

ATTITUDE TOWARDS ENTREPRENEURSHIP
ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PSYCHOLOGICAL AND
EDUCATIONAL FACTORS WITH ENTREPRENEURIAL
INTENTION AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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DEDICATION

By the special grace of God, I dedicate this thesis to my lovely family for
their endless support and love

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ABSTRACT

Entrepreneurship is a vital source to improve economic growth, and to create wealth and job opportunities. It is an important element in developing graduates that are more competitive and innovative for the economy, especially in the context of the Malaysian government's target towards a high-income nation by year 2020/2025. This study aims to investigate the mediation role of Attitude Towards Entrepreneurship (ATE) on the relationship between psychological factors (i.e. Subjective Norms (SN), Perceived Behavior Control (PBC), Big-Five (BF) personality traits, Entrepreneurial Motivation (EM)), and Educational Factors (EF) with Entrepreneurial Intention (EI). This study was conducted among final year local students in the management field at five research-intensive universities in Malaysia which are the Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM), Universiti Malaya (UM), and Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM). This study employed quantitative approach to address the research objectives. The quantitative data of 251 respondents were collected through questionnaires. Data was analysed through Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) using AMOS 22. Direct and indirect effects were calculated to test the endogenous and exogenous variables. The findings confirmed that BF personality traits, EM, PBC, SN, EF, and ATE, were positively related to EI. In addition, ATE mediated the relationship between BF personality traits, EM, PBC, SN, EF and EI. This study makes a novel academic and practical contribution to the field of entrepreneurship and makes a significant contribution to the body of knowledge. Finally, this research offers meaningful insight to the government and policy makers in their quest to encourage more students to elect entrepreneurship as a career of choice. However, this study is only limited to research-intensive universities in Malaysia.

ABSTRAK

Keusahawanan adalah sumber penting untuk menambahbaik pertumbuhan ekonomi, dan pembentukan kekayaan dan peluang pekerjaan. Ia adalah elemen penting dalam menggalakkan graduan menjadi lebih bersaing dan inovatif dalam ekonomi, khususnya dalam konteks sasaran Kerajaan Malaysia ke arah negara berpendapatan tinggi menjelang tahun 2020/2025. Matlamat kajian ini ialah untuk mengkaji peranan mediasi sikap terhadap keusahawanan (ATE) ke atas hubungan di antara faktor-faktor psikologi (i.e. norma subjektif (SN), tanggapan tingkah laku terkawal (PBC), lima sifat personaliti (Big-Five Personality)), motivasi keusahawanan (EM), dan faktor pendidikan (EF) dengan hasrat keusahawanan (EI). Kajian ini dilaksanakan di kalangan pelajar tahun akhir dalam bidang pengurusan lima buah universiti penyelidikan di Malaysia iaitu Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM), Universiti Malaya (UM), dan Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM). Kajian ini telah menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif untuk menjawab objektif kajian. Data kuantitatif yang terdiri daripada 251 responden telah dikutip melalui soal selidik. Data ini di analisa structural equation modelling (SEM) menggunakan AMOS 22. Kesan langsung dan tidak langsung telah dikira untuk menguji pemboleh ubah endogen dan eksogen. Hasil dapatan mengesahkan ciri keperibadian BF, EM, PBC, SN, EF, dan ATE mempunyai hubungan positif dengan EI. Selanjutnya, ATE mempengaruhi hubungan di antara ciri-ciri keperibadian BF, EM, PBC, SN, EF dan EI. Kajian ini merupakan suatu yang baharu dalam akademik bidari dan amalan keusahawanan serta menyumbang secara signifikan kepada bidang keilmuan. Akhir sekali, kajian ini akan memberi manfaat yang besar kepada penggubal polisi dan institusi kerajaan dalam menggalakkan pelajar memilih keusahawanan sebagai satu bidang kerjaya. Walau bagaimanapun, kajian ini hanya terhad dalam konteks universiti penyelidikan di Malaysia.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | | |
|-------|---|--|
| AGFI | - | Adjusted Goodness-of-Fits |
| AGR | - | Agreeableness |
| AMOS | - | Analysis of Moment Structure |
| ASEAN | - | Association of Southeast Asian Nations |
| ATE | - | Attitude toward Entrepreneurship |
| AVE | - | Average Variance Extraction |
| BF | - | Big-Five Personality Trait |
| CFA | - | Confirmatory Factor Analysis |
| CFI | - | Comparative Fit Index |
| CMIN | - | Minimum Chi Square |
| CON | - | Conscientiousness |
| CR | - | Composite Reliability |
| C.R. | - | Critical ration |
| CV | - | Convergent Validity |
| DF | - | Degree of Freedom |
| DV | - | Discriminant validity |
| EF | - | Education Factors |
| EFA | - | Exploratory Factor Analysis |
| EI | - | Entrepreneurial Intentions |
| EM | - | Entrepreneurial Motivation |
| ESM | - | Educational Support Model |
| EXT | - | Extroversion |
| GEM | - | Global Entrepreneurship Monitor |
| GFI | - | Goodness of Fit Index |
| HLIs | - | Higher Learning Institutions |
| IPPBM | - | Institute Penyelidikan Pembangunan Belia Malaysia |
| KMO | - | Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin |
| MAAYE | - | Malaysian Association of ASEAN Young Entrepreneurs |
| MEB | - | Malaysia Education Blueprint |
| MLE | - | Maximum Likelihood Estimation |

