^2 of 69.4%. The model in Table 3 reported a strong size effect. Therefore, this indicates that the predictor variable spousal social support can explain 69.5% of the variation in the digital entrepreneurs' performance.

This expresses that the outcomes are congruent with the literature, suggesting that spousal social support is a statistically significant determinant of digital entrepreneurs' performance. As explicated by (Rasool et al., 2020; Gorgievski et al., 2011; Matzek et al., 2010; De Maris 2010; Mahastanti & Nugrahanti, 2010; Rosenblatt et al., 1985) that spousal social support in the form of emotional and practical support enhances the entrepreneur's performance. Additionally, the findings of this study are parallel to the previous findings of (Adjei et al., 2019; Vadnjal & Vadnjal, 2013; Danes et al., 2010), who established that social support of the spouse is crucial to attaining entrepreneurial performance. Moreover, the results of this study contradict the findings of (Kurniawan & Sanjaya, 2016; Werbel & Danes, 2010; Danes & Olsen, 2003), who mention that a spouse involved in a business is a distraction which leads to misfortunes and poor entrepreneurial performance.

5.2 Social Network and the Digital Entrepreneurs' Performance

The second objective of the research was to establish the relationship between the social network and the digital entrepreneurs' performance. To realize this objective, it was hypothesized (H2) that there is a statistically significant relationship between the social network and the digital entrepreneurs' performance.

To determine the relationship between the social network and the digital entrepreneurs' performance, linear regression was first performed. Then, Pearson's correlation coefficient was assessed to determine the size and direction of the relationship and whether it was statistically significant.

The model as a whole was significant to predict that the digital entrepreneurs' performance was affected by social networks: The ANOVA model in Table 4 shows that $F(1, 312) = 354.674$, $p < 0.001$. The R^2 for the overall model was 53.3%, with an adjusted R^2 of 53.1%. The model in Table 4 reported a strong size effect. Therefore, this indicates that the predictor variable social network can explain 53.3% of the variation in the digital entrepreneurs' performance.

This illustrates that the findings are consistent with the literature, suggesting that social network is a statistically significant determinant of digital entrepreneurs' performance. As illuminated by (Dimitriadis & Koning, 2021; Pindado et al., 2018; Sparrowe et al., 2001; Aldrich & Zimmer, 1986), entrepreneurs with greater social networks can exploit new opportunities and ideas. Additionally, (Schlepphorst et al., 2020) discovered that entrepreneurial performance would be uplifted through social

networks, barriers to overcome the competition, and business rivalries would be more substantial. Therefore, the findings of these previous researchers are parallel to the findings of this study which indicates that social network is a significant factor in enhancing digital entrepreneurs' performance. Moreover, the result of this study negates the findings of (Klyver et al., 2011; de Bruin et al., 2009; Hakansson et al., 2009; Allen et al., 2007; Bruderl & Preisendörfer, 1998) who mention that social networks are a problem for entrepreneurial performance. This research also nullifies (Bean & Bell-Rose 1999; Gargiulo & Benassi 1999; Portes 1995), who found that social networks can become social liabilities that restrain entrepreneurs from achieving their business objectives and diminish their performance.

5.3 Social Media Usage and the Digital Entrepreneurs' Performance

The third objective of the research was to establish the relationship between social media usage and digital entrepreneurs' performance. To realize this objective, it was hypothesized (H3) that there is a statistically significant relationship between social media usage and digital entrepreneurs' performance.

The linear regression was first executed to determine the relationship between social media usage and the digital entrepreneurs' performance. Then, Pearson's correlation coefficient was measured to determine the size and direction of the relationship and whether it was statistically significant.

The model as a whole was significant to predict that the digital entrepreneurs' performance was affected by social media usage: The ANOVA model in Table 5 shows that $F(1, 312) = 462.436$, $p < 0.001$. The R^2 for the overall model was 59.8%, with an adjusted R^2 of 59.7%. The model in Table 5 reported a strong size effect. Therefore, this indicates that the predictor variable social media usage can explain 59.8% of the variation in the digital entrepreneurs' performance.

