



Entrepreneurial Leadership Development in Women-Owned Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises in Indonesia: A Narrative Literature Review

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Abstract. This study explores the development of entrepreneurial leadership among female-owned Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Indonesia, representing approximately 64% of the total MSME operators nationwide. Despite their significant contributions to the economy, women entrepreneurs face multifaceted challenges, including restricted access to financing, entrenched socio-cultural biases, and inadequate leadership training, which collectively hinder the growth and sustainability of their enterprises. Through a comprehensive narrative literature review, this study answers the research question by identifying effective leadership development strategies, emphasizing the critical role of technology-integrated training programs in enhancing the leadership capabilities of female entrepreneurs. The findings demonstrate that strengthened leadership competencies contribute positively to business performance and innovation. Furthermore, supportive government policies are vital to creating an enabling environment that fosters the advancement of women-led businesses. The study underscores the necessity of culturally sensitive and context-specific interventions that harness technology to empower women entrepreneurs, thereby enhancing competitiveness, operational efficiency, and business sustainability. Ultimately, these efforts contribute to inclusive economic growth and gender empowerment within the MSME sector.

Keywords: Competency Development; Economic Empowerment; Entrepreneurial Leadership; MSMEs; Women Entrepreneurs.

1. INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship plays a pivotal role in driving economic growth, innovation, and job creation worldwide, particularly through its contribution to economic empowerment and poverty alleviation (Aravik et al., 2025). Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises constitute the backbone of many economies, especially in developing countries where they serve as key drivers of inclusive development. Indonesia, as one of the largest emerging markets in Southeast Asia, boasts a vibrant MSME sector that accounts for approximately 60% of its Gross Domestic Product and roughly 97% of total employment (Shafwatullah & Arquisola, 2024a; Shinozaki, 2022). Within this dynamic landscape, women entrepreneurs have emerged as vital contributors, representing an estimated 64% of all MSME entrepreneurs in the country (Shafwatullah & Arquisola, 2024b), thereby challenging traditional gender norms and fostering inclusive economic participation.

Despite the growing recognition of women's entrepreneurship, female-led MSMEs often face unique challenges that hinder their growth and sustainability. These challenges include limited access to finance, socio-cultural barriers such as gender bias and social stereotypes, constrained networks, and gaps in leadership capabilities (Abdulla & Ahmad, 2023; Setyaningrum et al., 2023). Entrepreneurial leadership, the ability to innovate, take risks, and

strategically guide ventures, has been identified as a critical factor in overcoming these obstacles, as a higher level of entrepreneurial leadership significantly corresponds to enhanced business performance (Ariasih et al., 2024). Developing entrepreneurial leadership skills and specific competencies, such as absorptive capacity, is thus essential for empowering women to navigate complex business environments and scale their enterprises (Wulandari et al., 2025).

This narrative literature review aims to map the existing literature on entrepreneurial leadership development specifically for women operating Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises within the Indonesian context. This focus is particularly suitable given the significant contribution of women entrepreneurs to national and global economies, with a substantial presence in the MSME sector in Indonesia. Despite this, the scholarly discourse on this niche remains underdeveloped, particularly concerning the specific mechanisms and interventions for leadership enhancement among these entrepreneurs (Judijanto et al., 2025). The question research of the study is: What are the key factors, challenges, and strategies identified in the existing literature that influence the development of entrepreneurial leadership among women owners of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in Indonesia.?

In this manuscript, the literature comprises articles published in Scopus, WoS, and national journals. The selection criteria prioritize studies that specifically address entrepreneurial leadership, women entrepreneurs, MSMEs, and the Indonesian context, ensuring the review remains relevant and focused. This review will synthesize findings regarding effective leadership training programs, the unique challenges faced by Indonesian women in entrepreneurial leadership roles, and the impact of leadership development on MSME performance and innovative work behaviour. Furthermore, it will explore how entrepreneurial ecosystems influence women's leadership trajectories within Indonesian MSMEs, and identify gaps in current research to inform future investigations. The methodology employed in this narrative literature review adheres to established guidelines for literature mapping, ensuring a comprehensive and transparent approach to identify, select, and analyze relevant studies. This approach allows for a robust examination of how various factors, including social and institutional processes, contribute to the recognition and sustainability of women's entrepreneurial leadership, moving beyond solely instrumental performance indicators. This review will also address the prevailing gender-neutral application in much of the academic entrepreneurship literature, which often overlooks the critical gender dimensions impacting performance and growth in women-led enterprises (Hilmiana & Alviani, 2023). Specifically, it will investigate how leadership behaviors and moral leadership among women entrepreneurs correlate with employee creativity and overall business success, considering the