| | | |
|----------|---|---|
| MOHE | - | Ministry of Higher Education |
| My WIN | - | Malaysian Women In Innovation |
| NEU | - | Neuroticism |
| NFI | - | Normed-Fit Index |
| OPN | - | Openness |
| PBC | - | Perceived Behavioral Control |
| R&D | - | Research and Development |
| RMR | - | Root Mean Square Residual |
| RMSEA | - | Root Mean Square Error of Approximation |
| RU | - | Research Universities |
| SAQs | - | Applied Self-Administrated Questionnaires |
| SEM | - | Structural Equation Modelling |
| Sig | - | Significant |
| SN | - | Subjective Norm |
| SPSS | - | Statistical Package for Social Sciences |
| Std. Dev | - | Standard Deviation |
| TLI | - | Tucker Lewis Index |
| TPB | - | Theory of Planned Behavior |
| UiTM | - | Universiti Teknologi Mara |
| UKM | - | Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia |
| UM | - | Universiti Malaya |
| UPM | - | Universiti Putra Malaysia |
| USM | - | Universiti Sains Malaysia |
| UTM | - | Universiti Teknologi Malaysia |
| VIF | - | Variance Inflation Factor |

LIST OF SYMBOLS

| | | |
|----------|---|---------------------------------------|
| e_i | - | Error Variance Terms for Construct |
| h | - | The Number of Strata |
| i | - | The Number of Items |
| L_i | - | The Standardized Factor Loading |
| N_h | - | Number of Population Units in Stratum |
| Σ | - | A Sum of Multiple Terms |
| α | - | Cronbach Alpha |
| r | - | Correlation Coefficient |
| χ^2 | - | Chi-Square |

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Entrepreneurship activities are considered the backbone of economy and play a significant role in the areas of job creation and economic growth (Kritikos, 2014; Urbano & Aparicio, 2016; Ambad & Damit, 2016). Similarly, in developing countries e.g. Malaysia entrepreneurship is an important consideration for government and educational institutions to support economic growth and create better opportunities for people (Koe, Sa'ari, Majid & Ismail, 2012; Ahmad, 2013; Ahmad, Ismail & Buchanan, 2014). Thus, universities plan to involve students in entrepreneurship programs and encourage them for deeming entrepreneurship as a career choice. Since it is generally recognized that university graduates can be a significant source of nascent entrepreneurs in the future (Ambad & Damit, 2016).

The intention to found business (as a planned act) is usually considered as a serious phase in the process of becoming entrepreneur, therefore intention is a great predictor of planned behaviors (Krueger, Reilly & Carsrud, 2000; Pérez & Egea, 2019). In this regard several factors influence the rise of entrepreneurial intention, which explained by different theoretical models, (Torres et al., 2017; Rai, Prasad & Murthy, 2017) such as model of implementing entrepreneurial ideas (IEI) (Bird, 1988), model of the entrepreneurial event (SEE) (Shapero, 1982) and theory of planned behaviors (TPB) (Ajzen, 1987). Among these models based on the TPB (Ajzen, 1987, 1991), Krueger et al. (2000) maintained that entrepreneurship is intentionally planned behavior and therefore to understand the behavior, considering intention can be advantageous. The TPB composed of attitude towards entrepreneurship, perceived behavioral control and subjective norms.

Although prior studies on entrepreneurship was reasoned that personality research cannot offer anything valuable (Aldrich, 1999), but this view has changed with the beginning of meta-analytic studies in entrepreneurship. Based on meta-analytic reviews psychological traits are vital for entrepreneurship (Zhao et al., 2010; Brandstatter, 2011; Frese & Gielnik, 2014), business formation and achievement respectively; because they influence individuals' tendency to participate in entrepreneurial activities (Shane, Nicolaou, Cherkas & Spector; 2010; Karanja, Ithinji & Nyaboga, 2016). Therefore, psychological traits are considered one of the important factors in entrepreneurship research. As the differences among individuals have impact on the progress of entrepreneurial intention (Karabulut, 2016; Chaudhary, 2017).

However, the antecedents of entrepreneurial intention i.e. individual psychological traits, attitude towards entrepreneurship, perceived behavioral control, subjective norms (Usman, 2016; Bhuyan, & Pathak, 2017; Shah & Soomro, 2017) motivation (Purwana, & Suhud, 2018) and relationship between entrepreneurship education and intentions were widely studied (Rahim, Nasir & Yee, 2014). But previous studies have recommended to explore the missing link between these factors and entrepreneurial intention (Phuong, & Hieu, 2015; Liang, Chia & Liang, 2015; Popescu, Bostan, Robu & Maxim, 2016; Inuwa, & Mohammed, 2017). Consequently, it is largely unknown that how both psychological and educational factors collectively play role in shaping intention to become entrepreneur. Finally, mediating effect of attitude towards entrepreneurship on the relationship between psychological and educational factors with entrepreneurial intention still need to be explored. Similarly, the present study examined the direct relationship between psychological and educational factors with entrepreneurial intention. Moreover, this study also investigated whether attitude towards entrepreneurship mediates the relationship between psychological and educational factors with entrepreneurial intention or not.

