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Determinants of Entrepreneurial Intention among Low-Income Women in Sabah, Malaysia

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Abstract

Entrepreneurial intention is a critical predictor of actual entrepreneurial behavior, serving as a foundation for fostering entrepreneurship among underrepresented groups. Despite its significance, there is a lack of studies examining the entrepreneurial intentions of B40 (low-income) women in Malaysia, leaving a gap in understanding the factors influencing their aspirations. This study integrates the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and the Entrepreneurial Event Model (EEM) to examine entrepreneurial intentions among B40 women in Sabah, Malaysia. A quantitative approach was adopted, employing purposive sampling to select 134 respondents. The data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling-Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) with SmartPLS 4.0 software. The findings revealed that all hypotheses were supported: attitude toward entrepreneurship, family support, and entrepreneurial self-efficacy positively and significantly influenced both perceived desirability and perceived feasibility. Moreover, perceived desirability and perceived feasibility were found to be significant predictors of entrepreneurial intention. This study addresses the paucity of research on underrepresented groups, specifically low-income women, and proposes future directions for researchers and practitioners to enhance understanding and support for this demographic.

Keywords: Theory of Planned Behavior, Perceived Desirability, Perceived Feasibility, Entrepreneurial Intention, Low-Income Women, Attitude, Self-Efficacy, Family Support

Introduction

In recent years, governments worldwide have actively encouraged women to embrace entrepreneurship. Various initiatives have been launched globally to promote female participation in economic activities, reflecting the growing attention to the rise of female entrepreneurship (ul Haq et al., 2021). In Malaysia, efforts to enhance women's involvement in entrepreneurship are expected to align with the nation's regional development and employment goals in the coming decade (Laudano et al., 2019). A significant milestone in this direction was the establishment of the Ministry of Women, Family, and Community

Development in 2001, which has since introduced numerous programs aimed at improving women's status in the country.

Women entrepreneurship is recognized as a vital driver of global development. In developing nations, women entrepreneurs play crucial roles in job creation, wealth generation, poverty reduction, human development, education, healthcare, and nation-building (Sajjad et al., 2020). However, women's participation in entrepreneurship in Malaysia remains relatively low. Women-owned businesses constitute only 20.6% of the 907,065 SMEs in the country (Johari et al., 2021), and women entrepreneurs face higher business failure rates than their male counterparts (Yang & Triana, 2019). Factors contributing to this disparity include a lack of essential skills, relevant experience, training, and education (Sajjad et al., 2020).

Additionally, men and women operate in distinct business environments influenced by gendered societal roles, where women are often seen as caretakers and men as family providers (Wolf & Frese, 2018). This dynamic, coupled with socio-cultural, legal, and economic factors, contributes to the persistent gender gap in entrepreneurial ventures worldwide (Salis & Flegl, 2021). Despite progress, women in many countries remain disadvantaged and require societal support and infrastructure to succeed as entrepreneurs (Sajjad et al., 2020).

Despite the growing focus on entrepreneurship as a driver of innovation and economic growth, women remain significantly underrepresented in this field. This disparity stems from a combination of psychological, structural, and cultural barriers that uniquely affect women. For many, self-doubt and fear of failure discourage them from pursuing entrepreneurial ventures (Cardella et al., 2020; Laguía et al., 2022). Societal stereotypes further amplify these challenges, often associating entrepreneurship with traditionally "masculine" traits. This creates "stereotype threat," where internalized beliefs about gender roles negatively impact women's confidence and entrepreneurial intentions (Gupta & Bhawe, 2007).

Beyond these psychological hurdles, practical and structural issues also constrain women's entrepreneurial ambitions. Limited access to funding, networking opportunities, and mentorship disproportionately affects women entrepreneurs (Kumar & Singh, 2021; Tirivangasi, 2018). Additionally, many women face the dual burden of managing family responsibilities alongside career aspirations, with inadequate societal support systems making it harder to balance the two. Cultural norms often exacerbate this imbalance by prioritizing women's roles within the family, particularly in rural and traditional settings, leaving little room for entrepreneurial pursuits (Semkunde et al., 2021).

