

Motivation and Networking toward Muslim Youth SME's Intention

NADRATUN NAFISAH ABDUL WAHAB, SITI ASMA' MOHD ROSDI @ MOHD RODHI,
JULIANA OSMAN @ ZAINAL ABIDIN, THURAIYA ZAKARIA,
ZURAIDAH ZAINOL, SUZYANTY MOHD SHOKORY

Faculty of Management and Economics,
Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI)
MALAYSIA

Abstract: - This research examines the impact of motivation and networking on students' entrepreneurial intentions in Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). Based on relevant theoretical frameworks such as the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and Social Capital theory, this research aims to contribute to a better understanding of the factors that promote entrepreneurial intentions. This study used a quantitative research design; the data were collected using a simple random sampling from 120 students in the Enculturation of Entrepreneurship course at Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI). The results show that motivation has a positive and significant effect on entrepreneurial intention ($\beta = 0.62$, $p < 0.001$), meaning motivated students tend to be more engaged in an entrepreneurial career path. Networking was positively related to entrepreneurial intention ($\beta = 0.28$, $p < 0.01$), which indicates the importance of social networks, exposure to entrepreneurship, and access to a range of support systems in aspirations towards entrepreneurship. In addition, networking positively moderated the relationship between motivation and entrepreneurial intention ($\beta = 0.19$; $p < 0.01$), suggesting that students with wider and more supportive networks increase the strength of the effect between motivation and entrepreneurial intention. In general, this indicates that the interaction between individual motivation and social capital is influencing the entrepreneurial intention.

Key-Words: - Entrepreneurial intention, motivation, networking, Muslim youth, SMEs, Maqasid al-Shari'ah, resilience, sustainable development.

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1 Introduction

Entrepreneurship plays a significant role in promoting economic growth, innovation, and sustainable development, particularly through the activities of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). As key contributors to employment generation, poverty reduction, and economic resilience, SMEs are widely recognised as essential drivers in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) [1]. Consequently, fostering entrepreneurial intention among young people has become an important priority for governments, educational institutions, and policymakers seeking to strengthen future economic development [2], [3], [4].

Within Muslim communities, entrepreneurship extends beyond economic participation and is often associated with broader social and ethical responsibilities. Entrepreneurial activities provide opportunities for wealth creation, employment generation, and community development, making entrepreneurship an attractive career pathway for Muslim youth. Despite various initiatives aimed at promoting entrepreneurship, youth participation in

entrepreneurial activities remains inconsistent. Many young individuals continue to prefer salaried employment due to perceived risks, limited entrepreneurial exposure, inadequate support systems, and uncertainty regarding business sustainability. These challenges are particularly relevant in the context of SMEs, where entrepreneurial success often depends on both individual capabilities and access to supportive networks [1], [3].

Previous studies have extensively examined entrepreneurial intention among university students and adult populations. However, the determinants of entrepreneurial intention among Muslim youth remain underexplored, particularly in relation to the combined influence of motivation and networking. Motivation is widely recognised as a critical psychological factor that drives individuals to pursue entrepreneurial opportunities, while networking provides access to resources, information, mentorship, and social support that facilitate entrepreneurial development. Drawing upon the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and

Social Capital Theory, this study proposes that entrepreneurial intention is shaped by both individual and social factors. Specifically, motivation reflects an individual's willingness and commitment to engage in entrepreneurial activities, whereas networking enhances entrepreneurial intention by strengthening access to entrepreneurial resources and opportunities [3], [5].

Therefore, this study aims to examine the influence of motivation and networking on entrepreneurial intention among Muslim youth within the SME context. In addition, the study investigates the moderating role of networking in strengthening the relationship between motivation and entrepreneurial intention. The findings are expected to contribute to the entrepreneurship literature by providing a better understanding of the factors that encourage entrepreneurial aspirations among Muslim youth and by offering practical implications for entrepreneurship education, youth development programmes, and SME policy initiatives [3], [5], [6], [7].

2 Literature Review

2.1 Extending the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and Islamic Values

Theory of Planned behavior (TPB) is still one of the most used theoretical frameworks to explain entrepreneurial intention. TPB asserts that a person's motivation to engage in a behaviour is determined by three factors: attitude toward the behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. Specifically, these determinants describe ways in which individuals form intentions to perform an entrepreneurial activity. However, recent research has claimed that TPB may be improved by including contextual, social, and developmental factors more closely related to the environments people form entrepreneurial intent within [5], [8].

