

The Influence of Higher Learning Environment and Role Model towards an Entrepreneurial Intention among TVET Students

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ABSTRACT

The Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) field is part of the drive for national development. With the circumstances, the TVET institutions have taken steps towards creating future entrepreneurs as well as contributing to high-skilled employment. Thus, the study was conducted to examine several factors related to higher learning environment and role model as well as their relationship with entrepreneurship intentions among TVET students. The study was hypothesized and tested using three dimensions of TVET higher learning environment (entrepreneurship education, entrepreneurship activities and teaching and learning methods) and role model factors that influence students' entrepreneurial intention. The results from correlation analysis found that there was a relationship between all the independent variables; entrepreneurship activities, role models, entrepreneurship education and teaching and learning methods with entrepreneurial intentions. The overall results of the study act as an enlightenment for related parties in developing future entrepreneurship society for the development of the country.

Keywords: *Entrepreneurial intention, higher learning environment, role model, TVET students*

RESEARCH BACKGROUND

The growth of a nation can be achieved through community development based on entrepreneurial values. With these values, the country will be able to achieve growth in economy, innovation and competitiveness (Kuratko & Hodgetts, 2009). However, the efforts to create entrepreneurship-based society are a challenge for a country. Most recently, Malaysia ranked the 23rd in the Global Competitiveness Index 2017/2018 (MPC, 2018) and the 58th in the Global Entrepreneurship Index 2018 (Global Entrepreneurship Development Institute, 2019). Although the position is quite good, many efforts are needed by the government to improve the development of the society and the progress of the country.

In order to achieve this, higher education institutions should also assist the government in developing entrepreneurial societies. In Malaysia, higher education institutions including skill-based TVET institutions have taken steps in that direction by transforming from solely focusing on teaching and learning to trying to produce entrepreneurs amongst their respective students. This is in line with Malaysia Higher Learning Institutions 2016-2025 blueprint (Ministry of Higher Education, 2015) which aimed at developing future generations with entrepreneurial behavior. In this sense, the role of TVET education institutions is crucial in helping to achieve a high-income nation in the future.

However, the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM, 2018) reported a less satisfactory result with Malaysia's ranking in 2017 at a score of 18 percent of the country's population choosing entrepreneurship career compared to regional countries such as Vietnam (25%), Indonesia (28%) and Thailand (37%). Why did this happen? What are the factors related to the matter? Hence, the question arises; what are the factors that influence the intention of choosing entrepreneurial careers? This is likely to hamper the government's efforts to elevate entrepreneurship as a career choice for the Malaysian people in line with the main objectives of the National Entrepreneurship Policy (NEP) by 2030 (Ministry of Entrepreneurship Development, 2019). As such, the study will examine some of the relevant factors and the relationship of these factors with the entrepreneurial intention among TVET students. This study is important in giving clarification to related parties including government, higher learning institutions and students towards future entrepreneurship career development.

LITERATURE REVIEW

TVET institutions play the important roles in producing skilled work force for a country. TVET is an education and training process that has a job direction with a strong emphasis on industry practices. It aims to produce competent workforce in certain areas. In Malaysia, government-established TVET institutions include polytechnics, community colleges and several skills training centers in various ministries. Vocational education and training have proven its roles in creating the skills needed by the nation. With the education and training provided by TVET institutions, the resulting workforce is well trained and competent in contributing significantly to the needs of the industry and the work market, thus enhancing efforts to generate high income (Ahmad, Jalani & Hasmori, 2015).

Every year, higher learning institutions including universities and TVET institutions produce many graduates to fill in the job market for various sectors such as public, private and self-employed or start-up businesses. Even with more emphasis on entrepreneurship among students in higher learning institutions (Wahid, Hashim & Ibrahim, 2017), labor force in Malaysia is still lacking in entrepreneurship and their intention to start-up their own businesses (GEM, 2018). Therefore, the study attempts to examine the factors that are influenced and associated to entrepreneurial intentions especially for TVET students.

