

# The Relationship between Empathy and Social Support with Social Entrepreneurial Intention (SEI) among Public University Students

Radin Siti Aishah Radin A Rahman, Sheerad Sahid

Faculty of Education, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia

Email: radin@ukm.edu.my

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## Abstract

Various efforts and policies have been designed to meet the Malaysian government's desire to become an entrepreneurial nation by the year 2030. The Malaysia Social Entrepreneurship Blueprint 2030 (SEMy2030) is one of the latest action plans that focuses on providing a new national direction to raise awareness and cultivate the concept of social entrepreneurship, with the aim of generating a positive societal and economic impact. There is still a lack of studies done in exploring the involvement of Malaysian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) graduates in social entrepreneurship, particularly concerning empathy and social support. Hence, a survey research design that involved a total of 179 students who are or were active members of social entrepreneurship clubs under the ENACTUS Malaysia Foundation was employed. The data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, facilitated by the use of the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software. The findings showed that social entrepreneurial intention and empathy were at moderate levels, while social support was at a high level. Meanwhile, there was a significantly weak relationship between empathy and social entrepreneurial intention. Apart from that, there was a significant, moderate relationship between social support and social entrepreneurial intention. It is hoped that the awareness of the young generation can increase social entrepreneurship activities in Malaysia in a positive direction at the global level.

**Keywords:** Social Entrepreneurial Intention, Empathy, Social Support, Public University Students, SEMy2030

## Introduction

Social entrepreneurship is an entrepreneurial activity that focuses on achieving positive social impact through business and entrepreneurial projects, and has indirectly opened up great opportunities and benefits for society. The concept of social entrepreneurship has grown rapidly in all public and private sectors, causing interest in social entrepreneurship to continue to grow (Nicholls, 2008) into a global phenomenon that has an impact on society and the economy of a country (Robinson et al., 2009).

This underscores Malaysia's aspiration to become an entrepreneurial country by the year 2030 (Ling et al., 2022). Accordingly, Malaysia has introduced the Malaysian Social Entrepreneurship Action Plan 2030, which focuses on providing a new national direction in line with the aspirations, strategies, and initiatives set by the National Entrepreneurship Policy 2030 (NEP2030), the 12th Malaysia Plan (Twelfth Plan), and the Shared Prosperity Vision 2030 (SPV2030). The goal is to increase awareness, outreach, and culture of social entrepreneurship. This concept aims to be viable and have a positive impact on improving community life (Ministry of Entrepreneur Development and Cooperatives, 2022). Engaging the younger generations, especially students, can foster collaboration among stakeholders. This collaboration involves mobilizing ideas, energy, and a continuous commitment to empower social entrepreneurship in Malaysia.

With a series of government efforts to empower social entrepreneurship in this country, the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) has assumed a great responsibility in mainstreaming social entrepreneurship among students of Higher Education Institutes (HEIs). To cultivate the values and aspects of social entrepreneurship, these efforts need to be applied at the level of entrepreneurship education learning syllabus (Jabor & Hadi, 2012; Manaf et al., 2012). Additionally, there is a push to open up business opportunities on campuses through the Prihatin Business Registration Scheme (SPPP) for HEIs' students. This initiative supports start-up companies with various funds and involves strategic collaborations with external parties. The ultimate goal is to produce more graduates who are innovative, creative, competitive, and have the potential to be successful social entrepreneurs. This approach also aims to enhance graduates' marketability prospects (Ministry of Higher Education, 2023). MOHE has also successfully produced a total of 220,000 graduate entrepreneurs nationwide until 2022, compared to 178,105 people from 2016 until 2020 (Ahmad, 2023).

The study of social entrepreneurial intention (SEI) has become a major focus in entrepreneurship studies (Neneh, 2020). This is because SEI has been widely recognized as the best predictor of entrepreneurial behavior (Liñán & Chen, 2009). According to Syed et al (2020), entrepreneurial intention reflects the individual's desire to pursue an alternative career to create a new venture and not find another job. However, the various challenges faced in entrepreneurial activities may cause the individual to seek other solutions that are more accessible. The concept of entrepreneurial spirit appears as one of the constructs that helps individuals overcome the challenges they face (Stenholm & Nielsen, 2019). When the intention is stronger, then the individual is more likely to perform the behavior. The strength of this intention is influenced by the factors found in the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991). This factor refers to background elements--attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived control behavior--that influence individual intention.

