

# Conceptualising mentorship pedagogy on entrepreneurship intention

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## ABSTRACT

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*This study uses the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) to evaluate how mentorship pedagogy affects student entrepreneurial intention. This study explores how mentorship affects HLIs students, focusing on its impact on entrepreneurial mindsets, the complex relationship between mentorship and entrepreneurial ambition can be examined using Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) which includes attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behaviour control, Higher education students will be the samples for this study. Mentorship pedagogy is used to determine how it affects students' attitudes towards entrepreneurship. The study also explores how mentorship develops subjective norms through social interactions and normative beliefs and increases perceived behavioural control by providing students with skills, resources and a supportive environment. The purpose of this conceptual paper is to understand how educators as mentors can influence student's entrepreneurial intention using TPB as a guiding model. The purpose of this conceptual paper is to foster student ambitions towards becoming entrepreneurs. This study also contributes to the ongoing conversation on improving student's entrepreneurship intention.*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Entrepreneurship, a dynamic and influential factor that drives economic growth and fosters innovation, has gained significant attention in higher education institutions worldwide. In Malaysia, where economic diversity and innovation are crucial for long-term development, fostering an entrepreneurial culture among students is the highest priority. This study explores the significant relationship between mentorship teaching methods and students' at Malaysia Higher Learning Institutions (HLIs) to become entrepreneurs. Understanding the factors influencing students' intention to become entrepreneurs is crucial as Malaysia aims to establish itself as a centre for entrepreneurial excellence.

The importance of entrepreneurial education in Malaysia has increased, reflecting the worldwide acknowledgment of entrepreneurs' crucial impact on economies and societies (Bracken, 2023; Hami et al., 2020; Mohamad et al., 2021). In this context, the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) is used as a theoretical framework to examine the psychological aspects that influence entrepreneurial goals thoroughly. Applying the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) is particularly important in Malaysia, a country with a growing young population and a government actively promoting entrepreneurship (Kementerian Hal Ehwal Ekonomi, 2019). This study suggests that by integrating mentorship pedagogy, a teaching method that involves transferring experiential knowledge, providing psychosocial support, and serving as a role model (Achtzehn, 2023; Ali, 2022; Hami et al., 2020) into the TPB framework, it can have a significant influence on the entrepreneurial intentions of students in Malaysian Higher Learning Institutions (HLIs).

The research seeks to provide significant insights that are internationally applicable and locally tailored to Malaysian higher education. This study investigates the relationship between mentorship and entrepreneurial intention (EI) in Higher Learning Institutions (HLIs), which aligns with Malaysia's goal of developing a knowledge-based and innovation-driven economy as stated in the Twelfth Malaysia Plan (2021-2025). The subsequent parts will explore the theoretical foundations, the specific entrepreneurial landscape in Malaysia, and the particular use of mentorship pedagogy in the study framework.

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION**

Although the importance of entrepreneurship education (EE) is widely acknowledged, a significant gap exists in understanding the complicated relationship between educators that could be considered as mentorship in teaching methods and students' intention to become entrepreneurs, especially in Malaysia's higher education context. The previous research has not sufficiently combined the well-established Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) with the dynamic aspects of mentorship pedagogy, highlighting a theoretical gap (Ali, 2022; Jabid et al., 2023; Saoula et al., 2023). Although the TPB has been widely used to predict entrepreneurial intentions, there is a lack of research explaining how mentorship, as an educational strategy, affects the cognitive and motivational factors that are important to entrepreneurial aspirations (Liñán et al., 2011, Mohamad et al., 2021).

Moreover, the lack of proper research methods contributes to the existing theoretical limitations, highlighting the necessity for thorough examinations of the relationship between mentorship and entrepreneurial purpose in Malaysia's higher education context. Although reports indicate the existence of mentorship programmes at Malaysian Higher Learning Institutions (HLIs), there is a dearth of comprehensive empirical research assessing the efficacy of these programmes in influencing students' entrepreneurial intentions. The methodological gap is worsened by a lack of longitudinal studies that can effectively capture the changing dynamics of mentorship relationships over time, thus offering a more detailed understanding of the long-lasting effects on entrepreneurial intentions (Achtzehn, 2023; Huang et al., 2023; Shamsul Karim, 2013).

To fill these gaps in theory and methodology, the present study aims to incorporate a comprehensive theoretical framework by combining the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) with mentorship pedagogy. Furthermore, the study will use rigorous empirical methodologies covering many Higher Learning Institutions in Malaysia, enabling a more comprehensive assessment of the relationships between mentorship and student entrepreneurial intention. By incorporating the latest references, such as the works of Barba-Sánchez and Atienza-Sahuquillo (2018), the research seeks to enhance the theoretical and practical contributions, ultimately providing context-specific insights that can inform policy, practice, and curriculum design within the Malaysian higher education landscape. Thus, this study aims to conceptualise mentorship pedagogy and integration within the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) toward student entrepreneurial intention in Higher Learning Institutions in Malaysia.

