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**Entrepreneurship Education and Entrepreneurial Intentions among Malaysian University students: Developing a Hypothesised Model through Structural Equation Modelling**

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**ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this paper is to test the data collected for the study using descriptive statistics and develop a structural model through structural equation modelling to examine the entrepreneurial intentions of the Malaysian university students through entrepreneurship education. Data was collected from 396 students via questionnaires using Likert scale variables. The data was analysed using descriptive statistics and using structural equation modelling through AMOS 22.0. Results were obtained from the descriptive analysis and a hypothesised model developed for the study using structural equation modelling (SEM) approach. The SEM methodology takes a confirmatory factor analysis to analyse the structural theory. The hypothesised model developed was used to test the exogenous variable of entrepreneurship education, its components made up of, curricula, teaching methodologies, university roles towards the endogenous variable of entrepreneurial intentions through the mediating variables of attitude and stakeholder support systems.

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**INTRODUCTION**

Malaysia being a developing nation has a high rate of unemployment among the young graduates emerging from the universities. This has prompted the Malaysian government in taking drastic efforts to transform the economy to a knowledge-based economy defining ‘entrepreneurship’ as one of the key elements. The purpose of this paper is to test the hypothesised model in the study using the structural modelling (SEM) approach to examine the entrepreneurial intentions of the Malaysian university students through entrepreneurship education. The SEM methodology takes a confirmatory (hypothesis testing approach) to analyse the structural theory. The study investigates the variables of entrepreneurship curricula, teaching methodologies and university roles and the mediating variables of attitude and stakeholder support system towards entrepreneurial intentions (Rengiah, P and Sentosa, I, 2014).

Data was collected from 396 students via questionnaires. The data was analysed using descriptive analysis for demographic factors. The exogenous variables of entrepreneurship education

which included the components of entrepreneurship curricula, teaching methodologies and university roles and the mediating variables of attitudes and stakeholder support systems were tested against the endogenous variable of entrepreneurial intentions. The paper discusses how the data is analysed using descriptive statistics and how the hypotheses are derived from the structural model for the study. A hypothesised model is developed for the study which has to be tested statistically in an analysis of the entire system of variables to determine the extent to which it is consistent with the data. If the model fits adequately it is found to be plausible of postulated relations among variables, if it is inadequate, then the testability of the relation is rejected (Byrne 2013).

**Review of Literature:**

The independent variable classified in this study is: entrepreneurship education with the components of entrepreneurship curricula, teaching methodologies and university roles in promoting entrepreneurship. The dependent variable is the entrepreneurial intentions of students in the Malaysian universities. Attitude and stakeholder support systems act as mediating variables. Table 1.0

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summarises the operational definitions of the variables in this study.

### **Development of the hypotheses:**

The following hypotheses are unproven propositions or suppositions that tentatively explain

certain facts or events. Therefore, these propositions are empirically testable by analysing the relationship between a single dependent (criterion variable and several independent) predictor variables (Sekaran 2006).

**Table 1.0:** Operational definition of variables.

Entrepreneurship curricula	The course and content of entrepreneurship programs taught in the university.	Oyugi 2014; Sheta 2012; Roudaki 2009; Solomon 2007; Souitaris et al. 2007; Menzies & Tatroff 2006.
Teaching methodologies	The methods of teaching and assessment of entrepreneurship that are part of the entrepreneurship education in the university.	Laguador 2013; Zahra et al., 2012; Fayolle 2008; Krueger 2007; Kuratko, 2005; Bechard & Gregoire, 2005b; Morse & Mitchell 2005.
University roles	The university environment that encourages the development of entrepreneurial activities among students, including university policy, entrepreneurial infrastructure and other support systems.	Zhang et al., 2014; Liñan et al., 2011; Yar Hamidi et al., 2008; Nurmi & Paasio 2007; Kuratko 2005; Rothaermel & Thursby, 2005.
Demographic factors	An individual's gender, ethnicity, age, religion, educational background, working experience and place of origin.	Danes et al., 2008, De Bruin, Brush and Welter, 2006; Shay & Terjensen 2005; Wilson, Marlino, & Kickul 2004; Sharma 2004.
Attitude factors	An individual's attitude measures, social cognition and processes.	Schlaegel & Koenig 2014; Kautonen Teemu et al., 2013; Schwarz et al., 2009; Franke & Luthje 2004; Lim & Teo 2003; Shane et al., 2003.
Stakeholder support system factors	The group that supports entrepreneurial activities such as the Government, financial institutions, and parents.	O'Connor 2013; Laspita et al., 2012; Karlan & Valdivia 2011; Matlay 2009; Romani et al., 2009; Fehr & Hishigsuren 2006; Stevenson and Lundstro'm 2005; Storey 2005;
Entrepreneurial intentions	The willingness of individuals to start entrepreneurship activities.	Fayolle & Gailly 2008; Frank and Luthje 2004; Peterman & Kennedy 2003 Autio et al., 1997; Dyer 1994; Boyd & Vozikis 1994.

