



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND THE CHALLENGES OF RURAL ENTREPRENEURS DURING COVID- 19 PANDEMIC

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Abstract:

The human beings have been facing great challenges during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic nowadays. However, the number of research regarding the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and challenges of rural entrepreneurs during the COVID-19 pandemic is quite limited. The objectives of this research are to explore the challenge of rural entrepreneurs during the pandemic and to discover the affected SDG by those challenges. This research was done at Rural Community Centre (RCC) of Kampung Jelintoh, Gopeng, Perak, Malaysia. It was the most active RCC in conducting entrepreneurship programmes in 2019. This exploration research utilised qualitative approach which involved an in-depth interview by using a semi-structured interview format. Six entrepreneurs were selected through a non-probability sampling technique - a purposive sampling from the list of rural entrepreneurs. The data were analysed using a thematic analysis method. The results disclosed two main themes of the challenges. The first theme was business operation that comprises operation disruption, decrease in demand, shortage of logistic supply, and operation closure. The second theme involves business finance which includes cash flow problems, unexpected increase in production cost, and no access to economic stimulus package. It is suggested that all types of rural businesses be allowed to: operate normally, ensure the smoothness of logistics supply, be offered with financial aids, reduce the production cost, and create an easy-access entry to economic stimulus package. Nevertheless, the business operations must adhere to the Standard Operating Procedure.

Keywords:

Sustainable Development Goals, COVID-19, Rural, Entrepreneurship

Introduction

The United Nations had adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) in September 2015 (United Nations, 2015(a)). The SDG are embedded in the report entitled Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The idea of the SDG has quickly gained ground because of the growing urgency of sustainable development for the entire world (Sachs, 2012). Unlike their predecessors, the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), the SDG are not aimed solely at ending poverty; indeed, the envision is to apply SDG universally to all nations (Gaffney, 2014). Although specific definitions vary, sustainable development embraces the so-called triple bottom line approach to human wellbeing which consists of the combination of economic development, environmental sustainability, and social inclusion (Sachs, 2012). Basically, the SDG contain 17 goals and 169 targets that should be met by all nations until 2030 (United Nations, 2015(b)). Briefly, these are the 17 SDG (Table 1):

Table 1: Sustainable Development Goals

No.	Goals	Abridgements
1	End poverty in all its forms everywhere.	No poverty.
2	End hunger, achieve food security and improve nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.	Zero hunger.
3	Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.	Good health and well-being.
4	Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.	Quality education.
5	Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.	Gender equality.
6	Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.	Clean water and sanitation.
7	Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.	Affordable and clean energy.
8	Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.	Decent work and economic growth.
9	Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.	Industry, innovation and infrastructure.
10	Reduce inequality within and among countries.	Reduced inequalities.
11	Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.	Sustainable cities and communities.
12	Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.	Responsible consumption and production.
13	Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.	Climate action.
14	Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.	Life below water.
15	Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.	Life on land.

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| 16 | Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. | Peace and justice strong institutions. |
| <hr/> | | |
| 17 | Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development. | Partnerships for the goals. |
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Source: United Nations, 2015(b)

Generally, it is anticipated that the SDG will give benefits to all people, both today and for future generations. For example, the first goal of the SDG is to end the poverty in all its forms and everywhere. This goal has seven targets. Among others, by 2030 it is targeted to eradicate the extreme poverty for all people everywhere, which is currently measured as people living on less than \$1.25 a day. By 2030 also, it is targeted to reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions. Besides, the goal wants to ensure that all men and women (in particular the poor and the vulnerable group) have equal rights to economic resources, access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including microfinance by 2030.

Meanwhile, the second goal of the SDG is to end hunger, achieve food security and improve nutrition as well as sustainable agriculture. Among the targets are to end hunger and ensure access by all people (in particular the poor and people in vulnerable situations, including infants) to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round by 2030. It is targeted also to end all forms of malnutrition, including achieving, by 2025, the internationally agreed targets on stunting and wasting in children under 5 years of age, and address the nutritional needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women and older persons. By 2030 too, it is targeted to double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers (in particular, women, indigenous people, family farmers, pastoralists and fishers) through secure and equal access to land, other productive resources and inputs, knowledge, financial services, markets and opportunities for value addition and non-farm employment.

