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Momfluencers as Digital Entrepreneurs: Social Media, Economic Empowerment, and Challenges in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Objectives: The rise of digital entrepreneurship has transformed women's economic participation, particularly among stay-at-home mothers who leverage social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube for income generation. These platforms offer low-barrier entry into entrepreneurship, enabling women to monetize content, engage in brand collaborations, and establish online businesses with minimal financial investment. However, despite these opportunities, women digitalpreneurs remain vulnerable to algorithm dependency, engagement fluctuations, monetization uncertainty, and the dual burden of domestic and digital labor.

Methodology: This study explores how social media entrepreneurship empowers Indonesian women economically while exposing them to structural challenges. Using a qualitative case study approach, it analyzes data from semi-structured interviews with momfluencers, mombloggers, and digital entrepreneurs, complemented by content analysis of social media engagement strategies.

Findings: It reveals that while digital entrepreneurship provides financial independence and professional growth, women face precarious income streams, opaque platform policies, and intensified gendered labor expectations.

Conclusion: The study highlights the urgent need for platform accountability, transparent monetization policies, and labor protections to ensure sustainable income opportunities. It contributes to global discussions on gendered digital labor and social media economies, emphasizing the importance of policy interventions and structural reforms for a more inclusive digital business landscape.

Keywords: Digital Entrepreneurship; Women's Economic Empowerment; Social Media Monetization, Algorithmic Labor Precarity

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INTRODUCTION

The rapid proliferation of social media has fundamentally reshaped economic participation, entrepreneurship, and employment opportunities, offering new pathways for financial independence and professional growth. Digital platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and Facebook have evolved beyond entertainment hubs to become economic ecosystems that foster business activities, brand collaborations, and income generation (Chisanza et al, 2024). A significant transformation emerging from this digital economy is the increasing participation of women—particularly stay-at-home mothers—in digital entrepreneurship.

Digital entrepreneurship refers to the use of online platforms to create, market, and sell products or services without requiring substantial financial capital or physical infrastructure (Seifollahi et al 2025). Women, especially those balancing household responsibilities, have leveraged these opportunities to engage in content creation, affiliate marketing, and social media-driven business ventures, leading to the rise of momfluencers and mombloggers—women who establish social media personas to monetize content through advertising, brand sponsorships, and community-driven marketing strategies (Luthfia et al., 2025).

The social media penetration in Indonesia is among the highest in the world, digital entrepreneurship among women has become an emerging trend (Wahyuningsih & Mustaqim, 2021). Many women, particularly stay-at-home mothers, have embraced content creation as a means to achieve financial independence while maintaining their familial responsibilities. The phenomenon of momfluencers—mothers who influence purchasing decisions through social media content—has gained significant traction, particularly in sectors such as parenting, lifestyle, beauty, and home-based businesses (Rajput, 2021).

Social media serves as an alternative economic enabler, allowing women to engage in entrepreneurship without the rigid structures of traditional employment. According to Kumar and Anjali (2024), digital platforms have played a pivotal role in challenging traditional gender norms by providing women access to financial opportunities that were previously constrained by societal expectations and household obligations. By engaging in sponsored content, brand endorsements, and targeted advertising, women entrepreneurs are able to generate income while maintaining flexible work schedules that accommodate both professional and domestic responsibilities. (Pangihutan & Wibowo, 2025)

This study holds significant contributions in both academic and practical domains, particularly in the discourse of digital entrepreneurship and women's economic empowerment. From an academic perspective, this research enriches the existing literature by providing empirical insights into how digital entrepreneurship via social media facilitates financial independence among women, particularly stay-at-home mothers. (Hutabarat & Nusraningrum, 2025) While digital labor and online economic participation have been widely discussed, studies focusing on gendered digital entrepreneurship—especially in the context of emerging economies like Indonesia—remain relatively limited. By addressing this gap, the study offers a nuanced understanding of the socio-economic dynamics that drive women to engage in digital entrepreneurship, highlighting its role in reshaping traditional gender roles and labor market participation.