The success of social entrepreneurship activities is related to the spirit of volunteerism among the students themselves (Ernst, 2012). However, the level of social entrepreneurship involvement and volunteer participation among the youth in Malaysia is still low (General Entrepreneurship Monitor, 2009; Institute for Youth Research Malaysia, 2011). The 2022 Higher Education Statistics showed that the employment status of public university graduates choosing careers as entrepreneurs is still low, at 16,856 people. Although many studies related to entrepreneurial intention have been conducted, they are limited to business entrepreneurship alone. There is still a lack of research on social entrepreneurial intention

conducted in Malaysia to determine the relationship between empathy and social support with social entrepreneurial intention. Most previous studies have found that students' intention to implement social entrepreneurship activities was at a moderate level (Ayob et al., 2013; Baierl et al., 2012; Ernst, 2011; Moorthy & Annamalah, 2014). This finding was driven by the lack of a supportive environment (Sarif et al., 2013) and a lack of experience in education (Scholtz, 2010), which had an impact on efforts to increase the number of social entrepreneurs among PU students in Malaysia. Therefore, this study was produced to identify the relationship between empathy and social support with social entrepreneurial intention among PU students. The objectives of the study were as below:

1. Identify the level of entrepreneurial empathy, social support, and social entrepreneurial intention among public university students.
2. Identify the relationship between empathy and social support with social entrepreneurial intention.

## **Literature Review**

### **Empathy**

Empathy plays a major role in forming a prosocial personality. This construct comes from social psychology and describes the ability of a person to put himself in the situation or condition of another person (Dreesbach, 2010). There are several definitions found in this study. Penner, Dovidio, Piliavin, and Schroeder (2005), for instance, described empathy as *'the ability to distinguish and feel the emotions of others'*. Besides that, Wakabayashi, Baron-Cohen et al (2006) put empathy clearly as *"... a guide to identify the emotions and thoughts of others and to respond with appropriate emotions"*. Empathy is divided into affective and cognitive categories (Mehrabian & Epstein, 1972). While affective empathy means true emotions of compassion towards others (Penner et al., 2005), cognitive empathy means the ability to feel the emotional state of others (Dreesbach, 2010).

Borman et al (2001) showed the results of a meta-analysis on the significant relationship between empathy and prosocial behavior. As explained before, the field of social entrepreneurship has applied the concept of empathy to the models of social entrepreneurship by Dreesbach (2010), Bhawe, Jain, and Gupta (2007), as well as (Mair and Noboa, 2006). Interestingly, Dreesbach's (2010) study on prosocial personality in social entrepreneurs revealed that the characteristics possessed by social entrepreneurs are the same as those of business entrepreneurs. Meanwhile, the study by Ayob et al (2013) on a sample of 257 undergraduate students from public and private HEIs studying economics and business in Malaysia, found empathy to be an important predictor of SEI. On the other hand, this characteristic has become the fourth most important factor ( $r=0.863$ ) in determining someone to become a social entrepreneur in Malaysia based on the perception of social entrepreneurs (Moorthy & Annamalah, 2014). The ability to put oneself in other people's situations can motivate them to become social entrepreneurs. Empathy proved that the negative effect was small on the tendency to be a social entrepreneur, as it was only at the 10% significance level. Based on the findings above, the concept of empathy was drawn into the SEI model to explain prosocial personality in this study.

### **Social Support**

Social capital is defined as several real and potential resources obtained from network relationships owned by individuals or social units (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). In this regard,

social capital is understood as some resources owned as a result of the student's business network and needed to carry out community development projects.

