

Social Entrepreneurial Intention of the University Students: Prior Experience as a Moderator in an Extended Theory of Planned Behaviour Model

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Abstract

The current literature on social entrepreneurship still presents certain gaps that have to be addressed through some empirical studies. For example, the crucial impact of entrepreneurial knowledge (EK) and perceived university support (PUS) on the students' social entrepreneurial intention (SEI) has been recognised. However, the direct influence of both factors on SEI in an extended theory of planned behaviour (TPB) model is scarce. Besides, the moderation effect of prior experiences on SEI is also limited. Therefore, this study intends to address these gaps by exploring the factors that affect university students' SEI through an extended TPB model, integrating EK and PUS as additional predictors, while prior experiences are also included as a moderator. The study collected 216 valid responses from university students in Malaysia, and the proposed hypotheses were further analysed using partial least squares-structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM). The results showed that the students' intention to become social entrepreneurs was significantly influenced by attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control, EK, and PUS. Besides, the effect of PUS on SEI was significantly strengthened by prior experiences. Several significant implications have been associated with the findings of the study, and it might further contribute to the existing knowledge and also for stakeholders in encouraging students to take part in social entrepreneurship.

Keywords: Social Entrepreneurial Intention, Theory Of Planned Behaviour, Entrepreneurial Knowledge, Perceived University Support, Prior Experience, University Students

Introduction

The role of social enterprises in taking care of social welfare, economic development and sustainability has been remarked on (Iqbal et al., 2023). Specifically, social enterprises could

address market and government failures (Santos, 2012) by taking care of the vulnerable groups in society, as they could offer alternative solutions to ensure the benefits of these vulnerable groups will not be sacrificed in this capitalist era. Social enterprise is different from conventional enterprises as their main consideration is to contribute to society's benefits, rather than generating financial benefits for themselves (Sousa-Filho & Almeida, 2024). Therefore, social entrepreneurs tend to have social objectives (Zhang et al., 2021), and they are likely to establish business ventures for social matters and needs (Aloulou & Algarni, 2022). Theoretically, social entrepreneurship consists of two elements, which are business development and social development (Malaysia Social Entrepreneurship Blueprint 2030, n.d.). This has further defined social entrepreneurship as the use of innovative initiatives in business models to address social missions (Zhang et al., 2021). Besides, it also refers to the practices that leverage the resources generated from the conventional business model in achieving their social goals. This is crucial as it could further bridge the social gaps that are not covered by the governments and offer greater social inclusion and sustainable development (Sousa-Filho & Almeida, 2024). In this era that is facing socio-economic disparities, environmental degradation, and resource constraints, traditional government initiatives and profit-oriented business models often fall short in alleviating localised social crises. Social entrepreneurship has emerged as a vital mechanism to bridge these critical gaps by deploying market-driven strategies toward social objectives. Hence, studying the drivers of social entrepreneurial intention (SEI) is paramount as it could foster a new generation of social entrepreneurs for sustainable national development.

Due to the greater role of social enterprises in addressing social issues, more social entrepreneurs are required in each country, and thus, the development of the social entrepreneurial ecosystem is necessitated to encourage more social entrepreneurial behaviour (Iqbal et al., 2023). The traditional business idea might not be adequate in social entrepreneurship, as the financial benefits are not the focus of social entrepreneurship (Ukil et al., 2024). Therefore, social entrepreneurs must be someone who possesses innovative ideas for solving social issues (Sousa-Filho & Almeida, 2024). Besides, social entrepreneurs also possess the capabilities to tackle social problems sustainably (Singh & Awasthy, 2025). To better understand the social problems they aim to solve, prior experiences about these social issues are essential, as individuals are likely to empathise with the people who have social issues if they have experienced the same issues with them. As concluded in the prior studies, prior experience on social issues is important in determining the SEI (e.g. Aloulou & Algarni, 2022; Sousa-Filho et al., 2020; Ukil et al., 2023). This has signified the importance of experience in social issues before someone can develop innovative resolutions to address these social issues through the business model.

Focusing specifically on university students is highly impactful, as this population is digital natives and also equipped with fresh perspectives. Therefore, higher education students represent the prime demographic for cultivating social innovation. However, without a clear understanding of what drives or hinders their willingness to get involved in social ventures, institutional resources spent on entrepreneurship programs risk being ineffective. Unlocking the utility of SEI models further allows educators to move beyond general business training and actively nurture socially conscious leaders capable of creating scalable, self-sustaining socio-economic solutions.