From a practical standpoint, this research serves as a valuable reference for women who seek to leverage social media as a tool for economic empowerment. The study outlines motivational factors, key success strategies, and challenges, offering actionable insights for aspiring digitalpreneurs. By understanding the opportunities and risks associated with digital entrepreneurship, women can make informed decisions on how to navigate online platforms for financial gain while maintaining work-life balance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Digital Entrepreneurship

The evolution of digital entrepreneurship has played a crucial role in redefining the traditional boundaries of work and economic engagement for women. Unlike conventional business models that demand physical presence and rigid working hours, digital platforms enable women—particularly stay-at-home mothers—to engage in work that accommodates their domestic responsibilities (Leong et al., 2020). This shift aligns with the broader dynamics of the gig economy, where independent digital workers operate autonomously and often without formal employment contracts (Wood et al., 2019). Digital entrepreneurship has thus emerged as an alternative to traditional employment, offering women the flexibility to participate in the economy on their own terms. Social media platforms, in particular, have facilitated this transition, providing avenues for women to establish businesses, monetize content, and cultivate personal brands through innovative, low-cost digital strategies (Duffy & Pruchniewska, 2017).

Women's Economic Empowerment

Women's economic empowerment is a multidimensional concept that encompasses the ability of women to participate in, contribute to, and benefit from economic activities in a way that enhances their agency, autonomy, and financial independence (Kabeer, 1999). Traditional economic structures have historically limited women's access to resources, decision-making power, and financial control, largely due to entrenched gender norms and systemic barriers (Cornwall, 2016). Social expectations, domestic responsibilities, and restricted access to formal employment opportunities have constrained women's economic participation, leaving them underrepresented in entrepreneurial and professional domains (Hunt & Samman, 2016). However, the rise of digital platforms has altered the economic landscape, presenting new opportunities for women to engage in income-generating activities without requiring large-scale financial capital or physical business infrastructure (Heeks, 2017).

Social Media Monetization

Social media platforms function as business incubators by providing cost-effective marketing tools, audience engagement mechanisms, and revenue generation models that would otherwise be inaccessible in traditional business environments (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Digital platforms have enabled women to engage in content-driven entrepreneurship, allowing them to monetize personal branding and creative labor while reducing financial and operational barriers to business entry (Al Halbusi et al., 2024). This trend highlights a broader shift in gendered digital labor, where women leverage social influence and online presence to establish themselves as economically independent entrepreneurs. Through self-branding and content-driven business models, women are not only monetizing their expertise but also reshaping the perception of women's labor in digital economies.

Algorithmic Labor Precarity

Algorithmic labor precarity refers to the instability, insecurity, and vulnerability faced by workers who are subjected to labor conditions mediated or controlled by algorithms, often in gig or platform-based work. Researchers studying this phenomenon focus on how algorithmic systems influence and shape the experiences of workers, especially in sectors like ride-sharing, delivery, freelance platforms, and other "on-demand" services. Key areas of focus include exploitation, dehumanization, and the erosion of labor rights due to the increasing role of algorithms in managing work.

Social and Economic Impact of Women Digital Entrepreneurs in Indonesia

The phenomenon of momfluencers and mombloggers has gained significant traction in Indonesia, as an increasing number of women actively engage in content creation related to parenting, lifestyle, beauty, and household management (Abidin, 2020). The term momfluencer refers to mothers who utilize social media to share personal experiences, product reviews, and recommendations while simultaneously earning income from sponsored content and brand collaborations (Archer, 2019). Through this process, social media platforms have transformed from mere spaces for personal expression into viable economic avenues where women can commercialize aspects of their daily lives.

The increasing involvement of women as influencers and digital entrepreneurs has contributed to expanding economic opportunities while simultaneously challenging traditional gender expectations (Lepeley, 2019). Digital entrepreneurship offers financial independence without requiring women to leave their homes, making it particularly appealing to stay-at-home mothers who need flexible working arrangements. Unlike conventional business models that require significant financial capital and physical infrastructure, social media entrepreneurship presents lower entry barriers, allowing women to start their businesses with minimal investment. For many women who have previously stepped away from the workforce due to family responsibilities, content creation and digital entrepreneurship also provide a pathway for career re-entry, enabling them to regain financial independence while maintaining their domestic roles.