The present work considers motivation and networking as basic precursors for Muslim youth to develop an intention of entrepreneurship. Motivation represents the positive mindset of a person when it comes to entrepreneurship and is more of a psychological driver that capitalizes on their tendency to take advantage of entrepreneurship-related opportunities. One of the key characteristics of those interested in entrepreneurial careers is having a higher degree of motivation, which reflects on dedication, but also stamina and self-confidence. On the other hand, Networking is understood as the social aspect of

entrepreneurship, and this is strongly linked to subjective norms. Networking serves as a channel to access resources, information, and entrepreneurship opportunities, support from family members, peers, and mentors; for engaging in the community and institutional support that can promote more entrepreneurs with strong intentions [7], [8], [9].

To do so, this work extends the TPB framework to an extended version by integrating motivation and networking into the model, acknowledging that entrepreneurial intention is not only influenced by individual attitudes and perceived capabilities but also by social interactions and support structures. This extension helps to better apprehend how entrepreneurial intentions are generated among Muslim youth with an emphasis on SME participation and entrepreneurship education [10], [5].

2.2 Motivation and Entrepreneurial Intention

Motivation has played an essential role in predicting entrepreneurial intention as it impacts the individual propensity to seek entrepreneurial opportunities and start a business. Motivational mechanisms translate into positive or negative attitudes and behavioural intentions, which then guide entrepreneurial decisions in accordance with the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB). People with more motivation will be more likely to find opportunities, solve problems, and pursue entrepreneurship [1], [5].

The role of personal aspirations, achievement orientation, social contribution, and ethical values in shaping entrepreneurial motivation among Muslim youth has also been revealed. Entrepreneurship: An opportunity to improve the economy, progress as a person, and add society. This may range from initiative, persistence, creativity, and resilience characteristics that almost always lead to entrepreneurial success. Moreover, motivation ignites the interest to search for opportunities and learn entrepreneurial skills as well as gain expertise needed to start up and maintain businesses [7], [11].

A positive correlation between motivation and entrepreneurial intention has been documented by previous studies. This means that subjects who had a strong intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are also more likely to have positive attitudes toward entrepreneurship and intention for entrepreneurship. Motivation supplies the mental stimulation that encourages people towards entrepreneurial goals, and allows ambition to compete with doubt in creating a business amidst fear of uncertainty or risk. Since motivation is one of the most salient predictors of entrepreneurial attitude and behaviour,

it can be hypothesised that highly motivated Muslim youth will demonstrate a greater intention to venture than low-motivated Muslim youth.

- **H1:** Motivation has a significant positive effect on entrepreneurial intention among Muslim youth.

2.3 Networking and Entrepreneurial Intention

Networking is a core dimension of social capital that helps people gain access to necessary resources, information, knowledge, and opportunities that are otherwise not available through their own skills. Based on Social Capital Theory, access to support, skills, and ventures are all functions of the nature and extent of entrepreneurship-related social relationships. Networking provides aspiring entrepreneurs with advice, mentorship, and information about markets and capital, which leads to the development of entrepreneurial intentions and capabilities [8], [9], [12].

The perspective of entrepreneurship through the lens of networks embraces the notion that no entrepreneurial activity happens on its own and is rather deeply embedded in social and professional processes. Previous studies have indicated that those who had a larger network had higher chances of detecting business opportunities, which allows them to develop a stronger entrepreneurial self-efficacy and contributes to their confidence in pursuing entrepreneurship as a career. Exposure to a broad range of social ties also increases the flow of information and knowledge, which helps people make better entrepreneurial decisions and lower incomplete fraud uncertainty [11], [13].

In addition, networking helps develop subjective norms. Subjective norms are the perceived expectations and supports from family role models or mentors, and similar others. This statement means that the subjective norm can have a positive impact on entrepreneurial intention through more social approval and support for an entrepreneurial career. Younger individuals whose choices about careers are generally malleable and subject to the pull of the people around them feel this influence more acutely [5].

Networking might be particularly beneficial for Muslim youth, as a community seeking to collaborate and support each other in their entrepreneurial endeavors. The active social relations can generate an entrepreneurial ecosystem where entrepreneurs benefit from each other's experiences, knowledge, and resources over the long-term in undertaking their growth plans. Thus, those individuals who possess broader and stronger

networks are believed to present greater entrepreneurial intention than those with fewer social and professional ties [5], [7].

- **H2:** Networking has a significant positive effect on entrepreneurial intention.

