

## TRAIT EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURIAL INTENTIONS: MULTI MEDIATORS ANALYSIS

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**Abstract:** Social entrepreneurship (SE) is a recent phenomenon spreading around the world. It has become one of the finest solutions for addressing various socio-economic issues. Unfortunately, the involvement of Malaysian in SE activity is currently 2 % which is far behind of comparable emerging economic. Therefore, it is timely to investigate the factors influencing a student's social entrepreneurship intentions (social entrepreneurship intentions) as recommended by previous scholars to enhance the SE level in Malaysia. Drawing on the theory of planned behaviour (TPB) as the theoretical background; this study treats trait emotional intelligence (TEI) as the exogenous variable, while attitudinal constructs of TPB as the mediators to explain the propensity of social entrepreneurship intentions. 419 Enactus students from public and private universities were selected by using stratified sampling technique. The data was then analyzed using IBM Analysis of Moments Structures (AMOS) software version 26.0. The findings exhibit that three factors directly and positively affect the intention to become social entrepreneurs. Surprisingly, trait emotional intelligence has no direct relationship with social entrepreneurship intentions, rather indirectly via the mediator constructs. This study hopes to shed light on the literature by formulating a comprehensive model of social entrepreneurship intentions. Limitations and future directions are also discussed in the study.

Keywords: Social entrepreneurship intention, theory of planned behaviour, trait emotional intelligence, Enactus Malaysia Foundation, community.

### Introduction

As Malaysia moves towards the position of a high-income country, an inclusivity agenda has been the central tenet of Malaysia's government and it has made it a top priority to address the needs of its marginalized groups. Even though Malaysia's different ethnic groups peacefully coexist, the government needs to address its socio-economic challenges in order to become an advanced economy (Khazanah Research Institute, 2018; Noorseha, Yap, Dewi Amat & Md Zabid, 2013). Numerous economic indicators have been identified, including poverty and unemployment (Khazanah Research Institute, 2016).

Social entrepreneurs can demonstrate helpful in alleviating these issues by placing those less fortunate towards a better life (Suhaimi, Yusof

& Abdullah, 2013; Tran, 2017). However, the prevalence rate of SE activity in Malaysia is less than 2% of the entire population which is far behind comparable developing countries such as Thailand, Indonesia, and Argentina (Radin Siti Aishah, Norasmah, Zaidatul Akmaliah & Hariyaty, 2016). The fact that SE levels are low is a 'problem' for Malaysian society, as the country may be missing out on an innovative way to support its citizens (Noor Rizawati & Mustafa Din, 2017; Wan Mohd Hirwani, Mohd Nizam, Zinatul Ashiqin, & Noor Inayah, 2014).

In ensuring that individuals become social entrepreneurs as well as enhance the national SE level, the antecedents influencing their intent needs to be studied. Past literatures have listed numerous factors that influence intentions, such as in moral judgment, empathy, creativity, and

self-efficacy. Nevertheless, the dominant views tend to ignore the importance of emotional intelligence (EI) which affects an individual's intention (Tiwari, Bhat & Tikotia, 2018; Tiwari, Bhat & Tikotia, 2017a, Tiwari, Bhat & Tikotia, 2017b). In fact, emotional factors are the major cause for business failure (Walsh & Cunningham, 2016; Shepherd, Patzelt & Wolfe, 2011, Shepherd, Wiklund & Haynie, 2009).

Moreover, a comprehensive yet succinct social entrepreneurship intentions (SEI) model should be developed. Investigations of the process underlying the relationship between trait emotional intelligence and social entrepreneurship intentions are still limited. Offering a comprehensive framework of social entrepreneurship intentions would benefit many parties especially in designing and developing the policy of SE education. Although past scholars addressed those direct relationships, the findings were inconclusive (Aure, 2018; Tiwari *et al.*, 2018; Yu & Wang, 2019). According to Creswell (2014) and Dissayanake (2013), if research findings are inconclusive, inconsistent or contradict the literature, it automatically warrants further studies.

Therefore, Baron & Kenny (1986) and Hayes (2018) suggested the presence of a mediator as the best way to explain why and how the direction of the relationship occurs. A mediator will transmit the effect of an antecedent to an outcome and explains why an antecedent can influence an outcome.

This current study introduces aims to advance three studies done by Tiwari *et al.* (2018, 2017a, 2017b) from both the theoretical and methodological aspects. Firstly, this study examined the role of trait emotional intelligence (TEI) on social entrepreneurship intentions context, whilst this research embedded it into the theory of planned behaviour's model.

Hence, the model was modified following specifically the context of SE as opposed to the conventional entrepreneurship. Secondly, the introduction of multi mediators in forming the SEI Model. Finally, a survey of those studies was

distributed only to students taking engineering as their major, and in premier private universities. To advance, our research data was collected from students of various majors in both public and private universities.

## Literature Review

### *Current State of Social Entrepreneurship in Malaysia*

Social entrepreneurial conduct in Malaysia has been noticeable from the establishment of the Cooperation and Ikhtiar Project in 1986. One of the leading examples applying the concept of SE in Malaysia is Amanah Ikhtiar Malaysia (AIM), the national's first community development that offers micro-credit facilities. AIM offers microcredit financing schemes for the poor to allow them to participate in any economic activities based on the skills acquired in an effort to increase their family income. Recently, the concept of SE has been expanded by "free-fee-for-service" to private Islamic schools which combined with the concept of entrepreneurship as well as social development in Malaysia (Mohd Ali Bahari & Suhaimi 2016).