Social support from family, closest friends, role models, and social entrepreneurship culture measures still do not have a major impact on the formation of SEI. Financial resources, access to markets, business support, development structures, legislation, research, and training are identified as obstacles to the establishment of a social enterprise (Policy Brief on Social Entrepreneurship: Entrepreneurial Activities in Europe, 2013). This was reinforced by a global report which states that the level of social entrepreneurship activity in Malaysia is low (GEM, 2011). The concept of social capital focuses on relationships among group members who act to help each other.

There is a positive relationship between individual social support and opportunity discovery (Davidsson & Honig, 2003). So, the expectation is that social support can provide the necessary resources and be a very important factor in the new industrial environment, new products, new markets, and new technologies (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000). Meanwhile, Ernst's (2011) study found that the social support of social entrepreneurship includes support networks and institutions as resources that young social entrepreneurs can easily obtain. However, in his study, he found that social capital is not a predictor of SEI among undergraduate students in Germany. In addition, the strong relationship of an individual was found to be an important factor in starting a business continuously (Meek, Pacheco, & York, 2010).

### **Social Entrepreneurial Intention (SEI)**

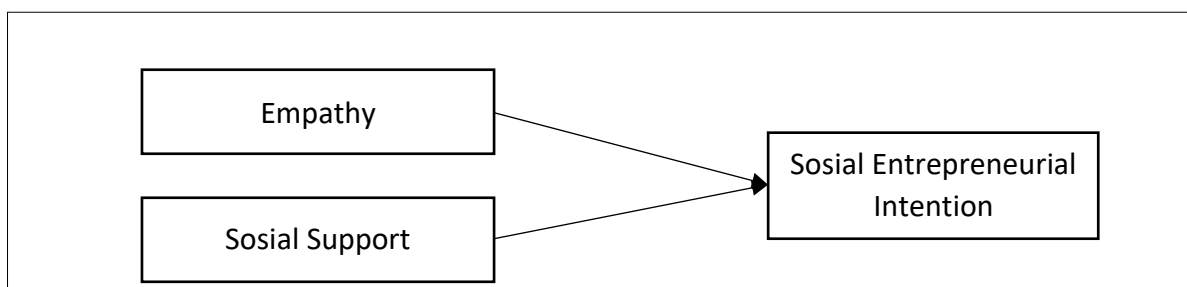
Social entrepreneurial intention is defined as the firmness of a person's stance to become a social entrepreneur and consciously plan to do so one day in the future (Thompson, 2009). Nga and Shamuganathan (2010) studied the relationship between personality and SEI. Their study found that personality factors greatly influence SEI based on the five-factor personality (big five personality). While agreeableness positively affects all dimensions of social entrepreneurship, namely sustainability, social networks, social goals, innovation, and financial returns, the attitude of openness has a positive influence on social goals, innovation, and financial returns.

The discussion continues through the findings of Ernst (2011), which confirmed that the elements of attitude towards social entrepreneurship, perceived control behavior-social entrepreneurship, and social norms-social entrepreneurship are important to the formation of SEI. Attitudes and perceived control behaviors have a direct effect on intention, while social norms and perceived control behaviors affect attitudes. The personality of social entrepreneurship, through an empathic attitude, indirectly affects the formation of social entrepreneurship tendencies. This empirical finding is supported by Tan and Yoo (2011), who stated that the formation of SEI from an organizational perspective found that social orientation aspects are important to explore new opportunities. Social support has a significant effect on the formation of SEI indirectly through subjective norms of social entrepreneurship, which strongly shape attitudes towards social entrepreneurship.

### Theory of Planned Behaviour Ajzen (1991)

The framework of this study was based on the entrepreneurial psychology approach, which is the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991). It was employed to confirm the empirical findings for predictor factors that influence the SEI of ENACTUS members in HEIS. Referring to this theory, elements or background factors of attitude, subjective norms, and perceived control behavior successfully predict intention, where intention and perceived control predict behavior. This theory also emphasizes the perception that influences a person's intention to take certain actions (Ajzen, 1991). This study used the SEI Model from Mair and Noboa (2003), updated by (Ernst, 2011).