2.4 The Moderating Role of Networking on Motivation and Entrepreneurial Intention

Motivation is arguably the most important antecedent of entrepreneurial intention, influencing individuals to engage in entrepreneurship and commitment to a business opportunity [1]. Yet even motivation may not be enough to turn dreams into intentions and actions. The usefulness of motivation is most likely determined by the presence of external systems that provide access to information, resources, knowledge, and entrepreneurial opportunities. Networking is significantly important in this aspect as individuals are linked and contribute with good social (family, friends) and professional relationships (mentors, venture capitalists) because while building a business, one needs a couple of connections to be made [10], [7].

The use of networking is based on Social Capital Theory, which shows that access to resources located in social relationships, such as mentorship, business knowledge, market information, loan-level funding, and entrepreneurship-specific support. These resources are intended to help aspiring entrepreneurs navigate uncertainty and lower the barriers to venture creation. Entrepreneurs with larger networks also typically receive encouragement, guidance, and assistance, bolstering their entrepreneurial ambitions as well as extending confidence that they will succeed in becoming entrepreneurs [9].

Also, networking can strengthen the effect of motivation on intention for entrepreneurship. High need for achievement individuals are better able to use social ties to learn of opportunities as well as resource acquisition when it comes to starting up. In parallel, supportive networks can enhance positive effects by offering the preconditions to facilitate the enactment of entrepreneurship intentions in a stronger way. Networking nurtures an ecosystem that empowers new entrepreneurs to chase their entrepreneurial aspirations with greater ease and success through the development of trust, collaboration, and knowledge sharing [10].

Empirical research indicates that social capital and networking further develop entrepreneurial outcomes by enhancing resource acquisition, improving levels of self-efficacy and increasing access to entrepreneurial opportunities. As such,

those who are highly motivated are anticipated to express higher entrepreneurial intentions when given large effective networks. From this argument, networking is offered as a moderating variable that enhances the relationship between motivation and intention to become an entrepreneur [7].

- **H3:** Networking significantly moderates the relationship between motivation and entrepreneurial intention.

2.5 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual model integrates the extended TPB and Social Capital Theory

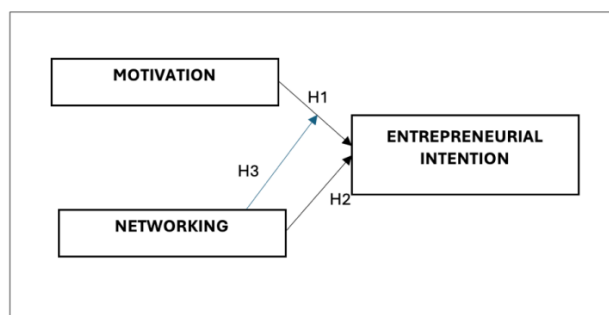


Fig. 1: Conceptual Framework of Motivation, Networking, and Entrepreneurial Intention

Source: [5], [11], [8], [13]

The relationship between motivation, networking and entrepreneurial intention is conceptually shown in Figure 1. Motivation in the model (H1): It is proposed that there is a positive and direct relationship between motivation to entrepreneur intention where individuals with more motivation are more likely to have an entrepreneurship intention. It is also believed that networking positively affects entrepreneurial intention directly (H2). Moreover, networking is suggested to impact on the relationship between motivation and entrepreneurial intention (H3), meaning that the association strength of these two will differ depending on whether a student networks or not. In conclusion, the framework tells about direct impacts of motivation and networking on entrepreneurial intention along with the moderating effect of networking.

3 Methodology

3.1 Research Design and Sample

The study used a quantitative cross-sectional research design to investigate the factors that affect university students' entrepreneurial intentions. Through an online questionnaire, data were obtained

from 120 Muslim students who enrolled in the Entrepreneurship course at Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI), utilizing a simple random sampling. This study adopted a quantitative approach, given the potential for systematic measurement and analysis of relationships among variables within a defined population [14]. This research employed the descriptive explanatory method by using a quantitative approach with a non-experimental design, a simple random sampling technique was used to ensure every student had an equal chance to participate, which can help to minimize sampling bias and increase the representativeness of the research [15], [16]. This seems a suitable epitome of the population, since those respondents are, through formal learning experiences, in such a process of transferential learning that depersonalises entrepreneurial knowledge, attitudes, and intentions that unfolds within entrepreneurship education. Notably, recent research indicates that university students are crucial for entrepreneurship because universities form a fertile ground for entrepreneurial education and even provide opportunities for future career paths of the students in terms of their intentions and aspirations towards entrepreneurship [17], [18]. This population is therefore significant as it embodies a rich talent pool from which the entrepreneurial values, attitudes, and intentions of tomorrow's entrepreneurs are formed.

