

# The Influence of Attitudes, Creativity, and Environment on Entrepreneurial Career Selection Behavior among Community College Students

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To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARPED/v14-i3/25592> DOI:10.6007/IJARPED/v14-i3/25592

*Published Online:* 30 July 2025

## Abstract

Entrepreneurship is a key element for the nation and one of the initiatives to address unemployment while fostering competitiveness in the global economic market. The integration of expertise and skills with entrepreneurial opportunities helps graduates in career selection. This study first aims to identify the levels of entrepreneurial attitudes, creativity and environment, and entrepreneurial career selection behavior. Second to identify the differences in entrepreneurial career selection behavior between different genders, and lastly the influence of attitude, creativity, and environment on career selection behavior among community college students. This study also adopts a quantitative approach using a survey method through questionnaires. A total of 218 final-semester community college students who have taken the entrepreneurship module were involved. Data analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27 to obtain descriptive and inferential analysis. The research findings show that attitudes, creativity, environment, and entrepreneurial career selection behavior among students are at a moderately high level. In addition, the findings also indicate that female students dominate entrepreneurial career selection behavior based on mean scores. Overall, the influence of attitudes, creativity, environment, and behavior on entrepreneurial career selection among community college students is at a moderately high level. Therefore, the implications of this research hoped that this study can be used to design entrepreneurial programs and activities to cultivate entrepreneurial attitudes and environments while enhancing creativity and entrepreneurial career selection behavior. This research supports the Theory of Entrepreneurial Cognitive Development (2000) and the Critical Thinking Model (1998), where all factors are interrelated and are used to predict and explain the entrepreneurial behavior that students will engage in when they complete their studies and choose entrepreneurial careers. Quality teaching and the cultivation of entrepreneurship in community colleges should be implemented more systematically and continuously to instill an entrepreneurial spirit, thereby changing students' mindsets and perceptions in choosing a career in entrepreneurship.

**Keywords:** Entrepreneurial Attitude, Entrepreneurial Creativity, Entrepreneurial Environment, Entrepreneurial Career Selection, Community College Students

## Introduction

Countries such as the United States, China, and the United Kingdom have demonstrated that a strong entrepreneurial ecosystem can significantly boost a nation's economy. For instance, Silicon Valley in the United States has produced giant technology companies such as Apple, Google, and Meta, which now dominate the global digital economy. In Asia, the success of companies like Alibaba and Tencent from China proves that entrepreneurship is a key driver of a country's economic transformation. Similarly, in European countries, governments provide various entrepreneurial activities and programs to encourage their citizens' interest in entrepreneurship (Pimpa, 2019).

In line with this development, the field of entrepreneurship plays a crucial role as a catalyst for national economic growth. Entrepreneurship is a significant national agenda, where entrepreneurs serve as key drivers through various economic activities. Moreover, entrepreneurship refers to individual activities involving business ventures and careers aimed at increasing income (Lilanka De Silva & Ravindra Koggalage, 2021). The National Entrepreneurship Policy (DKN) 2030 focuses on encouraging the participation of all levels of Malaysian society in entrepreneurship, particularly the younger generation. This initiative aligns with DKN's goal of fostering an entrepreneurial mindset and culture while increasing the number of entrepreneurs in the country. In this context, the transformation of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) serves as a key platform to produce graduates who are not only skilled and professional but also possess an entrepreneurial spirit. Strengthening this field is essential to ensure that graduates are globally competitive and capable of contributing to the nation's economic development. However, several challenges need to be addressed. Research on entrepreneurship education within the TVET sector remains limited, as highlighted by Galvão et al. (2018) and Alias and Ismail (2021). Additionally, a review of the literature indicates that the learning outcomes of entrepreneurship education—encompassing entrepreneurial thinking, skills, and attitudes—have yet to achieve consistency in research findings (Armanurah, 2014; Solesvik, Westhead & Matlay, 2014; Karlsson, 2013).

The government has taken initiatives to enhance and expand entrepreneurship education towards a more dynamic approach capable of attracting student interest. To strengthen the entrepreneurial culture among students and graduates of higher education institutions, the Ministry of Higher Education has taken proactive steps by launching the Higher Education Institution Entrepreneurship Action Plan (PTKIPT) 2021-2025. This initiative aligns with the aspirations of the National Transformation 2050 (TN50) and the Higher Education Entrepreneur Action Plan 2016-2020, which prioritize two core areas: education and entrepreneurship, to position Malaysia as a leading nation in economic, social, and innovation aspects. However, current statistics highlight several challenges that need to be addressed. According to the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) 2018/2019 report, the entrepreneurial intention rate among Malaysians is only 18.3 percent, significantly lower than neighboring countries such as Indonesia (28.1 percent), Thailand (37.4 percent), and Colombia, which recorded the highest rate at 52.5 percent. This situation is concerning, as a lack of student interest in entrepreneurial careers could hinder government efforts to elevate the field (Meyer & Jongh, 2018). More worryingly, data from the Graduate Tracer Study Report by the Ministry of Higher Education (2022) indicate a sharp decline in the involvement of higher education graduates in entrepreneurship. The percentage of graduates entering this

field has steadily decreased from 15.2 percent in 2020 to 9.7 percent in 2021, and further down to 8.2 percent in 2022.

