

## **Predictors of Entrepreneurial Intention among Youths in Malaysia**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study aims to examine the factors affecting entrepreneurial intention among youths in Malaysia. This study is quantitative in nature, and made use of a questionnaire as the main data-collection tool. Via multi-stage cluster sampling, a total of 400 youths from four districts in Peninsular Malaysia were selected as respondents. The analysis confirmed that all of the factors studied were found to have positive and significant relationship with entrepreneurial intention. Further analysis concluded three factors, namely attitude towards entrepreneurship, entrepreneurship knowledge and perceived feasibility, are the most significant factors contributing towards entrepreneurial intention among youth. These three factors (attitude towards entrepreneurship, entrepreneurship knowledge and perceived feasibility) need to be given particular emphasis in order to promote entrepreneurship intention among the target group. In other words, if these three factors among the target group were to be strengthened, there would be a greater likelihood that the group's entrepreneurship intention would be increased.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The Malaysian government aims to prepare adequate human resources, especially among the young population. In order to achieve this, a number of initiatives have been introduced, one being the establishment of several learning and

skills centres. Currently in Malaysia there are 21 public universities, 27 polytechnic colleges, 10 matriculation colleges, 38 community colleges, 21 private universities, 38 college universities and 324 private colleges. Furthermore, the establishment of the National Youth Skill Institute provides a great form of alternative education for young people. One of the main skills taught at these learning and skills centres is entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship offers a viable, rewarding and sustainable career option (Ambad & Damit, 2016). Despite the benefits offered, the involvement of Malaysian youth in entrepreneurship is still discouraging (Ahmad Faiz, Idris, Uli, Shaffril, & D'Silva, 2010; Yusof, Jamaludin, & Mat Lazim, 2013). This can be related to negative attitudes, weak social support, unavailability of mentors and expert support and a lack of entrepreneurship skills and knowledge (Ahmad Faiz et al., 2010; Ambad & Damit, 2016; Mat, Maat, & Mohd., 2015; Koe, Sa'ari, Majid, & Ismail, 2012; Linan, 2004; Roxas, Lindsay, Ashill, & Victoria, 2007; Shiro, 2010; Yildirim, Cakir, & Askun, 2016).

The study was mainly conducted due to lack of theoretical perspective on the influence of behavioral factors on entrepreneurial intention among Malaysian youth. Understanding of the fundamental theory on entrepreneurial intention is vital for better understanding and wider perspectives on the issues. Realising this, the current study attempted to respond by examining the factors affecting entrepreneurial intention among youth

in Malaysia from the perspective of the Entrepreneurial Intention Model (EIM).

### **Youth and Entrepreneurship in Malaysia**

Throughout the world, the youth is an important group. In Malaysia, youth constitutes more than 40% of the total population, with the current number of young people in Malaysia at 13.375 million (Institute for Youth Research Malaysia [IYRES], 2014). According to IYRES (2010), youths are defined as those whose ages range from 15 to 40 years. Compared with neighboring countries, such as Singapore (15 to 29 years), Thailand (15 to 24 years), Vietnam (15 to 35 years), Brunei (15 to 25 years) and Philippines (15 to 30 years), the age for youth in Malaysia is relatively old.

The majority of the employed in Malaysia fall into the category of youth; in fact, a total of 62%, or roughly 7.2 million people working in Malaysia are youths (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2014). However, despite this high number, youth involvement in one of the most important sectors, entrepreneurship, is not as high as one would expect. Shaffril, Hassan and Abu Samah (2009) for example, posited that only 29.8% of youths were involved in agro-entrepreneurship. Ahmad Faiz et al. (2010) stated that the total population of youth entrepreneurs was only 10% and this can be associated with their reluctance to deal with the high risk attached to engaging in entrepreneurship activities.

According to a study conducted by Graduate Barometer (2013), entrepreneurship is not one of the main career choices of young people. The majority favour working in the public or the private sector. Another study by the Department of Statistics Malaysia (2014) confirmed that young Malaysians favoured working in services, marketing and technical and professional fields.

