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I-CReST 2025:098-066 – Entrepreneurial Alertness, Innovative Behaviour and Entrepreneurship Education: A Framework on Social Entrepreneurship Intention among Students

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ABSTRACT

Recently, there is a growing concern over the increase in social problems particularly in developing countries. One way to solve these social problems is by stimulating the growth of social entrepreneurship through social entrepreneurs. Social entrepreneurship plays an important role in fixing social problems such as environmental concerns, poverty and unemployment. Several scholars proved that entrepreneurship intention is the most important antecedent of entrepreneurial behaviour that could influence the development of social entrepreneurship. Nonetheless, there are still limited studies on the factors responsible in predicting the intention to become a social entrepreneur, which may hamper the growth of social entrepreneurship. This study aimed to highlight the impact of entrepreneurial alertness and innovative behaviour on social entrepreneurship intention, by stressing the role of entrepreneurship education as a moderating force to these relationships. The study implies how policymakers, educational institutions and students could shape the development of social entrepreneurship through entrepreneurship education, entrepreneurial alertness and innovative behaviour in developing countries.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship alertness; innovative behaviour; entrepreneurship education; social entrepreneurship intention

1. INTRODUCTION

The field of social entrepreneurship is gaining a strong momentum due to increasing social problems and the need to provide concrete solutions [1]. This momentum is not unrelated to the role of social entrepreneurship in curtailing poverty, unemployment, environmental concerns and fixing other social issues [2]. Despite the public sector, practitioners, and academics showing a growing interest for social entrepreneurship, there are currently few research studies focused on predicting the social entrepreneur's intention at the individual level [2], [3]. However, individual's social entrepreneurial motivation and intention to start a business is one of the most complex and significant aspects impacting the social business development [4].

While governments invest significantly in entrepreneurship education to increase entrepreneurial performance and higher education institutions often include entrepreneurship education in their curricula [5], the effect of entrepreneurship education on entrepreneurship intention [6] and specifically social entrepreneurship intention remains inconclusive [1]. On the other hand, entrepreneurship alertness and innovative behaviour could be influenced by the amount entrepreneurship education/training programs provided to students [6], but the mechanism by which entrepreneurship education and the entrepreneurship alertness and

innovative behaviour interact to influence social entrepreneurship intention remains unclear [3]. Thus, this study proposed the influence of entrepreneurship alertness and innovative behaviour could significantly impact the social entrepreneurship intention, arguing that these relationships will be strongly supported by the moderating effect of entrepreneurship education.

Considering the fact that most studies on entrepreneurship education and social entrepreneurship intention were limited to the developed economies [5], this study seeks to develop a framework that will address the identified research gaps by examining how entrepreneurship alertness and innovative behaviour influences the social entrepreneurship intention under the moderation of entrepreneurship education in developing countries were several social problems exists [1]. The incorporation of entrepreneurship education in the relationship between entrepreneurship alertness and innovative behaviour on social entrepreneurship intention, not only augments these relationships but also contributes to the debate on how university support of entrepreneurship education is shaping the social entrepreneurship intention [7].

2. LITERATURE REVIEW, THEORIES AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

This study blends the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) and Human Capital Theory (HCT). TPB hypothesized that human behaviour emanates from human intentions, and intention is a function of attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control [8]. TPB can be used to envisage various behavioural intentions [9]. In psychological literature, intention is settled as the factor that most accurately represents the potential for the action of entrepreneurial [10]. Therefore, TPB has been expansively utilized to predict human intention that ultimately results to numerous human behaviour [11], [6]. Hence, entrepreneurial behaviour may never come to effect without the entrepreneurial intention [12], [13]. Once the intention is sculpted, the actual behaviour is imminent [14].

The Human Capital Theory (HCT) as posits that increase investment in education enhances decision making capabilities and fuels the economic productivity of individuals [15]. In entrepreneurship literature, entrepreneurship education is known to have a significant impact in the recognition and exploitation of entrepreneurial opportunities [16], [17]. Beyond business teaching, entrepreneurship education is indisputably a human capital investment that equips students with the requisite skills, knowledge, and experience to launch and or expand an entrepreneurial venture [18], [19].

While the TPB has been proven effective in assessing the entrepreneurial intention and behaviour, some theoretical gaps necessitate blending the theory with the Human Capital Theory (HCT). These theoretical gaps are evident when some important elements of the TPB failed to predict intention [6], necessitating the role of a moderating factor that could reinforce and advance our understanding of the TPB. In line with the entrepreneurship literature, the HCT can augment TPB by blending the entrepreneurship education (EE) as a moderating factor to reinforce the factors responsible for predicting social entrepreneurship intention.