Furthermore, there is a growing number of supporting intermediaries (i.e., myharapan, iM4u) and local universities where they are actively involved in creating awareness about social enterprise and helping the community with various SE activities. Although social entrepreneurs have contributed so much to SE activities, few people know about them—who are they? What are they doing? What motivates them to help others? (Hariyaty, 2014; Radin Siti Aishah *et al.* 2016).

On the other hand, among academics especially in Malaysia, empirical research on SE is still limited. However, many conceptual papers have been published. This scenario leads to there being even less empirical evidence that can give insight or point to the direction of SE initiatives in Malaysia. However, most of the scholars have come to the consensus, that the level of SE in Malaysia needs to be uplifted in order to help society (Punadi & Adriana, 2017;

Hariyaty, Suraini, Norsamsinar, Rafiduraida, Wan Salmuni & Ahmad Zainal Abidin, 2017).

They argue that the socio-economic problems cannot depend solely on government funding. Malaysia needs to “create and develop” the SE spirit in order to uplift all of mankind. Therefore, embedding SE concepts in education especially at schools will shed the light on, reduce, or even resolve several societal issues.

Kirby & Ibrahim (2011) carried out a research study at Egyptian universities, which revealed that although governments provide a lot of initiatives to promote SE, changes had to be made to the education system to encourage students to think and behave more entrepreneurially, while at the same time equipping them with the skills to start their own ventures after graduation. Likewise, a study by Hockerts’ (2017) study found, students intentionally create ventures if they opt for courses related to SE.

## Theoretical and Hypothesis Development

### *The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)*

The theory of planned behaviour (TPB) is established by Ajzen in year 1991. TPB is based on the idea that is shaped by an individual’s desire to act and ability to perform it. As suggested by Ajzen (2005), three variables have influenced the TPB-attitude toward behaviour (ATB), subjective norm (subjective norms) and perceived behavioural control (PBC). TPB is an advanced and adapted version of theory of reasoned action (TRA). Due to lack of one’s control factor on behaviour, an additional perceived behavioural control construct is introduced in the TPB (Ajzen, 2005; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Ajzen (1991) showed that if an individual acts rationally and is in control of their actions, they able to forecast own actions based on their intentions. TRA only explains behaviour rather than merely predicting it.

ATB is a behavioural belief which represents the perceived outcome of the behaviour (Conner & Armitage, 1998). Subjective norms are a normative belief which represents the perceived

social pressure to perform, or not perform, the behaviour (Ajzen, 1991; Kautonen, Gelderen & Fink, 2015; Kautonen, Gelderen & Tornikoski, 2013). Perceived behavioural control is defined as an individual’s perception of the ease or difficulty of performing the behaviour and interest (Ajzen, 1991; Kautonen *et al.*, 2015, 2013). The primary purpose of TPB is to counter the TRA’s weaknesses whereby, TRA is meant to explain the behaviour, whereas TPB is predicting it (Ajzen, 1991). Theoretically, TPB is relevant to the grand theory to support the study as it is to predict influencing factors to SE intention. Therefore, TPB is the most suitable theory to be used to explain the relationship among the studied variables.

### *Social Entrepreneurship Intentions (SEI)*

During the early years of research on TPB, there was no consensus among scholars on measuring it for intention construct (Kolvereid, 1996; Chen, Greene & Crick, 1998). The idea of venture creation is relying on what a person’s intentions are (Wang, Chang, Yao & Liang, 2016).

According to Bird (1988), entrepreneurial intention is a “mental orientation that leads a person in the direction of theory and implementation of specific business concepts”. In other words, this venture creation is a planned behaviour. None of the enterprise owner start-up venture without proper planning and strategies (Krueger, Reilly & Carsrud, 2000). Understanding the entrepreneurship intention in the context of social entrepreneurship is another part to what extend a student is belief to set up social enterprise when they graduated.

### *Conceptualised Direct Effects*

1. The relationship between Attitudes Toward Social Entrepreneurship (ATSE) and social entrepreneurship intentions.

Attitude is “the degree to which a person has a favorable or unfavorable evaluation of the behaviour” (Ajzen, 1991). Conner & Armitage (1998) stated attitude is a “behaviour or belief which represents the perceived outcome or

attributes of the behaviour.” It relates to feelings which range from undesirable to desirable, good to bad, harmful to beneficial, unpleasant to pleasant.

In this paper, ATB is conceptualised as attitude toward social entrepreneurship (ATSE) which refers to the belief that a person (i.e., student) has a favorable assessment of becoming a social entrepreneur or starting a social enterprise. In other words, with an encouraging attitude toward becoming a social entrepreneur, the intention will be stronger.

Empirical evidence confirms that attitudes towards social entrepreneurship has a positive effect on SE intention. A study by Zainalabidin, Golnaz, Mad Nasir & Muhammad Mu’az (2012) looked at 410 students and confirmed a significant association between attitude and intention to become agri-entrepreneurs. In another comparative study by Yang, Meyskens, Zheng & Hu (2015) the effect of attitude on SE intention is significantly stronger for individuals who stay in the USA than for those in China. This signifies that attitude is less significant in China than in the USA in determining a person’s SE intentions.

In line with the empirical evidence, this paper understands attitudes towards social entrepreneurship as the degree to which the individual holds a positive or negative personal evaluation of becoming a social entrepreneur.

Despite a favourable attitude among students who intend to be social entrepreneurs, some studies show that attributing attitudes to intentions can produce varied results both positive or negative in nature and can sometimes be insignificant with reference to specific behaviour. For example, Feakes *et al.* (2019) found attitude has low contribution to intention in the specific phenomenon suggesting that concerning the type of career and types of industry.