Addressing these issues requires a multifaceted approach, starting with the identification of entrepreneurial intentions through the development of a comprehensive framework. This framework will examine the factors influencing women's intentions to become entrepreneurs. Such an approach will support the creation of initiatives and programs aimed at encouraging more women to pursue entrepreneurship. The barriers women face in entrepreneurship are deeply ingrained but not insurmountable. By tackling these challenges head-on, we can create more inclusive opportunities for women, driving both economic growth and progress toward gender equality. Despite the potential of entrepreneurship to transform the lives of women in the B40 income group, their participation and intentions remain underexplored. Therefore, this study aims to provide insights into the factors

influencing the entrepreneurial intentions of B40 (low-income) women in Malaysia by integrating the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and the Entrepreneurial Event Model (EEM). Both theories have been widely used to predict entrepreneurial intentions and are recognized for their substantial predictive power. However, they are rarely combined to examine the entrepreneurial intentions of low-income women, making this study a novel contribution to the field.

Literature Review

Entrepreneurial Intention among Women

Intention is widely recognized as a key predictor of entrepreneurial behavior (Martínez-González et al., 2019). This concept reflects a deliberate and conscious effort by individuals eager to embark on their own business ventures. Specifically, entrepreneurial intention refers to behavior aimed at creating new businesses, pursuing self-employment, or expanding existing enterprises, underscoring its critical role in driving entrepreneurial actions (Rauch & Frese, 2007; Wasowska, 2016).

In recent years, research on entrepreneurial intention among women has expanded across diverse contexts, reflecting a global interest in understanding this phenomenon. Studies have examined women entrepreneurs in South Asia (India, Bangladesh, Pakistan), North Africa (Morocco), Southeast Asia (Vietnam, Malaysia), and the Middle East (Saudi Arabia), as well as Europe (France). These investigations reveal how factors such as culture, socioeconomic conditions, and gender norms influence entrepreneurial intention in various regions (Chhabra et al., 2020; Polas & Jahanshahi, 2021; Sarwar et al., 2021; Bouarir et al., 2023; Le & Nguyen, 2022; Jalil et al., 2022). Beyond geographical diversity, specific demographic groups have also been explored. For instance, studies in Malaysia have focused on indigenous communities (Derani et al., 2020) and the economically disadvantaged B40 group (Khan et al., 2021). Other research has targeted employees in SMEs in developing countries (Tian et al., 2022) and youth populations (Muddat et al., 2021). Comparative studies, such as those involving female students in Saudi Arabia (Bhatti et al., 2021) and postgraduate students in France (Bouhalleb, 2020), offer valuable perspectives on entrepreneurial intention across different life stages and educational contexts.

The studies reviewed consistently emphasize entrepreneurial intention as a critical outcome, highlighting its role as a precursor to entrepreneurial behavior. However, there is a noticeable gap in the literature concerning underrepresented groups, particularly B40 (low-income) women in Malaysia. This group faces distinct challenges, such as restricted access to resources, socioeconomic barriers, and cultural expectations, which can limit their ability to pursue entrepreneurial aspirations. Addressing these gaps is essential for understanding the specific factors that shape entrepreneurial intention in marginalized communities.

Research integrating frameworks like the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and the Entrepreneurial Event Model (EEM) provides valuable insights into the variables influencing entrepreneurial intention. Findings demonstrate that elements such as attitudes toward entrepreneurship, family support, and entrepreneurial self-efficacy play a significant role in enhancing perceived desirability and feasibility, which in turn influence entrepreneurial intentions. These insights are especially important for creating targeted interventions that address the unique needs of low-income women in regions like Sabah, Malaysia.

Underpinning Theories

This study integrates two widely recognized theories that have been found to strongly influence entrepreneurial intentions: the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), developed by Ajzen (1991), and the Entrepreneurial Event Model (EEM), expanded and refined by Shapero and Sokol (1982). These theories offer complementary perspectives. TPB focuses on the cognitive and psychological factors that shape an individual's intentions, while EEM emphasizes the situational and social conditions that propel individuals toward entrepreneurial actions. Together, these frameworks provide a holistic understanding of how entrepreneurial intentions are formed and influenced, particularly in contexts where external pressures and internal motivations intersect.

Theory of Planned Behavior

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), developed by Ajzen (1991), has been widely used in past studies to explain and predict a broad range of behaviors and intentions toward those behaviors (Derani et al., 2020). This theory is based on the premise that human actions are planned as an anticipation of possible outcomes (Sarwar et al., 2021). TPB explains that an individual's behavior is influenced by their behavioral intention, which is directly impacted by three components: attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control.

In this study, attitude refers to the individual's expectations and evaluations of the outcomes of a given behavior. Subjective norms pertain to family support, which plays a critical role for women entrepreneurs who face distinct challenges. Family support acts as a significant determinant of the success or failure of their ventures and encompasses emotional, intellectual, economic, and instrumental support provided by family members (Bhandari, 2016).

