The Effect of Empathy on Students’ Motivation in Social Entrepreneurship among Undergraduates

Norsamsinar Samsudin*, Ahmad Zainal Abidin Abd Razakb, Juliana Osmanc, Thuraiya Zakariad, Nazrina Azize

*a, b, c, d Faculty of Management and Economics, Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris, Malaysia

c School of Quantitative Sciences, Universiti Utara Malaysia

Correspondence Author: norsamsinar@fpe.upsi.edu.my*

Abstract: This study aimed to investigate the effect of empathy on students' motivation in social entrepreneurship among undergraduates. A total of 300 students from 15 selected public universities in Malaysia under the Entrepreneurial Act Us Program (Enactus) were involved in this research. A set of questionnaires was utilized to collect the data. Descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation were used to identify the level of students’ motivation towards social entrepreneurship and empathy. Inferential statistics including correlation and simple linear regression were used to test the research hypotheses of the research. The results show that there is a significant effect between empathy and students’ motivation for social entrepreneurship.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, empathy, students’ motivation

1. Introduction

Entrepreneurship is the key to improve a country's economic growth by contributing to GDP, stimulate investment and generate employment. In addition, entrepreneurship is a catalyst for innovation for the generation and as a platform to improve the socioeconomic status of the community by providing economic opportunities to all levels of society, particularly the marginalized and disadvantaged in the labor market, in starting and developing business. Thus, entrepreneurial activities are capable of mobilizing the country's economy and ensuring the well-being of the society (Ministry of Entrepreneurship Development, 2019; Rosna Mohamad & Norasmah Othman, 2018). Entrepreneurship is seen as a dynamic process encompassing vision, change and creation that requires the application of energy and enthusiasm towards implementing new ideas and creative solutions (Syahrina Abdullah, Armanurah Mohamad & Lily Julienti Abu Bakar, 2016). In addition, entrepreneurship is the process of doing something new and something different for the purpose of creating wealth for the individual and adding value to the society (Kao, 1993).

The term of entrepreneurship has expanded its scope to the context that involves the achievement of social goal and not profit oriented. This social entrepreneurship is aimed at resolving social problems through the activities of social entrepreneurs financed through business actions in the market. Social entrepreneurship involves the application of traditional entrepreneurship principles to the context and focus on social issues (Ching, Liang, Wu, Law & Liu, 2018; Suraiya Ishak & Ahmad Raflis Che Omar, 2015).

Social entrepreneurship as an innovative approach to society's social change. Although still recent, social entrepreneurship among young people is gaining. Social entrepreneurs are individuals with innovative solutions to a social problem that people around them are facing. A social entrepreneur can take any resources and possibilities that are available, not seen by others, to improve society, inspire new strategies and think about how new solutions can be used to better the world around them. This requires a social entrepreneur to deeply understand and being empathy of the society’s problem. Empathy form the role of social entrepreneurship when one is inspires to take the responsibility and show righteous attitude (Futoki, 2018; Yu & Wang, 2018).

Social entrepreneurship is known as a social enterprise in Malaysia. It is a social enterprise that is gaining in gaining. Social entrepreneurs are individuals with innovative solutions to a social problem that people around them are facing. A social entrepreneur can take any resources and possibilities that are available, not seen by others, to improve society, inspire new strategies and think about how new solutions can be used to better the world around them. This requires a social entrepreneur to deeply understand and being empathy of the society’s problem. Empathy form the role of social entrepreneurship when one is inspires to take the responsibility and show righteous attitude (Futoki, 2018; Yu & Wang, 2018).
incorporate theory and practice with solving real problems among community with love, happiness and mutual respect (Nor Hidayati Mokhtar, 2019). Hence, public university students need to be exposed in various program such as social entrepreneurship (Hariyaty Ab Wahid, Suraini Mohd Rhouse, Norsamsinar Samsudin, Rafiduraida Abdul Rahman, Wan Salmi Wan Mustaffa & Ahmad Zainal Abidin Abd Razak, 2018). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate the effect of empathy on student’s motivation in social entrepreneurship activities.

2. Literature Review

Poverty is said to be a social disease that is difficult to handle (Radieah Mohd Nor, Narimah Samat & Wan Norhasniza Wan Hassan, 2019). Siti Zalikha Zahari, Chamhuri Siwar, Shaharudin Idrus & Nor Diana Mohd Idris (2018) defined poverty as hunger, lack of opportunity, lack of options, education, health, productive assets, susceptible to risks and vulnerability. Social entrepreneurship is a new idea that can come out with products, services and models that are capable in meeting social needs and establishing social or collaborative relationships with everyone. A social entrepreneur is essentially the one who develops solutions and innovative ideas to address the social problems. According to Marwan Ismail & Wan Yusoff Wan Shaharuddin, (2015), social entrepreneurship is an approach that become phenomenon and is considered as a third source of energy besides the government and private sectors.

