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E-B Environment - Behaviour Proceedings Journal

KICSS2024

Kedah International Conference on Social Sciences:
https://kicss2024.wixsite.com/kicss2024

e-IPH e-International Publishing House Ltd., United Kingdom

BizFame 2024: 3rd International Conference on Business Finance Management & Economics
Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Bangkok, Thailand, 24 & 25 October 2024

Organised by: Universiti Teknologi MARA, Kedah, Malaysia

Student Entrepreneurial Intentions: Analyzing the influence of attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control

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Abstract
Entrepreneurship is a vital driver of economic growth and innovation. Cultivating an interest in entrepreneurship early among students is essential. Therefore, this study explores the effects of the Theory of Planned Behavior factors; attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control on entrepreneurship intention among university students. Data were collected from 244 students at universities in Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia. The findings reveal that only subjective norms and perceived behavioral control significantly influence entrepreneurial intentions. This paper provides insights for the education sector on offering students a comprehensive entrepreneurship curriculum to enhance their interest in becoming entrepreneurs.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship; Entrepreneurial Intention, Theory of Planned Behavior; University Students.

DOI: https://doi.org/10.21834/e-bpj.v10iSI28.6968

1.0 Introduction

Driving economic growth and promoting innovation are two crucial functions of entrepreneurship. The world is still changing quickly, and to stay competitive and meet global issues, it is now vital to start new companies and develop creative solutions. Early entrepreneurship education is essential, especially for students, to ensure a vibrant and sustainable economy (Prihanto et al., 2024). We can give the upcoming generation the means to realize their ideas, propel economic growth, and advance society by cultivating entrepreneurial attitudes and abilities in educational settings. In addition to fostering creativity and problem-solving skills, early exposure to entrepreneurship equips children to assume leadership roles and generate possibilities in a constantly changing world.

Moreover, innovation and economic growth are greatly aided by entrepreneurship, which also provides new opportunities and a solid foundation for societal advancement. Again, it is essential for students to foster entrepreneurial intents at an early age to maintain and accelerate this growth. Expanding upon the previous Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), TPB adds attitudes, subjective norms, and the idea of perceived behavioral control to provide a complete understanding of how people form intentions to engage in particular behaviors, like entrepreneurship. This study examines how these three factors influence students' inclinations to start their businesses using the TPB framework. Understanding these connections can help educational programs better prepare and motivate the upcoming

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.21834/e-bpj.v10iSI28.6968

generation of business owners, eventually promoting innovation and economic progress. In addition, entrepreneurs choose to become business owners on purpose; they are not forced to be entrepreneurs (Krueger, 2007; Waris et al., 2022)

In recent years, entrepreneurship has become increasingly important in Malaysia due to educational trends evolving patterns and practices within an education system that reflect changes in society, technology, and economic demands, particularly in higher education (Khadri et al., 2020; Ooi and Ahmad (2012). Despite rising enthusiasm for entrepreneurial initiatives, there is a gap in understanding the factors influencing university students' intentions to pursue entrepreneurship. This study aims to fill that gap through educational trends shaping students' aspirations. The Malaysian government recognizes entrepreneurship as a key driver of economic growth, yet empirical research on how initiatives align with students' intentions is limited. Therefore, this study aims to investigate how university students' intentions to pursue entrepreneurship are influenced by the three TPB factors. This study adds to our understanding of the psychological and social determinants of entrepreneurial behavior by looking at how these variables interact and affect students' desire to become entrepreneurs. This knowledge is essential for creating successful entrepreneurship education programs that inspire students to start their businesses by providing them with the drive and self-assurance they need in addition to imparting knowledge and skills. Therefore, the objective of this study is to examine the influence of attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control on entrepreneurial intention.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), created by Icek Ajzen in 1985, expands on the earlier TRA to provide a more comprehensive view of human behavior. It investigates the motivations underlying people's activities, operating under the assumption that many behaviors are purposefully designed to fit different circumstances. While the TRA stresses the impact of attitudes and subjective norms on behavioral intentions, TPB expands on this by including perceived behavioral control (PBC), representing an individual's belief in their capacity to do a specific behavior. TPB has been widely used in several sectors, including business, to predict and explain behavioral intentions. Al-Mamary and Alraja (2022) found that TPB efficiently explains students' entrepreneurial aspirations by considering their attitudes, subjective norms, and PCB over entrepreneurial actions. Adding PBC to the TPB paradigm allows for a more comprehensive understanding of how individuals perceive their ability to conduct specific activities, mainly when external considerations such as resource availability or environmental limits are essential.

