



# Nutripreneurial Challenges for Nutritionist Graduates in the Era of Pandemic COVID-19

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**Abstract:** Today, Health students are starting to be more interested in the field of entrepreneurship. Evidently, many graduates, nutritionists, have opened businesses in the culinary field. The COVID-19 pandemic, which has changed the structure of the community's economy, has had an impact on nutritionists to survive. This study aims to analyze challenges faced by nutrition science graduates as nutrition entrepreneurs in the COVID-19 pandemic era. This qualitative research with a phenomenological approach used indepth interview. The research sample was 6 nutritionists who graduated from the Nutrition Science Department at Universitas Jenderal Soedirman. The results showed that most nutripreneurs faced challenges, such as how to increase business capital, expand business marketing, get employees with good and appropriate abilities, increase product innovation, manage time in team work, and deal with business competitors. The success of a nutripreneurs depends on their ability to overcome challenges. From the research findings, in general, the challenges faced by these nutripreneurs are economic challenges, such as increasing business capital, expanding marketing, and recruiting the right employees, where during the COVID-19 Pandemic, optimal adaptation behavior is required. Therefore, nutripreneurs must be more creative in dealing with the difficulties their encounters. Entrepreneurial personality, technological opportunities, and incubation center resources were identified as the main factors influencing product innovation.

**Keywords:** Nutripreneurial Challenges, Nutritionist Graduates, COVID-19 Pandemic

## 1. Introduction

The Regulation of the State Minister for Cooperatives (Kemenkop) and Small and Medium Enterprises of the Republic of Indonesia concerning Guidelines for the Entrepreneurial Scholar Growth and Development Program states that entrepreneurs are people who have the spirit, attitude, behavior and entrepreneurial ability [1]. According to David Mc Clelland, a country can be prosperous if it has at least 2% entrepreneurship from its population. Minister of Cooperatives and Small and Medium Enterprises (UKM) of Indonesia said the ratio of entrepreneurship is currently 7% more than the total population, but it is still far behind

compared to neighboring countries, such as Malaysia at 5%, Singapore is 7%, and Thailand at 4.5% [2].

Entrepreneurship education is very important for any department in universities. The graduates who have entrepreneurial insight can create job opportunities to support the national economic development [3]. Higher education is a forum that facilitates citizens to get teaching, education, and training and it motivates students to become smart, independent, creative, innovative generations, and able to create various job opportunities or other business [4]. There are many benefits obtained from entrepreneurship, among others: 1) autonomy, where free and independent management makes the entrepreneur a "boss" who is fully satisfied; 2)

initial challenges and feelings of achievement motive. Initial challenges or feelings of high motivation are things that are important, such as development of business concepts to reach more profits; 3) financial control, where entrepreneurs are free to manage their finance, and feel their own wealth [5].

Entrepreneurship is an important way to deal with poverty problems since it can create new job opportunities, foster a climate of innovative thinking, and lead to the growth of both pioneering and cutting-edge companies [6]. However, to run his entrepreneurial business, an entrepreneur needs skills in financial management, human resources, start-ups, social and interpersonal, leadership, personality, marketing, and technical and business management skills [7]. Based on the entrepreneurial education model developed by Vesper (1998), it is explained that there are four types of knowledge that are useful for entrepreneurs: (1) general business knowledge; (2) general knowledge of the company; (3) specific knowledge about business opportunities, and (4) specific knowledge about the company or business [8]. The results showed that the entrepreneurship education model applied in each university has a unique added value and local wisdom in accordance with the vision, mission and goals of each university [9].

Business or enterprise in the health sector currently has very good prospects and even in the future will increase sharply. It is estimated that a business or enterprise or industry in the health sector is a future business, in addition to internet education, the entertainment industry, and recreation [10]. Entrepreneurship in the health sector is closely related to public health science, in the context of health promotion that focuses on market demand. The potential for health entrepreneurship is expected to be a provision for developing knowledge in the fields of epidemiology, environmental health, biostatistics, health policy and management, and social and behavioral sciences [11].

Entrepreneurship is not only applied in public health science, but also in other health fields such as nursing and nutrition. Previous researches stated that with changes in work life, entrepreneurship skills are needed in the health care field,

which can then be applied in the nursing entrepreneurship curriculum [12]. Entrepreneurship in the field of nutritional science, known as nutripreneurship, also has many business opportunities. Dietitians have skill benefit promote their entrepreneurial carrier opportunities (Blades, 2013). The research stated that the business interests of Health students are in the environmental health sector, clinical therapy, service, and culinary fields [10]. Nutritionists not only can be work in hospital or public health service center, but can be a free worker offering health nutrition services in other institution or environment. Some of nutrition-based businesses such as healthy food supermarkets, food co-ops, even cooking and food preparation classes, can be good opportunities for nutritionists, as part of health promotion actions (Hernández et al., 2014).

