

Preliminary Survey of the Level of Competence of Bumiputera Entrepreneurs in Malaysia

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Abstract:

The National Entrepreneurship Policy (NEP) 2030 creates a holistic and conducive entrepreneurial ecosystem to support an inclusive, balanced, and sustainable socioeconomic agenda. However, the issue of competence of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) Bumiputera entrepreneurs in the business sector has yet to be resolved holistically. Accordingly, a pilot study was conducted to determine the level of competence of MSME bumiputra entrepreneurs in Malaysia. The design of a quantitative study with a survey method approach was conducted on Bumiputera MSME entrepreneurs around Selangor and Kuala Lumpur. The competency study instrument has high reliability with a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.967. The resource-based view (RBV) theory is used as the basis for the formation of research instruments. Questionnaires were distributed to the respondents face-to-face. The study data were analyzed descriptively using SPSS Version 28.0 software. The results of the study show that most of the respondents are between 31 and 40 years old with an income of 10,000 Malaysian Ringgit (MYR) and above and are involved in the business sector. The level of competence of entrepreneurs in terms of skills through the strategic management dimension shows the highest mean value (4.41). Meanwhile, the level of knowledge competence through the dimension of foresight and the system of thinking showed the lowest mean value (4.17). The findings of this study have implications for the government to design training programs, seminars, and courses to strengthen the knowledge of Bumiputera entrepreneurs in Malaysia.

Keywords: competence, entrepreneur, pilot study, Malaysia.

马来西亚土著企业家能力水平初步调查

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摘要:

2030 年国家创业政策 (新经济政策) 创建了一个全面且有利的创业生态系统, 以支持包容、平衡和可持续的社会经济议程。然而, 微型、小型和中型企业 (中小微企业) 土著企业家在商业领域的能力问题尚未得到全面解决。因此, 进行了一项试点研究, 以确定马来西亚中小微企业土著企业家的能力水平。采用调查方法对雪兰莪和吉隆坡周围的中小微企业土著企业家进行了定量研究设计。该能力研究工具具有较高的可靠性, 克隆巴赫阿尔法值为 0.967。以资源为基础的观点 (RBV) 理论作为研究工具形成的基础。调查问卷面对面分发给受访者。使用统计软件 28.0 版软件对研究数据进行描述性分析。研究结果显示, 大多数受访者年龄在 31 岁至 40 岁之间, 收入在 1 万令吉 (马币) 或以上, 并从事商业领域。通过战略管理维度, 企业家的技能水平显示出最高的平均值 (4.41)。同时, 远见和思维系统维度的知识能力水平显示出最低的平均值 (4.17)。这项研究的结果对政府设计培训计划、研讨会和课程以加强马来西亚土著企业家的知识具有重要意义。

关键词: 能力、企业家、试点研究、马来西亚。

1. Introduction

The National Entrepreneurship Policy (NEP) is the country's long-term strategy to make Malaysia a superior entrepreneurial nation by the year 2030 (NEP, 2030). NEP acts as a catalyst for Malaysia's achievement as a united, prosperous, dignified, and sustainably developing country with a fairer and more inclusive economic distribution. Through NEP 2030, all levels of entrepreneur categories, including Bumiputera entrepreneurs in Malaysia, are given various forms of government support to develop entrepreneurial activities (ABD Shukor et al., 2022). Based on SME Corp Malaysia 2022, the business sector landscape of entrepreneurs in Malaysia is divided into service, construction, manufacturing, agriculture, mining, and quarrying sectors (Abidullah and Shafiai, 2017; Yusof and Tahir, 2021; Zahri et al., 2023).

In line with the NEP 2030 goals, the government provides various forms of support in terms of non-financial assistance and financial support to empower Bumiputera entrepreneurs in Malaysia (Aftab et al., 2022; Amat and Ishak, 2020; Din et al., 2020; Shafiee et al., 2022; Yusof and Tahir, 2021). In terms of non-financial support, the government promotes Malaysian products to the international market through the Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation (MATRADE). In addition, the government is upgrading infrastructure facilities and business premises through the involvement of agencies such as UDA Holdings Berhad (UDA), MARA, and the State Economic Development Corporation (PKEN). Advisory assistance is implemented through programs organized by INSKEN, such as the INSKEN High Performing Programs, the INSKEN Business Scale Up Program, and the INSKEN Start-Up Program (Abidullah and Shafiai, 2017; Alfitri et al., 2023; Wahab et al., 2019). In fact, the government also designed various seminars and workshops for entrepreneurs on the aspects of systematic business management. This also includes technical assistance in terms of R&D involving SIRIM, the Malaysian Agricultural Research and Development

Institute (MARDI), the Malaysian Palm Oil Board (MPOB), the Malaysian Forestry Research Institute (FRIM), and several higher education institutions (Alfitri et al., 2023).

