

DETERMINANTS OF ENTREPRENEURIAL INTENTION AMONG MALAYSIAN STUDENTS: A PATHWAY TO FUTURE INNOVATION

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(Received 18th March 2026; revised 26th June 2026; accepted 28th July 2026)

Abstract. Entrepreneurship intention is crucial to develop an innovative generation who can create new job opportunities. The Malaysian government itself has introduced various initiatives and policies to strengthen entrepreneurial ecosystems among youth and university students. This study aims to identify the factors that influence entrepreneurial intention among students in Malaysia. The prominent factors, which are entrepreneurial intention, personality traits, social recognition, and training and education, are all under investigation. The sample of this study consisted of students who enrolled in entrepreneurial courses from UiTM Dungun, Terengganu. Online questionnaires were sent to 214 responders, and 201 useful data were gathered. To determine the relationship between each research variable, data were examined using SPSS. The study found that social recognition, education and training, and personality traits have a significant impact on students' intentions to start their own business. The government, legislators, and academic institutions can use the findings as a roadmap to create plans that will foster future entrepreneurs and boost the country's economy.

Keywords: *entrepreneurial intention, personality traits, training and education, social recognition*

Introduction

Entrepreneurship is becoming more widely acknowledged as a key factor in innovation, economic expansion, and job creation, especially in developing nations. In Malaysia, the government's strategic focus is on encouraging young people to become entrepreneurs, particularly in higher educational institutions. This is in line with national goals to promote sustainable economic growth and lessen dependence on traditional job sectors. Thus, a focus of academic research has shifted to comprehending the factors that influence Malaysian students' ambition to start their own business. Nowadays, entrepreneurship in Malaysia has grown aggressively in recent years, especially with the rapid advancement of social media platforms. Social media has transformed the business environment by providing entrepreneurs with wider market access, low-cost promotional opportunities, and direct communication with customers (Olivieri and Testa, 2024). Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok have enabled entrepreneurs to market their products and services more effectively, even with limited financial resources (Sirait et al., 2025; Zahara et al., 2023). As a result, many individuals, particularly students and young people, are becoming more interested in entrepreneurship as a career choice. Social media also not only helps businesses increase brand awareness and customer engagement, but also motivates potential entrepreneurs to start their own businesses due to the accessibility and flexibility of online platforms (Bruce et al., 2025). Therefore, understanding the factors that influence

entrepreneurial intention has become increasingly important in supporting the growth of future entrepreneurs and strengthening the Malaysian economy.

Moreover, many university students and graduates in Malaysia are starting businesses in social media while studying or after graduation. They perceive that entrepreneurship offers income flexibility and requires lower startup capital. According to a report by Kementerian Pendidikan Tinggi Malaysia, a total of 220,000 student entrepreneurs and 17,501 graduate entrepreneurs were successfully produced through the Higher Education Institution Entrepreneurship Action Plan 2021–2025 (Bernama, 2023). In fact, 3,000 students at Universiti Malaysia Kelantan (UMK) were involved in entrepreneurial activities, and some of them were able to generate income of up to RM10,000 per month (Bernama, 2025). As a result, it is vital to understand the factors that influence entrepreneurial intention among students in order to support career development in the future. Numerous factors have been found to be important antecedents of entrepreneurial intention among students. Factors such as personality traits, locus of control (LoC), self-efficacy, family, institutional entrepreneurial self-efficacy, and peer support (Rudnák et al., 2025; Al-Qadasi et al., 2023; Martins et al., 2023). However, factors such as personality traits, training and education, and social recognition need further exploration.

