

The Relationships between Learning Orientation, Subjective Norm and Entrepreneurial Intention among the Undergraduate Students in Malaysia

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Abstract--- *The purpose of this research is to examine the relationship between learning orientation and subjective norm towards entrepreneurial intention among undergraduate students in one of the public university in Malaysia. The data is analyzed through survey (questionnaire) from 488 undergraduate students in one of the public university in the Northern Region of Malaysia. Hypotheses for all direct effects between the predictors (eg. learning orientation and subjective norm) and criterion (entrepreneurial intention) are tested using regression analysis. Results presented that students in this university have high level of entrepreneurial intention ($\mu = 3.64$); learning orientation ($\mu = 3.75$) as well as subjective norm ($\mu = 3.47$). Also, positive association are found between students' entrepreneurial intention and learning orientation ($r = .49$, $p = .00$) and subjective norm ($r = .63$, $p = .00$). Practical implications of the results are discussed. Last but not least, several suggestions for the institution to increase the level of students' learning orientation and subjective norm have also been touched.*

Keywords--- *Entrepreneurial Intention, Learning Orientation, Subjective Norm.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Higher institutions play an important role in developing an entrepreneurial society. They are able to stimulate their students a sense of understanding and presuming of the essential to be a job creator rather than a job seeker once the students' graduated. They can also play a role in developing some traits such to cultivate the learning orientation, or to instill subjective norm in students to provide the necessary support for students to have a high level of intention towards becoming the entrepreneurs. Self-employment as an entrepreneur is a career that must be given attention as an alternative for graduates besides those employed in facing the volatile limited job market and high retrenchment rate [1]. In addition, entrepreneurship can be a savior for reducing an unemployment rate in a country as it is not only impact to one individual but there will be opportunities to create new jobs [2]. Given that, it will become crucial to examine the extent on how the higher institution can play some sort of roles towards developing the entrepreneurial intention among students in the institution, specifically in the aspect of learning orientation and subjective norm. The totality of the experience that students gain at higher education is, and will be, influenced by many factors [3]. This may include the prior experiences they have had in education; their personal aspirations for the future; their expectations concerning their life while in the higher institution; and how their experience in the higher institution supports their future aspirations.

Past studies such as from [3],[4],[5],[6] and [2] shown that many factors created influence on entrepreneurial

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intentions. These factors are included of creativity, self-efficacy, locus of control, need for achievement, desirability of entrepreneurship, risk taking propensity, and theory of planned behaviour (TPB). However, less studies have been done to look on the relationship between learning orientation and entrepreneurial intention. Most of the previous researchers (eg. [7],[8],[9],[10]) tend to examine the impact of learning orientation directly on the firm (business) performance. Logically, learning orientation also may play some sort of roles in determining the intention level among students to become the entrepreneurs before it can be impacted on the firm (business) performance.

Equally important, the empirical evidence on the impact of subjective norm (one factor of TPB) on entrepreneurial intention among students in Malaysia is still need to be investigated. This is because based on the existing literature, the relationship between these variables is still ambiguous when the previous studies presented the inconsistent findings (eg. [11],[12],[13],[14]).

In the Malaysian context, the unemployment is reported as relatively low and stable at around three percent. However, the Malaysia's unemployment rate remained unchanged at 3.3% in November 2018 on track for the third straight month and the number of unemployed persons was 516,200 which was an increase of 2.2% from a year ago. Thus, there is a need to reduce the unemployment rate and the study on determining entrepreneurial intention among students in the public higher education institution may appear as crucial as these group of the undergraduate students may become involve in the entrepreneurship once they have graduated. Therefore, the involvement of the future undergraduate students in entrepreneurship may help the country to reduce the percentage of the nation unemployment rate. In accordance to that, this research attempts to reveal the relationship between learning orientation and subjective norm towards entrepreneurial intention among the undergraduate students in one of the Malaysian public university.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Entrepreneurial Intention