The financial support channeled by the government to Bumiputera entrepreneurs is through initiatives to provide more non-banking channels and platform financing. Among them, venture capital (venture capital), angel investors, crowdfunding, investment account platforms (IAP), and peer-to-peer lending (Almeida and Devedzic, 2022; Wahab et al., 2019). In fact, Vendor Commercialization and Research Grants (GPPV) to increase the company's involvement in research and commercialization to produce high value-added products are also provided (Almeida and Devedzic, 2022; Ratković et al., 2022). The People's Trust Council (MARA) and the National TEKUN provide entrepreneurial development funds for the B40 group. Through the Credit Guarantee Corporation (CGC) and financial assistance in the form of bank guarantees from the Malaysian Industrial Development Finance Berhad (MIDF), which provides soft loans for entrepreneurs (Almeida and Devedzic, 2022; Ratković et al., 2022; Sanusi et al., 2023).

Entrepreneurship and business activities play an important role in developing the country's economy and improving people's living standards (ABD Shukor et al., 2022). Community involvement in entrepreneurial activities is important to positively affect a country's economic growth (Aftab et al., 2022; Seraj et al., 2022b). However, entrepreneurs will usually be faced with various challenges to continue the business after five (5) years (Matić, 2022). Studies by Bigos and Michalik (2020), Firmansyah et al. (2022), Luo et al. (2022) found that entrepreneurs are usually faced with internal resource constraints linked to the competence of managing their business and organization. As a result, the entrepreneur's competence constraints have a negative impact on the decline in business performance and productivity.

Although entrepreneurs receive various forms of

financial and non-financial support from the government, the success or failure of a business depends on the competence of the entrepreneur (Harisfathillah and Tambi, 2023; Kurtz and Bartram, 2002; Zahri et al., 2023). Competence is generally associated with the efficiency of an entrepreneur in managing the business systematically (López-Núñez, 2022). Among the constraints commonly faced by entrepreneurs are lack of capital (Aftab et al., 2022), difficulty in obtaining raw materials (Alfitri et al., 2023; Ataei et al., 2020), lack of access to relevant business information (Almeida and Devedzic, 2022), difficulties in marketing and distribution of products, low technological capabilities (Amat and Ishak, 2020), high transportation costs, communication problems (Bigos and Michalik, 2020), and problems caused by complicated bureaucratic procedures (Ataei et al., 2020). Parallel to the issues faced by entrepreneurs, the question arises as to what is the level of competence of Bumiputera MSME entrepreneurs in Malaysia? Accordingly, this study aims to determine the level of competence of Bumiputera MSME entrepreneurs in Malaysia. This agrees with the view (ABD Shukor et al., 2022; Aftab et al., 2022; Alfitri et al., 2023; Amaran and Hamzah, 2021), in which empirical studies found that the success and failure of entrepreneurial activities are related to the competence and internal resources owned by the entrepreneur.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Entrepreneurial Competence

Competence refers to the knowledge, skills, abilities, and behaviors of a person that contribute to the performance of an organization (ABD Shukor et al., 2022; Seraj et al., 2022b; Soesetio et al., 2023). In this context, competence refers to a set of competencies that Bumiputera MSME entrepreneurs should possess. There are various definitions that describe the dimensions, elements, and indicators related to entrepreneurs' competence. According to the views of several researchers such as Amat and Ishak (2020), Azlan et al. (2022), Bigos and Michalik (2020), Chaker and Jarraya, (2021), entrepreneur competence is linked to the entrepreneur's ability to perform tasks, administer the organization, act, behave, and achieve the goals set by the organization Din et al., 2020, Zahri et al., 2023. Firmansyah et al. (2022) argue that entrepreneur competence is a set of specific/certain traits that lead to increased organizational performance and productivity. Previous studies (González-López et al., 2021; Hwang et al., 2020; Ismail, 2022; Soesetio et al., 2023) concluded that the competence of entrepreneurs can be described by the ability of individuals to manage the organization strategically based on the mission, vision, goals, and standards required by the organization.

Some scholars such as López-Núñez (2022), Luo et al. (2022), Matic (2022), Soesetio et al. (2023), Seraj et al. (2022b) are of the view that entrepreneur competence and entrepreneur competence models are

mostly based on the Resource Based View (RBV) Theory. The RBV theory is a well-known theory that explains the need for a person to identify the internal resources that an organization has. In creating competitiveness, entrepreneurs should examine the firm's internal resources and current performance (López-Núñez, 2022). The argument of RBV Theory is based on the rationale and view that if the firm has a variety of internal resources that are valuable, rare, inimitable, genuine, and intangible, it can give the organization an advantage in terms of overcoming competitors in business (Bigos and Michalik, 2020). In line with (López-Núñez, 2022; Matic, 2022; Pulka et al., 2021; Ratković et al., 2022; Sanusi et al., 2023; Sanyal et al., 2020), entrepreneurial competence is an internal organizational resource that is intangible and valuable to ensure that a business achieves success. Competence as an internal resource cannot be imitated by competitors but can be evaluated by the achievement of performance and productivity highlighted by the company.