3.2 Measurement of Variables

Measures of study constructs were adapted from prior studies and their validity established in the entrepreneurship literature using existing unidimensional Likert-scale measures. In this study, there were four constructs in the measurement model: entrepreneurial intention, motivation, Islamic practice and networking. To measure entrepreneurial intention, items adapted from [19] that capture both aspirations to become entrepreneurs, intentions to start a business, and commitment through working hard on trying to launch their own ventures were used. Motivation items were based on scales adapted from [20] indicators of intrinsic/extrinsic, which reflect respondents' motives to engage in entrepreneurial activities. Networking was measured with items adapted from [21], covering social interaction, entrepreneurial exposure, and access to support from personal networks and professional networks.

3.3 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The analysis comprised

descriptive statistics for summarising the characteristics of the respondents and study variables, reliability analysis to measure internal consistency of measurement scales, multiple linear regression for determining the relationship among variables, and moderation analysis to test the moderating effect of networking on entrepreneurial intention. Multiple diagnostic tests were carried out to confirm that the findings are valid and reliable. Internal consistency was good for all constructs, as shown in Cronbach's alpha (all higher than the cutoff score of 0.80) [4], [22]. The presence of multicollinearity was examined with the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF), and all values below the suggested threshold of 5 indicated that multicollinearity is not a problem [14]. Harman's single-factor test was also used to identify common method bias. The results showed that none of the variables explained a significant portion of the variance, providing evidence that common method variance did not substantially affect the data [23]. These procedures were necessary to maintain the methodological rigor and robustness of the findings.

4 Results

This paper shows empirical evidence strongly supporting the proposed hypotheses. On exploration via multiple regression analysis, it was found that motivation is the strongest individual predictor for entrepreneurial intention, having a strong positive effect ($\beta = 0.62$, $p < 0.001$). Search by Cycle This further highlights the extremely integral role of internal psychological and spiritual factors in motivating a desire for entrepreneurship. Networking was also shown to have a pronounced direct positive effect on intention ($\beta = 0.28$, $p < 0.01$), therefore furthering previous findings which highlight the importance of social capital as well as contextual assistance towards entrepreneurship. The global model fit was good, explaining 68% of the variance in entrepreneurial intention ($R^2 = 0.68$). Of note, the moderation test revealed a significant interaction of motivation and networking-outcomes ($\beta = 0.19$, $p < .01$). Finally, this result shows that networking acts as a key enabling mechanism, positively moderating and boosting the relationship between individual motivation and entrepreneurial intention 4, thus providing robust support for Hypothesis 3.

5 Discussion

This research guide adds to the collection of entrepreneurship literature, which provides empirical proof on the effect of motivation on common intention among Muslim youth. The study provides further evidence that entrepreneurial motivation is not just about money or personal achievement, but also about the desire to fulfill hopes and dreams of building a future for self and family; of creating benefits for others in society, and of long-term value creation through responsibility. This view of ambition contrasts with the more additive perspective that seems to inform much research concerning what helps stimulate young people in making entrepreneurial decisions in the context of SMEs [6].

A central theoretical contribution made by the present study to entrepreneurial intention is its conceptualization as a developmental process rather than an outcome that arises only in adulthood or higher education. Results demonstrate that entrepreneurial intentions are formed by ongoing socialization processes, starting with family experiences through their life course, community interactions, and climate influences. It indicates that not only may an entrepreneurial way of thinking and aspirations occur long before exposure to formal entrepreneurship education. Thus, the research emphasizes the need for nurturing entrepreneurial values, dispositions, and abilities since a young age in supportive family, educational, and community contexts.

The study also contributes to the extension of Social Capital Theory by showing that networking does not merely serve as a tool for resource procurement but serves as an enhancing modifier between motivation and intention to entrepreneurship. Family support, peer relationships, mentorship, and community engagement help develop entrepreneurial self-efficacy, confidence, and intention to start a venture. By emphasizing the moderating influence of networking, your findings imply that this motivated effect on entrepreneurial intentions is even stronger when certain social networks are supportive [1], [8], [17]

Additionally, the results highlight resilience and adaptability as critical elements of the entrepreneurial process. The dynamic nature of personal motivation in conjunction with external support systems facilitates the young entrepreneurs to leverage uncertainty, difficulties, and domain-resource constraints. Access to support networks, mentorship structures, and an entrepreneurial ecosystem provides reinforcing confidence and endurance, which increases the chances of pursuing

entrepreneurship. To conclude, this study proves that strong individual motivation with backing social structure creates a solid foundation for grooming future SME Entrepreneurs and leading to sustainable socio-economic growth [1], [9].