The researcher included predictive factors, namely the variables of empathy and social support, into the planned behavior model (Ajzen, 1991). Social entrepreneurial intention was also included as predicting a person's intention should be taken into consideration too. Therefore, the framework of this study is as below



### Methodology

A survey research design was used to collect respondent data on social entrepreneurial intention, empathy, and social support among public university students. The study involved all public universities in Malaysia. The study population were 320 students who have been or are currently active members of the social entrepreneurship club under the ENACTUS Malaysia Foundation for 12 months and above. Proportional and random stratified sampling were used, which took into account the student sample size of 179 public university students.

Next, the questionnaire form of this study contains two parts: PART A, which is demographics, and PART B, which includes instruments of social entrepreneurial intention, empathy, and social support using a 5-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree). The questionnaire for the SEI variable contains eight items that were modified and adapted from (Autio et al., 2001; Linan and Chen, 2009; Linan et al., 2011; Mueller, 2011; Thompson, 2009). The 8th item was constructed by the researcher herself based on literature, observations, and indirect interviews with ENACTUS HEI students. Meanwhile, five items representing the empathy variable were modified from Berkowitz and Lutterman (1968); Wakabayashi et al (2006) to determine the suitability of character towards becoming a social entrepreneur in the context of ENACTUS HEI students in this country. The social support variable also has five items. The first and second items represent support elements, modified and adapted from (Linan et al., 2011). The third until fifth items were constructed by the researcher based on the literature review.

The preliminary analysis was carried out by interviewing three students who have been active in social entrepreneurship activities to gain insight into the extent of their readiness to

become entrepreneurs based on the predictive factors in the Theory of Planned Behavior by (Ajzen, 1991). The next step was to get the face, content, and criteria valid before conducting a pilot test. The data collected from the questionnaire were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software program. Descriptive statistics was used to determine the level of research variables, while inferential statistics of the Pearson correlation test,  $r$ , was used to determine the relationship between the variables of empathy and social support with social entrepreneurial intention.

## Research Findings

### The Level of Variables

This section discusses the first objective of the study, which is to identify the level of social entrepreneurial intention, empathy, and social support among students at public universities. To avoid confusion during the analysis process, each item in the social entrepreneurial intention, empathy, and social support categories was combined from a five-point Likert scale into three categories, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1  
*Summary of the 5-point Likert scale into three categories*

Factors	5-point Likert scale	Categories
SEI, Empathy, Social Support	Strongly Disagree (SD)	Disagree (D)
	Disagree (D)	
	Moderately Agree (MA)	Moderately Agree (MA)
	Agree (A)	Agree (A)
	Strongly Agree (SA)	

While measuring the level of each predictor factor, the interpretation of the mean score was used, as explained in Table 2. According to Pallant (2020), a mean score value of 1.00 to 2.33 indicates a low level, a mean score value between 2.34 and 3.67 indicates a moderate level, and a mean score value of 3.68 to 5.00 indicates a high level.

Table 2  
*Interpretation of the mean score by Pallant (2010)*

Mean Score	Interpretation
1.00-2.33	Low
2.34-3.67	Moderate
3.68-5.00	High

## 1. The Level of Empathy, Social Support, and Social Entrepreneurial Intention among Public University Students

### Empathy

For the second objective of this study, a descriptive analysis was made by dividing the 5-point Likert scale into three categories, as shown in Table 1, namely Disagree (D) (scale for 1 = strongly disagree and 2 = disagree), Moderately Agree (MA) (scale for 3 = moderately agree), and Agree (A) (scale for 4 = agree and 5 =strongly agree). The discussion of this section



continues by analyzing the findings of the highest frequency and percentage of the five items in the empathy factor. In addition, the overall mean score value, standard deviation, and level are also explained in Table 3. The overall mean score value of the empathy factor was 3.59, with a standard deviation of 0.58. The findings of the study for the empathy factor of public university students were at a moderate level, taking into account the recommendation of interpretation of the mean score by Pallant (2010) in Table 2.