COVID-19 has caused significant economic and entrepreneurial disruption, and has raised unpredictable challenges [13]. The results showed that entrepreneurs can increase economic growth through their ability and courage to implement innovations in business enterprises and to establish companies [14].

## 2. Research Methodology

This research is qualitative with phenomenology approach, conducted in December 2020-September 2021, the number ethical approval: 517/EC/KEPK/VII/2021. Data were collected via in-depth interviews, observations, and field notes, and then analyzed. The research informants were nutritionists who graduated from the Nutrition Science study program, University of Jenderal Soedirman, who became entrepreneurs in the field of nutrition.

## 3. Results

### 3.1. Informant Characteristics

The following is a description of the informants involved in this research.

*Table 1. List of Research Informants.*

No. Informant	Ethnicity	Graduation Year	Start Entrepreneurship	Type of Business	Level of Business	Nature of Organization
1.	Javanese	2017	2019	catering, cake & snack	micro	Sole proprietor
2.	Sundanese	2015	2016	catering, cake & snack	micro	Sole proprietor
3.	Sundanese	2015	2016	catering & Snack	micro	Sole proprietor
4.	Javanese	2015	2016	catering, cake & snack	micro	Sole proprietor
5.	Sundanese	2018	2020	Nutrition Start-up	micro	Partnership
6.	Sundanese	2018	2019	Healthy Food Store	micro	Sole proprietor

All informants are female, 2 informants are Javanese and 4 informants are Sundanese. Most types of businesses are in the food sector, and only 1 informant has a start-up business in the nutrition sector. The business that the informant runs is on a micro scale, with annual sales of around Rp. 1,000,000.00 - Rp. 10,000,000.00 per month, and only 1 informant is an entrepreneur with a partnership system.

### 3.2. The Challenges of Nutrition Entrepreneurship During the COVID-19 Pandemic

In this research, all informants mentioned that the challenges they encountered during the COVID-19 pandemic were economic constraints, which are:

*Table 2. Challenges encountered by nutripreneurs.*

Informan Number	Challenges
2, 3, 5	Increasing business capital
1, 3, 6	Expanding business marketing
3, 4, 6	Recruiting employees, especially those with good and appropriate abilities
1, 2	Increasing product innovation
2	Dealing with business competitors
4, 5	Time management at work

Table 2 shows that most of the challenges faced by nutripreneur informants are increasing business capital, expanding marketing and designing more attractive promotions, and recruiting the right employees.

## 4. Discussion

Entrepreneurial activity or start-up business is one of the determinants of economic growth [15]. At first, in general, new entrepreneurs were faced with various problems when entering the small and medium business sector [16]. This is in accordance with the results of previous research which states that new entrepreneurs face many challenges, including impatience in solving problems, lack of sustainable motivation, inability to dream and use the subconscious, etc. Other challenges include; develop vision and ideas, raise capital, gather teams, find the right location, find the right employees, find good customers, fight off competition, deal with challenges even unexpected expenses, keep up with industry changes and trends, and get out of business [17].

### 4.1. Increasing Business Capital

Capitalist thinkers interpret business capital as things related to production factors such as labor, economic capital, and also infrastructure [18]. Most of young entrepreneurs want to be an entrepreneur because they want to letting their own from unemployment state. Other side, they need labors to running their business, so they have to recruitment on qualification levels for high-skilled employees, partially for medium-skilled employees but not for low-skilled employees [19]. Economic capital or capital requirement ensures business investment efficiency [20], while infrastructure such as digital technologies utilized by young entrepreneurs to undertaken their businesses and their added value to the economy [21].

Little differences across countries showed relationship between human and social capital as a propensity to become an entrepreneur [22]. Women can driven become an entrepreneur when they have increased education attainment in particular at degree level and the skills necessary to take advantage of their family capital [23]. The previous study stated that there is small relationship between human capital and entrepreneurship success, but it was higher especially for outcomes of human capital investments (knowledge or skills) than for human capital investments (education or experience) and for young businesses compared to old businesses [24].

Financial capital is not a priority for young entrepreneurs. Even previous study showed that majority, both male and

female, declared that financial was not needed [25]. Young entrepreneurs have no adequate financial capital and are unable to obtain formal banking funding. They can consider other capitals such as social capital, human capital and cultural capital as their financial capital as long as they are of good quality. Young entrepreneurs can also take advantage of various forms of loans from family or other informal resources [26].

