

Entrepreneurial Aspiration among *Asnaf* Students in UiTM Pahang

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Abstract: Aspiration or a strong desire for achievement is an attitude that should be commended. Aspirations to be an entrepreneur should be nurtured, supported and guided accordingly. Building and sustaining a business is not as easy as the theory made it out to be without the relevant knowledge and experience. However, in spite of the challenges, many individuals are still interested to venture in this field especially since the government has initiated various programs to assist them in starting a business. Entrepreneurship requires passion and a high level of patience which can be nurtured from young. As such, a research on the interest in starting a business among the Malays was conducted with a focus group covering *Asnaf* students from Universiti Teknologi MARA (Pahang). *Asnaf* students are comprised of orphans and the poor who are eligible to receive zakat. This group was chosen based on their high aspiration to have a better life in the future. Based on a survey conducted through questionnaire, 96.61 percent has the aspirations to get involved in the business realm than venturing to other salary-paid jobs. This entrepreneurial aspiration may be driven by UiTM (Pahang)'s various activities to foster their interest in the field of business. Therefore, the interest among the *Asnaf* students requires the support from various parties in order for them to realise the dream of owning their own businesses in the future.

Keywords: Aspiration, *Asnaf*, Business, Interest, Entrepreneurship

1 Introduction

One factor to ensure and could help the developing countries like Malaysia to remain competitive is to encourage entrepreneurship among their people. To be an entrepreneur requires a person to have the relevant knowledge, experiences and innovativeness to start a new venture or business where he or she can solve problems faced by the community as well as to relieve the worsening crisis of globalization (Othman and Nasrudin, 2016). The government provides assistance and programs to encourage the Malays as well as other indigenous citizens to venture into business to prepare for economic challenges that are underlined by elements that are flexible and sensitive to changes such as strong market, innovation, creativity, business development and small and medium industry, (Othman et. al., 2012). Therefore, he argued that entrepreneurial characteristics should be included as part of the curriculum in the current education system. This will help to instill business skills and interests in the students in accordance to the Malay proverb "*melentur buluh biarlah dari rebungnya*" meaning it is better to teach a child when he is still young. The government's awareness of the importance of entrepreneurship has led to many entrepreneurial-oriented programs offered by government agencies such as *Tekun National*, *Perbadanan Usahawan Nasional Berhad (PUNB)*, *Amanah Ikhtiar Malaysia (AIM)* and others. In addition, entrepreneurship programs are also offered at institutes of higher education to attract and provides exposure in business as an early preparation for students who are interested to venture into business. The idea is to encourage students to venture into business as an alternative choice of profession and not to rely entirely on the industry for employment. In 2016, there are a total of 261,048 to 305,800 graduates who are still unemployed after graduation, (www.beritasemasa.com.my/graduan-universiti-menganggur-penganggur-malaysia). This phenomenon is rather worrying because the graduates also had to compete with foreign workers who are employed in local industries whether in the professional or non-professional fields. A good example that entrepreneurship should be considered as a livelihood is a story about the success of an Electrical Engineering graduate who sells *nasi lemak* by the roadside which goes viral on the Internet. However, her resourcefulness caused her to be detained by the authorities for selling *nasi lemak* without a legal license. As a graduate trained in the engineering field, she obviously lacks the business knowledge. Therefore, it is the role of

higher institutions in Malaysia to equip students with business knowledge, attributes and capabilities to enable them to face future economic challenges. According to Akanbi (2013) as a developing country, Africa has developed an education system that incorporates entrepreneurship education in all programs. This is due to their awareness on the importance of entrepreneurship to build and strengthen the country's economy. However, to influence a student to turn to entrepreneurship is a big challenge to the institution and the country, (Maina, 2011). In the nutshell, graduates who have a family business have a better advantage in making a living as they can work in the family business. However, for students who come from poor families, it would be a challenge for them to start a business if they could not find employment. Early exposure on business ventures from respective of institution could at least provide them with ideas or knowledge to start a business. The university can also track students who are inclined to venture into business, especially *Asnaf* students who have high motivation to change their standards of living. Therefore, this pilot study is the first step to determine the interests of *Asnaf* students towards venturing into business. These students are strongly encouraged to consider entrepreneurship as a career choice as it could lead to a better life. By focusing on the *Asnaf* students' interests in business, it is foreseen that a remarkable result can be achieved.

2 Literature Review

The Al-Quran is the guidance in determining who belongs in the *Asnaf* group. Referring to Surah At-Tauba paragraph 60,

"Alms (zakat) are for the poor and the needy, and those employed to administer the funds; for those whose hearts have been inclined (towards Islam); and to free the captives; and for those in debts; and for Allah's cause (those fighting in the holy wars) and for the wayfarer (a traveller who is cut off from everything); a duty imposed by Allah. And Allah is full of knowledge and wisdom"

The detailed description of *Asnaf* was tabulated and approved through the *Jemaah Ulama' Majlis Agama Islam dan Adat Istiadat Melayu Kelantan* meeting which convened on October 8, 2007. (<http://www.e-fatwa.gov.my>) The meeting had underlined eight categories of *Asnaf* and the *zakat* (alms) rate for each *Asnaf*. A *fatwa* was also made to describe the categories of *Asnaf* as *fakir* (the poor or needy), *amil* (administrator of funds), *Al-Muallafatu Qulubuhum* (people who recently embraced Islam), *Fir Riqab* (free a person from slavery), *Al-Gharimin* (to those who have debts and eligible to receive zakat), *Fi Sabilillah* (assistance for war against the enemies of Islam and students as well as any form of support to show obedience and faithfulness to Allah) and *Ibnu Sabil* (*musafir* or travelers).

