



## International Journal of Economic Research

ISSN : 0972-9380

available at <http://www.serialsjournals.com>

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Volume 14 • Number 19 • 2017

### Shaping Convicts to Become Potential Entrepreneurs

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**Abstract:** Prison is a correctional institution to form and correct the behavior of prisoners so as to be in line with the requirements of the norm and also the values of society. A convict is a person found guilty of a crime and sentenced by a court. A person serving a sentence in prison is known as prisoner or inmate undergoing a sentence of imprisonment. While undergoing punishment in prison, convicts also undergoing entrepreneurial skills training with the hoped that when they have completed their time in prison, they would not return repeated crimes and return to prison. Therefore, the objectives of this study were to review the profiles of convicts and to assess the level of entrepreneurial intention among convicts who have followed conviction entrepreneurial skills training in prison. The samples consist of 300 convicts taken at random from one of the correctional institution in Malaysia. Data were collected at random using questionnaire instrument and analyzed using a descriptive statistics comprising of mean score, standard deviation, frequency, percentage and ranking. The study found that convicts who have followed the conviction entrepreneurial skills training program while in the prison have a high level of entrepreneurial intention with a mean score 4.12 and standard deviation 0.561. This study showed that entrepreneurial skills training undergoing by these convicts, and followed by their sentenced conviction while completing their punishment in prison, they have been able to foster a high level of entrepreneurial intention. Implications of the study showed that convicts that undergoing entrepreneurial skills training have the potential to be shaped up into becoming entrepreneurs. Therefore, a comprehensive entrepreneurial training program, entrepreneurship education and support program should be planned and implemented for convicts to assist and prepare them for their new and potential future business venture. This can give way to convicts as their willingness to make entrepreneurship as a career option after they get out of jail later.

**Keywords:** prisoner, inmate, convicts, entrepreneurial intention, correctional institution

## INTRODUCTION

The growing tide of modernization and increasing unemployment rate with volatile fluctuation rate of economic cycles have caused criminal situation in Malaysia to rise year after year. Therefore, this situation can lead to the expansion in the number of prisoners every year. In this regard, the Malaysian Correctional Institutions have conducted various activities for prisoners in correctional institutions which include entrepreneurial skills training with the hope that these convicts when they are free after fulfilled their conviction time would not return as convict on repeated crimes and sentenced to prison. With this entrepreneurial skills training program and various activities implemented by the correctional institution, it will provide an opportunity for ex-convicts to be entrepreneurs or find jobs either through the private and government sectors. In line with the objective of rehabilitation and entrepreneurial skills undertaken by the Malaysian Correctional Institution, entrepreneurial skills training carried out by the correctional institution can improve the characteristics of entrepreneurship among prisoners and at the same time to increase their Hisrich (2008) interest in the field of entrepreneurship. Since entrepreneurial skills can be trained among prisoners, it is hoped that the convicts can become useful and productive citizens upon their exit from the prison later. This study will focus on two objectives. Firstly, to view the profiles of prisoners convicted at one of the correctional institution. Secondly, to assess the level of entrepreneurial intention among prisoners who have followed the entrepreneurial skills training program at one of the correctional institutions.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Entrepreneurial Intention

Intentions play an important role in the decision to start or venture a new firm. According to Krueger, Reilly and Carsrud (2000) intention is the single best predictor of most planned behavior, including entrepreneurial behavior. Thus, the entrepreneurial intentions help explain why many individual decide to start a business even before they find business opportunity (Krueger *et al.*, 2000). According to Douglas & Shepherd (2002) the intention towards entrepreneurship also has to do with the attitude of the individual concerned against risk and independency. Someone who has a high propensity for entrepreneurship will exhibit a more positive attitude towards risk and independency.

The intention of a person against a certain things can push their desire to get those things. In this case, if the individuals have a tendency towards entrepreneurial careers then the likelihood of them to be engaged in entrepreneurship activities are also high. This is because, positive attitude is found capable of stimulating the level of individual desire to showcase the action by selecting the entrepreneurial career. It is also acknowledged by Hisrich (2008) who believe that individuals who have an intention to do a thing, they will show a positive attitude on the possibility of action required. Intention is related to the Theory of Planned Behavior.

### Theory of Planned Behavior

This study is built on the Theory of Planned Behavior by Ajzen's (2002) that suggests that the immediate antecedent of behavior is the intention to perform a given behavior. Intention is a direct antecedent of real behavior; and the stronger the intention for behavior, the bigger the success of behavior prediction or

actual behavior. Theory of Planned Behavior also explained the attitude towards the behavior or the behavior of an individual. According to Ajzen (1991) stated that the behavior of a person is determined by the intention which comprising of three determinants, namely:

**(i) Attitude toward behavior**

Attitude toward behavior is said to be influenced by the individual's confidence to the desired or not desired behavior. Individuals with confidence of positive behavior will have the high tendency to do something they want to conduct. However, individuals with low confidence of positive behavior will have low tendency to do things they want to conduct. In the context of entrepreneurship *attitude toward the behavior or personal attraction* relate to the degree to which the individual holds an overall positive or negative personal valuation about being an entrepreneur.