Entrepreneurship process could be classified as a planned behaviour because it emerges over time and requires substantial planning; therefore, entrepreneurial intentions are the best predictors of entrepreneurship behaviour [15]. Entrepreneurial intention is also considered to be the first step in new business formation [16]. The inclusion of entrepreneurial intentions as the first step in the entrepreneurship development dimension makes entrepreneurial intentionality the most important step in career choice [3]. Entrepreneurial intention is defined by [17] as the intention to start a new business. Previous evidences on entrepreneurial intention reported that several factors have been found to be the determinants of this criterion. For example, [4] conducted a survey among 746 students in Universiti Malaysia Sabah. This effort resulted that the relationship between risk taking propensity is significantly related to intention to become an entrepreneur even the ability of risk taking propensity to explain the variance in entrepreneurial intention is very small.

In Croatia, [5] conducted a research which involved with 315 undergraduate students of economic fields and presented that the self-assessment of entrepreneurial tendencies and abilities is positively associated with the perceptions of entrepreneurial self-efficacy and desirability of entrepreneurship, which also contributed positively to explain the entrepreneurial intentions. In addition, it was found that entrepreneurial tendencies and abilities

influenced entrepreneurial intentions only indirectly, through entrepreneurial self-efficacy and desirability of entrepreneurship. Meanwhile, an effort of [6] which engaged with 180 students at several universities in Hanoi, Vietnam confirmed that individual difference variables such as risk-taking propensity and creativity; and personality traits, such as locus of control and need for achievement had strong impacts on the intention to start a new venture. Whereas in Nigeria, [3] study which involved with 307 students found that the most influential factor of entrepreneurial intention was creativity. At the same time, they presented that entrepreneurial intentions increased with increase of age among the students.

Given the previous literature, empirical evidences have revealed that several behaviour determinants of entrepreneurial intention are included of risk taking propensity, entrepreneurial tendencies and abilities, self-efficacy, creativity, locus of control and need for achievement. Thus, lack of knowledge has known on the possible impact of learning orientation on entrepreneurial intention although learning orientation is very dominant in triggering students' entrepreneurial intention while they are still in the university environment. Not only that, although many researchers focused on the role of TPB and its relationship with entrepreneurial intention; however, limited knowledge is revealed regarding the relationship between one of TPB factor which was subjective norm and entrepreneurial intention. For example, [13] found that subjective norms play a major role and influence on entrepreneurial intention among the business students in Bangalore. The similar result is reported on the relationship between subjective norm and entrepreneurial intention in [12].

In contradict, [11] presented that subjective norm did not significantly affect entrepreneurial intention among women in Sarajevo. Similarly, a work of [14] resulted that subjective norm, is insignificant to entrepreneurial intention among the Nigerian students in Malaysia. Given that, the impact of subjective norm on entrepreneurial intention among the Malaysian students is important to be examined. This is because the management can take the appropriate action once the relationship between these variables has been revealed.

Therefore, it is the interest of this research to shed some lights regarding the relationships between learning orientation, subjective norm and entrepreneurial intention among students from one of the Malaysian public university. When students are provided with the reasonable stimulus to enhance the level of their learning orientation, hence it is assumed that the level of students' entrepreneurial intention can be increased. Similarly, it is important to know the role of subjective norm towards increasing the level of entrepreneurial intention among students in this university. If the information is at hands, thus the appropriate actions whether the managements need to develop or to eliminate subjective norm among student towards their intention to be the entrepreneur can be implemented. In a long run it will increase the students' entrepreneurial intention which this may be the potential factor to reduce the unemployment rate in Malaysia once these students have been graduated. Therefore, by combining these two factors and interrogatively tested them in one research will enhance our understanding on how to provide a way for a higher level of entrepreneurial intention among all students; particularly in this public university.

Learning Orientation

Entrepreneurial and learning orientations have attracted the interest of scholars over the decades [8,18].