2.1 Social Entrepreneurship Intention

Several scholars have discussed the concept of social entrepreneurship and social enterprise, which has helped to clarify its significance for rural development and vice versa [20]. The concept of social entrepreneurship is context-specific, dynamic, and can be applied to a range of activities and combinations that address social problems, empowerment, transformation, new hybrid partnerships, systemic social change, and new market opportunities at the local level and international level [21], [22]. However, social entrepreneurship is regarded to form

from the broader form of entrepreneurship which has been extensively studies by several scholars. Schneider [23] conducted a study exploring the placement of social entrepreneurship in social organisational form, demonstrating the flexibility of social entrepreneurship in connection to other ideas. Thus, the connection between mainstream entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship will allow us to relate the mainstream entrepreneurship intention literature to deliberate the social entrepreneurship intention in this study.

Intention is explained as the superlative predictor of human behaviour which may subsequently predict the course of new enterprise creation [24]. Entrepreneurial intention is associated with the prospective entrepreneur's subjective attitude towards the choice to launch a firm [25]. Thus, we can refer social entrepreneurship intention as a reflection of a person's drive to execute deliberate social entrepreneurship plans or choices. However, entrepreneurial intention may only serve as a motivation but not always result to entrepreneurial behaviour [26]. Nevertheless, Qiao and Huang [27] argue that entrepreneurial intention is the prerequisite for entrepreneurial behaviour which precedes any entrepreneurial action. Thus, entrepreneurial engagements including social entrepreneurship will not transpire in the absence of entrepreneurship intention [6].

2.2 Entrepreneurship Education

Entrepreneurship education is the set of structured programs aimed at developing the knowledge, abilities, and attitudes that are necessary for entrepreneurial competence [28]. Otache et al. [29] also defines entrepreneurship education as any educational programme that equip students with the required entrepreneurial skills and knowledge for entrepreneurial action. The integration of entrepreneurship education into academic curriculum is recognized as pivotal in promoting entrepreneurial culture that nurture the capabilities and mindset of prospective entrepreneurs [6]. According to Awaysheh and Bonfiglio [30], practical experiences like creating company plans and internships are crucial for giving students real-world skills and an awareness of the difficulties faced by entrepreneurs. In order to develop a broad skills-set that are essential for entrepreneurial success, Kuratko [28] suggests an interdisciplinary approach to entrepreneurship education, accentuating collaborations with several disciplines to promote a diverse skill set that are critical for successful entrepreneurs. Jones and Matlay [31] examine the global viewpoint, emphasising that for educational programs to be as effective as possible, they must be customised to the cultural settings.

2.3 Entrepreneurship Alertness

According to [32] Kirzner (1973), entrepreneurial alertness is the ability to recognise and take advantage of opportunities that have gone unrecognised. The entrepreneurial alertness concept has been thoroughly examined in the literature on entrepreneurship [33]. Kirzner [32] highlighted the special sensitivity of the alert entrepreneur to market signals, which helps them find new possibilities. This notion was expanded by Shane and Venkataraman [34], who emphasised the importance of prior knowledge in alertness, proposing that those with industry experience are better able to spot opportunities. A social cognitive approach, on the other hand, was presented by Baron [35], who claimed that social networks influence entrepreneurial alertness by offering knowledge and a variety of viewpoints. According to research on the temporal component by Foo et al. [36], those who are alert to changes in their surroundings are more vigilant. According to Soni and Bakhru [37], students' experiences and knowledge increase awareness and inspire entrepreneurial goals. Together, these viewpoints demonstrate how entrepreneurial alertness is complex and impacted by social, cognitive, and temporal aspects.

2.4 Innovative Behaviour

According to Bammens [38], innovative behaviour involves actively generating and implementing new concepts for products, processes, or technologies. According to Alt et al. [39], taking part in future problem-solving activities at universities increases individual's perception of innovative behaviour by raising awareness of upcoming issues and confidence in the person's creative abilities. Amabile's [40] componential theory of creativity goes on to describe inventive activity, highlighting knowledge, the ability to think creatively, and motivation as essential elements. Supportive organisational climates are also crucial for encouraging innovation, encouraging risk-taking, and praising imaginative work [41]. In his study of the social dimension, Burt [42] proposes that people who are situated in "structural holes" in social networks encourage creative activity by bridging divergent sources of information.