This phenomenon indirectly affects the percentage of certificate-level graduates choosing entrepreneurship as a career. Reports show that the majority of graduates prefer working under an employer, with most (71.7 percent) opting for the private sector. Therefore, this study aims to assess the influence of entrepreneurial attitude, creativity, and environment in shaping a deeper understanding of entrepreneurial career selection among community college students. The study's objectives are divided into three main aspects: (i) to identify the level of entrepreneurial attitude, creativity, environment, and career selection behavior among community college students, (ii) to determine differences in entrepreneurial career selection behavior based on gender among community college students, and (iii) to determine the influence of attitudes, creativity, environment, and behavior on entrepreneurial career selection among community college students.

## Literature Review

### *Entrepreneurial Cognitive Development Theory*

This research uses the Theory of Entrepreneurial Cognitive Development introduced by Baron in 2000 to see the level of entrepreneurial thinking of students that can influence attitudes, creativity, and environment in the selection of entrepreneurial careers. The Theory of Entrepreneurial Cognitive Development emphasizes the role of cognitive processes in the formation and development of entrepreneurial behavior. This theory emphasizes that individual attitudes play an important role in the formation of entrepreneurial intentions. Cognitive processes occur in which individuals acquire, use and process information (Baron & Markman, 1999; Krueger & Evans, 2004; Neisser, 1967). This assumption shows that entrepreneurial thinking and process information in a different way than non-entrepreneurs and so on. Positive attitudes towards entrepreneurship are closely related to a higher tendency to choose an entrepreneurial career (Entrialgo and Iglesias, 2020). Therefore, this theory is used as a basic theory that has significant applicability to career selection and within the context of this study, predictor factors such as attitudes, creativity, and environment are used to study and predict entrepreneurial behavior among students.

### *Model Critical Thinking Huitt (1998)*

According to the critical thinking model put forward by Huitt (1998), critical thinking allows a person to reevaluate previously accepted beliefs, either to confirm their truth or to build new beliefs. This indirectly influences individuals in planning and taking action, with critical thinking serving as the main guide in shaping their behavior. Richard Huitt (1998) provides an in-depth explanation of the concepts and main components that make up this skill. Huitt emphasizes that critical thinking not only involves fact-checking but also requires active involvement in assessing the beliefs and assumptions underlying the information received. The critical thinking model provides a useful framework for analyzing students' decision-making processes related to their career selection, especially in the field of entrepreneurship. This model emphasizes the importance of not only knowledge and skills but also disposition and ability to evaluate one's own thinking in making this important career decision.

### *Entrepreneurial Attitude*

Attitude is one of the main factors that influence an individual's selection for an entrepreneurial career. This is because the career selection process involves the individual himself, including aspects of their personality and attitude. Entrepreneurial attitudes can be fostered and enhanced through entrepreneurship education while encouraging students to prioritise entrepreneurial careers (Bazkiaei, 2020; Shah et al., 2020; Genshu et al., 2021; Lavelle, 2019). A proactive attitude and self-confidence in risk management are important predictors in the decision to choose an entrepreneurial career. This research emphasizes that a positive attitude not only influences intention but also influences students' actions in realizing their entrepreneurial career (Ramadani et al., 2019). The findings conclude that every entrepreneur needs to have a positive attitude to initiate and maintain their capabilities in the field of entrepreneurship. Therefore, this study aims to examine the role of students' readiness and willingness to seize entrepreneurial opportunities regardless of the resources they have under their control.

### *Entrepreneurial Creativity*

Creativity in entrepreneurship is the ability to see new opportunities, solve problems in innovative ways, and develop unique ideas to create added value for customers or product markets. Challenges, problems and uncertainties in the business world will be faced by a business. In this regard, entrepreneurs need to strive to overcome and face challenges, problems and uncertainties that will occur effectively and efficiently. A person's ability to come up with or gather new ideas is considered a creative ability, regardless of whether the idea is simple or complex (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2012). Creative thinking involves the ability to generate and create something that already exists by adapting or going beyond the possibilities expected in a particular situation or circumstance (Safiek, 2019). Creative thinking is also said to be the ability to generate a variety of ideas, manipulate ideas in different ways and build unconventional relationships in order to discover potential that can serve a specific purpose (Dara et al. 2020). In this regard, entrepreneurs need to try to overcome and face the challenges, problems and uncertainties that will occur more effectively and efficiently. In addition, entrepreneurial competence in solving problems creatively must exist in an entrepreneur.

