

## PINK DOESN'T MEAN WEAK: UNVEILING THE TRIUMPHS AND CHALLENGES OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN BALAYAN, BATANGAS

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### Abstract

The world of entrepreneurship has historically been linked with taking risks and the potential for significant rewards. However, there persists a notable gender imbalance in the entrepreneurial landscape, wherein women entrepreneurs remain a minority. Women navigating the entrepreneurial path encounter distinct challenges, setting their experiences apart from their male counterparts. In Balayan, Batangas, despite strides towards gender equality, women entrepreneurs continue to face challenges in the entrepreneurial landscape. This qualitative study delves into the experiences of 10 successful female entrepreneurs who met specific criteria. Accordingly, semi-structured interviews are conducted, exploring various aspects of participants' experiences and revealing their motivations, achievements, challenges, and strategies. Thematic analysis reveals the connection between familial, community-driven, and personal motivations that drive these entrepreneurs forward. Despite facing obstacles such as financial constraints and gender biases, they prioritize financial gains and personal growth. With resilience, innovation, and dedication, these women overcome challenges and achieve success, utilizing support networks and online marketing strategies to their advantage. Recommendations include empowering women in entrepreneurship, strengthening support networks, introducing tailored financial literacy programs, and advocating against gender biases. Implement skill development initiatives and provide specialized education in online marketing. Engage in policy advocacy, celebrate success stories, and continuously research challenges and successes. Foster collaborative partnerships between businesses, educational institutions, and communities, and advocate for increased funding opportunities for sustainable growth. This research emphasizes the strength and capabilities of women entrepreneurs in Balayan, Batangas, affirming that "pink doesn't mean weak."

**Keywords:** *Women entrepreneurship, Gender equality, Female entrepreneurs, Success stories, Balayan Batangas*

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## Introduction

The entrepreneurial landscape, often synonymous with risk-taking and potential rewards (Hayes, Drury, & Munichello, 2023), remains markedly imbalanced in terms of gender representation, with women entrepreneurs constituting a minority (Uzialko, 2023). The distinct challenges faced by women embarking on entrepreneurial ventures diverge from those encountered by their male counterparts (Uzialko, 2023).

Historically, societal expectations have placed women in subordinate roles, constraining their leadership opportunities (Rani, 2020). Women entrepreneurs wield economic empowerment within the business sphere, as defined comprehensively by Frederick Harbison. These entrepreneurs navigate various obstacles, including gender bias, cultural attitudes, limited access to resources, and financial constraints, which hinder their entrepreneurial journeys (Kapinga & Montero, 2017).

Moreover, the symbolism of the color pink, traditionally associated with femininity and often misconstrued as a symbol of weakness, has been redefined as "pink doesn't mean weak." This powerful notion challenges the stereotypes that have marginalized women in the business world and asserts that gender should never be a hindrance to entrepreneurial success. "Pink doesn't mean weak" serves as a compelling reminder that women possess inherent strength, knowledge, and talent, which are just as formidable as those of their male counterparts when it comes to leading and thriving in the business arena.

As highlighted by Nair (2024), successful female entrepreneurs are recognized for their pursuit of knowledge and development opportunities, evident through their engagement in educational programs and workshops. Despite the persistent gender-based entrepreneurship gap, women leaders possess distinctive qualities positioning them as formidable entrepreneurs (Raman, 2023). In the Philippines, women make significant contributions to entrepreneurship, particularly in small to medium enterprises, with notable representation in ownership and leadership positions (Philippine Report on Women and Entrepreneurship, 2024). These findings underscore the significant contributions of women to entrepreneurial activities (Noguera et al., 2013), while also shedding light on the persistent gender imbalance in entrepreneurship (Elam et al., 2019).

Surprisingly, recent data from the Business Permits and Licensing Office of Balayan demonstrates a shift, with a higher number of businesses operated by women compared to men. This shift underscores the resilience of female entrepreneurs amidst challenges and reshapes societal perceptions. Institutions such as the World Bank and leading corporations are increasingly supporting women-owned businesses (Rani, 2020).

In connection, it is observed that there are lots of success stories of women entrepreneurs in Balayan, Batangas, that are left untold. And to comprehend this, it is imperative to delve into their experiences and achievements. In light of this, our research endeavors to achieve five primary objectives: (1) to elucidate the motivating factors that propelled them forward despite these formidable obstacles; (2) to acknowledge the achievements that women entrepreneurs received throughout their business journeys; (3) to identify the challenges confronted by successful female entrepreneurs in Balayan, Batangas; (4) to explore the strategies employed by women entrepreneurs to surmount these challenges when initiating their businesses; and (5) to discern the key factors that have contributed

to their business triumphs. This study not only aims to illuminate the hardships faced by women entrepreneurs but also seeks to serve as a guide for aspiring female entrepreneurs, fostering a deeper understanding of the challenges and strategies that characterize their entrepreneurial journeys.

