

## **Students' Intention Towards Entrepreneurship as a Career: A Case of University Students**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*A part of the total unemployed in Malaysia is university graduates, while close to half of the graduates of public universities are working in mismatched occupations, totally unrelated to their formal training. To overcome this issue, the best solution is involvement in entrepreneurial activities. Therefore, this study aims to examine students' intention towards entrepreneurship. The data were collected from questionnaires that have been distributed to diploma and degree students in UiTM Terengganu. The questionnaires were tested on 300 respondents. The study found that social environment and knowledge management are significant with student intention. The result for all independent variables shows a positive relationship with the dependent variable.*

**Keywords:** *Student Intention, Entrepreneurship, Social Environment, Knowledge Management, Career*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Entrepreneurs play a key role in the economic growth and job creation of a country. Entrepreneurial education has been argued as an effective way to promote and bolster the interest in entrepreneurship among university students. According to Wilson et al., (2007), purposeful education enhances students' entrepreneurial efficacy by providing them with the attitudes, knowledge, and skills to cope with the complexities embedded in entrepreneurial tasks such as opportunity seeking, resource assembling, and leading the business to success. Exposures to this knowledge may instill positive attitudes towards entrepreneurship among students (Basu & Virick, 2008).

Interest in entrepreneurship has grown around the world since the beginning of the 1990s (Klofsten, 2000). This happened due to economic recession, higher unemployment rates in addition to the fluctuation in international trade cycles to countries that have never experience this situation before. Abdullah Azhar et al., (2010) revealed that entrepreneurship has become more crucial to every country ever since the age of globalization because it will help in creating jobs for the society and also reducing the unemployment rate. Nafukho and Helen (2010) proved that entrepreneurship is vital in creating and fulfilling a healthy economy. This is supported by Dickson et al., (2008) where growth of

entrepreneurship is significant to a country's economy. Attitude is important for competitiveness and encourages innovation. The government have faced failure in their attempt to promote entrepreneurship due to the negative attitude from people (Goel et al., 2007). This showed that attitude is crucial to create student's intention towards entrepreneurship. Behavior can be forecasted either it will be performed or otherwise by understanding the individual's intention towards entrepreneurship. They might end up either being unemployed or employed if they have no intention and might not even have the thought to consider entrepreneurship as their career choice.

There are more universities offering entrepreneurship courses to students to provide and prepare them with the necessary knowledge. Universities should seek to balance between students' and industries' needs when designing their curriculum (Ooi et al., 2011). According to Zaidatol Akmaliah (2009), there is a need for universities to improve their teaching strategies if they wish to improve entrepreneurial self-efficacy and desire amongst their students to choose entrepreneurship as a career choice. Besides, the courses are the best way to create intention among students to apply their knowledge and skills to be successful entrepreneurs.

### **Problem Statement**

Entrepreneurship has been given serious devotion due to its' importance on economic growth, job creation, sources of innovation and productivity. Therefore, it is important to know the factors that influence students' intentions to launch a new start-up or entrepreneurship effort. Thus, developing countries like Malaysia needs to encourage the students to be involved in and consider entrepreneurship as a career choice. Attitude towards entrepreneurship and self-efficacy are significant factors influencing entrepreneurial intention as well as identifying entrepreneurs' success (De Noble et al., 1999). However, there is little attention directed in measuring attitude (Mohd Shariff & Saud, 2009) and entrepreneurial efficacy among Malaysian students. This becomes a major challenge for entrepreneurial educators in designing courses and developing students' innate entrepreneurial capabilities and intentions. There is also preliminary evidence that showed entrepreneurial attributes can be positively influenced by educational programs and that many entrepreneurship programs and courses can build awareness of entrepreneurship as a career option and encourages favourable attitudes toward entrepreneurship (Gorman et al., 1997).

Becoming an entrepreneur is voluntary and a decision that is made based on the individual's attitude and knowledge towards entrepreneurial activities. Marques et al., (2012) discovered that attitude is a powerful and direct influencing factor when it comes to predicting entrepreneurial motive. Entrepreneurial self-efficacy is another potential driving factor, in which a person assumes that he or she is capable of effectively fulfilling the activities of an entrepreneur. Entrepreneurial self-efficacy, according to Krueger and Brazeal (1994), is one of the most important prerequisites for a future entrepreneur. However, measuring attitude (Mohd Shariff & Saud, 2009) and entrepreneurial effectiveness among Malaysian students receive little attention. This presents a significant challenge for entrepreneurship educators in terms of designing courses to improve students' natural entrepreneurial abilities and intentions.