Perceived behavioral control is the extent to which an individual feels they have control over or ease in performing a given behavior (Jing et al., 2016; Lihua, 2022). In this study, entrepreneurial self-efficacy serves as a proxy for perceived behavioral control. Entrepreneurial self-efficacy is defined as the belief an individual holds about their skills to undertake and successfully complete entrepreneurial tasks (Chhabra et al., 2020). It also relates to the individual's perception of their capabilities as an entrepreneur and their belief in effectively performing entrepreneurial roles (Boyd & Vozikis, 1994).

Entrepreneurial Event Model (EEM)

The Entrepreneurial Event Model (EEM) was introduced by Shapero and Sokol (1982), who proposed that an entrepreneurial event results from a dynamic process that generates situational momentum, influencing individuals toward entrepreneurial intentions. According to this model, an individual's perceptions and values are shaped by their social and cultural inheritance as well as their previous experiences. EEM identifies two core components: perceived desirability and perceived feasibility.

Perceived desirability refers to the degree to which starting a business is appealing to an individual (Krueger, 1993). In the context of this study, economic inflation is a significant factor that can ignite the desire to create income and provide socio-economic support. On the other hand, perceived feasibility relates to an individual's perception of their capability to become an entrepreneur (Chhabra et al., 2020). Cheung et al. (2002) further elaborate that

perceived feasibility reflects both the skills an individual possesses to become an entrepreneur and their judgment of what they can achieve using those skills.

Hypotheses Development

The Effect of Attitude Towards Entrepreneurship on EEM

Attitude towards a behavior is a key antecedent of entrepreneurial intention in the Theory of Planned Behavior. Similarly, perceived desirability and perceived feasibility are predictors of entrepreneurial intention according to the Entrepreneurial Event Model. Attitude reflects either a positive or negative perception about a particular behavior, whereas perceived desirability represents a positive feeling of enjoyment and interest in such behavior. On the other hand, perceived feasibility refers to an individual's belief in their ability to perform entrepreneurial activities.

Attitude encompasses personal beliefs about entrepreneurship which can influence both the desire and confidence to act entrepreneurially depending on whether the attitude is positive or negative (Mejía et al., 2023). For low-income women, their attitudes may be shaped by factors such as cultural norms, prior exposure to entrepreneurship, and their perceived role in economic activities. A positive attitude towards entrepreneurship can be particularly transformative, as it aligns with their aspirations for financial independence and empowerment.

Further, attitude has been linked to perceived desirability (Lediana et al., 2023) and perceived feasibility, though these relationships have not been extensively explored in the context of low-income women. For women in low-income settings, the belief in their ability to succeed as entrepreneurs can significantly enhance their interest and confidence in pursuing such activities, despite the challenges they face. Hence, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Attitude towards entrepreneurship positively influences perceived desirability

H2: Attitude towards entrepreneurship positively influences perceived feasibility

The Effect of Family Support on EEM

Family support is closely related to subjective norms in the Theory of Planned Behavior. It also corresponds to perceived social support, which, according to Lin et al. (2024), refers to the enabling mechanism of feeling valued and cared for by others. For low-income women, family support can play a pivotal role in shaping their entrepreneurial aspirations. Families act as close reference groups that provide emotional, financial, and moral backing, enhancing feelings of safety, security, and confidence in decision-making (An et al., 2024).

In many low-income communities, family dynamics often dictate the acceptance or rejection of entrepreneurial pursuits. Supportive family members can create a nurturing environment that promotes the desire and confidence to engage in entrepreneurial activities (Iakovleva et al., 2011). When entrepreneurship is seen as a valued and viable behavior within the family context, it can strengthen the individual’s belief in their ability to succeed (Sarwar et al., 2021). This is particularly critical for low-income women, as they may rely on family approval and assistance to overcome social and economic barriers. Thus, the following hypotheses are posited:

H3: Family support positively influences perceived desirability

H4: Family support positively influences perceived feasibility

The Effect of Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy on EEM

Entrepreneurial self-efficacy refers to an individual's intrinsic belief in their ability to successfully engage in entrepreneurial activities, often driven by confidence in their skills and resilience (Cope, 2005). It serves as a key motivator in the entrepreneurial process, particularly in navigating uncertainty and seizing opportunities (Bandura, 2006). For low-income women, entrepreneurial self-efficacy is crucial in overcoming societal, financial, and logistical challenges that often hinder their participation in entrepreneurship.

