

Entrepreneurial Intention among Special Needs Students

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ABSTRACT

The involvement of the disabled in entrepreneurship is low. Many initiatives have been made by the government to increase the participation of the disabled in the business field. Entrepreneurship courses are introduced to the disabled as early as primary- and tertiary-level education. This study investigates entrepreneurial intention among special needs students. The respondents of this study were 90 special needs students from polytechnics in Malaysia. This study employed components of the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB). Descriptive analysis found that entrepreneurial intention among special needs students is high. T-test and One Way ANOVA analyses reported that a significant difference in entrepreneurial intention between the genders and courses taken in university. This study suggests that the management of polytechnics should provide resources to the polytechnics pertaining to entrepreneurship among special needs students.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial intention, special needs students

INTRODUCTION

The disabled are identified as individuals who may have disabilities in physical, mental or both aspects since birth, or suffered a situation or condition that led to disability (World Health Organisation (WHO), 2001).

There are six types of disability registered by the Jabatan Kebajikan Masyarakat i.e. hearing impairment, blindness, physical disability, cerebral palsy, learning disability and disability identified by physicians. According to Abdullah (2012), hearing impairment is due to the loss of the ability to hear (Saari & Abd Muis, 2008).

According to the Department of Statistics, Malaysia, 10% of the total population of Malaysia is categorised as disabled. Difficulty in obtaining employment among the disabled is a major challenge for

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received: 01 November 2016

Accepted: 15 April 2017

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them (Khor, 2002). Work is one way for people with disability to improve their quality of life and economy. From 1998 to 2007, of the 10,332 disabled people who signed up for employment, only 7567 succeeded in being placed in the private sector (Department of Statistics in Malaysia, 2011). The number is low compared with the allocation of 1% participation of special needs persons in the employment sector.

With a view to improving the standard of living and quality of this group, some studies identified factors that hinder the disabled from being employed. Edwin (2012) mentioned that facilities provided by organisations is a major constraint in hiring the disabled compared to their own intellectual ability, while attitude and personality, generic skills and productivity are also barriers for people with disabilities to entering the workforce. Besides a negative attitude towards the disabled, the perception of employers is also a barrier for those with disabilities to getting jobs. Some employers do not understand the capabilities of the disabled and lack understanding of the needs of the disabled, such as the requirement for medical expenses (Toran, Muhamad, Mohd Yasin, Tahar, & Hamzah, 2012). Age, type of disability and lack of experience are also reasons that the job application of the disabled are often rejected (Utusan Malaysia, 2008). It is clear that these factors hinder the disabled from being accorded equal employment opportunities.

Unemployment among the disabled needs to be tackled urgently due to rising unemployment figures (Osman & Rahim,

2014). Entrepreneurship is the most empowering pathway for the disabled to break out of dependency and poverty (Oyewumi & Adeniyi, 2013). Entrepreneurial intention is an aspect that should be nurtured in the disabled. Entrepreneurial intention refers to the conscious intention to pursue entrepreneurship as an income avenue. Gelderen et al. (2008) stated that individuals who have strong intention to do something have a high tendency to act upon the intention as soon as possible. Immediate efforts should be made by all concerned to create more entrepreneurs among the disabled by nurturing entrepreneurial intention in them. However, before this is done, the level of entrepreneurial intention among the disabled must first be measured.

Entrepreneurship is seen as a solution for the disabled as it can empower them to take charge of their lives and to live a more meaningful life. Polytechnics, which provide training in entrepreneurship for special needs students, are viewed as agents on behalf of the government in cultivating entrepreneurial intention among the disabled. A study by Varela and Jimenez (2001) stated that institutions of higher education have the potential to produce more entrepreneurs who are engaged in entrepreneurial activities and programmes. Hannon (2005), and Peterman and Kennedy (2003) stated that there was an improvement in the attitude, desire and perceived feasibility of entrepreneurship among respondents who participated in entrepreneurial programmes in their studies. The purpose of entrepreneurial education

in polytechnics is to expose students to becoming entrepreneurs in the real world. Upon completion of the programme, the disabled should be independent and ready for employment as entrepreneurial education in polytechnics focusses on entrepreneurial activities and programmes. However, the success of entrepreneurial programmes in polytechnics also rests on the desire and willingness of special needs students to pursue entrepreneurship as a pathway to independence and empowerment. Therefore, it is necessary to gauge through research the entrepreneurial intention of special needs students who are pursuing entrepreneurial education in polytechnics.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Entrepreneurial Intention