1.2 Background of the Study

According to Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (Monitor, 2017) report, the extents of entrepreneurship are different across economies. Global entrepreneurship

monitor also shows the outlook of entrepreneurship among Asian countries e.g. Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, China, Korea, Taiwan and India. Based on the results of data among these countries, lowest entrepreneurship rates are recorded in Malaysia i.e. 7.7% which is 50% less in comparison with four Asian countries (China, India, Korea & Taiwan), 60% less than Philippines and 70% less than Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam. Among them the highest percentage of entrepreneurs illustrated in Thailand in where 36.4% of the adult population involved in activities related to entrepreneurship (Monitor, 2017).

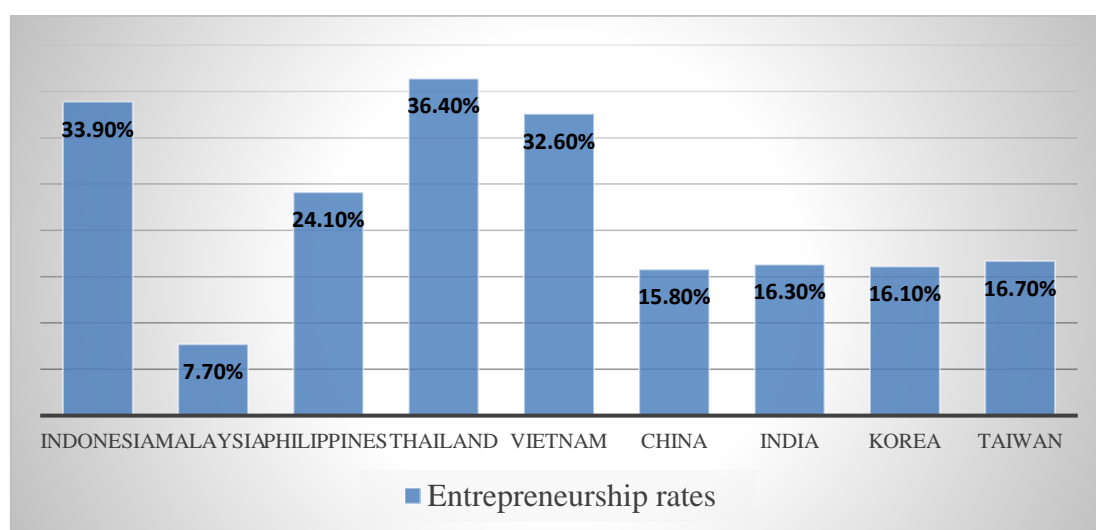


Figure 1.1 Entrepreneurship Rates

The findings have revealed that in ASEAN region, Malaysia has the lowest percentage of entrepreneurial intentions (4.9%), with (25%) perceived opportunities and (28%) capabilities which means the percentage of individuals who consider entrepreneurship as a good career choice is only (44.1%) which is the lowest among member countries (Monitor, 2017). In this regard, Philippines and Thailand have better percentage (74%) and (73%) respectively followed by Indonesia with higher entrepreneurial intentions among ASEAN member countries (37.1%), with (43.1%) perceived opportunities and (55.1%) capabilities which means the percentage of individuals who consider entrepreneurship as good career choice was (69.0%). China has (37.3%) perceived opportunities and (29.8%) capabilities with (21.3%) entrepreneurial intentions and (70.3%) of individuals who consider entrepreneurship as good career choice (Monitor, 2017).

Table 1.1 Entrepreneurship Indicators

| Countries | Perceived Opportunities | Perceived Capabilities | Entrepreneurial Intentions | Entrepreneurship as a Good Career Choice |
|-------------|-------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|--|
| Singapore | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| China | 37.3% | 29.8% | 21.3% | 70.3% |
| Indonesia | 43.1% | 55.1% | 23.2% | 69.0% |
| Philippines | 53.8% | 69.0% | 37.1% | 74.6% |
| Thailand | 37.7% | 43.4% | 22.6% | 73.7% |
| Malaysia | 25.4 % | 28.0% | 4.9% | 44.1% |

Adapted from Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, 2016-2017

The data of Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (Monitor, 2017) has reported that in ASEAN, Philippines ranked 9 is better than all member countries about individuals who are potential entrepreneurs and so intend to start a business in three years. Philippines is followed by Indonesia and Thailand with ranking value 26 and 25 respectively. However as shown in Figure 1.2, Malaysia ranking is 64 among member countries, which shows lesser tendency of individuals to develop entrepreneurial intention.