Besides, in establishing new business ventures to solve social issues, entrepreneurs must have a sufficient level of knowledge of entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurial knowledge (EK) is substantial in equipping someone to foster innovative ideas that are useful in solving social problems. As revealed by Mohd Noor et al. (2024) and Abu Shriha et al. (2025), EK is necessary to promote the establishment of new e-ventures. This is paralleled with Sousa-Filho and Almeida (2024), who have noted the importance of higher education institutions in encouraging students' entrepreneurship. Higher education institutions, or so-called universities, are crucial to equip students with the essential knowledge and skills, as universities are perceived as the change agents in society (Tangwanichagapong et al., 2017). Universities are not only places for students to get the necessary knowledge and learn skills, but they also serve as platforms that will provide assistance or support for students to pursue entrepreneurship. Empirically, the educational support effort from the university has been proven necessary in fostering students' intention to establish digital enterprises (Pergelova et al., 2023). Therefore, it is projected that both EK and perceived university support (PUS) will further cultivate the students' intention to establish their new social ventures.

Greater attention has been received in social entrepreneurship with a substantial role in offering alternative solutions to address social issues. To date, several studies have investigated the SEI in different settings. Most of these studies utilised the theory of planned behaviour (TPB) as the foundation to explore the factors that drive individuals to become social entrepreneurs, such as Tiwari et al. (2017), Mgueraman and Abboubi (2024), Hendriana et al. (2025), and Sharma et al. (2025), who consistently employed the TPB framework in their studies, while extending it with different factors. Particularly, Tiwari et al. (2017) have extended the TPB with cognitive styles and self-efficacy to engineering students in India. Besides, the TPB is extended with perceived knowledge of the support network and perceived social support in the study by Mgueraman and Abboubi (2024) on university students in Morocco, while Hendriana et al. (2025) extended the TPB with entrepreneurship competence among university students in Indonesia. Similarly, Sharma et al. (2025) also further extended the TPB model with four personality factors (proactiveness, empathy, emotional intelligence, and risk-taking) in Generation Z students in India. Although the importance of EK and PUS on entrepreneurial intention has been acknowledged in past research. However, their direct influence on the SEI in the extended TPB model is relatively limited to be discovered. Moreover, the evidence of the moderation role of prior experiences is also deficient, especially on the direct influence of the extended TPB framework on SEI. Therefore, these research gaps are required to be investigated further to offer solid evidence.

The study is motivated by the above research gaps and intends to achieve two research objectives: (1) to explore the relationship of the proposed predictors on the students' SEI, and (2) to examine the moderating effect of the prior experiences on the proposed relationships. An extended TPB model has been developed in the study with two additional factors, namely EK and PUS, as the extended model might offer greater explanatory power on the SEI by capturing the exclusive features of SEI that are not considered in the TPB model. Besides, due to the inconclusive evidence on the effect of five predictors on entrepreneurial intentions, the prior experiences were further added as a moderator in the research framework. By addressing the aforementioned research gaps, the study is projected to offer significant contributions to the existing knowledge as the new insights of the proposed relationships in proved in the study, together with the moderation effect of prior experiences. Moreover, this

study offers actionable significance across multiple key stakeholders. For example, university management and educators could benefit from the study by understanding how university support and specialised entrepreneurial knowledge can be combined with prior experience to maximise student engagement and venture incubation. Besides, the study further provides empirical backing for government and policymakers to formulate their national framework, in guiding targeted allocation of grants, mentorship and policy incentives to youth-led social initiatives. Lastly, society and marginalised communities could benefit as well, whereas the study's findings could further improve the students' intention to become social entrepreneurs and further assist the vulnerable populations to gain better access to localised support, job creation, and sustainable community solutions.

Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

Theory of Planned Behaviour

As developed by Ajzen (1985), TPB is a theoretical framework that is widely used in describing human behaviour in different settings. The framework consists of three elements, which are attitudes (ATT), subjective norms (SN), and perceived behavioural control (PBC). The TPB postulates that the behavioural intention to take part in a certain behaviour is explained by these three elements, whereas a person tends to take part in a behaviour if they possess favourable ATT and are influenced by people in their surroundings, and also when they believe that they can take part in it (Ajzen, 1985). The framework has been utilised in understanding different behaviours in past evidence, and it showed that it is adequate to describe these behaviours (e.g., Lee et al., 2024; Ling et al., 2023; Ling et al., 2024). However, other factors have to be included in the TPB framework as the initial TPB was only developed for general behaviour without taking into consideration the specific features of the study (Lee et al., 2024; Ling et al., 2023). Therefore, EK and PUS were also proposed as the two additional factors in capturing the unique context of the study. Besides, prior experiences are also added to the proposed framework in addressing the inclusive findings of the past evidence, and Figure 1 shows the proposed framework of the study.