Entrepreneurship education has the potential to develop knowledge and skills for the enterprise but also, most importantly, increase the willingness of individuals to consider entrepreneurship as a career option (Lucas et al., 2004). Xue et al., (2011) survey on university students from two public universities and two private universities in Malaysia claimed that there is a positive significance between the need for achievement and students' entrepreneurial intentions to start a business. However, the moderate relationship between the need for achievement and entrepreneurial intention shows there is a variation in the level of need for achievement. Ismail et al., (2012) study on undergraduate students in three private universities in Malaysia agreed that there is no significant effect of the need for achievement towards entrepreneurial intention besides internal control. In this study, two indicators

have been recognized to investigate the student's intention towards entrepreneurship as a career. The factors to be investigated are social environment and knowledge management.

## **Objectives and Significant of the Study**

This study was designed to contribute to the understanding of students' intention towards entrepreneurship. Universities play an important role to create the students' intention for involving themselves in entrepreneurial activities. The objective of this study is to examine the influencing factors of social environment and knowledge management towards students' intention of entrepreneurship venturing. It further attempted to investigate the perceptual differences between gender, program levels, and family background with students' intention towards entrepreneurship.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Entrepreneurship Intention**

The intention to become an entrepreneur or form a business depends on the individual's perceptions of desirability and feasibility to the activity of starting a business. Peterman & Kennedy (2003) also considered entrepreneurial intentions as one of the more recent approaches to understanding the entrepreneurial process. Students' intention to entrepreneurship refers to a mental orientation such as desire, wish and hope which may influence the person to choose entrepreneurship as a career (Korunka, et al., 2003). A study done by Shariff, et al., (2010) showed that there is a significant correlation between entrepreneurial intention and interest among university students. Continuous improvement to entrepreneurial education by broadening active teaching and learning approaches in all course contents might induce greater entrepreneurial interest and intention among them.

### **Social Environment**

The social environment plays an important role in influencing people to be involved in entrepreneurship. The environment can influence the students in choosing entrepreneurship as a career (Nor Fadila & DzufiIszura, 2011) while Ni (2012) concluded that the rapid changes in a social environment, family, friends, and peer groups may not influence individuals in deciding the entrepreneurship activities. The social environment gives positive and negative impacts on self-employment. The harmonious social environment in the workplace creates a positive relationship, cooperation, teamwork, and future success with one another. Negative social environments will destroy the students' ability or willingness to choose self-employment as a career. Social environment factors affect large groups that share common living or working spaces and the students' awareness of becoming entrepreneurs will increase from the interaction with the surrounding. According to Norudin Mansor & Azman Che Mat (2010), an individual is likely to engage in self-employment if the environment for setting up a business is favorable. Besides the environment, there are other factors involved such as entrepreneurship education, ability to take risks, family and friends including mentor contribute to the student's awareness to involve in self-employment (Faloye, 2018).

Education institution plays an important role in influencing students to choose to be an entrepreneur as their career (Aggarwal & Shrivastava, 2021) as students spend more time in school. However, students today are more independent and able to think independently about what they want to do for their future. Therefore, the educators need to be more charismatic and also possess an entrepreneurial mindset to instill an interest in students. When educators can inspire the students, they will develop an interest in entrepreneurship. The social environment can be varied among countries. For instance, in Bangladesh, parents prefer their children to have a stable occupation instead of taking risks venturing into a new business. 72 per cent of respondent's neighbors' and relatives assume that

being an entrepreneur is not a secure job (Choudhury & Mandal 2021). Becoming an entrepreneur requires the person to take chances and risks not knowing whether they will become successful or otherwise. Being an employee in an organization is simpler, more secure and less stressful.

## Knowledge Management

Knowledge management refers to the process of structuring, retaining, and sharing knowledge and experience with employees in the organization. According to Hanif et al., (2016), knowledge acquisition, sharing, and implementation are the three basic procedures that makeup knowledge management. The best driving force for entrepreneurial and organizational performance and its success is knowledge (Zaim et al., 2019). Al-Mubarak and Busler (2013) highlighted the importance of knowledge management to entrepreneurship. Successful entrepreneurs need to be creative in the use of new technologies for better and faster marketing of their new products (Bahrami, Salehi, et al., 2014). Knowledge management is important to improve organizational efficiency to ensure all employees can access and share their expertise within the organization. Not only that, but knowledge management in institutions also helps in improving the employability of students, quality of staff and student's performance, generating funding and collaboration with industry. (Dhamdhare, 2015).