These are the examples of goals and targets which have been outlined by the United Nations. There are many more goals and targets embedded in United Nations report which aim to create a better future for the people, planet and prosperity. Unfortunately, the emergence of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) since December 2019 has affected the abovesaid SDG. The challenge of COVID-19 to the whole world mounted when the World Health Organization (WHO) declared that the virus was a pandemic on 11th March 2020 when the number of confirmed cases recorded over 118,000 patients, with more than 4,000 deaths globally (WHO, 2020). These figures have rocketed because the virus spreads easily among humans. For instance, it is reported that 286,540,045 people were infected by COVID-19 with 5,429,544 deaths globally on 1st January 2022 (WHO, 2022). Besides, Malaysia also had a huge number of people infected by the virus which is 2,761,472 individuals with 31,513 deaths on the same date (Ministry of Health Malaysia, 2022).

Previous scholars posited that movement restriction is seen as the best approach to control the spread of infectious diseases such as coronavirus (Chinazzi et al., 2020). Hence, many countries around the globe have imposed the movement restriction order (or better-known as Movement Control Order (MCO) in Malaysia) including physical distancing, lockdown, and postponement on events for at least 14 consecutive days. The MCO is believed to be able to curb the spreading of the disease, but with various side effects. In terms of economy, previous

scholars found that there are many impacts related to MCO such as the closure of retail premises, and disruption in product delivery chains (Karabag, 2020). Lockdowns and the shutting down of industries such as hospitality, travel, and retail let to the significant closure of businesses all over the world and further disruptions, including the significant increase in unemployment that is expected in the months to come (Papadopoulos, Baltas and Balta, 2020). In short, these actions have reduced the economic flow through all kinds of enterprises (Caballero-Morales, 2021). These are among the examples of challenges which should be faced by the people during the pandemic. Generally, in Malaysia, MCO has been implemented by phases and categories since 18th March 2020 until 10th October 2021. Besides, the variation of MCO implementations depended on the current situation of the COVID-19 cases nationwide. Lately, the emergence of new variance of viruses like Delta and Omicron have increased the people's fear about the probability of facing the MCO again.

Many researchers have disclosed the challenges of small-scale businesses in developed (Bartik et al., 2020) and developing countries (Arundhati, Patnaik and Ipseeta, 2020) during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, their studies focused on Micro, Small, and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSME). The research about the challenge of rural entrepreneurs (defined by Saxena (2012) as entrepreneurs who emerge in rural areas) is quite limited during the pandemic. In the local context, rural means other than urban area; comprising all villages and small settlements with a population of less than 10,000; which are often characterized with agriculture and abundance of natural resources; low population density; low percentage in age-active population; population economic-based comprising of agriculture, rural industry and natural products/resources; maintain the rural socio-cultural activities including rural organization, family institution, community and cultural activities (PLANMalaysia, 2017). Kushalakshi and Raghurama (2012) suggested six types of rural entrepreneurship: (1) agro-based enterprise; (2) forest-based industry; (3) mineral-based industry; (4) textile industry; (5) handicrafts; and (6) engineering and services.

Rural entrepreneurs are significant business groups due to their contributions to create job opportunities in various fields such as farm-based enterprises, food processing, and aquaculture. Nonetheless, like many other sectors, they are currently facing several challenges during the period of pandemic especially in terms of business operation. Hence, the objectives of this research are to explore the challenges of rural entrepreneurs during COVID-19 pandemic and to discover the affected SDG by those challenges.

Literature Review

Basically, 'challenge' is (the situation of being faced with) something that needs great mental or physical effort in order to be done successfully and therefore tests a person's ability (Challenge, n.d.). It is strongly believed that COVID-19 pandemic gives huge challenges to the rural entrepreneurs because they cannot operate the business as usual. Hence, these challenges can be seen through the impact that they have faced during the pandemic. To the best of our knowledge, the empirical research about the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic directly on rural entrepreneur has been quite limited. Nonetheless, several scholars attempted to study those impacts on MSME such as Mohsin, Liu and Ren (2020); Papadopoulos et al. (2020). Apparently, they did not focus directly on rural entrepreneurs; but it is believed that their studies had shed light in exploring the topic further.