According to Krueger, Reilly and Carsrud (2000), the establishment of entrepreneurial intention depends on the attitude towards the treatment, and this reflects the beliefs, perceptions, and responses of the individual. Belief in entrepreneurship as a legitimate and desirable activity is very important because this influences one's attitude towards entrepreneurship. Without belief, success in entrepreneurial activities might not be possible (Krueger, Reilly, & Carsrud, 2000). According to Othman and Ishak (2009), desire to pursue entrepreneurship is also related to the attitude of the individual towards risk and self-reliance; a person who has aptitude for entrepreneurial activities exhibits a positive attitude towards risk and is more independent in behaviour. A

study done by Kuratko and Hodgetts (2004) showed that the involvement of companies in international business leads to a reduction in jobs and the interests of graduates as workers. The desire for freedom, independence and taking on a challenge is attracting students to entrepreneurial activities. Frustration at failing to get a job has made entrepreneurship the logical alternative career choice as it can bring financial opportunity and determine the desired work pattern. Hence, entrepreneurial intention can be one pathway for independence and revenue for people with disabilities.

Disability

According to Abdul Rahman and Abu Samah (2011), a person with disabilities is unable to determine the abilities themselves. Bari and Mohd Yasin (2009) stated that the hearing impaired are those lacking the ability to hear from birth or due to an accident. The disabled lack the ability to hear and speak; therefore, their communication skills are limited (Akhtar, 2003). Among the deaf, those with hearing ability of up to 90 decibels are categorised as being partially deaf, while the rest are considered fully deaf (Eymran, 2013). Among deaf students, the most common way to communicate would be to use sign language, hand codes and body language.

Theory of Planned Behaviour

The Theory of Planned Behaviour is an advanced model of human behaviour modified from the Theory of Reasoned

Action developed by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975). This theory focusses primarily on the desire to encourage behaviour that is presented. In this context, this is considered to be the ability to uncover the motivation factor that influences the presented behaviour. This study focussed on

an entrepreneurship model of behavioural competencies, the Theory of Planned Behaviour. The objective of this study was to investigate entrepreneurial intention among special needs students and to examine the significant difference in entrepreneurial intention between the two genders.

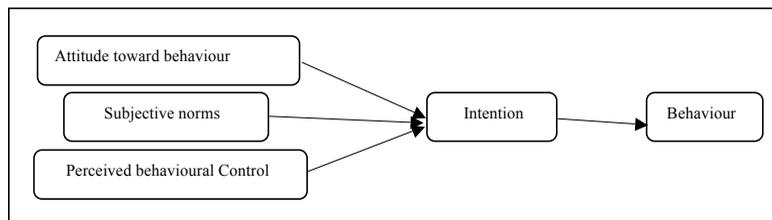


Figure 1. The theory of planned behaviour

METHOD

This research employed a questionnaire survey for data collection. The questionnaire was in Malay and it was validated by three lecturers who were experts in Generic Skills, one who was an expert in special needs education and another who was an expert in formulating content for questionnaires. The questionnaire used a 5-point Likert scale ranging from ‘Strongly disagree’ to ‘Agree’. The questionnaire was adapted from Abbas (2013). It consisted of four sections: entrepreneurial intention, attitude towards behaviour, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control. Section A attempted to investigate the respondents’ intention to be an entrepreneur and consisted of nine items. Section B was on the factors that influenced the respondents’ intention to be an entrepreneur and consisted of 12 items. Section C sought information on the respondents’ socio-demographic data

and consisted of 20 items, while Section D was on the respondents’ knowledge of entrepreneurship and consisted of nine items.

