



# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ACADEMIC RESEARCH IN BUSINESS & SOCIAL SCIENCES



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ISSN: 2222-6990

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Khairun Najihah Sabri, Siti Fatimah Mohamad, Ungku Fatimah Ungku Zainal Abidin, Mass Hareeza Ali@Hamid, Hazrina Ghazali

To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v11-i3/8895>

DOI:10.6007/IJARBSS/v11-i3/8895

*Received: 01 January 2021, Revised: 31 January 2021, Accepted: 20 February 2021*

Published Online: 26 March 2021

In-Text Citation: (Sabri et al., 2021)

To Cite this Article: Sabri, K. N., Mohamad, S. F., Abidin, U. F. U. Z., Ali@Hamid, M. H., & Ghazali, H. (2021). Food-Based Social Entrepreneur Mindset: A Review And Research Direction. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 11(3), 1252-1262.

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Vol. 11, No. 3, 2021, Pg. 1252 - 1262

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## Food-Based Social Entrepreneur Mindset: A Review And Research Direction

Khairun Najihah Sabri<sup>1</sup>, Siti Fatimah Mohamad<sup>2</sup>, Ungku  
Fatimah Ungku Zainal Abidin<sup>3</sup>, Mass Hareeza Ali@Hamid<sup>4</sup>,  
Hazrina Ghazali<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1,2,3,5</sup>Department of Food Service and Management, Faculty of Food Science and Technology,  
Universiti Putra Malaysia, 43400 UPM Serdang, Selangor, Malaysia, <sup>4</sup>Centre of  
Entrepreneurial Development and Graduate Marketability, Universiti Putra Malaysia, 43400  
UPM Serdang, Selangor, Malaysia

### Abstract

There is a rising trend of social entrepreneurial activities in Malaysia, but the research on social entrepreneurship, particularly within the context of food-based social entrepreneurs and mindset, is limited. This paper examines the components of mindset among food-based social entrepreneurship in Malaysia. A detailed review is used to sort out the literature and develop the research direction of the study. The review is focused on components of mindset among social entrepreneurs. An entrepreneurial mindset could sharpen the focus and strengthen the rationale compared to merely entrepreneurial competencies. However, research on the entrepreneurial mindset does not address these particularities, and the entrepreneur mindset attributes have been investigated mainly within the commercial entrepreneurial context. As the demand for food is continuously increasing, there are plenty of rooms to grow, to explore and understand the components that underlie the food-based social entrepreneurs' mindset. This paper is anticipated to shed some light on society and policymakers, which later help develop social entrepreneurship in Malaysia.

**Keywords:** Social Entrepreneur, Food-Based, Component, Entrepreneurial Mindset

### Introduction

Regardless of their geographical context or legal forms, social entrepreneurs share several specific characteristics that distinguish them from their commercial counterparts. However, research on entrepreneurial mindset does not address these particularities, and the attributes of an entrepreneur's mindset have been investigated primarily within the context of a commercial entrepreneur. (Booth et al., 2020; Hidalgo et al., 2020; Majumdar & Ganesh, 2020; Žur & Naumann, 2018). Much of the focus on social entrepreneurship is on the boundaries between social entrepreneurs and commercial entrepreneurs. While some researchers include the notion of shared value creation, specifically in social entrepreneurs' definition, other scholars point out that maximizing social value creation is a significant difference between social and commercial entrepreneurs. (Baporikar, 2020; Dacin et al., 2010; Ergul & Johnson, 2011).

There is a rising trend of social entrepreneurial activities in Malaysia but the research on the social entrepreneurship, particularly within the context of food-based social entrepreneurs and mindset is limited (British Council, 2018; Wahid et al., 2018). It is crucial to study food-based social entrepreneurs as food security has been an issue not only in Malaysia but worldwide. Food security is one of the concerns under the two goals of United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Envision 2030, which are Goal 2 Zero Hunger, and Goal 12 Responsible Consumption and Production (United Nations Enable, 2012). Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations reported that Malaysia gained 8.2% of its total GDP from agriculture in 2017 and was ranked 40th in food security among 113 countries tracked by the 2018 Global Food Security Index. Former finance minister, Tun Daim Zainuddin, stated that Malaysia has been ignoring the agricultural sector for the longest time and looking forward to supplying quality and safe food at affordable prices. He also suggested that food production investment is evaluated in terms of society benefits, social returns and the country's security. Food security requires an ecosystem and a mix between food policy, technology, and entrepreneurship (Surendran, 2019). Therefore, there is a need to provide more funds to develop entrepreneurs in food production, particularly the food-based social entrepreneurs.