Entrepreneurial Intention

Entrepreneurial intention as defined by Krueger, Reilly and Carsrud (2000) is the intention of someone to start a business. In other words, someone who started a business was driven by his or her intentions to become an entrepreneur. The entrepreneurial intention is parallel to one of the three dimensions as proposed by Ajzen (1987) in Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) involving attitude towards the act, subjective norms, and perceived feasibility. Ajzen (1987) further added that the behavior of a person could predict their choice of things. However, the intention to become an entrepreneur is triggered by a variety of factors either personally or environmentally related. Table 1 summarizes the previous study regarding entrepreneurial intention.

Table 1: Previous Studies on the Entrepreneurial Intention

| Authors | Independent Variables | Contexts | Results |
|---|--|---|---|
| Barba-Sánchez & Atienza-Sahuquillo (2018) | Need for independence & entrepreneurship education. | Engineering university students (Spain). | Significant: the need for independence and entrepreneurship education. |
| Israr & Saleem (2018) | Gender, age, degree, department, previous education, previous grades, job experience, business experience, family background, entrepreneurial education, personality traits, finance and government support. | University students (Italy). | Significant: Gender, family background, entrepreneurial education, extraversion, agreeableness, and openness to experience. Not significant: age, previous grades, and neuroticism. |
| Wahid, Hashim & Ibrahim (2017) | Factors of lecturer, curriculum & co-curriculum, support resources and campus cycles. | 33 university students who took entrepreneurship course (Malaysia). | All variables were significant; support resources (r=.701), campus cycles (r=.545), curriculum & co-curriculum (r=.434), lecturer (r=.218). |
| Ozaralli & Rivenburgh (2016) | Personality attributes of optimism, innovativeness, risk-taking propensity, training & education on entrepreneurship. | USA and Turkey students. | Significant: both countries: personality attributes of optimism, innovativeness, risk-taking propensity, training and education on entrepreneurship, USA students perceived a high level of risk. Turkish students evaluated the economic and political conditions of home country. |
| Saeed, Yousafzai, Yani-De-Soriano & Muffatto (2015) | Self-efficacy, self-realization, recognition, role, financial success, innovation and independence. | A sample of 805 university students (Pakistan). | Significant: Self-efficacy, self-realization, recognition, and role. Not significance: financial success, innovation and independence. |
| Garro, Kume & Basho (2015) | Entrepreneurial role model | 434 sample of students (Albania) | Significant: A positive correlation between students exposed to entrepreneurial role model within the family and their entrepreneurial intention. |

As shown in Table 1, numerous studies have seen the importance of the higher learning institutions in developing entrepreneurial intentions to their graduates. In Europe and the USA, studies on student intentions toward entrepreneurship have found significant and positive indicators encompassing entrepreneurship education, independence, family experience, openness to experience, innovative and risk-taking propensity, and role models (Barba-Sánchez & Atienza-Sahuquillo, 2018; Garro, Kume & Basho, 2015; Israr & Saleem, 2018; Ozaralli & Rivenburgh, 2016). While in Asia, some indicators such as self-efficacy and realization, role, support resources, campus cycles, curriculum and co-curriculum activities play a role in entrepreneurial intentions (Saeed et al., 2015; Wahid et al., 2017).

Higher Learning Environment

The higher learning environment dimensions focused in this study include entrepreneurship education, entrepreneurship activities, teaching, and learning methods.

Entrepreneurship Education

Entrepreneurship education is a course taught formally by an educational institution covering both inside and outside the classroom. In this case, Keat, Selvarajah and Meyer (2011) stated that entrepreneurial education is a course and lectures that contains the curriculum that offers entrepreneurial capabilities, expertise and understanding to entrepreneurship professions. With that, students are prepared with the right knowledge if they are interested in becoming an entrepreneur later.