The questionnaire was tested in a pilot test involving eight special needs students from Polytechnic Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah. About 100 questionnaires were distributed to respondents in the three polytechnics. However, only 90 questionnaires were returned and were used for the study. The data were checked for reliability and validity. T-test analysis and an ANOVA one-way test were also conducted.

RESULTS

Frequency Analysis

A frequency analysis of the respondents is shown in Table 1. The respondents were special needs students from three polytechnics. About 72.2% of the

respondents were from Politeknik Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah, while close to 22.2% were from Polytechnic Kota Kinabalu and about 5.6% were from Politeknik Sultan Ibrahim. The number of male students was 42 (46.7%), while that of the female students was 48 (53.3%). The majority were Malay (n=55, 61.1%), while the rest were Chinese

(n=35, 38.9%). Three specialisations are offered in polytechnics; the most popular among special needs students is Hotel and Catering (n=36, 40%), followed by Graphic Design (n=35, 38.9%), followed by Fashion Design (n=19, 21.1%) as the least popular among them.

Table 1
Demographic – frequency analysis

Variable	Description	Number	Percentage (%)
Polytechnic	Polytechnic Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah	65	72.2
	Polytechnic Kota Kinabalu	20	22.2
	Polytechnic Ibrahim Sultan	5	5.6
	Total	90	100
Gender	Male	42	46.7
	Female	48	53.3
	Total	90	100
Race	Malay	55	61.1
	Chinese	35	38.9
	Total	90	100
Specialisation	Hotel and Catering	36	40
	Graphic Design	35	38.9
	Fashion Designer	19	21.1
	Total	90	100

Descriptive Analysis

The descriptive analysis of the variables for entrepreneurial intention among special needs students is shown in Table 2. The

mean score was 4.033, which was higher than 3.50, making it a high score, indicating that entrepreneurial intention among these special needs students was high.

Table 2
Mean score of entrepreneurial intention

Construct	Mean score	Interpretation level
Entrepreneurial intention	4.033	High

Table 3
Mean score analysis of entrepreneurial intention

Item	Question	Mean score	Interpretation level
Item 1	I like to do business.	3.83	High
Item 2	I like to have my own shop.	3.93	High
Item 3	I like to succeed as a trader.	3.88	High
Item 4	I like to help my family.	4.48	High
Item 5	I like the ambition to become a dealer.	4.04	High
Item 6	I would like to improve the living standard of families.	4.32	High
Item 7	I like to discuss/talk about business issues.	3.99	High
Item 8	I like to do something profitable.	3.96	High
Item 9	I like programmes related to entrepreneurship.	3.87	High

The table shows that all the items had a high mean score that was between 3.83 and 4.48. The highest mean score was for the fourth item (4.48) while the lowest was for the first (3.83). Therefore, none of the items obtained a mean score lower than 2.40, which would have indicated a low score. So, we may conclude that entrepreneurial

intention among the special needs students surveyed in this study was high.

T-test Analysis

Kolmogrov-Smirnov’s recommendation for the T-test was used for this study because there were more than 30 respondents. The significance value was 0.2 ($P>0.05$).

Table 4
Normality test for the genders

Entrepreneurial Intention	Kolmogrov-Statistic	Smirnov df	Sig.
Female	0.106	48	0.200
Male	0.108	42	0.200

Table 4 shows a significant difference ($t=2.080$, $df=88$, $p=0.05$), which is a significant value less than 0.05 ($p=0.05$),

that is, 0.040. This indicated a significant difference of entrepreneurial intention between female and male students.

Table 5
Independent T-test for gender

Level of Entrepreneurial Intention	Lavene Test for Equality for Variances		T-test for Equility of means			
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig (two-tailed)	Mean Difference
Equal Variances Assumed	0.05	0.946	2.080	88	0.040	0.2262
Equal Variances not Assumed			2.080	86.337	0.041	0.2262

Table 6
Mean score of entrepreneurial intention between the genders

	N	Mean Score
Entrepreneurial Intention Female	48	4.139
Male	42	3.913

Table 6 shows that the mean score for the females (4.139) was higher than the mean score for the males (3.913). So, we may conclude that the mean score for

entrepreneurial intention among the female special needs students who were surveyed was higher than among the male special needs students.