Entrepreneurship education has become a crucial component of higher education, with an increasing focus on developing entrepreneurial attitudes in students (Mokshein, 2019). This is particularly important in the Malaysian context, as the country strives to shift towards a knowledge-based economy (Twelfth Malaysia Plan, 2021-2025). The study is guided by a theoretical framework that combines the well-established Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) with the dynamic aspect of mentoring teaching. This framework recognizes the transformational power of mentorship in influencing students' entrepreneurial ambitions. This literature review offers a thorough examination of essential topics in entrepreneurial education, the Theory of Planned Behaviour, the impact of mentorship in education, and areas of research that need more exploration, highlighting the importance of this study in the context of higher education in Malaysia.

## **ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION AND THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS**

Entrepreneurship education, which focuses on developing entrepreneurial mindsets, abilities, and aspirations, has gained significant recognition worldwide (Bae et al., 2014; Mbeteh, 2019; Mokshein, 2019). The Theory of Planned conduct (TPB) has been widely applied to study the psychological drivers of purposeful conduct, including entrepreneurial ambitions (Ajzen, 1991). Attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control are fundamental components within the TPB framework that influence an individual's intention to participate in certain behaviour. Liñán and Chen (2009) highlight the significant influence of attitudes on entrepreneurial intents within entrepreneurship education. Attitudes refer to an individual's positive or negative opinion of participating in entrepreneurial activities. Although the TPB has been widely used to predict entrepreneurial intents, there is a significant lack of research on how mentorship pedagogy might be integrated into this theoretical framework.

The TPB framework is centred around three key elements: attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control, as proposed by Ajzen in 1991. These ideas can be viewed as the psychological factors that form the basis of students' intention to participate in entrepreneurial activity. Attitudes refer to the positive or negative assessments of entrepreneurship, subjective norms encompass the social influences and normative beliefs related to entrepreneurial endeavours, and perceived behavioural control indicates the perceived capability of students to overcome obstacles and carry out entrepreneurial actions. Previous research shows there is a need to have a deeper understanding of the components of EE and mentorship toward individuals' cognitive antecedents and career choice. Some studies reveal mentorship has a direct impact on individual's attitudes as attitude has a cognitive psychological variable relationship (Tran et al., 2024). An interactive relationship with students is needed to change their cognitive antecedents on entrepreneurship.

The TPB offers a robust theoretical basis for understanding the factors that lead to planned actions, making it a suitable framework for analysing entrepreneurial intention in the higher education setting. Past research suggests that entrepreneurship intention (EI) can be influenced through entrepreneurship programmes (Johnson et al., 2023). Entrepreneurial mindsets can lead to company start-ups, and this kind

of mentality can be established by triggering individuals' entrepreneurial intentions, which can be found in the cognitive mind (Eysenck & Keane, 2020; Krueger Jr, 2003). Intentions are considered as highly important to entrepreneurship research as it is the belief and predictor of planned behaviour that supports individuals to react towards specific action (Brown & Lent, 2017; Pham et al., 2024). This has led the researchers to use an intentional model that could gain significant information about individuals' cognition.

Previous work of TPB and EE was used as the pillar to comprehend the relationship between personal variables and entrepreneurial intentions (Loi & Fayolle, 2021). Some studies confirmed the positive relationship between EE and EI (Overwien et al., 2024). Other studies show that EE and EI are highly correlated (Saoula et al., 2023). This research shows that participating in EE will impact students' EIs. Studies that utilized TPB in areas of EE find that EE promotes business creation among HLI students and enables them to transform themselves into business owners. Many studies use TPB in analyzing how EI is affected by regional, cultural, and also the institutional environments (Loi et al., 2023). This shows that further study needs to be done in investigating more perspectives and how it plays a role in influencing intentional desire to create a company.

Nabi et al. (2017) analysed previous work on how students transform into start-up individuals based on entrepreneurial process theories. He argued that intention to behaviour becomes challenging if researchers try to capture EI to actions simultaneously. This will misguide researchers into thinking that intentions were developed before the behaviour. Another researcher also introduced a linear entrepreneurial process, which describes the stages from intention to behaviour (Hagger et al., 2022). So, it is argued that individuals must have the cognitive process in their intention to become an actionable behaviour (Ajzen & Cote, 2008; Hagger et al., 2022; Vallerand et al., 1992). Although there are many intentional models that tried to explain EI, previous discussion shows that empirical studies tend to focus on the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) due to its strong explanatory power (Krueger Jr et al., 2000; Krueger et al., 2013). Therefore, this study will use TPB as the model in explaining the relationship between EE and EI among HLIs student. The following section will discuss how mentorship in EE will improve student cognition through educators' interactive pedagogies.

