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Norasyikin Mohaiyuddin, Nordin Kardi & Mohammad Aziz Shah Mohamed Arip

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The Effects of Gender Factors on Students' Entrepreneurial Career Intention (ECI) and Entrepreneurial Career Selection Behaviour (ECSB) for Entrepreneurial Career Intention Intervention Program (ECIP)

¹Norasyikin Mohaiyuddin, ²Nordin Kardi & ³Mohammad Aziz Shah Mohamed Arip

^{1,2}Sultan Azlan Shah University, Malaysia, ³Sultan Idris Education University, Malaysia

Abstract

The main objective of this study is to evaluate the effects of gender factors on entrepreneurial career intention and entrepreneurial career selection behavior in an experimental study of the Entrepreneurial Career Intention Intervention Program (ECIP). The program uses modules developed with the integration of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). The study population was counseling students at Sultan Azlan Shah University in Perak, Malaysia. The sampling was conducted through purposive sampling method which involved 100 students as the respondents. The data was analyzed using SPSS, and the results show that gender has no influence on the treatment in the intervention program.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, Intention, Intervention, Selection and Career

Introduction

Initiatives 1 and 2 outlined in the Entrepreneurship Action Plan 2016-2020 target 100% students in higher learning institutions to gain exposure of entrepreneurial culture and attribution, and 5% of graduates to make entrepreneurship a career. In order to achieve these targets, the two initiatives proposed are to implement high-impact educational practices by applying entrepreneurial elements across the curriculum and fields of study and implementing a job-generating framework. Therefore, the primary responsibility is to instill entrepreneurial determination among students during the period of their studies to prepare them to be ready to compete with themselves with self-marketability as a job generator after finishing their studies. This is supported by Branchet et al (2011) who mentioned that preparing and cultivating entrepreneurship among students with the aim of preparing them for career marketability is a crucial matter in a society. The attitude of the current students who depend on the jobs provided by the public and private sectors also needs to be changed. Fostering entrepreneurial values and changing the mentality of seeing self-employment as an alternative to employed workers need to be consolidated in institutions of higher learning

(Mokhtar & Zainuddin, 2016). This is further supported by the statement Yusoff et al (2015) who mentioned that entrepreneurship is like any other disciplines that can be learned, and entrepreneurs can be produced through effective educational programs, training and even other developmental processes.

Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) illustrates how determination is formed and becomes a motivating factor for the occurrence of a behavior. This may explain why some individuals have a high tendency towards entrepreneurship while others do not. Henley (2007) explains that an individual may have entrepreneurial potential such as having resources and competencies but lack the determination to engage in an entrepreneurial career. The main factor of student involvement in the field of entrepreneurship depends on the entrepreneurial career choice behavior itself. This factor will foster a high tendency or interest to venture into the field followed by the identification of opportunities that exist until the decision-making process to explore the area of and opportunities in entrepreneurship (Hisrich et al., 2008). In addition, Ferreira et al (2014) highlighted that both psychological and behavioral approaches need to be engaged in measuring the determination of entrepreneurial career. The level of entrepreneurial career choice behavior in this country is also still at a relatively low level (Othman et al., 2012). Entrepreneurship is only the second and last choice of career among students due to the lack of awareness of the field's potential (Othman & Ishak, 2011). Despite the fact that various efforts done by the government, the tendency of students to engage in entrepreneurial activities is still low due to the negative perceptions towards this field such as the difficulties and failures (Bidin et al., 2012). Thus, it can be concluded that if students have positive perceptions of the entrepreneurial career, then they are assumed to have a high potential to venture into the field. This can be seen through the behaviors they exhibit towards entrepreneurial careers, for example their desire to seek advice and be active in entrepreneurial activities held at the university (Othman et al., 2012).

Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

Studies related to entrepreneurship educational programs and TPB have been widely conducted nationally and internationally. The diversity in the study as well as the interconnectedness of the variables studied show that the study in relation to entrepreneurial determination still has ample room for further research. The following are the past studies that are studied for this research. The study of Ogunjipe et al (2012) examined the impacts of entrepreneurship education and career guidance courses implemented on students in business majors, and guidance and counselling. A total of 206 subjects from the Department of Guidance and Counselling and Business Management of Lagos State University were randomly selected to answer the Entrepreneurial Intention Questionnaire (EIQ) based on the Theory of Planned Behavior by (Ajzen, 1991). The analysis of the study findings shows that the subjects who followed the career guidance were found to show higher entrepreneurial determination compared to business management majors' subjects who followed entrepreneurship education courses. Lack of exposure to career guidance was found to be the leading factor to directing the subjects' thinking towards working with employers as opposed to being an entrepreneur despite pursuing business management studies at the university. Fiore, Sansone and Paulucci (2019) conducted an exploratory single case study on an entrepreneurship program in a multidisciplinary environment emphasizing the importance of forming groups with different competencies, cognitive as well as decision-making skills.