Although numerous studies have identified personality traits, training and education, and social recognition as important antecedents of entrepreneurial intention, the existing evidence remains inconclusive. Previous studies have reported inconsistent findings in term of relationship between personality traits, training and education, social recognition and entrepreneur intention (Ahmed et al., 2020). Besides, there is still a lack of research that simultaneously examines personality traits, training and education, and social recognition within a single theoretical framework among Malaysian university students. Most Malaysian studies have focused on isolated determinants of entrepreneurial intention or have emphasized demographic and economic factors rather than integrating individual, educational, and social influences based on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). Therefore, understanding how these factors jointly influence entrepreneurial intention is increasingly important. The findings are expected to contribute to entrepreneurship theory while providing practical implications for higher education institutions and policymakers seeking to strengthen entrepreneurial development among graduates.

Literature review

Theory of Planned conduct (TPB)

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), posits that entrepreneurial intention is determined by three key psychological factors, which is attitude toward the behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (PBC). According to TPB, individuals are more likely to develop entrepreneurial intentions when they hold favourable attitudes toward entrepreneurship, perceive support from important social groups. They also possess the capability and resources necessary to become successful entrepreneurs. TPB also has consistently been recognised as one of the most influential theoretical frameworks for explaining entrepreneurial intention among university students. In this study, the proposed independent variables are explicitly integrated with the TPB framework to provide stronger theoretical justification. Personality traits are linked to PCB because entrepreneurial characteristics such as innovativeness, self-

confidence, resilience, and risk-taking indirectly enhance students' confidence and ability to identify opportunities, overcome business challenges, and successfully establish new ventures. Moreover, individuals who possess stronger entrepreneurial personality traits tend to perceive greater control over entrepreneurial activities, thereby increasing their entrepreneurial intentions. Recent studies also found that proactive personality enhances entrepreneurial intention through perceived behavioral control, confirming the mediating role of PBC within TPB (Huang and Kee, 2024; Ng et al., 2021). Besides, social recognition also corresponds to the TPB component of subjective norms. Subjective norms refer to an individual's perception of social expectations from significant others, including family members, friends, lecturers, mentors, and peers. In fact, entrepreneurship is viewed positively and receives encouragement from these influential groups, students experience stronger normative pressure to pursue entrepreneurial careers. This relationship is particularly evident in collectivist societies such as Malaysia, where family support and social approval significantly influence career decisions. Recent empirical studies have confirmed that social recognition and perceived social support positively influence entrepreneurial intention through subjective norms among university students (Dar et al., 2024; Lyu et al., 2024).

Finally, training and education are also associated with both attitude toward entrepreneurship and perceived behavioral control. Entrepreneurship education provides students with entrepreneurial knowledge, practical skills, business experience, and exposure to entrepreneurial role models. These educational experiences foster more positive attitudes toward entrepreneurship by increasing awareness of its benefits while simultaneously enhancing students' confidence in their entrepreneurial capabilities. Consequently, entrepreneurship education not only shapes favourable evaluations of entrepreneurship but also strengthens perceived behavioral control by improving entrepreneurial competence and self-efficacy. Recent evidence indicates that entrepreneurship education significantly enhances entrepreneurial attitudes, perceived behavioral control, and ultimately entrepreneurial intention among higher education students (Ahmed et al., 2020). Overall, integrating personality traits, social recognition, and training and education into the TPB framework provides a comprehensive theoretical explanation of entrepreneurial intention.

Entrepreneurial intention (EI)

Entrepreneurial intention refers to a cognitive state that reflects an individual's readiness, inclination, and planning to start a business or create a new enterprise in the future. In the context of university students, this construct describes the extent to which a student has interest, confidence, and determination to choose entrepreneurship as a career path after graduation (Robin et al., 2025; Musa et al., 2023). In entrepreneurship studies, EI is often considered an early predictor of actual entrepreneurial behavior. This is because an individual will usually form an intention first before taking action to start a business. According to Robin et al. (2025), EI is an important element in the entrepreneurial process because the formation of a new business is difficult to occur without the existence of a clear intention. In the context of students, this intention is an early indicator of whether they have the potential to engage in entrepreneurial activities, whether full-time, part-time, or through digital businesses. In addition, entrepreneurship education is an essential aspect in shaping students' entrepreneurial intentions. This element helps students understand the basics of business, identify opportunities, plan strategies, manage risks, and build confidence to start a business. Prior study contends

that entrepreneurship education influences students' career decisions and assists higher education institutions in enhancing their curricula and support services pertaining to entrepreneurship (Fauzi et al., 2025). Therefore, practical learning experiences such as business projects, entrepreneurship simulations, mentoring, and exposure to real entrepreneurs can increase students' tendency to see entrepreneurship as a realistic career.

