

Factors that Cultivate Youth Intention to Be Social Entrepreneur

Renne Pramila Punadi^{1*}, and Adriana Mohd Rizal²

^{1,2}International Business School, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

*renne2205@yahoo.com

Abstract: This paper reviews the intention pattern of youth in Social Entrepreneurship. Various studies in past have been carried out in the context of business entrepreneur as opposed to social entrepreneur. Findings from social entrepreneur literature revealed that social entrepreneurs' intentions are triggered by internal and external factors similar to that of business entrepreneurs. Nevertheless, social entrepreneurs and business entrepreneurs are different in many ways. The prominent difference is the explicit social mission that social entrepreneurs uphold. Further research is required to address the youth intention to be a social entrepreneur. Young social entrepreneurs tend to be engaged in social-oriented activities as compared to their older counterpart who get involved in charities. The objective of this study is to review the contributing factors that influence young social entrepreneurs' intention to be a social entrepreneur. This study proposes a conceptual model of insight factors that triggers the intention to be a social entrepreneur. The paper is concluded with future study.

Keywords: Social entrepreneur, young social entrepreneur, intention, personal trait, social trait, support and guidance and opportunity creation

Paper type: Conceptual paper

1. Introduction

Youngsters play a crucial role in the development of a community and country as a whole. Their involvement can be beneficial or detrimental to the society. They are recognized as the key participants in a decision-making process and as an active change agent. Active participation of youth in social venture is vital as it energizes and sustains the civic consciousness of a community (Hancock, 1994) in addressing various social issues. Lately, significant social entrepreneurship growth is observed due to rising interest and attempts in the field (Miller *et al.*, 2012). Individual involvement in social enterprise is on the rise and

evolving over time (Volery *et al.*, 2013). On the other hand, social issues such as drug-trafficking, criminal offence, violence and sexual offense among youth are on the rise. These are not social issues related to specific ethnic, religious group or culture but the youth in general. Their action imposes serious threat to the nation.

In helping youth to restrain from unhealthy activities, they need to be engaged with activities led by youth to raise their self-worth. This will encourage them to decide the goals that needed to be accomplished (Davis, 2002) and to be in-charge of their own life. Appropriate holistic programs and platform should be designed for youth to initiate this transformation. This mission is mirrored through the emerging involvement of non-governmental youth organizations and government-initiated programs. For instance, the National Expert Survey (NES) indicated that the Malaysian government has been supporting and providing assistance in terms of infrastructure and funds to encourage young social entrepreneurs to be involved in social venture (Digital News Asia, 2015).

The Malaysian Prime Minister had launched the Malaysian Social Enterprise Blueprint 2015-2018, a three-year strategic plan for developing social enterprises through the formation of MAGIC SE, to mandate social economic growth in Malaysia with a fund of RM20 million (Digital News Asia, 2015). Another foundation is the Social Enterprise Alliances Malaysia (SEA), under the wing of MAGIC SE, with its own incubating program, fosters the connection between social entrepreneurs and experts from industry. This blueprint supports the potential growth of social entrepreneurs in Malaysia. This assistance and funding is believed to encourage more young entrepreneurs to be involved in social missions in the future (Yeoh, 2015). According to Roberts (2005), many programs, trainings and education have been carried out for the betterment of the country.

In fact, social enterprise in Malaysia is a blooming sector and at present, it is estimated that about only hundred social-oriented or hybrid enterprises existing in Malaysia (Yeoh, 2015). These social entrepreneurs engage in social causes such as education, environmental sustainability, rural development and poverty. Surprisingly, social commitment in Malaysia is lower compared to Thailand, which is Malaysia's bordering country, which has 120,000 social enterprises within its community (Yeoh, 2015). Social entrepreneurship in Malaysia requires several accelerator programs aced by the right mind-set of youth.