Students learn various things in entrepreneurship education. However, the main focus of the syllabus is to develop an effective business plan (Ronstadt, 1985). Instead, Sherman, Sebor and Digman (2008) argued that there is a lack of evidence about the effectiveness of teaching the business plan. In addition to preparing business plans, Gorman, Hanlon, and King (1997), Vesper, and McMullan (1988) stated that some of the instructional activities include experts' excursion, case studies and project related to the business development. Previous study has found that entrepreneurship education was significantly correlated to entrepreneurial intention. The studies included in Spain by Barba-Sánchez and Atienza-Sahuquillo (2018), in Italy by Israr and Saleem (2018), in USA and Turkey by Ozaralli and Rivenburgh (2016) and in Malaysia by Wahid, Hashim and Ibrahim (2017). However, Wahid's et al. study in Malaysia was based on university students who are taking programs solely at bachelor degree level. It is also important to examine the relationship between entrepreneurship education with entrepreneurial intentions among the certificate and diploma students at TVET institutions.

With reference to the discussion, it can be hypothesized in this study that entrepreneurship education has significant and positive relationships with entrepreneurial intention among students.

Entrepreneurship Activities

Nowadays, higher learning institutions have stepped up their focus on organizing entrepreneurship and business-based activities and programs within their campus. Those activities and programs are able to make students interested in the entrepreneurial world after graduation. The statement is parallel to the study by Engle et al., (2010) which found that participation and involvement of a person in entrepreneurial activity is due to its motivational drive towards entrepreneurship.

Conducive campus environments with entrepreneurship-related activities for a whole year are able to influence entrepreneurship intentions among students and thus lead to a new venture of business (Wahid et al., 2017). Besides that, the activity of featuring experts and successful entrepreneurs was able to attract students in entrepreneurship (Gorman, Hanlon & King, 1997; Vesper & McMullan, 1988). With reference to the discussion, it can be hypothesized in this study that entrepreneurship activities have significant and positive relationships with entrepreneurial intentions among students.

Teaching and Learning Methods

Lecturers are required to develop their knowledge in the teaching and learning process in various ways, especially in educational technology and exposure to the real world. In this case, educational institutions for them to develop their own skills should provide opportunities. Opportunities related in their programs should be given for them to experience the real world of business outside the institution and build networks with entrepreneurs (Abaho, Olomi & Urassa, 2015). Hence, various teaching and learning methods and different environments are expected to stimulate student's intent to entrepreneurship.

The previous teaching methods need to be checked with the current students' exposure to technology. This is because, traditional method used to teach entrepreneurship in the context of higher learning institutions was a major constraint in developing students with entrepreneurship mindset (Olokundun et al., 2018). This is in line with the statement by Olokundun et al. (2018) that found practical use of real-life experience into best practices in entrepreneurial teaching and learning at universities. It can stimulate interest and attraction to students to engage in business start-up activities. Therefore, support from related parties are strongly required to invest in developing such academic human capital and a variety of teaching aids that are diverse and up-to-date. With reference to the discussion, it can be hypothesized in this study that teaching and learning methods have significant and positive relationships with entrepreneurial intentions among students.

Role Model

Role model also became one of the dimensions of the study. The role model can positively give young people an incredible example of life beyond their daily environment (Cephas, 2012). As young people, students will be able to understand the world in a different way when this example is set before them. Added that they will also be able to imagine themselves away from their negative environment and become positive role models for others in the future.

In parallel with that, role model is an important factor that can facilitate students in entrepreneurship. Previous study such as Musa, Abdul Rashid and Rashid (2018) and Saeed et al., (2015) found that the role model was associated and symbiosis to every student who plans to be involved in the entrepreneurial activities. Garo, Kume and Basho (2015) added that students who have been exposed to the role of family entrepreneurship show high intentions to become entrepreneurs compared to those who do not have this role model. Hence, there is a positive correlation between students exposed to entrepreneurial role model in their family and their entrepreneurial intentions. With reference to the discussion, it can be hypothesized in this study that role model has significant and positive relationships with entrepreneurial intention among students.

