



## Personality Traits and Social Learning Variables on Entrepreneurial Intention (EI) among Iban Community: Conceptual Framework

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### Abstract

Many previous studies suggest that not every entrepreneurial intention (EI) is eventually transformed into actual behaviour such as starting and operating a new venture. This study proposed a new model to investigate the influences of content and process variables on Entrepreneurial Intention among the Iban community in Kuching based on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). The intention-action gap among Iban community was scrutinised, attributing it to the contextual factors, i.e., content (need for achievement, risk-taking propensity, and innovativeness) and process (entrepreneurial self-efficacy and family upbringing), affecting the translation of entrepreneurial intentions which can impact this community's decision in forming the business that they intended.

**Keywords:** entrepreneurial intention (EI); theory of planned behavior (TPB)

### 1. Introduction

Malaysia is one of the countries in the world that had witnessed and involved in an evolving progress of entrepreneurship. Malaysian government introduced a few policies such as New Economic Policy (1971 – 1990), the National Development Policy (1991 – 2000), the National Vision Policy (2001 – 2010), the New Economic Model and Economic Transformation Program introduced in 2010 which are focusing on improving the living standard among Bumiputera (Yusoff, Abu Hassan & Abdul Jalil, 2000; Jomo, 2004; Chin & Teh, 2017). Under the leadership of seventh Prime Minister, Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, the Malaysian Government has introduced National Entrepreneurship Policy (DKN 2030) which becomes a guideline in preparing a framework and holistic ecosystem for Malaysian entrepreneurship development (MEDAC, 2019). Through these policies, the Bumiputera had shown the growth and sustainability to be more competitive and proactive in the industry, especially entrepreneurship. Apart from that, more Bumiputera are expected to start and enhance themselves to become more competitive. However, the program policies which have been introduced by Malaysian government have not been giving any impacts and benefits to the Bumiputera groups, especially for Bumiputera who lives in Sarawak.

There are a few Bumiputera communities who inhabit in Sarawak such as Iban, Bidayuh, and Orang Ulu. During the year of 1971, the Malay community in Sarawak has managed to increase their living standard to become better and started to involve in business. The quality of life among the Sarawak Malays is increased due to their preference in shifting from traditional job to professionals (Fakhrul & Wan, 2011; N. M. Jurji et al. 2018). However, despite the progress in terms of the quality of life among the Malays, the Dayak community are still poorly paid because they live



in the rural area (Sarawak State Government, 1999). In Malaysia, some population such as the Iban people are still living in the poverty line and live in the areas which are near to the river and jungle. Consequently, the Dayak community is still involved in elementary occupations. From this situation, it makes Dayak community is still lagging behind and become ambiguous in contrast, according to the statistics released by the Malaysian Government.

There are academic and practical significance for studying the relationship between personality traits and entrepreneurial intentions among the Iban community in Sarawak especially in Kuching area. Theoretically, personality traits will predict the entrepreneurial intentions among the Iban community. The role of entrepreneurship in economic growth and poverty alleviation is very important and it will lead to economies efficiencies (Goel & Rishi, 2012). As poverty reduction tool, Tamvada (2009) stated that entrepreneurship creates job opportunity, and it helps many individuals to become self-employed. Thus, entrepreneurship will improve his or her welfare. In terms of academic significance, there is an urgent need to empirically review the relationship between these two aspects in the Iban community because the spark of intention among Iban community has been identified to participate in entrepreneurship. On the other hand, this study will contribute to practical significance by proposing some learning and training mechanisms which will be targeted on specific community mainly in Sarawak especially the Iban community. Beyond doubt, the significance of this study will also produce the findings that will help the Iban community as they are known as a local people that need to be raised up with the intention of exposing them more into the business field. This statement was supported by Fussell (2006; as cited in Tateh, 2013) as it is a period for Iban community to be recognized by others and became a period of great energy, enthusiasm, and creativity. The recognition for Iban community can be indicated through the small and medium enterprises (SMEs) sector which had gained attention and concern from the policymaker in the Malaysian government.

In previous studies, traditional culture and belief influence certain community on how to handle and run the business (Minai & Lucky, 2011). As entrepreneurship is unique in nature, it opens involvement from many culture and ethnic groups, and this brought novelty in terms of their values and preferences in operating their business. The thriving entrepreneurship in Malaysia is contributed from the economy and social wellness of this country (Ahmad, 2007). With the stability of economy and social aspects in Malaysia, this leads to several opportunities as well as challenges in the field of entrepreneurship among communities. Some of the opportunities are rising the living standard of the society (Doris, 2012; as cited in Tateh, 2013; Jaafar, Abdul Aziz & Ali, 2009), encouraging proactive entrepreneurship from the continuous support provided by the Government (Ismail & Sulaiman, 2007) and generating job opportunities, hence poverty can be reduced (Tamvada, 2009). Along with the opportunities, the challenges identified in entrepreneurship are lack of management expertise (Stanworth & Gray, 1991; as cited in Tonge, 2001) as well as absence of wealth such as limited technologies and shortage of raw material (Hashim, 2000; as cited in Chelliah, Mohamed Sulaiman & Mohd Yusoff, 2010).