By gathering, arranging and translating knowledge into actionable information, organisations with greater knowledge management capabilities are more likely to increase an entrepreneur's productivity (Shujahat et al., 2019). According to Tan and Nasurdin (2011), to increase efficiency, knowledge should be transferred from organization to an individual, from individual to individual, and from the individual back to the organization. Knowledge management's effectiveness plays an important role in improving work quality and keeping up with the latest information. The development of the intellectual capital of the potential workforce and entrepreneurs, particularly young people, primarily university students and graduates, is critically important for the long-term development of business (Safrankova, 2017; Rattan, 2020). Niknafs et al., (2013) highlighted the effectiveness of knowledge management in problem-solving, programming guidelines, and making efficient decisions. If more focus and structured programs apply, this can help in producing great entrepreneurs among students (Anumnu, 2014).

## METHODOLOGY

This study was carried out to examine the influence of social environment and knowledge management on students' intention towards entrepreneurship as a career. The framework in this study involved the independent variables such as social environment and knowledge management, while the dependent variable is students' intention towards entrepreneurship as a career. An overview of the research framework is depicted in Figure 1:

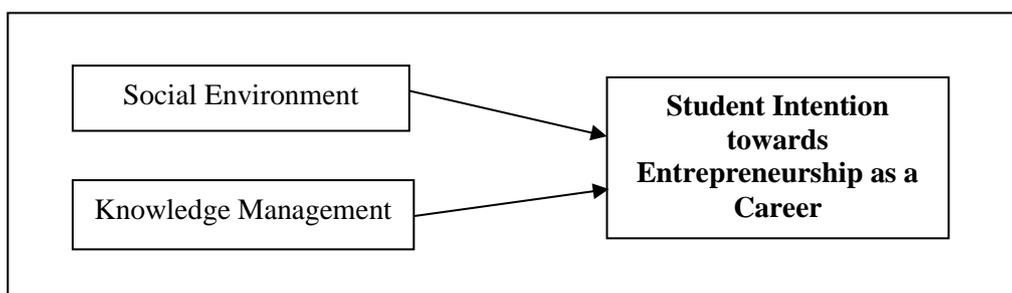


Figure 1: Conceptual Research Framework

The target respondents were 300 diploma and degree students from UiTM Cawangan Terengganu, Dungun Campus. To collect the data, a set of questionnaires was developed consisting of six (6) sections. Section A of the instrument was designed to capture the profile of the respondent. Among the information to be included are the gender, status, family income, education level, father's and mother's occupation. For section B, it was designed to explore the respondent's background in terms of their involvement in entrepreneurial related activities at the university. Section C is involved with gathering information related to the social environment factor. Section D is formulated to extract information on knowledge management, while section E which is the main theme of the research work attempted to address the issue of student's intention towards entrepreneurship. In the last section, which is section G, respondents were allowed to comment or give any suggestions about this study.

## RESULT ANALYSIS

### Frequency Distribution

Frequency analysis is used to analyze the overall information of the respondent based on profile information such as gender, status, family income, course, father's occupation, and mother's occupation. There are 300 respondents involved in this study. The result for the study is shown in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Respondent's Profile**

Demographic Factors	Types	Freq	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>	Male	127	42.3
	Female	173	57.7
<b>Status</b>	Single	283	94.3
	Married	12	4.0
	Others	5	1.7
<b>Family Income</b>	Below RM 300	208	69.3
	RM 500- RM 800	37	12.3
	RM 801- RM 1200	21	7.0
	RM 1201- RM 1500	12	4.0
	RM 1501- RM 1800	7	2.3
	RM 1801 and above	15	5.0
<b>Course</b>	Diploma	180	60
	Degree	120	40
<b>Father's Occupation</b>	Government	94	31.3
	Private	59	19.7
	Retirees	65	21.7
	Self-employed	82	27.3
<b>Mother's Occupation</b>	Government	80	26.7
	Private	38	12.7
	Retirees	14	4.7
	Self-employed	29	9.7
	Housewife	139	46.3

The result of the analysis shows that out of 300 respondents, 127 (42.3%) are male respondents and the rest which is 173 (57.7%) respondents are female.

Next, for the element of status, the majority of the respondents are single status (94.35%), followed by married (4.0%) and others (1.7%). The next analysis is referring to the element of the family monthly income. The highest percentage for family income is respondents whose salary fall

below RM 300(69.3%), followed by RM 500- RM 800 (12.3%), RM 801- RM 1200 (7.0%), RM 1801 and above (5.0%), RM 1201- RM 1500 (4.0%) and lastly RM 1501- RM 1800 (2.3%).