Individuals with high levels of entrepreneurial self-efficacy are more likely to persist through setbacks, sustain effort, and develop strategies for success (Caliendo et al., 2023). For women in low-income settings, self-efficacy can empower them to view entrepreneurship as a viable path to economic stability and personal growth, enhancing their desire to pursue and confidence in their entrepreneurial capabilities. Based on these arguments, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H5: Entrepreneurial self-efficacy positively influences perceived desirability

H6: Entrepreneurial self-efficacy positively influences perceived feasibility

The Effect of EEM on Entrepreneurial Intention

Entrepreneurial intention, defined as an individual's commitment to start a new business or engage in entrepreneurial activities, is significantly influenced by various psychological and contextual factors. Within the Entrepreneurial Event Model (Krueger et al., 2000), perceived desirability and perceived feasibility are identified as crucial antecedents that shape entrepreneurial intention. These constructs are particularly pertinent in the context of low-income women, who often face unique socio-economic challenges that impact their perceptions and motivations toward entrepreneurship.

Perceived Desirability

Perceived desirability pertains to the extent to which entrepreneurship is seen as an attractive and personally rewarding endeavor. Research consistently demonstrates a positive relationship between perceived desirability and entrepreneurial intention, including among low-income women. For instance Matharu and Juneja (2021) found that among marginalized women in developing countries, the presence of successful female entrepreneurs serves as a powerful motivator, enhancing the attractiveness of entrepreneurship as a pathway to financial independence. Similarly, de Sousa-Filho et al. (2020) highlighted that robust social support systems, such as family encouragement and community-based programs, significantly elevate perceived desirability, thereby strengthening entrepreneurial intentions among low-income women in rural settings. Additionally, Digan et al. (2018) observed that empowerment initiatives that emphasize the societal impact of women entrepreneurs positively influence their perceptions of desirability, further fostering entrepreneurial intentions. These insights support the proposed hypothesis:

H7: Perceived desirability positively influences entrepreneurial intention.

Perceived Feasibility

On the other hand, perceived feasibility refers to an individual's assessment of the likelihood that they can successfully engage in a particular behavior or venture, particularly in the context of entrepreneurship. This concept is closely linked to the availability of resources, personal capabilities, and the perceived ease of executing the necessary actions to

achieve a desired outcome. According to Shapero and Sokol (1982), perceived feasibility is fundamentally about the belief in one's ability to undertake entrepreneurial activities, which is influenced by prior experiences and the perceived availability of resources such as financial support and knowledge.

For low-income women, perceived feasibility is often contingent upon external support and the availability of resources. Recent studies emphasize the importance of various factors in enhancing perceived feasibility. Esfandiar et al. (2019) demonstrated that access to skill development programs and microfinance significantly boosts perceived feasibility, thereby increasing entrepreneurial intentions among low-income women residing in urban areas. Nikou et al. (2020) further revealed that digital literacy initiatives are critical in raising perceived feasibility, particularly by enabling women entrepreneurs to utilize online platforms effectively for their businesses. Moreover, Abbes (2024) found that educational support opportunities play a vital role in improving perceived feasibility, as they provide low-income women with the confidence and knowledge needed to navigate and overcome entrepreneurial challenges. These findings lend support to the following hypothesis:
H8: Perceived feasibility positively influences entrepreneurial intention.

Mediating Effects of EEM
The Entrepreneurial Event Model (EEM) and the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) are instrumental in understanding entrepreneurial intention, particularly among marginalized groups such as women in the B40 group (Bottom 40% income households). This integration offers a refined framework for exploring how cognitive evaluations, namely perceived desirability and perceived feasibility act as mediators in the relationships between the core TPB constructs (attitude toward entrepreneurship, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control) and entrepreneurial intention.

For women in the B40 group or low income, attitude towards entrepreneurship reflects their personal evaluations of starting a business as a means of economic empowerment. Research suggests that these women often view entrepreneurship as a viable path to overcoming economic challenges, contributing positively to their entrepreneurial intention. However, this relationship is often mediated by cognitive evaluations. Perceived desirability, the personal appeal of entrepreneurship, strengthens the link between attitude and entrepreneurial intention. Similarly, perceived feasibility, the belief in the ability to execute entrepreneurial tasks, plays a critical role in translating favorable attitudes into action. Studies like Ahmad et al. (2019) and Lediana et al. (2023) support these mediating effects, emphasizing the importance of personal evaluations in this process. Therefore, the hypotheses are:
H7: Perceived desirability mediates the relationship between attitude towards entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial intention.
H10: Perceived feasibility mediates the relationship between attitude towards entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial intention.