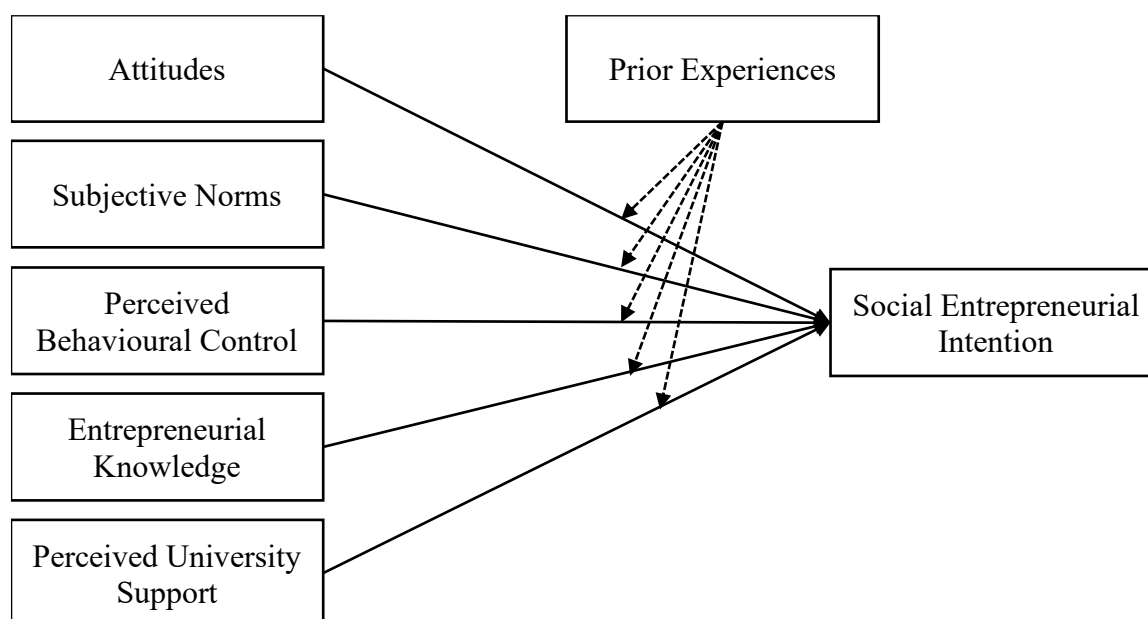


Figure 1: Proposed Framework

Attitudes on Social Entrepreneurial Intention

The personal feelings of an individual towards the behaviour have been defined as ATT (Ajzen, 1991). The individual might have different feelings about a behaviour, and this feeling is important to determine their subsequent behaviour. Individuals tend to engage in a behaviour when they possess favourable ATT on it (Lee et al., 2024). This is in line with Lopez et al. (2021), where the individual tends to take part in a behaviour if they perceive that the outcome of the behaviour is positive. With that, ATT is expected to have a substantial impact on the students' SEI as students' intention to become social entrepreneurs is projected to be high if they believe that the outcome of engaging in social entrepreneurship is positive. The substantial role of the ATT on entrepreneurial intention is evidenced by past research (e.g., Cela et al., 2024; Lopez et al., 2021; Vasileiou et al., 2023). For example, Mgueraman and Abboubi (2024) showed that the SEI of university students is positively affected by ATT. Sharma et al. (2024) also found that sustainable entrepreneurship intentions in India are influenced by ATT. Likewise, the SEI of Generation Z was also found to be significantly impacted by ATT. With that, the study postulates:

H1: SEI is positively related by ATT.

Subjective Norms on Social Entrepreneurial Intention

Practically, the opinion of the people's surroundings might significantly affect the decision of the individual in performing a behaviour, and this refers to the SN (Ajzen, 1991). SN is defined as the pressure from people in social circles, such as parents, friends, and others, which will influence the behaviour of an individual (Ling et al., 2024). As Malaysia is perceived as a collectivist culture, it is expected that the behaviour of an individual will be impacted by other people. With that, it is further suggested that students tend to have a greater level of SEI when the people in their surroundings encourage them to take part in it, and this supposition is remarked in the empirical studies (e.g., Abu Shriha et al., 2025; Duong et al., 2024; Nasri, 2024). For instance, Tiwari et al. (2017) concluded that the SEI of engineering students in India is impacted by the SN. Hendriana et al. (2025) also found that the SEI among students in Indonesia is positively affected by SN. Likewise, the positive influence of the SN on the SEI of Generation Z is also documented by Sharma et al. (2025). Therefore, this study proposed that:

H2: SEI is positively related by SN.

Perceived Behavioural Control on Social Entrepreneurial Intention

PBC is defined as the perception of a person about the difficulty level involved in a behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). Participating in behaviour usually requires a certain level of effort and sometimes involves monetary contributions as well. Therefore, the behaviour of an individual is projected to be impacted by the PBC. If performing a behaviour requires minimal effort and costs, it tends to encourage individuals to take part in it (Lee et al., 2024). With that, the students are anticipated to have a greater tendency to SEI when they believe that they can participate in it and require less effort and costs. Previous evidence has widely recognised the crucial role of PBC on entrepreneurial intentions (e.g., Abu Shriha et al., 2025; Sharma et al., 2025; Tiwari et al., 2017). The substantial role of PBC on the SEI of college students is concluded in the study of Sharma et al. (2024). Hendriana et al. (2025) also remarked on the important influence of PBC on the students' SEI in Indonesia. Likewise, a similar finding of PBC on the students' SEI in Morocco was also concluded by Mgueraman and Abboudi (2024). Accordingly, this study hypothesised that:

H2: SEI is positively related by PBC.

