

Personality Traits and Entrepreneurial Career Interests among Private University Students

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Abstract

This study aims to identify personality traits and entrepreneurial career interests among private university students. The study also aims to examine the impacts of personality traits on the interest in entrepreneurial careers among students of private universities. Personality traits consist of three constituents, namely openness, conscientiousness, and extraversion. To achieve the proposed research objective, a quantitative method based on a questionnaire survey was used. A total of 346 private university students were involved in this study. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics involving mean scores and standard deviations, while regression analysis was used to testify the impacts of personality traits on the interests in entrepreneurial careers among students of private universities. Based on the analysis results using SPSS version 25, the level of personality traits and entrepreneurial career interests of private university students was at a moderate level, while the impact of personality traits on the interests in entrepreneurial careers among students of private universities was significant. Overall, the findings of the study successfully inform related individuals on how to apply personality traits and interests in the entrepreneurial careers of private university students.

Keywords: Personality Traits, Entrepreneurial Career, Private University Students.

Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic has affected the economic sector and the development of the whole country. In fact, the pandemic has severely affected the economic sectors of all countries. A string of pandemics has also caused people's lives to be most affected as they were not only faced with health-related risks but also financial risks due to job loss. Many have become unemployed because a lot of private companies had to cease business operations, thus increasing the unemployment rate. In the first quarter of 2020, the unemployment rate was recorded at 3.9%, which is 0.6% higher than the year before. As explained through the statistical data, the number of unemployed in 2019 had increased to 610,000 compared to only 521,000 in the same month. This became more serious with the spread of Covid-19 in March 2020 (Department of Statistics Official Portal, 2020).

The spread of Covid-19 has not only put the country and companies to a great challenge but also the graduates who are in a quest for job opportunities. The difficulties to land a job became more difficult when many big companies were faced with financial problems until they had to declare bankruptcy (Malaysian Department of Insolvency, 2020). Thus, many graduates see entrepreneurship as a career opportunity to be free of the job-searching crisis. This shows that entrepreneurship plays an important role in lessening the macroeconomic issue for a long period (Ministry of Finance, 2020).

However, entrepreneurship has received less attention among graduates because the graduates are too obsessed with the idea of working a monthly-salaried job and they fear getting out of their comfort zone (Bernama, 2017). As analyzed by Kwong et al (2006) in their study, a few students have a positive view of entrepreneurship, but it still did not encourage them to be involved in entrepreneurship. Such a phenomenon happens because the importance of and interest in entrepreneurship are influenced by internal factors such as personality traits (Nawang et al., 2016).

Personality traits refer to the personality owned by an individual (Bujang and Yusni, 2015). This also includes the internal factors that influence the behaviour and thinking of individuals based on their surroundings (Hussain et al., 2012). According to Bujang and Yusni (2015), personality is a pattern and a form of manifested attitudes and traits to be practiced in daily life. This refers to a group of features owned by a person that makes the person unique (Ravi, 2015). The process of personality development encompasses the internal factors (personality traits) that finally allow an entrepreneur to act according to ethical demands and morals, which are also categorized as entrepreneurship cultivation (Mazlan, 2015). Entrepreneurship does not only manage to be one of the opted careers nowadays, but it could also shape a unique personality within an individual (Shahrir, 2015).

Hence, this study emphasizes the influence of personality traits on entrepreneurial career interests among private university students as a benchmark to analyze the students' interests in entrepreneurship.

Problem Statement

A ten-spoke base has been outlined by the Malaysian Education Development 2015-2025 (Higher Education) or PPPM (PT) on 7 April 2015 to aspire the stakeholders in higher education and strengthen the ecosystem. The Higher Education Institution Entrepreneurship Action Plan 2021-2025 has been developed by reconciling spikes 1 and 5 in PPPM (PT), Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE). The reason is to instill an entrepreneurial mindset in the entire higher education system, with a hope that holistic, balanced, and entrepreneurial features could be produced, in alignment with the National Education Philosophy. Graduates of higher education institutions are shaped as job creators; they need to lessen their dependency on the government's resources and be more entrepreneurial towards the source of funding in higher education. Students who are highly educated are qualified for a job that has a promising future either as an employee or an entrepreneur (Saad and Sankaran, 2021). This is enhanced by Norfadhilah and Halimah (2010) on the interests of students of Public Higher Institutions of Learning (IPTA) in the field of entrepreneurship, where their study found out that only 58.8% of the students have interests in this field. This implies that IPTA students still aim to earn a monthly salary after finishing their studies.