## **Statement of the Problem**

The primary goal of this study is to gain insight into the life experiences and challenges encountered by accomplished women entrepreneurs in Balayan, Batangas. Specifically, this study seeks to address the following inquiries:

1. What were the personal motivations that prompted women entrepreneurs in Balayan, Batangas, to embark on their entrepreneurial journeys and initiate their businesses?
2. What achievements and successes have women entrepreneurs in Balayan, Batangas, accomplished throughout their entrepreneurial pursuits?
3. What are the challenges encountered by successful women entrepreneurs in Balayan, Batangas, in their entrepreneurial journeys?
4. How do women entrepreneurs in Balayan, Batangas, navigate and surmount the challenges encountered during the inception and operation of their businesses?
5. What are the factors that contribute to the success of women entrepreneurs in Balayan, Batangas, and distinguish them in the entrepreneurial landscape?

## **Methodology**

### **Research Method and Design**

In this study, a qualitative research approach was adopted, specifically utilizing a case study design, to explore the complexities and contextual details of the phenomenon under investigation (Baxter & Jack, 2015). This qualitative methodology allows for a comprehensive examination of individual experiences and perspectives, facilitating a deeper understanding of the subject matter (Richard, 2023). Building upon this qualitative framework, the research study employed the descriptive case study method to gain insight into successful female entrepreneurs and their life experiences. As highlighted by Ebneyamini & Sadeghi Moghadam (2018), a case study involves analyzing a limited number of real-world events and connections, looking at a phenomenon within its actual context. Following suggestions by Hollweck (2015) and Yin (2014), case study research employs various data collection methods to thoroughly investigate the phenomenon. This approach is particularly suitable for describing the life experiences of successful women entrepreneurs in Balayan, Batangas, including their motivations, achievements, challenges, reasons for success, and key factors contributing to their business triumphs.

### **Population and Sampling**

The study employed a purposive sampling technique to carefully select research participants. Purposive sampling, as described by Acharya et al. (2013), was commonly utilized in research when specific criteria were essential for participant selection. In this study, the researchers intended to select a total of 10 participants who met the following criteria: they had to be women entrepreneurs who owned one or more businesses located in Balayan, Batangas, or in nearby municipalities, possessed a minimum of 5 to 10 years of business experience, fell within the age range of 21 to 60 years, and were residents of Balayan, Batangas. Additionally, the researchers also included specific sub-criteria incorporated into the selection process, aligning with established factors known to contribute to the reliability and validity of the study results. The following sub-criteria were that they had to be women entrepreneurs who had received recognition from organizational bodies, inspired others and created job opportunities, possessed a strong understanding of their business' financial aspects, built and led a skilled team, continuously innovated products or services based on customer preferences, effectively mitigated risks, cultivated valuable professional relationships, were part of a supportive business network, prioritized long-term sustainability over short-term gains, were mentally and emotionally prepared for challenges, and had conducted thorough market research to identify potential opportunities and target customers. Additionally, this method aligned with the insights provided by Frost (2023), who suggested that purposive sampling relied on the researcher's judgment to choose participants capable of offering valuable responses to the research question. It was worth noting that while purposive sampling required fewer resources, it remained a highly effective approach, as supported by Aransiola (2023).

### **Instrumentations**

The primary data collection method for the research involved semi-structured interviews, recommended by Mashuri et al. (2022) for acquiring in-depth insights aligned with the study's objectives. Researchers also utilized Google Forms or online interviews when in-person sessions were impractical due to participant availability. Interview guides were developed to explore various aspects of participants' experiences, including personal journeys, motivations, challenges, and strategies, with open-ended questions allowing respondents to express their experiences freely.

When in-person interviews were not feasible, particularly due to participant availability and convenience, Google Forms or online interview platforms were utilized to maintain flexibility and facilitate participation. To ensure participant engagement and consent for the online interviews through Google Forms, researchers initially sought permission offline and then informed potential participants of their intent to contact them via messenger to facilitate the online interview process through the provided Google Forms. This proactive approach aimed to respect participants' time constraints while maintaining open communication and obtaining consent for their participation in the study.

The instrumentation underwent rigorous validation to ensure reliability and validity. Face and content validation were conducted by two subject matter experts in the field, who reviewed the interview guides and provided valuable feedback. Subsequently, the instrumentation was revised according to their suggestions, enhancing its validity and alignment with the research objectives.

### **Data Collection**

To gather necessary data, the researchers obtained permission from the school and the municipality of the chosen locale and distributed consent and participation letters to identified participants. Before interviews, participants were briefed on study objectives and ethical considerations. Face-to-face interviews were audio-recorded with consent, but flexibility was maintained for challenges like participant availability. Online interviews via Google Forms were used as an alternative. Participants were contacted prior to online interviews through provided contact numbers to accommodate busy schedules and ensure continued participation, aligning with research ethics and addressing time constraints.

