

THE ROLE OF MOTIVATION, ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS AND UNIVERSITY ENVIRONMENT IN DETERMINING UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' DECISION TO BECOME ENTREPRENEURS

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ABSTRACT

Entrepreneurship plays a key role in economic growth and development. It is regarded as a main driver of job creation and innovation. Previous research recognised the intention as a vital element in determining individuals' decision to become entrepreneurs. The purpose of the current study is to examine students' motivation to start their own business. The sample utilised for the study consists of 304 students enrolled in different courses from three private universities and one public university in Malaysia. The results revealed that intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation and entrepreneurial skills play a significant role in influencing students' intention to become entrepreneurs. The regression analysis indicates that intrinsic motivation is the strongest predictor of entrepreneurial intention, followed by extrinsic motivation and entrepreneurial skills. The model explained over 57% of variance for entrepreneurial intention.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, Skills, Motivation, Education

INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurs are considered to be the backbone of industries as they come up with innovative business ideas which ultimately contribute to social and economic growth (Israr & Saleem, 2018). Entrepreneurs can change the way we live and work. If successful, their revolutions may improve our standard of living. In addition to creating wealth from their entrepreneurial ventures, they also create jobs and the conditions for a flourishing society (Ranjan, 2019). Entrepreneurship is a process that can create opportunities for students to generate an income, with higher education making an important contribution to the success of commercial ventures. It has further become a strong tool for creating employment and boosting economic power in the labour market and the economy as a whole. With the emergence of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, start-ups require a variety of skills such as ingenuity, innovation and agility.

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According to Solomon (2007), a significant number of entrepreneurship had influenced the academic field since there has been a rise of entrepreneurship courses introduced worldwide. In fact, many countries agreed that by encouraging people in start-ups, such businesses could be the best solution for unemployment. Thus, governments are placing much efforts in developing good policies for creating the right atmosphere for business start-ups, especially to counter unemployment rates for young adults (Park, 2017). Entrepreneurship education has rapidly and globally expanded in higher education institutions (Matlay & Carey, 2006). The unemployment rate in Malaysia is increasing and has become higher than expected due to the current covid-19 pandemic. Hossain et al. (2018) mentioned that the youth contribute a high percent to the overall unemployment in Malaysia. According to the Department of Statistic Malaysia, the unemployment rate was 3.9% in March 2020. Moreover, the job market has now become increasingly competitive due to the pandemic, causing many workers to lose their jobs. According to Hossain et al. (2018), one of the primary factors of unemployment come from the mismatch of skills where graduates cannot fulfil their employer's demands. This consequently makes the country's economy worse, leading to unemployment. Therefore, it is now more difficult to secure a good job, particularly for university graduates. Hence, entrepreneur skills can be considered as one of the crucial elements for students to decide on becoming entrepreneurs.

Higher education institutions that wish to increase their size in future may need to discover and maintain strong and innovative techniques for enrolling and strengthening their association with students (Bomrez & Rahman, 2018). Entrepreneurship courses definitely fulfil this criteria. Most students are aware that entrepreneurship education is vital in higher education and will upgrade their entrepreneurial skills. Several studies have been conducted to understand the motivations that prompt student decisions to become entrepreneurs. This is necessary to gain a better understanding of the key drivers of entrepreneurial motivation and to assess whether such education enhances the pool of knowledge. Entrepreneurship is beneficial to individuals, society and policy makers who start their own business (Obschonka et al., 2018). Regarding policy makers, for instance, this study will be significant since entrepreneurs create more jobs, reducing the burden on the government's side. The main objective is to investigate and identify the impact of extrinsic motivation, intrinsic motivation, entrepreneurial skills and university environment on students' decision to become entrepreneurs.

The aim of this study is to acquire greater insight on what motivates students in their decision to become entrepreneurs. The goal is to encourage the current and future generations to consider this topic for developing their knowledge and skills. The study's significance is determining the current types of motivation that influence students. This includes identifying whether intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, entrepreneurial skills and university environment are the requirements needed to influence students' motivation for becoming entrepreneurs. This is vital since more entrepreneurs will lead to the creation of more jobs in the long term, successfully benefitting the country's economy. This study can also be used for future research, especially in the education industry.