Analysis of each statement for the empathy factor showed that Item 3 had the highest frequency of agreement with a rate of 72.6 percent (130 people). This statement shows that many students can guess if a person shows their true emotions. This is followed by Item 4, which states that students easily understand other people's situations as if they were in their place, with a rate of 68.7 percent (123 people). While the third highest item, which was 2, states that the student is considered to be someone who easily understands the feelings of others, with a rate of 62.6 percent (112 people). However, in this empathy factor, there is a negative statement with the highest disagreement, which was Item 5 stating that students find it difficult to understand why there are people who bother about something, with a rate of 27.4 percent (49 people).

Table 3  
*Empathy*

Items	D n (%)	MA n (%)	A n (%)
1 I can guess the feeling someone is going through.	12 (6.7)	65 (36.3)	102 (57.0)
2 I am considered a person who easily understands other people's feelings.	15 (8.4)	52 (29.1)	112 (62.6)
3 I can guess if someone is showing their true emotions.	5 (2.8)	44 (24.6)	130 (72.6)
4 I can easily understand other people's situations as if I were in their place.	10 (5.6)	46 (25.7)	123 (68.7)
5 I have a hard time understanding why anyone would bother about something.	68 (38)	62 (34.6)	49 (27.4)
<b>Mean= 3.59, S. D= 0.58, Level = Moderate</b>			

### Social Support

For social support, a descriptive analysis was carried out by dividing the 5-point Likert scale into three categories, as shown in Table 1, namely Disagree (D) (scale for 1 = strongly disagree and 2 = disagree), Moderately Agree (MA) (scale for 3 = moderately agree), and Agree (A) (scale for 4 = agree and 5 = strongly agree). The discussion of this section continues with analyzing the findings of the highest frequency and percentage of the five social support items. In addition, the overall mean score value, standard deviation, and level are also explained in Table 4. The overall mean score value of the social support factor was 3.94, with a standard deviation of 0.63. The findings of the study for the social support factor of public university students were at a high level, taking into account the recommendation of mean score interpretation by Pallant (2010) in Table 2. This indicates a strong evidence of students getting solid support from family and friends, strong financial resources, and positive advice from family members.

Analysis of each statement for the social support factor showed that Item 1 had the highest frequency of agreement with a rate of 85.5 percent (153 people). This statement showed that many students, if they decided to become social entrepreneurs, will get approval from their families. This was followed by Item 4, which states that if students decided to become social entrepreneurs, they will get advice from their families at a rate of 81.6 percent (146 people). Meanwhile, the third highest item was 5, which states that if students decided to become social entrepreneurs, they will get support in the form of advisory services from the closest entrepreneurs, such as uncles or neighbors, with a rate of 76.6 percent (137 people). The last item with a rate of 51.4 percent (92 people) was the lowest among the five social support items, namely 3, which states that if students decided to become social entrepreneurs, they will receive financial support from their families to establish a social enterprise.

Table 4  
*Social Support*

Items	D n (%)	MA n (%)	A n (%)
1 If I decide to become a social entrepreneur, I will get approval from my family.	5 (2.8)	21 (11.7)	153 (85.5)
2 If I decide to become a social entrepreneur, I will get approval from my closest friends.	13 (7.2)	34 (19.0)	132 (73.7)
3 If I decide to become a social entrepreneur, I will receive financial support from my family to establish a social enterprise.	28 (15.6)	59 (33.0)	92 (51.4)
4 If I decide to become a social entrepreneur, I will get advice from my family.	6 (3.3)	27 (15.1)	146 (81.6)
5 If I decide to become a social entrepreneur, I will get support in the form of advisory services from the closest entrepreneurs (for example uncle or neighbor).	7 (3.9)	35 (19.6)	137 (76.6)
<b>Mean= 3.94, S. D= 0.63, Level= High</b>			

### Social Entrepreneurial Intention

For the first objective of this study, a descriptive analysis was conducted by dividing the 5-point Likert scale into three categories, as shown in Table 1, namely Disagree (D) (scale for 1 = strongly disagree and 2 = disagree), Moderately Agree (MA) (scale for 3 = moderately agree), and Agree (A) (scale for 4 = agree and 5 = strongly agree). The discussion of this section continues by analyzing the findings of the highest frequency and percentage of the eight items of social entrepreneurial intention. In addition, the overall mean score value, standard deviation, and level are also explained in Table 5. The overall mean score value of social entrepreneurial intention was 3.55, with a standard deviation (SD) of 0.83. The findings of the study on the social entrepreneurial intention of PU students were at a moderate level, taking into account the suggested interpretation of the mean score by Pallant (2010) in Table 2.

