

## Challenges of Young Female Social Entrepreneurs in Post-Covid 19: A Case Study of Mueang Pon, Mae Hong Son, Thailand

**Jakkapong Sukphan\***

Faculty of Business Administration, Maejo University, Thailand

**Sutawan Satjasomboon**

Mae hong son College, Chiang Mai Rajabhat University, Thailand

E-mail: [jakkapong@mju.ac.th](mailto:jakkapong@mju.ac.th)\* and [sutawan\\_sa@g.cmru.ac.th](mailto:sutawan_sa@g.cmru.ac.th)

\*Corresponding author

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### Abstract

This research aimed to investigate the context of social entrepreneurship and examine the difficulties faced by young female social entrepreneurs in Mueang Pon, Mae Hong Son, Thailand, in the post-Covid 19 eras. Qualitative methodology was employed, using purposive sampling to select participants relevant to a specific group. In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight participants who had completed their bachelor's degree within the past five years with ages below 30 years old, representing various sectors such as hospitality, food and beverage, and handicrafts. To ensure the reliability and accuracy of the collected data, triangulation techniques were employed. Inputs from academics and government agencies are sought to validate the interview questions. Additionally, these questions were tested on other groups to confirm their appropriateness.

The findings reveal that young female social entrepreneurs in Mueang Pon primarily emerged from community-based tourism, often operating as family businesses or sole proprietorships. These entrepreneurs prioritize the common good and strive to drive recovery, growth, inclusivity, and resilience within their enterprises while also promoting sustainable community development. However, the Covid-19 pandemic has presented significant challenges for these entrepreneurs. They face difficulties accessing financial resources, networking opportunities, mentorship, and the capacity building necessary for effective business operations in the post-pandemic landscape. This research also highlights additional challenges that may be faced by women entrepreneurs, including persistent gender inequality and biases, disruptions to business operations, and the complexities of balancing multiple roles. Addressing these challenges should be a priority for young female social entrepreneurs in the future.

**Keywords:** Challenges, Young female, Social entrepreneurs, Post-Covid 19

## Introduction

When examining the historical connection between entrepreneurship and its influence on social change, it becomes evident that societies have exhibited varying degrees of development. Among the factors contributing to this phenomenon, the emergence of female-owned businesses holds global significance. These enterprises not only serve as economic drivers but also play a crucial role in creating wealth, enhancing economic welfare, generating employment opportunities, and fostering societal transformation (Brush & Cooper, 2012; Jennings & Brush, 2013). Additionally, discussions on inventions and developmental processes, as predominantly explored in Baumol's work (1996), further highlight the complex nature of entrepreneurship. Consequently, Baumol's work focuses on investigating the impact of institutional factors on entrepreneurial development. Underlying this study is the assumption that environmental factors and their relative importance significantly shape the entrepreneurial landscape.

This qualitative study aims to investigate the pivotal role played by female entrepreneurs in a society changing. Employing an inductive approach, the research is grounded in the acceptance of Baumol's work (1996), which lends a somewhat deductive reasoning aspect to the study. Previous research has delved into various aspects of female entrepreneurship, including motivation, characteristics, and barriers to starting one's own business (Khan et al., 2019; Solesvik et al., 2019). However, it is crucial to recognize that characteristics alone do not solely determine the proliferation of entrepreneurship. Environmental factors, marketing strategies, innovation, and the presence of social entrepreneurs also wield significant influence in developing countries, particularly in the case of Thailand (Pansuwong et al., 2022; Politis et al., 2020; Srivetbodee, 2021).

The rate of female and young entrepreneurs has risen during the past decades. Hence, if the theory of entrepreneurial activity is dependent on environmental factors and institutions (Aljarodi et al., 2022; Baumol, 1996), then it should be further investigated what these are at a present state. Many factors might influence interest in starting a business. Some elements are general and related to the economy's overall situation or specific business conditions, motivation, challenges, and preconditions for business success (Bui et al., 2018; McGowan et al., 2012). Some factors are in the young generation, mainly explicitly related to this age group (Edelman et al., 2016).