Source: Kuratko, Hodgets, 2004, 6<sup>th</sup> edition, published by Thompson Publishers and other sources

#### **i) Entrepreneurship curricula:**

According to several existing research studies (Oyugi 2014, Roudaki 2009, Solomon 2007, Gibb 2002, Gottlieb & Ross 1997) it has been demonstrated, that entrepreneurship curricula is a critical factor in providing the best learning and training models.

**H1: Entrepreneurship curricula have a direct positive effect on entrepreneurial intentions among the Malaysian university students.**

#### **ii) Teaching methodologies:**

Entrepreneurship 'can be taught and many global institutions are teaching entrepreneurship programs'. Individuals may be born with the propensities toward entrepreneurship, but the level of entrepreneurship activity will be higher if entry-level entrepreneurial skills are taught (Laguador 2013, Zahra et al., 2012, Fayolle 2008, Krueger 2007, and Kuratko 2005)..

**H2: Teaching methodologies has a direct positive effect on entrepreneurial intentions among the Malaysian university students.**

#### **iii) Universities roles:**

The universities roles are of prime importance in developing the students' entrepreneurial careers and inclinations and the university teaching environment is the most influential factor in students' perception of an entrepreneurial career and intentions. Students who gain entrepreneurial experience were seen to be

more likely to consider starting their own businesses. The universities have to investigate what specific parts of the university education programs are most effective to raise entrepreneurial intentions (Zhang et al., 2014, Liñan et al., 2011, Yar Hamidi, et al. 2008, Nurmi & Paasio 2007 and Storey 2005).

**H3: The University roles in promoting entrepreneurship have a direct positive effect on entrepreneurial intentions among the Malaysian university students.**

#### **iv) Attitude:**

The variable attitude has become widely in use for the prediction of the likelihood to start an enterprise (Douglas 1999, Robinson et al. 1991). The attitudes are classified as: attitude towards money (Lim and Teo 2003), attitude towards change (Shane et al. 2003) and attitude towards entrepreneurship (Autio et al. 1997) and they are examined against entrepreneurial intentions.

**H4: Attitude has a direct positive effect on entrepreneurial intentions among the Malaysian university students.**

#### **v) Stakeholder support systems:**

The interdependency of all stake holders, the government, through public policies and programs need financing to ensure entrepreneurship will flourish (Stevenson and Lundstro'm 2005). Financial institutions play an important role as academic

entrepreneurs who involve in innovation have a high need for financing availability (Greene and Brown 1997). Parents are increasingly called to provide financial support to their children during their study in the higher educational institutes. This can impact on the welfare and responsibilities of the rest of their family (Matlay 2009).

**H5: Stakeholder support systems have a positive effect on entrepreneurial intentions among Malaysian university students.**

#### **Methodology:**

The methodology used in this study is descriptive statistics and Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) as the researcher is interested in studying theoretical constructs that cannot be observed. Entrepreneurial intention is the dependent variable in this study and it could be called 'latent' or 'unobservable' variable. Since latent variables are not observed directly they cannot be measured directly. As such the unobservable variable is linked to one that is observable making its measurement possible. The Structural Equation models in this research are schematically portrayed with configurations of four geometric symbols – a circle or ellipse, a rectangle, single headed arrows, and double headed arrows. The circles or ellipse represent unobserved latent variables, rectangles represent observed variables, single headed arrows ( $\rightarrow$ ) represent the impact of one variable on another, and double headed arrows ( $\leftrightarrow$ ) represent co-variances or correlations between pairs of variables. The error terms (e) unique factors to a variable represent residual variance within variables not accounted for path ways in the hypothesized model. Measurement error associated with an observed variable and residual error predicting an unobserved variable (Byrne 2013). The hypothesized model developed for the study has to be tested through Amos version 22.0 (Rengiah and Sentosa, 2014). Statistically, in an analysis of the entire system of variables, the aim is to determine the extent to which it is consistent with the data. If the model fits adequately it is found to be plausible of postulated relations among the variables. If it is inadequate, then the testability of the relation is rejected and a new model has to be generated. The unobservable or latent variable, entrepreneurial intention is linked to one that is observable making its measurement possible.