Entrepreneurial Knowledge on Social Entrepreneurial Intention

EK is defined as the individual's knowledge and awareness level regarding starting and handling a new business (Farani et al., 2017). It also refers to the awareness and understanding level of the individuals related to the chances, challenges, and requirements for entrepreneurship (Abu Shriha et al., 2024). As remarked by Mohd Noor et al. (2024), possessing sufficient qualities and skills is necessary for successful entrepreneurs to support them in managing their entrepreneurial activities. Therefore, EK played a vital role in affecting individuals to participate in entrepreneurship, and the substantial effect of EK on entrepreneurship intentions has been remarked on in past studies. For instance, Tee et al. (2023) concluded that green entrepreneurial intention is positively impacted by the green EK. Likewise, Mohd Noor et al. (2024) also concluded that EK has a substantial effect on e-commerce ventures in Malaysia. Besides, the significant role of EK on e-entrepreneurial intentions was also revealed by Abu Shriha et al. (2025). The impact of EK on SEI among university students requires further study, and the study proposed that:

H4: SEI is positively related by EK.

Perceived University Support on Social Entrepreneurial Intention

University support is defined as the support and assistance effort offered by the university to facilitate their behaviours (Lee et al., 2024). Based on this tone, PUS could refer to the perceptions of the students regarding the support that they obtained from their university for their behaviour (Awal et al., 2023). The supporting initiatives and efforts from the institutional agencies (like government and universities) could range from different perspectives, such as laws and regulations, facilities and infrastructures, and the like, which will affect individuals in performing some behaviour (Ling et al., 2024). In this study, the university is expected to play a vital role in affecting their students' behaviour. As remarked by Sidratulmunthah et al. (2018), the university environment has a vital impact on students' entrepreneurial intentions. Similarly, Mustafa et al. (2016) also noted that the university might offer several supportive efforts for their students, such as equipping them with sufficient knowledge, skills or techniques that are necessary for entrepreneurship. Empirically, the significant role of university supporting efforts for students' entrepreneurship has been acknowledged (i.e., Pergelova et al., 2023; Shi et al., 2020). Subsequently, the study suggests:

H5: SEI is positively related by PUS.

Prior Experiences as Moderator

As social entrepreneurship requires sufficient knowledge and experience to practice it, the prior experience in social problems of the individuals is expected to be important in establishing their SEI. As defined by Hockerts (2017), the prior experience could be referred to as the real experience obtained through working with social entities. Besides, it might also refer to the experience that individuals gain by handling social issues, and this experience is expected to influence their subsequent behaviour as they are relatively more understanding and know how to handle these social issues (Aloulou & Algarni, 2022). The substantial effect of prior experiences on entrepreneurial intentions has been widely documented in past research (e.g., Aloulou & Algarni, 2022; Sousa-Filho et al., 2020; Ukil et al., 2023). This signified that the individual's SEI is likely to be greater if they possess experience with social problems. In this study, prior experience is proposed as the moderator rather than the predictor of the SEI, as the empirical evidence in previous research still remarked on the questionable findings

regarding the impact of the proposed predictors on the SEI. For example, the insignificant role of ATT on entrepreneurial intention is still revealed in the study of Nasri (2024), although most studies have found a substantial role in different studies. Likewise, SN has insignificantly affected entrepreneurial intention in some of the past research (e.g., Cela et al., 2024; Mgueraman & Abboubi, 2024; Sharma et al., 2024; Vasileiou et al., 2023). The insignificant influence of PBC on entrepreneurial intention was also concluded in studies such as Alkhalaf et al. (2022) and Nasri et al. (2024), which indicated the questionable findings still reported in the literature. Besides, the inconsistent findings on the EK and PUS also further inspired this study to include prior experience as a moderator to investigate their effect on the proposed relationships. Farani et al. (2017) and Kaur and Chawla (2024) found that entrepreneurial intention is insignificantly impacted by EK, while the non-significant effect of the university support was also concluded by Pusparini et al. (2025) and Ukil et al. (2023). Accordingly, the study suggests that:

- H6: Prior experiences positively moderated the influence of ATT on SEI.
- H7: Prior experiences positively moderated the influence of SN on SEI.
- H8: Prior experiences positively moderated the influence of PBC on SEI.
- H9: Prior experiences positively moderated the influence of EK on SEI.
- H10: Prior experiences positively moderated the influence of PUS on SEI.