Since the latter part of 2019, firms and economies across the globe have been confronted with a crisis from the Covid-19 pandemic and the accompanying government measures. Researchers have diligently examined the challenges faced by entrepreneurs as they grapple with resource mobilization in an environment riddled with lockdowns, hindering their ability to cater to customers and plan for the future (Kuckertz et al., 2020). Simultaneously, government agencies have encountered difficulties in providing relief to businesses that have experienced a decline in activities due to the unfolding crisis (Groenewegen et al., 2021). Drawing on the existing research on entrepreneurship and crisis management, Williams & Vorley (2015) offer valuable insights and research avenues that could shed light on the Covid-19 pandemic. Entrepreneurs may explore how businesses respond to crises, focusing on aspects of resilience and identifying potential barriers (Doern et al., 2019).

The global discourse on the participation of females in the workforce has highlighted a persistent gender gap in entrepreneurship, with males exhibiting a higher likelihood of venturing into new business ventures (GEM, 2022). Within this context, female entrepreneurs encounter specific challenges that may impede their progress, including individual constraints. Furthermore, in the realm of social and economic transformation, the emergence of the new economic model assumes a crucial role in driving societal development. As individuals raised in the era of the new economic model, young entrepreneurs possess a more intuitive and

profound understanding of the evolution of the social market economy (Wang et al., 2021). Consequently, fostering the growth of young female social entrepreneurs becomes a promising strategy for promoting sustainable development in Thailand. Nevertheless, in order to effectively nurture and prepare aspiring entrepreneurs, it is essential for entrepreneurs and support organizations to have a comprehensive understanding of the potential challenges they may face in the near future.

Mueang Pon Village is a small village in Mae Hong Son, located south of Khun Yuam and nearby the famous tourist attraction, the so-called Thung Bua Tong Fields, and community-based tourism. The inhabitants mainly live from agriculture, such as rice, soybeans, and tobacco crops. There is a genuine interest in this village as its homestay program concludes with fabulous activities making them traditional. However, the Covid-19 pandemic has severely impacted the tourism industry in Mae Hong Son. Travel restrictions and lockdown measures have led to a significant decline in international and domestic tourist arrivals. Hotels, resorts, and other tourism-related businesses have faced financial losses, while many individuals have lost their jobs. The local economy has suffered due to reduced tourism revenue, creating hardships for the community. Recovery efforts have focused on promoting domestic tourism and implementing safety measures, but the road to recovery remains challenging amid ongoing travel restrictions and uncertainty surrounding the pandemic (Tourism Economic Review,2020). To mitigate the impact, the local government and tourism authorities have been implementing measures to support affected businesses and stimulate domestic tourism. They have focused on promoting domestic travel campaigns, improving health and safety measures, and providing financial aid to affected businesses. However, the road to recovery for the tourism industry in Mae Hong Son remains challenging, as international travel restrictions and the unpredictable nature of the pandemic continue to pose obstacles (National News Bureau of Thailand,2023).

Simultaneously, the recent crisis and economic challenges have led to job scarcity and layoffs among the newly graduated younger generation, prompting them to return to their hometowns and embark on entrepreneurial ventures (Ruyaporn et al., 2022). This study primarily focuses on female and young entrepreneurs who completed their bachelor's degree within the past five years during the Covid pandemic crisis and aged below 30 years old. Given that Mueang Pon is rooted in community-based tourism, the investigation on recovery and resilience of local communities impacted by the pandemic, with a specific emphasis on achieving sustainable development. Community-based tourism empowers local communities and facilitates socio-economic advancement, cultural preservation, and the empowerment of marginalized groups. Moreover, it provides alternative models that prioritize local involvement, cultural authenticity, and long-term sustainability. Through an examination of community-based tourism in the post-pandemic era, this research seeks to uncover valuable insights into how communities and tourism stakeholders can effectively prepare for and respond to future crises, thereby enhancing overall resilience and adaptive capacity within the tourism sector.