### *Entrepreneurial Environment*

The entrepreneurial environment refers to all the external factors that influence and shape the landscape for business activities and entrepreneurs. It includes elements such as political, economic, social, technological, legal, and environmental factors. The nature of the entrepreneurial environment is dynamic, which means that it is constantly changing and evolving according to changes in society and the market. Successful entrepreneurs are usually able to adapt quickly to changes in the entrepreneurial environment, take advantage of the opportunities available, and overcome the challenges faced. However, the perception formed among students towards entrepreneurship is often a challenge that influences individual support for the career (Salwani & Mohd Safarin, 2023). Strong family support plays an important role and involves four main aspects: emotional support that includes feelings of empathy and attention, support for appreciation of students' ideas and achievements, instrumental support in the form of a willingness to help students in various situations, as well as informative support that provides information and suggestions for solutions to the challenges faced (Annisa, Tentama & Bashori, 2021). Additionally, the role of the

environment, particularly from higher education institutions, is an important factor in fostering an entrepreneurial culture among students and supporting the formation of future entrepreneurs. The development environment for entrepreneurship education at community colleges such as space and infrastructure, skills training and research and development to some extent facilitates students in developing business ideas. Students can also be trained in entrepreneurial skills such as business management, strategic planning, marketing and social entrepreneurship as well as developing new knowledge, technology and innovation related to business.

### *Entrepreneurial Career Selection Behavior*

The choice of an entrepreneurial career among students is gaining increasing attention in the fields of research, education, and economics. Entrepreneurship is recognized as a key catalyst for economic growth and innovation, with interest in this field growing among the younger generation (Shamsudin et al., 2017). There are several factors that influence a student's choice of entrepreneurial career, including personal factors such as attitude towards risk, creativity, and desire to be independent (Zain et al., 2010). Students' attitudes have proven to be a major factor in influencing their intention to venture into entrepreneurship. A study involving 500 university students in Malaysia found that students who have a proactive and risk-oriented attitude are more likely to choose entrepreneurship as their career (Ahmad et al., 2023). While the creativity factor is often associated with entrepreneurship, and recent studies show a strong relationship between students' level of creativity and their tendency to choose an entrepreneurial career. Ng & Lee (2024) in their study of 400 students in Singapore found that students who demonstrated a high level of creativity in problem-solving and product innovation were more likely to express strong entrepreneurial intentions. In this study, the researcher wants to see the predictive factors of attitude, creativity and environment affecting the choice of entrepreneurial careers of community college students.

## **Methodology**

### *Research Design*

This research employed a survey design to identify the influence of attitude, creativity and entrepreneurial environment on entrepreneurial career selection behavior among community college students by referring to demographic factors such as their gender. Research design is a research method to obtain information from a large number of respondents through a sample from the population (Norhafiza & Noor Rulhanim, 2018).

### *Population and Sample*

The population of this research consists of 450 final semester students of community colleges in the southern zone, covering the states of Malacca, Negeri Sembilan, and Johor. This population was chosen because final year students have taken the entrepreneurship modules offered in each program at the community college. The process of determining the study sample is an important step in the research. Each population needs to have a significant relationship with the selected sample. Since the population size of community college students is small, the researchers decided to take the entire population as a sample, which is a total of 218 students from community colleges in Melaka (106), Negeri Sembilan (44), and Johor (68). The sample for this research was selected using a simple random sampling technique, namely cluster random sampling.

### *Instruments*

This research uses a questionnaire as an instrument to collect data to identify the influence of attitude (Nishanti & Radin Siti Aishah, 2022; Lim Siok Ling, Sheerad & Norasmah, 2022), creativity (Syahrina, Armanurah & Awanis, 2020), and entrepreneurial environment (Nishanti, Radin Siti Aishah & Norasmah, 2022) on entrepreneurial career selection behavior among community college students. This method is considered appropriate, fast, and effective in obtaining information qualitatively and quantitatively (Mohammad Najib, 1999). For content validity, the research instrument was evaluated by two subject matter experts from public higher education institutions which are one from University Technology MARA and the other from Polytechnic Melaka. Both experts reached a consensus in accepting all 25 items, each of which achieved a content validity agreement of 89% or above, as presented in Table 1. Both experts possess relevant academic and professional backgrounds in the field of study. The evaluation was conducted to assess the clarity, relevance, and representativeness of each item in measuring the intended constructs. Furthermore, slight revisions and refinements were incorporated to improve the clarity and comprehensibility of the instrument for respondents. Chi-Square test (Barlett's Test of Sphericity) and Kaise-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) were used in analyzing the validity of this study instrument to determine the significant values of the study variables. The questionnaire consists of two main parts, namely Part A and Part B, which are further divided into Section A to Section D. Part A includes questions related to student demographics with eight questions that provide personal information of the respondents. The items in this section are developed by the researchers themselves and cover questions about gender, age, institution of study, field of study, participation in entrepreneurship courses, involvement in entrepreneurship training and development programs, participation in business activities, as well as plans to start a business. Then, in section B, there are four sections, namely 8 items related to attitudes, 5 items related to creativity, 8 items related to the environment, and 4 items related to entrepreneurial career selection. The data obtained were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 27.