However, the entrepreneurial enterprises most affected by the crisis were early-stage start-ups that displayed the highest level of informational opacity [27]. The COVID-19 pandemic is most sensitive exposure for small business, so entrepreneurs take higher business risk Jaroslav [28]. They must be taking a care, even when they increase their cash holdings in the lead up to COVID-19. The previous study stated 61% of businesses may run out of cash, including 8.6% that had no retained earnings whatsoever with micro firms at particular risk [27]. The interactions between financial capital and entrepreneurial factors could managers be more focus to new and suitable coping strategies in the COVID-19 pandemic.

### 4.2. Product Innovation

Unique competence is a tool for organizations to survive and thrive amidst business competitions. This competency can be found through innovation [29]. Entrepreneurial personality, technological opportunities, and incubation center resources were identified as the main factors influencing product innovation. To meet customer needs and create a niche market, start-ups may focus on customization based on their technology and expertise. Business incubators encourage entrepreneurial skills in running a business, improve new products or services, and help entrepreneurs in competitiveness. Having strong entrepreneurial traits (need for achievement, locus of control, and tendency to take risks) can also form a higher tendency to encourage new ideas and products although the effect is quite small because many external factors often prevent entrepreneurs from being creative [30].

Entrepreneurs knowledge is an important way innovative products and services emerge in the marketplace caused by cultural change from COVID-19 [31]. Entrepreneurs can continue to implement dynamic business strategies in their business environment and business practices during the COVID-19 pandemic. A study estimates and the goodness of fit index and evaluation of business strategies can be applied to achieve an environmentally friendly even quality way for customer support [32]. Market players should carry out market orientation to identify changes in public consumption,

even they should have to knowledge sharing and product innovation according to community needs during the COVID-19 pandemic. Knowledge sharing covers information technology, gathering and sorting of knowledge, and knowledge transfer, while product innovation cover based on product trends and function, also quality and featured product [33].

#### **4.3. Low Business Marketing**

Financial capital is not the only capital for entrepreneurs to create or develop their company or business [26, 34]. Good individual skill in networking or sufficient social capital can usually optimize the financial challenges [35]. In addition, business resilience is supported by digital transformation. Digital transformation occurs when new digital skills emerge and digital tools are adopted. The right digitalization strategy is needed in achieving business goals and developing SME products or services to be more competitive, based on cultural diversity, plurality, and social motivation. By using the right technology for system resilience, a business can carry out its digital transformation and create digital resilience [36]. Based on company contextual factors, SMEs generally adopt several types of digital transformation, namely accelerating the transition to business, digitizing the sales function, and finding partners with good digital capabilities [37].

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused significant changes, especially with regard to digital marketing. The previous study indicate that during the COVID-19 pandemic information technology have played a role in the development of digital marketing [38]. The COVID-19 has drastically affected lives, economies and consumer behavior around the world, so organizations and marketers have had to adapt to this new normal. Communication between consumers and employees is important, so it have to improve by entrepreneurs. E-marketing is an opportunity to manage this crisis, by maintaining a positive attitude to communicate with customers through various digital platforms. By digital marketing business actor know what type of products are the consumers looking for and what do they expect from the brands to do during the pandemic [39].

Customers expect positive communication through various brands. Many customers are staying at home because of the lockdown, so the use of digital media can make them feel connected, updated and entertained. Marketing tools like social media and email need to be checked regularly and updated to better connect with customers. Lower advertising costs in e-marketing also provide opportunities for marketers to reach more customers. Small businesses also need to adjust digital transaction tools in accepting payments [40].

#### **4.4. Difficulty in Recruiting Employees, Especially Those with Good and Appropriate Abilities**

There are several aspects that make it difficult to recruit employees in entrepreneurial companies, namely aspects of individuals who work for entrepreneurial businesses, the working conditions of an entrepreneur, and the career path of

an entrepreneur. The previous study shows that there are cases that employees of entrepreneurial companies are more likely to choose to become entrepreneurs, former employees of entrepreneurial companies choose to become entrepreneurs, and even prefer to be employees of other companies [41].

Previous studies have shown that recruitment, retention, and work relationships have a significant effect on employee performance. On the other hand, employee recruitment and retention have a significant effect on employee performance. In addition to employee recruitment and retention, employment relationships found a significant effect on employee retention. The results also show that employee recruitment and retention have a significant effect on employee performance through employment relationships. Recruitment also has a significant effect on work relations through employee retention [42]. Researches showed that taking into account the background of job seekers, new business opportunities can attract individuals who have strong entrepreneurial behavior and it can also develop human capital strategies that are in line with the entrepreneurial orientation of startups [43].