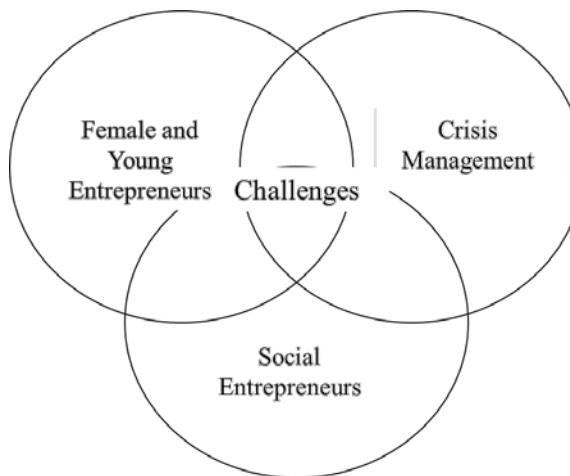
The primary objective of this study is to examine the contextual factors surrounding social entrepreneurs and explore the challenges faced by young female social entrepreneurs in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic. The paper is structured as follows: following an introductory section, we present a comprehensive review of the literature, encompassing the role of social entrepreneurs, the contextual background of female and young entrepreneurs, and crisis management. Furthermore, we specifically highlight the landscape of social entrepreneurs and young female social entrepreneurs in Thailand. Subsequently, we provide a detailed account of the data and methodology employed in this study. The findings are subsequently presented and summarized in the results section. Finally, the concluding section offers a concise summary of our main findings and their implications.

## Objectives

1. To study the social entrepreneurship of young female entrepreneurs in Mueang Pon, Mae Hong Son, Thailand
2. To analyze challenges encountered by young female social entrepreneurs after the COVID-19 outbreak in Mueang Pon, Mae Hong Son, Thailand

## Literature review

Figure 1 depicts our proposed approach, guided by the theories of female and young entrepreneurs, crisis management, and social entrepreneurs. The rest of the section covers literature on these critical theories, which explore and presents the role of female and young entrepreneur, crisis management, and social entrepreneurs.



**Figure 1** The Conceptual Model by the authors  
(Source: Researcher, 2023)

### Female and Young Entrepreneurs

According to Bruni et al. (2004), the business literature recognizes the distinct characteristics of females. However, Baycan et al. (2003) highlight a gender bias in entrepreneurship, with lower female participation. Initial research on female entrepreneurs primarily focuses on their motivations and economic performance (Santos et al., 2018; Yadav & Unni, 2016). On one hand, female entrepreneurs do not significantly differ from males in terms of personal characteristics, capabilities, and economic performance (Ahl, 2006; Watson, 2002). On the other hand, some studies have identified differences in personal traits, styles, investment sizes, and educational backgrounds (Carranza et al., 2018; Santos et al., 2018).

Entrepreneurship, particularly through female entrepreneurs, plays a vital role in the economic development of both developed and developing countries, especially during turbulent and challenging times. Their contributions to innovation, creation, and social empowerment can facilitate a faster recovery (Mustapha & Subramaniam, 2016). With the recent significant increase in self-employment rates and the new generation growing up in the new economic model, young entrepreneurs possess an intuitive understanding of the evolving social market economy and are more likely to succeed in this new paradigm (United Nations, 2013).

Various perspectives exist when examining young entrepreneurs, including young adults (Geldhof et al., 2014), student entrepreneurs (Politis et al., 2012), and adolescents (Schmitt-Rodermund & Vondracek, 2002). Previous research has focused on factors such as intention, resources, interests, self-efficacy, willingness, and experience that influence young

entrepreneurship. Accordingly, this paper specifically targets young entrepreneurs who are fresh graduates and adolescents.