Table 1

#### *Cronbach's Alpha Values*

| Expert Reviewer | Establishment Of Content Validity | Expert Reviews |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------|----------------|
| Expert 1        | 89%                               | Accepted       |
| Expert 2        | 89%                               | Accepted       |

### *Data analysis*

The survey approach through questionnaires was developed by the researchers for the purpose of data collection. The study data was obtained through the adaptation of questionnaires based on previous studies. Each section of the questionnaire was processed and modified according to the requirements of the study, which included expert validity, the Bartlett test, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test (KMO), and the reliability test. A pilot study involving 40 respondents (n=40) was conducted to assess the validity and reliability of the study instrument, where the questionnaire was reviewed by two experts to assess the validity of the face, content, and language. Additionally, the researchers used the Barlett test and the KMO test to assess the validity of the questionnaire, while Cronbach's Alpha was used to analyze reliability.

The Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient test is used to obtain the reliability index of an instrument. This reliability index has a range from zero ( $\alpha=0$ ) to one ( $\alpha=1$ ), where a high alpha value indicates higher reliability. According to Pallant (2000), a reliability coefficient value of 0.60 or more is considered good for an instrument that has ten or more items. If the reliability coefficient is below 0.60, it is considered unsuitable for use in scientific studies (Hair et al., 2010). Based on the findings of the pilot studies shown in Table 2, Cronbach's Alpha as a whole is above 0.60, indicating that the instrument has good reliability.

Table 2

*Cronbach's Alpha Values*

| Variables                   | Number of Items | Cronbach's Alpha Values |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|
| Influence of attitude       | 8               | 0.954                   |
| Career selection behaviors  | 5               | 0.922                   |
| Environmental influences    | 8               | 0.893                   |
| The influence of creativity | 4               | 0.789                   |

The validity used in this study was intended to ensure that the questions in the questionnaire were relevant to the objectives of the proposed study and based on a review of the literature. Some of the validity processes of this study instrument include the validity of face, content, and language. The Chi-Square test (Barlett's Test of Sphericity) was used to analyse the validity of the study instruments to determine the significance between the study variables. The p-value needs to show significant results to ensure that there is a relationship between the variables (Hair et al., 2010). In this study, the p-value was obtained at the level of  $p < 0.01$  which is 0.001, which proves that there is a relationship between the variable and the item is sufficient for factor analysis. In addition, the Kaise-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value is also used in the validity test of the study instrument. The KMO value of each variable needs to be greater than 0.50 for it to be suitable for further analysis. Table 3 details the KMO test and the Bartlett test values.

Table 3

*KMO Test and Bartlett Test Values*

| Variables                   | KMO Exam | Ujian Barlett |
|-----------------------------|----------|---------------|
| Influence of attitude       | 0.880    | 0.001         |
| Career selection behaviors  | 0.786    | 0.001         |
| Environmental influences    | 0.739    | 0.001         |
| The influence of creativity | 0.723    | 0.001         |

\*Significant at level 0.05

Descriptive statistics were used to describe the mean findings, standard deviations, frequencies, and percentage values to explain the demographics of the respondents as well as behavioral influences in the selection of entrepreneurial careers. Furthermore, inference statistics were used to test the study questions regarding the difference in the level of entrepreneurial career selection of students based on gender through the analysis of the

unleaning t-test. In section B, respondents gave feedback on each question using a five-point Likert scale, which is from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). To answer the question of the study, the mean score is interpreted according to Table 4. The findings on the influence of creativity, environment, and entrepreneurial attitudes in providing a clearer picture and understanding of entrepreneurial career selection behavior among community college students will be discussed in the next section.

Table 4

*Interpretation of Mean Score*

| Mean Score  | Interpretation of the Mean Score |
|-------------|----------------------------------|
| 1.00 - 2.00 | Very Low                         |
| 2.01 - 3.00 | Low                              |
| 3.01 - 4.00 | Moderately High                  |
| 4.01 - 5.00 | High                             |

Source: Chew & Zul Hazmi (2018)

**Study Findings***Profile Response*

Table 5 shows the findings for the demographics of the respondents as below. The study data were presented in the form of frequency and percentage.

Table 5

*Gender Profile of Respondents*

|           | Category                         | Frequencies<br>(N) | Per cent<br>(%) |
|-----------|----------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| Jantina   | Male                             | 68                 | 31.2            |
|           | Female                           | 150                | 68.8            |
| Bangsa    | Melayu                           | 184                | 84.4            |
|           | India                            | 17                 | 7.8             |
|           | China                            | 9                  | 4.1             |
|           | Others                           | 8                  | 3.7             |
| Age       | 18 to 20 years old               | 209                | 95.9            |
|           | 21 to 23 years old               | 7                  | 3.2             |
|           | 24 to 26 years old               | 2                  | .9              |
| Institusi | Bandar Penawar Community College | 17                 | 7.8             |
|           | Bukit Beruang Community College  | 24                 | 11.0            |
|           | Jasin Community College          | 13                 | 6.0             |
|           | Jelevu Community College         | 18                 | 8.3             |
|           | Jempol Community College         | 22                 | 10.1            |
|           | Ledang Community College         | 11                 | 5.0             |
|           | Masjid Tanah Community College   | 21                 | 9.6             |
|           | Pasir Gudang Community College   | 10                 | 4.6             |
|           | Rembau Community College         | 8                  | 3.7             |
|           | Segamat Community College        | 12                 | 5.5             |
|           | Selandar Community College       | 44                 | 20.2            |
|           | Tampin Community College         | 4                  | 1.8             |
|           | Tangga Batu Community College    | 14                 | 6.4             |