## Data Analysis

The transcripts of interviews will undergo thematic analysis, a method for identifying recurring themes, experiences, challenges, and successes. Thematic analysis involves systematically organizing and interpreting qualitative data to discern patterns and meanings. Three coding methods will be used: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding.

1. Open Coding: Data will be broken down into segments, and codes assigned to capture each segment's essence, allowing exploration of various themes and patterns.
2. Axial Coding: Codes will be organized and connected to identify relationships and patterns within the data, establishing a structured framework.
3. Selective Coding: Core themes emerging from axial coding will be identified and refined, focusing on the most significant and relevant themes to address research objectives (Siegler, 2023).

By employing thematic analysis and these coding methods, the study aims to provide a detailed understanding of the experiences of accomplished women entrepreneurs in Balayan, Batangas.

## Ethical Considerations

In this research, paramount ethical considerations include obtaining informed consent from all participants and maintaining their privacy and confidentiality. Participants will be provided clear information about the study's purpose, their role, and their rights. Measures to ensure privacy and anonymity include allocating unique code names or numbers, storing data securely, and maintaining confidentiality, except in legal reporting obligations. Participants will be contacted for permission for online interviews via text or messenger, and confidentiality will be maintained throughout the process. Additionally, participation will be voluntary, and participants can withdraw without consequences.

## Results and Discussions



Presented below are the findings and data analysis gathered from the responses of the 10 women entrepreneurs in Balayan, Batangas. Through thorough data analysis, several themes emerged, shedding light on the experiences of women entrepreneurs in the town, and the ways they overcome the challenges they face.

**Table 1**

*Personal Motivations of Women Entrepreneurs in Balayan, Batangas*

MAJOR THEMES	CODES
Family-Centric Motivations	Participant 1: "The main reason why I continued the family business is to make sure that my elderly parents have a companion in my house." Participant 2: "Aside from providing for the family, our business aims to provide avenue for our townspeople for improvement of their families financially." Participant 5: "I established this business to meet my family's needs." Participant 6: "I started this business mainly for my family, so that we can have a source of income and because this business can greatly help us financially." Participant 7: "I started this business for my family." Participant 10: "Secondly, I started this business for my kids."
Community Improvement	Participant 2: "...our business aims to provide avenue for our townspeople for improvement of their families financially." Participant 6: "Back then, there were not a lot of business in this field, so to fill that gap and to provide the needs of the citizens we initiated this business."
Mentorship and Support	Participant 3: "My personal motivation is my half Chinese mentor, who encouraged me to start a business. She provided financial and emotional support, guiding me in various aspects and teaching me effective business strategies."
Self-Motivation and Passion	Participant 4: "I don't really have a particular motivation. I started this business because being an entrepreneur is what I want." Participant 5: "Through my patience and perseverance, I was able to open my business." Participant 8: "I motivated myself to start this business." Participant 9: "Hard work and perseverance are my motivations." Participant 10: "First of all, I started this business because I encountered a problem back then then I wondered what if I open a water refilling station in our barangay with clean and pure water."

Following interviews with 10 participants, the study revealed four themes associated with the Personal Motivations of Women Entrepreneurs in Balayan, Batangas. These themes include:

1. Family-Centric Motivations
2. Community Improvement
3. Mentorship and Support
4. Self-Motivation and Passion

**Family-Centric Motivation**

The study explores diverse themes related to understanding the personal motivations of women entrepreneurs in Balayan, Batangas. Family emerged as a primary source of motivation for four participants (P1, P2, P5, P6, P7, P10). Their collective statements highlighted family as a powerful driving force, fueling a desire to forge a better future while instilling a profound sense of purpose and responsibility. Moreover, the inherent flexibility of entrepreneurship was cited as a key factor, enabling these women to effectively balance career pursuits with family priorities, fostering a more fulfilling and sustainable lifestyle. This aligns with research emphasizing the significance of family motivation in job performance (Menges et al., 2017). Drawing on theories of prosocial motivation and action identification, it proposes that family motivation enhances energy, reduces stress, and becomes particularly crucial in situations where intrinsic motivation might be lacking.

### **Community Improvement**

Notably, two participants highlighted the role of community improvement as a crucial factor shaping their personal motivations. Participant 2 emphasized how community improvement can profoundly influence businesswomen by instilling a sense of purpose and social responsibility. Engaging in initiatives for community betterment not only aligns with their values but also enhances their reputation. Meanwhile, Participant 6 initiated her business to fill a gap in their town, suggesting a broader goal of community improvement. Additionally, the reciprocation of community support creates a positive environment, offering personal and professional benefits for businesswomen.