### **Social entrepreneurship**

The concept of social entrepreneurship has been introduced in previous studies, with its origins tracing back to the mid-19th century (Bowen, 1953). However, it has gained significant popularity in the last decade and has emerged as a prominent area of research in various academic disciplines, business publications, books, and articles. Social entrepreneurship involves the operation of non-profit organizations that address complex social needs and have an embedded social purpose, particularly in the face of diminishing public funding (Austin et al., 2006; Reis & Clohesy, 2001). Various issues, such as poverty and human welfare, have motivated numerous firms to conduct business with a strong social drive, utilizing social entrepreneurship as a catalyst for social change, without expecting direct monetary benefits from their ventures (Barberá-Tomás et al., 2019; Gupta et al., 2020).

Likewise, the role of females in social entrepreneurship and their involvement in business creation have witnessed growth at different levels of government, both regionally and locally. Several tools and initiatives have been developed and implemented to promote female entrepreneurial activity (Urbano et al., 2014). Theoretical approaches have been proposed to study the processes of business creation by women and social entrepreneurship (Humbert, 2012; Huysentruyt, 2014; Jeong & Yoo, 2022). For instance, Van Ryzin et al. (2009) suggest that social entrepreneurs are more likely to be young, college-educated females of non-white ethnicity, residing in major cities, and possessing some business experience. The findings of their study underscore the higher likelihood of women engaging in social entrepreneurship.

### **Crisis Management.**

Throughout history, crises and pandemics have often served as catalysts for innovation and progress (Meyer et al., 2020). The term "crisis" is commonly used but can lead to confusion and inaccuracies. It encompasses industrial and environmental crises that threaten human survival, organizations, industries, or countries (Shrivastava, 1993). Organizational crises resulting from such industrial and environmental crises are complex phenomena influenced by psychological, socio-political, and technological-structural factors. Effective crisis management becomes crucial for the survival of organizations, the maintenance of products or services, and the well-being of employees (Pauchant & Mitroff, 1992; Pearson & Clair, 1998). However, Pforr & Hosie (2008) argue that crises require case-by-case management, particularly in the context of tourism-related businesses.

Although the onset and resolution of a crisis are challenging to predict, businesses must be well-prepared to tackle future problems. The concept of crisis management can be divided into three phases: Pre-Crisis, Crisis, and Post-Crisis. The pre-crisis and crisis stages involve short-term responses aimed at mitigating the negative impacts, while the post-crisis phase consists of two sub-phases: the recovery phase, where normalcy is restored, and strategies are devised to recover from the damages, and the learning process phase, where after-action reviews facilitate knowledge and resource management in crisis situations (Laws & Prideaux, 2006).

Unlike other crises, the Covid-19 pandemic has introduced significant economic and societal uncertainty (World Health Organization, 2021). Such disruptions typically have substantial implications for entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurs are compelled to drive innovation and growth amid the challenges presented by the crisis, although they often encounter financial difficulties (Meyer et al., 2020). Consequently, personal characteristics (Navarro-García & Coca-Pérez, 2014), self-efficacy, and resilience (Bullough & Renko, 2013) play vital roles in motivating entrepreneurs during challenging times, enabling organizations and individuals to respond and recover more swiftly, adapt their business strategies, and bounce back (Doern et al., 2019). Additionally, we focus on the post-crisis phase (the learning process), which yields

diverse performances in knowledge and resource management concerning crisis management (Ma & Zhang, 2022).

The key literature used in this study covering the main theoretical perspectives is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1** Summary of Key Literature

Context	Reference
Female entrepreneurs	Ahl (2006); Carranza et al. (2018); Hughes et al. (2012); Santos et al. (2018); Watson (2002); Yadav & Unni (2016)
Young entrepreneurs	Geldhof et al. (2014); Mustapha & Subramaniam (2016); Politis et al. (2012); Schmitt-Rodermund & Vondracek (2002); Varadarajan et al. (2010)
Social entrepreneurship	Austin et al. (2006); Barberá-Tomás et al. (2019); Bowen (1953); Gupta et al. (2020); Humbert (2012); Huyseentruyt (2014); Jeong & Yoo (2022); Reis & Clohesy (2001); Urbano et al. (2014); Van Ryzin et al. (2009)
Crisis management	Bullough & Renko (2013); Doern et al. (2019); Laws & Prideaux (2006); Ma & Zhang (2022); Meyer et al. (2020); Navarro-García & Coca-Pérez (2014); Pauchant & Mitroff (1992); Pearson & Clair (1998); Shrivastava (1993)