Goal 8 of the United Nation Envision 2030 aims to promote sustainable, inclusive, sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all. One of the objectives is to promote development-oriented policies that support productive activities, appropriate job creation, entrepreneurship creativity and innovation, and encourage the formalization and growth of micro-and medium-sized enterprises. The Federal Agricultural Marketing Authority (FAMA) is helping local suppliers to promote local products in Malaysia. There is, however, a lack of coordination between hypermarkets, cooperatives, hotels, and restaurants with farmers, where local farmers have not well informed of what is lacking in the local market and led to a high import of raw ingredients for food products (Surendran, 2019). The existence of social entrepreneurs in the community will be able to solve these problems, as they focus on addressing social, cultural or environmental issues that will further improve the well-being of society (Adnan et al., 2018; Baporikar, 2020; Kline et al., 2017).

## Literature Review

### Social Entrepreneur

Entrepreneurs are agents of change and catalysts for innovation (Anderson & Starnawska, 2008; Bhushan, 2020; Laskovaia et al., 2019) and identified as individuals who take advantage of opportunities, create new ventures that will stimulate the economy later and have a positive impact on the economic growth and development of a nation (Lee, 2019; Mazzarol & Reboud, 2020). The implementation of the National Entrepreneurship Policy in Malaysia expected to create a holistic entrepreneurial ecosystem to support an inclusive, balanced, and sustainable economic development agenda by the year 2030 (WargaBiz, 2019). As of 2018, the gross domestic product (GDP) contributed by small and medium enterprises (SME) was 37.4% and expected to increase to 50.0% by 2030 (Rao, 2019).

Social entrepreneurship is one type of entrepreneurship that has been on the rise in recent decades (Apadula & Predmore, 2019; Bhushan, 2020; Sarkar & Sinha, 2015). The social entrepreneur is different from the commercial entrepreneur, where the social entrepreneur refers to an individual who creates needs, while the commercial entrepreneur fulfils needs

(Booth et al., 2020). The study on social entrepreneurs has been a new research area yet to emerge fully, and there are more rooms to explore. (Hidalgo et al., 2020; Majumdar & Ganesh, 2020). There are critical challenges in the literature to agree on definitions, conceptual work, and broaden the discussion to different areas of concern (Canestrino et al., 2020; Mottiar, 2016).

Social entrepreneurs take responsibility and risk for the needs of society, focus on existing environmental and social issues, and seek solutions to social issues such as fair-trade environment, education, health, and human rights (Ergul & Johnson, 2011).

Social entrepreneurship activities have long been practised in developed countries and have gained attention in developing countries (Ali et al., 2019; Bornstein, 2007; British Council, 2018; Haugh, 2007). The social entrepreneurial activities in Malaysia are growing (Malaysian Global Innovation & Creativity Centre (MaGIC), 2020; Nee, 2019), but the study on the social entrepreneurship is still at the infancy stage (British Council, 2018; Wahid et al., 2018). There is no definite number of social entrepreneurs in Malaysia, but British Council (2018) estimated there were around 20,000 Malaysian social enterprises among micro, small, and medium enterprise (MSME), cooperative and non-governmental organizations (NGO) in 2018. As compared to Thailand, there were over 120,000 social enterprises, while in the United Kingdom, there are more than 70,000 social enterprises. These countries have more than one million social entrepreneurs and contributed 5% to their total GDP (Malaysian Social Enterprise Blueprint 2015-2018, 2015). As social entrepreneurs are not only able to escalate the society growth but also contributing to the national income, the Malaysian Global Innovation and Creativity Centre (MaGIC) obtained RM10,000,000 to develop social enterprises from Budget 2020 (Edward, 2020). MaGIC is an agency under the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation (MOSTI) responsible for realizing the aspirations of the National Entrepreneurship Policy 2030. The main focus of MaGIC is social entrepreneurship, intending to drive the movement of entrepreneurship through community engagement, capability development, and social impact initiatives (Malaysian Global Innovation & Creativity Centre (MaGIC), 2020).

Malaysia is now giving attention to social entrepreneurs as they are the visionary change agent, thinker, and disrupter, who works for the betterment of society. Social entrepreneurs are creative in initiating ideas and solutions for the existing social and community problems. Environmental sustainability, waste management, and food security are part of the social issues in Malaysia that capture the interest of social entrepreneurs. They are not merely finding mechanisms to solve the problems, but also to make a difference among the community (Adnan et al., 2018; Baporikar, 2020; Kline et al., 2017; Malaysian Global Innovation & Creativity Centre (MaGIC), 2020). Nonetheless, reported that one of the common challenges faced by social entrepreneurs in Malaysia was a lack of awareness of social enterprises among Malaysians (British Council, 2018). This can be due to the lack of promotion and studies about social entrepreneurship (Wahid et al., 2019).