2.2 Attitude

Attitude is a person's judgment about a specific behavior, determining whether they view it positively or negatively, and is influenced by their beliefs about the potential outcomes of that behavior. In the theory of planned behavior (TPB) framework, attitude is crucial as it significantly impacts intention and directly influences behavior. A positive attitude toward a behavior, such as entrepreneurship, increases the likelihood of developing a solid intention to engage in it, while a negative attitude weakens this intention. Students with positive attitudes toward entrepreneurship often believe that starting a business will lead to independence, personal growth, and financial success, which motivates them to pursue entrepreneurial activities actively. Several studies, including research by Al-Mamary and Alraja (2022) in Saudi Arabia, Al-Jubari (2019) in Yemen, and Wang and Ortiz (2022) in China, demonstrate a positive relationship between attitudes and entrepreneurial intentions among students, emphasizing the importance of fostering positive attitudes. Presenting entrepreneurship as an attractive and viable career option can inspire students to develop business ideas and pursue ventures. However, as noted by Khadri (2020) and Kobylińska (2022), having a positive attitude alone does not guarantee action, as belief in the value of entrepreneurship does not necessarily translate into the intention to engage in entrepreneurial activities.

2.3 Subjective norms

Subjective norms refer to the perceived social pressure to engage in or refrain from a particular behavior influenced by the opinions and expectations of significant individuals or groups, such as family, friends, colleagues, or society. These norms guide an individual's actions by shaping their intentions based on the influence of their social circle (Al-Mamary & Alraja, 2022). In entrepreneurship, subjective norms play a crucial role in enhancing students' entrepreneurship education by fostering a supportive environment. Networking with peers and industry professionals boosts student confidence, while real-world skills in curricula and guest speakers inspire interest. Additionally, online resources and collaborative projects promote community, encouraging entrepreneurial activities. Research by Sadat and Lin (2020) highlights the importance of subjective norms, particularly in collectivist cultures, in influencing entrepreneurial intentions. Studies by Shahzad et al. (2021) further support the role of family support, peer influence, and mentorship in enhancing entrepreneurial self-efficacy, ultimately increasing students' likelihood of establishing their businesses. Similarly, Katz and Green (2022) found that entrepreneurship programs emphasizing collaboration and community engagement lead to more tremendous entrepreneurial success.

2.4 Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC)

PBC refers to an individual's perception of their ability to perform a specific behavior, encompassing both self-efficacy and the perceived ease or difficulty of the behavior. It reflects a person's sense of control over their actions. In entrepreneurship education, PBC reflects students' beliefs in their capability to engage in entrepreneurial activities and their perceptions of external support or barriers. PBC is a key predictor of students' entrepreneurial goals, demonstrating their confidence in accomplishing tasks and overcoming obstacles. When students feel they have the necessary skills and resources, they are more likely to pursue their entrepreneurial aspirations. Recent

research emphasizes the crucial role of PBC in fostering entrepreneurial intentions. Hu et al. (2021) found that mentorship and networking opportunities significantly enhance students' PBC, strengthening their entrepreneurial self-efficacy. Similarly, Wang and Ortiz (2022) demonstrated that PBC plays a pivotal role in boosting management students' entrepreneurial intentions. Kobylińska (2022) highlighted that students' entrepreneurial intentions are primarily driven by perceived control, with public policy awareness and external support becoming increasingly important as individuals move forward with their entrepreneurial activities. As students strive to succeed in their entrepreneurial endeavors, they will likely seek external support to execute their plans effectively.