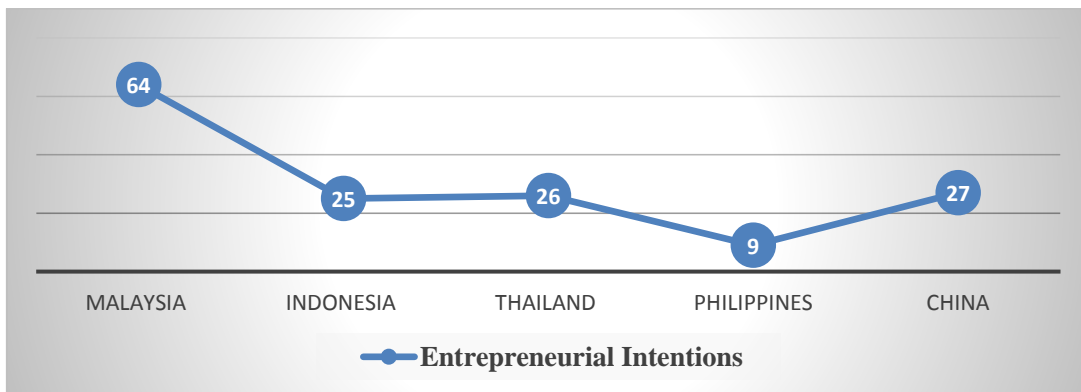


Figure 1.2 Ranking of Entrepreneurial Intentions (Monitor, 2017)

1.3 Malaysian Context

Entrepreneurial revolution has taken hold across the globe and its more progress seems unabated. In Malaysia, entrepreneurship activities have started prior to the independent of the country in 1957. It has gained the attention of Malaysia government after the May 13 riot, when the country realized that entrepreneurship could help in the restructuring of Malaysia society (Unit, 2015). The perceived significance

of entrepreneurship to the development of Malaysia's economy has proved by the total amount and diversity of supporting policies and mechanisms which exists for entrepreneurs comprising funding, physical infrastructure, and business counseling services (Unit, 2016). The instituting of a specific ministry for entrepreneurs i.e. the Ministry of Entrepreneur Development in 1995 further boosted the significance of developing entrepreneurship and entrepreneur (Ariff & Abubakar, 2003).

As, the government also realized that development could not work without the involvement of the private business entities. Hence, under the 11th Malaysia Plan (11MP) entrepreneurship was realigned to include private sector-driven in line with the Economic Transformation Program (ETP) (Unit, 2015). Under this plan, private sector including big, small and medium business enterprises, should work closely with the state government to achieve the development agenda, which ultimately will benefit people, state and country. According to the 11th Malaysian plan (11MP) the transformation from a middle-income economy to a knowledge-based and high-income economy status in 2020, needs entrepreneurship to become synonym with the creation of new sources of economic growth and it assumes a bigger role of growth, productivity and competitiveness, as outlined under the New Economic Model (Awang, Ibrahim & Ayub, 2014). The importance of entrepreneurship is for employment, economic growth, solution to the extreme number of university graduates and social probable problems. Entrepreneurship offers graduates and youth, options for self-employment opportunities (Samian & Buntat, 2012) which can lead to engage students of universities to improve employability rate (Ekpe, Razak, Ismail & Abdullah 2015).

The Malaysian higher educational system has made outstanding growth in recent decades. Over the last ten years, student enrolment has increased, and Malaysian universities have become favorable destinations for them. This significant growth brings a drive of innovation to the Malaysian academic community and fosters interlinkages between the private sector and government. The core purpose of the 11th Malaysian plan was to encourage the connection between private sector and government to boost up the entrepreneurial activities. To take one-step ahead the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015–2025 or the MEB (HE) started to be developed by the Ministry which was drawn on various sources of input such as Malaysian

education experts, leaders of Malaysian HLIs and members of the public institutions (Blueprint, 2015). The MEB (HE) developed on the system's achievements to recommend major adjustments in the way the Ministry and system will manage to accomplish this goal. Specifically, the Ministry desires to encourage an entrepreneurial mindset throughout Malaysia's higher education system and make a system that causes graduates with a motivation to create jobs, rather than to just search for jobs, by improving the entrepreneurship programmes, including more practical components and incentives for making quality in entrepreneurial learning.

Additionally, activities of government entities like Institute of Youth Development Research Malaysia (Institut Penyelidikan Pembangunan Belia Malaysia/IPPBM) and Ministry of Youth and Sports Malaysia developed where several programs, trainings, researches and further youth entrepreneurial actions were implemented (Ghadas, Ariff, Muslim & Hamid, 2014). The Malaysian government made it compulsory for public sector universities to offer entrepreneurship courses for students to foster their intentions and increase entrepreneurship among graduates (Rahim et al., 2015). In addition, the government also introduced the programs like Malaysian Women in Innovation (My WIN) and the Malaysian Association of ASEAN Young Entrepreneurs (MAAYE) in 2015 (Kelley, Singer & Herrington, 2015).

Everyone can be potential to be an entrepreneur particularly those who with educational practice in universities (Keat et al., 2011). According to some studies in Malaysia, the results strongly suggested that exposing to educational factors, would develop entrepreneurship (Ahmad et al., 2014). The entrepreneurship education and training offered by public universities is very effective to enhance the students' entrepreneurial skills and activities (Din, Anuar & Usman, 2016; Taha et al., 2017). Findings from the study of Shamsuddin, Rosli, Kurup, Mathaven & Zawari (2018) indicated that entrepreneurial education, has significant influence on students to choose entrepreneurship as their future career. Furthermore, empirical results of studies in Malaysia, supported that programs offered by the government can enhance intention to become entrepreneur among students (Mohamad, Lim, Yusof, Kassim & Abdullah, 2014).