Subjective norm, operationalized as family support, is a critical factor influencing entrepreneurial intention among women in the B40 group. In this context, family support can provide encouragement, resources, and emotional backing, which are essential for overcoming the socio-economic barriers faced by these women. The mediating roles

of perceived desirability and perceived feasibility are particularly salient. Family support enhances the attractiveness of entrepreneurship (perceived desirability) by fostering confidence and motivation, while also reinforcing the practicality of pursuing entrepreneurial ventures (perceived feasibility). Previous studies, such as Saeed et al. (2014) and Ahmad et al. (2019), highlight these mediating pathways, especially in resource-constrained settings. Hence, the hypotheses are:

H8: Perceived desirability mediates the relationship between family support and entrepreneurial intention.

H11: Perceived feasibility mediates the relationship between family support and entrepreneurial intention among women in the B40 group.

Entrepreneurial self-efficacy, a proxy for perceived behavioral control, represents an individual's belief in their ability to succeed in entrepreneurial endeavors. For women in the B40 group, building self-efficacy is particularly crucial, as they often face systemic barriers such as limited education, access to resources, and socio-cultural constraints. Enhanced entrepreneurial self-efficacy can increase the personal attractiveness of entrepreneurship (perceived desirability) and bolster their belief in its feasibility. Studies, including Lediana et al. (2023) and Ahmad et al. (2019), have shown that both perceived desirability and perceived feasibility mediate the effect of entrepreneurial self-efficacy on entrepreneurial intention, suggesting that these cognitive mechanisms are pivotal in fostering intention among resource-constrained groups. Therefore, the hypotheses are:

H9: Perceived desirability mediates the relationship between entrepreneurial self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intention.

H12: Perceived feasibility mediates the relationship between entrepreneurial self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intention.

Methodology

Purposive sampling was used to ensure that the sampled population fit the identified characteristics of the target population. Sarker and AL-Muaalemi (2022) stated that respondents are selected based on their ability to fulfill the given criteria. Hence, the selection of respondents was guided by inclusion and exclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria were as follows: (i) the respondent is a female Malaysian residing in Sabah, Malaysia, for at least one year; (ii) the respondent is an adult aged at least 21 years; (iii) the respondent is not involved in any active or entrepreneurial activities; and (iv) the respondent belongs to a household classified under the B40 income group (households earning up to RM5,249).

Profile of the Respondents

A total of 134 responses were deemed usable for further analysis, all of which came from low-income women. Most respondents were aged below 30 years (n = 47, 35.1%) or between 41 and 50 years (n = 48, 35.8%), with smaller proportions aged 30–40 years (n = 23, 17.2%), 51–60 years (n = 12, 9.0%), and above 60 years (n = 4, 3.0%). In terms of marital status, the majority were either single or married (n = 62 each, 46.3%), while others were divorced (n = 4, 3.0%), separated (n = 2, 1.5%), or widowed (n = 4, 3.0%). Employment statuses varied, with respondents reporting part-time employment (n = 20, 14.9%), full-time employment (n = 42, 31.3%), self-employment (n = 27, 20.1%), unemployment (n = 43, 32.1%), or retirement as pensioners (n = 2, 1.5%). In terms of monthly household income, a majority earned less than RM2,500 (n = 82, 61.2%), while others earned between RM2,500 and RM5,249 (n = 52,

38.8%). These demographic characteristics provide critical context for understanding the perspectives of low-income women in this study.

Results

The data was analyzed using SEM-PLS with SmartPLS 4.0. Before testing the hypotheses, the reliability and validity of the data were assessed through Convergent Validity and Discriminant Validity. As shown in Table 1, all items were retained as they met the required cut-off values. The results indicate that all constructs had outer loadings exceeding the threshold of 0.70, justifying the retention of all indicators to represent their respective latent constructs. The internal consistency of the measurement models was also satisfactory, with all Cronbach's Alpha values exceeding 0.70. Furthermore, composite reliability, represented by rho_c, was also acceptable, as all latent constructs had values above 0.70. Thus, the construct reliability of the measurement models was confirmed as satisfactory. Additionally, construct validity, based on the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), was acceptable, with all measurement models achieving AVE values greater than 0.50. This confirms that the measurement models in this study have acceptable and satisfactory convergent validity. Similarly, discriminant validity was demonstrated through the Hetero-Trait Mono-Trait (HTMT) ratio. The HTMT values for all constructs were below the cut-off of 0.850, as shown in Table 2, indicating that the discriminant validity of the measurement model is acceptable (Hair et al., 2022).