### **Entrepreneurial Intention Model**

Although several theories have attempted to provide a comprehensive understanding of entrepreneurial intention, this study attempts to understand it from the specific perspective of the Entrepreneurial Intention Model (EIM), developed by Linan (2004). A number of studies have examined intention as the prime predictor of starting a new business venture (Ambad & Damit, 2016; Koe et al., 2012; Mat et al., 2015; Yildirim et al., 2016). According to Yildirim et al. (2016), understanding entrepreneurial behaviour can be achieved more successfully from entrepreneurial intention perspectives rather than from personality traits or demographic factors. Entrepreneurial intention refers to the commitment placed on the performance of the entrepreneurial effort of setting up a business for self-employment (Linan, 2004). Entrepreneurial intention guides the entrepreneur on what to do and what not to do, as this is vital for establishing, developing and implementing a successful business concept (Mat et al., 2015). Therefore, in understanding the

pursuit of business ownership, it is vital to view the nature and precursors of the intention of engaging in entrepreneurship activities (Yildirim et al., 2016).

Numerous theories have attempted to connect several factors to entrepreneurial intention. Dahalan, Jaafar and Mohd Rosdi (2013), and Stamboulis and Barlas (2014), for example, confirmed the influence of demographic factors such as age, gender, geographic areas, education achievement and labour experience on entrepreneurial intention. Other scholars across the globe such as Olugbola (2017), Yildirim et al. (2016), Jebarajakirthy and Lobo (2014), and Serra, Kuscu and Doganay (2014) focused on the influence of certain behavioural factors on entrepreneurial intention. However, despite the emergence of these factors, Reynolds (1997) claimed that predictive capacity was still limited, and earlier findings have been criticised for their methodological and conceptual limitations as well as for their weak explanatory power (Veciana, Aponte, & Urbano, 2005).

In response to this gap, Linan (2004) suggested some alternative factors that might affect entrepreneurial intention and introduced the Entrepreneurial Intention Model (EIM). The model was tested among 533 university students in Spain and Taiwan. The model consists of four behavioural factors namely, attitude towards entrepreneurship, perceived social norms, perceived feasibility and entrepreneurial knowledge.

Attitude towards entrepreneurship can be understood as the level of individual

personal valuation, either positive or negative, about being an entrepreneur. It is suggested by a number of studies that attitude can be a significant factor towards behaviour (Ambad & Damit, 2016; Koe et al., 2012; Mat et al., 2015; Shiro, 2010; Yildirim et al., 2016). According to Linan (2004), a favourable attitude towards entrepreneurship is expected to increase the individual's intention to become involved in entrepreneurial activities. Perceived feasibility can be considered to be the extent to which people perceive themselves to have the capacity to display certain behaviours. It attempts to study people's confidence in their ability to join and run any entrepreneurship activities (Linan, 2004). Perceived social norm refers to the perceived social pressure on their decision to display certain behaviours. People's decisions can be hugely influenced by those around them (Ambad & Damit, 2016; Mat et al., 2015). The emphasis on 'collective action' taken by the community must be supported by the majority; therefore, for entrepreneurship involvement to become truly useful to an individual, it must come with majority support (Ambad & Damit, 2016; Koe et al., 2012). Entrepreneurship knowledge refers to the concepts, skills and mentality that entrepreneurs use or should use as knowledge plays a major part in ensuring entrepreneurship success and sustainability (Koe et al., 2012; Yildirim et al., 2016).

## METHODS

This study was quantitative in nature. The questionnaire was used and was developed based on document analysis and a series of instrument-development workshops. For a review of the document analysis process, a number of related articles were identified from several journal databases such as Science Direct, Taylor & Francis, Sage Publications and Emerald Publishing. This was required to find suitable questions from previous studies for inclusion in the questionnaire.