1.4 Problem Statement

It is undeniable that entrepreneurial activities make a significant contribution to the economic and social development, especially in case of developing countries e.g. Malaysia. Entrepreneurship has become crucial to the economic growth by contributing to job creation and innovation; because, it also offers significant opportunities for individuals to achieve financial independence and reduce the unemployment rate (Mohamad, Lim, Yusof, Kassim & Abdullah, 2014; Awang et al., 2015).

In Malaysia with the increasing number of universities, the students' enrolment growth has been risen. At the time of graduation, most of them prefer to seek job employment over self-employment and there exists need to promote capabilities and skills (Mohamad et al., 2014). The public sectors, which traditionally employed a sizable portion of these graduates, cannot indefinitely employ all (Lee, 2012; Woo, 2015). Additionally, in some cases where graduates are able to successfully find employment opportunity, it has found that there is mismatch between their skills and the requirements of their employers. Hence, graduates are unable to find suitable employment, due to the gap between their abilities and employers' needs.

Realizing the aforementioned problems and the significance of entrepreneurship to develop knowledge-based economy, numerous efforts have been taken by the Malaysian government to nurture entrepreneurship (Othman, Othman & Ismail, 2012) e.g. promoting entrepreneurship education (Rahim & Mohd Lajin, 2015). The higher educational institutions have started offering formal entrepreneurship education employing new instruction and delivery approaches of entrepreneurship that help in incorporating entrepreneurial thinking to all levels of education in Malaysia (Sipon, Pihie, Rahman & Manaf, 2015). Despite these encouraging efforts, previous studies have exposed that being an entrepreneur is not the major career choice among Malaysian graduates (MOHE, 2017; Monitor, 2017). This observation seems to blend with the National Youth Survey in 2012, where it has found that majority of youth, e.g. around 73%, approved that getting a favorite job is a problem in Malaysia (Ming, Azhar, Hazri & Mulakala, 2012). Hence, one of the

solutions to this, has been to engage in entrepreneurial activities (Ghadas et., 2014; Vodă & Florea, 2019).

Many structural reforms were being made creating entrepreneurial opportunities (Mohamed et al., 2012). But despite all efforts, data has reported that the lowest entrepreneurship rates among aforementioned countries are experienced in Malaysia with 7.7% i.e. almost 50% lower than other Asian countries. The findings revealed Malaysia has the lowest percentage of entrepreneurial intentions (4.9%), in ASEAN region which means that the percentage of individuals who consider entrepreneurship as a good career choice is only 44.1%, as the lowest among member countries. Similarly, Malaysia has ranking of 64 among member countries, which shows lesser individuals' tendency to develop entrepreneurial intentions (Monitor, 2017).

In the context of graduates' employability, entrepreneurship is a significant direction; and attitude towards entrepreneurial career and conscience is important to be considered. Despite that, determining the entrepreneurial intention of students in higher learning institutions (HLIs), especially in the Malaysian public universities is still debatable (Othman et al., 2012; Bin Yusoff, Zainol & Bin Ibrahim, 2015). Accordingly, the current study possibly would make novel contribution in developing students' perception as potential entrepreneurs to become entrepreneurs after graduation; as outlined in the new educational policy by Malaysian government (2015-2025) (Blueprint, 2015).

Entrepreneurial intentions lead individuals to become entrepreneurs which is the source of self-employment (Kitching, 2014; Bögenhold, & Klinglmair, 2016). Most of entrepreneurship studies have discussed existing entrepreneurs and established businesses (Mason & Brown, 2014; Grine et al., 2015; Windapo, 2018; Abdul, 2018) while neglecting a large section of potential entrepreneurs, i.e. students. Students can be considered as the primary resources of future entrepreneurs and it will be an advantage for them to make entrepreneurship as a career (Gallant, Majumdar & Varadarajan, 2010). In this regards the assessment of entrepreneurial intention among

them is important (Krueger, 2017), to identify their level of this intention (Neneh, 2014; Israr & Saleem, 2018).

In the entrepreneurial intention researches, there is a great potential for considering mental, psychological or cognitive models' evidences in individuals entrepreneurial decision-making process (Shinnar, Giacomini & Janssen, 2012; Fayolle & Liñán, 2014). Moreover, psychological traits provide an insight into the individual's psyche as effective variables related to entrepreneurship (Lin, Rogoff, Foo & Liu, 2015; Antoncic, Bratkovic Kregar, Singh & DeNoble, 2015). In another word, psychological traits in entrepreneurship studies could provide additional insight to explore behavior, motivation and cognition contributions towards entrepreneurship (Rokhman & Ahamed, 2015; Omorede, Thorgren & Wincent, 2015). On the other hand, it suggested that future researches should investigate the relationship between entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial intention with high standard of methodological consistency (Fayolle & Liñán, 2014).