2.5 Entrepreneurship Alertness and Social Entrepreneurship Intentions

Entrepreneurship alertness, or self-acknowledged commitment to launch a new business in the future, is one of the key cognitive elements that influence entrepreneurship intentions [43]. Entrepreneurship alertness is the practice of identifying and seizing lucrative chances that others would overlook or disregard. Numerous empirical researches indicate a favourable association between entrepreneurship alertness and entrepreneurship intentions as well as other entrepreneurial outcomes such as social entrepreneurship intentions. According to Li et al. [44], people who want to launch a business can improve their ability to recognise and evaluate opportunities by honing their entrepreneurship alertness. Entrepreneurship alertness according to Van Gelderen et al. [45], can boost people's confidence and drive to turn their ideas into new businesses, particularly for extroverted persons who are more gregarious and outgoing. In a meta-analysis of 125 research studies, Araujo et al. [46] revealed a substantial positive association between entrepreneurship alertness and entrepreneurship intentions, and between opportunity recognition, innovation, and performance.

According to Saadat et al. [47], the first step in the entrepreneurial process involves the identification of entrepreneurial opportunities, and those who are alert possess the cognitive capacity to identify these opportunities [48]. According to Mehdizadeh et al. [49] the most important predictor of entrepreneurial opportunity is the entrepreneurial alertness. Entrepreneurship alertness activates the process of entrepreneurship [50] (Otache, Edopkolor, Sani, & Umar, 2024). People with heightened alertness may have stronger chances to take advantage of opportunities. A person's entrepreneurial alertness has been argued to increase their entrepreneurial intention and inspires them to turn ideas into businesses [51]. Additionally, research has shown that entrepreneurial alertness strongly predicts entrepreneurial intentions [52], [53], [48]. Social entrepreneurship intention is the motivation behind a person's choice to engage in social business activities, whereas entrepreneurship alertness is explained as the capacity to concentrate on and seize lucrative chances that others might overlook. Therefore, by boosting the confidence to spot possibilities, make choices, and develop ideas into new social ventures, entrepreneurship alertness will have a favourable impact on social entrepreneurship intention.

H1. Entrepreneurship alertness will have a positive effect on social entrepreneurship intention.

2.6 Innovative Behaviour and Social Entrepreneurship Intentions

According to Sutrisno et al. [54], students' entrepreneurial intents are expected to be significantly impacted by innovative behaviour, which includes the capacity to come up with novel concepts, think creatively, and put new solutions into practice. Students who exhibit innovative behaviour are more likely to be interested in launching their own companies because they perceive opportunities to employ their creative ideas in an entrepreneurial setting [55]. Moreover, individuals who possess the ability to think creatively and are naturally motivated are more likely to be capable of and interested in engaging in innovative pursuits like entrepreneurship [56]. Similarly, a recent study by Sutrisno et al. [54] shows the significant positive influence of innovative behaviour on the entrepreneurial intentions of students. Studies have further demonstrated that creative behaviour may operate as a vital link between outcomes such as entrepreneurial ambitions and outside influences. Research by Amabile [57] highlights that inventive behaviour may be fostered in an atmosphere that supports creativity. Students who exhibit creative behaviour are likely to become change agents by creating new social enterprise concepts that are pertinent to resolving social problems as a result of the continuously evolving global innovative and entrepreneurship culture.

H2. Innovative behaviour will have a positive effect on social entrepreneurship intention.

2.7 Entrepreneurship Education Moderates the Relationship Between Entrepreneurship Alertness and Innovative Behaviour on Social Entrepreneurship Intention

Nurturing entrepreneurship as a possible career path among young people requires the intervention of entrepreneurship education, which is the process of imparting entrepreneurial skills, knowledge, and attitudes to students [14]. Students who take entrepreneurship training courses tend to be more conscious of the risks and difficulties associated with entrepreneurship, which encourages them to prepare more for their entrepreneurial endeavours [58]. With conscious efforts to create and execute policies and initiatives meant to give the next generation the skills and information necessary for entrepreneurship, the governments of many countries have made entrepreneurship education a priority [59], [6], [12]. Students may acquire, develop, and accumulate entrepreneurial knowledge through entrepreneurial education [60], which has been interpreted by some academics from the standpoint of human capital. Entrepreneurship education is also said to help students develop their entrepreneurial skills to build their human capital [61]. Academically, there is a consensus that people can learn and develop their entrepreneurial skills rather than having them innately [62]. From the entrepreneurial learning standpoint, scholars investigated the internal mechanism that transforms an entrepreneur's experience into entrepreneurship ability, and concluded that this process is a learning process. Thus, entrepreneurship knowledge and skills are the primary focus of entrepreneurship education [62].