Nonetheless, research that involves entrepreneurial activities among the students of Private Higher Institutions of Learning (IPTS) is still scarce. According to Ambad and Namit (2016), IPTS needs to conduct a study in this context because the studies done by IPTA did not represent the whole student population that also includes the students of IPTS. Hence, the current study was conducted to raise awareness of the importance of entrepreneurship among IPTS students. The literature gap might exist due to the lack of interest among IPTS students to be involved in the field of entrepreneurship. Therefore, the researchers in this study are driven to determine the objectives towards entrepreneurship among students of private universities.

In general, attempts have been taken by certain parties because entrepreneurship is favoured by the younger generation as a career choice, especially in developed countries (Ministry of Higher Education, 2020). However, this situation is far from the current state of Malaysia. Entrepreneurship is not seen as a career similar to engineers, doctors, or surveyors that have a status from the society's perspectives (Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM), 2016/2017). Therefore, in terms of career selection, graduates still have less interest in entrepreneurship even though the Ministry of Higher Education has embarked on a few attempts to produce successful entrepreneurs (Ministry of Higher Education, 2020). This scenario is also proven by the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor's (GEM) statistical data in 2016/2017, which showed that Malaysia was still among the countries with a low score in opting for entrepreneurship as a career with only 44.1% (Diagram 1) compared to other Asian countries (GEM, 2016/2017).

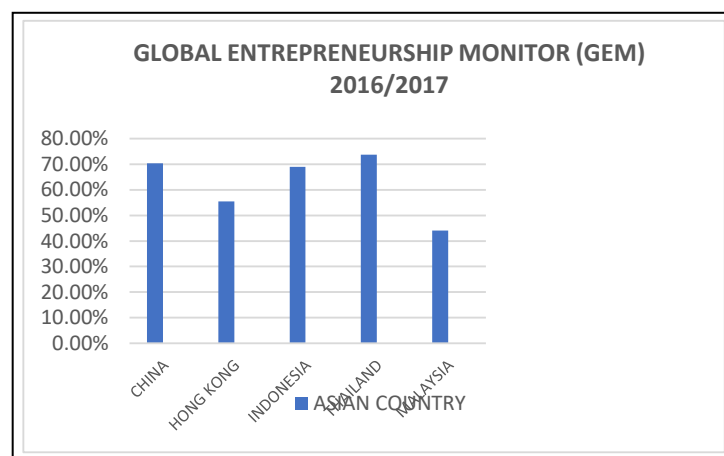


Diagram 1: Entrepreneurship as a good career selection

Resource: Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM), 2016/2017 Statistics.

If this trend continues, the government's attempt to empower the entrepreneurial field will be rather tough due to less inclination among students to make entrepreneurship a career. Other than GEM, research by the Ministry of Education also explains that graduates, 13.3% from public universities and 20.6% from private universities, are still unemployed (Ministry of Higher Education, 2020). This happens due to job selection and because graduates are reluctant to shift to other alternatives such as entrepreneurship due to a lack of interest. Basically, graduates do not prefer to take a high risk by involving themselves in entrepreneurship. To them, it is a heavy and difficult leap to take, figuratively like a newborn baby who is just brought out to the real world, not knowing how to lead a life without

guidance from someone. Hence, the graduates are afraid to draw their own life journey. Many graduates would also rather follow the life patterns showcased by others to start and lead their life (Bantial & Radin, 2021).

Apart from that, bounded exposure is seen as one of the factors that hinder students to be widely involved in entrepreneurship, which may cause the students to feel depressed. This could be another reason why the students are not interested in any activities related to entrepreneurship (Syuhada et al., 2015; Fatimahwati, 2016). If the students carry out activities that they like but they are, however, in a state of being depressed, their motivational or interest level will indirectly decline and decrease.