In the study, Feakes *et al.* (2019) claimed that attitude has negatively predicted 844 Australian veterinary officers’ intentions with regard to healthcare entrepreneur initiatives.

This makes sense; when becoming a veterinary doctor or joining veterinary services, attitude alone is insufficient. The crucial factor is knowledge and understanding of the overall healthcare ecosystem.

In a separate study, Ajzen (2005) found that some background factors such as age, gender, ethnicity, education and exposure to information may directly impact a person’s intentions. Therefore, relying on the preceding debate, the following hypothesis was developed:

***H1: There is a positive relationship between attitudes towards social entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship intentions***

## 2. The relationship between subjective norms (SN) and Social Entrepreneurship intentions

Subjective norms (subjective norms) are described as “perceiving social pressure whether to perform or not to perform the behaviour ” (Ajzen, 1991). In this paper, subjective norms refer to perceived acceptance or rejection of an idea by influential people or surroundings (i.e., reference groups, parents, teachers and friends) to become social entrepreneurs or to start a social enterprise. Subjective norms are the most controversial construct of TPB.

Some empirical analysis show that subjective norms are a significant predictor of intention and behaviour. Other studies have shown the opposite. For example, some studies revealed that subjective norms have a positive effect on the choice of mode of travel (Bamberg, Ajzen & Schmidt, 2003), the decision to complete high school (Davis, Ajzen, Saunders & Williams, 2002) and on the effects on new technology implementation (Baker, Al-Gahtani & Hubona, 2007).

It is also verified that the subjective norms influence SE intention among university students (Politis, Ketikidis, Diamantidis & Lazuras, 2016). Students have always been influenced by those close to them; therefore, choosing the right surroundings (i.e., reference group) will help them to improve subjective norms. These reference groups could be lecturers, parents,

friends, classmates or other relatives (Davis *et al.*, 2002; Manning, 2009). This paper measures how far these reference group can encourage student's opinion, idea and desire on to participate or not participate in SE activities.

On the other hand, Budiman & Wijaya (2014) revealed a negative correlation between subjective norms and intention. This means that an individual with high subjective norms has low intention to purchase a product, whereas low subjective norms leads to a high intention to purchase a product. Another study by Luc (2018) found that the subjective norms path fails to reach statistical significance and has less field-specific predictors of entrepreneurial intention. He claimed that unlike normal forms of business, social enterprises are those enterprises that operate not for profit and social entrepreneurs need special characteristics. These characteristics are completely different from commercial entrepreneurs, so the impact from family, friends and colleagues does not seem to affect student's SE intentions. Therefore, relying on the preceding debate, the following hypothesis was developed:

***H2: There is a positive relationship between subjective norms and social entrepreneurship intentions***

3. The relationship between Perceived behavioural control (PBC) and social entrepreneurship intentions

Perceived behavioural control (PBC) is defined as "people's perception of the ease or difficulty of performing the behaviour and interest" (Ajzen, 1991). According to Davis *et al.* (2002), perceived behavioural control makes a substantial contribution to predicting individual's intention. In this paper, perceived behavioural control can be measured by asking about the capability of a student to perform SE activity or the ability to deal with specific inhibiting or facilitating factors. Perceived behavioural control reflects the "do-ability" of the target behaviour. Perceived behavioural control makes a substantial contribution in

predicting intention (Altawallbeh, Soon, Thiam & Alshourah, 2015; Davis *et al.*, 2002). It can be measured by questioning ones ability to perform a behaviour or the ability to deal with specific inhibiting or facilitating factors. The more an individual believes in their own ability to start and operate a social enterprise, the stronger their intention to become a social entrepreneur (Chipeta, 2015; Kibler, 2013). Empirical research by Chipeta (2015) evaluated 350 students and found a positive relationship between perceived behavioural control and social entrepreneurship intentions. Paço, Ferreira, Raposo, Rodrigues & Dinis (2015) also revealed that perceived behavioural control positively function as a factor in influencing entrepreneurship intention. This study found that if the perceived behavioural control is low, the entrepreneurial intention is significantly low too.

In certain circumstances, the role of perceived behavioural control can be negative or insignificant in nature (Ajzen, 1991). For example, Noorkartina, Lim, Norhafezah, Mustafa & Hussin (2015) state that graduates in Malaysia have many opportunities to opt entrepreneurship as their career choices. However, not many graduates are seizing the opportunity to become one. At this point, the decision to start a business (entrepreneurial intention) was influenced by both the student's personal circumstance and their contextual circumstances (i.e., entrepreneurial training, funds, time, business coaching) (Usman & Yennita, 2019). In a separate study, Ming, Wai & Amir (2009) claimed that entrepreneurship education is insufficient for increasing the number of entrepreneurs among graduates. From the argument, it is surmised that the perceived behavioural control fails to influence entrepreneurial intention (Usman & Yennita, 2019). Therefore, relying on the preceding debate, the following hypothesis was developed:

***H3: There is a positive relationship between PBC and SEI***

#### 4. The relationship between trait emotional intelligence (TEI) and social entrepreneurship intentions (SEI)

Emotional intelligence (EI) is a set of capabilities or perceptions about the way individuals think, recognize, utilize, cope with, and process emotions (Andrei, Siegling, Aloe, Baldaro & Petrides, 2016; Mikolajczak, Luminet, Leroy & Roy, 2007). The prominent scholars in emotional intelligence literature are Salovey & Mayer (1990), Goleman (1995), Bar-On (1997) and Petrides & Furnham (2001). These scholars have introduced numerous salient models in emotional intelligence literature. Salovey & Mayer (1990) called their classical model an ‘ability’ model. They recognized four branches that are related hierarchically: the ability to perceive emotions accurately, the ability to use emotions to facilitate thought, the ability to understand emotions and the ability to manage emotions. Alternative popular model is Goleman’s (1995) ‘competency or ability’ model which encompasses four components: self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, and relationship management. A third model, by Bar-On (1997), is also ‘competency-based’ model and comprises of five dimensions: intrapersonal emotional quotient, interpersonal emotional quotient, stress management, adaptability and general mood. The final salient model in the emotional intelligence literature is Petrides & Furnham’s (2001) ‘trait’ model, which conceptualizes EI as a constellation of emotional perceptions.

