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# Entrepreneurial Intention among University Students in Malaysia

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#### **Abstract**

As an immediate precursor to entrepreneurship and a crucial factor in understanding how future regional economic development in emerging nations will be explained, the aspiration to become an entrepreneur is highly significant. Academics are becoming more and more interested in the entrepreneurial intention of university students from developing nations. Entrepreneurial intention is important study among university students because it empowers them to think proactively, take risks, and contribute to innovation, economic growth, and societal development in the entrepreneurial landscape. Thus, this study looks at the predictors that influence students' intentions to start their own businesses. This study involved a total of 260 students at one selected public university. The research adopted a quantitative methodology, utilising standardised questionnaires that are self-administered to gather data. Version 26.0 of the SPSS programme was used to analyse the data that had been gathered, incorporating statistical methods such as multiple linear regression and Pearson correlation. The results showed that there was a significant relationship between personal attitude, subjective norms, perceive behavior control and entrepreneurial intention. This study has the potential to fortify entrepreneurship education initiatives in Malaysian universities by recommending the introduction and enhancement of courses, workshops, and experiential learning opportunities. These strategies aim to systematically cultivate entrepreneurial skills and foster entrepreneurial mindsets among the student population. Future study can explore how students perceive and engage with technology-driven entrepreneurship, including areas such as digital startups and innovation ecosystems.

**Keywords**: Entrepreneurial Intention, Personal Attitude, Subjective Norms, Perceive Behavior Control

#### Introduction

In Malaysia, the number of university graduates has been steadily increasing in recent years, placing more pressure on employment. A considerable number of university graduates face challenges in securing job offers after graduation, leading to concerns about the availability of satisfactory employment. The Malaysian government has been actively involved in

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promoting entrepreneurship among students through various initiatives and policy measures through the establishment of Entrepreneurship Action Plan-Higher Education Institutions (EAP-HEIs) 2021-2025. Recognizing the importance of fostering an entrepreneurial culture, the government has implemented programs aimed at encouraging students to explore and engage in entrepreneurial activities. Several key strategies have been adopted to support student entrepreneurship in Malaysia. These include the incorporation of entrepreneurship education into the academic curriculum, providing financial assistance and grants to aspiring student entrepreneurs, and establishing incubators and innovation hubs to nurture and support startup ventures. In an effort to address the issue of unemployment among university graduates, the government has actively promoted entrepreneurship among students through various favorable policy measures; however, the impact of these initiatives has been minimal.

Entrepreneurship has gained significant attention in recent years as a driver of economic growth and innovation (Gomes et al., 2023). The emergence of new ventures and start-ups has become a crucial component of many economies worldwide. Thus, in developing nations such as Malaysia, there is a concerted effort to promote student involvement in entrepreneurship, urging them to view it as a viable career path. It is generally accepted that undergraduates will be a major source of burgeoning entrepreneurship in the future. Consequently, understanding the factors that influence individuals' intention to become entrepreneurs has become a topic of great interest for researchers and policymakers alike. However, its cultivation among university students has gained significant attention in recent years (Jin, 2022).

University students, with their diverse backgrounds and fresh perspectives, are a potent source of innovative ideas and entrepreneurial ventures. Nevertheless, a substantial number of college students opt for entrepreneurship as a temporary escape from financial challenges, often without a deep appreciation for the true significance and value of entrepreneurial pursuits (Hao, 2021). Thus, utilising Ajzen's theory of planned behaviour (TPB) as our study framework, this study looks into what factors Malaysian university students consider to be entrepreneurial in goal.

#### **Literature Review**

Ajzen's (1991) model comprises three key elements that serve as precursors to the formation of intention. These elements include (1) personal attitude, reflecting the extent to which an individual harbors a positive or negative personal evaluation of becoming an entrepreneur; (2) subjective norms, which gauge the perceived social pressures emanating from family, friends, or significant others, influencing the decision to pursue or not pursue an entrepreneurial career (Ajzen, 1991); and (3) perceived behavioral control, encompassing the perception of situational competence that determines the perceived ease or difficulty associated with engaging in the desired behavior, such as becoming self-employed. Many research endeavors have utilized the theory of planned behavior (TPB) as the foundational framework to investigate the entrepreneurial intentions of business graduates, as evidenced in studies such as those conducted by (Farooq, 2018; Feola et al., 2019; Al Halbusi et al., 2023). The robustness of this approach has been substantiated by comprehensive meta-analyses conducted by (Zaremohzzabieh et al., 2019).