In Malaysia, the involvement of young entrepreneurs has increased by 30 percent from the total of 2.6 million entrepreneurs in 2014. This was due to the Malaysian government policy, continuous encouragements as well as increased incentives and intervention strategies (Ridzwan, Muhammad & Rahman, 2017). According to the Department of Statistics Malaysia, the country's population in 2020 was estimated at 32.7 million compared to 32.5 million in

2019, indicating an annual growth rate of 0.4 percent. The population density in 2020 was estimated to be around 99 people per km², and the urban population was 78.4%, which is 25,361,963 people. The labour force participation rate was 68.6% which is around 15.23 million people. From that group, 2.81 million people were their own bosses such as traders or small dealers. As of March 2020, the unemployment rate in Malaysia was estimated at 3.9%, which is around 550,000 people who are not working.

The job competition environment has currently initiated self-employment opportunities for the youth in order to survive. It is not pertinent anymore for the youth to depend on jobs offered by organisations in a developing country such as Malaysia (Shaari, Abdul Rahim & Noor, 2020). The unemployment rate has increased around 0.6% due to the effect of the covid-19 pandemic. Al-Jubari et al. (2019) had mentioned that the unemployment rate was at 3.3% in June 2019, where the youth unemployment rate was at least 10%. Compared to other countries in the region, Malaysia and Singapore's youth unemployment rate is at an average position (Al-Jubari et al., 2019). Entrepreneurs among the youth in Malaysia remains low. Al-Jubari et al. (2019) added that the total entrepreneurial activity among the youth was about 2.8%, and only 2.5% established their own business.

Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)

The theory of planned behaviour seeks to explain human behaviour by examining the antecedents and implications present in the environment of the individual as well as the connections which he or she has gained through previous experiences (Ajzen, 1985). The immediate antecedent of behaviour in TPB is the intention to perform the behaviour in question; the stronger the intention, the more likely it is that the behaviour will follow (Ajzen, 2020).

According to TPB, behavioural intention is determined by three factors: attitude towards the behaviour, subjective norm concerning the behaviour and perceived behavioural control. In the current formulation of the theory, a favourable attitude and a supportive subjective norm provide the motivation to engage in the behaviour, however, a concrete intention to do so is only formed when the perceived control over the behaviour is sufficiently strong (Ajzen, 2020).

Entrepreneur Intention

Entrepreneur intention is one of the factors that can affect entrepreneurship education according to student passion. Entrepreneur intention can directly affect entrepreneurial behaviour. It is the key to success which can prompt the decision to become an entrepreneur. According to Barba-Sánchez & Atienza-Sahuquillo (2018), the component to the accomplishment of this approach depends on entrepreneurship development, which is fundamental for the creation of upcoming companies that comes from individual personal motivation. It was found that there are three relevant points related to students' entrepreneurial intention: 1) students' observable variables; (2) the possibility of students already possessing a level of entrepreneurial intention before entering university; and (3) external factors that affect students' entrepreneurial intention which originate from the macro environment rather than from the university environment (Renata et al., 2018).

The important issue is whether entrepreneurship can be encouraged through education. Barba-Sánchez & Atienza-Sahuquillo (2018) had mentioned that the results of previous studies are

inconsistent. Therefore, the main aim of this paper is to determine what motivates students to develop entrepreneur intention and decide to become entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurship can be encouraged through university education. Since the current trend is students starting their own business, entrepreneurship education will provide positive outcomes in terms of personal skills, attitudes and behaviour (Chen et al., 1998). This will also motivate students to develop their main business idea and support them during their start-ups.

Intention can predict individual behaviour. Most students intend to become entrepreneurs due to the learning phase provided as well as the required capabilities for pursuing a career in future. In the field of entrepreneurship, the TPB (Theory of Planned Behaviour) influences students' attitudes and behaviours (Bird & Jelinek, 1988; Krueger & Brazeal, 1994). However, it is not enough to utilise opportunities for shaping the decision to become an entrepreneur. Entrepreneurial motivation should be present as well. Vuorio, Puumalainen & Fellnhofner (2018) mentioned that motivation can lead to the decision to become an entrepreneur. By knowing and examining the factors that encourage entrepreneurial intention, it can help influence student intentions to become entrepreneurs. Nowadays, entrepreneurship is a profession that helps graduates start their own business by opening their company in the industry that they are interested in.