EI can be categorised into Ability Emotional Intelligence (AEI) which is widely used by Salovey & Mayer (1990), Goleman (1995) and Bar-On (1997); and trait emotional intelligence, which was first proposed by Petrides & Furnham (2001). Only small differences between the two models which is based on the type of measurement used in the operationalisation process. Tiwari *et al.* (2018; 2017a; 2017b) explained emotional intelligence as an explanatory variable, whereas Siti Daleela, Abu Hanifah & Wan Mohd Hirwani (2018) specifically address trait emotional intelligence

as the critical component to be explored. Trait emotional intelligence emphasizes on self-perceived emotion-related abilities and is measured through self-assessment, whilst AEI emphasizes on actual emotion-related abilities and is measured through maximum-performance tests. Trait emotional intelligence should be examined using personality hierarchies, while AEI should be examined using cognitive hierarchies. It should be noted that TEI and AEI are two different variables conceptually, methodologically and empirically.

Several scholars have tried to define trait emotional intelligence according to their understanding. For example, some scholars claimed trait emotional intelligence is a separate variable as opposed to personality trait; and some said it is a part of personality trait but lies at the lower levels of personality (Pérez-González & Sanchez-Ruiz, 2014; Petrides, Pita & Kokkinaki, 2007). Petrides, Mikolajczak, Mavroveli, Sanchez-Ruiz, Furnham & Pérez-González (2016) clearly proclaimed that understanding trait emotional intelligence within personality component is essential to ensure trait emotional intelligence can be linked to the mainstream personality literature. After reviewing the argument, the author believes that trait emotional intelligence is a part of personality traits regardless of whether or not it falls under the Big Five Model of Personality Traits or the Giant Three Model of Personality Traits. Following the definition by Petrides *et al.* (2016), trait emotional intelligence “is a constellation of emotion-related self-perceptions that located at the lower levels of personality hierarchies.”

Consequently, it is not distinct from personality constructs, but part of them (Zampetakis, Kafetsios, Bouranta, Dewett & Moustakis, 2009). On the conceptualization of emotional intelligence as a personality trait is in line with the nature of individual’s emotional experience (Andrei *et al.*, 2016).

Trait emotional intelligence is measured based on several domains. First, well-being domain is referring to individual perception on

their lives. This domain highlighted that each human-being should always find life enjoyable, have a positive perspective on most things and possess self-good qualities. In separate domains, self-control is referring to the capability of an individual to control their emotion under work-pressure. This domain emphasized that individuals are encouraged to consistently understand one's own and other's emotion in dealing with life's constant pressures. The last domain is sociability, a facet that involves the relationship with others. This domain is about the willingness to fight for their rights and the capability of influencing people in making decisions. These domains are amendable to change (Petrides *et al.*, 2016). In other words, it can be either added or removed if the interrelationship of all domains caused low model fits. This misfit may be due to high secondary loadings or redundant facet content within the same factor (Aluja, Blanch & Petrides, 2010).

Trait emotional intelligence includes dispositional attributes for monitoring one's own and others' feelings, beliefs, and internal states to offer beneficial information to guide one's and others' thinking and actions (Adegboyega, Idowu & Mowaiye-Fagbemi, 2017; Goleman, 1995). Salami (2010) has proven empirically that EI contributes positively to a student's behaviour. In her study, two hundred and forty-two college students in Nigeria confirmed that EI predicted students' behaviour. In a similar vein, trait emotional intelligence is considered to be the dominant and positive predictor influencing SE intention (Ahmetoglu *et al.*, 2011; Tiwari *et al.*, 2018; Torres-Coronas & Vidal-Blasco, 2017; Zampetakis *et al.*, 2009; Zhao, Seibert & Lumpkin, 2010).

Comparably, many past scholars have noted that it is difficult to measure a multidimensional factor like trait emotional intelligence due to high secondary loadings (Aluja *et al.*, 2010; Petrides, Jackson, Furnham & Levine, 2003). In addition, it is challenging to establish significant relationships with trait emotional intelligence due to redundant facet content within the same factor (Ramrainsi & Siti Norashikin, 2016; Torres-Coronas & Vidal-Blasco, 2017). Literature

confirms that personality traits may affect the tendency to become a social entrepreneur (Nga & Shamuganathan, 2010; Stephan & Drencheva, 2017). Unfortunately, Ernst (2011) found that entrepreneurial traits do not show strong signs of influencing intention formation. Justifying the result, Ernst (2011) stated, it could be a SE-specific phenomenon that causes concerns on the type of entrepreneurship. She suggested that there may be nothing to do with traits that affect the actual intention formation process. On a cautious note, it must be added that the trait variable has the lowest reliability values within the quantitative research study (Ernst, 2011). Therefore, relying on the preceding debate, the following hypothesis was developed:

**H4: There is a positive relationship between trait emotional intelligence and social entrepreneurship intentions**

#### *Conceptualization of Indirect Effect*

1. Attitudes Towards Social Entrepreneurship mediate the relationship between trait emotional intelligence and social entrepreneurship intentions

Generally, intentions are presumed to impact behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) and are beneficial in comprehending students' entrepreneurial and career-related behaviour (Krueger *et al.*, 2000). Even though, there is limited examination on the emotions associated with the idea of opening a business, Krueger *et al.* (2000) contend that attitudes towards specific behaviours encompass affective components (i.e., emotions). An individual with high tolerance in trait emotional intelligence will display high tolerance to stress and environmental stressors (Mikolajczak *et al.*, 2009; Tiwari *et al.*, 2018). A meta-analytic review by Zhao *et al.* (2010) found these effects suggest that emotional intelligence in an individual's personality plays a role in the emergence and success of entrepreneurs.