Mohsin et al. (2020) found that most of the enterprises had been severely affected, and they were facing several issues such as financial, supply chain disruption, decrease in demand, reduction in sales and profit, transportation, reduction in production, and many others. Papadopoulos et al. (2020) said the Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) have more severe effects on sustainable operations of businesses including reduction of business activities, human resource issues related to staffing and supply chain disruptions compared to larger and global firms. Bartik et al., (2020) discovered that many small businesses in the United States of America (USA) were closed just a few weeks of the COVID-19 pandemic. The entrepreneurs had problems to access credit facilities or funding from the government too (Bartik et al., 2020). Moreover, Arundhati et al. (2020) disclosed that the relief package was insufficient to compensate the losses faced by business entrepreneurs of MSME; manufacturers of both non-essential goods as well as essential goods suffered losses close to 50 percent during the pandemic; and small businesses in India experienced a rapidly decrease in business due to a negative growth rate of net sales.

In the Malaysian context, Nur Hazirah, Salina and Lai (2021) found that the challenges faced by many micro-entrepreneurs were classified in terms of operation disruption and financial issues. The operation disruption involves the closure of business operation; shortage of logistic supply; travelling restriction; extra length of travelling period; and delay in product delivery. Besides, the financial issue involves issues such as rental payment for shop lots/kiosks and food truck loans; unexpected increase in production cost; the lack of roll up capital; having to depend on other loans to cover several costs; and the risk of bankruptcy. Furthermore, Noor Fzlinda, Khairul Hanim and Juliana (2020) discovered the challenges faced by the micro-entrepreneurs are failure to operate their businesses as usual; the loss of clients; the dumping of agricultural produces due to the closure of several supporting sectors such as retails and transportation; the decrease in daily sales revenue; and loss of income. In short, based on all the above previous researches, it is understood that there are various challenges faced by the MSMEs including the rural entrepreneurs amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Methodology

This descriptive research aims to get meaningful understanding on the challenges of rural entrepreneurs during COVID-19 pandemic. The exploration research had utilised a qualitative approach to collect the data. It involved an in-depth interview that was used by previous researchers such as Noor Fzlinda et al. (2020). This method was selected to gain some in-depth insights from the respondents. This research used semi-structured telephone calls as an in-depth interview. So, the telephone interviews were conducted from 12th September 2021 until 20th September 2021. This step is parallel to the suggestion put forward by O'Conor et al. (2020) who said that during the COVID-19 pandemic, all research activities would be better conducted by telephone for the safety of respondents and the researchers.

This study has been conducted at Rural Community Centre (RCC) of Kampung Jelintoh. It is located about three kilometres away from Gopeng, a small town in Perak, Malaysia. RCC is a facility provided by the Ministry of Rural Development Malaysia, that assists the rural community with entrepreneurship matters. This RCC was selected because of its active involvements with entrepreneurship programmes in 2019. Currently, there are 44 rural entrepreneurs in the study area who are involved in various rural entrepreneurship.

Previous scholars posited several numbers of sample size when utilising a qualitative approach. For instance, Creswell (1998) used 20 to 30 respondents, while Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006) suggested 15 informants as the sample size. In discussing this matter, Merriam (2009) said there is no answer about the appropriate number for a sample size. It always depends on the questions being asked, the data being gathered, the analysis in progress, and the available resources to support the study (Merriam, 2009). Furthermore, Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed the sampling until reaching a point of saturation or redundancy. For instance, Lovric, Farcis, Miksic and Vcev (2020) have reached the saturated number of 33 respondents when conducting their research. Besides, Nur Hazirah et al. (2021) interviewed six respondents. Hence, a total of six respondents were interviewed for this research. It is believed that the number of respondents had reached data saturation of six which is considered enough without compromising the quality of the research findings. The respondents were selected through a non-probability sampling technique, specifically the purposive sampling. The selection was made from the list of rural entrepreneurs provided by the manageress of RCC of Kampung Jelintoh, Puan Siti Rohana Ismail. Table 2 shows the background of six respondents and their entrepreneurship areas.