A literature review and document analysis led to the production of a draft questionnaire that comprised three parts. The first part related to demographic background. The second part related to entrepreneurial intention and examples of items such as "I'm thinking seriously of being an entrepreneur." The third part consisted of four sub-sections; the first sub-section was attitude, with items such as "being an entrepreneur offers me more advantages than disadvantages." The second sub-section was perceived social norms and an example of the items was "Entrepreneurship is a culture in my community." The third sub-section was perceived feasibility and an example of item was. "I know how to develop entrepreneurship projects." The fourth sub-section was entrepreneurial knowledge, with items such as "I have entrepreneurship skills" (see Table 1). For each question, except for those related to

demographics, the respondents had to pick a number based on a 5-point Likert ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree). The questionnaire was then pre-tested among 30 youths in Sepang, Selangor. The resulting Cronbach's alpha values were: attitude towards entrepreneurship (0.924);

perceived social norms (0.864); perceived feasibility (0.888); and entrepreneurial knowledge (0.903). These values exceeded the recommended alpha value of 0.700 suggested by Nunnally (1978) as indicating the reliability of the questions.

Table 1  
*The questionnaire*

Part	Number of questions	Type of answer
Demographics	6	Open-ended, closed ended
Entrepreneurial intention	7	with Likert scale response options
Behavioural factors		
Attitude towards entrepreneurship	8	With Likert scale response options
Perceived social norms	11	
Perceived feasibility	11	
Entrepreneurial knowledge	8	

The number of samples was 400, determined by G-Power software. Via G-Power, the number of samples was determined based on the required analysis. To fulfil the objectives determined, this study ran inferential analyses such as Pearson correlation and multiple linear regression tests. Based on the moderate effect size, the alpha value =0.005 and the magnitude of power was between 0.90 and 0.95. The appropriate number of samples needed to run the Pearson product moment correlation test is 191 and the appropriate number to run a multiple linear regression test is 119. Bigger sample sizes are not a problem as they strengthen the instrument's reliability (Mohammad Najib,

1999). The respondents were selected based on multi-stage cluster sampling. In the first stage, all the states in Peninsular Malaysia were grouped based on their respective zones. Then, in the second stage, one state was selected to represent its zone, which resulted in Perlis being chosen to represent the northern zone, Terengganu, the east-coast zone, Selangor, the central zone and Negeri Sembilan, the southern zone. In the third stage, the districts of each selected state were listed, and a district was then randomly selected to represent its respective state. The districts selected were Arau (Perlis), Marang (Terengganu), Kuala Selangor (Selangor) and Jelebu (Negeri Sembilan). In the final

stage of sampling, a total of 100 youths aged between 15 and 40 years old were selected from each district to ensure that each district was represented by an equal number of youths ( $100 \times 4$  districts = 400 youths).

Data collection was conducted over five months from January 2014 to May 2014. Prior to data collection, permission from the local authorities (e.g. village leaders, youth leaders) was requested. Experienced and trained enumerators were hired to assist with data collection with monitoring by the researchers. The main data-collection technique used was the survey, and for each respondent, the enumerators took between 20 and 25 min to complete the questionnaire. The performed test of normality resulted in a skewness value and kurtosis value that passed the minimum requirement for the data to be accepted as normal. The skewness value was within  $\pm 2.0$ , while the minimum requirement for kurtosis was within the range of  $\pm 3.0$  (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Therefore, based on the value obtained in the normality test, it could be assumed that the data for this study were normally distributed. Descriptive analysis of traits such as frequency, percentage, mean score and standard deviation was performed to describe the descriptive data,

while inferential analyses and Pearson product moment correlation were performed to examine the relationship between the factors. Multiple linear regressions were performed to determine the factor that contributed most towards entrepreneurial intention among youths.

## RESULTS

Table 2 below shows the socio-demographic data of the respondents. Nearly two thirds (64.0%) of the respondents were male and the remaining third (36.0%) were female. The mean score for respondents' age was 26.2 years old, with the majority belonging to the age group, 20-30 years old. The mean income was RM1355 per month (roughly USD451.6). This result was encouraging, as the figure exceeds the poverty level set by the Economic Planning Unit of Malaysia (RM720 per month, approximately equal to USD240). In terms of education level, the majority had obtained secondary-level education. One third of the respondents (33.1%) were self-employed, while nearly a quarter (23.5%) worked in the private sector. Additionally, most of the respondents had a household size of between four and five family members.