Challenges Faced by Women in Digitalpreneurship

While digital entrepreneurship has created unprecedented opportunities for women's economic empowerment, it also presents a range of barriers and limitations that impact sustainability, stability, and overall well-being. Women entrepreneurs who build their businesses on social media platforms must navigate the complexities of digital labor, including unpredictable algorithm changes, work-life balance struggles, financial uncertainties, and exposure to digital exploitation. These challenges shape the realities of women's participation in the digital economy, often reinforcing existing gender inequalities despite the promise of flexible and independent work.

Although digital entrepreneurship offers women the possibility of financial independence, it does not guarantee long-term financial stability due to several economic uncertainties. One of the main challenges is the fluctuation in engagement rates and brand partnerships, which are often influenced by changing algorithms, audience preferences, and market competition (Bishop, 2020). Since many women digitalpreneurs rely on sponsored collaborations and

affiliate marketing as primary revenue sources, any decline in visibility can lead to reduced income opportunities.

METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative research approach to explore how social media-driven digital entrepreneurship contributes to women's economic empowerment in Indonesia. Given the complexity of gendered digital labor, a case study method is used to capture insights from momfluencers, mombloggers, and female digital entrepreneurs who actively monetize social media platforms. This approach enables an in-depth understanding of their motivations, challenges, and business strategies, offering a holistic perspective on the economic potential and limitations of digital entrepreneurship.

Data Collection

Data collection consists of semi-structured interviews, content analysis of social media engagement strategies, and a literature review, ensuring a comprehensive examination of the research problem. Interviews are conducted with purposively sampled women entrepreneurs across Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and blogs, ensuring a diverse representation of monetization strategies. The interview questions explore key themes, including economic empowerment, platform dependency, branding strategies, work-life balance, and financial sustainability. Interviews are recorded with participant consent, transcribed, and analyzed using a thematic approach.

Data Analysis

For data analysis, thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) is applied to the interview transcripts and social media content, identifying recurring patterns related to financial independence, branding strategies, algorithmic struggles, and work-life balance. The analysis process involves a step-by-step coding approach, beginning with data familiarization through transcript review, followed by initial coding to identify key themes, theme development through categorization, and refinement to ensure coherence and relevance. The findings are then structured using participant excerpts and content observations, allowing for a nuanced interpretation of women's experiences in digital entrepreneurship.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Contains the results of empirical research or theoretical studies written in a systematic, critical, and informative manner. The use of tables, figures, etc. is only as support to clarify the discussion and is limited to truly substantial support, for example tables of statistical test results, pictures of model test results, etc. The table presented is not in the form of statistically processed output, but is an informative summary of the results. Figures and Tables are placed consistently in the middle of the page, numbered and titled at the top for Tables and at the bottom for Figures. Each table or figure must be cited or explained. Explanation of the table is not just repeating the numbers in the table.

Types of Digital Entrepreneurship Among Stay-at-Home Mothers

The increasing accessibility of social media platforms has provided a vast array of opportunities for women, particularly stay-at-home mothers, to engage in digitalpreneurship. This research finds that digital entrepreneurship among women in Indonesia takes various forms, each catering to different monetization strategies and content types. The primary types of digitalpreneurs identified in this study include influencers (momfluencers), bloggers (mombloggers), content creators, YouTubers, online consultants, and online sellers.

Content creators on platforms like TikTok and YouTube also play a significant role in the digitalpreneurship landscape. Their content includes short-form and long-form videos tailored for brand marketing and entertainment purposes. Additionally, online consultants have emerged as a new category, where professionals use digital platforms to offer expertise-based services, such as parenting consultation and health coaching. This diversification of digitalpreneurship highlights how social media allows women to engage in entrepreneurial activities without the need for traditional capital or physical infrastructure.