## **MENTORSHIP PEDAGOGY IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION**

The mentor-mentee relationship, a key aspect of mentorship pedagogy, significantly impacts entrepreneurship education (Winkler et al., 2023). According to Clarysse et al. (2020), mentorship involves more than just transferring knowledge. It also includes providing psychosocial support, serving as a role model, and creating a helpful learning environment. Mentors, typically successful businessmen or industry experts, operate as role models, providing students with practical knowledge, expertise, and moral encouragement (Baggen et al., 2022). The study done by Renko et al. (2015) emphasizes the significance of mentorship in influencing entrepreneurial leadership styles and promoting favorable entrepreneurial results. Although the importance of mentorship in entrepreneurship education is widely acknowledged, a lack of literature thoroughly examines its influence within the TPB theoretical framework, specifically in Malaysia. Mentor or educator need to act as someone who can persuade student to have the intention to start business by encouraging them using variety of pedagogy style.

The theoretical basis of the research is based on combining the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) with mentorship pedagogy to understand the intricate dynamics that affect students' entrepreneurial ambition. Although the importance of EE is widely acknowledged, there is still a significant gap in understanding the complicated relationship between mentorship teaching methods and students' intention to become entrepreneurs, especially in Malaysia's higher education context. This study suggests that by integrating mentorship pedagogy, a teaching method that involves transferring experiential knowledge, providing psychosocial support, and serving as a role model (Achtzehn, 2023; Ali, 2022; Hami et al., 2020) into the TPB framework, it can have a significant influence on the entrepreneurial intentions of students in Malaysian Higher Learning Institutions (HLIs). The TPB offers a solid theoretical basis for understanding

the factors that lead to planned actions, making it a suitable framework for analysing entrepreneurial intention in the higher education setting.

The integration of mentorship pedagogy as a transformational educational technique is done in conjunction with the TPB. Mentorship, as developed by Clarysse et al. (2020) and Gindes et al. (2023), is a complex process that involves the transfer of knowledge, provision of psychosocial support, and demonstration of role modeling. Mentors, usually successful entrepreneurs or industry experts, are responsible for molding students' attitudes towards entrepreneurship by sharing knowledge, influencing subjective norms through fostering normative beliefs, and improving perceived behavioural control by offering essential skills, resources, and an environment of support. The incorporation of mentorship into the TPB framework is to provide a comprehensive comprehension of the factors that impact student entrepreneurial intention, recognising the significant significance of mentors as educators and influencers in the entrepreneurial process.

Entrepreneurship literature suggests that EE impacts students' EIs'. However, the role of teachers' mentorship pedagogy in influencing students' cognition has received little attention. Mentorship in entrepreneurship is based initially on supporting relationships between novice and experienced entrepreneurs that focus on guiding and building the mentee's entrepreneurial skills. However, mentorship in an educational environment links pedagogical theory to business methods, which in turn could replicate the real business world. A mentor can be a role model or educator who teaches or instructs individuals. Even though mentorship was predominantly used in many business incubators or simulations, educators as mentors could also use innovative pedagogy that is important in EE. The next following section will discuss briefly on how the research could be carried out in order to achieve its objectives.

## **METHODOLOGY**

To achieve the objective of this study, the researchers plan to do a qualitative study. Themes from the qualitative study could help researchers develop a model that could be further explored. A purposive sampling technique will collect data from the business management faculty. This research will use focus group discussion. Research shows that students from business management who study entrepreneurship will familiarise them with concepts and expectations for becoming entrepreneurs (Al-Jubari et al., 2019). Past study also confirms that students who have studied entrepreneurship at university, either theoretical or practical, will increase their' attitudes and perceived behavioural control, ultimately increasing their intention for business startups. Interviews will be chosen for this research as it allows researchers to obtain detailed information that might not be available through other research methods (Denzin et al., 2023)

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, it is important to understand how mentorship pedagogy, guided by the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), affects student entrepreneurial intention in Malaysian higher education institutions. A study that could integrate the TPB's psychological drivers with mentorship's transformative dimensions allows for a complete study of students' entrepreneurial inclinations that could portray the inclusiveness of such a relationship. This research has practical consequences for Malaysian entrepreneurship education and contributes to the global debate on mentorship's impact on entrepreneurial mindsets. This study also could give a holistic view of student entrepreneurial desire by considering mentors' crucial role as educators and influencers. As the study moves to empirical investigation, the findings are expected to contribute to entrepreneurship education scholarship and inform Malaysian Higher Learning Institution policy and practice, aligning with the nation's vision for a robust knowledge-based economy. This research aims to fill theoretical and methodological gaps in our knowledge of how mentorship in the TPB framework affects entrepreneurial desires. This study hopes to help educators, policymakers, and mentors improve entrepreneurship education programmes and support students' entrepreneurial goals.

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## CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors agree that this research was conducted without any self-benefits, commercial or financial conflicts and declare the absence of conflicting interests with the funders.

## AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Suhailah Kassim carried out the research, wrote and revised the article. Ahmad Syahmi Ahmad Fadzil contributing to the theoretical idea and framework of the research. Khalilah Ibrahim and Noor Azzura Mohamed supervised the research progress, Nik Rozilaini Wan Mohamed do the final checking of grammar and proofread.

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