Entrepreneur Motivation

Motivation can influence behaviour or intention towards the decision to become an entrepreneur. Motivation can help determine the process that influences individuals to become involved in entrepreneurial behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). It is essential to discover the motivating forces of entrepreneurial behaviour so that within a sphere of interest, policy makers can develop efficient programs that benefit and facilitate productive entrepreneurship. Entrepreneur motivation can be influenced by intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation. It was found that intrinsic and extrinsic motivations have higher entrepreneurial intentions (Vuorio et al., 2018). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations were founded on the self-determination theory.

Research has shown that most respondents choose to pursue entrepreneurship while studying (as early as senior high school level) as an avenue for addressing personal financial constraints (Arthur & Arthur, 2020). To steer students into entrepreneurship, the factors that give rise to entrepreneurial behaviour must be assessed. Motivation contributes in terms of skills, knowledge and entrepreneurial attitude. To achieve specific goals, innovative action is understood through the organised system of human relationships. Entrepreneurship training will promote knowledge-based growth and motivation helps to define that process, leading students to take part in entrepreneurial behaviour (Liñán & Chen, 2009).

Self Determination Theory (SDT)

The self-determination theory (SDT) is a broad framework for understanding factors that facilitate or undermine intrinsic motivation, autonomous extrinsic motivation and psychological wellness. These are all issues of direct relevance to the educational setting (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Self-determination theory is about "human motivation theory" (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2017). It has been used in numerous studies, including the work environment, education, environmental issues and health. This theory is popular among researchers because it describes the approach to recognise human motivation. The self-

determination theory recognises motivation based on quality rather than quantity. Autonomous motivation describes intrinsic motivation and fully embedded extrinsic motivation, while controlled motivation is mostly directed towards extrinsic motivation (Al-Jubari, 2019). The theory of self-determination implies that people are curious and intense in nature, always looking for opportunities for self-development and growth (Al-Jubari & Mosbah, 2019). Research from SDT revealed that both intrinsic motivation and well-internalised (autonomous) forms of extrinsic motivation predict a range of positive outcomes across various educational levels and cultural contexts. They are enhanced by the support of students' basic psychological need for autonomy, competence and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2020).

Extrinsic Motivation on Entrepreneur Intention

Extrinsic motivation occurs when people act out of responsibilities, lack of options, when they expect some reward or for avoiding punishment (Al-Jubari & Mosbah, 2019). This is usually applicable in the field of entrepreneurship where some people like to establish a business simply to gain a profit or to avoid unemployment. Perhaps they participate in such activities because they get excitement or pleasure from it (Al-Jubari & Mosbah, 2019). Extrinsic motivation usually involves a wide range of actions where the purposes of behaviour go beyond the tasks themselves. Usually, they can be motivated by the reward that is given. Such motivations usually affect extrinsic motivation. Thus, it has been hypothesised that:

H1: Extrinsic motivation has a positive effect on students' decision to become entrepreneurs.

Intrinsic Motivation on Entrepreneur Intention

Intrinsic motivation refers to inner or physical incentives such as actualisation-fulfilment, the opportunity for creativity, appreciation, challenge, enthusiasm and gratification of the need for achievement, personal growth and self-reliance. Intrinsic motivation is related to problem solving, learning and creativity (Vuorio et al., 2018). The synergy of intrinsic motivation can enhance entrepreneurial innovation since it tends to play a key role. For instance, an extrinsic goal is profit, while intrinsic motivation is mastery (Manish & Sutter, 2016). Intrinsic motivation occurs from within an individual, which includes solving problems or conducting activities that people would find enjoyable for their own sake. Entrepreneurs choose to seek for themselves opportunities that are believed to expand their business and independence (Xavier et al., 2014). Based on this, the following hypothesis is suggested:

H2: Intrinsic motivation has a positive effect on students' decision to become entrepreneurs.