Social entrepreneurship studies for Malaysia still is lacking, but surveys found that majority Malaysian youth are inspired to be social entrepreneurs (Digital News Asia, 2015). Omorede (2014), in his studies, have suggested that motivational factor drives people to be engaged in social entrepreneurship but often overlooked and requires new researches to gain more insights as to why some social entrepreneurs strives on despite facing challenges. Besides that, Krueger *et al.* (2008) found limited knowledge on factors that influence social entrepreneur intentions and action.

There is a need for new research to reflect on potential perspective that may drive graduates to start social enterprises (Nabi *et al.*, 2010). However, youth's involvement remains a question mark since the nature of motivation is subjective and personal. This leads to in-depth study on intentions of social entrepreneurs' among youth. Sharfman *et al.* (2006) stated that more rigorous empirical studies need to be validated as the findings could benefit both practitioners and academicians in identifying factors that encourage youth to be involved in social enterprises. Hence, the objective of this study is to review the social entrepreneur and entrepreneurship literature to identify young social entrepreneurs' intention to be social entrepreneur. The study also proposes a conceptual model to further understand factors that trigger youth's intentions to be social entrepreneur.

2. Literature Review

A. *Social entrepreneur*

Social entrepreneur literature is rooted in entrepreneurship. Social entrepreneurs are believed to possess noble heart and mind that sense the responsibilities towards community needs. Social entrepreneurs existed from a long time ago in various identities like visionaries, humanitarians, philanthropies, reformers, saints and great leaders (Bornstein and Davis, 2010). Social entrepreneurship is fueled by high profile industrialist (Cukier *et al.*, 2011). For instance owner and chairman of Microsoft, Bill Gates who established “Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation” generated wealth through commercial activities to help and support various communities (Boluk and Mottiar, 2014). The founder of Ashoka, Bill Drayton, claimed that social entrepreneurship is an approach that renders support for growth in forming a sustainable growth in a country. On the other hand, founder of Skoll Foundation, Jeff Skoll termed social entrepreneur as an individual who promotes social and economic growth and meets the need of the marginalized (Cukier *et al.*, 2011).

Social entrepreneurs have been acknowledged as the change agent seeking for social rationality by maximizing social values (Kim and Yoon, 2012). Social entrepreneurs tend to be proactive in learning and developing additional skills, taking risks, being innovative, confident, comfortable with diversification and collective in helping the needy (Bargsted *et al.*, 2013). Riquelme (1992), postulated that entrepreneurial spirit itself is not sufficient, but great idea is required that turns dream to reality.

Davis and Peake (2014) urge more studies on variables that influence graduates’ intention in business start-ups. Social entrepreneurs are capable in instigating potential solutions to social problems (Sebba *et al.*, 2009) but studies are lacking in youth’s commitment in pursuing the intention. According to Khosrohashi *et al.* (2006), youth abandon the social intention due to limited knowledge and collective efforts or support in social venture. In addition to that, Mair *et al.* (2012) believe there is a need to explore the conditions where social entrepreneurial model can be made successful. Young people are capable of addressing social problems and drafting strategies to bring about social empowerment.

B. *Definition of young social entrepreneur*

The definition of young differs and determined by the subject matter, setting and objective of classification (Khosrohashi *et al.*, 2006). Sebba *et al.* (2009), defines youth as individual at a biological life stage who progresses from the phase of dependent to independent. The United Nations defined youth as individuals between the age group of 15 to 24 (Youth and United Nations, 2010). The Government of Malaysia defined youth as individual between the age of 15 to less than 40 (DOSM, 2014). Hence, in this paper, youth is defined between ages of 18 to 30.