From the above table, we can see that the respondents from diploma programs are more than the respondents who are taking degree programs. The result of the analysis indicates that 180 out of 300 respondents are from diploma programs while 120 (40%) are from degree programs. For the father's occupation, we can conclude that around 94 respondents' fathers (31.3%) are employed as a government servants, followed by self-employed (27.3%), retirees (21.7%) and private sector (19.7%). The final element is the mother's occupation. Most of the respondents' mothers are a housewife. The percentage shows that 46.3% are housewives followed by government servants (26.7%), private sectors (12.7%), self-employed (9.7%) and retirees (4.7%)

### Correlation Analysis

Analysis for correlation was deployed in this research to analyze the strength of the relationship between the investigated variables. Table 2 summarized the correlation analysis result between all research variables.

**Table 2: Correlation Coefficient**

		(A)	(B)	(C)
Student Intention(A)	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	1	0.509 0.000	0.541 0.000
Social Factor(B)	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)		1	0.689 0.000
Knowledge Management(C)	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)			1

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

The result indicated that there are moderate relationships between the two independent variables of social factor and knowledge management with students' Intention towards Entrepreneurship as a Career. The two independent variables demonstrated that they were significant at a Pearson Value of 0.01 as shown in the table above.

### Multiple Regression Analysis

Table 3 summarized the Multiple Regression Analysis results for social factors and knowledge management towards the dependent variable (Student's Intention towards Entrepreneurship).

**Table 3: Analysis of Predictors on Student Intention**

Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	1.345	0.203		6.614	0.000
Social Factor	0.288	0.073	0.259	3.946	0.000
Knowledge Management	0.374	0.068	0.363	5.528	0.000

Dependent Variable: Student Intention, Adjusted R square: 0.324; Sig F Change 0.000

From the above regression table, knowledge management has a higher value (0.363) compared to social factors at 0.259. Both variables of social factor and knowledge management have a significant relationship towards student's intention based on a value of 0.000. These two independent variables can

explain the 32.4% contribution towards student's intention, and 67.6% could be some other variables that had not been included in this study. The entire three variables that have been selected in this study are found to be significant at 0.000.

### Analysis of Differences

Analysis of t-test was conducted for gender, the levels of program enrolled among students, and family background involvement in student towards entrepreneurship.

**Table 4: Table T-test for Type of Gender**

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig	Sig (2-tailed)
Male	127	3.6480	0.68543	0.116	<b>0.070</b>
Female	173	3.7850	0.61456		0.075

As displayed in table 4, the result indicated that male students have a slightly higher intention as compared to female students. There was no significant difference between the two groups at 0.070. Thus, gender is not the main issue that requires special attention in ensuring student's intention towards entrepreneurship.

**Table 5: Table T-test for Program taking by Respondents**

Program	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig	Sig (2-tailed)
Diploma	180	3.6244	0.68549	0.003	0.001
Degree	120	3.8808	0.55523		<b>0.000</b>

Table 5 demonstrated that the degree level of students (3.8808) have a higher intention to embark into entrepreneurship as a career compared to those studying at the diploma level (mean value: 3.6244). The differences between the two groups prevail at 0.000 in terms of student's intention towards entrepreneurship.

**Table 6: Table T-test for Family Background**

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig	Sig (2-tailed)
Yes	182	3.7956	0.66089	0.809	<b>0.020</b>
No	116	3.6164	0.61826		0.018

The result of the t-test shown in Table 6 revealed the difference in the means of 3.7956 and 3.6164 for the respondents who have family members that are involved in entrepreneurship and those who do not. As such, there is a significant difference for both groups of respondents at significant value of 0.020.

## CONCLUSION

This study has unveiled an understanding of the independent variables (social environment and knowledge management) that influence student's intention towards entrepreneurship. Based on the result of the study, it can be concluded that the two factors; social environment and knowledge management are significant factors that influence students' intention towards entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship will assist the development of the nation as it will help to reduce the unemployment rate. Students need to build a network with other new as well as experienced entrepreneurs to gain hands-on experience, knowledge, and support from them. Also, students need to be creative and innovative to be involved in self-employment. The university should be involved from the early stage in the education of upper-level students to create awareness of entrepreneurship as a career alternative. As such, universities and other higher institutions should focus on providing more entrepreneurial subjects in their curriculum and also continuously make improvements in terms of the syllabus to create students' interest to explore more about entrepreneurship. An entrepreneurial course that helps students to recognize and overcome any obstacles to creative problem-solving and developing concepts for an innovative product or service in his or her area of interest will stimulate and enhance students' interest in entrepreneurship. The government also plays an important role to support students' interest in entrepreneurship by providing funds to universities to organize activities and conduct suitable training programs to develop skills and competencies to ensure that these students become successful entrepreneurs.

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