From a theoretical viewpoint, attitudes involve two components: affective and cognitive (Edwards, 1990). The affective component refers to "the feelings or emotions associated with an attitude object, and the cognitive

component concerns beliefs or thoughts associated with an attitude object.” Since attitudes include both cognitive and affective components (Edwards, 1990), this means that the individuals’ emotional preferences will probably enhance the entrepreneurial intention. Subsequently, to increase attitudes towards social entrepreneurship, it is critical to target both the cognitive and affective bases of entrepreneurial attitudes (Zampetakis, Kafetsios & Moustakis, 2017). In separate study, Zampetakis *et al.* (2009) confirmed that attitudes towards social entrepreneurship mediates the relationship between emotional intelligence and entrepreneurship intention. On the other hand, a study on 367 students from Nigeria revealed that that students’ attitudes partially mediated the interplay between salient belief (i.e., SE pedagogical techniques) and student’s social entrepreneurship intentions. Additionally, Altawallbeh *et al.* (2015) studied 245 instructors from six universities and confirmed that attitude mediates the relationship between salient belief (i.e., trait emotional intelligence) and entrepreneurial intention.

## 2. Subjective norms mediate the relationship between trait emotional intelligence and social entrepreneurship intentions

The influence of a role model as subjective norms on entrepreneurial orientation is undeniable (Kirkwood, 2007). It appears that entrepreneurial role models may direct trait emotional intelligence towards proactive behaviour. A study indicates that every entrepreneur has to be more self-confident and stronger in the face of stress and effectively cope with negative emotions (Zhao *et al.*, 2010). In addition, this also applies to those students who live with parents who own a business may use or deal with emotions effectively. For instance, students who live with a family that runs a business, may build up resistance concerning the potential stressors involved. This signifies those students with high trait emotional intelligence would be more actively trying to prevent or minimize potential stressors. On the other hand, a student whose parents do not

own a business will not be able to cope with their emotions when faced with failure. The student needs to be both proactive and creative to find potential stressors and overcome them (Zampetakis *et al.*, 2009). This proposes that opinions and influence of family and friends are of immense importance and suggests that subjective norms have a significant effect on trait emotional intelligence (Yusnidah & Imran, 2017). Clearly, subjective norms contribute to the intermediating effect on the relationship between trait emotional intelligence and social entrepreneurship intentions (Zhao *et al.*, 2010).

## 3. PBC mediates the relationship between TEI and SEI

Ajzen’s (1991) explanation of perceived behavioural control is similar to Bandura & Wood’s (1989) idea of perceived self-efficacy, which is concerned with how well an individual’s behaviour is strongly influenced by their ability to perform that certain behaviour. Chen *et al.* (1998) provided empirical evidence that entrepreneurial self-efficacy was positively related to students’ intentions to start their own business. Evidence to reinforce the relation between entrepreneurial intention and self-efficacy is provided by Zhao, Seibert & Hills (2005), who studied the intermediating role of self-efficacy of student’s intentions to becoming entrepreneurs. Mortan, Ripoll, Carvalho & Bernal (2014) used multiple hierarchical regression to confirm that there is positive interplay between emotional intelligence dimension and entrepreneurial self-efficacy. In turn, the perception of self-efficacy partially mediates the interplay between emotional intelligence and the intention to be an entrepreneur. In similar vein, Kibler (2013) claimed, the more a student believes they have the ability to start a business, the stronger their intention to become an entrepreneur. When the surroundings are not encouraging or supportive, it will negatively affect the social enterprise process. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H5: ATSE mediates the relationship between TEI and SEI.



H6: subjective norms mediate the relationship between TEI and SEI.

H7: PBC mediates the relationship between TEI and SEI.

## Research Methodology

### Population and Sample Procedures

Population is defined as “the complete number of components (i.e., organizations, individuals, or items) that are selected to be measured as the study sample” (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). For this present study, 1,266 registered for the Enactus Malaysia session 2018/2019 students represent the population. The entire membership consisted of undergraduate students from different disciplines. Selecting undergraduates is a good model because being an undergraduate is a precursor to be an entrepreneur (Politis *et al.*, 2016) which is the primary reason why they are used as the sample population in investigating the social entrepreneurship intentions. Numerous of past studies have also surveyed students to develop social entrepreneurship intentions formation (Barton *et al.*, 2018; Hockerts, 2017; Nga and Shamuganathan, 2010; Noorseha *et al.*, 2013; Radin Siti Aishah *et al.*, 2016). Surveys were self-administrated to 419 students through personal contact. Data collection took place in October 2018 and lasted for six weeks. We choose Enactus students as the sample because they are more experienced in SE activities as compared to non-Enactus. Moreover, SE definition and concept remain debated in academic field. Therefore, we believe by selecting Enactus participants it helps to reduce non-responses error.