#### **Sampling and instrument:**

The sample size in SEM analysis must be sufficiently big to obtain stable and meaningful parameter estimates. Guidelines are given for absolute sample sizes available for the study. Small sample size is less than 100; medium sample size is 100 to 200 and large sample size is more than 200 (Hair *et al.*, 2014; Kline 1998). A total number of 600 questionnaires were distributed to the final year students from four Malaysian universities to students

in the areas of business, computing and information technology. A response rate of 77% was collected from the respondents which resulted in 464 completed questionnaires. The questionnaire consisted of seven sections, with a total of 78 questions relating to the seven variables of entrepreneurship curricula (9 items), teaching methods (9 items), university's role (9 items), demographic characteristics (18 items), attitude (12 items), stakeholder support system factors (12 items), and entrepreneurial intention (9 items). All the sections used the Likert interval scale of measurement (7 – strongly agree to 1 – strongly disagree) except for the demographic questions which were nominal and ordinal scales.

#### **Data screening:**

The 464 questionnaires that were collected were coded and saved in SPSS version 22.0 and analysed using AMOS version 22.0. Having treated the missing responses, the data was screened for outliers using the Mahanobolis  $d^2$  values as the measure of distance and was reported with the probability of  $p < 0.001$  (Byrne 2013). The results of the Mahalanobis distance analysis showed that out of the 464 cases, only 396 cases had an observation within the centre of scores that is Mahalanobis  $d^2$  of 99.62. The cases that were discarded from the total scores were 68 leaving 396 cases to be analysed for the study using Structural Equation Modelling. Statistical validity tests and analysis were conducted such as reliability test and composite reliability tests, validity tests using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) for construct validity, descriptive analysis, correlation and structural equation modelling analysis (SEM) using AMOS 22.0.

#### **Data Analysis:**

The data in this study is analysed using descriptive statistics initially for the demographic characteristics of 18 items and structural equation modelling technique of confirmatory factor analysis to test the hypothesised model.

#### **Profile of respondents:**

The profile of respondents in this section is analysed using descriptive statistics to analyse the demographic variables which consists of 18 items, namely gender, age, ethnicity, place of origin, order of birth, educational qualification, current program of study, educational funding, working experience, working sector, father's working status, mother's working status, choice of study program, family history of entrepreneurship, interest in the area of study, growth in the interest of entrepreneurship, motivation to become an entrepreneur, how the entrepreneurship program in the university has increased the skills. Frequency distributions were calculated for all the respondents in this research and are summarised in Table 2.0.

**Results of descriptive statistics:**

The profile includes a total of 464 respondents, out of which 238 (51.3%) were females and 226 (48.7%) were males. The age group of respondents showed 417 (89.9%) fell in the category of 21-25 years which is the normal age range of students in the university, 47 (10.1%) students were more than 26 years. Ethnicity showed that 276 (59.5%) were Malays, 112 (24.1%) were Chinese, 47 (10.1%) were

Indians and 29 (6.3%) were others. The ratios were proportionate according to the distribution of races among the total population. The place of origin from where the respondents originated showed that 297 (64%) were from urban areas while 167 (36%) were from rural areas. The birth order range showed that 154 (33.2%) fell into the eldest child category, 133 (28.7%) fell into the youngest child category and 177 (38.2%) as others in the group.

**Table 2.0:** Profile of respondents (N= 464).

Description of variable	Number	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	227	48.7
Female	238	51.3
<b>Age</b>		
21-25 years	417	89.9
26-30 years	38	8.2
>30 years	9	1.9
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
Malay	276	59.5
Chinese	112	24.1
Indian	47	10.1
Others	29	6.3
<b>Original place</b>		
Rural	167	36
Urban	297	64
<b>Birth order</b>		
Eldest	154	33.2
Youngest	133	28.7
Only child	30	6.5
None of the above	147	31.7
<b>Educational qualifications</b>		
STPM	190	40.9
Matriculation	65	14
Diploma	183	39.4
Others	26	5.6
<b>Student program</b>		
Business	249	53.7
Computing/IT	215	46.3
<b>Education funding</b>		
Scholarship	50	10.8
Study loan	325	70
Sponsorship	6	1.3
Self-financing	83	17.9
<b>Working experience</b>		
Yes	145	31.3
No	158	34.1
Worked > 6 months	123	26.5
Worked < 6 months	38	8.2
<b>Working sector</b>		
Public	45	9.7
Private	217	46.8
Parents/relatives	28	6
Friends/others	22	4.7
None of the above	152	32.8
<b>Father's status</b>		
Business	116	25
Full-time	220	47.4
Part-time	17	3.7
Not working	67	14.4
Deceased	44	9.5
<b>Mother's status</b>		
Business	49	10.6
Full-time	133	28.7
Part-time	28	6
Not working	244	52.6
Deceased	10	2.2
<b>Program choice</b>		
Parent's choice	34	7.3
Own choice	415	89.4