**(ii) Subjective norms**

Subjective norm is related to the individual views other than those adjacent to it and it is affecting the behavior of individuals. Individuals have the confidence when an individual or a certain group accepts or do not accept his actions (Norm cluster). This will be the subjective norms in the individuals who will form his conduct based on norm cluster. In context of entrepreneurship, *subjective norms* relate to the perception of what a person's "reference group" such as family, friends or significant others would think about performing entrepreneurial behavior or whether they approve or disapprove of the entrepreneurial decision.

**(iii) Perceived behavioral control**

Perceived behavioral control explain the level of desire that is closely related to the behavior in which behavior is moved, and at the same time the desired behavior driven (Fisher and Ajzen, 1975). The higher the attitudes toward behavior and subjective norms and the higher the degree of behavioral control, the stronger the tendency an individual does to perform behaviors under consideration (Ajzen, 1991). In the context of entrepreneurship, *perceived behavioral control* refers to an individual's belief and confidence in his/her capability in performing as an entrepreneur and realizing control and success in entrepreneurial activity (Ajzen, 2002). Perceived behavioral control also can be called *entrepreneurial self-efficacy*, where Krueger *et al.* (2000) claimed that entrepreneurial self-efficacy have a greater influences on entrepreneurial behavior.

**Entrepreneurial Skills Training**

Entrepreneurial skills training have a positive relationship on the level of confidence of entrepreneurs to expand their business (Petridou, Sarri and Kyrgidou, 2009). Entrepreneur who wants to excel in entrepreneurship should learn the entrepreneurship courses, attending seminars and others related to entrepreneurial skills (Zaidatol Akmalian & Zakaria, 2000). Research on small scale entrepreneurs in the state of Perlis under the MARA skills training programs found that the entrepreneurial skills training affect the success of the entrepreneurs (Suhaini, Norhasyila, and Yuslina., 2013). This study explains that entrepreneurial skills training programs are essential in enhancing entrepreneurs business and also for entrepreneurs to be more competitive in the market.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Sampling Design

The study population consisted of 1500 convicts that undergoing entrepreneurial skills training in one of the correctional institution in Malaysia. A total of 306 sets of questionnaires were distributed to these convictions prisoners at random with the help of several prison officers at the correctional institutions. According to Krejcie and Morgan (1970) the sample needed for the population amounting to 1500 were 306 respondents. The rates of return of questionnaire respondents were one hundred percent because the filling of questionnaire by the convicted prisoners has been monitored by prison officials. Out of a total of 306 questionnaire returned, the researchers found that six respondents provide responses that are too extreme as well as incomplete and cannot be used for the purpose of this study. Therefore, the researchers can only used 300 respondents or survey for the purpose of this study. Data from questionnaires was analyzed using descriptive statistics consisting of frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation and ranking.

### Data Analysis

The discussion of the findings in this section covers the profile of the convicts, which are the respondents of the study. Details about the respondents profile are shown in table 1 and 2. Convicts profile in this study are divided into two parts, namely 1) Background of the convicts and 2) Education of convicts. This section will also highlight in detail about the level of entrepreneurial intention among convicts in one of the correctional institutions.

### Profile of Convicts

Table 1 shows the composition background of convicts at one of the correctional institution. This profile is the sample of the study. The gender percentage is 50 percent male convicts and 50 percent female convicts. In terms of age of convicts, the majority of convicts are aged between 32 years (57%) followed by the age of 21 to 31 years (43%) respectively. For the number of siblings of convicts, the highest is

**Table 1**  
**Personal background of convicts**

<i>Demographic Factor convicts</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Per cent(%)</i>
Sex	Men	150	50.0
	Female	150	50.0
Age of	21-31 years	129	43.0
	32 years old and above	171	57.0
Number of siblings	1-3	87	29
	4-6	130	43.3
	7 and above	83	27.7
Position on siblings	1-5	260	86.7
	6-10	40	13.3
Marital status	Married/Widower/Widow	110	36.7
	Not married	190	63.3

between 4 and 6 (43.3%), followed by between 1 and 3 (29.0%), 7 and above (27.7%) respectively. While for a position of siblings, the highest position is the position between 1 and 5 (86.7%) and the lowest position is between 6 and 10 (13.3%) respectively. The majority of the convicts are unmarried (63.3%) while married and widower or widow status is (36.7%) respectively.

Table 2 shows the composition of convicts' education background at one of the correctional institution. Based on Table 2, it is found that the majority of convicts' education are SPM/SPMV/MCE (40.7%) followed by PMR/SRP/ICE (24.7%) and primary school (16.3%) respectively. For STPM and Diploma level were 7.0 percent and 6.7 percent respectively. Only 2.7 percent of the respondents did not attended school, followed by bachelor degree (1.3%) and master degree (0.7%) respectively.