2.2. Elements of Entrepreneurial Competence

A lot of research related to the competence of entrepreneurs has been conducted in Malaysia and outside Malaysia. However, the definition of entrepreneur competence is linked to the competence and ability of entrepreneurs based on their knowledge and experience. Nevertheless, until now, the literature study has shown findings on the competence of entrepreneurs from various angles.

Amat and Ishak (2020), Ng et al. (2020), Seraj et al. (2022b), Yusof and Tahir (2021) explained that the competence of entrepreneurs depends on their knowledge and experience to be ready to face any risk in business. With the knowledge possessed, entrepreneurs are expected to be competent enough to take on any responsibility and innovate to improve the performance of the company or business (Azlan et al., 2022; Sekaran and Bougie, 2010).

The entrepreneur's personality is also driven by the behavior exhibited by the individual, organization, environment, and process (Alfitri et al., 2023; Seikkula-Leino and Salomaa, 2020). The combination of behavior and personality forms the attitude of entrepreneurs who constantly innovate to improve business by introducing new products or services, new resources, new production methods, new markets, and forming new organizations. As explained by Ataei et al. (2020), Azlan et al. (2022), Seraj et al. (2022a; 2022b), Shafiee et al. (2022), Wahab et al. (2019), the element of entrepreneur competence depends on the entrepreneur's skills in efficiently mobilizing human resources, capital, and land to produce high output.

Personality is an element of entrepreneurial competence that must be possessed by an entrepreneur (Ambad, 2022). According to Cruz-Sandoval et al. (2023), González-López et al. (2021), Sekaran and Bougie (2010), Seraj et al. (2022), Yusof and Tahir (2021), individuals with the title of entrepreneur act as a

trigger for economic growth. Accordingly, they are always far-sighted and have a different thinking system than others (Jaffar et al., 2023; Sanusi et al., 2023). This is because an entrepreneur is a person who tries to find and seize business opportunities that can be developed.

In conclusion, entrepreneur competence refers to the ability and competence of the entrepreneur to perform entrepreneurial functions effectively (Kurtz and Bartram, 2002; Seraj et al., 2022b; Wahab et al., 2019; Soesetio et al., 2023). Accordingly, this study examines the level of competence of bumiputera entrepreneurs in Malaysia in terms of knowledge, experience, behavior, personality, and skills.

2.3. Elements of Knowledge Competence

The knowledge possessed by an entrepreneur allows them to analyze opportunities, potential, and threats and find solutions to improve organizational performance (ABD Shukor et al., 2022; Ratković et al., 2022). Knowledge about the business owned by the entrepreneur can increase the productivity of the organization (Luo et al., 2022; Seraj et al., 2022a). There is no doubt that knowledge can be acquired through education, experience, interaction, and a network of relationships (Sakib et al., 2022; Seraj et al., 2022a). The characteristics of knowledgeable entrepreneurs are that they have various competencies (Alfitri et al., 2023), think farsightedly (Amat and Ishak, 2020; Ataei et al., 2020; Hwang et al., 2020; Sanyal et al., 2020), and have a different thinking system from others (Pulka et al., 2021; Wahab et al., 2019; Soesetio et al., 2023; Yusof and Tahir, 2021). This definition shows that the success of entrepreneurs in business depends on their ability to explore various environmental opportunities based on available resources. In addition, motivation, work quality, and sustainable leadership drive organizational efficiency (Ratković et al., 2022; Seraj et al., 2022b; Wahab et al., 2019).

2.3.1. Diversity of Competencies

Abidullah and Shafiai (2017) explained that an entrepreneur's knowledge is influenced by demographic factors such as age, level of education, and experience of venturing into the field of entrepreneurship. Demographic indicators also influence the decisions and risks that an entrepreneur is willing to take (Alfitri et al., 2023; Pirhadi et al., 2023; Sanusi et al., 2023; Seikkula-Leino and Salomaa, 2020). In this regard, Alfitri et al. (2023), Amat and Ishak (2020), Hwang et al. (2020), Soesetio et al. (2023), Zahri et al. (2023) explain that the knowledge and education of entrepreneurs gives them the advantage of having various competencies in terms of uniting conflicts of economic, social, and environmental interests.

Furthermore, diverse competencies allow entrepreneurs to use experience in dealing with sustainability issues in business organizations (Amat and Ishak, 2020; Ismail, 2022; Wahab et al., 2019). This agrees with the view of Ataei et al. (2020), Din et al.