The current study employs the probability sampling category. Probability sampling is an approach in which every member of the population listed in the sampling frame could be selected as a sample. In this study, stratified sampling design is employed. It refers to sampling plans where the sample is divided into proportions from the original number of population (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). The choice of the sampling technique is in line with

Chen ‘s (2016) recommendation. The advantage of using stratified sampling is more efficient among all probability sampling. Besides, all group are adequately sampled and comparisons among groups are possible (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). In this study, we have divided the HLIs into two strata, namely, (a) Public HLI and (b) Private HLI. In terms of sample size, there are few guidelines that have been suggested by past researchers. After considering the suggestions, we considered 500 students as a sample of our study.

### Measurement of the Theoretical Construct

This study employed a self-reported questionnaire. The survey questionnaire was divided into four (4) sections. The questions in section A covered the background of HLIs students, such as gender and race, were all collected in this study. While in section B, the questions covered the Trait Emotional Intelligence which was adapted and improvised from the trait emotional intelligence questionnaire (TEIQue) by Petrides & Furnham (2001). The questions in section C, attitudes towards social entrepreneurship, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control which was adapted and modified from Ernst (2011) and. Liñán & Chen (2009). Thereafter, it was edited to suit the context of this study.

Lastly, the questions in section D cover social entrepreneurship intentions, the items were borrowed and improvised from Liñán & Chen (2009). The instrument was using a 7-Likert scale ranging from 1 (Completely Disagree) to 7 (Completely Agree) which were used to measure the items.

### Analysis Process

To analyze the data, two-stage analysis was adopted. During the first-stage analysis, descriptive analysis includes a frequency distribution was performed using the IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Specifically, a frequency distribution table was used to summarize the respondents’ profiles. During the second-stage analysis,

inferential statistics analysis, specifically SEM, performs to assess the relationships between the exogenous variables and endogenous variables (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). According to Hair, Black, Babin & Anderson (2018), SEM “is the best multivariate procedure for testing both the construct validity and theoretical relationships.” SEM is used as a more powerful approach as compared to multiple regressions, path analysis, factor analysis, time series analysis, and analysis of covariance. Hair *et al.* (2018) added that by using SEM, the strength of associations between constructs could be identified more accurately because it considers measurement errors.

**Research Findings**

**Descriptive Analysis**

The 419 students who took part in this survey were 60.9% (N=255) female and 39.1% (N=164) male. Most students were 24 years old (15.5%, N=65), followed by 20 years old (14.8%, N=62), and 25 years old (14.3%, N=60). In terms of race, 54.9% (N=230) were Malay, 21.2% (N=89) were Chinese, 12.9% (N=54) were Indian, and 11.0% were other. The information on the HLI of students revealed that 81.1% (N=340) attended a public HLI, while 18.9% (N = 79) attended a private HLI. A majority of the students (60.9%, N=255) have a degree, followed by (39.1%, N=164) of the students with a diploma. Most of student are studying the sciences (52.3%, N=219), while non-science students consist of 47.7% (N=200) of the sample. Last but not least, a majority of the students (37.7%, N=158) had been participating in the Enactus program for 1 to 2 years and surprisingly there were 18.9% (N=79) students who joined Enactus for more than 5 years. These

group have joined the Enactus program since they were doing their Diploma level.

**Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)**

CFA is a procedure to validate all latent variables in the model. The purpose of conducting CFA is to evaluate the model fit, standard factor loadings, and standard errors. The CFA is a pre-requisite for measurement models in which both the number of factor loadings and their corresponding indicators are clearly defined (Kline 2016). In CFA, the theory is proposed first, then assessed to see how the constructs systematically represent latent variables (Hair *et al.*, 2018). In this study, there are five latent variables: trait emotional intelligence, attitudes towards social entrepreneurship, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control and social entrepreneurship intentions. Hair *et al.* (2018) recommended that an acceptable standardized factor loading must be greater than 0.500. The CFA result shows that the correlation coefficients among the constructs ranges between 0.050 to 0.750, which is less than 0.900, therefore, suggestion no multicollinearity among the variables.

**Measurement Model**

The first step of SEM is to test the measurement model. The results show that all the items have greatly affected the variation in their related constructs. In assessing the measurement model, there are four (4) elements to be tested. Firstly, the model fitness. The fit indices values are Relative Chi-Square=2.780, RMSEA=0.065, CFI=0.947, TLI=0.938 and PGFI=0.699. As these five fit indices meet the requirement as recommended by Hair *et al.* (2018) who suggested that if three

Table I: Result of measurement model

Fit Indices	AFI		IFI		PFI
	Relative Chi Square (<5.0)	RMSEA (<=0.080)	CFI (>=0.900)	TLI (>=0.900)	PGFI (>=0.500)
Measurement model	2.787	0.065	0.935	0.926	0.706

to four of the Goodness-of-Fit indices meets the requirement, then the model is acceptable. Therefore, in this study the measurement model is declared to be a good fit.

Secondly, convergent validity refers to a set of variables or items that is assumed to measure a construct and to share a high proportion of common variance (Hair et al. 2018). It is tested by using Factor Loadings and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). Convergent validity of these constructs is trait emotional intelligence (0.540 to 0.929), attitudes towards social entrepreneurship (0.798 to 0.882), subjective norms (0.848 to 0.932), perceived behavioural control (0.603 to 0.809) and social entrepreneurship intentions (0.814 to 0.889). Factor loading for all items is greater than 0.500, which signify that the set of variables in this present study meets one of the important components of convergent validity. In this present study, the AVE for the five latent variables is trait emotional intelligence (0.527), attitudes towards social entrepreneurship (0.553), subjective norms (0.696), perceived behavioural control (0.794) and social entrepreneurship intentions (0.746). Thus, convergent validity is achieved as factor loading for all items is greater than 0.500 and AVE is greater than 0.500, therefore, all the constructs in the model are statistically significant.