Table 2: Background of Respondents and Rural Entrepreneurship

Respondent	Age (Year)	Type of Business	Number of Permanent Staff
Informant 1	38	Bakery	0
Informant 2	46	Handicraft - artificial flower decoration	0
Informant 3	35	Soybean drinks	3
Informant 4	47	Hydroponic equipment	0
Informant 5	50	Frozen food - sour meet	2
Informant 6	51	Food - pineapple spicy dish	0

The interview protocol began with the sharing of a semi-structured questionnaire to the respondents through WhatsApp message platform, in about 30 minutes prior to telephone call. In so doing, the respondents would be more ready for a smooth interview. It took about 25 to 30 minutes each, and was audio recorded with the respondents' permission. Later, the interview recording was transcribed and analysed using a content analysis. This research utilised the analysis suggested by Austin and Sutton (2015), which involved coding, theming, and the synthesising of the findings. Then, the findings were compared with the SDGs to discover the affected goals by those challenges.

Results and Discussion

This research has found two main themes for the challenges of rural entrepreneurs during COVID-19 pandemic. Those themes are: (1) business operation, and (2) business finance.

Business Operation

The first challenge of business operation was operation disruption. All respondents mentioned that they had the problem of operation disruption during the pandemic. This problem was believed to be related with the implementation of MCO. For instance, bakery entrepreneurs could not sell their products and were prohibited from running their normal business operations. Entrepreneurs who were involved in hydroponic equipment could not sell their products to the weekly market as usual since this activity was classified under non-essential sector. Although some entrepreneurs in food processing sector (sour meat and pineapple black

spicy) were allowed to operate, they said the business operation period was shorter. The finding of operation disruption in the current research was consistent with other scholars such as Bartik et al. (2020). Excerpts from the interview are listed as follows:

I cannot operate the business at the shop as usual - Informant 1.

Since COVID-19 pandemic, I cannot sell the product to the weekly market and AgroFest organized by Federal Agricultural Marketing Authority (FAMA) as usual - Informant 4.

Business operation period become shorter - Informant 5.

The second challenge was decrease in demand. All respondents said they were facing a decrease in demand for their products. For example, the bakery entrepreneurs had to close their shops due to the low demand for bread, cakes and pastries. As an alternative to earn a living, they sold other products such as local kueh and fried popiah. Handicraft entrepreneur said the demand for artificial flower decoration plummeted due to cancellation of events such as birthday parties and social gatherings. Soybean drink entrepreneurs experienced a decrease in demand too. The situation of decrease in demand during the pandemic was mentioned by several researchers such as Mohsin et al. (2020). Excerpts from the interviews are listed below:

The demand for my bakery products decreased rapidly. So, I decided to sell fried popiah as an alternative to earn a living - Informant 1.

The demand for my artificial flower decoration products decreased due to cancellation of events - Informant 2.

The demand from the agents for my soybean drinks decreased - Informant 3.

The third challenge was shortage of logistics supply. Some entrepreneurs suffered a decrease in demand for their products, but they still needed to operate their businesses at a lower scale to earn a living. However, they were facing another challenge which was the shortage of logistic supply. This study discovered that the bakery entrepreneur who sold fried popiah as an alternative product said she faced the same problems and difficulties to get the materials such as packet cooking oil. The handicraft entrepreneur also faced the shortage of artificial flowers and other decoration materials. While, the food processing entrepreneur faced the shortage of logistic supply too such as pineapple. This impact was mentioned by previous researchers such as Nur Hazirah et al. (2021). Excerpts from the interviews are listed below:

I have difficulties to get the material such as packet cooking oil - Informant 1.

I face the shortage of logistic supply. So, I use whatever left to do the decoration - Informant 2.

I face the shortage of raw material. It is very difficult to obtain the pineapple - Informant 6.