Table 2  
Socio-demographic data

Factor	Frequency	Percentage	Mean
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	256	64.0	
Female	144	36.0	
<b>Age</b>			
17-19	111	27.8	26.2
20-30	162	40.5	
31-40	127	31.7	
<b>Income per month (n=251)</b>			
<RM750	54	21.5	1,355.42
RM751-RM1,500	144	57.4	
>RM1,500	53	21.1	
<b>Education achievement</b>			
Never been to school/Primary school	13	3.3	
Secondary school	254	63.5	
Skill certificate	29	7.3	
Tertiary	104	26.0	
<b>Profession</b>			
Government sector	46	11.5	
Private sector	94	23.5	
Self-employed	132	33.1	
Retiree/housewife	18	4.5	
Unemployed	19	4.8	
Student	91	22.8	
<b>Number of household members</b>			
1-3	68	17.0	
4-5	143	35.8	
6-7	107	26.8	
>8	82	20.5	

Table 3 shows the overall mean score of entrepreneurial intention. A total of seven statements were used to measure overall entrepreneurial intention. The summated mean score of these statements was calculated and then grouped into three

categories. Categorisation, as mentioned above, was based on the range of score calculation. The mean score of 3.69 reflects a high level of behavioral intention among the respondents studied.

Table 3  
*Overall entrepreneurial intention*

Factor	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	S.D.
Level			3.69	0.985
Low (1.00-2.33)	43	10.8		
Moderate (2.34-3.67)	135	33.7		
High (3.68-5.00)	222	55.5		

Table 4 shows the factors studied, namely attitude towards entrepreneurship, perceived social norms, perceived feasibility and entrepreneurial knowledge. The summated mean score was used to study the overall mean score for each factor. The results showed that attitude towards entrepreneurship had recorded the highest mean score ( $M=3.76$ ), while entrepreneurial knowledge had recorded the lowest mean score ( $M=3.22$ ).

Table 4  
*Factors studied*

Factor	Mean	S.D.
Attitude towards entrepreneurship	3.76	0.883
Perceived social norms	3.71	0.656
Perceived feasibility	3.51	0.758
Entrepreneurial knowledge	3.22	0.914

Further analysis using the Pearson product moment correlation was performed in order to investigate any possible relationship that might exist between entrepreneurial intention and the four factors studied. Table 5 shows that three factors, namely attitude towards entrepreneurship ( $r=0.656$ ), perceived feasibility ( $r=0.660$ ) and entrepreneurial knowledge recorded a strong and positive

relationship, with entrepreneurial intention, and perceived social norms had a moderate and positive relationship ( $r=0.483$ ).

Table 5  
*Relationship between factors studied and entrepreneurial intention*

Factor	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>
Attitude towards entrepreneurship	0.656	0.0001
Perceived social norms	0.483	0.0001
Perceived feasibility	0.660	0.0001
Entrepreneurial knowledge	0.657	0.0001

Multiple linear regression using the enter method was employed to test the contribution of the four independent variables (factors) on entrepreneurship intention. The results of the analysis showed that the overall regression model met the model fit ( $F[4,395]=145.173$ ,  $p=0.000$ ). Based on the value of the coefficient ( $R^2=0.595$ ), the four independent variables explained 59.5% variance in entrepreneurship intention. The relationship between the four factors and entrepreneurship intention was considered high ( $R=0.771$ ).

A detailed examination of the individual factors revealed that only one factor (perceived social norm) did not contribute

significantly towards entrepreneurship intention ( $t=-0.003$ ,  $p=0.997$ ), while the other three factors contributed significantly towards explaining the dependent variable. The most significant factor that contributed towards entrepreneurship intention was attitude (Beta=0.355), followed by entrepreneurship knowledge (Beta=0.338) and perceived feasibility (Beta=0.212).

These three factors contributed positively towards entrepreneurship intention, as seen from the positive Beta values (Table 6). The findings were in line with the previous studies of Linan (2004), Shiro (2010), Ahmad Faiz et al. (2010), Ambad and Damit (2016), Yildirim et al. (2016), Mat et al. (2015), and Koe et al. (2012).