Table 1

Convergent Validity Based on Indicator Reliability and Construct Reliability and Validity

Constructs	Indicators	Outer (OL)	Loading	Cronbach's alpha (CA)	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Attitude towards Entrepreneurship	ATT1	0.823		0.904	0.908	0.929	0.722
	ATT2	0.872					
	ATT3	0.832					
	ATT4	0.862					
	ATT5	0.861					
Family Support	FS1	0.880		0.898	0.902	0.929	0.766
	FS2	0.890					
	FS3	0.865					
	FS4	0.865					
Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy	ESE1	0.808		0.886	0.890	0.917	0.688
	ESE2	0.866					
	ESE3	0.808					
	ESE4	0.846					
	ESE5	0.817					
Perceived Desirability	PD1	0.939		0.921	0.926	0.950	0.863
	PD2	0.909					
	PD3	0.938					
Perceived Feasibility	PF1	0.817		0.847	0.855	0.908	0.766
	PF2	0.891					
	PF3	0.916					
Entrepreneurial Intention	EI1	0.895		0.959	0.956	0.965	0.819
	EI2	0.922					
	EI3	0.939					
	EI4	0.875					
	EI5	0.900					
	EI6	0.898					

Note: Acceptable Level: OL ≥ 0.70; CA ≥ 0.70; Rho_a ≥ 0.70; Rho_c ≥ 0.70; AVE ≥ 0.50

Table 2
Discriminant Validity with HTMT Ratio

Constructs	ATT	FS	ESE	PD	PF	EI
ATT						
FS	0.561					
ESE	0.621	0.683				
PD	0.731	0.604	0.665			
PF	0.763	0.719	0.812	0.711		
EI	0.752	0.605	0.562	0.665	0.838	

Hypotheses Results – Direct Effect

Table 3 presents the bootstrapping results for testing the research hypotheses based on a one-tailed analysis, and the findings reveal that all the proposed hypotheses are supported. Specifically, attitude towards entrepreneurship demonstrates a positive and significant relationship with both perceived desirability (β = 0.433, T = 6.008, p < 0.001) and perceived feasibility (β = 0.344, T = 5.996, p < 0.001). Similarly, family support is positively associated with perceived desirability (β = 0.179, T = 2.273, p = 0.012) and perceived feasibility (β = 0.230, T = 2.674, p = 0.004). Furthermore, entrepreneurial self-efficacy shows a significant positive influence on both perceived desirability (β = 0.245, T = 2.693, p = 0.004) and perceived feasibility (β = 0.372, T = 5.280, p < 0.001). Additionally, perceived desirability is positively linked to entrepreneurial intention (β = 0.241, T = 2.998, p = 0.001), while perceived feasibility has a strong positive impact on entrepreneurial intention (β = 0.607, T = 8.449, p < 0.001). Therefore, hypotheses H1, H2, H3, H4, H5, H6, H7, and H8 are all supported.

Table 3
Direct Paths Analysis Output

Hypotheses		Beta (β)	T Statistics	P Values	Confidence Interval		f^2	Support Hypothesis
					5%	95%		
H1	ATT → PD	0.443	6.008	0.000	0.316	0.559	0.277	Yes
H2	ATT → PF	0.344	5.996	0.000	0.246	0.433	0.210	Yes
H3	FS → PD	0.179	2.273	0.012	0.097	0.397	0.085	Yes
H4	FS → PF	0.230	2.674	0.004	0.253	0.485	0.041	Yes
H5	ESE→ PD	0.245	2.693	0.004	0.052	0.310	0.071	Yes
H6	ESE → PF	0.372	5.280	0.000	0.078	0.361	0.206	Yes
H7	PD → EI	0.241	2.998	0.001	0.110	0.378	0.090	Yes
H8	PF → EI	0.607	8.449	0.000	0.482	0.717	0.573	Yes
	R^2							60.9%

Key: ATT – Attitude towards Entrepreneurship; FS – Family Support; ESE – Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy; PD – Perceived Desirability; PF – Perceived Feasibility; EI – Entrepreneurial Intention