6 Implications

6.1 Theoretical Implications

This paper adds to the entrepreneurship literature by further extending the application of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) in explaining the entrepreneurial intention of Muslim youth. More particularly, the study underlines that motivation and networking are major antecedents of entrepreneurial intention in an SME context. Drawing on Social Capital Theory, this research establishes that entrepreneurial intention is a function not only of individual motivators but also of the quality of social networks and avenues to entrepreneurial support systems. In addition, the results present empirical support for how motivation is reinforced by networking to positively contribute towards entrepreneurial intentionality, thus providing for a broader constellation of personal and social factors in predicting entrepreneurial intentions. The research is also a contribution to the literature as it emphasizes that entrepreneurship, per se, is a developmental process that begins well before one enters the labour force. Impressions of Family Maintain Support, Education Fellowships, and Community Organizations, and System impacts on Local Business Plan for children's entrepreneurship intention. This paper, by underscoring the importance of both motivation and networking in this context, expands perspectives on youth entrepreneurship, and therefore its contributions to SME development and ultimately employment generation as well as sustainable socio-economic growth [5], [7], [9].

6.2 Practical Implications

In practice, this research indicates that entrepreneurship intention development is not an innate feature of Muslim youth, but rather obtains its trajectory based on the nature of their initial social and educational settings. As such, supportive families, educational institutions and communities offer the encouragement that goes much further than individual characteristics in contributing to entrepreneurial development. To bolster the motivation and confidence of young people before they enter the labour market, early family support can be important. In addition, opportunities for

experiential learning and exposure to entrepreneurial networks from a young age increase the awareness of entrepreneurship, knowledge exchange, and skill development. Exposure through youth entrepreneurship clubs, community programmes and mentoring initiatives, participation in entrepreneurship-related activities could promote collaboration, social capital, along with fostering entrepreneurial competencies. As such, introducing pre-college entrepreneurship education with experiential learning opportunities and networking at an early age will play a role in nurturing robust SME entrepreneurial intentions among Muslim youths to become the next generation of SME entrepreneurs.

6.3 Policy Implications

The results of this study point to a few practical implications for governments, education facilities, and policymakers related to economic empowerment and employment as SDGs that want to implement SDGs. First, muslim entrepreneurship needs to be covered deeper within higher education curricula. Second, more specific initiatives providing young people access to resources, practical training, and better opportunities in business could help reduce youth unemployment, building on previous measures designed to strengthen the SME ecosystem. Lastly, policymakers and institutions of higher learning can foster mentorship programs on campuses, business incubators, and entrepreneurial hubs as well as community-based initiatives that encourage networking among the youth, aspiring entrepreneurs, and members of business communities. These types of efforts can cultivate entrepreneurial orientation, build social capital, and contribute to eco-friendly and value-oriented entrepreneurship.

7 Conclusion

In conclusion, findings indicate motivation and networking as strong factors of Muslim youth SME entrepreneurial intention. The result showed that motivation was significant in creating students' willingness to engage in entrepreneurial activities, while networking had a direct effect through knowledge acquisition, accessibility, and opportunities, which strengthen entrepreneurial behaviour. Networking also strengthened the positive association between motivation and entrepreneurial intention, indicating that motivated individuals are more likely to convert their dreams of entrepreneurship into real intentions if they have

strong social and professional networks. The results indicate a necessary increase in entrepreneurship motivation and strengthened networking opportunities for Muslim youth to ensure participation in SME development. It suggests the need for policies among colleges, policy makers and enterprise assistance businesses to create entrepreneurial learning with good neighbourhoods and networks, coaching packages and socialisation systems to elicit powerful entrepreneurial capability and intention. Finally, longitudinal designs with repeated measures and multiple subsequent activities which leverage developmental theory are needed (e.g: entrepreneurial intentions spread over time while development is moderated by motivation & networking) to better inform strategies dealing with Muslim youth in local socio-cultural environments.

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Declaration of Generative AI and AI-assisted Technologies in the Writing Process

During the preparation of this work, the author(s) utilized artificial intelligence (AI) technologies solely for the purpose of linguistic refinement and grammatical correction. Following the application of these tools, the author(s) comprehensively reviewed, verified, and edited the resulting text. The author(s) maintain full accountability and responsibility for the accuracy, integrity, and final content of the publication.

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The authors equally contributed in the present research, at all stages from the formulation of the problem to the final findings and solution.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors have no conflict of interest to declare.

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