Table 6  
Results of multiple regression (enter method)

Variables	<i>b</i>	SE	Beta	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Constant	0.060				
Attitude	0.396	0.050	0.355	7.994	0.000
Perceived social norm	0.000	0.063	0.000	-0.003	0.997
Perceived feasibility	0.276	0.064	0.212	4.280	0.000
Entrepreneurship knowledge	0.365	0.047	0.338	7.731	0.000
<i>F</i> =145.173		<i>R</i> =0.771			
Sig- <i>F</i> =0.000		<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> =0.595			

## DISCUSSION

The major contribution of the present study was the extending of the generalisability of the EIM from university students in Europe and South Asia to a new specific context, Malaysian youth. As discovered in this study, three factors from the original factors discussed in the EIM, namely attitude towards entrepreneurship, entrepreneurship knowledge and perceived feasibility, significantly contributed towards entrepreneurial intention among the Malaysian youths studied here.

In line with studies conducted by Ambad and Damit (2016), Yildirim et al., (2016), Mat et al. (2015), and Koe et al. (2012), this study concluded that attitude

was one of the major contributors towards entrepreneurship intention. Several causes can be attributed to this findings First, within the scope of the EIM, as suggested by Linan (2004), a favourable attitude is expected to increase an individual’s intention to display a certain behaviour; hence, a positive attitude is expected to drive positive personal evaluation of entrepreneurship intention. Shiro (2010) on the other hand, suggested the simple explanation that a positive attitude will lead to success in any activity in which the majority of a community are involved in, and vice versa.

In line with the EIM, perceived feasibility was found to be a significant contributor. Within the scope of this factor,

the influence of role models, mentors or partners is vital; this notion is supported not only by the results of this present study, but by other researchers such as Ahmad Faiz et al. (2010). Ahmad Faiz et al. explained the significant influence of partners on youths' decision and in most cases, more so than that of parents and the surrounding community. Ahmad Faiz et al. further clarified that experience and expertise of role models and mentors attract youth attention and intention to be involved in entrepreneurship. Furthermore, Ahmad Faiz et al. confirmed that experience and expertise possessed by these people made entrepreneurship look easy, thus motivating and encouraging young people to get involved in entrepreneurship activities.

Knowledge is another contributor towards entrepreneurial intention. Having knowledge can further help young people to distinguish or generate opportunities and take action aimed at realising an innovative knowledge practice or product. The findings of this study are in line with studies conducted by Yildirim et al. (2016) and Koe et al. (2012), who found that the possession of adequate knowledge of entrepreneurship creates interest among young people, which then nurtures intention to participate in entrepreneurship.

This study concluded that perceived social norms are not considered a major contributor towards entrepreneurial intention and this contradicts the findings of Roxas (2007). Nevertheless, this contradiction might be explained by Miranda, Chamorro-Mera and Rubio (2017), who stressed lack of

entrepreneurial culture in the local context as a possible reason, as the community might not be characterised as being greatly drawn to entrepreneurial activity.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The study has several limitations. First, the sample size included only 400 respondents from among the large population of Malaysian youths; different findings are expected if a bigger sample size and various age groups had been included. Second, the study was conducted in four districts in Peninsular Malaysia; hence, the results may not be generalised to the total population of youths in Malaysia. Third, although there are many behavioural factors studied by scholars across the globe, the present study focused only on four behavioural factors, namely attitude, perceived social norms, perceived feasibility and entrepreneurship knowledge.

### **CONCLUSION**

From this study, three variables emerged as significant contributing factors towards entrepreneurship intention. These three factors, attitude towards entrepreneurship, entrepreneurship knowledge and perceived feasibility, need to be given particular emphasis in order to promote entrepreneurship intention among the target group. In other words, if these three factors among the target group were to be strengthened, there would be a greater likelihood that the group's entrepreneurship intention would be increased.

## Recommendations

A number of recommendations are highlighted here. First, in order to enhance entrepreneurship knowledge among young people, intervention by the parties concerned is necessary. Courses and seminars, for example, can be conducted at schools and universities. Online courses and seminars are also an effective and highly engaging means of spreading information. The same strategy also can be used to create a positive attitude towards entrepreneurship among young people.

A mentor-mentee programme could also be created, where mentors would help their young mentees set career goals and take the necessary steps to realise those goals, while at the same time capitalising on their own personal contacts to get involved in helping their mentees locate entrepreneurship possibilities. Through a programme like this, potential youth entrepreneurs could be identified and nurtured.

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