As for urban and rural community in Peninsular Malaysia, household that is less than RM970 and RM880 is categorized as poor. While for household below than RM580 is categorized as hardcore poverty. In Sabah and Wilayah Persekutuan Labuan, poor household for urban and rural area is RM1,170 and RM1,220. Household for hardcore poverty in Sarawak urban and rural area are RM700 and RM610. Poverty issues occurs due to the process of migration and urbanization that causes some community to gather in one place and form different type of group income in household per month (Nor Azrul Mohd Zin & Noordeyana Tambi, 2018). Malaysia are divided into three types of groups namely Top 20% (T20), Medium 40% (M40) and Below 40% (B40). Based on Noraida Ali, Suriyani Muhamad, Masita Masila Abdul Jalil & Mustafa Man (2018), T20, M40 and B40 has an average household around RM14,305, RM5,662 and RM2,537 respectively. Special emphasis on social entrepreneurship could be an important tool for bridging the gap between household income, wealth distribution, and low-income.

The MOE (2018) reported that the total number of students for public university intake in degree level are 98,605 students. It is very huge number intake compared to other categories of HEIs which are private and polytechnic. However, there is a small number of students involved in social entrepreneurship. Based on data in Enactus Malaysia, there are 25 public and private universities join this organization. As until first quarter of 2020, only 1,221 students from both type of universities is being members of Enactus (www.enactus.org). Enactus is one of the organization that invest explicitly in social entrepreneurship. People at Enactus createsabetterfutureforsociety.72,000undergraduatesandgraduates’ students, across 11,730 campuses in 36 countries are values-driven social innovators that have a positive impact on the lives of people from their various country each year. All these impactful activities were involved by educators and sponsored by business leaders as they see the problem of what community and social needs. Then the student teams carry out evaluations, find the perfect solution on how to overcome with and execute the community with impactful projects that may solve the society issues. This is where all starts for social entrepreneur with the idea and invention. Enactus believe, as in business, that competition fosters innovation. This means more lives that are affected every day for Enactus (Hockerts, 2015).

Mair and Noboa (2006) argue that some unique aspects in the context of social entrepreneurship require adaptation from traditional measures used in the model of planned behavior theory and entrepreneurial intention. One the key elements of social entrepreneurship that they proposed is empathy. As defined by Anna (2017), empathy is the experience of putting ourselves in someone else’s situation. The emergence of empathy has led to significant cooperation among stakeholders. It is aimed to sharing views and creating services that mostly community will well receive. Decety, Bartal, Uzevosky & Knafo-Noam (2015) stated that, empathy portrays the innate potential to observe and be sensitive to the emotional situations of people as well as the motivation to maintain for their universality. Decety & Yoder, (2016) said empathy is a multi-faceted skill that is used to accommodate one's ability to share and hold onto the notion and feelings of others. Su, Zhou & Zhang (2019) explained, as one of the motivation element in social entrepreneurship, empathy favorable social entrepreneur to be altruistic which is being more concerned with the happiness and welfare of others than themselves. In addition, social entrepreneur with high altruistic behavior have a vigorous motivation of empathy (Su et al., 2019).
3. Methodology

Population is an overall aspect of a group of elements that has common characteristics and consists of several areas to scrutinize. This study population consisted of 1220 students from public and private universities who have involved in Enactus (www.enactus.org). However, the researcher only focuses and selected 15 public universities across Malaysia that participating in Enactus. The proportionate sampling was utilized in this study. With proportionate stratification sampling, the sample size of every stratum is proportionate to the population size of the stratum. This suggests that every stratum has an equivalent sampling fraction of proportionate sampling. The population of this research will be measures proportionately in order to determine the number of respondents (Ranjit, 2011). Thus, the sample size for this study is 300 students.

A set of questionnaires that was adapted and adopted from Carrahar (2013) and Hockert (2015) was utilized to collect the data. The questionnaire was distributed to selected respondents using Google Form. This method can also help the researcher obtain data in a short time and low cost. Before the questionnaire was distributed, the researcher also conducted a pilot study to test the reliability and validity of the questionnaire. All required information and data were analyzed using the Special Package for Social Science Software (SPSS) using Windows version 23.

In this study, data were analyzed using descriptive method consisting of mean and standard deviation to identify the level of student motivations’ in social entrepreneurship and empathy among respondents. The Pearson correlation and simple linear regression in conducted to test the effect of empathy on students’ motivation in social entrepreneurship.