**Table 2**  
**Education background of convicts**

<i>Category Education</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent (%)</i>
Primary School	49	16.3
PMR/SRP/ICE	74	24.7
SPM/SPVM/MCE	122	40.7
STPM	21	7.0
Diploma in	20	6.7
Master	2	0.7
A First Degree	4	1.3
Do not go to school	8	2.7

### **The Level of Entrepreneurial Intention among Convicts**

Interpretation of the mean score as in Table 3 is used to determine the level of entrepreneurial intention among convicts. The level of entrepreneurial intention mean score is divided into four levels, low, medium low, medium high and high.

**Table 3**  
**Mean Score of Interpretation of Entrepreneurial Intention**

<i>Mean Score</i>	<i>Entrepreneurial Intention</i>
1.00 – 2.00	Low (L)
2.01 – 3.00	Medium Low (ML)
3.01 – 4.00	Medium High (MH)
4.01 – 5.00	High (H)

*Source:* Norasmah Osman 2006

To assess the level of entrepreneurial intention in this study, 10 items were applied. Table 4 shows detail analysis on the level of entrepreneurial intention among conviction prisoners in one of the correctional institutions. It also shows the overall mean score of entrepreneurial intention among prisoners conviction is 4.12 with a standard deviation of 0.561 (n = 300). This means that the interpretation of the level of

entrepreneurial intention among conviction prisoners at the chosen correctional institution for this study was high. From the 10 items that are measured in the entrepreneurial intention constructs, items numbers 6 shows the highest mean score, i.e., 4.27. This item was “if given the opportunity to choose between working on my own or working with others, I prefer to work on my own”. While the item that has the lowest mean score was item 10 with the score mean 4.01. This item was “I already have plans to start my own business”.

**Table 4**  
**Mean, Mean Ranking, Standard Deviation and Level of Entrepreneurial Intention**

<i>Item</i>	<i>Entrepreneurial Intention</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Mean Ranking</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>	<i>Level</i>
1	I will have my own business one day.	4.10	5	0.886	H
2	I always strive to find a way to start my own business.	4.09	8	0.837	H
3	I am very interested in starting a business.	4.17	2	0.829	H
4	I feel the opportunity to start my own business is very spacious.	4.03	9	0.837	H
5	I will find a way to work with a small business firm if I am given the opportunity.	4.10	6	0.754	H
6	If given the opportunity to choose between working on my own or working with others, I prefer to work on my own.	4.27	1	0.775	H
7	I always dream of starting my own business.	4.16	3	0.795	H
8	I will endeavor to learn business knowledge so that I didn't miss it in the business.	4.15	4	0.800	H
9	To achieve the ambition of a successful business person, I will endeavor to participate in business workshops.	4.09	7	0.889	H
10	I already have plans to start my own business.	4.01	10	0.941	H
<b>Overall Entrepreneurial Intention</b>		<b>4.12</b>		<b>0.561</b>	H

## CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Generally, the entrepreneurial intention is a motivational factor for individuals to start their own venture. This study found that the levels of entrepreneurial intention among convicts in one of the correctional institution in Malaysia were of high level (4.12). This showed that a convict has the potential to be shaped into entrepreneur. The study was quite different from the study conducted by Siti Nur A'ishah (2014) toward 160 orang asli Kampung Legong Lunuk where their entrepreneurial intention were at medium level, but the study also concluded that the respondent still have a potential to be shaped into entrepreneur. Similarly, the study conducted by Natifah (2006) among the accounting students of Penang matriculation College found that the level of entrepreneurial intention were at medium high.

In conclusion, convicts has a high level of entrepreneurial intention, which means that they have a high potential to be shaped to become entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurial skills training obtained by a convict while in prison can create entrepreneurial characteristics among convicts such as being creative and innovative, able to identify entrepreneurial opportunities, and willingness to take risks. In addition, by exposing convicts in entrepreneurial skills training programs has helped to increase the interest and motivation among convicts toward entrepreneurship.

In terms of practical implications, this study provides an understanding of entrepreneurial intention among convicts. Organization bodies related to the prisoners, especially correctional institution should provide appropriate entrepreneurial skills training and entrepreneurial motivation to further enhance entrepreneurial intention among convicts. Since the level of entrepreneurial intention was high among convicts, the implications of the study also showed that convicts that undergoing entrepreneurial skills training have the potential to be shaped up into becoming entrepreneurs. Therefore, a comprehensive entrepreneurial skills training program, entrepreneurship education and support program should be planned and implemented for convicts to assist and prepare them for their new future business venture. This can give way to convicts as their willingness to make entrepreneurship as a career option after they get out of jail later.

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