|                                                 |             |     |      |
|-------------------------------------------------|-------------|-----|------|
| Course Attendance                               | Already     | 152 | 69.7 |
|                                                 | No          | 66  | 30.3 |
| Training and Development Involvement            | Already     | 147 | 67.4 |
|                                                 | No          | 71  | 32.6 |
| Involvement of Respondents' Business Activities | 1 time      | 63  | 28.9 |
|                                                 | 2 - 3 times | 95  | 43.6 |
|                                                 | > 4 times   | 45  | 20.7 |
|                                                 | Never       | 15  | 6.9  |
| Intention to Do Business                        | Already     | 147 | 67.4 |
|                                                 | No          | 71  | 32.6 |

A total of 218 respondents participated in the study, with the majority of respondents being women, which was 68.8% (150 people), compared to only 31.2% (68 people) of men. The respondents were of various races, with 84.4% (184 people) being Malays, followed by Indians at 7.8% (17 people), Chinese at 4.1% (9 people), and 3.7% (8 people) at other races. In terms of age, the majority of respondents were in the range of 18 to 20 years, which was 95.9% (209 people), while 3.2% (7 people) were in the range of 21 to 23 years, and 0.9% (2 people) were aged 24 years and above. Table 5 shows that responses were received from respondents representing 13 institutions. Selandar Community College recorded the highest number of respondents, at 20.2% (44 people), followed by Bukit Beruang Community College with 11.0% (24 people). Meanwhile, Jempol Community College and Masjid Tanah represented 10.1 percent and 9.6 percent, representing 22 people and 21 respondents, respectively. The lowest sample was Tampin Community College with 1.8 percent equivalent to 4 people. Meanwhile, the attendance profile of the course showed that a total of 152 respondents, 69.7 per cent, had attended the entrepreneurship course while 66 respondents, 30.3 per cent, had never attended the entrepreneurship course.

The profile of involvement in training and development showed that 147 respondents (67.4 per cent) had been involved in entrepreneurship training and development while 71 respondents (32.6 per cent) had never been involved in entrepreneurship training and development. The business activity involvement profile of the respondents in this study showed that 43.6% (95 people) of the respondents had been involved in entrepreneurship training and development 2-3 times. Meanwhile, 28.9% (63 people) of the respondents were involved once, and 20.7% (45 people) had participated in entrepreneurship training and development more than 4 times. A total of 6.9% (15 people) of the respondents had never been involved in any entrepreneurial training and development. As for the profile of intention to run a business after graduation, 67.4% (147 people) of respondents expressed their intention to venture into business, while 32.6% (71 people) of respondents did not intend to engage in business after graduation.

*Level of attitude, creativity, entrepreneurial environment and entrepreneurial career selection behavior*

Table 6 presents the results of the study related the level of four main constructs: attitudes, creativity, entrepreneurial environment, and entrepreneurial career selection behaviors. For each construct, this analysis includes the mean score, mean position, standard deviation, and mean score interpretation. The results showed that the entrepreneurial environment was ahead of other constructs by recording the highest mean value of 3.93 (standard deviation = 0.761). This was followed by career selection behavior in second place which recorded a mean value of 3.85 (standard deviation = 0.789). Next, the attitude construct is in third place with a mean value of 3.77 (standard deviation = 0.689), while creativity is in the last position with a mean value of 3.66 (standard deviation = 0.726). Despite the difference in ranking, the interpretation of the mean score shows that all these constructs are at a moderately high level. These findings answer the question of the first study which aims to identify the level of attitude, creativity, entrepreneurial environment, and entrepreneurial career selection behavior among community college students.

Table 6: Mean score, mean position, standard deviation and interpretation of mean score for the construct of attitude, creativity and entrepreneurial environment and entrepreneurial career selection behavior

| Construct                   | Number of Items | Min  | Standard Deviation | Interpretation  |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|------|--------------------|-----------------|
| Attitude                    | 8               | 3.77 | 0.689              | Moderately High |
| Creativity                  | 5               | 3.66 | 0.726              | Moderately High |
| Entrepreneurial Environment | 8               | 3.93 | 0.761              | Moderately High |
| Behavior                    | 4               | 3.85 | 0.789              | Moderately High |

*Differences in entrepreneurial career selection behavior between different genders among community college students*

In this study, a non-leaning t-test was used. The second research question aims to identify differences in entrepreneurial career selection behaviors based on gender. The findings of the study revealed that the t-value for the comparison of entrepreneurial career selection behaviour between male and female students was  $t = -2.085$ , with a significance level of  $p = 0.04$ . Since the p-value is less than 0.05 ( $p < 0.05$ ), this indicates a statistically significant difference in entrepreneurial career selection behaviour between male and female students. The mean score for male students ( $m = 3.69$ ) was less than that of female students ( $m = 3.92$ ), suggesting that female students demonstrated a higher level of entrepreneurial career selection compared to their male counterparts. Overall, gender played a significant role in the entrepreneurial career selection behavior among community college students.