According to (Ravi et al., 2016), some graduates tend to choose entrepreneurship as a second choice, if not the last choice, which makes them less interested in exploring this field. Even though the graduates' involvement is slowly increasing, the numbers are still not encouraging. Therefore, this study aims to see the extent of student interests in entrepreneurship through personality traits. Correspondingly, this study aims to achieve the following objectives:

- i. To identify the level of personality traits among students of private universities.
- ii. To identify the level of entrepreneurial career interests among students of private universities.
- iii. To examine the impacts of personality traits on entrepreneurial career interests among students of private universities.

Literature Review

In detailing the writing of this study, the researcher has conducted a literature review on personality traits and entrepreneurial career interests among university students. To discuss personality traits more comprehensively, the researchers used the *Big Five* Personality Theory, while Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior (1991) and Shapero's "Entrepreneurial Event" Model (1982) were used as references to explore entrepreneurial career interests.

Personality Traits

The word "personality" comes from a Latin word. Personality traits become one of the benchmarks in analyzing one's personality (Bujang and Yusni, 2015). According to (Rafatpanah et al., 2016), the features of personality are known as personality traits that could complete one's ability and potential. Besides, Soto (2018) indicated that personality traits encompass the thinking patterns, feelings, and behaviours of individuals. The three personality traits that show a person's behaviour and identity are as follows:

I. Openness

Openness is one of the entrepreneurship features needed by every entrepreneur. Openness in an individual could create a healthy competition in the world of entrepreneurship (Singh & DeNoble, 2003). According to (Zhao et al., 2006; Ariani, 2013), someone with an open characteristic should be ready to try new things to be a successful entrepreneur. This is also supported by (Antocic et al., 2005; Zhao et al., 2010).

II. Extraversion

According to Costa and McCrae (1992), the extraversion trait pictures how far one becomes strict, dominant, energetic, active, and enthusiastic as well as exhibiting positive emotions. Ismail et al. (2009) stated that individuals with high scores in extraversion are those who like to socialize and are joyful. According to (Farrukh et al., 2016), extraversion refers to the element of personality in shaping enthusiastic values as well as creating ambitious, sociable, and spirited individuals. Therefore, graduates with these features are more suitable for the entrepreneurship field compared to introverted individuals. This is because entrepreneurs are responsible for promoting their businesses either to their staff or investors (Zhao et al., 2010).

III. Conscientiousness

Conscientiousness is one of the features needed by an entrepreneur because individuals with this trait are always careful and are more goal-oriented in anything that they do. This is also supported by (Antocic et al., 2018; Irengun & Arikboga, 2015). The conscientiousness factor is related to entrepreneurship because an individual should have high motivation and purpose to realize his or her dreams. Meanwhile, Zhao and Seibert (2006) also stated that the conscientiousness factor has a strong relationship with entrepreneurship compared to the other Big Five personality traits.

According to Norfadhilah and Halimah (2010), universities are responsible for correcting student perceptions so that students will choose entrepreneurship as a career. In entrepreneurship, students' behavioral traits must be tested to identify their behavioral patterns. Based on a study by Colakoglua and Gozukara (2016), the Big Five Model was used to determine an individual's personality traits. This is also evident in a study by (Kamaliah et al., 2019) where personality traits were used to identify the tendency of vocational students towards entrepreneurship. Based on their findings, there is a medium relationship between openness and the tendency of vocational students towards entrepreneurship. As such, students' tendencies towards entrepreneurship could be researched further and a few initiatives could be developed to increase the tendencies. As reported by Fardeana (2020), efforts to increase students' inclination towards entrepreneurship as a career could be done through a digital approach. Hence, their findings showed a positive relationship between the Big Five personality traits and digital entrepreneurship tendencies among the students of Community College.

Interests in Entrepreneurship

Interest is one of the important aspects of starting an activity. This is because passion and interest are a strong push for someone to do something that they desire. In this sense, desires encompass the interests, tendencies, favors, or wants towards something (Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 2010). According to Mohammad and Othman (2018), one's interest to do something will encourage his or her feelings that will lead to an action known as tendencies, for instance, involvement in entrepreneurship. Thus, individual interest and passion will encourage the individual to be involved in entrepreneurship. This coincides with the findings reported by Erinawati (2014), where students' capacity and ability to explore opportunities in entrepreneurship could result in awareness of risks and creativity and innovation of the students to stay active in entrepreneurship. However, a few students are

still prone to working in their field of studies and, in addition to that, choosing a job in accordance with their interests, behaviors, and actions that they are more inclined to.