This study differs from the previous approach where most entrepreneurship educational programs are focusing on specific fields of study and specific levels of study only. The Contamination Lab of Turin (CLabTo) program received 102 participatory responses which eventually only 62 participants were able to complete the program. Surveys from pre and post-tests as well as qualitative analysis showed that students' perceptions of the ability to work in multidisciplinary teams, entrepreneurial skills and entrepreneurial determination were found to increase. However, entrepreneurship education for these multidisciplinary students is found to be more challenging than teaching students from certain fields and levels of study. A study by Supriyono and Christian (2018) involving 190 students from 10 institutions of higher learning in Bandung found that the higher the level of students' self-confidence in their ability to handle responsibilities and tasks that need to be performed as a successful entrepreneur, the higher their entrepreneurial determination. This high level of self-confidence shows individual personality affects entrepreneurial determination. These findings are consistent with the findings from Michael's (2017) which involved 141 students of institutions of higher learning under the Ministry of Higher Education, Malaysia. Michael identified that proactive personalities and support systems have a significant relationship to student TPB.

Hypothesis

There were no significant differences for gender effects and significant inter-gender interactions in the mean measures of the post-test dependent variables of Entrepreneurial Career Intention (ECI) and Entrepreneurial Career Selection Behaviour (ECSB) of the treatment group.

1.1 There were no significant differences for the effect of gender and significant interaction between the sexes in the mean measure of the post-test Entrepreneurial Career Intention (ECI) dependent variable.

1.2 There were no significant differences for gender effects and significant inter-gender interactions in the mean measures of the post-test dependent variables Entrepreneurial Career Selection Behavior (ECSB) of the treatment group.

Research Method

This study is a quasi-experiment involving 100 subjects of study from amongst Sultan Azlan Shah University's Counseling undergraduates. The pre-test was given a week before the subjects attended the test while the post-test was given a week after the subjects of study completed the treatment session. MANCOVA analysis was carried out.

Findings

Table 1: Summary of MANCOVA analysis looking at the effects of gender and significant interactions between genders in the mean measures of post-test dependent variables Entrepreneurial Career Intention (ECI) and Entrepreneurial Career Selection Behavior (ECSB) of the treatment group.

Table 1

Summary of MANCOVA analysis of the effects of gender and significant interactions between genders in the mean measures of post-test dependent variables Entrepreneurial Career Intention (ECI) and Entrepreneurial Career Selection Behavior (ECSB) of the treatment group.

Dependent variables	Source	JKD	Dk	MKD	F	Sig.
ECI	Gender	.02	1	.02	.25	.61
	Treatment group	1.32	1	1.32	.03	.86
	Gender*Treatment group	.08	2	.04	.51	.60
ECSB	Gender	43.06	2	21.53	.48	.61
	Treatment group	.01	2	.007	.09	.91
	Gender*Treatment group	2.32	2	1.16	.02	.97

p < .05 (significant at the level of 95%)

Table 1 shows the results of MANCOVA analysis on the interaction effect of treatment group factor and gender factor on entrepreneurial career determination variable. It shows that gender factor is not significant or does not have a significant effect on the mean of pre-test and post-test to the two variables: determination entrepreneurial careers and entrepreneurial career selection behaviors. The entrepreneurial career determination variable shows $F(1, 69) = .251$ ($p > .618$). As for the entrepreneurial career choice behavior variable the findings are $F(2, 69) = .486$ ($p > .617$). Thus, these results prove that gender factor is not significant on the determination score as well as the score of the entrepreneurial career choice behavior variable. The same results are also found to be the same for treatment group. The findings showed a significant value ($p > .05$) of the treatment group for both variables: entrepreneurial career determination and entrepreneurial career choice behavior. Hence, null hypotheses 6.1 and 6.2 are accepted.

Discussion

MANCOVA analysis showed that the gender factor is not significant or does not have a significant effect on the two main variables namely ECI and ECSB. The test findings explain that the gender factor did not affect the determination score. The same situation also applies to the ECSB variable. The gender of either male or female does not affect or differentiate the variables. The same results were also found within the treatment group. Gender factors are also found not to show any significant differences either in the big or small intervention groups. In short, the increase in the mean value of ECI and ECSB depends solely on the strength of the module and not dependent on gender and gender interaction according to the intervention group. From theoretical point of view, neither TPB nor CBT emphasizes on gender influencing factors when discussing the implementation of theory. CBT as a theory of counseling psychology emphasizes on treatment using certain techniques to change irrational thinking that also affects emotions and behavior. Nonetheless, CBT is proven to be suitable to be used at child and youth level across a variety of modality problems. CBT approach can be carried out either individually, in groups such as a family, in groups or in an inpatient or outpatient setting (Turner & Swearer, 2010). For TPB which is classified as a popular social psychology theory in this study of determination or behavioral tendency, there are past studies involving the influence of gender on entrepreneurial determination. Among such studies are Robledo, Aran, Martin- Sanchez & Molina (2015), Maes, Leroy & Sels (2014) and Hussain and Hashim (2016). However, all these studies looked directly at the effect of gender with three subscales of determination namely attitude, subjective norms, or perceived behavioral control. The findings of this study also contradict the study of Obschonka, Schmitt-Rodermund, Silbereisen, Gosling & Potter (2013) which found that gender and culture are among the factors that have a significant influence on entrepreneurial determination.

However, the findings of the same study indicate a more detailed study is needed to see to what extent gender factors influence these variables.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings of this study is hope to help supporting higher institutions in Malaysia to encourage graduates to become entrepreneurs through entrepreneurial career intention program. All institutions of higher learning should promote entrepreneurship to the graduates as a preparation to face the working world after they finish their studies.

Corresponding Author

Nordin Kardi

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