nuanced and sometimes contradictory findings in extant literature (Pertiwi et al., 2024). Ultimately, this comprehensive review seeks to provide a nuanced understanding of entrepreneurial leadership within this demographic, identifying key areas for intervention and further scholarly inquiry to foster sustainable growth and empowerment.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The existing literature on women's entrepreneurship in Indonesia highlights both the crucial role of women in the MSME sector and the persistent barriers they encounter (Awalia et al., 2025). These challenges often hinder business growth and place women at a disadvantage compared to their male counterparts, despite a growing landscape of initiatives and policies aimed at promoting women's entrepreneurship (Setyaningrum & Muafi, 2023). Nevertheless, a comprehensive understanding of the specific leadership development strategies tailored to the unique socio-cultural and economic landscape of Indonesian women MSME owners remains largely unexplored in existing academic discourse (Anggadwita & Dhewanto, 2015; Fanaja et al., 2023). This review, therefore, aims to bridge this knowledge gap by systematically analyzing the available research to elucidate effective entrepreneurial leadership development frameworks pertinent to Indonesian women MSME owners (Emon & Nipa, 2024; Lusianawati et al., 2023). This will involve dissecting how foundational factors, structural elements, and contextual influences shape female entrepreneurial leadership within this specific demographic, moving beyond a gender-blind or gender-neutral approach often found in broader entrepreneurship and leadership research (Aparisi-Torrijo & Ribes-Giner, 2022). By synthesizing current research, this review will identify specific leadership behaviors and contextual factors that either facilitate or hinder the development of entrepreneurial leadership among Indonesian women MSME owners. It will also explore the influence of Eastern cultural values on female entrepreneurs' management styles and how these values can provide a new perspective on entrepreneurial leadership research (Franzke et al., 2022).

Additionally, the review will examine how entrepreneurial leadership influences innovation performance and employee creativity within women-led MSMEs, acknowledging the mediating role of innovative work behavior and the moderating effect of self-efficacy in this dynamic (Rumijati & Hakim, 2023). Given that women operate 64.5% of Indonesia's MSMEs, contributing significantly to the national GDP and employment, understanding tailored leadership development is crucial (Herlina et al., 2022). Despite this vital economic contribution, women entrepreneurs in Indonesia frequently face structural and operational barriers, such as limited access to finance, fluctuating market demand, and intense post-

pandemic competition, underscoring the urgent need for targeted leadership interventions (Diawati, 2026). These challenges are often compounded by societal expectations, gender roles, and commercial incentives that can limit women's access to leadership training, technology adoption, and decisive business decision-making (Nurlatifah et al., 2024) (Wulandari et al., 2025). Therefore, an in-depth exploration of entrepreneurial leadership in this context is essential to identify effective strategies for fostering resilience and promoting sustained growth (Ariasih et al., 2024). Furthermore, an examination of entrepreneurial leadership in this specific context could highlight critical gaps in academic literature, particularly concerning the interplay between intellectual agility of employees, entrepreneurial leadership, and innovativeness within micro and small enterprises (Dabić et al., 2021).