According to (Suhaidashima et al., 2019), interest is included in personality. Moreover, interest is an element that can be used to discover students' talents and their development. Students will be keener on succeeding in a subject if their interests and passions are nurtured. Thus, it can be concluded that interests are related to a high inclination towards something.

According to (Luis-Rico et al., 2020), to increase the interest in entrepreneurship, higher authorities should include the surroundings of entrepreneurship such as incubator, trading space, and network to play a more active and bolder role in promoting the advantages of entrepreneurship. Hussein (2003); Anwar et al (2020) also stated that interest encourages an individual to be able to conduct an activity and be active in their daily life. Individuals with a deep passion will achieve the highest level in whatever they are involved in. In short, interest is very important for entrepreneurs to start their businesses.

A study by Nurrahmah (2018) focuses on the factors that influence the interest in entrepreneurship among students from the Faculty of Accounting and Economics, Yogyakarta State University. Based on the outcome of the study, a total of 154 students have a deep passion for entrepreneurship. This could be related to the existence of factors that promote the development of interest in entrepreneurship. This is also supported by Norasmah and Zafirah (2018) through a study entitled "*Public University Students' Entrepreneurship Interest and Their Career in Malaysia,*" which outlines a factor that encourages students' interest in entrepreneurship that makes it becomes a career selection after graduating. The findings also showed that the students' interest in entrepreneurship is high, but entrepreneurship as a career is low.

On top of that, Norfadhilah and Halimah (2010) studied 420 IPTA students from Universiti Utara Malaysia, Islamic International University Malaysia, and the University of Technology Malaysia. Overall, the results of the study concluded that IPTA students had less interest in becoming entrepreneurs in the future. This is further proven through the findings of the study, which stated that not many of the IPTA students had taken part in the entrepreneurial course (only 33% attended the course) either stated or outsourced by the universities.

Azilahwati and Helmi (2011) stated that the country's economic development in the last two decades has brought a lot of changes and progress in producing many business opportunities. Thus, the higher education authorities took this golden opportunity and started to offer courses related to entrepreneurship. Finally, we could state that more students are choosing entrepreneurship as their career because they have started to see entrepreneurship as a career with a more promising source of income. Their findings also showed the highest mean score of 4.2, which means that students are interested in starting a business if they are given the opportunity and enough resources.

In a study by (Pirdaus et al., 2020), their findings showed the interests of the students of Universiti Malaysia Terengganu (UMT) before and after attending an entrepreneurship course. Evidently, there was a significant increase in the interests of students in the

entrepreneurship course. Thus, we could conclude that the basic entrepreneurship course could attract the students' interest in becoming entrepreneurs. Accordingly, one of the influential factors towards becoming an entrepreneur is interest. A deep interest will indirectly result in the long-term survival of entrepreneurs with high resilience. Thus, the introduction to the entrepreneurship subject at the higher education level, either in public or private institutions, is essential in shaping graduates' interest in entrepreneurship as well as having the mind of an entrepreneur.

Based on the detailed literature review of entrepreneurial career interests among students, the influential factors that encourage their involvement are personality traits and interests in entrepreneurship. As these are the contributing factors to the students' involvement in entrepreneurship, the following conceptual framework is, therefore, developed in this study:

Personality Traits

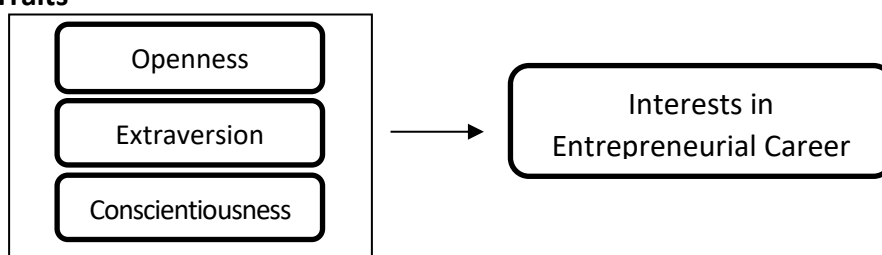


Diagram 2: Conceptual Framework

As illustrated in Diagram 2, entrepreneurial career interests serve as a dependent variable, while the personality traits of openness, extraversion, and conscientiousness are the independent variables in this study.