Entrepreneurial skills are required skills for being efficient in business. They are basic skills required to empower an individual to start, grow, finance and succeed in their home business (Elmuti, Houry & Omran, 2012, as cited by Kuratko et al., 2004). For example, the type of entrepreneurial skills that business owners need include communication skills, time management, soft skills and other related abilities that can be useful for establishing entrepreneurship in future. Entrepreneurs should also have personal skills such as innovation, risk-taking and persistence. Self-skill awareness has a significant influence on improving entrepreneurial skills. The current entrepreneurship education is based on a linear approach. Business entry has been one of the most frequently discussed topics of entrepreneurship in the existing curricula. Developing this entrepreneurial skill is an important factor since it can be

used in future when the decision to open up a business has been reached. Volunteering to lead a group, learning from a mentor or practicing communication skills are some examples of developing entrepreneurial skills. "Entrepreneurs have talents that are rooted within at all times. We should discover and grow these secret characteristics enough to become good entrepreneurs" (Elmuti et al., 2012, as cited by Kaplan & Warren, 2010, pg. 8). Hence, the following has been hypothesised:

H3: Entrepreneurial skills have a positive effect on students' decision to become entrepreneurs.

University Environment

University Environment is defined as a place where many people or students are brought together in the pursuit of knowledge with the understanding of the importance of acquiring such knowledge. Research has shown a dynamic link between teacher and student motivations. Teachers themselves are influenced and constrained by controlling mandates, institutional pressures and leadership styles (Ryan & Deci, 2020, as cited by Bayon et al., 2015). To become an entrepreneur, a cognitive process is required to determine the ability and skills that play a crucial role in completing this process. Students who experience a favourable atmosphere and enrol in university entrepreneurship programs tend to develop more entrepreneurial ambition. The university environment is one of the key factors that influence a student's decision to become an entrepreneur. According to Franke & Lüthje (2004), the university environment is one good medium for establishing a great quality of entrepreneurs. Universities, nowadays, must build on this type of education to directly affect the development of skills, which can also be a driver for entrepreneurial intention.

Students' entrepreneurial intention is also influenced by the university environment and the attitude towards risk-taking and self-efficacy. Self-efficacy, in turn, is influenced by student characteristics regarding planning, leadership and innovation (Hermínio & Marcondes, 2018). According to Gieure, Benavides-Espinosa & Roig-Dobón (2019), universities should develop this type of education today because implementing this will have a direct impact on skills development which will provide positive results for entrepreneurial intention. As a result, it has been hypothesised that:

H4: University environment has a positive effect on students' decision to become entrepreneurs.

METHODOLOGY

A convenience sample of 304 students from 3 private universities and one public university in Malaysia was acquired for our current study. From the total, 195 respondents were female (64.1) and the age ranged between 18-32. Involvement in this study included different races and local students. The implementation was from verified sources using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree (Table 1). The first variable, entrepreneurial intention, was measured with the use of a scale created by Al-Jubari (2019) and analysed using a total of 6 items. The sample item read, "I will make every effort to start and run my own firm". The second variable, entrepreneur motivation, was measured using a scale developed by Gagné et al. (2015) and examined using a total of 6 items. Three items represented intrinsic motivation and 3 items represented extrinsic motivation. The sample items read as follows: "In order to get others' approval" and "Because I think doing my own business

is going to be interesting”. The other two variables, entrepreneurial skills and university environment, were measured using 6 and 7 items, respectively. The sample items were, “I am able to recognise a business opportunity” and “My university promotes seminars that generate business ideas and identify business opportunities” (Gieure et al., 2019).

Table 1: Full list of study measures

No.	Variables	Items
1	Entrepreneurial Intention	I am ready to do anything to be an entrepreneur. My professional goal is to become an entrepreneur. I will make every effort to start and run my own firm. I am determined to create a firm in the future. I have very seriously thought of starting a firm. I have the firm intention to start a firm some day.
2.	Entrepreneur Motivation	In order to get others approval. Because others will respect me more. In order to avoid being criticized by others. Because I will have fun doing my own business. Because it will be exciting to do my own business. Because I think doing my own business is going to be interesting.
3.	Entrepreneurial Skills	I am able to recognize a business opportunity. I have creativity for business. I have some abilities for problem solving. I have the capacity for leadership and communication skills. I know how to develop new products and services. I know how to make new professional contacts.
4.	University Environment	My university promote seminars that generate business ideas and identify business opportunities. My university brings businessmen who motivate me to consider other business ideas. The university promotes different skills that I need to become an entrepreneur. The courses provide me with the necessary knowledge to start a business. My university supports forming student teams for the creation of business. I have participated in projects for the implementation of new businesses at the university. The university fosters actively the process of business creation

RESULTS

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics, reliability and the collected constructs. All five variables are reliable where the Cronbach’s alpha ranged from .845 for extrinsic motivation to .944 for entrepreneurial intention. The mean values of student responses were moderate in a scale of 5. For the correlation analysis, a moderate to high significance can be seen among the variables. Entrepreneurial skill and entrepreneurial intention had the highest correlation ($r = .681$), while intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation had the lowest correlation ($r = .278$).