#### Food-based Social Entrepreneur

Food-based social entrepreneurship, especially in agriculture, has gained attention to be further developed due to the various complexity factors that occur in urban areas. These factors include the increment of urbanization flows, limited land, the increased consumption

food among households, increased number of poor people and severe environmental pollution (Kamaruddin et al., 2020).

Food and beverage are one of the focus areas perceived by social entrepreneurs in Malaysia (British Council, 2018). Fresh food supply from local farmers, organic food, less processed and nutritious food are some of the concerns among food-based social entrepreneurs. One example that can illustrate a social entrepreneur's activity is by Su Seau Yeen, one of the food-based social entrepreneurs in Malaysia. She started her social enterprise by donating cakes and pastries to children in shelters, where those food were the extras after she had supplied to her clients. Su Seau Yeen then further her journey in social entrepreneurship by forming Simply Cookies, where this enterprise conducted culinary and baking classes to single mothers and children. She also formed Junior Nutri Chef as a platform to educate children to avoid disease that can be spread through food (Research House of Asia, 2017).

Food and beverages of a host community can be among its most important cultural expressions (Sims, 2009). Food can bridge the gap between everyday life and one's leisure, satisfying physical needs, as well as enhancing social interactions (Hjalager & Johansen, 2013). According to Hall and Gossling (2013, p. 27), a local food system refers to deliberately formed systems characterized by a close producer-consumer relationship within a designated place or local area. The local food movement demonstrates a "heightened interest in cooking, wellness, dining locally, and traveling for and socializing through food experiences" (Kline et al., 2014, p. 330)

## **Results/ Findings**

### **Entrepreneurs' Mindset Components**

Entrepreneurship is unpredictable and ambiguous. Therefore, it needs a vigorous mindset (Laskovaia et al., 2019). Entrepreneurs mindset can be defined as socio-emotional skills and overall entrepreneurship awareness, linked to entrepreneurial motivation and future success as an entrepreneur. (Valerio et al., 2014). There are several challenges to developing an entrepreneurial mindset in the 21st century, most of which address the need to develop agility, adaptiveness, creativity and social impact. First, fostering entrepreneurial mindset is not just about helping current or future entrepreneurs to become more innovative, ambitious, or risk-tolerant. It is a more complex task to change what they think they are personally, socially, and professionally. Second, a complex entrepreneurial ecosystem with multiple facets to accommodate multiple definitions of entrepreneurial identity and mindset (McGrath & MacMillan, 2000). Dweck (2006) acknowledged that a mindset could be fixed-oriented or growth-oriented. While a fixed mindset assumes that talents and abilities were set, the growth mindset believes talents and skills can be developed through learning and experiences. Growth of mind can change, and much of this can happen by developing a greater awareness of the individual's current thinking while taking steps to start thinking and reacting purposefully in new ways (Dweck & Yeager, 2019). There is also a need to study the social entrepreneurial mindset due to its scarcity. The current literature focuses more on commercial entrepreneurship's mindset (Davis & Hall, 2015; Kompar, 2018; Kouakou et al., 2019), and there is a difference with social entrepreneurship as it has different priorities (Shaver & Commarmond, 2019).

Openness to change and Continuous learning



Mooradian (2016) emphasized the importance of being a versatile and adapting person, based on the situation; instead of rigidity and fixation to a planned path. Hence, an entrepreneur needs to be constructive or open to change or consensus. This flexibility can then contribute to the ability of quickly adapt with changing circumstances. Moreover, it can be described as effectuation, the capacity to leverage contingencies that occur spontaneously over time and can only be exploited if there is initial confidence and openness to change and continuous learning (Sarasvathy, 2001).

#### Creative and innovative

Essential attributes of an entrepreneurial mindset are the capability to transform conventional rules, trends and culture and develop concrete, new ideas and meaning (Valerio et al., 2014). The imaginative process leading to inventive production starts with pure curiosity and inquisitiveness (Moberg et al., 2014) and a desire for non-compliance, or as Davis et al. (2016) put it a preference and willingness to behave differently and stand out from the crowd. A creative and imaginative entrepreneur is dedicated to creativity and is willing to learn through the continuous approach. Experimentation and exploration always start with the emergence of several ideas, as well as a willingness to try different approaches and adapt solutions in an effective and non-linear process. (Davis et al., 2016).