Methodology

This study employed a quantitative approach using a self-administered survey. The sample consists of 346 students of private universities. The sampling technique used is simple random sampling, where the sample size is determined based on the sample size table of (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970).

Due to the spread of the Covid-19 virus, data for the study were collected using online questionnaires. The questionnaire is divided into three sections. Section A consists of 8 items on the respondents' backgrounds, while Section B comprises 10 items on entrepreneurial career interests. The items in Section B were adapted from (Nieuwenhuizen & Swanepoel, 2015; Ng et al., 2016). Finally, Section C consists of 27 items where 10 items are negative. Each item in Section C was adapted from (John et al., 1991) Big Five Inventory (BFI). All items in Sections B and C are measured using a 5-point Likert Scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree).

The data were further analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25 software. Two types of analyses were used in this study, namely descriptive analysis and inferential analysis. Descriptive analysis was used in this study to analyze every item in the questionnaire. To evaluate the descriptive statistics, frequencies, percentages,

mean scores, and standard deviations were used. On the other hand, inferential analysis was used in this study to measure the relationship between variables.

The researchers used Cronbach's Alpha to measure the reliability of the instrument. The values of Cronbach's Alpha for entrepreneurial career interests and personality traits are 0.700 and 0.669, respectively. These values show that the questionnaire used in this study could be used in the real study as the values are more than 0.6. Validity analysis was also conducted by looking at the correlations among items. Based on the KMO test, every aspect shows a value of more than 0.6 (entrepreneurial career interests = 0.774, personality traits = 0.805). This means that the values and confidence levels are good and acceptable. Thus, the questionnaire is appropriate for this study.

Research Findings and Discussion

Identifying the Level of Personality Traits Among Students of Private Universities.

Table 1 shows the mean score for each personality trait dimension.

Table 1

Level of Personality Trait of Private University Students

Personality Traits	Mean Score	Std. Deviation	Level
Conscientiousness	3.162	0.496	Medium
Extraversion	3.061	0.442	Medium
Openness	3.283	0.443	Medium
Total	3.177	0.352	Medium

Overall, the average mean score for each personality trait of private university students is 3.177 and the standard deviation is 0.352. This depicts that the personality traits of the students of private universities are at a medium level.

The findings of this study are aligned with the study by (Hassan & Buang, 2017). Based on their findings, the level of entrepreneurship features among the graduates are very medium. Individuals with entrepreneurial attitudes would always be ready to face challenges using an approach of creativity and determination to succeed and become more competitive. Nevertheless, if their entrepreneurial attitude is at low and medium levels, this will indirectly influence the involvement of the graduates in conducting business activities.

Research findings by (Mohd Shahrir, 2015; Norasmah et al., 2009; Mohd Hafeez, 2013) are also parallel to the above statement, where the entrepreneurial attitudes were recorded at a medium level. This shows that students' involvement in business is still not impressive. On the other hand, (Mohd Hassan, 2007) shows that entrepreneurial attitude was at a high level. This indirectly indicates that many students are involved in entrepreneurship. Therefore, mastering an entrepreneurial attitude makes individuals more alert to their current needs and wants as well as willing to relatively sacrifice their time and efficiency in solving problems.

Identifying the Level of Entrepreneurial Career Interests Among Students of Private Universities.

Table 2 shows the mean scores, standard deviations, and level of interest in entrepreneurship among private university students according to gender.

Table 2

Level of Entrepreneurial Career Interests Among Private University Students According to Gender

Career Interest	Mean Score	Std. Deviation	Level
Male	3.466	0.554	Medium
Female	3.385	0.549	Medium
Total	3.431	0.552	Medium

Table 2 shows that the level of interest in entrepreneurship among male students is higher with 3.466 compared to female students with 3.385. Overall, the entrepreneurial career interests among students of private universities are at a medium level. This finding also validates the findings reported by (Mustafa, 2019). Besides, according to Kakkonen (2011), students must have the readiness, motivation, and interest to become entrepreneurs. This study is related to business efficiency and perception of the intention towards entrepreneurship. Overall, business efficiency and perception of entrepreneurial intention were evidently low.