Manifestation of social entrepreneurs’ intention take place over the time, but it is believed that it may begin in tertiary level and it is necessary to study what enlightens the undergraduates to be a social entrepreneur. Young individuals are keen than middle-aged individual in social endeavors (Prabhu, 1999) and this interest adds greater value to society in long run. Their views are often different than many older adults. They are intuitive, creative and energetic; engaging themselves into meaningful initiatives that make them an asset of a country and the change agent for community well-being (Davis, 2002). Apparently, only few studies examined undergraduate students towards social venture attempt (Davis and Peake, 2014). Young social entrepreneurs grow from their own interest, participation, thoughts and decisions to define their skills, attitude, knowledge and commitments instead of being told or forced on picking up a social mission. Youth are often spontaneous, imaginative and swift; different than older adults. Apparently, activities led by youth provide an opportunity to the society in long term (Davis, 2002).

C. Definition of intention

The process of forming intentions is an established field in entrepreneurship studies. Ajzen (1991) classified intention as the motivational factors that influence individual attempt to perform. In the case of planned, purposive and goal-oriented behavior, intention is an influential predictor (Bagozzi *et al.*, 1989). Krueger and his associates, Krueger and Carsrud (1993), Krueger and Brazeal (1994) and Krueger *et al.* (2000) developed a model called entrepreneurial intention model. The model illustrates social venture intention achieved through perceived feasibility and desirability. The model proposed by Krueger and his associates was drawn closely from the work of Ajzen and Fishbein (1975) on the theory of planned behavior. According to Shapero and Sokol (1982), entrepreneurial venture is influenced by events that resulted from interacting with environment.

Apparently, an intention permits individual to perform certain behavior grounded by their own belief (Krueger and Casey, 2009). Intention proved to be the utmost predictor of individual behavior, predominantly when the behavior is rare and hard to observe or involves unpredictable time gap (Krueger and Brazeal, 1994). Further investigation is needed to identify what manifests the intention (Bargsted *et al.*, 2013), especially among the youth. On the other hand, Quan (2012) classified intention into two categories which are (1) impulsive entrepreneurial intention (IEI), influenced by personal characteristic and cultural background as the reason for one's desire to form a start-up and (2) deliberate entrepreneurial intention (DEI), which is influenced by prior experiences and active social network which identify resources available to venture out. The author suggested for the most recent data to understand further on the application of these two levels of entrepreneurial intention. Moreover, what truly leads to actual intention towards social venture is unclear and requires better understanding on what really cultivates the youth intention to be a social entrepreneur.

3. Factors Contributing to Social Entrepreneurial Intention among Youth

A. Personal trait

Social entrepreneurs are believed to possess certain special traits and abilities to pursue a social mission. Being innovative, proactive and daring to take risk is considered the central traits of social entrepreneurship (Weerawardena and Mort, 2006). Social entrepreneurs also possess significant values such as high credibility, integrity and the ability to influence followers (Borins, 2000). These values come from leadership skills (Thompson *et al.*, 2000), through building social networks and gaining support from external community.

Boyd and Vozikis (1994) extended Bird's (1988) model on entrepreneurial intention, proposing "self-efficacy" as an important determinant in entrepreneurial intention formation and it is likely to be translated into actions. According to Ajzen (1991), self-efficacy influences individual attitude and intention. Self-efficacy is enhanced through entrepreneurial education and observation of a role model or known as vicarious learning (Bandura, 1997).

Another important factor in social entrepreneurship is being alert Kirzner (1997), a vital element in the Kirzner's theory. Baron and Ensley (2006) agree that cognitive capacity such intelligence and creativity rely on individual alertness and when the alertness is high active search is least required. In fact, more comprehensive and real-time study is required to provide an empirical evidence on how and why individual undertake social venture (Diochon *et al.*, 2011) and pursue the opportunity (Mair and Marti 2006). Another factor that is associated with alertness is being proactive. Proactive people are unrestrained by situational forces, discover opportunities and sustain until significant transformation forms (Crant, 2000). Being proactive is also known as the tendency to act as per entrepreneurial intentions (Segal *et al.*, 2005) that fuel initiatives improving current situation or creating a new one.