(2020), Seraj et al. (2022) that the diversity of competencies can expand the network of entrepreneurs in terms of actively involving stakeholders and experts from other disciplines to make organizational decisions. In short, the diversity of entrepreneurial competencies allows entrepreneurs to rationally explain every decision taken to improve organizational performance.

2.3.2. Far-Sighted Competencies

Entrepreneurs' knowledge affects their thinking competence (Amaran and Hamzah, 2021). The level of education possessed by entrepreneurs forms a different thinking system between one group of entrepreneurs and another group of entrepreneurs. Foresight competence according to (Narmaditya and Sahid, 2023; Ratković et al., 2022; Zahri et al., 2023) is influenced by the entrepreneurs' abilities in terms of their judgment to see the progress of their organizations or business performance (Kruger, and Steyn, 2021; Seraj et al., 2022b; Soesetio et al., 2023; Zahri et al., 2023).

Based on the views of Bigos and Michalik (2020), Ng et al. (2020), Sekaran and Bougie (2010), Zahri et al. (2023), far-sighted entrepreneurs can identify the risks and opportunities in the present and future development. Ratković et al. (2022), Seikkula-Leino and Salomaa (2020), Wahab et al. (2019) concluded that well-informed entrepreneurs will use all their experiences to evaluate scenarios before making any decisions, considering the short- and long-term effects.

2.3.3. Systems Thinking

Entrepreneurs who know the business field they engage in the form of a creative (Almeida and Devedzic, 2022), innovative (Ambad, 2022), competent (Hwang et al., 2020), proactive (Jaffar et al., 2023) thinking systems dare to take any risk (Din et al., 2020; Soesetio et al., 2023; Zahri et al., 2023). Entrepreneurs who play various roles in the organization are assumed to have leadership characteristics (Firmansyah et al., 2022). As a leader in an organization, an entrepreneur has a different thinking system than other employees (Hwang et al., 2020). This is because the entrepreneur as the leader can identify the main aspects of the production chain that can provide a good return to the organization (Kruger, and Steyn, 2021; Sahar et al., 2023; Seraj et al., 2022b; Soesetio et al., 2023; Zahri et al., 2023).

Through the competence of the thinking system as well, entrepreneurs can identify the company's main operations that have a negative impact on the environment or society (González-López et al., 2021). According to Hwang et al. (2020), Sanusi et al. (2023), Seikkula-Leino and Salomaa (2020), with the competence of a broad thinking system, entrepreneurs can reduce their negative impact on the environment. With a system of thought that considers environmental sustainability, entrepreneurs can evaluate any decision taken so as not to conflict with human rights (Kruger, and Steyn, 2021; Ng et al., 2020; Ratković et al., 2022; Seraj et al., 2022b; Soesetio et al., 2023).

2.4. Elements of Behavioral Competence

Entrepreneurial competence can be seen from two main contexts, namely behavioral competence through elements of attitude and actions shown by an individual (Chaker and Jarraya, 2021). This agrees with the view (Bolzani and Luppi, 2020; Din et al., 2020; Sahar et al., 2023; Seraj et al., 2022a) that behavioral competence can be increased through training (Bigos and Michalik, 2020). According to Ambad (2022), Ng et al. (2020), Seraj et al. (2022b), behavioral competence includes normative attitudes that are reflected through actions taken to improve organizational performance. At the same time, the entrepreneurs' environment is expected to influence their behaviors and methods of interacting with external organizational networks (Amat and Ishak, 2020; Ng et al., 2020; Seikkula-Leino and Salomaa, 2020; Seraj et al., 2022b). In summary, competent behavior produces other factors such as individual motivation and personality traits that are always dynamic according to the company's performance scenario (Almeida and Devedzic, 2022; Soesetio et al., 2023; Zahri et al., 2023).

2.4.1. Normative Attitude

Competence is the minimum standard for organizational and company performance (ABD Shukor et al., 2022; Yusof and Tahir, 2021). Normative attitude competence is owned by entrepreneurs through behavioral practices because of the influence of a person's life values and internal insistence to perform tasks with excellence. Alfitri et al. (2023) and Ratković et al. (2022) explained that the normative attitude of entrepreneurs can be evaluated by the initiatives taken to make organizational improvements based on norms, values, targets, and sustainability principles. This is based on the view of Amaran and Hamzah (2021), Ambad (2022) and Ratković et al. (2022) that normative attitudes can also be assessed based on the competence of entrepreneurs in identifying sustainable practices and explaining the rationale for decisions made by companies to ensure sustainable organizational progress in terms of social, economic, and political as well as the environment.