In this study, the researchers are interested to see the personality traits and social learning variables that link to the entrepreneurial intentions among Iban community. Entrepreneurship brings improvement to market, generates new jobs, and sustains employment levels entrepreneurship and it is vital because it leads to enlarged financial productivities (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000). However, in ensuring the success of entrepreneurship, there are a few decision processes required and this necessitates the adequate understanding of social variable such as personality trait on the entrepreneurial intentions (Markman, Balkin, & Baron, 2002). In the field of entrepreneurship, there have been extensive studies which focuses into Malay and Chinese communities in Sarawak (Lew, Keling, Muniapan, Kong & Yong, 2004; De Run, Subramaniam & Wong, 2006; Loveline, Uchenna & Karubi, 2014; Mohamad & Kasuma, 2016; Mohamad Sabli & Abdul Latif, 2019; Law & Jaafar, 2019). At a glance, it can be seen that the scarcity of entrepreneurship studies among Iban community drives the researchers to analyse and correlate the personality traits and social learning variables that affected the entrepreneurial intentions among Iban community. With limited literature on entrepreneurship among Iban community, the growing problem of unemployment within society is also another concern as entrepreneurship is considered as a platform to generate income. Conversely, the younger people observe entrepreneurship as their second or even last choice of employability and they found that this career choice will not give them privilege and considered as wasting their time.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Entrepreneurship Concepts and Variables**

There are several definitions of entrepreneurship and the best definition of this concept has yet to be agreed upon. Nevertheless, it is widely accepted that the concept of entrepreneurship is about creating or starting a new venture (Fang et al. 2020). The various definitions of entrepreneurship state that it involves a process of getting new ideas and



innovatively converting them into revenue. It is believed that entrepreneurship is also a process of incrementing wealth as true entrepreneurs are able to identify opportunities and seize them to create something valuable to the market, which in turn brings wealth to themselves or others. The wealth is not necessarily in financial terms, but it also can be cultural, social and environmental enrichment. Entrepreneurial activity is shaped by various aspects such as entrepreneur's experience and environment, socialization process and other motivational factors. It is believed that societies with a socialization process creates a high need for achievement produce more entrepreneurs (Sonne & Gash, 2018). For the purpose of the present study, entrepreneurship potential is defined as the possibility to start a business whereas entrepreneurial intention (EI) refers to the desire to start up a business (Alammari et al., 2019; Santos & Liguori, 2019).

## **2.2 Need for Achievement**

Need for achievement here is motivational factors that drive an entrepreneur to exploit opportunities and put their ideas into actions. According to Mamun and Ekpe (2016), if an individual has the desire to achieve something in their life or being successful, they will be motivated. No matter how many obstacles in their ways to success, if they are highly motivated, they will definitely find ways to overcome it to achieve their goals. Previous research had found that as compared to non-entrepreneurs, entrepreneurs show a high need for achievement (Vandor, 2021). People with a high achievement motivation have three characteristics: 1) the preference for working with a defined scope of personal responsibility, 2) the ability to set realistic goals whose likelihood of fulfilment is estimable, and 3) the need for gratification and feedback on progress (Klinkosz & S kowski, 2013). Thus, achievement motivation seems significantly related to entrepreneurial intention.

## **2.3 Risk Taking Propensity**

Entrepreneurship can be considered as a venture creation process by a person (entrepreneur) who is willing to take risk, search for change, never satisfied with the existing condition and continually exploits opportunities to create value (Ali et al., 2019). Compared to other people, entrepreneurs have a higher risk-taking propensity because entrepreneurs had to deal with uncertainty when making decision (Koh, 1996; Thomas & Mueller, 2000). It has been indicated that an owner of a new business venture who is a risk taker has a strong desire to grow the firm (Altinay et al, 2012).

## **2.4 Innovativeness**

Entrepreneurship can be defined as the process of discovering, evaluating identifying and exploring value-creating opportunities through innovation to produce goods and services (Shane, 2012). In addition, it is a process of vision, change, and creation that needs energy and enthusiasm to develop and execute new ideas and creative solutions (Kuratko, 2016). Moreover, a research conducted by Obschonka et al. (2017) found that high scores on a creativity test and prior entrepreneurial experiences are positively associated with entrepreneurial intentions. Elnadi and Gheith (2021) revealed that entrepreneurial intention among students had greater innovativeness rather than those who are not. Hence, to be an entrepreneur, innovativeness element is important to explore individual intention in venturing new business.