Furthermore, Mair and Noboa (2006) presented the social entrepreneurial intention formation model, where the actual behavior stays undiscovered and unexplored in reality, which raised a question on why some individuals embark on the intention after being triggered to do so while others do not. Omorede (2014) explained in his article, that there should be an extended research to study and gain more insights on why social entrepreneurs continue the social activities despite the difficulties faced in creating social change. His studies also suggested that factors that drive people to be engaged in social entrepreneurs are still overlooked. Although there are other personal traits that influence individual intention, in this research, only the relevant key traits related to youth are studied. Harnessing and enriching the right skill among youth would lead to a positive change in community. In this study, personal trait refers to self-efficacy, alertness and being proactive.

B. Social trait

People who possess well-developed social skills tend to experience more favorable outcome from participating in community service compared to those who are not (Lamine *et al.*, 2014). Social network plays a leading role in providing information, experience and support for youth to be involved in social entrepreneurship. In personal, social network, family and friends support influences the decision of an entrepreneur to proceed bravely into social venture (O'Leary *et al.*, 2014). On the other hand, a dynamic social network fosters acceptance, increases self-confidence and credibility. Nevertheless, Baron and Shane (2005) argued that networking is an important social skill to build entrepreneurs' competence level or distinct skills to interact with others (Saayman and Klerk, 2012). A good network practice creates access to new sources of funding, potential problem solving approaches and information sharing opportunity (Farr-Wharton and Brunetto, 2007). Researchers are yet to investigate the influence of anti-social behaviors in social network which might lead to unfavorable result in societal development.

Political skill is adapted from business environment ground. The term political is associated with self-interests, manipulation, and dishonest behavior of an individual (Ahearn *et al.*, 2004; Ferris *et al.*, 2004). Nevertheless, politically-skilled entrepreneurs use their propriety knowledge to innovatively exploit opportunities. Individuals who possess high political skill are perceived to know how to influence investors and make positive moves in handling people and resources effectively (Davis and Peake, 2014). Therefore, new studies are being made to examine entrepreneurs' political skills in new venture creation during the start-up process. Qualitative case analysis may assist in gaining more details and understanding political skills (Neil *et al.*, 2012). In this study, social trait refers to social skill and political skill.

C. Support and guidance

Education guides youth to seize opportunities from surrounding and to avoid early failure in business (Kerka, 2005). Knowledge is the key to identify entrepreneurial opportunities and individuals tend to acquire knowledge through interactions (Kirzner, 1997). As stated by Gregson (1994), effective mentoring from experienced individuals guides and supports the less-experienced ones. It was observed that, due to lack of educational exposure, entrepreneurs are left without guidance in strategic planning (Roberts and Woods, 2005). However, limited literatures were published on the success of curriculum outcome towards social entrepreneurship formation (Krueger and Brazeal, 1994). Othman and Wahid (2015) asserted that there are still insufficient literatures on social entrepreneurship with regards to educational issue. It is clear that education instills social entrepreneurial activities.

Social entrepreneurs are not as much financially rewarded as business entrepreneurs. A greater challenge among social entrepreneurs is the resource acquisition (Roundy, 2014). Santos (2012) stated social entrepreneurs with sufficient support and resources strengthen and encourage innovative solutions in social sphere. Financial support and funding in initiatives led by youth is still insufficient (Aujla and Redding,

2013). In several countries, government targets the educational initiatives on primary, secondary and tertiary level students with the purpose to enhance youth's personal development and positive behavior (Hytti and O'Gorman, 2004). An individual's intention to be engaged in social entrepreneurship activities needs to be supported with guidance and opportunity (Othman and Wahid, 2014). In this study, support and guidance refers to government funding and educational support.