Table 7

*Differences in entrepreneurial career selection behaviour between gender*

|          | Gender | n   | Mean | SD    | T value | Sig. P |
|----------|--------|-----|------|-------|---------|--------|
| Behavior | Male   | 68  | 3.69 | 0.832 | -2.085  | 0.04   |
|          | Female | 150 | 3.92 | 0.760 |         |        |

\*Significant at  $P > 0.05$ 

*Influence of attitude, creativity and entrepreneurial environment on entrepreneurial career selection among community college students*

Based on the analysis conducted, there is significant and acceptable variance involving attitude, creativity and environment in predicting entrepreneurial career selection, which is  $F = 135.14$ ,  $\text{Sig.} = 0.001$ . Table 8 shows the summary of the stated model. Table 9 shows the Multiple Regression Analysis for the variance value on the dependent variable, which is entrepreneurial career selection behavior associated with the predictor variables, namely attitude, creativity and environment, which is 53.8 percent ( $R^2 = 0.538$ ). The results indicate that all predictors jointly explain 53.8 percent of the variance in entrepreneurial career selection. In summary, a 1 percent increase in the independent variables (attitude, creativity, and environment) is associated with a 0.538% increase in the entrepreneurial career selection score.

Table 8

*Analysis of variance for attitude, creativity and environment*

| Model        | Sum of Squares | df  | Mean Square | F      | Sig   | Durbin Watson |
|--------------|----------------|-----|-------------|--------|-------|---------------|
| 1 Regression | 72.650         | 3   | 24.217      | 82.926 | 0.001 | 1.709         |
| Residual     | 62.495         | 214 | 0.292       |        |       |               |
| Total        | 135.145        | 217 |             |        |       |               |

Predictor: Attitude, Creativity and Environment

Dependent variable: Entrepreneurial career selection behavior

Table 9

*Summary of Standard Regression Analysis Model*

| Model | R     | R <sup>2</sup> | R <sup>2</sup> Adjusted | Standard Error |
|-------|-------|----------------|-------------------------|----------------|
| 1     | 0.733 | 0.538          | 0.531                   | 0.540          |

Table 10 shows that attitude variables ( $p = .009$ ), creativity ( $p = .001$ ) and environment ( $p = .001$ ) are predictor variables to entrepreneurial career selection. Therefore, to compare the influence of all these predictors, the  $\beta$  value in the Standard Coefficients is referred to. The analysis results show that environment is a greater influence which is 0.459 which is 45.9 percent compared to attitude which is 0.174 (17.4 percent) and creativity which is 0.209 (20.9 percent). Environmental influences significantly affect entrepreneurial career selection after the influence of other variables in the model is controlled.

Table 10

*Standard regression analysis for attitude, creativity and environment*

| Predictor                   | B     | Standard Error | t     | Sig.  | Beta  | Percentage (%) | Influence |
|-----------------------------|-------|----------------|-------|-------|-------|----------------|-----------|
| Attitude                    | 0.199 | 0.076          | 2.622 | 0.009 | 0.174 | 17.4           |           |
| Creativity                  | 0.227 | 0.069          | 3.263 | 0.001 | 0.209 | 20.9           |           |
| Entrepreneurial Environment | 0.475 | 0.063          | 7.498 | 0.001 | 0.459 | 45.9           |           |
| Constant                    | 0.400 | 0.226          | 1.768 | 0.078 |       |                |           |

Dependent variable: Entrepreneurial career selection behavior

Based on the multiple regression analysis above, it can be concluded that when the environment score increases by one unit, the entrepreneurial career selection score increases by 0.459 units. When the creativity score increases by one unit, the entrepreneurial career selection score increases by 0.209 units. Meanwhile, when the attitude score increases by one unit, the entrepreneurial career selection score increases by 0.174 units. Based on the statistical analysis above, a linear equation can be constructed, namely:

$$\text{Entrepreneurial career selection behavior} = 0.400 + (0.199) X_1 + 0.227 X_2 + 0.475 X_3$$

Where;

|          |   |                                           |
|----------|---|-------------------------------------------|
| Y        | = | Entrepreneurial Career Selection Behavior |
| X1       | = | Attitudinal Factor                        |
| X2       | = | Creativity Factor                         |
| X3       | = | Environmental Factor                      |
| Constant | = | 0.400                                     |