Although give a number of problems, most of small employers adopted the recommended systematic procedures, use of "tried and trusted" methods, word-of-mouth recruitment and the hiring of "known quantities". Some small companies also have a tendency to be exclusive and not open to applicants, even based on an 'interpersonal fit' relationship. The highly personalised management styles can lead to reassessments of employee worth and contribution, it make employers failure to maintain professional working relationships. Previous study states that some of formal procedures or other methods could reduce staff turnover in small firms and its operating expenses [44]. The recruitment system during the COVID-19 pandemic can be conducted online. The online recruitment system (E-recruitment) has ease of use, accessibility, and flexibility. This system has a user-friendly interface and can be accessed anywhere in the world [45]. Organizations can find inspiration to address adjustment issues and employee well-being in today's work environment, by considering the ways in which entrepreneurs overcome similar challenges [46].

#### **4.5. Dealing with Business Competitors**

Entrepreneurial motivation can influence new business strategies. Necessity entrepreneurs (those who do entrepreneurship because of compulsion) are less able to plan and prepare their steps when compared to other types of entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs start their businesses out of necessity and driven by external circumstances. Entrepreneur have fewer opportunities to accumulate or develop specific resources such as skills, abilities, or connections, to pursue complex differentiation strategies [47].

Entrepreneurial marketing action depend on the entrepreneur's ability to understand business environment, however entrepreneurs pay less attention to competition. Entrepreneurial marketing action address relations,

publicity, and the development of offerings. Entrepreneurs need to address competition by developing network relationships, ensuring publicity on the market, and creating new products and services [48]. The study showed that entrepreneurs tend to enter the competition for the sake of competition itself, not to win the competition or even for personal development. Meanwhile, apart from other factors such as self-confidence and high courage in taking risks, the enjoyment of competing can be a factor driving entrepreneurs' decisions to enter the market [49]. Beside it, product excellence, people's behavior and process reliability are main components in sustaining a business. During a pandemic COVID-19, the right choice of technology and digitalization strategies can be used to improve and develop SME business products or services competitively [36]. Entrepreneurs can collaborate with competitors also during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, entrepreneurs must also balance the risks and benefits of competitive activities. They must decide whether to continue working with competitors after the pandemic ends, or to continue operating with an individualistic business model [50].

#### 4.6. Time Management at Work

Time management is an important thing for entrepreneurs to pay attention to. Entrepreneurs should spend time as needed and learn to improve their daily attitudes and habits. So that all problems that may occur simultaneously, can be managed properly and do not have a heavy impact on other aspects Sunday. Entrepreneurs who run their business on a part-time basis, indicating that they do not know their previous entrepreneurial abilities. Entrepreneurs choose how much time to spend in business and how much capital to invest based on their expectations. However, after spending a certain amount of time as a part-time entrepreneur, if the business seems profitable, the individual will increase his time for business and will soon transition to full-time entrepreneurship [51]. Research on the transition to entrepreneurship from part-time to full-time shows that motivation to increase income or motivation to achieve social recognition is negatively related to transitional behavior, while motivation to achieve independence or self-realization is positively related to transitional behavior. Motivation to follow role models, financial success, and innovation were not significantly associated with transitional behavior [52].

Other studies have shown that employees' perceptions of flexible work arrangements do not significantly affect employee performance. Flexible work arrangements are positively related to innovative work behavior innovation, while flexible work arrangements are positively related to employee performance mediated by innovative work behavior. During the COVID-19 pandemic, entrepreneurs' activities have restricted. Some of them may be do their work from home. It may leads to a loss of social contact as an important benefit of work. For United Kingdom small businesses, video meetings as an alternative to reduce negative impacts. It is a useful tools for business activities and to accomplish tasks although are less

suitable to support social interactions [53]. Thus, companies can take advantage of the latest technological innovations in terms of employee attendance [54].

## 5. Conclusion

From the research findings, in general, the challenges faced by these nutripreneurs are economic challenges, such as increasing business capital, expanding marketing, and recruiting the right employees, where during the COVID-19 Pandemic, optimal adaptation behavior is required. In this research, the number of respondents was limited, they are nutritionists who graduated from a nutrition science study program from a university. Therefore, this does not yet fully describe the types of challenges that may arise during this COVID-19 pandemic.

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