Others	15	3.2
<b>Family history</b>		
Parents	131	28.2
Siblings	36	7.8
Relatives	129	27.8
None	168	36.2
<b>Student interest</b>		
Job-employment	151	32.5
Self-employment	227	48.9
To form a company with friends	62	13.4
To help parents in business	24	5.2
<b>Increased interest</b>		
Hands on learning approach	96	20.7
Internship programs	110	23.7
Entrepreneurship activities	234	50.4
Entrepreneurship clubs	24	5.2
<b>Motivation</b>		
I like the program	109	23.5
I enjoy the entrepreneurial activities	144	31
I have started business with my friends	39	8.4
I like to be self-employed	172	37.1
<b>Increase in skills</b>		
Communication	186	40.1
Problem-solving	87	18.8
Job-related	46	9.9
Self-development	145	31.3

Source: SPSS 22.0

The educational qualifications showed that 255 (54.9%) had STPM (Higher school certificate) and Matriculation, while 209 (45.1%) had Diploma and other qualifications. Most of the students were qualified to study the degree program in the universities. Educational funding for the programs revealed that 325 (70%) were on study loans, 50 (10.8%) were on scholarships and 89 (20.2%) were on sponsorship or self-financing. From the total of 464 respondents, 306 (66%) had working experience, while 158 (34%) had no working experience. With regard to working experience, it revealed that 211 (45.5%) worked in the private sector, 45 (9.7%) worked in the public sector, while 50 (10.8%) worked for parents, relatives and friends. Father's working status showed that 116 (25%) were involved in business, 220 (47.4%) were working full-time and 128 (27.6%) were working part-time, not working or deceased. Mother's working status showed that 49 (10.6%) were involved in business, 133 (28.7%) were working full-time, and 282 (60.8%) were working part-time, not working or deceased. Out of the 464 students, 249 (53.7%) were Business students and 215 (46.3%) were Computer or information technology students. The study included only Business and Computer/IT students. Students selected entrepreneurship program as their own choice was 415 (89.4%) whereas parent's choice and others showed 49 (10.5%). This indicated that the students' intentions in choosing the entrepreneurship program were on their own.

Students family history of entrepreneurship, where parents, siblings and relatives comprised of 296 (63.8%) and who did not have family history of entrepreneurship as 168 (36.2%). This also revealed that the majority of students had a family history of entrepreneurship. The student's interest in