## Methodology

### Research Design

This research aims to investigate the context of social entrepreneurship and examine the difficulties faced by young female social entrepreneurs in Mueang Pon, Mae Hong Son, Thailand. The study adopts an experimental research design to gain insights into how these social entrepreneurs navigate and respond to the challenges of the Covid-19 outbreak. Due to the limited number of young female social entrepreneurs in the specific research area, a sample of eight informants was deemed appropriate, as suggested by Sutheewasinnon & Pasunon (2016). Qualitative research methods, specifically interviews, were employed to collect data from participants engaged in community-based tourism businesses such as hospitality, food and beverage, and handicrafts. The interviews were conducted between July and August 2022.

The interviews were conducted using in-depth semi-structured techniques, with each session taking an average of 30 minutes. Before the interviews commenced, participants were informed about the project and asked to sign a consent form. During the sessions, respondents shared their thoughts on various aspects of this research including motivation for starting a social business and how the Covid-19 pandemic impacted their companies. Researchers also followed up with some respondents over mobile phones to gather additional data such as personal characteristics, self-efficacy, and resilience levels.

### The informants were asked to answer the following questions:

1. What motivated you to initiate your entrepreneurial venture?
2. In what ways has the Covid-19 outbreak influenced the operations of your enterprise?
3. How do you administer and strategize for your business amidst and subsequent to the pandemic crisis?

4. How do you incorporate troubleshooting techniques within your business framework?

5. To what extent will consumer patterns shift in response to post-pandemic circumstances, and how will you prepare accordingly?

The research objectives were briefly explained to them, highlighting their potential contributions. A formal meeting with entrepreneurs was held in June 2022 at the Mueang Pon subdistrict administrative organization's office to ensure data triangulation while participant observations were made. Two academics - one specializing in entrepreneur and social entrepreneurship studies - along with an officer from the community tourism-supporting Mueang Pon subdistrict administrative organization verified all questions related to the study. Moreover, several groups of participants from different areas also reviewed these questions for reliability and validity checks. Finally, stakeholder discussions during participant observation helped confirm the interview results' accuracy.

**Table 2** Informants' characteristics

Participants	Type of Business	Ownership
P1	Hospitality	Family Business
P2	Hospitality	Family Business
P3	Hospitality	Family Business
P4	Food and Beverage	Family Business
P5	Food and Beverage	Sole Proprietorship
P6	Food and Beverage	Sole Proprietorship
P7	Handicraft	Family Business
P8	Handicraft	Family Business

### Data Analysis

We used thematic analysis to understand an issue or idea (Attride-Stirling, 2001). We transcribed interview data and added practitioner perspectives for better understanding. Codes were assigned and classified into themes and meanings with researchers considering all the themes (Vaismoradi et al., 2016). The process was iterative until completion. Finally, using existing theories on young entrepreneurs, female entrepreneurs, and crisis management within the social entrepreneurship context helped identify challenges faced by participants during discussions of the analyzed data.

### Results

The study findings are derived from a literature review, analysis of secondary documents, and conducting semi-structured interviews with eight female entrepreneurs who are young in age.

#### **Objective 1 To study the social entrepreneurship of young female entrepreneurs in Mueang Pon, Mae Hong Son, Thailand.**

In Thailand, the Covid-19 pandemic has led to a significant downturn in the economic and tourism industries. The government's emergency measures required financial activities, especially those related to hospitality and tourism, to cease completely. As a result of this pause in business operations, there has been an adverse impact on the economy with struggling businesses unable to generate income.