2.4.2. Action

The success of an entrepreneur is influenced by the actions taken to improve the performance of the organization (Aftab et al., 2022; Bigos and Michalik, 2020; Mohamed and Hussin, 2021; Sekaran and Bougie, 2010). According to the view of Din et al. (2020), competence of action means the skills of entrepreneurs to change unsustainable ways of working in the organization. For González-López et al. (2021), Kurtz and Bartram (2002), Sanusi et al. (2023), and Zahri et al. (2023), action competence is also observed in terms of the entrepreneur's ability to identify opportunities for sustainable development in the organization. In addition to being able to understand social, environmental, or community challenges that

can be turned into opportunities for the organization/company (Ambad, 2022; Chaker and Jarraya, 2021; Wahab et al., 2019). According to González-López et al. (2021), Firmansyah et al. (2022), Ratković et al. (2022), and Seraj et al. (2022b), action competence is influenced by the motivation of entrepreneurs who can encourage investors to invest in the company's business.

2.5. Elements of Skills Competence

The element of skill competence that contributes to the improvement of organizational performance is strategy management and interpersonal communication. This agrees with the view of Pulka et al. (2021), Ramadani et al. (2022), and Sahar et al. (2023) that the skills of entrepreneurs in the field of management will facilitate the smoothness of the organization in terms of administration, human resources, leadership, identification of opportunities, and the current situation of the organization. Conversely, according to Sakib et al. (2022), interpersonal communication skill competence among entrepreneurs can form a sustainable organizational culture, reduce employee conflict, and encourage employee cooperation in increasing organizational productivity.

2.5.1. Strategic Management

High quality work is influenced by the commitment of the entrepreneurs and their employees. Systematic planning is driven by the existence of strategic management skills among entrepreneurs (Ambad, 2022; Kurtz and Bartram, 2002; Seraj et al., 2022). Strategic management is described through the entrepreneur's efficiency in involving interested individuals to achieve a common goal (Azlan et al., 2022; Harisfathillah and Tambi, 2023). Creative problem solving is also influenced by strategic management competence based on entrepreneurs' ability to take proactive steps to create solutions (Harisfathillah and Tambi, 2023). According to Ismail (2022), Sekaran and Bougie (2010), and Seraj et al. (2022b), entrepreneurship education can produce entrepreneurs who manage business strategically through the ability to design. Ismail (2022) and Ratković et al. (2022), test, implement, and monitor performance to improve organizational efficiency from all angles (Narmaditya and Sahid, 2023; Sekaran and Bougie, 2010).

2.5.2. Interpersonal Communication

Interpersonal communication refers to the ability of individuals to understand various social situations and determine appropriate and accurate behaviors because of individual interactions with other individuals in the organization (Ng et al., 2020). Based on the survey by Aftab et al. (2022), Almeida and Devedzic (2022), Ambad (2022), Bolzani and Luppi (2020), and Zahri et al. (2023), interpersonal communication is represented by the dimension of appreciation of entrepreneurs who act as leaders to solve complex issues. According to Azlan et al. (2022), the interpersonal communication of

entrepreneurs that is needed to improve organizational performance is verbal communication, listening skills, and non-verbal communication. Kurtz and Bartram (2002), Sekaran and Bougie (2010), Soesetio et al. (2023), and Zahri et al. (2023) think that entrepreneurs who are skilled in interpersonal communication are brave in upholding any decision that is assumed to be true, accurate, and rational to make. In addition, Narmaditya and Sahid (2023), Ng et al. (2020), Seraj et al. (2022b), and Yusof and Tahir (2021) argue that entrepreneurs who practice interpersonal competence effectively usually feel the willingness of stakeholders to cooperate in a project.

Table 1. Cronbach's alpha value (Developed by the authors, 2023)

Section	Construct	Total Items	Cronbach's alpha
A	Demography	5	-
B	Competence of the Bumiputera Entrepreneurs	26	0.967

The research instrument developed is based on a review of previous studies related to the competencies of an entrepreneur. The research instrument is divided into two parts. Part A explains the demographics of Bumiputera MSME entrepreneurs. Meanwhile, Part B explains the items that measure the level of competence of MSME bumiputra entrepreneurs.

After the MSME Bumiputera entrepreneur competency study instrument was developed, a face-to-face meeting with selected reference experts was conducted to confirm the consistency of the instrument. The data collection procedure for this pilot study is to meet Bumiputera MSME entrepreneurs for the face-to-face questionnaire distribution process. After data collection was completed, the data were analyzed using SPSS software version 28.0. The results of the analysis of data reliability show a high Cronbach's alpha value of 0.967.

4. Results

4.1. Demographics of the Bumiputera MSME Entrepreneurs

The demographics of Bumiputera MSME entrepreneurs were analyzed based on the frequency distribution and percentage of age, gender, education level, company location, estimated income, and education level of respondents. Based on the 30 research instruments distributed, only 23 are complete and do not contain erroneous data. Therefore, the pilot study only displays the analysis results of 23 study respondents.