### **Mentorship and Support**

Furthermore, mentorship and support were crucial aspects of personal motivation, with participant 3 citing that her mentor played an important role in encouraging her to start a business, offering not only financial support but also emotional guidance. Establishing a network of mentors aids in managing challenges and fostering personal and professional growth, aligning with research emphasizing mentoring's role in entrepreneurial success (Yitshaki & Drori, 2018; Moulson, 2015; Jamshed et al., 2015). According to Nathanael Moulson (2015), mentoring is a proven approach for enhancing the success of new entrepreneurs and their business enterprises. To reinforce this claim, Jamshed M. et al. (2015) stated that mentors play an important role in an individual's entrepreneurial development. He helps businesses with everything from business planning to establishing goods and growth.

### **Self-Motivation and Passion**

Another noteworthy theme involves the self-motivation and passion of successful women entrepreneurs. Four individuals (P4, P5, P8, P9, and P10) highlighted that self-motivation and passion were motivating forces in starting their own businesses. Participant 4 defined her entrepreneurial experience as one driven by passion, which supported her efforts. Participants 8, 9, and 10 emphasized self-motivation as the driving force for navigating the entrepreneurial landscape. Women often leverage their deep commitment to chosen interests, contributing significantly to the resilience and triumph of their ventures. This aligns with research highlighting how pursuing passions contributes to personal growth and satisfaction (Wall-Andrews & Shakeir, 2023). Overall, these themes shed light on the motivational forces driving women entrepreneurs' successes in Balayan, Batangas.



**Table 2**

*Achievements and Successes of Women Entrepreneurs in Balayan, Batangas*

MAJOR THEMES	CODES
Financial Achievements:	<p>Participant 1: "Through our business earnings, we are able to buy back our farm lot in San Jose, Tuy, which costs around 6M."</p> <p>Participant 4: "My main accomplishments include being able to send my children to school, helped them, built the house, and I bought motorcycles."</p> <p>Participant 5: "After ten years of doing business, I was able to buy a second-hand car. Another decade later, I managed to build my own house and acquire land."</p> <p>Participant 6: "I committed to buying our Fortuner car, spending five years paying for it, all made possible through the profits from my flower business."</p> <p>Participant 7: "I was able to send my children and grandchildren to school, buy land, and purchase multiple vehicles."</p> <p>Participant 9: "I was able to have my house repaired, bought a car (Navara), and another vehicle. I also purchased a piece of land, and my children have completed their studies."</p> <p>Participant 10: "First and foremost, financially, I no longer have a problem with my family's expenses for my children's education. My water refilling business has become a source of income, and I've managed to invest in a vehicle, thanks to my water venture."</p>
Recognition and Awards	<p>Participant 2: "Recognition and Awards as top-performing Sales Leader with free trips locally and internationally as a reward." "Having bagged the Branch of The Year for 3 years had motivated all stakeholders to hold on to the business despite all the challenges that come our way."</p> <p>Participant 5: "During my two years with Reyes Haircutters franchise in Balayan, we ranked among the top 10 outstanding salons in Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao."</p>
Business Growth (Expansion and Stability)	<p>Participant 3: "My achievements are we were able to open a branch and with that, the business grew more. And as of now, it is still operating and thriving."</p> <p>Participant 9: "Our achievements include the business being stable and the number of our clients grew."</p>
Educational Privileges	<p>Participant 4: "I was able to help my children graduate as well as my grandchildren. As well as, I was able to send 2 of my sons abroad."</p> <p>Participant 8: "My accomplishments include being able to provide good education for my children as well as to provide their basic needs."</p>

After interviewing 10 participants, the study identified four themes related to the major achievements and successes of women entrepreneurs in Balayan, Batangas

1. Financial Achievements



2. Recognition Awards
3. Business Growth (expansion and stability)
4. Educational Privileges

## **Financial Achievements**

This study delves into various themes surrounding the achievements and successes of women entrepreneurs. Financial achievements emerge as a central theme, with seven participants (P1, P4, P5, P6, P7, P9, and P10) highlighting significant milestones such as property acquisition, vehicle ownership, and providing educational support for their families. This observation aligns with the findings of Ganguli et al. (2021), which suggest that the presence of external rewards motivated participants to exert more effort in their business operations, consequently improving their chances of achieving success.

## **Recognition Awards**

Another prominent theme is the attainment of recognition awards. Participants received acknowledgment for their contributions to their businesses and the economy. Participant 2, for instance, received awards as a top-performing Sales Leader, fostering motivation and productivity among stakeholders. Jones et al. (2014) support the notion that such awards contribute to strategic advantage and business improvement. Meanwhile, Participant 5's mention of ranking among the top 10 outstanding salons in Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao during her tenure with Reyes Haircutters franchise signifies not only personal recognition but also positions the business prominently within a competitive regional context. Such recognition not only serves as a validation of their hard work but also contributes to their visibility and credibility within the community and industry.

## **Business Growth**

Business growth is also highlighted, with two participants (P3 and P9) sharing their experiences of successfully expanding their ventures through opening another branch, and ensuring the stability of their operations that resulted to their increase in number of customer.