Research Methodology

The study primarily focused on university students in Malaysia. Therefore, purposive sampling has been used to collect the responses from the population. The respondents had to meet the two screening criteria, which are: (1) they must be Malaysian, and (2) they must be currently studying at any university in Malaysia. In this study, 216 valid responses were gathered, and this number of respondents is adequate for the study as it exceeds the required sample size of 178 that was calculated in the power analysis.

The quantitative responses from the respondents have been collected through a self-administered survey, and it was developed using the electronic platform of Google Forms. The enumerator recruited has shared the invitation message with the link to the electronic survey to the targeted population through several social media platforms. This study has adopted 31 validated items from past research and slightly modified them to reflect the study context. These studies include Alkhalaf et al. (2022), Aloulou et al. (2024), Duong (2023), Duong (2024), Hockerts (2017), and Lopez et al. (2021). These items were prepared in English and further translated into the Malay language to prevent any misunderstanding. The participating respondents were requested to assess the items based on the seven-point Likert scale, from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7).

The collected responses were then analysed through the partial least squares-structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) to validate the proposed hypotheses. As determined by Mardia's normality test, the collected responses of the study are not normally distributed, as the kurtosis coefficient (77.5342) exceeded 20 (Kline, 2011). With that, PLS-SEM is the suitable analytic technique for the study, as the bootstrapping procedures in PLS-SEM are suitable for the non-normally distributed data (Hair et al., 2019).

Data Analysis and Results

Table 1 presents the background information of the respondents and shows that the female was dominated the study, compared to males. Besides, almost 60% of the students were aged between 22 and 24 years old. Most of the students were studying in public universities and were enrolling in social science and humanities programmes.

Table 1

Background Information of Respondents

Categories	Sub-Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	28	12.96
	Female	188	87.04
Age Ranges	18 – 21 Years Old	61	28.24
	22 – 24 Years Old	127	58.80
	25 – 27 Years Old	22	10.19
	28 – 30 Years Old	6	2.78
Types of Universities	Public Universities	135	62.50
	Private Universities	81	37.50
Education Stream	Science and Technology	62	28.70
	Social Science and Humanities	154	71.30

As shown in Table 2, the results of outer loading and average variance extracted (AVE) indicated that convergent validity tests were confirmed in the study, as all items (except for ATT1) have loading values exceeding 0.708 (Hair et al., 2017), and also all constructs have AVE values that are greater than 0.5000 (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). All constructs have a composite reliability (CR) higher than 0.7000, indicating that the internal consistency is also confirmed (Gefen et al., 2000). Besides, heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) values in Table 3 showed that discriminant validity was also attained, as all HTMT values were lower than 0.90 (Gold et al., 2001). In addition, the variance inflation factors (VIF) values in Table 2 further signified that the common method bias (CMB) is absent from the study, as all VIF values were not greater than 5 (Hair et al., 2017).

Table 2

Validity tests, Reliability Test and Common Method Bias

Constructs	Items	Loading	AVE	CR	VIF
Attitudes	ATT2	0.8759	0.7563	0.9254	2.2930
	ATT3	0.8921			
	ATT4	0.8470			
	ATT5	0.8630			
Subjective Norms	SN1	0.9019	0.7859	0.9362	2.0720
	SN2	0.9048			
	SN3	0.8592			
	SN4	0.8793			
Perceived Behavioural Control	PBC1	0.8129	0.7395	0.9445	4.2580
	PBC2	0.8847			
	PBC3	0.8820			
	PBC4	0.8500			
	PBC5	0.8349			
	PBC6	0.8920			

Entrepreneurial Knowledge	EK1	0.8274	0.7755	0.9118	2.9880
	EK2	0.9213			
	EK3	0.8906			
Perceived University Support	PUS1	0.8580	0.7791	0.9136	1.6810
	PUS2	0.8968			
	PUS3	0.8928			
Prior Experience	PE1	0.8412	0.7217	0.8861	1.7480
	PE2	0.8445			
	PE3	0.8627			
Social Entrepreneurial Intention	SEI1	0.7184	0.7464	0.9535	4.2660
	SEI2	0.8359			
	SEI3	0.8795			
	SEI4	0.9095			
	SEI5	0.9228			
	SEI6	0.8944			
	SEI7	0.8704			

Table 3

Discriminant validity test using HTMT

	ATT	SN	PBC	EK	PUS	PE	SEI
ATT							
SN	0.6836						
PBC	0.7233	0.6882					
EK	0.6098	0.5584	0.8787				
PUS	0.5776	0.5226	0.6236	0.6480			
PE	0.5631	0.5385	0.7078	0.6660	0.4471		
SEI	0.7695	0.7301	0.8579	0.8103	0.6710	0.6959	

Table 4 and Figure 2 provide the results of the hypothesis testing, and it shows that all five proposed direct hypotheses are supported. Specifically, ATT ($\beta = 0.1950$), SN ($\beta = 0.1945$), PBC ($\beta = 0.2850$), EK ($\beta = 0.1462$), and PUS ($\beta = 0.1473$) have a positively significant impact on the student's SEI, supporting H1, H2, H3, H4, and H5. PBC has the greatest influence, followed by ATT and SN, ranked as second and third. Besides, the moderation analysis further showed that prior experiences significantly moderated the influence of PUS on SEI ($\beta = 0.0875$). As shown in Figure 3, the impacts of PUS on SEI have been enhanced if the PUS is higher. Surprisingly, although the influence of EK on SEI is also significantly moderated by prior experiences, the negative direction is not aligned with the hypothesis, and it has to be rejected.