Strategies of Successful Momfluencers and Digital Entrepreneurs

Success in digital entrepreneurship is not accidental; it is built on strategic planning, adaptability, and a deep understanding of digital ecosystems. The women in this study who have sustained and scaled their businesses share common key strategies that have helped them navigate algorithm changes, attract brand partnerships, and maximize income potential. Their journeys highlight the importance of community, platform diversification, personal branding, and monetization techniques in achieving long-term success.

Community engagement is not just about learning—it's about growth through collaboration. Many successful digital entrepreneurs partner with fellow influencers, cross-promote content, and engage in audience-sharing activities, allowing them to expand their reach organically. These partnerships enhance credibility and help digitalpreneurs gain visibility in competitive markets.

Finally, understanding how digital platforms prioritize content is a game-changer in digital entrepreneurship. Many successful bloggers in this study invest time in SEO (Search Engine Optimization) to ensure that their content remains discoverable long after it is published. Unlike social media posts that fade quickly, SEO-driven blogs attract visitors months or even years after posting, generating sustained passive income.

The Economic Impact of Digitalpreneurship on Women's Empowerment

The research findings reveal that digitalpreneurship provides a direct pathway to financial independence for women, allowing them to earn consistent income from brand collaborations, content monetization, and online selling. Many participants reported that sponsored posts, YouTube monetization, and affiliate marketing are their primary sources of income.

Additionally, YouTube monetization, Instagram sponsorships, and TikTok Live Shopping provide alternative income sources, enabling women to contribute financially to their households. Some respondents also sell their own products online, demonstrating how digitalpreneurship extends beyond content creation into e-commerce and product branding.

The findings show that the key advantage of digitalpreneurship is its flexibility, which allows women to balance entrepreneurship with household responsibilities. Many participants mentioned that they work during off-peak hours, such as late at night after completing household chores. However, while flexibility is a key benefit, some respondents struggled with managing multiple responsibilities, highlighting the constant negotiation between family and professional life.

Challenges Faced by Women in Digitalpreneurship

Despite all the attractiveness of the digital entrepreneurship for women, they are also need to be aware of the challenges exist in the industry. One of the biggest challenges in digitalpreneurship is the unpredictable nature of social media algorithms, which impact content visibility and engagement rates. Many participants expressed frustration over algorithm changes that affected their audience reach.

To mitigate all these risks, the platform diversification has become a crucial survival strategy. Rather than relying solely on Instagram, TikTok, or YouTube, successful entrepreneurs spread their content across multiple platforms to ensure that a decline in one does not completely disrupt their business.

However, understanding these algorithm changes in real-time remains a constant struggle. Many women in this study turned to online communities—such as Facebook groups, private WhatsApp channels, and influencer forums—where entrepreneurs exchange insights on algorithm updates, monetization techniques, and engagement hacks. These peer networks help them adapt quickly and stay ahead of platform shifts.

Although digitalpreneurship offers flexibility, many women still struggle with balancing family duties and online business commitments. Some participants reported burnout from handling both household and digital work responsibilities.

From the finding above, we can highlight that the efficient time management strategies remain crucial for sustaining a healthy work-life balance for the more sustainability of this digital entrepreneurship for women especially for stay-at-home mothers. It can be concluded from the findings that digitalpreneurship plays a crucial role in women's economic empowerment, providing financial independence, flexible work schedules, and accessible business opportunities. However, platform dependency, algorithm shifts, and work-life balance remain major challenges. Women digitalpreneurs must continually adapt to changing digital landscapes while leveraging online communities for knowledge-sharing and business support. These insights contribute to a broader understanding of gendered digital labor and social media-based economic participation, particularly in emerging economies like Indonesia.

Discussion

The study finds that social media-based entrepreneurship contributes directly to financial autonomy for women, particularly stay-at-home mothers. This aligns with Kabeer's (1999) framework on women's economic empowerment, which highlights the significance of access to income-generating activities as a means to enhance agency and decision-making power. Many participants reported that monetizing social media content allowed them to contribute financially to their households, thereby improving their bargaining power within their families. However, while digital entrepreneurship provides an avenue for financial agency, its sustainability remains uncertain due to platform dependency and algorithmic control.

