

STUDENT READINESS FOR THE FIELD OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP: A SURVEY OF POLYTECHNIC AND COMMUNITY COLLEGES IN JOHOR

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Abstract: This study measured the readiness level of Polytechnic and Community College students in Johor to venture into entrepreneurship. It also aimed to identify the influence of student's attitudes, subjective norms and behavior control on their entrepreneurial readiness intentions. The research used a quantitative approach, where the data collected was analysed using IBM SPSS version 29. Additionally, the study adopted the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) to identify factors influencing student's intentions and readiness for entrepreneurship. A total of 305 questionnaires were randomly distributed to students from Polytechnic and Community Colleges in Johor who participated in entrepreneurship programs organized by the Johor Polytechnic and Community College Entrepreneurship Unit throughout 2024. The findings revealed that the variables attitude and subjective norms significantly influenced student's entrepreneurial readiness intentions. However, behavior control showed no significant impact. Overall, the average score for the student's readiness level in entrepreneurship was 3.48, which indicates a moderately high readiness level to venture into entrepreneurship after graduation. One of the suggested recommendations is to use a qualitative approach, such as interviews to gain more in-depth and comprehensive insights into the factors influencing entrepreneurial intentions among students.

Keywords: *Readiness Intention, Students, Planned Behaviour Theory (TPB), Entrepreneurship*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship has become a catalyst for change and economic progress in this challenging era of globalization. The Ministry of Higher Education (KPT), through the Entrepreneurship Action Plan for Higher Education Institutions 2021-2025, continuously supports efforts to cultivate entrepreneurship among students. The implementation of entrepreneurial activities in Polytechnics and Community Colleges is based on this action plan, which encourages high-impact programs to assist in developing student's preparedness to venture into entrepreneurship through innovation and technology. According to the Director-General of Polytechnic and Community College Education, YBhg. Dato' Dr. Haji Mohd Zahari bin Ismail, during the Director-General Aspirations Ceremony for Polytechnic and Community College Education 2023, a total of 40,380 students have been trained in entrepreneurship during their studies and more than 7,000 of them have successfully become entrepreneurs.

Entrepreneurship should be the primary choice for students today, as it opens broader and more competent opportunities for the labour market in today's challenging economy. Despite discussions on the potential of entrepreneurship as an alternative to salaried jobs among Polytechnic and Community College graduates, the fact remains that the participation of graduates and students in this field is still low. This is supported by a study from Md Sum et al. (2021a), which states that student's willingness to choose this career path remains low. Furthermore, negative perceptions about entrepreneurship careers, particularly regarding starting their own business, remain irrelevant (Obschonka & Stuetzer, 2017).

The question arises as to whether the trend of involvement is due to the student's low preparedness and unwillingness to break through the mindset barrier to enter a field known for its risks, capital requirements and lack of a salary. Therefore, this study is necessary to assess the preparedness level of Polytechnic and Community College students in Johor pursuing entrepreneurship. The study is expected to identify the influence of attitude, subjective norms and behavior control on student's willingness to engage in this field. Additionally, this study aims to determine the most dominant factors influencing the preparedness level of Polytechnic and Community College students in Johor in pursuing entrepreneurship. Ultimately, by understanding the preparedness level and the dominant influencing factors, appropriate steps can be taken to improve the preparedness and interest of Polytechnic and Community College students in entrepreneurship.

The primary objective of this study is to measure the preparedness level of Polytechnic and Community College students in Johor to pursue entrepreneurship. The second objective is to identify the influence of attitude, subjective norms and behavior control on student's preparedness to engage in entrepreneurship.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Entrepreneurship education influences entrepreneurial intentions by encouraging individuals to engage in entrepreneurial activities (Dickson et al., 2008; Dutta et al., 2010; Sanchez, 2011). Despite its growing popularity, it is widely acknowledged that well-structured entrepreneurship programs are still lacking (Matlay, 2005; Maritz & Brown, 2013). Some researchers have focused on the theoretical content of entrepreneurship courses and programs (Fiet, 2001), while others have emphasized the adoption of a more practical, activity-based approach (Mbaziira & Oyedokun, 2007; Dermol & Cater, 2013).

Additionally, Zurairah Jais et al. (2023) found that a person's attitude can predict their entrepreneurial intention. Other studies also support this finding. For example, Dinis et al. (2013) mentioned that entrepreneurship clearly affects a person's attitude, career direction and entrepreneurial mindset over time. Roszi Naszariah (2024) added that attitude and personal traits influence the intention to start a business among new entrepreneurs.