Besides, the value of R^2 of 0.7820 showed that 78.20% of the variance in SEI was explained by all proposed predictors. Similarly, the predictive ability of the endogenous variables has again been proved with the Q^2 value of 0.5731, which is higher than zero (Hair et al., 2017). According to Cohen (1988), all five predictors together with the interaction variable of PUS and prior experiences have a small effect size on SEI as the f^2 value is between 0.02 and 0.15.

Table 4

Results of Hypotheses Testing

Hypo	Path	Coeff.	Std. Dev.	T-stat.	P-value	BCI-LL	BCI-UL	f2	Remark
H1	ATT -> SEI	0.195	0.079	2.453	0.007	0.068	0.327	0.068	Supported
H2	SN -> SEI	0.194	0.054	3.573	0.000	0.110	0.289	0.073	Supported
H3	PBC -> SEI	0.285	0.074	3.820	0.000	0.168	0.413	0.092	Supported
H4	EK -> SEI	0.146	0.060	2.433	0.007	0.048	0.243	0.031	Supported
H5	PUS -> SEI	0.147	0.049	2.964	0.001	0.066	0.231	0.052	Supported
H6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Not Supported
H7	PE*AT -> SEI	0.021	0.062	0.345	0.364	0.119	0.085	0.000	Supported
H8	PE*SN -> SEI	0.053	0.042	1.267	0.102	0.018	0.118	0.008	Supported
H9	PE*PUS -> SEI	0.087	0.046	1.898	0.028	0.018	0.170	0.019	Supported
H10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Not Supported
	PE*EK -> SEI	0.149	0.062	2.384	0.008	0.257	0.051	0.029	Supported