Conceptual Framework

The previous section reviewed on variables related to entrepreneurial intentions. Accordingly, this study proposes the framework as shown in the figure below.

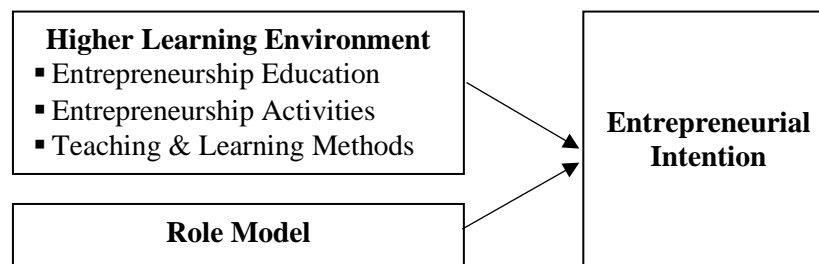


Figure 1: Proposed Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 shows the proposed relationship between the variables of higher learning environment (including entrepreneurship education, entrepreneurship activities and teaching & learning methods) and role model with entrepreneurial intention.

METHODOLOGY

This quantitative study was conducted by collecting primary data through cross-sectional surveys. The population consists of TVET educational institution students in Perlis state covering Polytechnic Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin (PTSS - Polytechnic), Kolej Komuniti Arau (KKA - Community College), Institut Kemahiran Belia Negara (IKBN - National Youth Skills Institute) and Institut Kemahiran MARA (IKM - MARA Skills Institute). A total of 354 samples were selected from the study population which include 258 students from PTSS, 26 students from KKA, 28 students from IKBN and 42 students from IKM. Cluster sampling techniques were used by selecting four TVET institutions besides several other institutions in Perlis such as Pusat Giat MARA and Institut Latihan Perindustrian (ILP).

Unit of analysis for the study was measured based on individual basis, which focused on student's perception itself. There were 26 items used to measure variables involved through questionnaires adapted from previous studies. These items included entrepreneurial intention (5 items), entrepreneurship education (5 items), entrepreneurship activities (5 items), teaching and learning methods (6 items) and role model (5 items). While the scale used involved a numerical scale of 5-points with scale 1 refer to "strongly disagree", to scale 5 for "strongly agree" statement. A pilot study conducted on 40 samples illustrated that all the items involved are in good condition and can be used for data collection in the field. The Cronbach test showed good alpha values that included the variables of entrepreneurial intention ($\alpha = .760$), entrepreneurship education ($\alpha = .804$), entrepreneurship activities ($\alpha = .824$), teaching and learning methods ($\alpha = .782$) and role model ($\alpha = .870$).

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Profile of Respondents

The respondents involved were 317 students after deducting from the original collection of 354 students. Some of the demographics items were collected from the respondents. These items include gender, race, age, educational institutions and the type of parents' occupation. The details are provided in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Profile of Respondents (N=317)

| Demographics | Characteristics | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------|--------------------|-----------|------------|
| Gender | Male | 132 | 42% |
| | Female | 185 | 58% |
| Race | Malay | 274 | 86% |
| | Chinese | 18 | 6% |
| | Indian | 23 | 7% |
| | Siamese | 2 | 1% |
| Age | 18 years and below | 6 | 2% |
| | 19 to 20 years | 219 | 69% |
| | 21 to 22 years | 78 | 25% |
| | 23 years and above | 14 | 4% |

| | | | |
|-------------------------|--|-----|-----|
| Educational Institution | Polytechnic – PTSS | 237 | 75% |
| | Community College – KKA | 23 | 7% |
| | National Youth Skills Institute – IKBN | 22 | 7% |
| | MARA Skills Institute – IKM | 35 | 11% |
| Occupation of Parent | Government sector | 142 | 45% |
| | Private sector | 70 | 22% |
| | Self-employed | 105 | 33% |