ANOVA One-Way Analysis

The ANOVA test analysis was used to obtain the mean scores for entrepreneurial intention related to three courses taken by the students in order to discover if there was a significant difference in interest among the students.

Table 7
ANOVA analysis for three courses taken by the students

	Sum of squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between groups	2.476	2	1.238	4.901	0.010
Within the group	21.979	87	0.253		
Total	24.456	89			

Table 7 shows that the significant value was 0.010, which was smaller than the alpha value of 0.05. So, we may conclude that there was a significant difference in entrepreneurial intention based on interest.

Table 8
Mean score of entrepreneurial intention related to the three courses

Courses	N	Mean Score
Graphic Design	35	3.825
Hotel and Catering	38	4.167
Fashion Designer	19	4.164

Table 8 shows that Hotel and Catering received the highest mean score (4.167), followed by Fashion Designer (4.164) and lastly, Graphic Design (3.825).

DISCUSSION

This study examined entrepreneurial intention among impaired students. Entrepreneurial intention is considered to be a motivating factor that affects behaviour, in which the intention itself shows how the person is ready to try using their effort to realise a behaviour (Ozaralli & Rivenburgh, 2016). It also explains and predicts how the cultural and social environment affects human behaviour. Ajzen (2005) stated that behaviour depended on three main elements, namely attitude toward the behaviour, subjective norms (social pressure will be felt either to do something or not) and the extent to which individuals are able to control behaviour.

Entrepreneurship has been explored to measure the tendency of motivation and determination in influencing a person's decision to become an entrepreneur. Entrepreneurship is described as a motivating factor that influences individuals to pursue an entrepreneurial venture (Hisrich, Peters, & Sheperd, 2008). This study found that entrepreneurial intention among special needs students in three polytechnics was high. Among the items tested, the highest mean score, 4.48, was for the item, "I like to help my family." This indicated that the students' motivation in pursuing

entrepreneurship was to improve the life of their family. This showed that they believed that entrepreneurial ventures could help and benefit them, and they were ready to become entrepreneurs upon graduation.

According to Othman and Ishak (2009), entrepreneurship is perceived as the relationship between the entrepreneur as an individual and how his business is framed. According to them, an individual desiring to become an entrepreneur may not have a plan regarding the type of business he will venture into, the methods of obtaining funds and other business-related issues. Although he only has the intent at this stage, he is still eager to pursue a career in business (Othman & Ishak, 2009).

This study also identified the significant difference in entrepreneurial intention based on gender. A T-test analysis showed a statistically significant difference in entrepreneurial intention between female and male students. The female students obtained a higher mean score (4.139) than the male students (3.193). Therefore, it can be concluded that the female students had a higher level of entrepreneurial intention than the male students. The results of this study are consistent with the findings of Ismail (2005), which stated that more female students are interested in entrepreneurship compared to male students. Hamid (2012) stated that women have demonstrated abilities, capabilities and skills in their respective fields. Indeed, the financial services industry shows a high involvement of women in business.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of this study, the special needs students in the three polytechnics surveyed have entrepreneurship intention. However, factors related to knowledge of entrepreneurship needs to be improved, as knowledge is essential to becoming a successful entrepreneur. Lack of knowledge of entrepreneurship is one of the challenges and a prohibitive factor for involvement entrepreneurship. Therefore, the relevant authorities such as the Department of Polytechnics and the Ministry of Higher Education should play a role in designing suitable programmed and should make the effort to assist students with special needs to become successful entrepreneurs, thereby helping to reduce the unemployment rate in the country. Special needs students should be given exposure to relevant fields in order that they may acquire information, knowledge and experience necessary to succeeding in entrepreneurship. As Shane (2003) stated, proper education prepares an individual to make good use of opportunities. This is because the information and skills acquired through education can enhance the opportunity to generate good returns from a venture.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This paper was fully sponsored by the Office for Research, Innovation, Commercialisation and Consultancy Management, University of Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia.

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