Personality traits

Personality traits refer to stable patterns of thinking, attitudes, and behavior within an individual. In the context of entrepreneurship, personality traits such as creativity, risk-taking, self-confidence, innovation, and need for achievement can influence a student's tendency to choose entrepreneurship as a career path (Neupane et al., 2025; Kajal et al., 2024). Personality traits are important in the study of entrepreneurial intention because the decision to become an entrepreneur is not only influenced by external factors such as education and social support but also by internal factors of the individual. Students who are creative, proactive, brave in the face of uncertainty, and have a high achievement drive are more likely to see entrepreneurship as an attractive option. Singh and Onahring (2020) explain that personality traits can help individuals identify opportunities and form entrepreneurial intentions. In addition, risk-taking behavior and need for achievement are also associated with entrepreneurial intention. Risk-taking and the drive to achieve success have a positive relationship with entrepreneurial intention. The Big Five personality traits study also showed that extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience have a positive relationship with entrepreneurial intention, while neuroticism shows a negative relationship (Pang et al., 2025). Therefore, based on this statement, the following hypothesis was proposed: (H1): There is a significant influence between personality traits and entrepreneurial intention.

Training and education

Entrepreneurship training and education refers to formal and informal learning processes that aim to build students' knowledge, skills, attitudes, and confidence in entrepreneurship. In the context of university students, entrepreneurship training and education are important because they help students understand the basics of business, identify opportunities, manage risks, and build confidence to start a business in the future (Fauzi et al., 2025; Astiana et al., 2022). Entrepreneurship education also plays a role in shaping entrepreneurial intention, because it can change students' perceptions of entrepreneurship as a realistic career choice. Through courses, workshops, practical training, business projects, incubators, and exposure to real entrepreneurs, students not only gain business knowledge but also experiences that can increase their interest and readiness to become entrepreneurs (Digón-Arroba et al., 2025; Musa et al., 2023). Recent studies show that entrepreneurship education has a positive relationship with entrepreneurial intention. In fact, entrepreneurship education can increase entrepreneurial intention directly as well as through factors such as entrepreneurial passion and entrepreneurial self-efficacy (Liu et al., 2025; Thomas, 2023; Vivekananth et al., 2023; Shah et al., 2020). This shows that education and training not only provide technical knowledge but also build students' motivation, self-confidence, and courage to venture into entrepreneurship. Therefore, based on this statement, the following

hypothesis was proposed: (H2): There is a significant influence between training and education and entrepreneurial intention.

Social recognition

Social recognition is defined in the literature as the perceived approval, admiration, and status granted by an individual's social environment (family, peers, and society) in response to their entrepreneurial pursuits (Fisher et al., 2020). Unlike financial rewards, social recognition serves as an extrinsic psychological motivator. It functions as a "social signal" that validates the individual's career choice, thereby reducing the perceived social risk of deviating from traditional employment paths. Social recognition also is a primary component of "subjective norms": the perceived social pressure or expectations from significant others (Bosnjak et al., 2020). Students are influenced by the views of family, friends, and role models (Lihua, 2022). In fact, when a social environment grants high status and respect to entrepreneurs, the subjective norm shifts favorably, making the "intention" to start a business more likely (Xanthopoulou and Sahinidis, 2024). A previous study also found that social recognition positively strengthens entrepreneurial intention among the students (Nguyen, 2021; Türkmen and Yıldız, 2020). Students are more motivated to become entrepreneurs when society appreciates entrepreneurial activities and views entrepreneurs as contributors to social development. In fact, social recognition indirectly creates positive perceptions toward entrepreneurship and encourages individuals to see entrepreneurial careers as desirable and rewarding. Therefore, based on this statement, the following hypothesis was proposed: (H3): There is a significant influence between social recognition and entrepreneurial intention.