“...Due to the circumstances, my parents are unable to manage our homestays and engage in partnerships with various stakeholders within our community, such as suppliers,

tourist attractions, and souvenir shops. Our family is seeking additional income opportunities, but unfortunately, we all find ourselves in a similar predicament. Consequently, I believe it is necessary for me to return and provide assistance to my parents... (P1)"

"...Our business is currently facing challenges due to the absence of customers. It remains uncertain when this crisis will abate, considering the restrictions on both domestic and international travel. In light of these circumstances, the only option available to me is to explore online avenues as a means to sustain our operations... (P7)".

"...The current situation has had a pronounced economic impact, resulting in the temporary closure of businesses. Unfortunately, as an outbound business, I am facing a shortage of employment prospects in these challenging circumstances... (P5)".

The quotes clearly demonstrate that Covid-19 has presented significant challenges for businesses. (P1), (P5), and (P7) have all emphasized the severity of the situation, with many companies forced to close indefinitely while still facing ongoing business costs. Such crises are not uncommon, and research shows that they can have a profound impact on both the economy and society at large (Meyer et al., 2020; Pauchant & Mitroff, 1992; Pearson & Clair, 1998). As a result of this crisis, there will likely be lasting changes in culture, community dynamics, and overall way of life.

In this scenario, the most probable survivors are knowledgeable female entrepreneurs who possess expertise in developing innovative business models and effectively engaging with clients to establish credibility (Mustapha & Subramaniam, 2016; Santos et al., 2018). The subsequent excerpts offer reliable evidence of the circumstance:

"... Due to social distancing restrictions, I must modify my business model to focus on online delivery, thereby creating new employment opportunities within our community ... (P6)"

"...Due to the closure of our community, I have resorted to producing and selling products on a made-to-order or pre-order basis through social media. This approach presents a promising opportunity for us to maintain employment... (P8)"

Considering the paths customers take to reach businesses, their experiences, and their behavior is a complex process that involves societal change. According to (Barberá-Tomás et al., 2019; Gupta et al., 2020), this does not always result in direct financial benefits for social ventures. Young female entrepreneurs who are socially conscious show greater solidarity towards marginalized individuals and often engage in charitable activities, as noted by (Urbano et al., 2014; Varadarajan et al., 2009).

**Table 3** The summary of the context of young entrepreneurs

The post-Covid-19 era presents unique challenges and opportunities for young female social entrepreneurs. Recognizing the importance of their role in driving economic growth and social change, therefore, we summarize the context of young female social entrepreneurs in Mueang Pon, Mae Hong Son, Thailand, as follows:

No.	Issue	Meaning
1	Recovery and Growth	Young female social entrepreneurs play a vital role in driving economic recovery and growth by initiating innovative and socially impactful businesses
2	Inclusive and Resilient	Young female entrepreneurs can build a more inclusive and resilient economy, fostering social cohesion and reducing inequalities
3	Sustainable Development	Young female entrepreneurs can address pressing social and environmental challenges, contributing to the sustainable development

## Objective 2 To analyze challenges encountered by young female social entrepreneurs after the COVID-19 outbreak in Mueang Pon, Mae Hong Son, Thailand

Community-based tourism businesses have previously never been experiencing various epidemics and pandemics. However, as Pforr & Hosie (2008) noted, managing crises must be tailored to specific conditions. The sudden onset of the Covid-19 pandemic left businesses with limited time to prepare for the profound impacts of temporary closures and the suspension of activities worldwide. In response to this crisis, young female entrepreneurs in Mueang Pon have appealed to government agencies and nearby universities for support through initiatives such as tax deductions and the U2T program for BCG and Regional Development (Doern et al., 2019; Meyer et al., 2020). The following quotes exemplify the tactics employed by these businesses to sustain themselves amidst the crisis.