Thirdly, construct reliability refers to the degree to which an instrument is measured according to the dimensions of the constructs (Hair et al., 2018). The construct reliability is tested through composite reliability. The acceptable level for reliability test is between 0.600 and 0.700 whereby a value of 0.700 or

higher indicates good reliability or the measures have internal consistency that represents the same construct (Griethuijsen et al., 2014; Hair et al., 2018). The composite reliabilities are as follows: trait emotional intelligence (0.761), ATSE (0.880), subjective norms (0.902), perceived behavioural control (0.939) and social entrepreneurship intentions (0.936). Therefore, all variables were consistent and dependable in representing the same latent construct.

Fourthly, discriminant validity refers to “the extent to which a construct is truly distinct from other constructs” (Hair et al., 2018). The cut-off points for discriminant validity which is called AVEs is greater than 0.500, preferably 0.700. The result for discriminant validity, all variables AVEs’ ranges from 0.527 to 0.794, which had exceeded the 0.500 cut-off point. It means that items only measure one latent construct distinctly.

**Structural Model**

In this current study, the structural model showed that the values for fit indices met the recommended acceptable value. The fit indices values were Relative Chi Square=2.865, RMSEA=0.067, CFI=0.943, TLI=0.935 and PGFI=0.711. These fit indices met the requirement as recommended by Hair et al. (2018) who suggested that if three or four of the Goodness-of-Fit indices met the requirement, then the model was acceptable. Therefore, in this present study the structural model is declared to be a good fit. Subsequently, we analyzed the following 7 hypotheses.

Table II: Result of structural model

Fit Indices	AFI		IFI		PFI
	Relative Chi Square (<5.0)	RMSEA (<=0.080)	CFI (>=0.900)	TLI (>=0.900)	PGFI (>=0.500)
Measurement model	2.865	0.067	0.943	0.935	0.711

1. Direct effects

The research hypothesis was to identify the direct influence of the attitudes towards social entrepreneurship, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control and trait emotional intelligence on social entrepreneurship intentions. The results shows that the three path were significantly related to social entrepreneurship intentions; the relationship among subjective norms and social entrepreneurship intentions was  $\beta=0.314$ ,  $p=0.000$ , perceived behavioural control and social entrepreneurship intentions was  $\beta=0.698$ ,  $p=0.000$ , trait emotional intelligence and social entrepreneurship intentions  $\beta=-0.122$ ,  $p=0.019$ . The relationship between attitudes towards social entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship intentions was  $\beta=0.052$ ,  $p=0.183$  which signifies that attitude towards social entrepreneurship is not significantly

related to social entrepreneurship intentions, thus, the hypothesized relationship is not supported. The overall direct effects result is presented in Table III.

2. Indirect effects

In the present study, H5 predicted that attitudes towards social entrepreneurship will positively and significantly mediate the relationship between trait emotional intelligence and social entrepreneurship intentions. The results of the Bootstrapping mediation analysis, presented in Table IV, show that the standardised indirect effect of attitudes towards social entrepreneurship was not significant ( $b=0.019$ ,  $p=0.607$ ). Also as indicated by Preacher & Hayes (2008) the indirect effect 0.019, 95% Bootstrap BC [LB=0.164, UB=0.363] suggest that attitudes towards social entrepreneurship is not an underlying factor for explaining the

Table III: Result of direct effects

Hypotheses	Causal Path		Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	p	
H1	ATSE	--->	SEI	0.057	0.042	1.333	0.183
H2	SN	--->	SEI	0.247	0.038	4.933	***
H3	PBC	--->	SEI	0.860	0.072	11.986	***
H4	TEI	--->	SEI	-0.173	0.074	-2.343	0.019

Table IV Results of Hypotheses Testing (H5)

Model/ Hypothesized Paths	$\beta$	P	95% Bootstrap BC	
			LB	UB
<i>Direct Model</i>				
TEI → SEI	-0.084	0.008		
<i>Mediation Model</i>				
TEI → SEI	0.220	0.006		
<i>Standardized Indirect Effect (SIE)</i>				
TEI → ATSE → SEI	0.019	0.607	0.164	0.363

relationship between trait emotional intelligence and social entrepreneurship intentions. Thus, H5 was not supported.

The H6 predicted that subjective norms will positively and significantly mediate the relationship between trait emotional intelligence and social entrepreneurship intentions. The results of the Bootstrapping mediation analysis, presented in Table V, shows that the standardized indirect effect of subjective norms was significant ( $b=0.384$ ,  $p=0.004$ ). Also as indicated by Preacher & Hayes (2008) with a bias corrected bootstrap confidence interval that lies inside zero with 95% Bootstrap BC [LB=0.199,

UB=0.3840]. These results suggested that subjective norms significantly explain the relationship between trait emotional intelligence and social entrepreneurship intentions. Thus, H6 was supported.