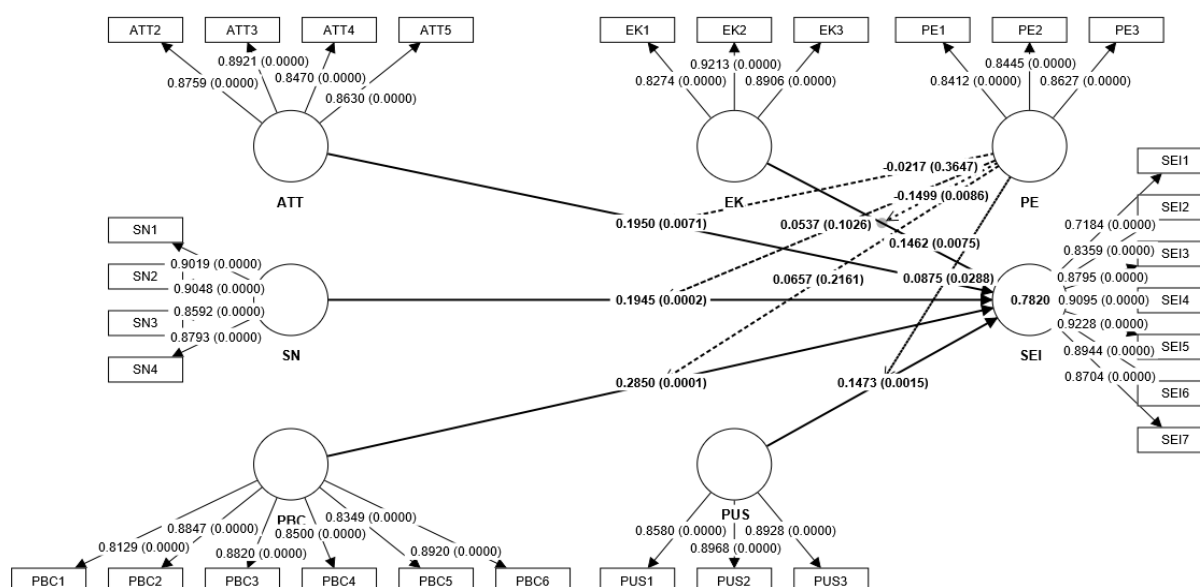


Figure 2: Output Figures of the Proposed framework with coefficient and p-value

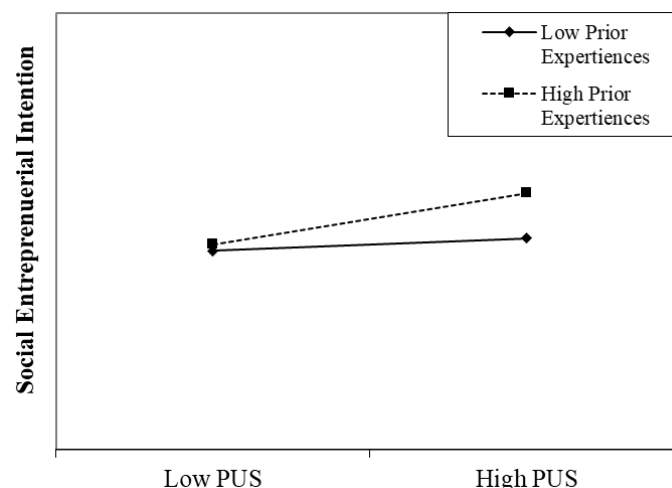


Figure 3: Interaction plot of prior experiences on PUS and SEI

Discussions

The study intends to explore the factors that affect the SEI of university students. An extended TPB model has been developed, and the findings revealed significant roles of all five predictors on the students' SEI. Besides, the prior experiences were also found to significantly enhance the effect of PUS on SEI.

The study first revealed that ATT possess a positive influence on SEI, and this finding is consistent with Lopez et al. (2021), Sharma et al. (2024), and Vasileiou et al. (2023). This shows that university students have a greater tendency toward social entrepreneurship if they have favourable feelings toward social entrepreneurship. If students tend to have positive feelings about social enterprises if they believe that social enterprises could address social issues, this feeling will encourage them to become social entrepreneurs.

The positive significant role of SN on SEI was also remarked on in this study, and this indicated that the influence from others in the students' social network tends to affect their intention to become social entrepreneurs. The students have a greater likelihood of becoming social entrepreneurs if people in their surroundings encourage them to do so. This finding is consistent with the studies of Abu Shriha et al. (2025), Hendriana et al. (2025), and Sharma et al. (2025).

A significant influence of PBC on the SEI was also identified in the study, and this is paralleled with the findings of Mgueraman and Abboudi (2024), Sharma et al. (2025), and Tiwari et al. (2017). University students have higher intentions in social entrepreneurship when they believe that they can do so. This showed that university students have a greater intention to take part in social enterprise if it requires minimal effort and costs.

The current study also demonstrated that EK is positively significant with SEI, and this signified that the level of entrepreneurial knowledge is crucial in impacting the student's SEI. The significant influence of EK on SEI is consistent with Abu Shriha et al. (2025), Mohd Noor et al. (2024), and Tee et al. (2023), who also found the important role of EK on entrepreneurial intentions.

The positive effect between PUS and SEI was also verified, and this is followed by the findings of Pergelova et al. (2023) and Shi et al. (2020) in other research contexts. The supporting efforts from the university are crucial in influencing the student's SEI, as students tend to have greater SEI if they believe that the university provides a lot of supporting efforts for them.

The study further discovered the significant moderating effect of prior experiences on the relationship between PUS and SEI. This significant finding presents new evidence as the moderation role of prior experiences in entrepreneurial intention is relatively limited. This showed that with past experiences with social problems, the effect of PUS on SEI is likely to be higher. With that, it signified that prior experiences in social issues played an essential role in affecting social entrepreneurship. Unexpectedly, prior experiences also present a significant moderating effect on the influence of EK on SEI, but in the opposite direction. This surprising result might be due to the repulsion effect between EK and prior experiences, whereas the prior experiences in social issues tend to weaken the initial effect of EK on SEI. With that, the students only have to focus on either the EK or prior experiences in social issues, as both cannot supplement each other.

Implications

The study offers substantial contributions to the extended knowledge of entrepreneurial intentions as the study successfully explored the SEI of university students and magnificently addressed the research gaps by utilising an extended TPB model. Therefore, the study further provides a deeper understanding of the subject areas. The extended TPB model with EK and PUS, together with the moderator of prior experiences, showed that all proposed predictors could explain almost 78% of the variance in the SEI. This implied that there is a need to extend the TPB model with some factors to capture the unique features of the study contexts, rather than adopt the initial model directly. Thus, some additional factors such as EK, PUS, and prior experiences, which are crucial to the SEI, should be included to explain the unique study contexts that are not considered in the TPB model. As proved in the study, both EK and PUS had a substantial effect in determining students' SEI. These findings signified that both knowledge level, as well as the supporting initiatives and efforts from the university, are crucial in cultivating the students' SEI. In addition, the study further proves that the students' prior experiences with social issues are also important in determining the students' SEI. The effect of the PUS on the SEI tends to be higher if the students have experiences with social issues. This offers new insights into the literature regarding the moderation effect of prior experiences on SEI. However, the moderation effect of prior experiences has to be investigated further, as the adverse effect would also be found on the effect of EK on SEI, whereas both experiences in social issues and knowledge in entrepreneurs look like they cannot supplement each other; therefore, a revulsion effect between EK and prior experiences was found.