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# Personal Attitude and Entrepreneurial Intention

The relationship between personal attitude and entrepreneurial intention among university students has been a subject of extensive research in the entrepreneurship literature. Personal attitude, often considered a fundamental component of Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991), plays a crucial role in shaping individuals' intentions to pursue entrepreneurial endeavors. A person's positive or negative assessment of entrepreneurship as a career option is referred to as their personal attitude (Linan & Chen, 2009). Numerous studies have found a positive correlation between a favorable personal attitude toward entrepreneurship and higher entrepreneurial intention among university students. Students who perceive entrepreneurship positively are more likely to express an intention to pursue entrepreneurial activities (Adeel et al., 2023; Elnadi & Gheith, 2023). According to Hussain et al (2021), an individual's entrepreneurial aim is greatly influenced by their personal attitude. In the same vein, Ambad and Damit (2016) suggested that the greater the students' attitude towards the entrepreneurship, the greater the entrepreneurial intention is. Personal attitude in the study refers to the perception of the students on the advantages, satisfaction and attractiveness of entrepreneurship. Gonzalez-Serrano et al (2018) conducted a study in Spain and Lithuania, employing variables from the theory of planned behavior. Their findings revealed a significant impact of personal attitude on entrepreneurial intention, particularly among students in the sports sector in both Spain and Lithuania. In summary, a positive attitude among students is likely to enhance an individual's inclination to engage in entrepreneurship. Therefore, we hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 1: Personal attitude has a positive effect on entrepreneurial intention.

# Subjective Norms and Entrepreneurial Intention

The second determinant of perceived behavior is a social factor known as subjective norms (SN). Subjective norms involve the perceived social pressure influencing an individual to either undertake or abstain from a specific action. This pressure stems from people in the immediate environment who exert influence and apply pressure on the individual. The endorsement or disapproval typically stems from an individual's family, friends, and close associates within their social circle. This dynamic influences the individual's belief system, shaping their perception of whether entrepreneurship is a socially acceptable career choice (Azim & Islam, 2022). Furthermore, it governs the extent of motivation the person maintains to pursue this option. Given that students often rely on their families for financial support, they are inclined to align with the expectations of their family members, especially parents and close relatives. Given that students often rely on their families for financial support, they have a propensity to live up to the expectations of those in their family, especially parents and immediate relatives. Subjective norms, as a component of the Theory of Planned Behavior, delve into the perceived social forces that impact a person's decision to pursue entrepreneurship (Linan & Chen, 2009). The normative beliefs underpinning the subjective norm involve an individual's considerations regarding the perceived likelihood and significance of reactions from influential individuals or groups in response to their behavior. Therefore, based on the prevailing social context, an individual might perceive the surrounding environment as either supportive or unsupportive of entrepreneurial endeavors. In this alignment, the construct of subjective norms exerts its influence on shaping entrepreneurial intentions. Subjective norms emerged as a noteworthy factor influencing entrepreneurial intentions in the study conducted by Ozaralli and Rivenburgh (2016), encompassing students from both the United Vol. 13, No. 12, 2023, E-ISSN: 2222-6990 © 2023

States and Turkey. In the same vein, Pinazo-Dallenbach and Castelló-Sirvent (2023) reported that subjective norms is one of the precursor to entrepreneurial intention among Mexico university student. Subjective norms also emerged as a relevant predictor for commercial entrepreneurial intention in the German university student sample (Wach et al., 2023). Therefore, we hypothesize that

Hypothesis 2: Subjective norms have a significant effect on entrepreneurial intention Perceived Behavioral Control and Entrepreneurial Intention

In reference to perceived behavioral control, as outlined by Ajzen (1991), the perceived ease or difficulty of a task plays a pivotal role in influencing one's willingness to engage in it. Individuals are inclined to undertake a task if it seems relatively straightforward to accomplish, a phenomenon often described as the self-efficacy effect (Farooq et al., 2018). PBC is further described as a person's ideas of the elements that can either help or hinder the behavior's realisation (Ajzen, 2002; Urban & Chantson, 2017). This encompasses considerations such as the potential for intellectual growth, skill evaluations, the ability to overcome obstacles, and the capacity to successfully negotiate obstacles (Gieure et al., 2019). People who feel they have a lot of control over their conduct are more likely to persevere and put forth more effort because it confirms their determination to perform the required actions to reach their objectives. In essence, people often embrace behaviours that they feel they can manage and command (Gieure et al., 2019). Earlier research endeavors have consistently demonstrated a positive correlation between perceived behavioral control and entrepreneurial intention, as evidenced by studies conducted by (Al Halbusi et al., 2023; Lopes et al., 2022; Farooq et al., 2018). Hence, our hypothesis posits that

Hypothesis 3: Perceived behavioral control has a significant effect on Entrepreneurial Intention

#### **Conceptual Framework**

As previously indicated, the primary objective of this study was to explore the correlations among personal attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and entrepreneurial intention within the context of university students in Malaysia. (Figure 1).