In detail, the analysis of the eight statements found that Item 3 had the highest frequency of agreement with a rate of 72.1 percent (129 people). This statement shows that many students are determined to start their social enterprise once they have a strong financial position. This was followed by Item 7, which states that students need social entrepreneurship courses because they want to become social entrepreneurs, with a rate of 62.0 percent (111 people). The third item, which was 8, states that students often think of becoming social entrepreneurs, with a rate of 58.7 percent (105 people). However, the lowest statement of



agreement was Item 5, with a rate of 37.5 percent (67 people). This statement shows that very few students have set professional career goals of becoming social entrepreneurs.

Table 5  
*Social Entrepreneurial Intention*

Items	D n (%)	MA n (%)	A n (%)
1 I am determined to become a social entrepreneur.	19 (10.6)	69 (38.5)	91 (50.8)
2 I will try my best to establish my social enterprise.	19 (10.6)	72 (40.2)	88 (49.2)
3 I am determined to start my social enterprise after having a strong financial position.	14 (7.8)	36 (20.1)	129 (72.1)
4 I am determined to create a social enterprise within five years first after graduating.	24 (13.4)	75 (41.9)	80 (44.7)
5 I have set a professional career goal to become a social entrepreneur.	45 (25.1)	67 (37.4)	67 (37.5)
6 I still run my social enterprise on a part-time basis even though I already have a permanent career.	39 (21.8)	57 (31.8)	83 (46.4)
7 I need a social entrepreneurship course because I want to become a social entrepreneur.	19 (10.6)	49 (27.4)	111 (62.0)
8 I have often thought about becoming a social entrepreneur.	24 (13.4)	50 (27.9)	105 (58.7)
<b>Mean= 3.55, S. D= 0.83, Level = Moderate</b>			

## 2. The Relationship between Empathy and Social Support with Social Entrepreneurial Intention

This section discusses the second objective of the study, which is to identify the relationship between empathy and social support with social entrepreneurial intention. Hence, to determine the relationship, the inference statistics analysis using Pearson Correlation,  $r$ , was adopted, as can be seen in Table 6.

Table 6  
*Interpretation of strength relationship by Cohen (1988)*

Correlation coefficient (r)	Strength Relationship
±0.10 until 0.29	Weak
0.30 until 0.49	Moderate
0.50 until 1.00	High

The second objective, which is the relationship between empathy and social support with social entrepreneurial intention, is explained in Table 7. The findings clearly showed that there was a significant relationship between empathy and social entrepreneurial intention, where the correlation value ( $r$ ) obtained was 0.284 at a significant level of  $p=0.000$  based on the recommended interpretation of the strength of the relationship by Cohen (1988), as in Table 6. This shows that the element of empathy had a weak relationship with the social entrepreneurial intention among public university students to become social entrepreneurs.

The relationship between social support and SEI is explained in Table 7. The findings revealed that there was a significant relationship between social support and social entrepreneurial

intention, where the correlation value ( $r$ ) obtained was 0.351 at a significant level of  $p=0.000$  based on the recommended interpretation of the strength of the relationship by Cohen (1988), as in Table 6. This shows that the element of social support had a moderate relationship with the social entrepreneurial intention among public university students to become social entrepreneurs.