## **Educational Privileges**

Simultaneously, educational privileges emerge as another significant theme, with participants (P4 and P8) facilitating the education of their children and grandchildren, showcasing the broader societal impact of entrepreneurial success on education within the community. These narratives collectively emphasize the vital role of entrepreneurship in transforming lives within the Balayan, Batangas, community.

## **Table 3**



*Challenges Encountered by Successful Women Entrepreneurs in Balayan, Batangas*

MAJOR THEMES	CODES
Financial Challenges	<p>Participant 1: "One setback is the lack of government assistance. We once tried availing the DTI assistance to improve our production process, but it is quite too pricey for us."</p> <p>Participant 7: "Yes, sometimes we lacked capital or investment, that's why we also resorted to borrowing money and having debt."</p> <p>Participant 9: "Back then, when I was just starting, I had limited capital."</p> <p>Participant 10: "Yes, there were many challenges. Firstly, even in the municipality, I thought establishing a business would be easy, but it wasn't. They demanded a lot, especially money, as I started with limited capital."</p>
Market Competition and Competitors	<p>Participant 3: "I faced a challenge due to a lack of capital at that time. As a result, I had to borrow money from banking institutions, which created another capital difficulty. There were good and bad effects in the business. It was good because I was able to provide the need of the client and I also somehow earned something in return. There were a bad side because of course you have to share your income. Instead of having additional finances, it was immediately sent to them. But it's fine because I was still able to survive. And I had competition right in front of me, and at times it felt like I was being underestimated."</p> <p>Participant 5: "When I started this business, it wasn't really that hard because I already have experienced but maybe in the middle of the progress of my business, I experienced encountering competitors – it's inevitable and a normal part of the business landscape. Competitions are normal in a business, how we handle it is what makes it different. What's important is that you are willing to innovate, up to date, and aware of the new trends."</p> <p>Participant 6: "Of course, there is fear – the fear of incurring losses is the first thought that comes to mind, fearing that it might not make a profit. Criticism in business is inevitable; there will always be those who try to bring you down so they can rise."</p> <p>Participant 7: "We experienced being belittled by our competitors. Competitors will always be there, but if you will continue to study and work harder, you will be motivated to do better for your business."</p> <p>Participant 10: "The delivery aspect also posed difficulties; sometimes, my staff would fall ill. As a woman, I had to take on a more masculine role, handling responsibilities traditionally associated with men."</p>
Dealing with Bad Debts	<p>Participant 2: "Since the business caters to trust with our clients through allowing credit of our products, there are numerous times that we experienced a heavy blow of bad debts."</p> <p>Participant 7: "Many problems arose. Of course, there were issues with the staff, and sometimes customers fail to pay. Our outstanding balances became noncollectable. Our business was affected back then because some people stopped paying and forgetting about their debts."</p>

Challenges in Business Perception	<p>Participant 3: "Initially, I ponder how people would react to my business, questioning if the business I entered is the right one, if it will thrive in the market."</p> <p>Participant 4: "My husband opposes me relocating the business, fearing potential losses and expressing concerns that I might not have the expertise, questioning my capability to handle a business."</p> <p>Participant 5: "The most significant challenge I faced as a female entrepreneur was perhaps the emotional aspect. The difference lies in the fact that women, being emotional, may find it more challenging compared to their male entrepreneurs in dealing with various problem situations in business."</p> <p>Participant 6: "Facing criticism in business is inevitable; individuals will attempt to undermine your efforts in order to elevate themselves. But even still, you have to do your best to prove that you are not what they say."</p>
External Factors Impacting Business	<p>Participant 1: "The continued price increase of the raw materials and other stuff needed in our daily production, i.e., gasul, shipping cost of packaging materials, etc."</p> <p>Participant 8: "I felt the decline during the pandemic; it had a significant impact on us. Returning now, after several years of the pandemic, our customer base isn't as extensive, but we're still making a profit and managing to get by."</p> <p>Participant 9: "I needed to have a strong and healthy body to continue the business."</p>
Gender-Related Challenges	<p>Participant 2: "Maybe because our business usually caters to women, I can't really think of any challenges that point to being a woman."</p> <p>Participant 6: "The most significant challenge I faced as a female entrepreneur was perhaps the emotional aspect. The difference lies in the fact that women, being emotional, may find it more challenging compared to their male entrepreneurs in dealing with various problem situations in business."</p>

After analyzing the data from the interview of 10 participants in the study about the different challenges faced by women entrepreneurs, the following themes emerged:

1. Financial Challenges
2. Market Competition and Competitors
3. Dealing with Bad Debts
4. Challenges in Business Perception
5. External Factors Impacting Business
6. Gender-Related Challenges

### Financial Challenges

The study examines the challenges faced by successful women entrepreneurs in Balayan, Batangas, revealing several significant themes. Financial challenges, including limited access to capital and government assistance, emerged prominently. Participants (P1, P7, P9, and P10) highlighted the struggle to obtain financing, resorting to borrowing money, and facing difficulties in availing government support.