Table 2 shows 4 age distributions of Bumiputera MSME entrepreneurs who participated in the pilot study. Most respondents involved in the pilot study were entrepreneurs aged between 31 and 40 years (52.2%).

Table 2. Age distribution in the Bumiputera entrepreneurs' MSMEs (Developed by the authors, 2023)

3. Research Methodology

The study design is quantitative. The rationale for choosing a quantitative method is its suitability for a pilot study that aims to survey respondents' perspectives on a construct being tested (Ismail, 2022; Wahab et al., 2019; Zahri et al., 2023). The research approach uses survey methods to identify the demographics and competency levels of MSME bumiputra entrepreneurs in Malaysia. The study area that is rationalized for the pilot study is around Selangor and Kuala Lumpur. The pilot study population and sample involved Bumiputera MSME entrepreneurs who are active in various business sectors such as services, manufacturing, agriculture, construction, mining, and quarrying.

Demography	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Age		
20 to 30 years	1	4.3
31 to 40 years	12	52.2
41 to 50 years	7	30.4
51 years and above	3	13.0
Total	23	100

Table 3 shows that according to the gender distribution of Bumiputera MSME entrepreneurs, most respondents who participated in the pilot study were female Bumiputera MSME entrepreneurs (65.2%).

Table 3. Gender distribution in the Bumiputera entrepreneurs' MSMEs (Developed by the authors, 2023)

Demography	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	8	34.8
Female	15	65.2
Total	23	100.0

Table 4 shows the distribution of education levels of Bumiputera MSME entrepreneurs, which are divided into six education levels. Thus, most respondents who participated in the pilot study had a diploma (26.1%) and a master's degree' (26.1%) from various fields of study.

Table 5 shows the location distribution of the MSMEs of the Bumiputera Entrepreneur companies. Most respondents who participated in the pilot study run businesses around Kuala Lumpur.

Table 4. Education level distribution of Bumiputera MSME entrepreneurs (Developed by the authors, 2023)

Demography	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Education Level		
SPM	2	8.7
Certificate	3	13.0
Diploma	6	26.1
Bachelor's Degree	5	21.7
Master's Degree	6	26.1
Doctor of Philosophy	1	4.3
Total	23	100

Table 5. Location distribution of the Bumiputera company's MSMEs (Developed by the authors, 2023)

Demography	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Location of the Bumiputera Company's MSMEs		
Selangor	9	39.1
Kuala Lumpur	14	60.9
Total	23	100.0

Table 6. Estimated income distribution of the Bumiputera entrepreneurs' MSMEs (Developed by the authors, 2023)

Demography	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Estimated Income (RM)		
RM 1500 to RM 3000	4	17.3
RM 3100 to RM 5000	5	21.6
RM 5100 to RM 10,000	9	38.9
RM 11,000 to RM 20,000	1	4.3
RM 50,000 and above	2	8.6
RM 200,000 and above	2	8.6
Total	23	100

Table 6 shows six estimated income distributions of

Table 8. Diversity of competencies among Bumiputera MSME entrepreneurs (Developed by the authors, 2023)

Items and Statements	Mean	SD
I have various competencies	4.21	0.629
A1 Consolidate conflicts of economic, social, and environmental interests.	4.17	0.650
A2 Using the experience, activities, and values of various relevant stakeholders to address sustainability issues.	4.35	0.573
A3 Actively involve stakeholders and experts from other disciplines in dealing with sustainability issues.	4.13	0.626
A4 Explain the importance of involving local stakeholders (e.g., in recruitment) for a company.	4.22	0.671

Regarding competence diversity, most Bumiputera MSME entrepreneurs as respondents agreed that they use the experience, activities, and values of various relevant stakeholders in dealing with sustainability issues, which contributed to the highest mean value of

the Bumiputera entrepreneurs' MSMEs. Most respondents who participated in this pilot study had an estimated income distribution of RM5,100 to RM10,000 (38.9%).

Demographics in terms of the distribution of the business sectors that the respondents engage in consist of service business sectors, manufacturing, agriculture, construction, mining, and quarrying (Table 7). A pilot study showed that most respondents ventured into the business sector in the form of services (34.8%).

Table 7. Distribution of business sectors in which Bumiputera entrepreneurs' MSMEs are engaged (Developed by the authors, 2023)

Demography	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Business Sector		
Services	8	34.8
Manufacturing	4	17.4
Agriculture	6	26.1
Construction	2	8.7
Mining	1	4.3
Quarrying	2	8.7
Total	23	100

4.2. Level of Competence of the Bumiputera Entrepreneurs' MSMEs

The level of competence of Bumiputera MSME entrepreneurs in Selangor and Kuala Lumpur is assessed on the basis of seven entrepreneur competencies based on the research instrument developed. Among the seven competencies of Bumiputera MSME entrepreneurs that were studied are the dimensions of competency diversity, far-sighted thinking competency, thinking system competency, normative attitude, action competency, strategic management competency, and interpersonal communication competency. Table 8 shows the results of a pilot study on the seven competencies tested for Bumiputera entrepreneurs.