4. Results and Discussion

The results show a high level of students’ motivation in social entrepreneurship (M= 4.1661, SD= 0.59). The itemize analysis found that, the item of ‘I am caring deeply about the outcomes’ has the highest mean score (M= 4.30, SD=.74). This is followed by ‘I am adopting a mission to sustain social value (not just private value)’ (M=4.28, SD=.659). The least mean score is item of ‘I am acting boldly without being limited by resources currently in hand in the fulfillment of my mission’ (M=3.94, SD=.88). The data analysis found that the level of students’ empathy is high (M=3.8538, SD=.74). The item of ‘When thinking about socially disadvantaged people, I try to put myself in their shoes’ has the highest mean score (M=4.34, SD=.77). This is followed by ‘I feel compassion for socially marginalized people’ (M=4.28, SD=.71).

Table 1. Pearson Correlation Results between Empathy and Students’ Motivation towards Social Entrepreneurship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Students’ Motivation towards Social Entrepreneurship</th>
<th>Empathy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students’ motivation</td>
<td>r= 0.435, p= 0.000, n= 300</td>
<td>0.435</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>towards social entrepreneurship</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Significant at the level p<0.01

Based on the Table 1, it is found that there is a significant association between empathy and students’ motivation towards social entrepreneurship where (r=0.435, n=300, p<0.01). The value of coefficient correlation, r=0.435 is far from 1, so this clearly explained that there is only moderate correlation between the variables involved.

Table 2. Simple Linear Regression Result (Model Summary) Regarding the Effect of Empathy on Students’ Motivation towards Social Entrepreneurship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R Square</th>
<th>Adjusted Square</th>
<th>Std. Error of the Estimate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.435</td>
<td>0.189</td>
<td>0.187</td>
<td>4.03207</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a) Predictors (Constant): Empathy
b) Dependent Variable: Students’ motivation towards social entrepreneurship
Based on the Model Summary in Table 2, it shows that the magnitude of the Pearson correlation coefficients (R) for the relationship between empathy and students’ motivation towards social entrepreneurship is 0.435. If the value of R is compressed, another very useful statistical value will be obtained which is the value of the determination coefficient. The $R^2$ value (0.435² = 0.189) can illustrate the variation in dependent variable that can be explained by regression model produced. According to the Table 2, the regression model that use empathy as independent variable can explain 18.9% of the variance in the dependent variable which is the students’ motivation towards social entrepreneurship. The adjusted $R^2$ gives a reflection of the total variance in the dependent variable which can be explained by the independent variable for other data sets derived from the same population. The adjusted $R^2$ value of 0.187 is smaller than the actual $R^2$ value of 0.189. In addition, the standard error of estimated value of 4.03 is estimated variance of the dependent variable of each value of the independent variable.

Forster and Grichnik (2013) realized that empathy features a positive effect on company volunteering intentions, thus reinforcing results from the primary and third samples. However, Ernst (2011) had concluded that empathy had a negative effect on a respondents’ attitudes toward begin a social enterprise. This means that the mixed finding from this research regarding empathy should involve for further studies into the effect of empathy has on social entrepreneurial motivations. Empathy was conjointly determined to be a significant factor for amassing social entrepreneurial intentions, and this is in line with Hockerts (2017). Chan, Kuan & Wang (2011) from Hong Kong stated that, a common objective in social entrepreneurship is to diminish poverty, emotional connections with those suffering are needed to develop a prosocial identity to the act to alleviate poverty. The research done by Nur Syafinaz Rashid et al., (2018) and Yu & Wang (2018), proves that there is no significant relationship between empathy and social entrepreneurship because solely having empathy is not enough to increase the social entrepreneurship motivation. But then, empathy was proven to have positive and significant impact on social entrepreneurship by Peng et. al (2019).

5. Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effect of empathy on students’ motivation in social entrepreneurship. Each of the finding and discussions in this research is limited to the context of this study only. The findings from the simple linear regression indicates a significant relationship between empathy and students’ motivation towards social entrepreneurship activities (sig. = 0.001; p < 0.05). However, the data that have been obtained is limited to the context of social entrepreneurship among Enactus members only. The variables in this study are also limited to the purpose of this study. As the scope of social entrepreneurship is wide, the researcher only focuses on aspect of motivation elements that is empathy. Future research is suggested to investigate other factors that contribute to the development of students’ motivation in social entrepreneurship.

6. Acknowledgements

This research is funded by Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris Research Grant (2019-0189-106-01)

References