On the contrary, the study by (Karabulut, 2016) aims to explore the impact of personality traits on entrepreneurial intention. Karabulut (2016) conducted a study that was inspired by Orman's (2009) study entitled "*Factors Affecting Entrepreneurial Intentions: An Application for University Students and University Graduate Employees.*" Based on the study, personality trait has a positive impact on entrepreneurial interests. This is further supported by Mohammad and Othman (2018) study, where the inclination towards entrepreneurship among Vocational College students was at a higher level because the students thought that entrepreneurship could give them a great income. As a result, many previous studies have given priority to the aspect of interest. Individuals will choose their careers based on their interests because these will unlock their spirit and ideas for them to succeed in the field that they venture into.

The Impacts of Personality Traits on Entrepreneurial Career Interests Among Students of Private Universities

Table 3 shows the overall results for the impacts of personality traits on entrepreneurial career interests among students of private universities.

Table 3

Regression Model

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.627 ^a	P .393	.391	.43093

Based on Table 3, the value of $R^2 = 0.393$ shows that 39.3% of the changes in entrepreneurial career interests are due to personality traits. This means that personality traits are the factor that contributes to private university students' interests in entrepreneurship.

Table 4 shows the ANOVA test results in this study.

Table 4

ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	41.337	1	41.337	222.593	.000 ^b
Residual	63.882	344	.186		
Total	105.219	345			

Table 4 shows the ANOVA test results ($F(1,344)=222.593, p < .05$). The result shows that personality traits are significant at $p < .05$; hence, personality traits have a significant impact on entrepreneurial career interests. This finding is aligned with the study by Zhao and Seibert (2006), where the personality traits highlighted by individuals influenced their careers. For instance, as entrepreneurs, innovative personality traits encourage them to try something new. Besides, Antocic et al. (2015); Zhao et al. (2010) also stated that personality traits such as optimism may determine one's entrepreneurship.

Table 5 shows the results for Standardized Coefficient Beta in this study.

Table 5

Standardized Coefficient Beta

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	.311	.210		1.480	.140
Personality Trait	.982	.066	.627	14.920	.000

Based on the findings ($\beta=0.627, p=0.000$), there is a significant relationship between personality traits and entrepreneurial career interests among students of private universities because the value of p is less than 0.05. Hence, hypothesis (H1) is supported. Besides, the standardized coefficients show that every one unit increase in personality traits will contribute to 0.627 units of entrepreneurial career interests among private university students.

Hence, it could be proven that personality traits are important in determining one's direction, especially in terms of career. Personality traits could be taken as an indicator to look into one's career interests. As reported by (Suhaidashima et al., 2019), interest is one of individual personalities or characters. The elements of interest are also useful in tracing talents. Indirectly, it could boost one's spirit to be involved in entrepreneurship.

Conclusion

Overall, the findings of the study have shown that the levels of personality traits and entrepreneurial career interests are average, while the relationship between personality traits and entrepreneurial career interests is averagely positive and significant. Thus, the study found that personality traits increase entrepreneurial career interests among private university students.

Activities that introduced at the private university level need to move in an integrated manner with the standard curriculum. Therefore, the Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia (MOHE) needs to deliver a standard curriculum to produce students interested in entrepreneurial careers. It is an approach in an effort to understand, lead and support students to be able to increase the interest of students to venture into entrepreneurial careers in the future.

By suggesting standard curriculum, a country could lessen the rate of unemployment among graduates. This study is hoped to be an eye-opener to many parties, especially universities by outlining various plans in an effort to increase students interests to be involved in entrepreneurship. Therefore, it is also hoped that this study could contribute knowledge to the field of entrepreneurship and develop a balanced human capital.

Furthermore, involvement of private university students in entrepreneurship could also boost the country's economic growth, especially through entrepreneurs' involvement in Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs). SMEs are one of the potential platforms to drive the country's economic growth so that we could be competitive with other countries. Hence, it is the government's responsibility to intensify many initiatives to attract the involvement of young entrepreneurs in entrepreneurship such as by developing entrepreneurial programs, giving exposure to marketing programs, and providing financial assistance to ensure that the young entrepreneurs could start their business successfully.

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