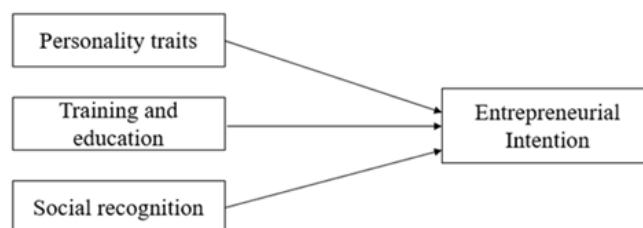


Figure 1. Conceptual framework determinant of entrepreneurial intention.

Materials and Methods

This study involved undergraduate students from Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Dungun Campus, Terengganu. The total population comprised 480 students enrolled in entrepreneurship courses. Based on the sample size determination table developed by Krejcie and Morgan (1970), the recommended minimum sample size for this population was 214 respondents. A systematic random sampling technique was employed to select the respondents. Systematic random sampling is a probability sampling method in which the first respondent is selected randomly, followed by the selection of subsequent respondents at a fixed sampling interval until the required sample size is achieved (Sekaran and Bougie, 2009). The questionnaire was distributed online through the students' WhatsApp groups. Accordingly, every third student on the

sampling list was selected to participate in the study. Although the target sample size was 214 respondents, a total of 201 completed questionnaires were returned and deemed usable for data analysis, representing a response rate of 93.9%.

Reliability analysis

A reliability test was performed to evaluate the internal consistency of the study's instruments, encompassing personality traits, training, and education. Therefore, the questionnaire was sent to the 45 students who have completed entrepreneurs' courses via online survey. *Table 1* presents the outcomes of the reliability analysis for each variable. Entrepreneur Intention has the highest Cronbach's alpha value of 0.954. This score indicates the strength of association between items is excellent. This is followed by personality traits (0.876), training and education (0.919) and social recognition (0.819).

Table 1. Reliability analysis for research variables.

Research Variables	Cronbach's alpha
Entrepreneurial Intention	0.954
Personality Traits	0.876
Training and Education	0.919
Social Recognition	0.819

Results and Discussion

201 respondents participated in this study by answering online questionnaires via systematic sampling. *Table 2* lists the demographic profile of the respondents. *Table 2* illustrates that 62.7% of female and 37.3% male students are involved in this study. Respondent age is 20 years old (58.2%) 19 years old (37.8%) followed by 18 years old (2.5 %) and 21 above (1.5%). Majority of students are from semester 4 (60.7%) and semester 2 (39.3%). The student also does not have any background of entrepreneurship (80.6%). *Table 3* illustrates descriptive analysis for research variables. The mean for entrepreneur intention is 4.83. Social recognition shows the highest mean value (5.25), followed by training and education (5.20), and personality traits (4.82). Correlation analysis was conducted to investigate the relationship between the research variables. This study discovered that all of the research factors were positively connected with entrepreneur intention. The R-value for personality traits is ($r=0.725$, $p<0.05$, $p = 0.000$), training and education ($r=0.611$, $p<0.05$, $p = 0.000$), and social recognition ($r=0.654$, $p<0.05$, $p = 0.000$). The result also indicates that personality traits have high correlation with entrepreneur intention. This indicates that all these variables show a high and moderate relationship with entrepreneur intention (*Table 4*).

Table 2. Demographic profile of the respondents.