Table 2: Descriptive statistics, reliability and correlation

Variables	Mean	SD	Alpha	1	2	3	4	5
Entrepreneurial Intention (6)	3.80	.90	.944	1				
Extrinsic Motivation (3)	3.38	.95	.845	.460**	1			
Intrinsic Motivation (3)	4.25	.76	.915	.621**	.278**	1		
Entrepreneurial Skills (6)	3.69	.84	.932	.681**	.503**	.549**	1	
University Environment (7)	3.97	.82	.935	.517**	.350**	.486**	.617**	1

**p < 0.01; numbers in parentheses are number of items in the measurement

The multiple regression analysis was used to evaluate the study's hypotheses to determine whether they are positive or negative. In Table 3, the results indicate that the predictor variables were significant regarding entrepreneurial intention, and only one predictor variable was insignificant. The strongest predictor among the variables was Entrepreneurial Skills ($\beta = 0.377$, $p < 0.000$), followed by Intrinsic Motivation ($\beta = 0.340$, $p < 0.000$) and Extrinsic Motivation ($\beta = 0.153$, $p < 0.001$). The lowest predictor was University Environment ($\beta = 0.066$, $p < 0.184$). The factors that strongly influence entrepreneurial intention were Entrepreneurial Skills and Intrinsic Motivation. Based on these findings, all hypotheses were accepted except for one, which was rejected. The four variables resulted in 57% of explained variance in the model (Adj. $R^2 = .572$; $F = 99.953$, $p < .00$).

Table 3: Multiple regression predicting entrepreneurial intention

Predictors	Std. β	t-value	Significance
Extrinsic Motivation	.153	3.491	.001
Intrinsic Motivation	.340	7.326	.000
Entrepreneurial Skills	.377	6.788	.000
University Environment	.066	1.330	.184

Adj. $R^2 = .572$; ($F = 99.953$, $p < .00$)

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The main purpose of this study is to analyse the effect of entrepreneur intention towards extrinsic motivation, intrinsic motivation, entrepreneurial skills and university environment. Four variables have been proposed to examine the motivational factors for students to start their own business. To fulfil the objectives, a sample of 304 students was acquired, consisting

of three private universities and one public university in the Selangor area. The results of the multiple regression analysis only supported three of the hypotheses since one variable was rejected. Entrepreneurial intention is significantly influenced by extrinsic motivation, intrinsic motivation and entrepreneurial skills.

The findings of this study revealed that intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation and entrepreneurial skills play a significant role in influencing students' intentions to become entrepreneurs. It raised awareness on the important factors which guide and help students form their intention and decision to become entrepreneurs. It was found that entrepreneurial skills can enhance and develop student capabilities, starting from communication skills, time management and soft skills. It was also found that extrinsic motivation has a good effect on students since it provides the relevant understanding of several factors for their decision-making as well as the knowledge that they learn from it. Evidence has shown that extrinsic motivation occurs when people act due to responsibilities, lack of options, because they expect some reward or to avoid punishment (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Regarding intrinsic motivation, the findings have shown that if students have fun doing their own business, it will encourage them to work harder and engage in that particular activity. Thus, the effect of SDT on intrinsic motivation will influence students' intention through its proximal determinants (Ryan & Deci, 2000). According to Soydas & Aleti (2015), the main factors that affect the second generation to become entrepreneurs include intrinsic motivators such as creative expression, ambition, autonomy and the need for status.

To conclude, motivation and entrepreneurial skills are the key determinants for the career choice of entrepreneur. Enhancing student motivation can enhance their entrepreneurial behaviour and their interest in becoming entrepreneurs. The university should provide a platform for every student to explore today's challenges. Future studies may consider collecting data from various universities in Malaysia. Future studies can also include national culture in the research since it was found that cultural differences have varied effects on entrepreneurial intention and subsequent behaviours (Al-Jubari et al., 2019).

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