4.35 (mean). The diversity of competencies in terms of the involvement of stakeholders and experts from other disciplines actively in dealing with sustainability issues contributed to the lowest mean value of 4.13 (mean).

Table 9. Far-sighted competencies of the Bumiputera MSME entrepreneurs (Developed by the authors, 2023)

Items and Statements	Mean	SD
I think foresight:	4.17	0.673
B1 Construct and consider different sustainability directions for the future.	4.30	0.703

Continuation of Table 9			
B2	Identify risks and opportunities in current and future development.	4.09	0.668
B3	In analyzing and evaluating scenarios for action, I consider the short- and long-term effects.	4.17	0.650

Next, the competence of Bumiputera MSME entrepreneurs in terms of far-sighted thinking is contributed by item building and considering different sustainability directions in the future, with the highest

mean value of 4.30 (mean). In the aspect of identifying risks and opportunities that exist for development, it shows the lowest mean value of 4.09 (mean).

Table 10. Thinking system competencies of the Bumiputera MSME entrepreneurs (Developed by the authors, 2023)

Items and Statements	Mean	SD
My thinking system is as follows:	4.17	0.662
C1 Identify the main aspects of the agricultural production chain and ecosystem.	4.13	0.757
C2 Identify the company's main operations that have a negative impact on the environment or society.	4.17	0.717
C3 Analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the production chain and suggest improvements to reduce the negative impact on the environment or society.	4.17	0.576
C4 Integrate social, environmental, and community issues into the company's' future.	4.22	0.600

Table 10 shows the competence of Bumiputera MSME entrepreneurs in the context of the thinking system. The majority agree that they show the ability to integrate social, environmental, and societal issues in the future of a company with the highest mean value

amounting to 4.22 (mean). The aspect of identifying the main aspects of the production chain and the agricultural ecosystem contributed the lowest mean value of 4.13 (mean).

Table 11. Bumiputera MSME entrepreneurs' normative attitude competencies (Developed by the authors, 2023)

Items and Statements	Mean	SD
I have a (normative) attitude:	4.28	0.655
D1 Take the initiative to improve my own practice based on norms, values, targets, and principles of sustainability.	4.26	0.619
D2 Knowing "good sustainable practices" in the field of entrepreneurship.	4.43	0.662
D3 Apply sustainability norms, values, targets, and principles in my own practice.	4.22	0.671
D4 Explain the decisions the company has made regarding sustainability.	4.22	0.671

Table 11 shows the results of data analysis on the competence of entrepreneurs in terms of having a normative attitude. The study found that most Bumiputera MSME entrepreneurs know "good sustainable practices" in the field of entrepreneurship,

with the highest mean value amounting to 4.43 (mean). However, in terms of the application of norms, values, targets, and results, both showed the lowest mean value of 4.22 (mean).

Table 12. Bumiputera MSME entrepreneurs' action competencies (Developed by the authors, 2023)

Items and Statements	Mean	SD
I act with (action competence):	4.18	0.612
E1 Changing unsustainable ways of working in my company.	4.30	0.635
E2 Identify opportunities for sustainable development.	4.17	0.650
E3 Knowing the social, environmental, or community challenges that can be turned into opportunities for the organization/company.	4.09	0.515
E4 Motivate higher management in the company to invest in sustainability.	4.17	0.650

Table 12 shows the results of the study on action competence. The study found that most respondents acted by changing unsustainable ways of working in companies with the highest mean value of 4.30 (mean).

Knowledge about social, environmental, or community challenges that can be turned into opportunities for the organization/company showed the lowest mean value of 4.09 (mean).

Table 13. Bumiputera MSME entrepreneurs' strategic management competencies (Developed by the authors, 2023)

Items and Statements	Mean	SD
I practice strategic management in my business:	4.41	0.603
F1 Involves only relevant people in achieving sustainability goals.	4.48	0.593
F2 Know the steps that need to be taken to achieve sustainability goals.	4.39	0.583
F3 Using strategies in sustainable projects (design, test, implement).	4.43	0.590
F4 Monitor performance for company sustainability.	4.35	0.647

Table 13 shows that most respondents agree that involving only relevant individuals in achieving sustainability goals will contribute to strategic management competence, with the highest mean value

of 4.48 (mean). In the aspect of performance monitoring for the sustainability of the company, it shows the lowest mean value of 4.35 (mean).