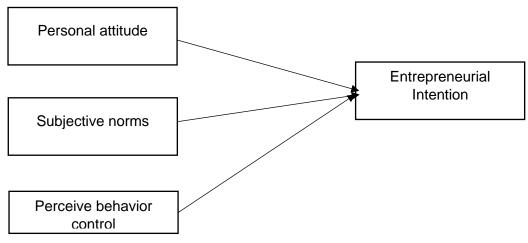


Figure 1: Research Framework

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# Methodology

# **Participants**

The study used a cross-sectional design with 260 Malaysian university students. The sample for this study was undergraduate students aged 18 years to 26 years old and above at Universiti Putra Malaysia. The sample size for this study was determined using the G Power technique. Respondents were selected through a randomization sampling technique facilitated by Microsoft Excel. Prior to data collection, participants provided informed consent, and approval to conduct the study was obtained from the participating institution. Data were gathered through an online platform, with questionnaires administered to respondents via email through the use of Google Forms.

#### Measures

The items and responses in this study were based on validated and established measures from previous research, with a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree (1)" to "strongly agree (5)." It modifies the six-item measure of entrepreneurial intention and the personal attitude (PA) scale (five items), the subjective norms scale (three items) and the perceived behavior control (six items) from Liñán and Chen (2009). The Cronbach alpha for entrepreneurial intention was 0.926, personal attitude (0.769), subjective norms (0.842) and perceived behavior control (0.881).

# **Data Analysis**

Statistical analysis for this study utilized SPSS software version 26.0. Descriptive statistics were employed to characterize the student sample. To assess the relationships between personal attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and entrepreneurial intention, Pearson's correlation coefficient was applied. Additionally, an analysis of multiple linear regression was performed to assess the influence of independent variables on the dependent variable, which is the intention to pursue entrepreneurship.

# **Demographic Profile**

The study encompassed a sample of 260 university students falling within the age range of 22 to 26 years. Notably, the majority of respondents (49.3%) fell into the 22 - 23 age bracket. Gender distribution indicated a higher representation of female students (59.6%) compared to male students (40.4%). In terms of ethnicity, the majority identified as Malay (87%), followed by Chinese (7.7%) and Indian (3.2%). Participants represented various academic years, with 18.8% in their third year and the highest proportion (26.9%) comprising first-year students.

#### **Results**

# **Coefficient Correlation**

The examination of the associations between personal attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and entrepreneurial intention was conducted through the application of the Pearson product-moment correlation, as illustrated in Table 1.

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Table 1
Coefficient correlations among personal attitude, subjective norms, perceive behavior control and entrepreneurial intention.

Variable	r	Sig.
Personal attitude and entrepreneurial intention	0.519**	0.000
Subjective norms and entrepreneurial intention	0.338**	0.001
Perceive behavior control and entrepreneurial	0.496**	0.001
intention		

<sup>\*\*</sup> Significant at p < 0.001 level

The outcomes of the Pearson product-moment correlation analysis, as presented in Table 2, revealed a positive correlation between personal attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and entrepreneurial intention. The higher relationship value was between personal attitude and entrepreneurial intention (r=0.519, p<0.001) followed by perceive behavior control towards entrepreneurial intention (r=0.496, p<0.001). Lastly subjective norms towards entrepreneurial intention (r=0.338, p<0.001).

# Regression Analysis on personal attitude, subjective norms, perceive behavior control and entrepreneurial intention

The outcomes of the regression analysis, presented in Table 2, illuminate the results of testing the hypotheses related to the primary effects of personal attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and entrepreneurial intention within the university student population in Malaysia. In assessing the fit of the multiple linear regression model with the research data, it was observed that personal attitude significantly explained a substantial portion of the variance in entrepreneurial intention among university students in Malaysia (F= 159.161, p < 0.000;  $\beta$  = 0.702, p= 0.001). Perceived behavior control came next ( $\beta$  = 0.106, p= 0.001). Therefore, personal attitude and perceived behavioral control emerged as the primary contributors, making a more substantial and distinct impact in elucidating the variation in entrepreneurial intention. In contrast, the influence of subjective norms was found to no longer be statistically significant (p= 0.094). The coefficient of determination,  $R^2$  = 0.647, signified that 64% of the variability in entrepreneurial intention among university students in Malaysia could be accounted for by the combined influence of personal attitude and perceived behavioral control.