Previous researches have investigated the attitudinal and motivational factors individually to explain entrepreneurial intentions; for example in the examination of the level of motivation and obstacles among university students to become entrepreneur (Keat & Ahmad, 2012); it found that the entrepreneurial motivations foster entrepreneurship career intention among students to frame entrepreneurial agenda at Malaysian higher education institutions (Ng, Ahmad & Ibrahim, 2014). Moreover, educational supports enhance entrepreneurial intentions (Kadir, Salim and Kamarudin, 2012). It also found that personality trait has impact on entrepreneurial intention (Ismail et al., 2009; Koe et al., 2012; Karabulut, 2016; Karanja, Ithinji and Nyaboga, 2016), e.g. individuals with some specific personality traits like extraversion and openness, are more attracted to entrepreneurial activities. In addition, many studies were also conducted to investigate TPB in Malaysia (Abbas, 2015; Taha, Ramlan & Noor, 2017). According to literature, researchers should investigate other important factors in predicting entrepreneurial intentions based on theoretical foundation of TPB (Fayolle & Liñán, 2014). Despite the growing concern about the limitation of entrepreneurial intention models, no research study has investigated the relationship between psychological traits, educational, motivational and attitudinal factors

collectively in predicting entrepreneurial intentions, considering the mediation role of attitude toward entrepreneurship.

Given the importance of entrepreneurship and new business start to the economy and society, along with the factors which foster antecedents of entrepreneurship; it is important to investigate the impact of both psychological and educational factors on university students' entrepreneurial intentions. In view of this, the current study aimed to fill the identified gaps in literature and intended to investigate the relationship among psychological, educational and attitudinal factors to explain students' entrepreneurial intentions among five research-intensive Malaysian universities including, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM), Universiti Malaya (UM), Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) and Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM).

1.5 Research Questions

The current research study has reviewed the previous literature works on psychological, educational and attitudinal factors and proposed the following research questions based on literature and relevant theories.

RQ₁: What is the relationship between big-five personality traits and attitude towards entrepreneurship in predicting entrepreneurial intention among university students?

RQ_{1a}: What is the relationship between big-five personality traits and entrepreneurial intention among university students?

RQ_{1b}: What is the relationship between big-five personality traits and attitude towards entrepreneurship among university students?

RQ_{1c}: What is the relationship between Attitude towards entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial intention among university students?

RQ2: What is the relationship between entrepreneurial motivation and attitude towards entrepreneurship in predicting entrepreneurial intention among university students?

RQ2a: What is the relationship between entrepreneurial motivation and entrepreneurial intention among university students?

RQ2b: What is the relationship between entrepreneurial motivation and attitude towards entrepreneurship among university students?

RQ2c: What is the relationship between attitude towards entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial intention among university students?

RQ3: What is the relationship between perceived behavioral control and attitude towards entrepreneurship in predicting entrepreneurial intention among university students?

RQ3a: What is the relationship between perceived behavioral control and entrepreneurial intention among university students?

RQ3b: What is the relationship between perceived behavioral control and attitude towards entrepreneurship among university students?

RQ3c: What is the relationship between attitude towards entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial intention among university students?

RQ4: What is the relationship between subjective norm and attitude towards entrepreneurship in predicting entrepreneurial intention among university students?

RQ4a: What is the relationship between subjective norm and entrepreneurial intention among university students?

RQ4b: What is the relationship between subjective norm and attitude towards entrepreneurship among university students?

RQ4c: What is the relationship between attitude towards entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial intention among university students?

RQ5: What is the relationship between educational factors and attitude towards entrepreneurship in predicting entrepreneurial intention among university students?

RQ_{5a}: What is the relationship between educational factors and entrepreneurial intention among university students?

RQ_{5b}: What is the relationship between educational factors and attitude towards entrepreneurship among university students?

RQ_{5c}: What is the relationship between attitude towards entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial intention among university students?

RQ₆: What are the indirect effects of psychological (big-five personality traits, entrepreneurial motivation, perceived behavioral control, subjective norms) and non-psychological factors (educational factors) on entrepreneurial intention among university students?

RQ_{6a}: Does big-five personality traits indirectly affect entrepreneurial intention among university students?

RQ_{6b}: Does entrepreneurial motivation indirectly affect entrepreneurial intention among university students?

RQ_{6c}: Does perceived behavioral control indirectly affect entrepreneurial intention among university students?

RQ_{6d}: Does subjective norm indirectly affect entrepreneurial intention among university students?

RQ_{6e}: Do educational factors indirectly affect entrepreneurial intention among university students?

1.6 Research Objectives

The above research questions provide logical grounds to propose research objectives based on comprehensive review of literature. The primary objective of current research was to investigate the relationship among psychological, educational and attitudinal factors in predicting entrepreneurial intentions among students of five research-intensive Malaysian universities including Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM), Universiti Malaya (UM), Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM). In addition, this research study proposed six main objectives.

1: To examine the relationship between big-five personality traits and attitude towards entrepreneurship in predicting entrepreneurial intention among university students.

1_a: To examine the relationship between big-five personality traits and entrepreneurial intention among university students.

1_b: To examine the relationship between big-five personality traits and attitude towards entrepreneurship among university students.

1_c: To examine the relationship between attitude towards entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial intention among university students.

2: To examine the relationship between entrepreneurial motivation and attitude towards entrepreneurship in explaining entrepreneurial intention among university students?

2_a: To examine the relationship between entrepreneurial motivation and entrepreneurial intention among university students.

2_b: To examine the relationship between entrepreneurial motivation and attitude towards entrepreneurship among university students.

2_c: To examine the relationship between attitude towards entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial intention among university students.