2.5 Entrepreneurship intention among students

Research entrepreneurship identifies various factors influencing students' intentions to start a business, often referencing the TPB. Ooi and Ahmad (2012) highlight that intentions like extrinsic rewards and change management encourage students to pursue new ventures, while government support is crucial for fostering entrepreneurship. Additionally, Moy et al. (2001) explore the motivations of university students in Thailand and Hong Kong, revealing that factors such as independence, intrinsic rewards and family security, drive individuals toward entrepreneurship. Kabonga et al. (2021) also identified key intentions for student entrepreneurship, such as career aspirations, family background, poverty challenges, curriculum impact, and societal consumption expectations. Nevertheless, in the era of Industry 4.0, online entrepreneurship is recognized as a key driver of innovation and development. Pham et al. (2023) identify how students' knowledge and technological innovativeness motivate the formation of e-entrepreneurial intentions, particularly considering the rapid failure of new businesses due to insufficient human capital. The finding shows that students' technological innovativeness moderates the link between their entrepreneurial motivation and their intention to establish a digital business (Nurlan et al., 2024).

2.6 Research model

According to the TPB, a student's intention to pursue entrepreneurship is influenced by attitude toward entrepreneurship, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. This study adopts a TPB-based framework to predict which students are more likely to develop entrepreneurial intentions and eventually take steps toward launching their businesses. Figure 1 depicts the research model applying the TPB in this study. The hypotheses are outlined as follows:

H1: Attitude has a significant effect on entrepreneurial intention among students.
H2: Subjective norms have a significant effect on entrepreneurial intention among students.
H3: Perceived behavioral control has a significant effect on entrepreneurial intention among students.

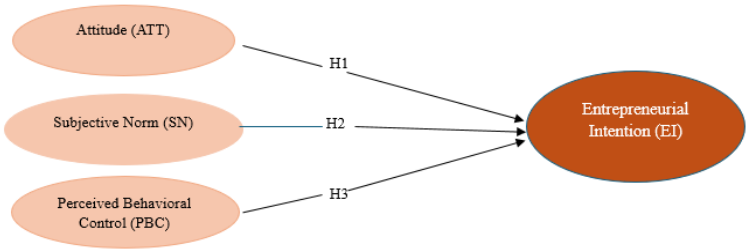

Fig. 1 Research Model

3.0 Methodology

Applying a quantitative approach, a questionnaire is used as an instrument to collect data from students in UiTM Negeri Sembilan. Survey forms were distributed through online Google Forms, and it took two weeks to acquire all the data. The total of the students in UiTM Negeri Sembilan is 11,400. Students were selected using a simple random sampling technique, which ensures that each respondent has an equal chance of being chosen and eliminating the researcher bias (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). A total of 244 students from various programs completed the questionnaire within the stipulated time.

The measurement is developed based on validated instruments in prior studies. The measurement of TPB and entrepreneurial intention was conducted using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from “1” (strongly disagree) to “5” (strongly agree). The measurement scales for attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control consist of seven, six, and eight items respectively which were adopted from Khadri et al. (2020). Ten questions adopted from were used to measure the entrepreneurial intention among students. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) was used to test the research hypotheses in this study. PLS provides additional sturdiness compared to traditional statistical approaches, and it is based on two models: the Measurement model and the Structural model.

4.0 Findings

A total of 244 questionnaires from 244 students were usable for data analysis in this study. Table 1 highlights the demographic profile of students involved in the survey.

Table 1. Demographic profile of respondents

Profiles	Types	Frequencies n= 244	Percentage %
Gender	Male	56	23.14
	Female	186	76.86
Program Level	Diploma	220	90.16
	Degree	24	9.84
Field of Study	Business Management	88	36.67
	Information Management	60	25
	Science Policy	36	15
	Mass Communication and Media	24	10
	Halal Management	17	7.08
	Applied Science	19	7.92
Involvement in the Entrepreneurial Program	Yes	159	65.16
	No	85	38.84
Preferences of business methods	Physical Business	15	6.15
	Online Business	43	17.62
	Hybrid	186	76.23
Potential business	Food and Beverages	106	43.44
	Services business	39	16.00
	Health and Beauty	34	14.00
	Apparels	33	13.5
	Others	17	7.00
	Manufacturing business	15	6.1