Besides, the study further provides some practical insights that are useful for stakeholders in nurturing the students' SEI. As discovered in the study, all five predictors (ATT, SN, PBC, EK, and PUS) are substantial in promoting the students' SEI. Therefore, stakeholders such as government agencies such as "*Kementerian Pembangunan Usahawan and Koperasi*", "*Institut Keusahawan Negara*", SME Corporation Malaysia, TEKUN Nasional, "*Kementerian Belia dan Sukan*", university management, and the like could utilise the findings of the study in formulating and developing some strategies and policies in establishing a more sustainable

ecosystem for social entrepreneurship in Malaysia. For instance, the stakeholders have to assist the university students to develop a favourable and positive ATT toward social entrepreneurship. With that, the objectives and benefits of the social enterprises in assisting the governments to address social issues have to be emphasised, so that the students will understand the purpose of the social enterprises. Besides, entrepreneurial development programmes such as training, workshops, and coaching events have to be widely and frequently organised to equip the public with some necessary knowledge and skills, besides promoting their interest in entrepreneurship. As proved in the study, the pressures of the people in the social context are likely to influence the students' SEI. Therefore, it is expected that the students might have favourable ATT toward social entrepreneurs and also that the people surrounding them have a greater understanding of social entrepreneurs through these programmes. In addition, the education programmes are also projected to enrich the students' understanding and enhance their skills and abilities in entrepreneurship, and this would further enhance their intention to become social entrepreneurs.

Moreover, the stakeholders, such as entrepreneurship education and training providers, have to enhance the contents of the education syllabus or training, as it is crucial in developing the students' knowledge level of entrepreneurship. Some latest knowledge and technologies have to be integrated into entrepreneurship education and training as it could further cultivate the students' intention to become entrepreneurs when they possess a greater level of knowledge on entrepreneurship. Furthermore, the university management has to reshape its role in cultivating more entrepreneurs. Besides providing education and training, the university also has to be a platform that might offer several supporting efforts for students to become entrepreneurs, such as acting as a coach for new start-ups, as an agency that offers grants or financial assistance, providing advice and suggestions for students' entrepreneurs to stabilise or expand their ventures and the like. The more supporting efforts or initiatives offered by the university, the more it will further encourage students to be involved in social entrepreneurship. Lastly, prior experiences in social issues are also vital in promoting SEI, as the moderation effect was found in the relationship between PUS and SEI. This signified that the stakeholders have to expose the students to the social issues or problems that are currently happening surrounding them, as this might further strengthen their understanding of the social issues and subsequently let them generate better solutions to handle these social problems. However, the exposure to social problems should be minimised if the students have a greater knowledge level of entrepreneurship, as this might further dampen the students' SEI when students have a greater level of knowledge and experience in social issues.

Conclusions

The study resolved the research gaps by exploring the factors that significantly affect university students' intention to become social entrepreneurs. By considering the research gaps in the literature, the TPB model has been expanded by adding EK and PUS as additional predictors of the SEI, while prior experiences in social issues were also proposed to be a moderator on the proposed relationships, due to the inconclusive findings in past research. The study collected 216 responses from university students in Malaysia through purposive sampling, and the results of the PLS-SEM further showed that the students' intention to become social entrepreneurs is significantly affected by ATT, SN, PBC, EK, and PUS. Besides, PBC was the most influential factor, followed by ATT and SN, while EK and PUS were the least important factors. Besides, prior experiences have significantly strengthened the effect of

PUS on SEI, and the influence of PUS on SEI tends to be higher if the students possess a high level of prior experience in social issues. The study is expected to provide some significant implications in the existing knowledge as new insights into the SEI were offered in the study, while the findings could be useful reference sources for stakeholders in coming up with strategies and policies for nurturing university students to become social entrepreneurs.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Although numerous significant implications were provided in the study. However, some limitations have to be overcome in upcoming research. Firstly, the study only gathered primary data from university students in a single country, and this might limit the generalizability of the study. University students in other nations might possess some other characteristics that are not presented in university students in Malaysia, and this would lead to the findings of the study not being generalised to other study contexts. Besides, only the direct effect of the predictors on the outcome variable was considered in the study, and this might not be appropriate in explaining the human decision-making processes, as a complicated process is involved in making a decision. Therefore, the indirect effect through a mediator(s), such as entrepreneurship alertness, entrepreneurial self-efficacy, entrepreneurial ambition, and the like, has to be examined in the upcoming studies. Moreover, the study has not considered the heterogeneity of the respondents, as all respondents are expected to be homogeneous in the study. This might affect the robustness of the study as the sub-groups within the respondents might present different perspectives on the subject domains. With that, future research is advised to consider the diverse perspectives of the sub-groups in the respondents, and the results of these sub-groups might be compared through multigroup analysis to produce more robust and deeper findings on the subject areas.

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