This review will also assess the mediating role of government support and business performance in shaping the entrepreneurial leadership landscape for women in Indonesian MSMEs, considering the nuances of rural versus urban settings. Ultimately, this review seeks to offer actionable insights for policymakers, educators, and support organizations to develop bespoke programs that enhance the entrepreneurial leadership capabilities of Indonesian women MSME owners, thereby contributing to both economic development and gender empowerment. This comprehensive analysis will also consider the interplay between entrepreneurial leadership, work engagement, and innovative work behavior within this demographic. It will delve into the mechanisms through which entrepreneurial leadership fosters innovative work behavior and creative self-efficacy among employees in women-led MSMEs (Akbari et al., 2021; Sarwoko, 2020). It will also analyze the effect of educational and training programs provided by governmental and legislative bodies on enhancing the performance and entrepreneurial activities of women entrepreneurs in Indonesia (Reza et al., 2020). Such an investigation is vital, as women entrepreneurs in Indonesia often encounter unique challenges, including self-doubt, limited business networks, and difficulties in accessing funding, all of which are exacerbated by the demands of balancing domestic and professional responsibilities (Astuti et al., 2024).

Consequently, this review will examine how entrepreneurial leadership, characterized by vision setting, risk-taking, adaptability, team building, and decision-making, empowers women to navigate these complexities and drive organizational success. Moreover, understanding the impact of digital leadership and resilience on the success of women-owned micro-enterprises is crucial, especially given the challenges in accessing technology, financing, and networking opportunities (Hisni et al., 2025). This exploration will also assess the role of strategic agility, particularly in the context of digital entrepreneurial leadership, in driving innovation and

competitiveness among Indonesian women-led MSMEs (Jufri & Hadiwibowo, 2025; Sari & Ahmad, 2026). Furthermore, the review will consider how organizational adaptive leadership, fostered by female leadership, mediates the relationship between leadership and financial performance within these enterprises (Laily et al., 2025).

3. METHODOLOGY

Narrative literature reviews play an essential role in scientific research (Baumeister & Leary, 1997). Moreover, Baumeister and Leary confirmed that unlike empirical reports, literature reviews could address broader and more abstract questions, allow for more post hoc theorizing without the risk of capitalizing on chance, provide stronger support for null-hypothesis conclusions, and better recognize and incorporate methodological diversity. A narrative literature review involves the comprehensive collection, critical appraisal, and organized presentation of information from diverse sources such as scholarly journals, books, and prior research reports. The primary objective is to understand the existing body of knowledge, identify research gaps, and establish a robust theoretical foundation for new investigations.

The scope of a literature review encompasses the gathering, evaluation, and synthesis of literature related to the research topic. This section outlines the approach undertaken to identify, select, and synthesize relevant literatures concerning entrepreneurial leadership development among Indonesian women MSME owners to answer the research question: What are the key factors, challenges, and strategies identified in the existing literature that influence the development of entrepreneurial leadership among women owners of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in Indonesia? In this study, the literatures include articles published in Scopus, WoS and national journals within the last 10 years. The selection criteria will focus on studies directly addressing entrepreneurial leadership, women entrepreneurs, MSMEs, and the Indonesian context, ensuring relevance and specificity to the review's scope.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section presents a synthesized overview of the current research landscape concerning entrepreneurial leadership development within Indonesian women-led MSMEs, identifying prevalent themes, emerging trends, and significant gaps in the existing literature. It will systematically categorize findings based on critical determinants of entrepreneurial leadership, such as access to training, policy frameworks, and socio-cultural influences, providing a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted challenges and opportunities

present. This section also highlights the varying impacts of entrepreneurial leadership development initiatives across different geographic regions within Indonesia, considering the distinctions between rural and urban settings. Recent literatures highlight that targeted leadership training and entrepreneurial education significantly bolster competencies such as strategic vision, innovation, and digital adoption among women MSME owners in Indonesia, leading to improved business performance and resilience, as evidenced by studies in regions like East Java, Denpasar, and Jabodetabek (Ariasih et al., 2024; Pertiwi et al., 2024; Shafwatullah & Arquisola, 2024). Emerging patterns from the reviewed studies indicate that transformational leadership, often characterized by inspirational motivation, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation, emerges as the most prevalent and effective style among Indonesian women MSME owners, significantly enhancing venture growth, innovation, and long-term sustainability (Feranita et al., 2020) (Laily et al., 2025) (Mardiana, 2020). Furthermore, the influence of social cognitive theory and social capital on entrepreneurial leadership in these contexts is frequently explored, often linking these theoretical constructs to creative self-efficacy and project success (Amborowati et al., 2026).