## **Market Competition and Competitors**

Market competition and competitors was another central theme, with entrepreneurs, particularly P3, P5, P6, P7, P10 expressing concerns about sustaining profitability amid competition and criticism from rivals. The fear of incurring losses and dealing with criticism from competitors were highlighted, emphasizing the importance of innovation and staying informed about market trends. This aligns with the study done by Dea Saveska (2021) which she stated that competitive environments have significantly impacted a corporation's strategic goals and investment management, consistently occupying attention. They must navigate challenges, understand evolving environments, and adapt to maintain their business position.

## **Dealing with Bad Debts**

Dealing with bad debts posed a significant challenge, impacting cash flow and operational stability for businesses extending credit to clients. According to the insights gathered from participants in the study, specifically P2 and P7, instances were highlighted where outstanding balances became noncollectable, significantly impacting the day-to-day operations of their businesses. This not only poses a financial strain but also underscores the delicate balance entrepreneurs must maintain between trust-building with clients and managing potential financial risks associated with bad debts. Supporting this observation, FasterCapital (2023), an online accelerator operating globally, found in their study on small business challenges that bad debts were a common concern among entrepreneurs, impacting their cash flow and overall financial stability.

## **Challenges in Business Perception**

Moreover, challenges in business perception were evident, with participants (P3, P4, P5, P6) facing doubts from spouses and emotional hurdles related to gender stereotypes. The emotional aspect of business, especially for female entrepreneurs, was emphasized, highlighting the additional challenges they may face in dealing with problem situations compared to their male counterparts (Kumar, 2018).

## **External Factors Impacting Business**

External factors impacting business, such as the continuous increase in raw material prices and the effects of the pandemic, were highlighted by three participants (P1, P8, P9). Participants discussed challenges in maintaining customer bases and adjusting to the evolving market conditions. The first participant (P1) highlights the challenge of continued price increases in raw materials necessary for daily production, such as gasul and shipping costs for packaging materials. This underscores the vulnerability of these entrepreneurs to market fluctuations, where the rising

costs of essential inputs can directly impact operational expenses, potentially affecting profitability. However, the decline in Participant 8’s customer base during the pandemic reflects the global trend observed across various sectors, where businesses faced challenges in maintaining their clientele amid economic uncertainties (Gu, 2021). Additionally, Participant 9's statement introduces a personal dimension to external factors impacting business – the necessity for a strong and healthy body to sustain business operations. According to Keuilian (2018), maintaining a healthy body positively affects the performance of your business, highlighting the significance of personal well-being in entrepreneurial endeavors.

**Gender-Related Challenges**

Lastly, gender-related challenges were explored, with two participants (P2, P6) expressing that being a woman did not pose significant obstacles in their businesses. However, the emotional aspect of entrepreneurship was reiterated as a notable challenge for female entrepreneurs. Moreover, research by Huettermann and Bruch (2019) and Rhee et al. (2017) suggests that when work-related emotional exhaustion arises, it may lead to a decrease in firm performance. This is because women entrepreneurs may lack the discretionary energy needed to run their firms successfully. Additionally, according to Motilewa et al. (2015), societal gender expectations often stereotype females as primarily homemakers, discouraging their involvement in high-risk entrepreneurial activities. This stereotype hampers many female entrepreneurs from initiating, managing, and expanding successful businesses, exposing them to various political, economic, and social challenges as emphasized by feminist theory.

**Table 4**

*Navigating and Surmounting Challenges for Women Entrepreneurs in Balayan, Batangas*

MAJOR THEMES	CODES
Utilizing Online Marketing	Participant 1: "We try to increase our market by utilizing online marketing." Participant 6: "Social media helped me improve because I was able to study. As well as, I use the internet and social media as a support system to promote my business, and that really helped with our business."
Support Systems and Mentoring	Participant 2: "Aside from money, human power or resources and connections are helpful in addressing any challenges that an entrepreneur faces." Participant 3: "I was able to overcome these challenges with the help of my co-workers, my staff, my friends and of course my mentor whom I will never forget. Even though I am not her family, she really helped and supported me with my journey. I was able to survive because of her teachings." Participant 5: "Self affirmation and self-confidence in your ability and in your goal. That’s what you need to overcome challenges that come in your way. Your determination, your self-affirmation and belief in yourself, that’s what’s important." Participant 6: "Self-confidence and continuous learning helped me overcome those challenges."