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Table 2
Multiple regression analysis of personal attitude, subjective norms, perceive behavior control and entrepreneurial intention

Variable	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient		Sin (n)
	В	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig. (p)
Constant	1.757	0.391		4.494	0.000
Personal attitude	1.282	0.090	0.702	14.301	0.000
Subjective norms	0.152	0.090	0.075	1.682	0.094
Perceive behavior control	0.277	0.113	0.106	2.460	0.015

#### Discussion

The purpose of this study was to ascertain the associations between Malaysian university students' perceived behaviour control, personal attitude, subjective norms, and entrepreneurial intention. Three key hypotheses that determine entrepreneurial intention were developed into an analytical framework. Furthermore, three predictors of entrepreneurial intention were identified through data analysis, two of which were significant at the 0.01 level.

The initial hypothesis posits a significant positive impact of personal attitudes on entrepreneurial intention among university students in Malaysia. This significant revelation warrants in-depth investigation and clarification. The outcomes of the study substantiate the acceptance of this hypothesis at a statistically significant level. This implies that personal attitudes serve as a meaningful predictor of entrepreneurial intention, indicating a strong association between the favorable evaluation of entrepreneurship and the likelihood of individuals intending to engage in entrepreneurial activities. This optimistic assessment plays a crucial role in shaping intentions as students become more inclined to contemplate and dedicate themselves to entrepreneurial pursuits. These observations align with a substantial body of prior empirical research, including studies by Bağış et al (2023); Al-Mamary et al (2020); Gonzalez-Serrano et al (2018), which reaffirm the association between a positive personal attitude and the inclination of individuals to consider and commit to entrepreneurial endeavors.

Furthermore, the findings from the current research study reveal a notable positive influence of subjective norms on entrepreneurial intention among university students in Malaysia. Thus, hypothesis 2 is supported. Positive subjective norms suggest that these social groups approve of entrepreneurial endeavors, shaping students' perception that entrepreneurship is socially acceptable and valued. Subjective norms may have a lasting impact on entrepreneurial intentions over time. As students continue to receive social cues and feedback, the cumulative influence of subjective norms can shape and reinforce their

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entrepreneurial intentions. This result aligns with other research that emphasises the significance of subjective norms in boosting Malaysian university students' intention to start their own business (Al-Halbusi et al., 2023; Pinazo-Dallenbach & Castelló-Sirvent, 2023).

Next, the present research study results show that perceived behaviour control shows a significant positive impact on entrepreneurial intention among university students in Malaysia. Higher levels of perceived control enhance self-efficacy and confidence, making students more inclined to believe in their capability to undertake entrepreneurial activities. If students believe that the process is manageable and within their control, it strengthens their entrepreneurial intentions. This finding is consisted with previous study (Bağış et al., 2023; Al-Mamary et al., 2020; Gonzalez-Serrano et al., 2018).

# **Limitations, Implications and Future Recommendations**

This study used a self-administered questionnaire to gather data, participant memory and reporting bias may have existed. Furthermore, the study's cross-sectional nature limits the ability to establish causality between the variables, as it captures a snapshot at a single point in time rather than tracking changes over an extended period. Students from one particular public university in Malaysia made up the study's sample; in future research, the study can examine how factors such as gender, ethnicity, and socio-economic background intersect with entrepreneurial intention. Understand how diverse student populations in Malaysia perceive and engage with entrepreneurship. Next, future study also can examine the role of technology and innovation in shaping entrepreneurial intentions. Explore how students perceive and engage with technology-driven entrepreneurship, including areas such as digital startups and innovation ecosystems. The current study exclusively employs a quantitative research design, emphasizing numerical data and statistical analyses. However, considering that entrepreneurial intention is inherently a social phenomenon shaped by subjective interpretations, there is a compelling argument for incorporating qualitative data through indepth interviews. This approach is anticipated to yield a more profound comprehension of the phenomenon, unraveling nuanced aspects that quantitative data may not capture fully. Consequently, for future research endeavors, adopting a mixed-methods research design, which integrates both quantitative and qualitative approaches, is suggested. This methodological blend can offer a comprehensive and enriched exploration of entrepreneurial intention by combining statistical insights with the depth and context provided by qualitative narratives obtained through interviews. The findings of this study offer valuable insights that can aid universities and organizations in comprehending the determinants of entrepreneurial intention, particularly among student populations.

#### **Conflict of Interest**

The authors declare that they have no competing interest in conducting this study.

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