## **2.5 Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy**

Entrepreneurial self-efficacy is defined as "an individual's own belief in his/her skills and abilities linked to entrepreneurial activity" (Barakat et al., 2014). Entrepreneurial self-efficacy measures the degree of a person's beliefs in his/her own capabilities to implement the required steps to start a business (Alammari et al., 2019). Low self-efficacy may lead individual to avoid certain situations and this avoidance behavior may lead the individual to avoid facing fears or building competencies (Bandura, 1977). In contrast, individuals with high levels of entrepreneurial self-efficacy tend to successfully undertake the entrepreneurship process and face the challenging conditions associated with launching a new business (Elnadi & Gheith, 2021).

## **2.6 Family Upbringing**

Family with a business background often influence and motivate their siblings to involve in entrepreneurial activity and they are expected to possess higher propensity to launch a business in future (Zapkau et al., 2017). In addition, parents' attitudes directly affect tourism and hospitality students' entrepreneurial attitude and perceived behavioural control, ultimately impacting these students' EI. Younger parents are more likely to respect and support their children's entrepreneurial choices, enhancing their children's probability of starting up a business (Liu & Zhao, 2020).

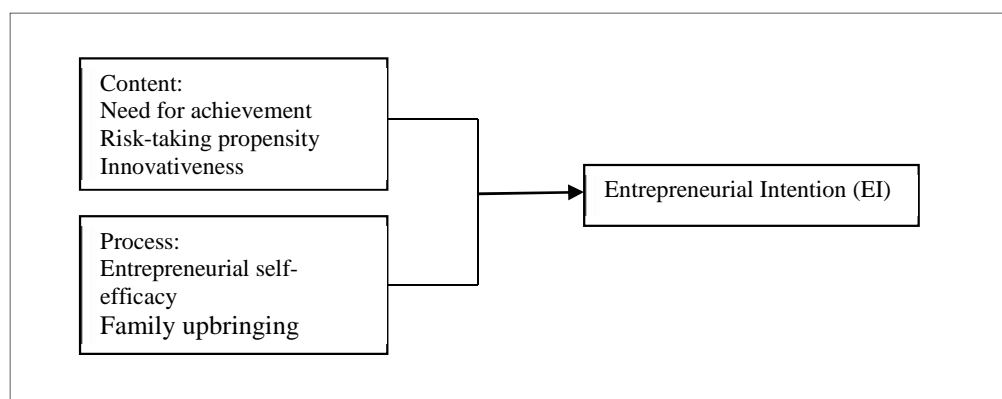


Interestingly, in terms of household gender role influence, fathers have a stronger influence on their children's decisions to become entrepreneurs than mother's self-employment (Kirkwood, 2009).

## 2.7 Entrepreneurial Intention (EI) and Theory of Planned Behaviour

Thompson (2009) stated that there is no unified definition of entrepreneurial intention and based on the research to date, there is also no definition on entrepreneurial intention. Hence, Thompson (2009) understood the construct of entrepreneurial intention as a self-acknowledged conviction by an individual who intends to become an entrepreneur and willing to do so at some point in the future. In this research, this variable is the ultimate dependent variable in the theoretical framework on entrepreneurial intention formation. The dimensions in the social entrepreneurial intention will be divided into three categories which are Attitude towards Behavior, Subjective Norms and Perceived Behavioral Control. These dimensions are based on the most veteran antecedent of intention in the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) by Ajzen (1991).

Meanwhile, this conceptual framework highlights the entrepreneurship potential of unique ethnic such as *Iban* in Kuching and intend to examines the factors responsible for their participation in business sectors through content and process variables. Content variables focus on personality traits such as need for achievement, risk-taking propensity, and innovativeness (Thomas & Mueller, 2000; Utsch & Rauch, 2000), while process variables consider entrepreneurial self-efficacy attained as well as family upbringing which includes family support, financial status, and awareness (Altinay & Altinay, 2006; Altinay et al., 2012). Figure 1 represents the proposed framework of this study.



**Figure 1:** Proposed Framework

## 3. Recommendations

By collecting more people within the Iban community to help and expose them more on entrepreneurship, it could yield a unique finding for the Iban community in Kuching, Sarawak. In some cases, the Malay entrepreneurship resignation to providence has consequently made them risk averse. Apart from that, some entrepreneurs do not see the goodness and benefit in going for something that is not guarantee. The community is working in fear to one's greatest ability and capacity without any guaranteed. The Iban community tends to be conscious of the opinions through actions and appearances. The status consciousness of the Iban community makes them shy to socialize with people of higher status. This perception must be changed to improve their economic and social development.

## 4. Conclusions

Entrepreneurial self-efficacy shows that some Iban community members have the capabilities and abilities to venture into new business. The environmental factors and the limitation surrounding them will influence them to proceed and venture into the new area of industry. They need to open their mindset to compete with other competitors to enhance more skills and knowledge and prevent them from wasting time and money for increasing the living standard to become better. Some motivational factors will drive the entrepreneurs to exploit opportunities and may put their ideas into actions. Entrepreneurs who are willing to take risk may create and exploit opportunities to create value. Those who came from family with business background often influence and motivate them to be involved in entrepreneurial activity and leads to higher propensity to launch business in future.



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