4.1 Measurement Model Assessment

In the measurement model assessment, the reliability and validity of the constructs within the research model were evaluated. The assessment included values for indicator loadings, indicator reliability, average variance extracted (AVE), and composite reliability. To meet the requirement for indicator reliability, a construct must explain at least 50% of each indicator's variance (Urbach & Ahlemann, 2010). This implies that the indicator's outer loadings should be 0.708 or higher, as a squared loading of 0.708 equals 0.50 (Hair et al., 2022). The analysis shows that the outer loadings for indicators A6, A7, SN2 and SE8 were less than 0.708. However, these indicators were not removed because the composite reliability and the average variance extracted (AVE) already met the threshold value.

Composite reliability was used to measure internal consistency reliability. The composite reliability values in this study were all above the satisfactory threshold of 0.7. Additionally, AVE values greater than 0.50 were achieved, demonstrating the constructs' ability to explain more than half of the variance of their indicators (Hair et al., 2022). The assessment also involved testing discriminant validity using the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT), which indicates how well the indicators represent their construct and differ from other constructs. The obtained HTMT values for constructs in the measurement model were less than 0.85 based on HTMT0.85, indicating that discriminant validity was established between constructs in the model. Overall, the results of the reliability and validity tests obtained in the evaluation of the measurement model were found to be satisfactory, as they met the established thresholds. The reliability and validity constructs are displayed in Table 2.

Table 2 Summary of results for measurement model

Constructs	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability
Attitudes	0.615	0.897	0.912
Subjective Norms	0.605	0.863	0.891
Perceived Behavioral Control	0.709	0.934	0.956
Entrepreneurial Intentions	0.800	0.972	0.972

4.2 Structural Model Assessment

In the evaluation of the structural model, the focus was on examining the hypothesized relationships and determining how well the exogenous variables explained the endogenous variable through R^2. The R^2 value obtained in the study was 57%, indicating the variance in entrepreneurship intention constructs explained by the combination of attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control. According to Hair et al. (2017), an R^2 value of 57% for entrepreneurial intention as an endogenous construct is considered moderate, aligning with the classification of R^2 values in the research area. As summarized in Table 3, the results indicated that only two hypothesized relationships (H2 and H3) were significant at a p-value < 0.05 and t > 1.645 using a one-tailed test, thereby supporting the hypotheses. Specifically, the hypothesized relationship between attitude and entrepreneurial intention (H1) was not supported with a path coefficient of a t-value of 0.069, indicating non-significance at $p > 0.05$. For H2, which proposed a positive relationship between subjective norms and entrepreneurial intention, the results showed a path coefficient of $\beta = 0.339$, a t-value of 3.006, and statistical significance at $p < 0.05$, thus supporting H2. Lastly, the hypothesized relationship between perceived behavioral control and intention was confirmed with a path coefficient of $\beta = 0.498$, a t-value of 6.304, and significance at $p < 0.05$. The findings suggest that the influence of social environments such as family and friends and the control over their ability plays crucial role in determining the intention of the students in becoming an entrepreneur in their future. Perceived behavioral control emerged as the strongest predictor of performance

with the highest path coefficient of 0.498, followed by subjective norms and attitude, with path coefficients of 0.339 and 0.069, respectively. Table 3 provides the results of the structural model.

Table 3. Results of the structural model relationships

Hypotheses				Path Coefficients	*T* Statistics	*P* Values	Results
H1	ATT	➞	EI	0.069	2.613	0.945	Not Supported
H2	SN	➞	EI	0.339	2.284	0.003	Supported
H3	PBC	➞	EI	0.498	5.485	0.000	Supported

5.0 Discussion

This study examined the relationship between TPB elements namely attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control and intention to become an entrepreneur among students. For H1, attitude was found to have a non-significant effect on the entrepreneurial intention, thus indicating that even though students have a positive attitude towards entrepreneurship, they are not interested in becoming an entrepreneur. This finding challenges the common assumption that a positive attitude towards entrepreneurship directly correlates to start a business. It suggests that while attitudes are important, they may not be the primary driver of entrepreneurial intentions. The insignificant role of attitude in shaping entrepreneurial intention among students is similar to Khadri (2020) who concluded that simply having a positive view of entrepreneurship is not enough to guarantee that students will act on it or develop a stronger intention to pursue entrepreneurial activities.