3: To examine the relationship between perceived behavioral control and attitude towards entrepreneurship in predicting entrepreneurial intention among university students.

3_a: To examine the relationship between perceived behavioral control and entrepreneurial intention among university students.

3_b: To examine the relationship between perceived behavioral control and attitude towards entrepreneurship among university students.

3_c: To examine the relationship between attitude towards entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial intention among university students.

4: To examine the relationship between subjective norm and attitude towards entrepreneurship in predicting entrepreneurial intention among university students.

4_a: To examine the relationship between subjective norm and entrepreneurial intention among university students.

4_b: To examine the relationship between subjective norm and attitude towards entrepreneurship among university students.

4_c: To examine the relationship between attitude towards entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial intention among university students.

5: To examine the relationship between educational factors and attitude towards entrepreneurship in predicting entrepreneurial intention among university students.

5_a: To examine the relationship between educational factors and entrepreneurial intention among university students.

5_b: To examine the relationship between educational factors and attitude towards entrepreneurship among university students.

5_c: To examine the relationship between attitude towards entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial intention among university students.

6: To examine the indirect effects of psychological (big-five personality traits, entrepreneurial motivation, perceived behavioral control, subjective norm) and non-psychological factors (educational factors) on entrepreneurial intention among university students.

6_a: To examine the indirect effects of big-five personality traits on entrepreneurial intention among university students.

6_b: To examine the indirect effects of entrepreneurial motivation on entrepreneurial intention among university students.

6_c: To examine the indirect effects of perceived behavioral control on entrepreneurial intention among university students.

6_d: To examine the indirect effects of subjective norm on entrepreneurial intention among university students.

6_e: To examine the indirect effects of educational factors on entrepreneurial intention among university students.

1.7 Scope of the Study

This research study investigated the relationships between psychological and educational factors in predicting entrepreneurial intentions. In addition, this study also investigated the mediating role of attitude toward entrepreneurship on the relationship between psychological and educational factors with entrepreneurial intention. The current study conducted among five Malaysian research-intensive universities (Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM), Universiti Malaya (UM), and Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM)). Moreover, the data was collected from final year Malaysian students to measure their entrepreneurial intentions. Because it expected from students who passed entrepreneurship course and may perceived more experience in their classes, to be more motivated and inclined towards entrepreneurship. The results of this research study would be initially generalized to five Malaysian research-intensive universities, and later can be applied to the higher education institutions in Malaysia.

1.8 Significance of the Study

Previous study works have reported that there is a growing concern for research on entrepreneurial intention among students in academic programs e.g. (Rae & Ruth Woodier-Harris, 2013; Popescu, Bostan, Robu & Maxim, 2016; Mbuya & Schachtebeck, 2016; Jemal, 2017). However, few studies have conducted on entrepreneurial intention among students in developing world (Nabi & Liñán, 2011; Singh Sandhu, Fahmi Sidique & Riaz, 2011; Mahmoud, 2015; Nieuwenhuizen & Swanepoel, 2015). Therefore, there is needed to research about students' entrepreneurial intention in developing world which leads to graduate entrepreneurship, especially in the Asia region where issues evolving students' entrepreneurial intentions are even more pressing; moreover in the economic environment of developing countries it would offered more opportunities to do entrepreneurial activities than developed economies (Bin Yusoff et al., 2015; Doran, McCarthy & O'Connor, 2018). Despite these emergent needs, few studies on entrepreneurial intention and involvement have conducted in the context of Malaysian

master and undergraduate students (Zain, Akram & Ghani, 2010; Singh Sandhu et al., 2011; Hussain & Othman, 2013; Ghadas et al., 2014; Abbas, 2015; Shamsuddin, Rosli, Kurup, Mathaven & Zawari, 2018); which suggested more researches needed to be done in this context. These studies confirmed that Malaysia's entrepreneurship has serious concerns and need to be addressed.

Malaysian students after graduation can stimulate the competitiveness and economic growth of country by their involvement in entrepreneurship activities, to foster Malaysia development plan to become a developed nation by 2020. Prior studies have exposed that being an entrepreneur is not the major career choice among local students at Malaysian universities (MOHE, 2017; Monitor, 2017). This research is substantial, mainly because it investigated the significant factors which have vital impact on individuals' choices to foster their entrepreneurial intentions and help them to become entrepreneurs to develop national economic plan. The importance of this study is because of its focus on entrepreneurial intentions among local students. The focus on entrepreneurial intentions is important to provide educators and researchers with data contributing on categorizing potential entrepreneurs. Therefore, the current research is important for students on their future career path because some of them may have more motivation to become entrepreneurs. So, it can prepare them to make better decision for superior options about their career choice.

According to the intention-based models, it is essential and important to recognize the factors lead to this intention (Debarliev, Janeska-Iliev, Bozhinovska & Viktorija, 2015; Ojiaku, Nkamnebe & Nwaizugbo, 2018; Islam, 2019). There are many approaches and theories about entrepreneurial intention proposed earlier such as The Trait Theory (Cromie, 2000; Low & MacMillan, 1988; Shaver & Scott, 1992) the entrepreneurial motivations theory (Carsrud, Gaglio & Olm, 1986), expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964) and Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991). However, these theories to a certain degree have been able to explain the inclination towards entrepreneurial activities, but they are still incomplete (Matlay & Westhead, 2005; Lin et al., 2015; Touzani et al., 2015).