#### Opportunity recognition

An entrepreneurial mindset enables an entrepreneur to recognize and seek existing opportunities and not be resource-dependent but rather creative to use readily resource (Putta, 2014). Dealing skillfully and promptly with a specific opportunity or issue with minimal tools or resources showed how it applies to seeking prospects for creativity with limited resources. Davis et al. (2016) called a tendency for a restricted framework in which entrepreneurs are free to adapt and are bored with the following ordered tasks and also defined as resourcefulness.

#### Belief and competency

In the study, Valerio et al. (2014) showed that the belief and competency producing a positive result to success and one of the key aspects of an entrepreneurial mindset. This is also including a sense of faith in one's skills, competence and judgement. Commonly referred to as self-efficacy, this general belief is a key driver of desired results and effectiveness in any context. Entrepreneurial self-efficacy is the belief in one's capability to successfully conduct entrepreneurial tasks, and it is driven by self-belief, self-confidence and self-esteem and is all about trusting others capacity

#### Desire and motivation

People choose to become an entrepreneur because of many reasons. Therefore, the motivation to become an entrepreneur may be influenced by autonomy, mastery, and a strong reason for purpose. Example of motivation factors may be power, honour, and fame, but these motivational factors need to be very encouraging and powerful enough to keep the momentum and achieve goals (Moberg et al., 2014). Entrepreneurship requires the need to have a positive view of entrepreneurship, as well as a desire, inspiration and intention to be an entrepreneur.

#### Risk taking

Another component of the entrepreneurial mindset is the ability to take or analyze risk. Risk-taking means taking aggressive action by venturing into the unknown, investing heavily, or committing substantial capital to projects in unpredictable environments. However, an entrepreneur can analyze and reduce risk properly with experience or by analyzing the risk factors. According to Asenge et al., (2018), risk-taking has a positive impact on performance

assessment at a certain level; above that level, an increase in risk negatively affects performance. The climate in which a business operates can impact whether or not a company takes a risk.

#### Networking

Social interaction is another attribute that seems to be critical in the social entrepreneurship context; entrepreneurs need to know how social networks work, how they are built and nurtured. A comprehensive network system of people with different backgrounds gives access to a broad spectrum of ideas, specific information, and perspectives. Resources are acquired, exchanged, recombined, and managed within the network social and economic goals. The stronger the ties, the faster the sharing. The tighter the network, the more relevant and of higher quality is the information the network members receive (Starnawska, 2014).

#### Independence

Independence means taking responsibility for using one's judgment instead of blindly following the assertions of others. It also means any decision is not influenced by others. The need for independence is also considered a success factor in entrepreneurship because they know their goals and business direction more than people from outside (Hassan, 2016).

#### Passion

Passion is always linked to a variety of positive behaviours, such as bravery and determination, encouragement, vitality, focus, perseverance, tenacity and many more. Even though passion is not the most critical components of mindset, a past study shown that this positive attribute can encourage to sustain and resilient in completing their mission (Hou et al., 2019).

### **Conclusion and Future Research**

There are a variety of possible directions for future research involving social entrepreneur mindset. Social entrepreneurs have been well proven to initiate ideas and solutions for the betterment of society. Social enterprises focus on the social and economic equilibrium for their targeted beneficiaries, for example, poor people, single mothers, disabled individuals, local farmers, and children in shelters.

There is a growth of social entrepreneurship in Malaysia but limited studies on the component of mindset among food-based social entrepreneur context. This research is an attempt to contribute to the social entrepreneurship literature by providing new context about social entrepreneurship mindset. The research went beyond stating the definition of social entrepreneurs, and started to dig deeper to the literature on mindset and cognitions of social entrepreneurs. The review studies the contextual factors that lead to social venture creation, the underlying organization dynamics and structures, and how these typologies influence intention and bring about sustainable social change and well-being.

Reviewing the underlying components of mindset among food-based social entrepreneur will extend the body of knowledge on social entrepreneurship, which later promotes awareness among Malaysians concerning social entrepreneurs' economic and social implications. Thus, it is anticipated that this study will influence policymakers to assist in the development of social entrepreneurship in Malaysia.

In addition, this research will help to achieve the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which to transform food and agriculture to be more resilient, equitable, inclusive, and environmentally, socially and economically sustainable.

### Acknowledgement

This work was supported and funded by the Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia under the Fundamental Research Grant Scheme (FRGS/1/2020/SS01/UPM/02/1), Project Code 05-01-20-2331FR. The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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