From the above table, some demographic information was obtained. In the aspect of gender, respondents consisted of 132 (42%) males and 185 (58%) females. Meanwhile, in the aspect of race, majority of the respondents were Malay with 274 (86%), followed by Indian, 23 (7%), Chinese, by 18 (6%) Siamese, by 2 (1%). Furthermore, the age aspect shows that the majority of the respondents were in the age range of 19 to 20 years, which are 219 students (69%), followed by 21 to 22 years with 78 students (25%), 23 years and above with 14 students (4%) and 18 years and below with 6 students (2%). In terms of educational institutions, PTSS students were 237 (75%), followed by IKM with 35 students (11%), KKA consisted of 23 students (7%) and IKBN with 22 students (7%). Lastly, parents' occupation involved of 142 in the government sector (45%), followed by 105 of self-employed (33%) and 70 in the private sector (22%).

Descriptive and Correlation Analyses

Descriptive and correlation analyses have been carried out in order to answer the research objectives. Descriptive analysis is conducted to examine the level of each variable among respondents. While the correlation analysis is conducted to determine whether there was a relationship between independent variables and entrepreneurial intention. Table 3 below shows the results of descriptive analysis as well as correlation for all variables.

Table 3: Descriptive and Correlation Statistics

| Variables | Mean | SD | EI | EE | EA | TM | RM |
|-----------|------|------|--------|--------|--------|--------|----|
| EI | 3.56 | .679 | 1 | | | | |
| EE | 3.73 | .654 | .506** | 1 | | | |
| EA | 3.62 | .696 | .608** | .499** | 1 | | |
| TM | 3.97 | .614 | .516** | .488** | .453** | 1 | |
| RM | 3.80 | .706 | .650** | .534** | .658** | .554** | 1 |

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The mean analysis of all variables indicate that the respondents agree on the statements submitted. On the scale of 5, the highest mean is the factor of teaching and learning methods (TM) (m = 3.97) followed by the role model (RM) (m = 3.80), entrepreneurship education (EE) (m = 3.73) and entrepreneurship activities (EA) (m = 3.62). Meanwhile, entrepreneurial intention (EI) is at the mean value of 3.56. Next, the correlation analysis is performed for four independent factors on entrepreneurial intention. It is found that all four factors are positively correlated with entrepreneurial intention. Two factors have significant relationship at a relatively high level with entrepreneurial intention encompassing entrepreneurship activities (r = .608) and role model (r = .650). While the other two factors are at a relatively moderate level of teaching and learning methods (r = .516) and entrepreneurship education (r = .506).

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATION

The results of the descriptive analysis show that all variables are at moderate level with majority of the respondents had expressed their agreement on the behavior and practices. In ranking, the highest variable position is the teaching and learning method followed by role model, entrepreneurship education, entrepreneurship activities and entrepreneurial intention. The study found that the practice of students on all factors involved was at a good level but could still be improved. Furthermore, the correlation analysis found a significant and positive relationship between all independent variables with entrepreneurial intention. It points out that all the factors involved are the determinants of entrepreneurial intention among students. Specifically, entrepreneurship activities and role model are the highest determinants of entrepreneurial intention rather than teaching and learning methods and entrepreneurship education.

The findings of this study are important in giving enlightenment to related parties such as TVET institutions and the students itself. TVET institutions can further enhance entrepreneurship-related activities and programs either inside or outside campus by enhancing students' exposure to entrepreneurship as well as the business world. TVET institutions also need to bring a successful entrepreneurial personality in front of the students, be an idol and role model for them. Additionally, parents can be an idol and encourage their child's activities.

Despite the relationship between all the factors studied with entrepreneurial intentions, the findings highlighted the informal and self-relational factors such as entrepreneurial activities and role models. This provides guidance for future research on this matter. Some of the forecasting factors need to be looked at because of their entrepreneurial intentions covering short-term student placement in business enterprises during the holiday season and business experience of students on campus. In addition, longitudinal studies are also important to see the impact of entrepreneurial intention on business start-up.

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