However, less evidence is revealed on the relationship between learning orientation and entrepreneurial intention. Past researchers stated that learning orientation comprised of commitment to learning, open-mindedness and shared vision [19]. Thus, this may imply the students' commitment to learn, their open-mindedness as well as their shared vision towards entrepreneurship based on the entrepreneurial education (course) which has been learned from the university. Based on the existing literature, learning orientation is conceptualized as a basic attitude towards learning such as the organizational and managerial characteristics that facilitate the organizational learning process [20]; and is a form of knowledge-based resource capability [21]. In this context, learning orientation is viewed on how the management in this university facilitated several values that influenced the learning process towards enforcing the students' tendency to create and use knowledge based on the entrepreneurial education which has been taught. As added by [20], management commitment can support a culture that fosters learning orientation as one of its main values. Therefore, in this case; learning orientation may also refer to the management (university) commitment to support a culture that fosters students' learning orientation as one of its main values.

Learning orientation is defined by [22] as a basic attitude toward learning. Learning is crucial to every level of people including the students. This is because learning can help students to develop their ability towards the entrepreneurship, starting with their intention to become the entrepreneurs while they are still in the university's environment. Empirical evidences confirmed that learning orientation plays a significant role in enhancing firm performance (eg. [7],[9],[10]). For example, [7] found a significant association between learning orientation and performance of small-medium enterprises (SMEs) in Malaysia. Similarly, [9] and [10] presented that learning orientation is a good predictor to improve the performance of SMEs in Mexico and Indonesia. However, less is known regarding the impact of learning orientation on entrepreneurial intention even though learning orientation is a key component of the business (entrepreneurship) performance. Thus, the relationship between learning orientation and entrepreneurial intention is important to be revealed because the intention towards entrepreneurship may lead the entrepreneurs to excel in the business (entrepreneurship) performance.

In addition, [23] claimed that for any entrepreneurship education programme to achieve its goals, the structure and the key components of such programme must favourably motivate students learning orientation and considerations of entrepreneurship as a future career. He added that the design and process of the entrepreneurial education offered in the university can facilitate the undergraduates to be more learning oriented particularly if the design and process of such programmes are active experimentation oriented. Given that, it becomes the challenge for the university to provide the entrepreneurship education which can enhance students learning orientation. In addition, [24] found that learning orientation and passion for work invigorate the role of these feasibility and desirability considerations in enhancing entrepreneurial intention. Moreover, [10] presented that learning orientation and entrepreneurial orientation is associated significantly; where entrepreneurial orientation is considered as individual or organizational willingness to accept new opportunities and responsibility to have an influence on change [10]. Therefore, on the basis of this discussion, this research suggests the first hypothesis. H_1 : The relationship between learning orientation and entrepreneurial intention among students in this university is significantly related.

Subjective Norm

TPB or theory of planned behaviour is introduced by [15]. It discusses on the three main factors such as attitude toward behaviour, subjective norm and perceived behavioural control. Attitude toward behaviour is positive or negative evaluation of the individual's self-performance on certain behaviours. Subjective norm is the individual perception of a particular behaviour, which is influenced by the assessment of significant others (eg. parents, spouses, friends, teachers). Perceived control behaviour is the individual's perception about the ease or difficulty to perform certain behaviours.

Subjective norm is important since it relates with the view of an individual who can influence one [12]. As stated by [25], subjective norms are the views that are considered important by individuals who advise the individual to perform or not perform certain behaviours; and motivation accompanied by a willingness to do or not do something that was considered important. In this research context, subjective norm refers to the views that are considered important by university representative who advise students to perform or not to perform certain behaviours which are related to become the entrepreneurs. It also refers to the motivation accompanied by the University for Students to do or not to do specific activities of entrepreneurship when students have graduated. Subjective norm refers to the extent to which relevant persons or individuals support or do not support the performance of a particular behaviour [11].

According to [11], subjective norm is commonly measured in research by asking participants to what extent they think their closest ones (eg. family members, friends, or colleagues) would support them in engaging in entrepreneurial activities. Because the perceptions of individuals are subjective in their very nature, therefore this factor is entitled as a subjective norm. As stated by [13] if the target behaviour is more attractive to the individual (student), therefore the intention will be higher; thus the people around the student think that she or he should perform the target behaviour. This perceived social pressure to take, or not to take entrepreneurship as career, is one of the variables that precede the decision, said to be subjective norm [13]. Other researchers [2] documented that subjective norm measures on how individuals perceive the close person in their surrounding think they could execute the behaviour; and the perceived opinions of these close person encourage them to decide whether they will execute the behaviour or not.