Zairon Mustaph (2018) further explained that people who understand the entrepreneurship's risks, benefits, and challenges of entrepreneurship are more likely to think about becoming entrepreneurs. They feel confident in their decisions and act based on that belief. This shows that self-efficacy has a strong positive relationship with entrepreneurial intention (Madzan Ali Amaran, 2015).

In the study by Nurul Jasmin and Noor Aslinda (2020), subjective norms were identified as a factor that enhances entrepreneurial intention. Subjective norms refer to how an individual perceives the opinions of those around them, such as family and friends. According to Hockerts et al. (2017), people are more likely to act based on the views they consider important. Christina (2017) added that subjective norms include advice or motivation from others to do or not do something considered important.

Entrepreneurial intention plays an important role in motivating people to engage in business (Mat et al., 2016). Maresch (2016) stated that the stronger someone desire a particular behavior, the more likely they will do it. Behavior control, which is influenced by self-efficacy, also affects a person's belief in how easy or hard it is to perform a task (Cruz, 2015).

Tiwari et al. (2017) mentioned that behavior control refers to the belief in one's ability to perform specific tasks, including the activities needed to complete them. In the study by Mwiya et al. (2017), behavior control was an important factor in understanding entrepreneurial intention. The studies by Nurul Jasmin & Noor Aslinda (2020) and Omar NH et al. (2023) also support that behavior control is a key part of entrepreneurship because it reflects self-efficacy, which influences a person's behavior.

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) by Icek Ajzen (1991) is widely used to predict and understand people's intentions and behaviors. The theory is based on the idea that a person's behavior is influenced by their intention, which is shaped by three main factors: attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavior control. These TPB factors show that attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavior control are key variables ~~that influence~~ influencing a person's intention to act. When people have a positive attitude, supportive subjective norms, and high perceived behavior control, their intention to act increases. This theory is useful in entrepreneurship studies as it helps explain how internal and external factors influence a person's decision to enter the field. It remains relevant in various areas such as psychology, marketing, education and entrepreneurship development because it helps explain the relationship between intention and behavior.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

This study uses a quantitative research method in the form of a survey. Surveys are a simple and popular method for identifying the general characteristics of a population (Chua, 2006). A simple random sampling technique was used to select respondents. This sampling technique is the same one used in the study by Lim Siok Ling et al. (2022). The data collection method was through the distribution of questionnaires. The questionnaire form was distributed online (Google Form) to gather data on the influence of entrepreneurial intention on student's preparedness to venture into entrepreneurship. This method was chosen because it is proven to expedite the data collection process and save costs (Batubara, 2017).

The population refers to the objects or subjects within a certain area who meet specific criteria set by the researcher to be selected as respondents for the study sample (Slamet Asari, 2018). In this study, the researcher targeted the population sample among students of Polytechnics and Community Colleges in Johor who participated in entrepreneurship programs organised by the Polytechnic and Community College Entrepreneurship Unit of the Johor Zone throughout 2024. Due to limited time, the researcher was able to collect responses from only 300 respondents.

The data for this study will be analysed using SPSS software, where the researcher will perform descriptive analysis (mean) to address the first objective. For the second objective, multiple linear regression will be used to identify the influence of attitude, subjective norms and behavior control on student's preparedness to venture into entrepreneurship. The study also refers to adapting the Entrepreneurial Intention Model (Linan & Chen, 2009) as the theoretical

framework. This model consists of three main components: attitude, subjective norms and behavior control, which influence preparedness in pursuing entrepreneurship and ultimately encourage an individual to become an entrepreneur. The study sets three independent variables: attitude, subjective norm and behavior control. The dependent variable is the preparedness to engage in entrepreneurship. This means that in the context of this study, the factor of intention is influenced by entrepreneurial preparedness. Preparedness refers to a higher willingness to act based on the intention to become an entrepreneur, and this entrepreneurial preparedness is influenced by attitude, subjective norms and behavior control.