The fourth challenge of the pandemic crisis was operation closure. The finding of operation closure in this research was consistent with other scholars such as Nur Hazirah et al. (2021). However, the present study found that operation closure was understood as a temporary measure until the pandemic crisis has been stabilized, or when the country moves to endemic status. This challenge involves the bakery, soybean drink, and frozen food (sour meat) entrepreneurs. It is understood that, the products are not crucial for the customers. So, the

demand for these products is given a lesser priority compared to other essential products such as rice, egg, sugar and flour. Excerpts from the interviews are listed below:

I have to close the shop temporarily and operate from home by selling fried popiah - Informant 1.

I have to close the rented premise for soybean drinks processing and move the operation to my home and run it at a smaller scale - Informant 3.

I have to close the premise which I used as my kitchen and moved the business to home - Informant 5.

Business Finance

The first challenge of business finance is the problem of cash flow. This impact was mentioned by previous researchers such as Noor Fzlinda et al. (2020). All respondents said they were facing this problem. It involves a decrease in sales of products, a drastic reduce in income, and a lack of roll-up capital; but at the same time business owners still had to pay monthly rentals for business premises, utility costs, and staff salary. Besides, some businesses such as bakery had zero monthly income because of the zero demand from customers. Hence, this entrepreneur decided to sell another product which was fried popiah. However, she said it was too difficult to get even RM120.00 sales per day. Excerpts from the interviews are listed below:

I have the problem of cash flow. I receive zero monthly income for my bakery business. So, I decided to sell fried popiah because no entrepreneur around my residential area is selling that food. I guess I will succeed, but it is too difficult for me to get even RM120.00 sales per day - Informant 1.

Most of my customers come from Klang Valley and Penang, but the pandemic has reduced the sale of hydroponic equipment and decreased my monthly income to almost half - Informant 4.

My monthly sale reduced, and there is a lack of business roll-up capital; but I still need to pay for monthly rental of business premise, utility cost, and staff salary - Informant 5.

The second financial challenge was the unexpected increase in production cost. This finding was parallel to research done by Nur Hazirah et al. (2021). This study revealed that the bakery entrepreneurs faced an increase of cost in baking materials, as high as double the normal price. Hence, she sold fried popiah but said that the production cost increased too because the prices of materials such as cooking oil, and vegetables were higher. The handicraft entrepreneur faced an unexpected increase in production cost too because the related materials have become more expensive during the pandemic. Besides, the prices of pineapples, and anchovies had also increased. This problem occurred because of MCO's supply chain disruption. Excerpts from the interviews are listed as follows:

The prices of materials like cooking oil, vegetable have increased - Informant 1.

The handicraft materials have become more expensive during the pandemic - Informant 2.

The prices of raw materials like pineapples and anchovies have increased - Informant 6.

The third financial challenge was no access to economic stimulus package. This issue also was discovered by Bartik et al. (2020) in his study. It is discovered that the handicraft entrepreneur did not receive any economic stimulus package from any government agencies. She was ineligible to get the fund because of her failure to renew her expired Companies Commission of Malaysia (CCM) permit. However, she kept running her operation since her business was treated as a hobby to earn side income. An excerpt from the interview is listed below:

I did not receive any economic stimulus package because I did not renew my expired CCM permit - Informant 2.

Sustainable Development Goals and Challenges of Rural Entrepreneurs

The themes of findings (both business operation and business finance) are compared with the anticipated SDG in order to discover which goals are affected by the challenges of the rural entrepreneurs during COVID-19 pandemic (Table 3). Business operation comprises of operation disruption, decrease in demand, shortage of logistic supply, and operation closure. While, business finance includes problem of cash flow, unexpected increase in production cost, and no access to economic stimulus package. Apparently, there are seven SDG and several targets which are affected by those challenges. Those SDG are no poverty (goal no. 1); zero hunger (goal no. 2); decent work and economic growth (goal no. 8); industry, innovation and infrastructure (goal no. 9); reduced inequalities (goal no. 10); sustainable cities and communities (goal no. 11), as well as partnerships for the goals (goal no. 17). It is believed that those challenges could hamper the achievement of the SDG if they are left unattended. Hence, an appropriate action should be taken to minimise the challenges faced by the rural entrepreneurs. It is vital to assist them to resume their businesses and prosper again.