Hypotheses Results – Mediating Effect

Table 4 presents the bootstrapping output used to test the research hypotheses through a one-tailed analysis. The results indicate that all research hypotheses are supported. Specifically, there is a positive and significant mediation of the relationship between attitude towards entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial intention by perceived desirability (β = 0.107,

T = 2.455, CI: 0.030–0.198, p = 0.007) and by perceived feasibility (β = 0.209, T = 4.612, CI: 0.127–0.305, p = 0.000). Similarly, the relationship between family support and entrepreneurial intention is mediated positively and significantly by perceived desirability (β = 0.043, T = 1.668, CI: 0.007–0.091, p = 0.048) and by perceived feasibility (β = 0.139, T = 2.323, CI: 0.047–0.247, p = 0.010). Additionally, entrepreneurial self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intention are mediated by perceived desirability (β = 0.059, T = 2.260, CI: 0.018–0.103, p = 0.012) and by perceived feasibility (β = 0.226, T = 5.117, CI: 0.1546–0.300, p = 0.000). Consequently, the research hypotheses H9, H10, H11, H12, H13, and H14 are all supported.

Table 4
Indirect Paths Analysis Output

Hypotheses		Beta (β)	T Statistics	Confidence Interval		P Values	Support Hypothesis
				5%	95%		
H9	ATT → PD → EI	0.107	2.455	0.030	0.198	0.007	Yes
H10	ATT → PF → EI	0.209	4.612	0.127	0.305	0.000	Yes
H11	FS → PD → EI	0.043	1.668	0.007	0.091	0.048	Yes
H12	FS → PF → EI	0.139	2.323	0.047	0.247	0.010	Yes
H13	ESE → PD → EI	0.059	2.260	0.018	0.103	0.012	Yes
H14	ESE → PF → EI	0.226	5.117	0.156	0.300	0.000	Yes
Total Effects							

Discussion

This study highlights the crucial role of attitudes towards entrepreneurship in shaping women's desire and confidence to pursue entrepreneurial ventures. Attitude emerged as a key driver of both perceived desirability and perceived feasibility, aligning with previous research that underscores its importance in influencing entrepreneurial behavior (Lediana et al., 2023). Our findings confirm that a positive attitude has a significant and meaningful impact on how desirable and feasible entrepreneurship seems to women, providing further evidence for the value of fostering supportive mindsets in potential entrepreneurs.

Family support was also found to play an important role in encouraging entrepreneurial aspirations. Although the effect sizes were small, the significance of family support is evident in its ability to boost both perceived desirability and feasibility. This finding resonates with the lived experiences of many women, particularly in Malaysia, where family is a central part of life. As women increasingly turn to entrepreneurship to improve their quality of life and gain flexibility in managing work and family commitments (Qazi et al., 2022), family support becomes a cornerstone for enabling them to juggle multiple roles. This support acts as a confidence-builder, helping women believe in their ability to succeed in both their professional and personal lives.

Entrepreneurial self-efficacy also emerged as a significant factor in shaping both perceived desirability and feasibility among B40 women in Sabah, Malaysia. Notably, self-efficacy had a stronger effect on feasibility than desirability. This suggests that women who feel confident in their entrepreneurial skills are more likely to see entrepreneurial ventures as achievable. This finding is consistent with previous studies showing that individuals with higher self-

efficacy are more inclined to believe in their capacity to succeed in business (Elnadi et al., 2021). The smaller effect on desirability may reflect the perception that entrepreneurship is a risky and demanding endeavor, which can dampen enthusiasm among those who are risk-averse (Newman et al., 2019).

One of the key takeaways from this study is the clear connection between perceived desirability, perceived feasibility, and entrepreneurial intention. Both desirability and feasibility significantly influence entrepreneurial intentions, with feasibility showing a much larger effect size. Together, these factors—along with their antecedents (attitudes, family support, and self-efficacy)—explained 60.9% of the variation in entrepreneurial intentions among B40 women in Malaysia. This is a substantial finding, demonstrating the strength of the research model while also pointing to the need for further exploration of other factors that could shape women's entrepreneurial aspirations.

This study also explored how perceived desirability and feasibility mediate the relationships between attitudes, family support, self-efficacy, and entrepreneurial intention. Perceived desirability was an important mediator, with its strongest influence observed in the relationship between attitudes towards entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial intention. This was followed by the influence of self-efficacy and family support. These results emphasize the need to cultivate not only the skills and resources women require for entrepreneurship but also a strong desire and motivation to pursue such ventures.