Table 7

*The relationship between Social Support and SEI*

Variable	SEI	
	$r$	$p$
Empathy	0.284**	0.000
Social Support	0.351**	0.000

$p<0.01$

### Discussion

The discussion continued with the level of empathy among public university students. The findings reported that empathy among public university students were also at a moderate level (mean=3.59, S. D=0.58). This finding is not consistent with Ernst's (2011) study that student entrepreneurs have a high level of empathy (mean=3.71, SD=0.69). A statement about the empathy factor that many students agreed with was that they can guess if someone was showing their true emotions. Amran et al (2018) stated that empathy is an individual assessment of the ability to respond voluntarily in the social environment and influence social entrepreneurial intention. For this empathy factor, there is a negative statement that obtained the highest disagreement, i.e., "It is difficult to understand why there are people who bother about something." This was explained by Niezink et al (2012), where emotional responses of compassion and concern are caused by witnessing the situations of others in need.

For social support, the findings demonstrated that social support among public university students was at a high level (mean=3.94, SD=0.63). This gives the impression that students have strong support from family and friends, strong financial resources, and positive advice from family members. This finding rejects Ernst's study (2011), where the findings for social support such as family and closest friends were at a moderate level (mean=3.44, SD=0.89). The statement that got the most agreement was "If they decided to become a social entrepreneur, they will get approval from their family." Molino et al (2018) asserted that the social support that individuals feel from their immediate environment, such as family and friends, can have a positive effect on their entrepreneurial interests. The tendency to start a new business will be higher when the individual gets a lot of social support from his environment through networks, guidance, and information from parents and peers, which will help him better understand how to start a real business (Sahban et al., 2016).

Overall, social entrepreneurial intention was at a moderate level (mean=3.55, SD=0.83). This finding is similar to the study conducted by Rahman (2016), where the overall SEI for HEIS students (mean=3.50, SD=0.69) and for ENACTUS Alumni (mean=3.54, SD= 0.67) were at moderate levels of SEI. Likewise, Prieto's study (2010) found that the mean SEI score of African, American, and Hispanic undergraduate students was moderate (mean=3.11, SD= 0.87).

Next, the statement that many students agreed with was that they are determined to start their social enterprise once they have a strong financial position. Social entrepreneurship requires high spirit and intention, as found by Moorthy and Annamalah (2014), for social entrepreneurs to fulfill their responsibilities. This study discovered that the element of intention was the second most important factor after intention in determining the decision of social entrepreneurs to become social entrepreneurs in Malaysia. However, there is a statement that had the lowest agreement, i.e., *“Students do not set a professional career goal to become social entrepreneurs.”* This finding is confirmed through the study of Bacq et al (2011), which explained that social entrepreneurs in Belgium and the Netherlands are less ambitious than business entrepreneurs.

The results of the Pearson r correlation test showed that there was a weak significant relationship between empathy and social entrepreneurial intention ( $r=0.284$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). This finding rejects the study of Moorthy and Annamalah (2014), where the results showed a strong and significant relationship between empathy and social entrepreneurial intention ( $r=0.863$ ). However, Bacq and Alt (2018); Mair and Noboa (2006), as well as Tucker et al (2019) expressed empathy as a driving force for social entrepreneurial intention.

While the results of the Pearson r correlation test for social support indicated that there was a moderately significant relationship with social entrepreneurial intention ( $r=0.351$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). This finding is confirmed by the study of Akhter et al (2022), who found a moderately significant relationship between social support and social entrepreneurial intention ( $r=0.386$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). However, in contrast to the findings of Moorthy and Annamalah's (2014) study, social support had a strong and significant relationship with social entrepreneurial intention ( $r=0.975$ ). This clearly revealed that social support has a strong and significant relationship with social entrepreneurial intention (Hockerts, 2015; Mair and Noboa, 2006).

### **Implication and Conclusion**

In general, this study can prove moderate levels of social entrepreneurial intention factor and empathy, and a high level of social support factor. This study confirmed the applicability of the Theory of Planned Behavior Ajzen (1991) at a moderate level and a positive and significant relationship between empathy and social support factors with social entrepreneurial intention.

Overall, this study showed that the findings are relevant to the current situation in Malaysia, where public university students respond positively to SEI. The younger generation is increasingly aware of their responsibility to develop the surrounding community. As a result, they show empathy and social support to having a positive relationship with SEI and the ability to increase the level of social entrepreneurship activities in Malaysia towards a better global level.

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