4.0 DISCUSSION OF ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The SPSS software version 29 was used to analysed the data. The data collection period was four weeks, from November 3, 2024, to December 1, 2024. The demographic findings are as follows:

4.1 Analysis of student's readiness for entrepreneurship

The study used descriptive analysis, specifically mean score analysis, to address the first objective. The detailed findings and discussion of the study are presented in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Students readiness for entrepreneurship

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
1. I am ready to do whatever it takes to become an entrepreneur.	3.61	0.98
2. I am always serious about pursuing a career in entrepreneurship.	3.60	1.07
3. I am always highly motivated to become an entrepreneur.	3.57	1.11
4. I am seeking support and opportunities to start a career as an entrepreneur.	3.72	1.07
5. I consider entrepreneur as my career.	3.33	1.12
6. I am currently working on starting my own business.	3.22	1.23
7. I am prepared to make entrepreneurship my primary source of income.	3.36	1.15
8. I am willing to invest a large amount of capital to start my business.	3.22	1.17
9. I explore entrepreneurial knowledge to become a successful entrepreneur.	3.62	1.16
10. I make future plans for my business.	3.52	1.17

Overall Mean Value: 3.48 : Standard Deviation: 0.97

Based on Table 1, the results show the average mean for student's readiness to pursue entrepreneurship. The highest mean value, 3.72, was obtained from item 4, "I am seeking support and opportunities to start a career as an entrepreneur." On the other hand, the lowest mean value, 3.22, was obtained from two items: item 6, "I am currently working on starting my own business," and item 8, "I am willing to invest a large amount of capital to start my business." Overall, the mean score for student's

readiness in entrepreneurship is 3.48, indicating a moderately high level of readiness for entrepreneurship after graduation.

4.2 Analysis of the influence of attitude, subjective norms and behavior control on students readiness

The multiple regression analysis was used to identify the influence of attitude, subjective norms and behavior control on student's readiness to pursue entrepreneurship. The study also aims to determine which factor most dominantly influences student's readiness for entrepreneurship. A summary of the findings is provided in Tables 2 and 3 below:

Table 2: Model summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Standard Error of the Estimate
1	.846a	.725b	.712	.51317

Notes:

a. Dependent Variable: Students Entrepreneurial Readiness

b. Predictors: (Constant): Attitudes, Subjective Norms, Perceived Behavior Control

Table 3 : Coefficients

Unstandardized Coefficients			Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
Model	β	Standard Deviation	Beta		
Constant	-.267	.151		1.768	.078
Attitudes	.632	.057	.585	11.225	.001**
Subjective Norms	.341	.051	.305	6.791	.001**
Perceived Behavior Control	.031	.061	.027	.529	.598

Notes:

Predictors: (Constant): Attitudes, Subjective Norms, Perceived Behavior Control

Dependent Variable: Students' Entrepreneurial Readiness

R Square = .725, F Statistic = 245.319, Sig. = 0.00**

**p < 0.01b

Tables 2 and 3 illustrate the results of multiple regression analysis examining the independent variables, attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavior control and their influence on the dependent variable, student's entrepreneurial readiness. The R Square value in Table 2 is .725, indicating that 72.5% of the variance in student's entrepreneurial readiness can be explained by the variables of attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavior control. The remaining 27.5% is attributed to other factors not covered in this study. This value of 72.5% is considered robust in explaining the influence of the independent variables on student's readiness to pursue entrepreneurship.

Based on Table 3, the multiple regression model can be expressed as follows:

$$SER = \alpha + \beta_1 C_1 + \beta_2 C_2 + \beta_3 C_3 + e$$

$$SER = -0.267 + 0.632C_1 + 0.341C_2 + 0.031C_3 + e$$

Where:

SER	: Student's Entrepreneurial Readiness
α	: Constant
C_1	: Attitudes variable
C_2	: Subjective Norms variable
C_3	: Perceived Behavior Control variable
e	: Error term

This model indicates that attitude and subjective norms significantly influence student's entrepreneurial readiness, with $\beta_1 = 0.632$ ($p = 0.001$) and $\beta_2 = 0.341$ ($p = 0.001$). The results show that attitude is the most dominant factor. This finding is supported by studies by Salam, S. N. et al. (2022) and Nurul Jasmin & Noor Aslinda (2020), which confirm that students with a positive attitude towards entrepreneurship are more ready to pursue it. Subjective norms also play an important role, but to a lesser extent than attitude, reflecting the role of social support and peer influence in enhancing student's readiness. As for the factor of behavior control, the study found that it does not have a significant influence on student's readiness to pursue entrepreneurship, with a p-value of 0.598 and a minimal impact of 3.1% ($\beta_3 = 0.031$).