Although past studies have investigated the relationship between subjective norm and entrepreneurial intention however, the results are still inconsistent. To date, [14] found the insignificant association between subjective norm and entrepreneurial intention although their findings on attitude towards entrepreneurship and perceived behavioural control are positively and significantly related to entrepreneurial intention. Other survey [2] involving 163 students in Malaysia found that only one factor of TPB which is subjective norm has a significant relationship with entrepreneurial intention, whereas the other factors such as attitude towards behaviour and self-efficacy are not significantly related to entrepreneurial intention. Given that there are inconsistent findings on the relationship between subjective norm and entrepreneurial intention based on the past studies (eg. [11],[13],[14],[2],[12]), this research would like to provide new insights by examining the impact of subjective norm on students' entrepreneurial intention in one of the public university in Malaysia. It is hoped that the results can reveal the exact impact of

subjective norm towards increasing the level of entrepreneurial intention among students in this university. On the basis of this discussion, this research suggests the second hypothesis. H₂: The relationship between subjective norm and entrepreneurial intention among students in this university is significantly related.

III. METHODOLOGY

This research used the quantitative method to determine the relationship between learning orientation and subjective norm towards entrepreneurship intention among 488 students from one of the public university in the Northern Malaysia. The populations used in this research were all students who registered in the academic year 2015-2016. This research utilized the individual unit of analysis which aimed at all undergraduate students as the respondents in obtaining the data. Data for respondents' demographic have been obtained based on respondents' gender, age, race, year of study, whether they currently owned any business as a freelance, and the category of business which they run. In this research, respondents' agreement towards their perception of leaning orientation and subjective norm becomes the basis for understanding of their level of entrepreneurial intention.

Entrepreneurial intention was the dependent variable in this research. In this research, the instrument for entrepreneurial intention is adopted from [26]. It is measured by 9-items. The two independent variables in this research consisted of learning orientation and subjective norm. Learning orientation scale is adapted from the instruments of [23]. There were 6-items used to measure learning orientation. As for the subjective norm scale, it has been measured based on 8-items as developed by past authors [27–29]. Likert scale is used to measure learning orientation, subjective norm as well as entrepreneurial intention. Choices of answers are given in the scale ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). All data collected are analyzed by using SPSS (version 22).

IV. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The total of 488 out of 500 distributed questionnaire sets are successfully collected, indicated 97.6% of the response rate. Gender of respondents is presented by 70.3% of female (343 participants) and the remaining 29.7% of male students (145 participants). The characteristics of respondents by age is presented as follows: 59.4% (21 to 23 years old); 36.9% (below 20 years old); 3.5% (24 to 26 years old) and 0.2% (above 26 years old). Next, the race of respondents is indicated as follows: 67.6% (Malays); 19.7% (Chinese); 8.6% (Indians) and 4.1% (others).

As for the year of study, majority of the respondents which contributed of 40.6% were the first year students, followed by the third year students (37.7%), second year students (20.7%), fourth year students (0.6%) and other categories such as repeaters (0.4%). To the extent of currently owned any business as a freelance, 20.7% of students stated 'yes' and the remaining 79.3% students stated 'no'. Next, is the results regarding the category of business which has been run of the students who owned the business as a freelance: 18% (creative and multimedia); 16% (academic services); 16% (transportation and tourism); 15% (housing services); 14% (fashion and beauty); 10% (software development and technology); 8% (housing care and improvement) and 3% (other categories).

As presented in Table I, students in this university have high level of entrepreneurial intention with the mean score at 3.64. Also, the findings showed that the respondents have the high level of learning orientation and subjective norm with the mean values at 3.75 and 3.47 each.