"... Despite the closure of all community-based tourism services, it is imperative for our business to continue operating. Consequently, I am compelled to adapt our business model, although obtaining financial support has proven challenging. Nevertheless, I remain determined to exhaust all efforts in securing the necessary financial assistance..." (P2)

"...Adaptation becomes essential in this situation, such as shifting towards food delivery services. However, we encounter obstacles in both establishing the necessary networks and acquiring sufficient skilled staff to support this new business model for survival..." (P3)

"...While we possess a competitive advantage in terms of skilled staff and expertise, we acknowledge a deficiency in our negotiation skills when transitioning to an online platform. Nevertheless, I am committed to continuously practicing and improving in this aspect..." (P4)

"...Although we take pride in offering authentic and high-quality products, we recognize a deficiency in our communication skills when operating online..." (P8)

The aforementioned statement further reinforces our second objective, which highlights the possession of key traits by young female social entrepreneurs. These include a visionary mindset, creativity, adaptability, and willingness to undertake risks, as Bullough & Renko (2013) and Navarro-García and Coca-Pérez (2014) suggested. Moreover, insights from practitioners regarding crisis management demonstrate that employing such tactics within businesses can effectively mitigate potential losses, ensure business continuity, and lay the foundation for post-crisis operations. That is the challenge for young female social entrepreneurs in Mueang Pon, Mae Hong Son, Thailand need to be concerned.

**Table 4** The summary of the difficulties faced by young female social entrepreneurs

The post-Covid-19 landscape poses distinctive challenges for young female social entrepreneurs. Acknowledging the significance of their contribution to the stages of business recovery, this study aims to outline the specific obstacles encountered. Therefore, we summarize the obstacles that become the challenges for young female social entrepreneurs in Mueang Pon, Mae Hong Son, Thailand as follows:

No.	Issue	Meaning
1	Access to Financial Resources	Limited access to funding and financial support poses significant constraints on the growth and sustainability of young female entrepreneurs
2	Networking and Mentorship	Building networks and accessing mentorship can be challenging for young female social entrepreneurs, hindering their access to valuable guidance and support
3	Capacity Building and Skills Development	Training and capacity-building opportunities tailored to the needs of young female social entrepreneurs are essential to enhance their business and managerial skills.

## Discussions

The post-Covid-19 era presents distinctive challenges and opportunities for young female social entrepreneurs in Mueang Pon, Mae Hong Son, Thailand. Recognizing the pivotal role they play in driving economic growth and social transformation is essential for addressing their specific challenges and providing recommendations to empower them. The findings unequivocally highlight the profound impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on businesses, with widespread closures and ongoing operational costs affecting even small enterprises like family businesses and sole proprietorships. Scholars have emphasized the gravity of the situation, as evidenced by the significant influence these entrepreneurs have on the economy and society at large (Meyer et al., 2020; Pauchant & Mitroff, 1992; Pearson & Clair, 1998). Furthermore, the repercussions of the crisis are expected to bring about enduring changes in cultural norms, community dynamics, and overall way of life.

In the context of young female social entrepreneurs, they face the dual responsibility of supporting their families and establishing their own businesses, thereby contributing to their community's recovery and growth. However, as highlighted by Barberá-Tomás et al. (2019) and Gupta et al. (2020), this endeavor does not always result in direct financial gains. Additionally, socially conscious young female entrepreneurs display greater solidarity towards marginalized individuals and actively participate in charitable activities, as observed by Urbano et al. (2014) and Van Ryzin et al. (2009) in the realm of sustainable development. Survivors in this domain tend to possess comprehensive knowledge and expertise in developing innovative business models and effectively engaging with clients, thus establishing their credibility, as indicated by Mustapha and Subramaniam (2016) and Santos et al. (2018). It is important to recognize that understanding customers' paths, experiences, and behaviors in reaching businesses is a multifaceted process that entails societal change, emphasizing inclusivity and resilience.