5.0 CONCLUSION

The results of the descriptive analysis show that the readiness level of students from Polytechnics and Community Colleges in Johor, who participated in the entrepreneurship program organised by the Entrepreneurship Unit of the Polytechnic and Community Colleges Zone Johor in 2024, is at a moderately high level. This indicates that they still have an interest in pursuing entrepreneurship. This readiness is evident through their involvement in small businesses such as selling snacks, cosmetics, clothing, mobile phone maintenance services and more during their studies. These findings align with the study by Md Sum et al. (2021b), which states that graduate's readiness to choose entrepreneurship as a career is high. Overall, the regression model formed shows an R square value of 72.5%, indicating that the model is strong in explaining the influence of variables such as attitude, subjective norms and behavior control on student's entrepreneurial intentions. The study finds that attitude and subjective norms are significant in influencing student's entrepreneurial intentions. However, the third variable, behavior control, was found to have an insignificant effect on student's readiness to pursue entrepreneurship. The most dominant factor influencing student's intentions is their attitude. This suggests that a positive perception of entrepreneurship (such as the benefits, satisfaction, profits and success gained) is the primary motivator for students to consider entrepreneurship as a career path.

This study's findings can benefit stakeholders such as the Student Recruitment and Development Division and the Polytechnic and Community College Education Department. They should consider ways to increase student's readiness for entrepreneurship in their planning and actions. Research on entrepreneurial readiness, especially among Polytechnic and Community College students, is crucial as it can contribute to the country and further enhance student's interest in choosing entrepreneurship as a career. For the Entrepreneurship Unit of the Polytechnic and Community Colleges Zone Johor, contributions to entrepreneurial development can be enhanced by implementing more practical entrepreneurship activities, programs and training in institutions. Entrepreneurship development at Polytechnics and Community Colleges should provide the best opportunities to attract more students to engage in entrepreneurial activities. The Entrepreneurship Unit is also encouraged to organise more programs and practical training related to entrepreneurial activities. Through student involvement in these activities, they can nurture their interest and knowledge in entrepreneurship. Additionally, with the TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) skills students acquire in their respective programs at Polytechnics and Community Colleges, they can be motivated and potentially pursue entrepreneurship after graduation. TVET and entrepreneurship complement each other as both emphasise practical skills, innovation and job creation opportunities. Through a combination of TVET and entrepreneurship foundations, skilled students can become competitive entrepreneurs, contributing to local and national economic development.

For the Malaysian government, contributions from the entrepreneurship sector can be enhanced by focusing more on plans that encourage the youth to get involved in entrepreneurial activities. The government can leverage the vast potential of the entrepreneurship sector by focusing specifically on youth and graduates. Through strategic plans that include education, incentives and continuous support, this effort can not only boost the national economy but also develop a generation of young entrepreneurs who are competitive, creative and innovative. The government needs to provide more opportunities and facilities for graduates to start businesses, thus encouraging entrepreneurship as one of the career options after graduation. By encouraging more graduates and youths to engage in entrepreneurship, the government will benefit from reduced unemployment, increased local economic growth and enhanced national competitiveness on a global scale.

This study has several limitations. It focuses only on students from Polytechnics and Community Colleges in Johor who participated in the entrepreneurship program organised by the Entrepreneurship Unit of the Polytechnic and Community Colleges Zone Johor in 2024. Therefore, the study's population and sample size are limited, and in the future, this research should be expanded to a larger sample size.

Based on the study's findings, students need to pay more attention to factors such as attitude, subjective norms and behavior control in increasing their intentions and deepening their knowledge of entrepreneurship. For future studies, several aspects can be considered:

1. Expanding the scope of the study to compare several zones of the Polytechnic and Community Colleges Entrepreneurship Unit.
2. To use a qualitative approach through interviews with students to obtain more in-depth findings.

3. Adding mediating or moderating factors between dependent and independent variables for a more comprehensive study.
4. Investigating how student's choice of TVET fields can encourage their readiness to pursue entrepreneurship as one of their career paths.
5. Investigating government policies and funding opportunities that can attract student involvement in entrepreneurship.

By enhancing the level of readiness and awareness of entrepreneurship among students, it is hoped that more graduates will choose entrepreneurship as their career choice in the future. In line with current developments, entrepreneurship programs should also adapt to technological advancements (technology-centric) so that these students remain relevant to the current trends.

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