4. Social Entrepreneur Intention Lead to Opportunity Creation

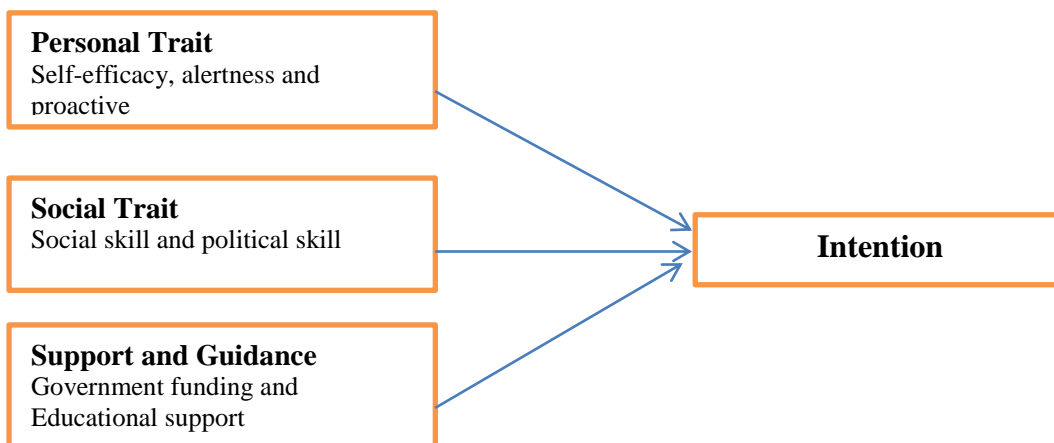
A social entrepreneur discovers opportunity under situation that they understand (Paul, 2005). Hsieh, Nickerson and Zenger (2007) claim that opportunity is led by unexpected events and followed by an intentional search. Dutta and Crossan (2005) view entrepreneurial opportunities as: (1) opportunity existing in the environment waited to be discovered and: (2) opportunity existing through entrepreneurs' perception and environmental observable. Ardichvili *et al.* (2003), depicted factors affecting the opportunity identification through: (1) entrepreneurial alertness, (2) prior knowledge, (3) discovery versus intentional search, (4) social network and, (5) personality trait (risk taking, optimism and self-efficacy and creativity) that triggers the process of entrepreneurial opportunity recognition.

The nature of opportunity and individual differences draws thought towards opportunity discovery (Shane and Venkataraman, 2000). Likewise, different scholars have varying views and opinion on entrepreneurial opportunity. There are limited indications on which of these aspects began first; the discovery, identification or the creation in "entrepreneurial formation phase". The entrepreneurial intention is what one fosters in his or her mind. An individual initiates the entrepreneurial actions when his or her entrepreneurial perceived belief on opportunity is higher. However, intention is influenced by various factors that are likely to play a significant role in social endeavor and it requires more thorough research (Mohamad, 2015).

5. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework is developed based on factors that lead to social entrepreneurs' intention as discussed earlier in section 3. The social entrepreneur intention among youth is categorized into personal traits, social trait and support and Guidance. The personal trait among young social entrepreneurs refers to self-efficacy, alertness and proactive. Where else, social trait refers to social skill and political skill. Support and Guidance, refers to government and educational support. This led to the formulation of factors that cultivate youth's intention to be social entrepreneur framework as depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Factors that cultivate youth intention to be a social entrepreneur



6. Conclusion and Future Research

Youngsters are considered as the force that drives the wheel of social entrepreneurship. Given the opportunity and support, the younger generations is capable of addressing societal problem and react positively. In addition, entrepreneurial intention leads to recognition and formation of opportunity (Sarasvathy, 2003). The young and experienced social entrepreneurs can guide and motivate youth to participate in social activities. In another word, youth must be coached by young social entrepreneurs who are passionate about changing the community. As youth are the leaders of tomorrow, identifying the source of such social entrepreneurial intention and enriching them in specific ways will flourish a better society and future. However, there is a lack in empirical studies to demonstrate the actual determinant of social entrepreneur activities, in both quantitative and qualitative nature and further studies should be carried out to identify other underlying factors motivating the intention to be social entrepreneur (Aileen and Mottiar, 2014).

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