Table 3: Sustainable Development Goals versus Challenges of Rural Entrepreneurs

No.	Abridgement of Goals and Related Targets	Challenges
1	No poverty - relate with: a. target 1.4 - ensuring all men and women particularly the vulnerable group to have equal rights to economic resources including financial services. b. target 1.5 - build the resilience of the vulnerable group and reduce the exposure to any disasters.	Business operation; business finance.
2	Zero hunger - relate with target 2.3 (double the incomes of small-scale food producers, in particular women, indigenous peoples to equal access to financial services).	Business operation; business finance.
3	Good health and well-being.	-
4	Quality education.	-
5	Gender equality.	-
6	Clean water and sanitation.	-
7	Affordable and clean energy.	-
8	Decent work and economic growth - relate with: a. target 8.3 - promoting policies that support the growth of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises. b. target 8.10 - strengthening the access to financial services for all.	Business operation; business finance.
9	Industry, innovation and infrastructure - relate with target 9.3 (increase the access of small-scale enterprises to financial services).	Business finance.

10	Reduced inequalities - relate with:	Business
	a. target 10.1 - increasing the income growth of the 40 per cent of the population.	operation;
	b. target 10.2 - empowering the economy of all people.	business
11	Sustainable cities and communities - relate with:	finance.
	a. target 11.5 - protecting the people in vulnerable situations.	Business
	b. target 11a - supporting positive economic development in rural area.	operation;
	c. target 11b - adopting policy toward disasters resilience society.	business
12	Responsible consumption and production.	finance.
13	Climate action.	-
14	Live below water.	-
15	Live on land.	-
16	Peace and justice strong institutions.	-
17	Partnership for the goals - relate with target 17.15 (poverty eradication policy).	Business
		operation;
		business
		finance.

Conclusion

The objectives of this research were to explore the challenge of rural entrepreneurs during COVID-19 pandemic and to discover the affected SDG by those challenges. This research had found that the challenges were divided into two main themes. The first theme was business operation which includes operation disruption, decrease in demand, shortage of logistics supply, and operation closure. The second theme was business finance that involves problem of cash flow, unexpected increase in production cost, and no access to economic stimulus package. At least, seven SDG are affected by those challenges during COVID-19 pandemic. Those SDG are no poverty (goal no. 1); zero hunger (goal no. 2); decent work and economic growth (goal no. 8); industry, innovation and infrastructure (goal no. 9); reduced inequalities (goal no. 10); sustainable cities and communities (goal no. 11), as well as partnerships for the goals (goal no. 17). In term of contribution to new knowledge, these findings show that there are two main themes of challenges during COVID-19 pandemic faced by rural entrepreneurs which are business operation and business finance. Moreover, at least seven SDG are affected by those challenges.

These findings provide good inputs to relevant parties to assist rural entrepreneurs to resume their businesses. In terms of business operation, the suitable aids for them include the permission for normal operations to all types of rural businesses, encouraging the consumers to purchase rural entrepreneurs' products, letting the logistics supply to run smoothly, and encouraging the entrepreneurs to reopen their businesses. In line with the new norm, all entrepreneurs are highly encouraged to obtained the digital marketing skills and operate the businesses digitally. Definitely, the business operations must adhere to the Standard Operating Procedure due to the fluctuating COVID-19 cases in this country with the emergence of new variant of viruses like Delta and Omicron (until the time this article was written). In term of business finance, the relevant agencies can offer financial aids to rural entrepreneurs, reduce production cost, and create an easy-access entry to economic stimulus packages. Locally, those initiatives are in line with the aim of Malaysian government to enhance the rural area in offering the business opportunities for rural people. Globally, these suggestions could assist government in achieving the SDG especially the abovesaid seven goals.

Obviously, this qualitative research has no attempt to generalise the findings of the research. Nevertheless, the findings of this research are meaningful. Future research is required to be explored further by using a quantitative approach with a larger group of rural entrepreneurs to discover those challenges. Based on the findings, several researches can be done such as the effects of home-based business operation on neighbours, the practice of digital business among the rural entrepreneurs, the level of access to economic stimulus package among the rural entrepreneurs and so forth.

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