Interestingly, perceived feasibility emerged as an even stronger mediator than desirability. This suggests that when women believe entrepreneurship is achievable, they are more likely to develop the intention to pursue it. Among the three predictors, attitudes towards entrepreneurship had the strongest indirect influence on entrepreneurial intention via feasibility, followed by self-efficacy and family support. These findings underline the importance of making entrepreneurship feel not only appealing but also attainable. Programs or policies that provide practical support, training, and resources to enhance feasibility perceptions could have a profound impact on empowering women to take entrepreneurial steps.

In conclusion, this study paints a comprehensive picture of the factors driving entrepreneurial intention among B40 women in Sabah, Malaysia. It highlights the importance of fostering positive attitudes, building self-efficacy, and ensuring family support to create an environment where entrepreneurship feels both desirable and achievable. These findings are particularly relevant in light of the economic challenges and evolving social roles that encourage women to explore entrepreneurship as a viable option for achieving financial independence and flexibility.

Practical Implications

This study highlights the practical importance of fostering attitudes toward entrepreneurship, family support, and entrepreneurial self-efficacy to enhance entrepreneurial intention among B40 women. Policymakers, NGOs, and other stakeholders can address these factors by implementing tailored strategies such as showcasing role models, providing tangible incentives like grants and subsidies, and launching awareness campaigns that emphasize the long-term benefits of entrepreneurship. Flexible business models, childcare support, and peer

networks can help alleviate the dual pressures of business and family responsibilities, encouraging more women to consider entrepreneurship. Additionally, targeted training programs, mentorship opportunities, and financial literacy initiatives can boost women's confidence and equip them with the skills needed to start and sustain their ventures.

These strategies are particularly critical given the dual roles of perceived feasibility and desirability in shaping entrepreneurial intentions. While perceived feasibility emerged as the stronger predictor, highlighting the need for practical support such as training, resources, and mentorship to instill confidence, perceived desirability plays an equally important role in motivating women to pursue entrepreneurship. By sharing success stories, highlighting the personal and societal benefits of entrepreneurship, and addressing cultural barriers, stakeholders can inspire women to view entrepreneurship as an attractive option. Integrating interventions that address both feasibility and desirability, such as combining skills training with motivational activities, can create a supportive environment where B40 women feel empowered to embrace entrepreneurship as a pathway to financial independence and personal growth.

Limitation of Research and Future Research Suggestion

This study demonstrated the robustness of its research model in explaining the entrepreneurial intentions of B40 women by focusing on individual-level factors such as attitude toward entrepreneurship, family support, entrepreneurial self-efficacy, perceived desirability, and perceived feasibility. However, several limitations must be acknowledged. Being a cross-sectional study, it captures a snapshot in time and does not provide insights into how these factors evolve or interact over a longer period. To address this, future research should employ longitudinal designs to track the progression of entrepreneurial intention among B40 women. Such studies could examine how attitudes, perceived behavioral control, and subjective norms change over time, particularly following targeted interventions, offering a more dynamic understanding of entrepreneurial intention development.

Additionally, replicating this study in different regions of the country could provide valuable comparative insights. By investigating the entrepreneurial intentions of B40 women in various cultural and economic contexts, researchers can help policymakers design region-specific interventions that address localized challenges and opportunities. Comparative studies could also reveal broader patterns and differences, enriching the understanding of how individual and environmental factors interact to shape entrepreneurial intentions.

This study also validated the applicability of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and the Entrepreneurial Event Model (EEM). However, exploring alternative theoretical frameworks could provide fresh perspectives. For instance, incorporating the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) could shed light on the roles of intrinsic motivation, autonomy, and competence in fostering entrepreneurial intentions. Similarly, the Human Capital Theory could provide insights into how education, skills, and experience influence entrepreneurial readiness among B40 women. Expanding the theoretical lens would deepen the understanding of the multifaceted drivers of entrepreneurship.

Furthermore, extending the research framework to examine the relationship between entrepreneurial intention and well-being could yield fascinating insights. Future studies could

investigate whether entrepreneurship enhances the psychological, social, and economic well-being of B40 women. This includes exploring whether entrepreneurial activities help reduce stress, improve financial stability, or lead to a better quality of life. Such research would not only add to the academic discourse but also provide practical recommendations for designing entrepreneurship programs that holistically benefit B40 women and their communities.

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