Table I: Means and Standard Deviations

<i>Variables</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Means</i>	<i>SDs</i>
Entrepreneurial Intention	488	3.64	0.82
Learning Orientation	488	3.75	0.83
Subjective Norm	488	3.47	0.78

Apart from that, standard deviations for all the variables are reported at the values of 0.82, 0.83 and 0.78 respectively. This presented that learning orientation obtains the highest standard deviation. Thus, this indicated that the data are widely spread which means it is less reliable. Subjective norm has a low standard deviation which shows that the data is more reliable.

Table II: Inter-Correlation between Variables

<i>Variables</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>
Entrepreneurial Intention	488	-		
Learning Orientation	488	.66**	-	
Subjective Norm	488	.55**	.60**	-

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

Table II showed the correlation analyses between all variables for 488 participants in the research. Learning orientation is found to have a positive correlation with students' entrepreneurial intention ($r=.66$, $p<.01$). Also, subjective norm is presented to have a positive correlation with students' entrepreneurial intention ($r=.55$, $p<.01$) in this research. Last but not least, subjective norm and learning orientation is positively correlated ($r=.60$, $p<.01$) in this research. In interpreting the strength of relationships between variables, all of the correlations presented a kind of moderate correlation between all variables.

Table III presented the linear regression results of learning orientation and subjective norm on students' entrepreneurial intention. As indicated in Table III, learning orientation is positively associated to students' entrepreneurial intention ($\beta=.49^*$, $p=.00$) with moderate adjusted R^2 (30%). The same results are presented for the impact of subjective norm on students' entrepreneurial intention. As shown, subjective norm is positively associated to students' entrepreneurial intention ($\beta=.63^*$, $p=.00$) with moderate adjusted R^2 (44%). Therefore, both hypotheses are supported in this research.

Table III: Regression Analysis towards Entrepreneurial Intention

<i>Predictors</i>	<i>Standardize Coefficient</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>R²</i>
	<i>Beta</i>			
Learning Orientation	0.49	14.44	.00	.30
Subjective Norm	0.63	19.55	.00	.44

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

**Dependent Variable = Entrepreneurial Intention

V. DISCUSSIONS

The findings for H_1 indicated that learning orientation have a strong and significant influence on entrepreneurial intention among the undergraduate students in this university with $\beta=.49^*$. This implies that the view of students regarding learning orientation can contribute to increase their entrepreneurial intention. However, students still need more exposure to get them have enough experience in order to compete with their global competitors to generate

wealth creation. Therefore, several actions should be taken by the institution to facilitate learning orientation among students such as to let them put more efforts in sharing lessons widely among them, and to make them perceive that learning entrepreneurship is one of their investment and not an expense.

Results regarding the relationship between learning orientation and entrepreneurial intention based on this research was consistent with [24] who presented that passion on business can enhance entrepreneurial intention learning orientation is needed to motivate them to work harder. Learning orientation activities could help students to better respond to the market changes and improve productivity, which ultimately improve their entrepreneurship skills and performance [30]. Thus, learning orientation is deemed important to be nurtured by the institution management in order to create a culture that can encourage students' commitment to develop strong learning orientation while they were in the university's environment.

Also, the findings for H₂ indicated that subjective norm have a strong and significant influence on entrepreneurial intention among the undergraduate students in this university with $\beta=.63^*$. A possible explanation for this results is that the students agreed that subjective norm can increase the level of their entrepreneurial intention. Thus, it may show that students in this public university believed that their decisions and actions can affect their future desire to be entrepreneur and this can influence their motivation to work harder towards their business. This result is consistent with past researchers (eg. [13],[12],[25]) who said that subjective norm was one of the important element to influence individuals' decision towards entrepreneurial intention.

However, this result is inconsistent with [31] who presented that subjective norms have no roles to influence the student's entrepreneurial intentions. Therefore, several actions should be taken by the institution to facilitate subjective norm among students such as to let them believe that their closest families, friends and who are important to them think that they should pursue their future career as the entrepreneurs. Also, the institution need to actively encourage students to pursue their own business and to support them by providing the well-function infrastructure (eg. incubator). Since most of students were still young in the age ranged from 21 to 23 years old (59.4%) and below 20 years old (36.9%), it can be concluded that they still need their parents' consent and support in whatever choices of their future career.

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