Additionally, innovation capability and entrepreneurial leadership have been shown to impact business performance, with innovation acting as a mediating variable in some studies (Laily & Sari, 2024). Specifically, effective entrepreneurial leadership directly influences innovation, which in turn significantly contributes to heightened business performance (Indrawati et al., 2026). Moreover, transformational leadership styles among Indonesian women MSME owners enhance business performance through mediating mechanisms such as improved decision-making, effective marketing communication, and self-motivation (Adelia et al., 2024; Laily et al., 2022). Beyond leadership styles, access to capital, entrepreneurship education, and robust support networks are critical factors supporting the economic capacity and independence of women entrepreneurs (Arwani et al., 2024). Conversely, challenges such as limited access to digital literacy and business networks can impede the effectiveness of entrepreneurial leadership in driving business success.

Despite those challenges, tailored interventions addressing financial literacy, digital transformation, and business acumen have been shown to significantly enhance the operational efficiency and market competitiveness of women-led MSMEs (Hidayah, 2023; Lestari et al., 2025; Zahwa et al., 2025). These findings collectively underscore the imperative for targeted policy interventions and developmental programs aimed at bolstering the strategic leadership capabilities and innovation potential of women entrepreneurs in the Indonesian MSME sector (Herlita, 2025; Susanti et al., 2023). Such programs should strategically integrate

entrepreneurial and transformational leadership development to foster strategic planning, innovation management, and competitive positioning, as these leadership styles are empirically linked to improved strategic outcomes for MSMEs in Indonesia (Aviyanti & Widyastuti, 2024). The reviewed literature underscores the necessity of customizing entrepreneurial leadership development programs to mitigate socio-cultural barriers, limited resource access, and digital literacy deficits among Indonesian women MSME owners, with technology-based training demonstrating significant positive effects on business performance, decision-making, and competencies. This approach is further supported by findings indicating a strong positive relationship between entrepreneurial leadership and SME business performance, where enhanced leadership directly correlates with improved performance outcomes. For instance, studies consistently show that entrepreneurial education, improved financial literacy, and the strategic adoption of digital tools empower women entrepreneurs to enhance their self-confidence and master financial conditions, thereby maximizing access to business opportunities (Raspati & Kadiyono, 2023).

Moreover, government policies that provide access to resources, training, and support are crucial for enhancing women's entrepreneurial activities and overall economic empowerment (Christodoulou et al., 2024). Nevertheless, persistent challenges such as inadequate access to leadership training, financial constraints, and socio-cultural barriers continue to undermine entrepreneurial leadership development among Indonesian women MSME owners, highlighting the urgent need for tailored government policies that prioritize technology-integrated coaching programs and competency-building initiatives to overcome these obstacles (Tanti et al., 2021). Such targeted interventions can significantly enhance the strategic role of women's leadership within MSMEs, contributing to organizational sustainability and overall economic growth (Pradani et al., 2025). This emphasizes the critical role of robust policy frameworks and specialized support systems in fostering an environment conducive to the advancement of women-led MSMEs in Indonesia, particularly concerning digital literacy and market access. Accordingly, this literature review methodically charts the extant literature on entrepreneurial leadership development among women MSME owners in Indonesia, illuminating recurrent themes such as transformational leadership styles, technology-integrated training initiatives, efficacious intervention strategies, and critical gaps in the rigorous evaluation of tailored programs. It further describes the interplay between internal factors like entrepreneurial orientation and external influences such as socio-cultural norms and digital transformation challenges, which collectively shape entrepreneurial leadership development and performance among Indonesian women MSME owners (Kurniawan et al., 2023).