This indicates that the results are coherent with the literature, suggesting that social media usage is a statistically significant determinant of digital entrepreneurs' performance. As elucidated by (Bhattacharya, 2022; Fan et al., 2021; Kanapathipillai, 2021; Olanrewaju et al., 2020; Celebi & Terkan, 2020; Qureshi et al., 2020; Pratono, 2018), the use of social media enhances the entrepreneurs' performance. Moreover, the result of this study is also parallel to (Bhattacharya, 2022; Kanapathipillai & Mahbob, 2021; Gustafsson & Khan, 2017; Mack et al., 2017; Delerue & Sicotte, 2017; Quinton & Wilson, 2016; Nambisan & Zahra, 2016; Park, Sung, & Im, 2017; Quinton & Wilson, 2016; Fischer & Reuber, 2011) who have enlightened that the use of social media can influence entrepreneurial opportunity recognition and has led to enhanced entrepreneurial innovation and networking which in turn increases entrepreneurs' performance. Additionally, the findings of this research refute the findings of (Ahmad et al., 2019; Gavino et al., 2018; Grimmer et al., 2018; Gavino et al., 2018), who cited that social media usage and the information gathered through social media platforms does not significantly impact entrepreneurial performance.

6. Conclusion

This conclusion is based on the relationship between spousal social support, social network, social media usage, and digital entrepreneurs' performance in Malaysia.

6.1 Spousal Social Support and the Digital Entrepreneurs' Performance

Research question one focused on whether there is a statistically significant relationship between spousal social support and the digital entrepreneurs' performance?

The survey response implied that the findings of this research prove and conclude that spousal social support is statistically significant for the digital entrepreneurs' performance in Malaysia when the Omicron variant wave hit Malaysia in early February 2022. This is parallel to the studies conducted by mainstream researchers (Guihua & Linping, 2021; Rasool et al., 2020; Adjei et al., 2019; McDonald et al., 2017; Cruz et al., 2015), who stressed that spousal social support positively impacted an entrepreneurs' performance.

Without spousal social support, digital entrepreneurs will not be able to manage their businesses and find a balance between work and family. The digital entrepreneurs' spouse was an inspiration and a potent force in steering the digital entrepreneurs to make the right decision during the Omicron variant's onslaught in Malaysia. Additionally, it can be concluded that spousal social support played a significant role in providing economic and social support concurrently to digital entrepreneurs during trials and tribulations. Thus, this study has disclosed, deduced, and shrunk the gap in the literature pertaining to the significance of spousal social support in enhancing the digital entrepreneurs' performance during the Omicron variant wave's cataclysm in Malaysia.

6.2 Social Network and the Digital Entrepreneurs' Performance

Research question two is anticipated to determine and resolve if there is a statistically significant relationship between the social network and the digital entrepreneurs' performance?

The survey response indicated a strong statistically significant relationship between the social network and the performance of the digital entrepreneurs during the Omicron variant storm in early February 2022 in Malaysia. Past studies conducted by (Ibrahim et al., 2021; Yani et al., 2020; Weiss et al., 2019; Nasip et al., 2017; Mamun et al., 2016) yielded similar results and supported the conclusion of this study.

In addition to using the digital technologies available, digital entrepreneurs need to establish significantly robust social networks to obtain complementary external resources to achieve the digital entrepreneurs' business objectives.

A formidable social network is a significant source that will enable digital entrepreneurs to achieve astonishing business performance through network interactions, quality of relationships, and external links. Thus, this study has revealed, construed, and narrowed the gap in the literature regarding the significance of social

networks in augmenting the digital entrepreneurs' performance during the Omicron variant's surge in Malaysia.

6.3 Social Media Usage and the Digital Entrepreneurs' Performance

Research question three is intended to reveal if there is a statistically significant relationship between social media usage and the digital entrepreneurs' performance?

The survey response uncovered a strong statistically significant relationship between social media usage and the performance of digital entrepreneurs in Malaysia. Previous research conducted by (Bhattacharya, 2022; Fan et al., 2021; Qureshi et al., 2020; Pratono, 2018) disclose that social media assist entrepreneurs in obtaining crucial resources and opportunities to increase their performance. The conclusions of these researchers match the outcome of this study.

Although many entrepreneurs have lost their business income due to the Covid-19 wave, this research indicates that the digital entrepreneurs who utilise social media can rekindle their business and achieve business performance. By using social media, the digital entrepreneurs will be able to meet and exceed the expectations of omnichannel consumers. Thus, this study has discovered, resolved, and bridged the gap in the literature concerning the significance of social media usage in heightening the digital entrepreneurs' performance during the Omicron variant upheaval in Malaysia.

7. Limitations and Future Research

The focus of this study was only on the digital entrepreneurs in Peninsula Malaysia. Therefore, research can be conducted on a larger scale to compare if spousal social support, social network, and social media usage differ between digital entrepreneurs and conventional entrepreneurs to gain additional knowledge on this area of study.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors of this research would like to declare that there are no conflicts of interest linked with this research, and this research was not sponsored by anyone that could have influenced its outcomes. As the researchers of this study, the authors validate its novelty and assert that this study has not been published previously, and verify that it is not presently being considered for publication elsewhere.

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The authors are academics and independent researchers who have been involved in scholarly and research activities.

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