Item	Frequency (n=201)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	75	37.3
Female	126	62.7
Age		
18 Years old	5	2.5
19 Years old	76	37.8
20 Years old	117	58.2
21 and above	3	1.5
Semester		
2	79	39.3
4	122	60.7

Family Background		
Entrepreneur	39	19.4
Not Entrepreneur	162	80.6

Table 3. *Descriptive analysis for research variables.*

Item	Mean	Standard Deviation
Entrepreneurial intention	4.83	1.106
Personality traits	4.82	0.954
Training and education	5.20	0.953
Social recognition	5.25	0.910

Table 4. *Pearson correlation result.*

Research Variable	R-Value	P- value	Decision
Personality traits	0.725	0.000	H1 is supported
Tanning and education	0.611	0.000	H2 is supported
Social recognition	0.654	0.000	H3is supported

*Note: *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).*

This study found that personality traits, social recognition, and training and education have a positive relationship with entrepreneurial intention among students at UiTM Dungun. Personality traits were also found as important predictors that affect entrepreneurial intention. The element of personality traits exists when students believe in their ability to succeed and achieve a goal to become entrepreneurs. Students also feel confident in their skills to overcome challenges and uncertainties in entrepreneurship. Previous research also argues that individuals with high personality traits are more likely to form strong entrepreneurial intentions, engage in entrepreneurial activities, and motivate themselves to start their own businesses (Brás et al., 2024; Rafiq et al., 2024; Ye and Yee, 2023; Abodunde and Akinbo, 2022; Ahmed et al., 2022; Junid, et al., 2017; Javan, 2014). In the context of this study, the strong belief in the student's inner self is a key to being a successful entrepreneur. Social recognition is also important to influence entrepreneurial intention among students. Students believe that entrepreneurs are respected, admired, and appreciated by society; they are more motivated to consider becoming entrepreneurs themselves. This recognition indirectly increases motivation and confidence among them. Studies also argue that higher social recognition increases individuals' motivation toward entrepreneurship (Viswanath and Sadananda Reddy, 2025). In fact, when successful entrepreneurs are recognized as role models, students tend to view entrepreneurship as an attractive and prestigious career. This positive perception can strengthen their entrepreneurial intention.

This study also revealed that training and education help to improve self-confidence and self-efficacy. Students may be interested in business but feel afraid of failure or lack confidence in their abilities. Training programs, workshops, and practical activities such as business simulations or entrepreneurship projects can indirectly strengthen students' confidence to start a business. Recent studies also show that entrepreneurship education significantly improves entrepreneurial mindset, self-efficacy, and entrepreneurial intention among university students (Overwien et al., 2024; Li et al., 2023; Sun et al., 2023). Therefore, universities need to focus on personality traits, training and education, and social recognition because these factors help shape students' entrepreneurial mindset, confidence, motivation, and readiness to become entrepreneurs. By supporting these factors, universities can produce more innovative, independent, and opportunity-driven graduates who can contribute to economic and social development. However, this study has several limitations, which are that it only focuses on students at UiTM Dungun. Therefore, the results cannot be applied to students in other regions.

Comparing studies from other universities, both local and worldwide, can help to improve applicability in Malaysian and global contexts.

Conclusion

In conclusion, research on entrepreneurial intention among Malaysian students is important because it helps identify the factors that encourage young people to become future entrepreneurs and job creators. As Malaysia continues to strengthen its economy and reduce unemployment among graduates, understanding students' readiness, motivation, attitudes, and challenges toward entrepreneurship can assist universities, policymakers, and related agencies in developing more effective entrepreneurial education and support programs. In fact, students in Malaysia are actively involved in entrepreneurial activities via many programs at the university level. This approach indirectly can build a passion to be a successful entrepreneur with financial and emotional support from the university and government itself.

Acknowledgement

This research is self-funded.

Conflict of interest

The authors confirm that there is no conflict of interest involve with any parties in this research study.

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