The result for H2 shows a significant effect of subjective norms on entrepreneurial intention among students. Subjective norms refer to the individual's assumptions about something that is influenced by their social environment or group's behavior. The findings suggest that friends and family can be a game-changer for aspiring entrepreneurs. A robust support system and a positive work environment provide the necessary emotional, practical, and psychological resources that boost an individual's motivation and desire to embark on an entrepreneurial journey. Subjective norms are guiding principles that influence whether intentions turn into actions, shaped by the opinions of people in one's close circle (Al-Mamary & Alraja, 2022).

H3 was supported by the significant positive result for the relationship between perceived behavioural control and entrepreneurial intention. The findings highlight that someone with a high level of perceived behavioral control is more likely to feel motivated and committed to carrying out a behavior. When students believe they have control over their ability to start a business, they are more likely to commit to their entrepreneurial goals. It reflects their belief in their ability to successfully engage in entrepreneurial activities, which is shaped by both internal and external factors. The significant effect of subjective norms and perceived behavioral control on entrepreneurship intentions are consistent with the prior studies (e.g. Al-Mamary & Alraja, 2022; Khadri et al., 2020; Turra & Melinda, 2021). They discovered that the influence of significant individuals in students' lives, along with their commitment, shapes their motivation to pursue business ventures in the future.

The findings of this study are significance as they provide a thorough understanding of the factors affecting entrepreneurial intentions among Malaysian university students. Academically, they address a crucial gap in the literature concerning local economic and educational contexts, enriching theories of entrepreneurial intention. Practically, the insights can guide the creation of tailored entrepreneurship education programs and support initiatives that align with students' needs and local economic trends. This dual contribution aims to cultivate a more vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystem in Malaysia.

6.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

This study explored the relationship between elements of the TPB and students' intentions to become entrepreneurs. The results revealed that while students may hold positive attitudes towards entrepreneurship, this does not significantly influence their entrepreneurial intentions, The finding that attitude does not significantly predict entrepreneurial intentions may be due to several factors. In Malaysia, students may prioritize external influences, such as social norms and perceived behavioral control, over personal attitudes. Additionally, the rapidly changing economic landscape could lead them to view entrepreneurship as a necessity rather than a choice based on positive feelings. This suggests that practical considerations and external support are more critical in shaping their entrepreneurial intentions. Additionally, the results confirmed a strong positive relationship between perceived behavioral control and entrepreneurial intention, indicating that individuals with higher perceived control are more likely to feel motivated and committed to pursuing entrepreneurial activities.

Considering these findings, it is recommended that educational institutions and policymakers should focus on enhancing support systems for aspiring student entrepreneurs. This implies that educational programs should not only aim to foster positive attitudes but also tackle other essential factors that influence entrepreneurial intentions. Incorporating practical experiences and real-world challenges into the curriculum could help students translate their positive attitudes into actionable entrepreneurial objectives. For instance, this could involve creating mentorship programs that connect students with experienced entrepreneurs, fostering a collaborative environment that encourages peer support, and integrating entrepreneurship education into the curriculum. Thus, it helps students build confidence in their skills and decision-making abilities. Additionally, initiatives that promote community engagement and provide resources for students to explore entrepreneurial opportunities could further stimulate interest and intention to start businesses.

Acknowledgments

The authors acknowledge Universiti Teknologi MARA for funding this article.

Paper Contribution to Related Field of Study

This paper validates the TPB as a framework for understanding university students' entrepreneurial intentions, emphasizing the role of attitudes, perceived behavioral control, and subjective norms. It offers insights to enhance entrepreneurship education by focusing on mindset development that promotes innovation and economic growth. Additionally, the study provides a strong foundation for future research on entrepreneurial intentions in various contexts.

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