Entrepreneurship education has shown a favourable positive impact on social entrepreneurship intention in several developed and developing nations, including Taiwan and Thailand [63], Vietnam [1] and Great Britain [64] (Nabi et al., 2018). While entrepreneurship education has been demonstrated to predict entrepreneurial intentions in certain studies, other studies have shown inconsistent or even contradictory findings. For instance, entrepreneurship education has been shown by Nabi et al. [64] to both raise and lower entrepreneurial intentions in Great Britain. Some studies also contended that while entrepreneurship education enhances the proficiency of students, it has no effect on their readiness to start a new venture and may even limit their intention to do so [65], [58]. These results suggest the potential of

entrepreneurship education serving as a moderating factor [1]. Prior research by Shah et al. [66], [67], as well as [68] Piperopoulos and Dimov (2015), proved that entrepreneurship education favourably moderates the nexus between cognitive factors and entrepreneurial intention. Therefore, the following hypotheses were proposed:

H3. Entrepreneurship education will positively moderate the relationship between entrepreneurship alertness and SEI

H4. Entrepreneurship education will positively moderate the relationship between innovative behaviour and SEI

3. RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

Relying on the preceding literature deliberations, it is noticeable that entrepreneurial alertness and innovative behaviour will have a positive impact on social entrepreneurship intention. However, these relationships will be further reinforced by the intervention of entrepreneurship education as strong moderator for student groups. The use of entrepreneurship education as moderating variable is aimed at understanding how the relationship between entrepreneurial alertness, innovative behaviour and social entrepreneurship intention will vary under different circumstances such as entrepreneurship education. This will essentially help policy makers and academics to determine when or under what conditions does the relationship between entrepreneurial alertness, innovative behaviour and social entrepreneurship intention holds better, providing insights into policy development and curriculum refinement. The research framework showing the hypothesized relationships is presented in Fig. 1.

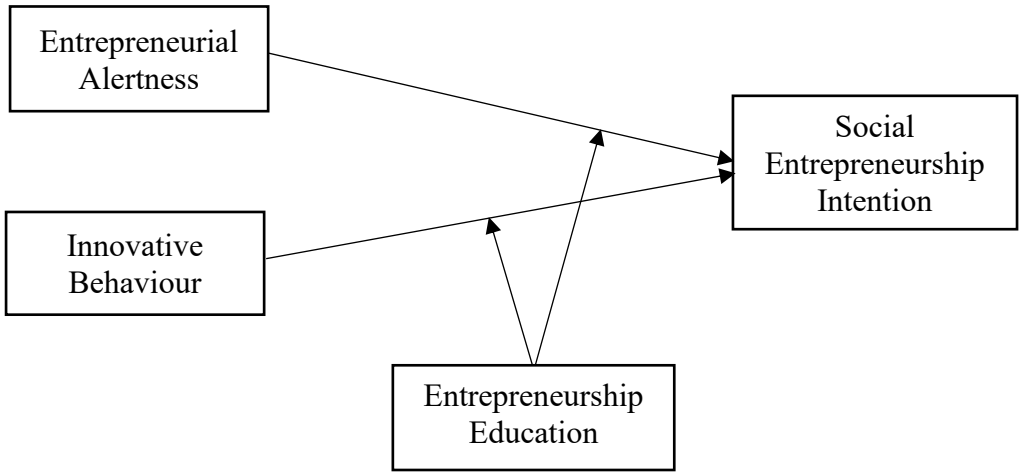

Fig. 1. Research framework

4. CONCLUSION

This paper deliberated the moderating effect of entrepreneurship education on the nexus between entrepreneurial alertness, innovative behaviour and social entrepreneurship intention among students of higher learning. The past literature regarding the relationship between entrepreneurial alertness, innovative behaviour, entrepreneurship education and social entrepreneurship intention was examined. Based on this literature, the paper argued in favour of a positive moderating role of entrepreneurship education on the examined relationships, particularly among students in developing countries. Thus, the paper projected an increase in entrepreneurial alertness, innovative behaviour and social entrepreneurship intention when students participate in entrepreneurship education. It is therefore, important for policy makers,

educational institutions and academics to take into account the role of entrepreneurship education and enhance the existing entrepreneurship education programs to cultivate social entrepreneurship intention among graduates in developing countries.

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