This proves that environment ( $\beta = 0.459$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) is the best significant predictor compared to creativity ( $\beta = 0.209$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and attitude ( $\beta = 0.174$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) with an overall  $R^2 = 0.538$  to entrepreneurial career selection behavior. In conclusion, the findings reveal that each predictor attitude, creativity, and environment have a strong and significant relationship with entrepreneurial career selection among community college students across three Malaysian states: Melaka, Negeri Sembilan, and Johor. As detailed in Table 10, the environmental factor emerged as the most influential, accounting for 45.9% of the variance in students' intention to pursue entrepreneurship as a career path. This highlights the critical role of external conditions such as institutional support, access to resources, and socio-economic context in shaping students' entrepreneurial inclinations. The strength of this contribution underscores the need for targeted interventions and policy enhancements aimed at creating supportive entrepreneurial ecosystems within the community college environment.

## Discussion, Implication and Recommendations

### Discussion

The results of the level of attitude, creativity, entrepreneurial environment and entrepreneurial career selection behavior among community college students were at a moderately high level. These three factors influence the behavior of entrepreneurial career selection by students. The most important influencing factor is the entrepreneurial environment of the students. The influence or involvement of family members, especially parents, in a student's career selection helps students a lot. In addition, the involvement of students in the activities of the institution has also helped students understand the ins and

outs of the business world and help in making business-related decisions. These findings have expanded on a study conducted by the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy Archive (2014); Samihah & Zahari (2021) is a family institution that acts as the main socialization agent that shapes an individual's thinking, culture, and social skills. A study by Samihah et al (2021) showed that parents, siblings, and immediate family members, such as fathers or aunts, have a significant influence on the tendency of students of higher education institutions to choose a career as an entrepreneur. Interestingly, this influence is closely related to the entrepreneurial experience in the family.

The second and third factors that influence the choice of an entrepreneurial career by students are the level of entrepreneurial behavior and attitude. The level of attitude of students who are able to overcome challenges and obstacles in business, as well as perform and control tasks well while running a business, has an impact on their decision to choose an entrepreneurial career. These findings are supported by a study by Lim Siok Ling, Sheerad & Norasmah (2022) and Hassanain (2015), which found that individuals with a high entrepreneurial attitude are more likely to become entrepreneurs after graduation. This attitude encourages them to sacrifice time, take risks, and keep trying without giving up easily in achieving their goals. Additionally, an individual's ability to master three key elements – attitudes, thoughts, and entrepreneurial behaviours; acts as a catalyst that motivates them to engage in the business world, while improving their planning skills (Ishak, Ahmad & Mohd Yusoff, 2017; Capelleras & Contin-Pilart, 2019).

The fourth factor that influences the choice of entrepreneurial career among students is the level of entrepreneurial creativity, which is at a moderately high level. Students who possess the ability to generate ideas, solve problems, and perform tasks uniquely tend to choose entrepreneurship as a career. The results of this study are in line with the views of Syahrina, Armanurah, and Awanis (2020), who found that the level of creativity and innovation is at a moderately high level. In addition, Ravi and Nor Aishah (2016) explained that entrepreneurial thinking, as a cognitive aspect, helps entrepreneurs identify opportunities, generate ideas, and think creatively in developing businesses.

The findings of the study through the analysis of the t-test showed that there were differences in entrepreneurial career selection behavior between male and female students in the southern zone community colleges, covering the states of Malacca, Negeri Sembilan, and Johor. Interestingly, female students showed superiority in aspects of attitude, creativity, and an entrepreneurial environment, as indicated by a moderately high mean value, which also influenced entrepreneurial career selection behavior among southern zone community college students. These findings are supported by Noh, Rahman, and Othman (2024) found that female students in southern Malaysian community colleges exhibited a higher entrepreneurial mindset compared to their male peers, largely due to increased exposure to entrepreneurial role models, institutional support, and tailored educational programs. Similarly, Saoula, Abid, Ahmad, & Shamim (2024) emphasized that institutional support and a conducive entrepreneurial environment are pivotal in enhancing self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intentions, particularly among female students. Ye and Cheok (2023) further elaborated that personality traits, perceived behavioral control, and environmental factors significantly influence female students' entrepreneurial decisions.

**Implication**

The findings of this research are found to support the Cognitive Development Theory of Entrepreneurship (2000) when all factors are related to each other and are used to predict and explain the entrepreneurial behavior that will be carried out by students upon graduation. This study confirms that attitude, creativity and environment are able to predict entrepreneurial career selection behavior. This proves the applicability of the Cognitive Development Theory of Entrepreneurship in measuring career selection. The argument is proven by the results related to the level of attitude, creativity and environment which are moderately high and the highest variance value is the environment that contributes to the choice of entrepreneurial career.