In addition, this study brings a new perspective by highlighting Indonesia-specific barriers, particularly the lack of government regulations governing influencer contracts. Many women in the study reported instances of unfair compensation, late payments, and exploitative sponsorship deals, underscoring the need for formal labor protections for digital entrepreneurs.

Platform Dependency and Algorithmic Control as Economic Barriers

Despite the economic potential of digital entrepreneurship, findings reveal that women's success in this space is often dictated by opaque platform policies and engagement algorithms.

Many digital entrepreneurs struggle with fluctuating engagement metrics, changing monetization policies, and income instability, aligning with Duffy & Pruchniewska's (2017) argument that platform labor remains precarious and highly controlled by tech corporations.

Participants in this study reported that unexpected algorithm changes significantly impacted their visibility and earnings, reinforcing Bishop's (2020) claim that algorithmic power can disproportionately disadvantage smaller content creators. This also aligns with Bucher (2018), who suggests that content creators must constantly adjust to shifting algorithmic landscapes to remain economically viable.

This aligns with Cotter (2021), who discusses the 'black box' nature of social media algorithms, where users receive little to no transparency regarding engagement drops or reduced content reach. Similarly, Gillespie (2018) highlights that platform governance is designed to prioritize corporate profits rather than user sustainability, leading to uncertainty and instability for digital entrepreneurs.

However, unlike previous research that predominantly examines algorithmic precarity in Western contexts, this study introduces a unique insight into how Indonesian women counteract algorithm changes through digital community networks. Many participants relied on Facebook groups, WhatsApp channels, and influencer support circles to exchange real-time algorithm updates, content strategies, and monetization advice, highlighting their adaptability despite the exploitative nature of platform capitalism. (Brahmana & Shiratina, 2024)

The Dual Burden of Domestic and Digital Labor

Finally, the findings reinforce the persistent gendered labor expectations that digital entrepreneurship fails to eliminate, in line with Orgad (2019) and Duffy and Wissinger (2017). While digital work is marketed as flexible and empowering, women in this study still faced the dual burden of entrepreneurship and household responsibilities, often sacrificing personal time to maintain their online businesses. This study further nuances this issue by revealing that many women structure their work around their domestic duties, working in "off-peak" hours such as late at night or early in the morning.

These findings suggest that while social media entrepreneurship presents a pathway for women's financial empowerment, its sustainability is challenged by algorithmic precarity, labor exploitation, and deeply embedded gender norms. The study calls for structural interventions, including platform accountability, legal protections for digital workers, and policy support for sustainable influencer economies, to ensure that women's participation in digital labor markets translates into long-term economic security rather than temporary income opportunities.

CONCLUSION

This study confirms that social media-driven digital entrepreneurship has emerged as a transformative force in women's economic empowerment, particularly for stay-at-home mothers seeking financial independence and flexible work arrangements. The ability to monetize content, establish personal brands, and engage in digital commerce through platforms like Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and blogs has allowed women to participate in the economy without the constraints of traditional employment. This research provides empirical evidence that momfluencers, mombloggers, online consultants, and digital entrepreneurs are actively shaping consumer behavior, brand collaborations, and audience-driven commerce, positioning themselves as key contributors to the digital economy.

The findings contribute to theoretical discussions on gendered digital labor by reinforcing that women's participation in digital entrepreneurship is shaped by both empowerment and precarity. While social media offers economic opportunities, flexible work models, and professional visibility, it also reinforces traditional gendered expectations, as women must negotiate between caregiving responsibilities and digital labor demands. This study expands on existing literature on platform governance, influencer economies, and economic agency in digital spaces, offering new insights into how Indonesian women counteract algorithmic control through platform diversification and community networking.

This study acknowledges several limitations, including its focus on Indonesian digital entrepreneurs, which may limit the generalizability of findings to other socio-economic and cultural contexts. Additionally, as social media platforms and digital labor policies continue to evolve, the findings may require future updates to reflect new industry trends and regulatory changes. Future research should explore policy-driven solutions for fair digital labor conditions, the role of digital cooperatives in promoting sustainable influencer economies, and the intersection of digital labor rights, gendered entrepreneurship, and economic inclusion in emerging economies.

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