Table 14. Bumiputera MSME entrepreneurs' thinking system competencies (Developed by the authors, 2023)

Items and Statements	Mean	SD
I practice interpersonal competence with	4.33	0.602
G1 Expresses appreciation for their cooperation in solving complex issues.	4.48	0.593
G2 Dare to state the truth in the event of neglect (forgetting) one or more sustainability goals.	4.39	0.656
G3 Feel the willingness of stakeholders to cooperate in a project.	4.30	0.559

Finally, Table 14 shows that most respondents agree that the interpersonal competence of Bumiputera MSME entrepreneurs is in terms of expressing appreciation for their cooperation in solving complicated issues, with the highest mean value of 4.48 (mean). For the item of feeling the willingness of stakeholders to cooperate in a project, the study found that the mean value contributed was the lowest at 4.30 (mean).

5. Discussion

From the demographic data, the study found that most respondents consisted of Bumiputera MSME entrepreneurs aged between 31 and 40 years old who had a good educational background at the Diploma and Master level. This shows that most Bumiputera entrepreneurs who are active in entrepreneurial activities have a higher education background. The demographic findings of highly educated entrepreneurs are in line with the studies by ABD Shukor et al. (2022), Firmansyah et al. (2022), Pulka et al. (2021), Soesetio et al. (2023), and Zahri et al. (2023) stating that most entrepreneurs have a foundation of entrepreneurial education at the university level before venturing into the business sector in various fields. The interest and motivation of entrepreneurs drive them to venture into various business sectors such as services. This finding is supported by Alfitri et al. (2023), Ataei et al. (2020), Din et al. (2020), Pulka et al. (2021), and Yusof and Tahir (2021), who explained that the service field, especially digital business, attracts young people because it does not require a physical business space.

Regarding entrepreneur competence, the study found that the level of competence of Bumiputera MSME entrepreneurs in terms of skills showed the highest mean value. This shows that Bumiputera MSME entrepreneurs in Malaysia practice strategic management in any business sector. The issue of lack of capital and the challenge of lack of investors is not a major problem for bumiputra entrepreneurs because there is various support from the government (Hwang et al., 2020; Shafiee et al., 2022; Soesetio et al., 2023; Zahri et al., 2023).

Knowledge competence in the far-sighted aspect and the thinking system of Bumiputera MSME entrepreneurs, each showing the lowest mean value. This shows that demographic differences such as educational background, business sector background, and experience in the business sector impact the knowledge competence of bumiputra entrepreneurs. The finding of knowledge competence that does not stand out among Bumiputera MSME entrepreneurs agrees with the findings of (ABD Shukor et al., 2022; Alfitri et al., 2023; Almeida and Devedzic, 2022;

Ambad, 2022; López-Núñez, 2022; Pirhadi et al., 2023; Sanusi et al., 2023; Seikkula-Leino and Salomaa, 2020.

6. Conclusion

Bumiputera MSME entrepreneurs involved in the pilot study are individuals who have ventured into various business sectors in Malaysia with various demographic backgrounds. The level of competence of the Bumiputera MSME entrepreneurs was found to be prominent in terms of strategic management practice competence. This shows that Bumiputera MSME entrepreneurs are always committed to developing businesses consistently, even when faced with income disparity and lack of business capital.

The strength of this study lies in its ability to explore the competency levels of Bumiputera MSME entrepreneurs who have experience in various business domains. However, this study has shortcomings that are considered a limitation of the study because the findings of this study are the results of a pilot test that cannot be represented by all Bumiputera MSME entrepreneurs. This is because the results of this study are the results of a pilot test, which cannot be represented by all Bumiputera MSME entrepreneurs.

This study provides implications for the contribution of new knowledge input to stakeholders in the National Entrepreneurship Policy (NEP 2030) in terms of the level of competence possessed by Bumiputera MSME entrepreneurs. The holistic MSME Bumiputera entrepreneur development strategy needs to be strengthened by diversifying programs that support entrepreneurs in both financial and non-financial forms. This coincides with the NEP action plan 2030 to create a holistic and conducive entrepreneurial ecosystem to support the country's socioeconomic agenda.

As a recommendation, researchers of the competence of Bumiputera MSME entrepreneurs should diversify their research methods and include other theories of entrepreneurial competence. To strengthen the previous findings, future researchers should use a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. Additionally, the interview session be conducted with government agencies involved in entrepreneur development. Since the findings of this study include the elements of interpersonal competence and having a normative attitude, Cochran's Cultural Value Theory is recommended for future researchers.

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Authors' Contributions

Author 1 is a doctoral student who served as the principal researcher to write the paper, designed the analysis, and collected the data. The main supervisor, author 2, critically examined the manuscript for significant intellectual content. Author 1 was co-supervised by Authors 3 and 4, who worked scientifically on data interpretation. Statistics analysis and data presentation were performed by author 5.

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