In addition, the use of the Critical Thinking Model by Huitt (1998) in this study focuses on items that are indirectly capable and able to help students choose an entrepreneurial career. For example, if a student is a creative person in solving problems or identifying business ideas, then the student is suitable to get involved in the entrepreneurial arena. In this regard, community colleges need to apply this theory and model to students, by creating an environment that can influence and support students in choosing an entrepreneurial career. Through this study, we will further increase our understanding of behavioral theory in the context of entrepreneurship in Malaysian community colleges.

In addition, this research provides implications for the institution, namely the Department of Polytechnic and Community College Studies (JPPKK), especially Community Colleges, in planning more effective entrepreneurship development programs by emphasizing the formation of positive attitudes, creativity and an environment that supports students' entrepreneurial career selection behavior. This study also helps lecturers understand the importance of integrating creativity elements in teaching entrepreneurship and identify more effective teaching methods for entrepreneurship development and teaching methods that support the formation of a conducive entrepreneurial environment. Indirectly, it facilitates the process of assessing and monitoring student development in the field of entrepreneurship and can foster entrepreneurial career selection behavior. The next implication of the study is for students, namely increasing awareness of the importance of developing entrepreneurial attitudes and creativity and helping students better understand the role of the environment in the development of entrepreneurial careers.

**Recommendations**

This research is a small contribution aimed at broadening the understanding in the field of entrepreneurship, by providing an explanation of the factors that influence students' interest in choosing an entrepreneurial career, especially among community college students. The proposed study focuses on the perspectives of individuals, especially community college students, as well as stakeholders in entrepreneurial development in Malaysia, such as the Department of Polytechnic and Community College Education, the Ministry of Higher Education, the government, as well as non-governmental organizations. The study only involved community college students in the southern zone. Therefore, the researchers suggest that a similar study be conducted on community college students across the zone, including Sabah and Sarawak, to produce a broader and more accurate generalization of the findings. In addition, other researchers are also encouraged to extend the study on the

influence of behaviour on entrepreneurial career selection to other public and private institutions of higher learning.

This paper uses a quantitative approach with a survey method. The same study can be carried out but using a different approach i.e. qualitative method or mixed method. The qualitative approach provides an opportunity for researchers to come face-to-face with the respondents and the research questions can be refined in more depth. This study only tests the level of attitude, creativity, environment and behaviour of entrepreneurial career selection and the difference in career selection behaviour in terms of demographic factors namely gender among community college students. Other researchers can study in terms of relationships from each of the selected variable factors. Therefore, it can be seen that variable factors affect the career selection behavior of each student. In addition, it is also proposed that the study will evaluate other variables that have not been tested in this study and identify those other variables that have an impact on students' entrepreneurial career selection behavior. Therefore, it is appropriate that further studies from different perspectives should be carried out.

### **Conclusion**

Overall, the research provides findings that are relevant to the current situation in Malaysia, where students show a positive response to entrepreneurial behaviour. The younger generation is increasingly aware that entrepreneurship is able to form individuals who dare to face challenges, are creative, innovative, good at identifying opportunities, far-sighted, assertive, determined, and always striving. This research aims to examine the level of attitude, creativity, and entrepreneurial environment in influencing entrepreneurial career selection behavior among community college students in the southern zone. The findings of the study show that the level of attitude, creativity, and entrepreneurial environment is at a moderately high level, where the environment and attitude are at the top in influencing career selection compared to creativity. The support of family and immediate individuals plays a crucial role in helping students make more confident decisions about choosing an entrepreneurial career. It is hoped that this support can help form students' positive attitude towards entrepreneurship. A person's attitude can change when influenced by experience and learning, not just based on ancestry or nature. Therefore, although attitude change takes time and effort, it is still achievable.

In addition, this research found that there were differences in entrepreneurial career selection behavior between male and female students. The results of the research show that female students are more likely to choose an entrepreneurial career due to the influence of attitudes, creativity, and the entrepreneurial environment that exists in their educational institutions. Therefore, educational institutions need to play a role by providing various infrastructure and facilities to support students who are interested in venturing into entrepreneurship. Institutions also need to provide wider exposure and support entrepreneurial activities among students. This step can help ensure that students' interest and attitude towards entrepreneurship remains high throughout their studies. As a next step, the application of attitudes, creativity, and an entrepreneurial environment needs to be expanded so that students see entrepreneurship as a top choice in their careers. Further studies can be conducted in the future with a qualitative approach, which takes into account other factors such as educational background, duration of involvement in entrepreneurship, etc.

This paper makes two contributions. Firstly, contributes to the advancement of entrepreneurship theory by confirming the relevance of the Cognitive Developmental Theory of Entrepreneurship and Huitt's Critical Thinking Model in explaining students' entrepreneurial career selection behaviour. It highlights the significant role of attitude, creativity, and environment in shaping entrepreneurial intentions. Secondly, the paper offer practical contribution by findings assist higher education institutions in enhancing entrepreneurship programs, designing more effective teaching strategies, and identifying students with entrepreneurial potential. Additionally, the study provides valuable input for policymakers to improve national entrepreneurship education policies and create a more supportive entrepreneurial ecosystem in Malaysia.

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