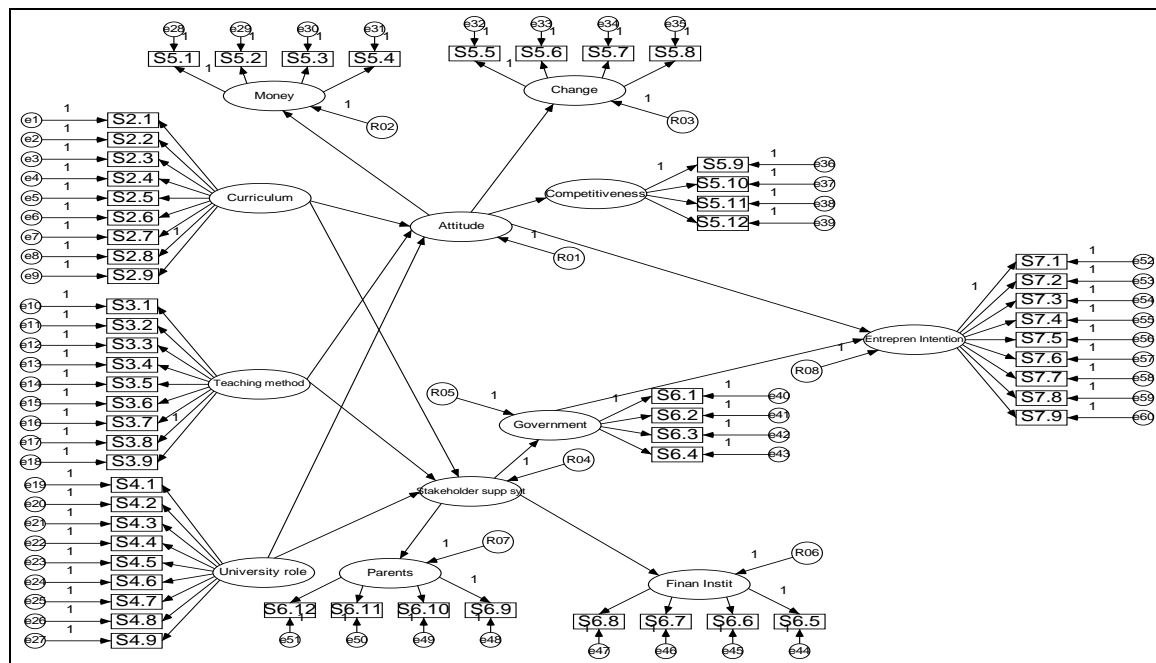
entrepreneurship showed that those who wanted to go into self-employment, form a company with friends and help parents in business were 303 (51.1%) and those interested in job employment were 151 (32.5%). These figures again revealed the students' intentions in entrepreneurship. The increased interest in entrepreneurship in entrepreneurship activities, clubs and internship programs were 368 (79.3%) while students' interest in hands on learning approach were 96 (20.7%) and revealed increased interest in entrepreneurship. The students' motivation in entrepreneurship showed students who liked the program were 109 (23.5%), who enjoyed the entrepreneurial activities as 144 (31.0%), who had started business with their friends as 39 (8.4%) and who liked to be self-employed as 172 (37.2%). The results revealed that all are motivated in entrepreneurship. The increase in skills obtained from entrepreneurship programs revealed that 145 (31.3%) were favouring self-development skills, while 186 (40.1%) were favouring communication skills, 87 (18.8%) were favouring problem-solving skills and 46 (9.9%) were favouring job-related skills. Most of them favoured communication, problem-solving and self-development skills that were crucial in entrepreneurship activities.

#### **Development of the hypothesised model:**

The present study is hypothesised and shows a correlation between the exogenous variable of entrepreneurship education (curricula, teaching methodologies and universities roles) and the endogenous variable of entrepreneurial intentions. Attitude and stakeholder support systems have a mediating effect in the relationship between the entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial

intentions (Rengiah and Sentosa, 2014). Factor analysis is the best-known statistical procedure for investigating relations between sets of observed and latent variables. The study uses confirmatory factor analysis, as the researcher has some knowledge of the underlying latent variables structure based on the theoretical knowledge and empirical studies (Byrne 2013). Structural Equation Modelling is used to confirm the measurement as hypothesised in the structural model. SEM is a powerful statistical technique that combines the measurement model or

CFA and the structural model into a simultaneous statistical test. SEM is valuable in inferential data analysis and hypothesis testing where the pattern of inter-relationships among the constructs are specified a priori and grounded in established theory (Byrne 2013). It has the flexibility to model relationship among multiple predictors and criterion variables, and statistically tests a priori theoretical assumptions against empirical data through CFA (Chin 1998). The hypothesised model of the study is depicted in Fig. 1.0.



Source : AMOS 22.0

Source: AMOS 22.0

Fig. 1.0: Proposed hypothesised CFA model.

### Conclusion and Findings:

The data in this study was analysed through descriptive and inferential statistics using structural equation modelling (SEM). The eighteen items in the demographic variable consists of gender, age, ethnicity, original place, birth order, educational qualifications, student program, educational funding, working experience, working sector, father's status, mother's status, program choice, family history, student interest, increased interest, motivation and increase in skills. Majority of the students in the study were females within the age of 21 to 25, ethnicity was Malay, who enrolled in the program of business and information technology and sponsored on study loans. The results revealed that the students' intentions in choosing the entrepreneurship program were on their own and majority of them had a family history of entrepreneurship. The students had an interest to go into self-employment, had an increased interest in entrepreneurship activities, were motivated in entrepreneurship and were interested in increasing their skills in entrepreneurship.

The study used Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) to test the model developed for the study through AMOS 22.0. The hypothesised model developed showed how the endogenous variables of entrepreneurship education its components of entrepreneurship curricula, teaching methodologies and university roles, were tested with the endogenous variable of entrepreneurial intentions through the mediating variables of attitudes and stake holder support systems. The next stage is where the hypothesised model has to be tested as a two-stage SEM using confirmatory factor analysis and goodness fit index.

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