Aspiration, Desire and Interest in Business

Entrepreneurship is one of the agendas of Vision 2020 where the vision is to become a fully developed and industrialized nation. It provides the basic support and technology to ensure that the businesses in the country prosper. According to Kuratko (2005) the concept of entrepreneurship should start with the willingness to establish business relationships with other businesses, to withstand and endure any risk and challenges, to be innovative and creative, and possess a strong team spirit. While Bird and Jelinek (1988) in their study identified the factors that influence the interest in business such as family background, employment, academic qualifications and training programs. While the Theory of Behavior Plan by Azjen stated that attitudes, cultures and behaviour are all factors that is the driving force in someone's interest in entrepreneurship (Ma'ruf, Mohammad and Ramayah 2005; Stone & Jawahar and Kisamore 2010). According to Mohd Zain et. al. (2010) and Ascher (2012), the intention of going into business is influenced by the family, career advisors, friends, academic counselors, media and business partners. Mohd Zain et. al., (2010) also emphasized that from the results of his research, 60.5% of respondents have expressed their desire to follow in the footsteps of their family by starting a business, however, Mohd Arif et. al., (2010) found that most students will not be in business immediately after graduation because they are more likely to become salaried workers to gain the experience and strengthen their financial position prior to engaging seriously in business.

This statement was also supported by previous researchers like Scot & Twomey (1988) and Kruger (1993) and they are also of the opinion that previous experience is another factor that influenced an individual's interest in business. While according to Ekpoh and Edet (2011) and Gaddam (2008), the role of the university is very important in producing student's interest in entrepreneurship. These institutions are able to act as a motivator for the students as they are young, inexperienced, lack of confidence and knowledge in business and therefore

require a counselor to help them. The training program provided by the university helps the students in preparing a systematic and effective business plan, providing insights on the attitude and behaviour of an entrepreneur as well as knowledge about the legal aspects of business. (Souitaris et. al., 2007). This statement is also supported by the findings in the study conducted by Abd Jabar et. al., (2013) where students who attended entrepreneurship programs organized by the university are found to have 3.54 times the tendency to be interested in entrepreneurship compared with students who did not attend the programs.

3 Research Methodology

The study focused on *asnaf* students in UiTM Pahang involved in entrepreneurship programs. Questionnaire formulated by MASMED UiTM Malaysia which contains five sections; demography, entrepreneurial background, interest in business, experience/involvement in business and interest in entrepreneurship programs were distributed to the students. A descriptive analysis using SPSS 20.0 was conducted from the data obtained.

4 Findings and Discussion

The respondents for this study comprised of 59 *Asnaf* students of which 15 (25.42%) are male and 44 (74.58%) are female and aged between 19 to 24 years. 38 (64.41%) students are from the East Coast (Pahang, Terengganu and Kelantan) where 30 (50.85%) of them are Diploma in Business Studies students. The study have also identified that 24 (40.68%) of the students have family members who are directly involved in business, where 50% are either the father or mother. Based on the level of interest to become entrepreneurs in the future, the study indicated that almost all students (57, 96.61%) showed interest in entrepreneurship after graduation. This may be due to the students' previous experiences in running small-scale businesses such as selling soap, scarves, cakes and prepaid cards. The small scale businesses operated by 26 (44.07%) students apparently helped increased their pocket money for daily expenses. Herrington et al. (2009) stated that graduate entrepreneurs have poor business and managerial skills because of the poor quality of entrepreneurship training. However, UiTM is taking a more serious approach towards entrepreneur education so as to encourage the students to choose entrepreneurship as an alternative career choice. UiTM has created various initiatives such as creating a special entrepreneurship course in each program of study for both diploma or degree programs. UiTM Pahang also held variety of courses, workshops, seminars, field trips, business on campus and business-oriented competition to foster students' interest towards entrepreneurship. The study revealed that most students (52, 88.14%) are interested to attend programs organised by UiTM Pahang and that field trip is the first choice, followed by workshops, seminars, courses, business on campus and business-oriented competition. These findings are also supported by Abd Jabar et al. (2013), Ekpoh and Edet (2011), and also Gaddam (2008).

5 Conclusion

UiTM's initiative to be an entrepreneurial university has impacted greatly on the students who are interested in going into business. UiTM Pahang has produced graduates who are competitive in the field of business and it is evident by the percentage of alumni who has chosen business as a career. Thus, this study is relevant to determine the interest of *Asnaf* students in UiTM Pahang to venture into business as well as to ensure the university's objectives to be an entrepreneurial university is achieved. This is evident in the findings of this study where 44.07% of *Asnaf* students have the experience of running small businesses like selling soap, scarves, cakes and prepaid cards. This small-scale income has helped with their daily expenses while increasing their standard of living. With this experience, they are more confident to manage a large-scale business in the future. In addition, 88.14% of the *Asnaf* students are also interested to join programs organized by the university where field trips is their first choice, followed by workshops, seminars, courses, business on campus and business-oriented games. Since most of them have a high level of commitment, support in other forms from the universities and other relevant external agencies is needed to realize their aspiration to venture into business. Moreover, UiTM Pahang will be able to produce more graduates with entrepreneurial potential and being competitive in the global arena.

6 References

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