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	<p>Participant 7: "We overcome those challenges by asking our staff who is assigned in reminding the balances of our clients to take charge and ask them for their payments."</p> <p>Participant 10: "My support system are my children who help me and my business be successful and progress."</p>
<p>Financial Strategies</p>	<p>Participant 4: "I was able to survive a lot of challenges, through the help of my staff and co-workers here. I also tried financing and borrowing money."</p> <p>Participant 8: "I resorted in borrowing to <i>'bumbay'</i> to be able to overcome financial challenges.</p> <p>Participant 9: "It is difficult to start a business with a lot of responsibility, persistence, diligence, and dedication are very important factors that helped me to achieve success." "I sought financial support through borrowing."</p> <p>Participant 10: "I was more stable financially because of my business. I was also able to buy cars."</p>
<p>Quality Output and Work Ethic</p>	<p>Participant 1: "One business secret that my father has left me with is 'if a task is once began never leave it til it's done. Be the labor great or small, do it well or not at all.' We keep in mind to make quality output to retain and increase our market. Make our products market themselves with its good quality."</p>
<p>Teamwork and Encouragement</p>	<p>Participant 5: "Teamwork is important. Embrace the role of a businesswoman or businessman, not just a boss. Consider yourself an active part of the team, working collaboratively. Support your staff, share your knowledge, and help them achieve success. Prioritizing customers is our focus, and we strive to provide the best service."</p> <p>Participant 10: "As a business owner, I always encourage my staff that they will not always be a staff here in my business. They can try other things or try opening their own business. They give me strength because they don't leave me and they always encourage me."</p>

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After interviewing 10 participants, the study identified five themes related to the the navigation and surmount of the challenges of women entrepreneurs during the inception and operation of their business. These themes include:

1. Utilizing Online Marketing
2. Support System and Mentoring
3. Financial Strategies
4. Quality Output and Work Ethic
5. Teamwork and Encouragement

### Utilizing Online Marketing

The study from Balayan, Batangas, revealed various strategies and approaches employed by women entrepreneurs in their endeavors. One notable theme was the utilization of online marketing, emphasized by Participant 1 and Participant 6, who highlighted its crucial role in expanding market reach. This aligns with broader trends in entrepreneurship, as outlined by K. Bizhanova, A. Mamyrbekov, and I. Umarov (2019), indicating the significant influence of digital marketing on business strategies in response to changes in consumer behavior driven by the internet and social media.

## **Support System and Mentoring**

Support systems and mentoring emerged as pivotal factors in overcoming entrepreneurial challenges, with participants (P2, P3, P5, P6, P7, P10) expressing gratitude for the assistance received from mentors, co-workers, and friends. This aligns with the importance of mentorship emphasized by "Navigating the Startup Landscape - Best Practices and Challenges in Strategic Planning and Risk Management for Entrepreneurship" (n.d.), which underscores the value of experienced mentors in providing guidance and support to entrepreneurs, aiding in decision-making and facilitating growth. Participant's claims about the crucial role of support systems and mentoring are supported by Francis (2023), who emphasizes that mentoring offers a support system during difficult periods and facilitates learning through social interaction.

## **Financial Strategies**

Financial strategies played a central role in participants' narratives, specifically P4, P8, P9 and P10, with borrowing money and seeking financial support highlighted as essential for business stability and growth. This resonates with the findings of Liu and Green (2021), discussing the significance of borrowing for small businesses to access capital necessary for expansion and stability.

## **Quality Output and Work Ethic**

Quality output and work ethic were emphasized by Participant 1, echoing a business secret inherited from their father. This aligns with the importance of quality management practices highlighted by Abu-Rumman et al. (2021), emphasizing their role in achieving high-quality output and enhancing competitiveness for SMEs.

## **Teamwork and Encouragement**

Teamwork and encouragement emerged as vital components of entrepreneurial success, as highlighted by the insights of Participant 5 and Participant 10. Participant 5 stressed the importance of teamwork and adopting the role of a collaborative leader. The significance of teamwork and encouragement in entrepreneurial success finds support in the research of Hebles, Yániz, and Jara Bertin (2019). In their article on teamwork competence and collaborative learning in entrepreneurship training, the authors underscore the pivotal role of teamwork in entrepreneurial endeavors. Similarly, Participant 10 highlighted the encouragement provided to their staff, fostering loyalty and motivation resonates with the idea that encouragement plays a crucial role in creating a positive and supportive work environment. The findings highlights the importance of these strategies for success in small business ventures.



**Table 5**

*Factors Contributing to the Success of Women Entrepreneurs in Balayan, Batangas*

MAJOR THEMES	CODES
Family	Participant 3: "My family serves as my primary inspiration. Their needs drive my commitment to providing costumes, aligning with my passion. Even in challenging times, their motivation fuels my perseverance." Participant 4: "My family is the main reason why my business is successful because of the support they give me." Participant 6: "My family's support has been instrumental in my success. Their assistance and motivation have spurred me to work harder in my entrepreneurial journey." Participant 7: "My motivation stems from the desire to provide for my family's needs." Participant 8: "The fulfillment of providing for my family is a driving force behind my dedication to making my business successful." "My husband, children, and staff, have propelled my business to success."
Positive Relationships and Connections	Participant 1: "Maintaining strong relationships with staff, suppliers, and clients has been pivotal in our success." Participant 10: "My connection to God is a constant source of inspiration and strength in my business endeavors."
Personal Attributes and Mindset	Participant 2: "The critical factors of self-confidence, determination, and empowering stakeholders have greatly contributed to our business achievements." Participant 8: "My passion and determination have propelled my business to success." Participant 9: "The journey to success has been marked by determination, diligence, perseverance, and dedicated prayers."
Consistent Good Service	Participant 5: "Consistently delivering excellent service has been the cornerstone of our success. Satisfied customers not only return but also recommend our business to others, contributing to our growth and success."