Furthermore, young female entrepreneurs in Mueang Pon face significant obstacles when it comes to accessing financial resources. As suggested by Doern et al. (2019) and Meyer et al. (2020), these entrepreneurs often struggle to secure financial capital, mentorship, networks, and business development support essential for their ventures. Fortunately, the Thai government has implemented certain projects to provide assistance. Consequently, these entrepreneurs have sought support from government agencies and nearby universities, utilizing initiatives such as tax deductions and the U2T program for BCG and Regional Development. Key traits possessed by young female social entrepreneurs include a visionary mindset, creativity, adaptability, and willingness to undertake risks, as suggested by Bullough & Renko (2013) and Navarro-García and Coca-Pérez (2014). However, insights from practitioners in the field of women entrepreneurs and crisis management indicate persistent gender inequality and biases, disruptions to business operations, and the challenge of balancing multiple roles, as highlighted in the research of Yadav & Unni (2016). Thus, addressing these challenges remains a priority for young female social entrepreneurs in Mueang Pon, Mae Hong Son, Thailand, in the future.

## Conclusion and suggestions

Recognizing the context of young female social entrepreneurs post-Covid-19 in Mueang Pon, Mae Hong Son, Thailand, is crucial for creating an enabling environment that supports their growth, success, and the overall development of society and the economy. By understanding their unique challenges and implementing the recommendations, stakeholders can foster an ecosystem that empowers these young women and unleashes their entrepreneurial potential. This study adopts a multidisciplinary approach, drawing from the theoretical perspectives of young entrepreneurs, female entrepreneurs, social entrepreneurs, and crisis management. In the context of the post-pandemic crisis, the concept of young female social entrepreneurs serves as a strategic tool for examining and addressing the specific challenges they face (Doern et al., 2019; Gupta et al., 2020). The research suggests several key recommendations for young female social entrepreneurs as follows: First, establishing specialized funds, grants, and financial programs that prioritize supporting these entrepreneurs, providing them with the necessary capital to start and scale their ventures. Second, developing comprehensive training programs that focus on enhancing entrepreneurial skills, business management, marketing strategies, and impact measurement for young female social entrepreneurs. Third, creating platforms for networking, mentorship, and peer-to-peer learning opportunities to connect young female social entrepreneurs with experienced mentors, industry experts, and like-minded peers. Fourth, advocating for policies that promote gender equality, eliminate gender biases, and create a favorable regulatory environment for young female social entrepreneurs. Finally, raising awareness about the achievements and contributions of young female social entrepreneurs through media campaigns, awards, and recognition programs to inspire others and challenge stereotypes. Implementing these recommendations will contribute to the growth and success of young female social entrepreneurs, fostering a supportive ecosystem that encourages their entrepreneurship and drives positive change in society.

## New knowledge and the effects on society and communities

This paper offers valuable insights for entrepreneurs in navigating the crisis triggered by Covid-19. It highlights the significance of young female entrepreneurs as social entrepreneurs, drawing upon prior studies by Urbano et al. (2014) and Van Ryzin et al. (2009). Understanding the multifaceted impacts of the crisis, which can be categorized into distinct stages, as indicated by Laws and Prideaux (2006), is crucial for entrepreneurs. Our study reveals that entrepreneurial characteristics, such as self-efficacy and resilience, as emphasized by Bullough & Renko (2013), play a pivotal role in business recovery. Given the ongoing uncertainty surrounding the Covid-19 pandemic and the potential for future crises, entrepreneurs must remain attuned to external threats and possess the agility to adapt to evolving industry dynamics. Proactive measures should be taken to reorganize business operations and mitigate risks during the pre-crisis period, as suggested by Laws and Prideaux (2006). Furthermore, the context of young female social entrepreneurs in the special economic zones research area presents an opportunity for the government sector to formulate spatial policies and targeted initiatives in Mae Hong Son province, aimed at fostering the development and harnessing the potential of entrepreneurs in the region. Going forward, this would enable local government organizations to provide comprehensive support and assistance to entrepreneurs in close proximity, thus ensuring their sustained growth and well-being.

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