The significance of this research study is threefold, first to investigate the entrepreneurial intentions among Malaysian students at five research-intensive universities including Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM), Universiti Malaya (UM), Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM). Secondly, this research contributes to the existing body of knowledge and proposed a conceptual model of psychological, educational and attitudinal factors to predict entrepreneurial intentions among local students. Thirdly, the findings of this research study would provide comprehensive insights for policy makers and higher learning educational institutions to foster the entrepreneurial intentions.

1.9 Operational Definitions of Terms

The application of operational definitions in the field of psychological concepts began in the 1930s e.g. (Crissman, 1939; McGregor, 1935). It refers to how variables of study operationalized based on validated dimensions or items. In this regard creating new concepts is not the purpose of operational definitions, instead the focus is on processes of operationalization and validation of one specific concept considering its dimension and items (Flannelly, Flannelly & Jankowski, 2014). Accordingly, the current study used following terms and concepts to operationalize the main variables.

1.9.1 Entrepreneurship Intention

In this research study following the theory of planned Behavior, entrepreneurial intention is indication as a state of mind which direct individuals' attentions and efforts to consider entrepreneurial behavior (Ajzen, 1991; Liñán, 2004; Liñán & Chen, 2009). This encompasses individuals who would consider starting their own business following graduation or at some stage soon. Accordingly, the current research study operationalized entrepreneurial intention based on the work done by Linan and Chen (2009) by considering the respondents pure intention to entrepreneurship.

1.9.2 Big-Five Personality Trait

In this study, Big-five personality trait operationalized by five factors including agreeableness, conscientiousness, extraversion, neuroticism and openness to experience, following the work done by John and Srivastava (1999). Openness refers to taking propensity to thought, infrequent designs, adventure, diversity of knowledge and interest. Conscientiousness defined as desire to act loyally, with the purpose of success. Extraversion refers to positive emotions, energy, persuasion, optimistic and the tendency to seek large group and gathering. Agreeableness as a dimension of interpersonal tendencies is propensity to be sympathetic and cooperative rather than doubtful and opposed towards others, with this belief that others will be similarly helpful in equal. Neuroticism or emotional strength is the general tendency to emotionally experience irrational ideas or unpleasant status such as, anxiety, guilt, anger and depression (Costa & McCrae, 1992).

1.9.3 Entrepreneurial Motivation

In the current thesis, students' entrepreneurial motivation operationalized based on the work done by Choo and Wong (2006), considering the motivational factors which may derive them to entrepreneurial intention including extrinsic rewards, independence and intrinsic rewards.

1.9.4 Perceived Behavioral Control

This study operationalized perceived behavioral control based on the work done by Linan and Chen (2009) and Kolvereid (1996) considering the respondents perception toward their abilities and control to make and progress an entrepreneurial project.

1.9.5 Subjective Norms

This thesis operationalized subjective norm based on the work done by Kolvereid (1996); Linan and Chen (2009) with considering normative beliefs and the motivation to comply regarding these beliefs. Normative beliefs include the perceived likelihood in which important references such as individuals or groups will support or discard one certain behavior; they established the norm which specifies how should be behaved. Motivation to comply, indicates one individual's inclination to follow these norms (Linan & Chen, 2009).

1.9.6 Attitude toward Entrepreneurship

This study operationalized attitude toward entrepreneurship based on Linan and Chen's (2009) study and according to that, it was asked for rating respondents' preference about both selections, founding their own business and working for an employer.

1.9.7 Educational Factors

Educational factors are defined as the whole set of educational and training activities and supportive events inside the educational system (Turker & Selçuk, 2008); which try to progress participants' intention to make entrepreneurial behaviors or some factors affecting related intentions such as, "entrepreneurial desirability or knowledge of entrepreneurial activities. This research study operationalized educational factors considering Educational Support Model (ESM) developed by Türker and Selçuk (2008).

1.10 Thesis Structure

Chapter one as introduction, provided a broad description of this research and overall structure of thesis. Introduction chapter consists of a background of research, problem statement, research questions and objectives followed by research scope and significance. Chapter two provides a comprehensive review of literature on five research variables used in this study. Each variable has discussed thoroughly beginning with definitions and concepts followed by their respective dimensions and the relationship with dependent variable i.e. entrepreneurial intention based on underpinning theories. It further discusses research framework and relationships among the variables resulting in hypothesis development. Chapter three presents the methodology for current study. This chapter provides detailed discussion about research paradigms, quantitative research design explained in detail. In addition, this chapter discusses survey measures, sampling plan, quantitative data collection and analysis procedures. Chapter four presents preliminary data analysis and interpretation of research results. After refining data through various data cleaning tests and procedures; the data analysis provides interpretation of quantitative data collected and analysed through structural equation modelling (SEM) technique using AMOS 22. Chapter five presents detailed discussion about findings and drawing a conclusion. Initially, this chapter begins with research overview and key points of research results. In addition, next section provides comprehensive discussion on research objectives in the light of previous literature. Furthermore, theoretical and practical significance of this research is discussed. last section sheds light on major research limitations and recommendation for future research.

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