After interviewing 10 participants, the study identified four themes related to the factors contributing to the success of women entrepreneurs in Balayan, Batangas. These themes include:

1. Family
2. Positive Relationship and Connections
3. Personal Attributes and Mindset
4. Consistent Good Service

## **Family**

The information gathered encompasses various themes, shedding light on the factors contributing to the success of female entrepreneurs in Balayan, Batangas. Four participants emphasized the significant role their families played in supporting their business endeavors. Participants (P3, P4, P6, P7, P8) collectively expressed that their families serve as their main source of inspiration, and the drive to provide for their family's needs serves as a powerful motivator. These entrepreneurs attribute a substantial portion of their success to the unwavering support they receive from their families. Digging deeper into the literature, past studies, such as the work of Azmi (2017), have scrutinized the crucial role of family support, self-confidence, and motivation in women's performance in various professional domains.

## **Positive Relationship and Connections**

Positive relationships and connections also play a crucial role, evident in statements from P1 and P10, underscore the importance of maintaining strong connections with various stakeholders, including staff, suppliers, clients, and spiritual connections, as integral to their success. Moreover, business owners have expressed a positive view regarding the significance of relationships in contributing to the growth of their businesses (Xesha et al., 2014). Several researchers, such as Accuff and Wood (2004), Browne and Keeley (2009), Donaldson and O'Toole (2007), Ford et al. (2003), and Selmier and Travis (2013), have emphasized the critical role of strong relationships for achieving success as a business owner.

## **Personal Attributes and Mindset**

Personal Attributes and Mindset, as emphasized by P2, P8 and P9, reveal the critical factors of self-confidence, determination, diligence, perseverance, and a positive mindset that contribute significantly to business achievements. These findings align with research by Unger et al. (2011), Kerr et al. (2017), and the Quarterly Review of Business Disciplines (2021), emphasizing the integral role of personal attributes and mindset in contributing significantly to business achievements.

## **Consistent Good Service**

Furthermore, the theme of consistent good service mentioned by Participant 5, emerges as pivotal, emphasizing the importance of quality service in fostering customer loyalty and overall business growth. This aligns with research highlighting the central role of customer satisfaction and service quality in business success (Ammattikorkeakoulu, 2013). Together, these themes provide valuable insights into the factors driving the success of female entrepreneurs in Balayan, Batangas.

## **Conclusions**

The findings reveal significant insights that are worth noting. The personal motivations of women entrepreneurs in Balayan, Batangas, are diverse and multifaceted, reflecting a blend of familial, community-oriented, and intrinsic factors. Notably, while community improvement and mentorship and support both ranked the lowest among positive themes with one participant stating each, it remains a significant factor. Family-centric motivations and self-motivation and passion emerged as the most positively impactful aspects, contributing to the personal motivations of successful women entrepreneurs to start their business journeys. Financial gains, including property acquisition and vehicle ownership, were notable achievements, underscoring the tangible impact of their businesses on their families' well-being. Despite facing challenges such as financial constraints, market competition, and gender-related obstacles, these entrepreneurs demonstrated resilience and innovation, contributing to both personal and community growth. Leveraging strategies like online marketing, support systems, and financial management, they navigated obstacles and drove success. Family support and positive relationships played central roles, alongside personal qualities like determination and enthusiasm. Ultimately, the success of female entrepreneurs in Balayan, Batangas reflects their unwavering dedication amidst diverse challenges, showcasing the transformative power of entrepreneurship.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study recommendations can be made to address the identified challenges and support the continued success of women entrepreneurs in the region. Firstly, there should be a push for government support and policy reform tailored to the needs of women entrepreneurs. This could involve advocating for improved access to assistance programs, such as grants and low-interest loans, as well as implementing policies that promote gender equality in entrepreneurship.

Additionally, fostering partnerships between the institution, Immaculate Conception College of Balayan, Inc., and local businesses could provide valuable mentorship and training opportunities for aspiring women entrepreneurs, enhancing skills development and financial literacy.

Furthermore, supporting aspiring researchers and entrepreneurs through collaboration between academic institutions, government agencies, and local businesses can facilitate research initiatives and provide resources for growth.

Finally, community engagement and awareness efforts should be intensified to combat gender stereotypes and foster a culture of entrepreneurship. Ultimately, by implementing these recommendations, stakeholders can create a more inclusive and supportive business environment conducive to the success and growth of women entrepreneurs in Balayan, Batangas.

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