This review synthesizes current research to underscore the multifaceted challenges and opportunities confronting women entrepreneurs in Indonesia's MSME sector, particularly focusing on how entrepreneurial leadership development can be leveraged for sustainable growth and economic empowerment. Solid governmental strategies coupled with dedicated assistance initiatives play a pivotal part in cultivating a supportive setting that propels the progress of women-run small businesses throughout Indonesia, above all by bridging gaps in digital proficiency and broadening avenues to wider markets. In particular, technology-based leadership training initiatives that simultaneously build entrepreneurial competencies and digital proficiency among women MSME owners have proven effective in elevating business performance, decision-making, and overall competitiveness. Such efforts also promote greater entry into broader markets, streamlined daily operations, and more effective gathering of essential resources, enabling these women to overcome entrenched systemic barriers while promoting enduring and viable business models. These strategies enable women-led ventures to evolve from informal operations into structured formal enterprises, thereby strengthening their embedding within the national economic fabric. This shift to formality proves essential for securing formal banking and credit options while linking these ventures to international supply networks, thereby heightening their broader economic contributions and capacity to endure shocks. This progression highlights how digital communication proves vital not only for broadening market access but also for cultivating a robust entrepreneurial sense of self and sharpening decision-making skills. This aspect holds special relevance, as embracing digital shifts combined with stronger technical and interpersonal abilities markedly boosts women's drive to pursue and commitment to digital business ventures. In turn, effective communication functions as a cohesive tool that facilitates market growth, the cultivation of an entrepreneurial mindset, and skill enhancement for women business owners. Such measures encompass targeted communication strategies alongside intensive skill-building initiatives that markedly enhance information sharing, teamwork in tackling challenges, and overall entrepreneurial prowess among women business owners. These insights underscore the vital importance of holistic strategies blending digital skills, effective communication, and skill enhancement efforts to build toughness and advance equal opportunities for women in business.

Despite growing attention to entrepreneurial leadership among women MSMEs in Indonesia, existing literature remains fragmented, with limited context-specific frameworks, insufficient gender-sensitive analysis, weak integration of multi-level determinants, and a lack of rigorous empirical evaluation of leadership development interventions. Furthermore, the mechanisms linking leadership to innovation, performance, and digital transformation

outcomes remain underexplored, particularly across diverse regional and socio-cultural settings. The author suggested establishing broad policy structures alongside dedicated assistance programs remains essential to cultivate a nurturing ecosystem that propels the growth of women-owned small businesses, especially by bolstering digital skills and expanding market reach. Such support entails granting access to cloud-based technologies and online marketing tools, allowing women business owners to respond swiftly to market changes, base choices on solid data, connect with international customers, and compete more fairly with bigger firms. These digital resources are essential not just for optimizing business processes and reaching new markets but also for helping women entrepreneurs break through longstanding gender obstacles and nurture a forward-looking mindset centered on creativity, calculated risks, and pursuing emerging possibilities.

5. CONCLUSION

This narrative literature review systematically gathered, appraised, and synthesized existing literature on entrepreneurial leadership development for women micro, small, and medium-sized enterprise owners in Indonesia. Answering the research question, this study identifies crucial themes, including the prevalence of specific leadership styles, the impact of technology-integrated training, and the necessity for robust evaluation methodologies to assess program efficacy. The review's insights further reveal that advances in digital adoption, coupled with focused training in technical and interpersonal abilities, substantially boost women entrepreneurs' motivation and active participation in online business pursuits. These results point to the pressing demand for focused programs to strengthen digital competencies, address cultural and social inequalities, and implement equitable policies that nurture a thriving environment for female-led ventures. From this body of work, practical guidance emerges for government officials, local communities, and supporting groups to bolster women-run businesses and drive fairer economic progress across genders. This comprehensive analysis demonstrates how digital advancements greatly improve access to markets, streamline daily operations, and facilitate the acquisition of vital resources, thereby enabling female business owners to surmount longstanding systemic hurdles and more deeply embed their companies within the national economy. Shifting informal operations into officially registered entities opens pathways to conventional lending and worldwide trade linkages, amplifying their economic influence while building greater stability against disruptions. Combining digital advancements with efforts to advance gender equity significantly improves access to broader markets and streamlines business operations, allowing women entrepreneurs to overcome

deep-rooted institutional challenges. Moreover, such combined approaches cultivate a strong entrepreneurial spirit among women, empowering them to adopt fresh ideas, handle uncertainties adeptly, and actively pursue new prospects amid shifting market conditions.

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