The H7 predicted that perceived behavioural control will positively and significantly mediate the relationship between trait emotional intelligence and social entrepreneurship intentions. The results of the Bootstrapping mediation analysis, presented in Table VI showed that the standardized indirect effect of perceived behavioural control was significant ( $b=0.301$ ,  $p=0.004$ ). Also as indicated by

Table V: Results of Hypotheses Testing (H6)

Model/ Hypothesized Paths	$\beta$	P	95% Bootstrap BC	
			LB	UB
<i>Direct Model</i>				
TEI → SEI	-0.084	0.088	-0.283	-0.008
<i>Mediation Model</i>				
TEI → SEI	0.960	0.870	-0.184	-0.005
<i>Standardized Indirect Effect (SIE)</i>				
TEI → SN → SEI	0.384	0.004	0.199	0.384

Table VI Results of Hypotheses Testing (H7)

Model/ Hypothesized Paths	$\beta$	P	95% Bootstrap BC	
			LB	UB
<i>Direct Model</i>				
TEI → SEI	-0.084	0.088	-1.167	-1.662
<i>Mediation Model</i>				
TEI → SEI	0.175	0.075	0.006	0.175
<i>Standardized Indirect Effect (SIE)</i>				
TEI → PBC → SEI	0.301	0.004	0.131	0.301

Preacher & Hayes (2008) with a bias corrected bootstrap confidence interval that lies inside zero with 95% Bootstrap BC [LB=0.131, UB=0.301]. These results suggest that perceived behavioural control significantly explains the relationship between trait emotional intelligence and social entrepreneurship intentions. Thus, H7 was supported.

## Discussion

### *Direct Effects*

1. The relationship between attitudes towards social entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship intentions

The results show that attitudes towards social entrepreneurship was not significant to social entrepreneurship intentions. Previous evidence confirmed that attitudes towards social entrepreneurship has a positive effect on social entrepreneurship intentions; presumably people with 'strong' attitudes demonstrate a stronger association between their attitudes and behaviour, while those with 'weak' attitudes tend to lack such association (Guyer & Fabrigar, 2015). The result is consistent with the study by Ajzen (2005) and Ernst (2011). According to Ajzen (2005), show that some background factors such as age, gender, ethnicity, education, and exposure to information may directly impact intention, not merely individual's attitude.

From the discussion, a prospective social entrepreneur, such as an Enactus student, needs to be motivated by and carefully responsible for their actions. This is to ensure that they understand the costs and benefits of performing a specific behaviour and thus form an attitude toward the specific behaviour. Therefore, the effective way to improve attitudes towards social entrepreneurship among Enactus students is to improve the entrepreneurship education at the university level (Abun, Foronda, Agoot, Belandres & Magallanez 2018; Bosma, Schött, Terjesen & Kew, 2016). The literature regarding entrepreneurial intentions confirms

that entrepreneurship education programs are effective in preparing students to be entrepreneurs (Abun *et al.* 2018).

2. The relationship between subjective norms and social entrepreneurship intentions

The results show that subjective norms positively and significantly influence social entrepreneurship intentions. This confirms other empirical analyses showing subjective norms to be a significant predictor of intention (Baker *et al.*, 2007; Bamberg *et al.*, 2003; Davis *et al.*, 2002), and that subjective norms influence social entrepreneurship intentions among university students (Politis *et al.*, 2016). Students are easily influenced by those close to them. Therefore, identification of their surroundings (i.e., reference group) will aid to enhance the subjective norms. These reference groups could be lecturers, parents, friends, classmates, or other relatives (Davis *et al.*, 2002; Manning, 2009).

From this discussion, a prospective social entrepreneur, like an Enactus student, is more likely to start social enterprise if their surroundings are more supportive. In other words, almost 65% of Malaysian students who voluntarily join Enactus are influenced by their friends and lecturers. The role played by close friends helps them explore a socially oriented program.

3. The relationship between PBC and SEI

The results show that perceived behavioural control positively and significantly influence social entrepreneurship intentions. Furthermore, perceived behavioural control makes a substantial contribution to predicting intention (Altawallbeh *et al.*, 2015; Davis *et al.*, 2002). The more an individual believes in their ability to start and operate a business successfully, the stronger their intention to become an entrepreneur (Kibler, 2013). Chipeta (2015) assessed 350 students and found a positive relationship between perceived behavioural control and social entrepreneurship intentions..

4. The relationship between trait emotional intelligence and social entrepreneurship intentions

The result shows trait emotional intelligence significantly related to social entrepreneurship intentions. This finding consistent with Salami (2010) who proved that EI contributes to students' behaviours. In the study, 242 college students in Nigeria confirmed that EI predicted students' behaviours. It should be noted that Enactus students had great control over their own or others' feelings and beliefs.

**Indirect Effects**

1. Attitudes Towards Social Entrepreneurship mediates the relationship between trait emotional intelligence and social entrepreneurship intentions

The results show that attitudes towards social entrepreneurship has no mediation effect on the relationship between trait emotional intelligence and social entrepreneurship intentions. The results of the Bootstrapping Resampling mediation analysis report that the standardized indirect effect of attitudes towards social entrepreneurship is not significant ( $b=0.019$ ,  $p=0.607$ ). This finding differs from Altawallbeh et al. (2015) who studied 245 individuals from six universities in Jordon and proved that salient beliefs like trait emotional intelligence influence intention directly and indirectly through attitudes towards social entrepreneurship. In a separate study, Nagarathanam & Nor Aishah (2016) studied 315 students in Malaysia and suggested that an emphasis on SE education is an effective way to teach students to have a positive attitude and demonstrate entrepreneurial intention. In order to foster emotional intelligence and innovative human capital (or social entrepreneurship intentions), it is essential to nurture an enterprising spirit and ensure Malaysia's economic survival (Dehghanpour, 2013; Hariyaty et al., 2016; Nagarathanam & Nor Aishah, 2016).

2. Subjective norms mediate the relationship between trait emotional intelligence and social entrepreneurship intentions

The results of the Bootstrapping Resampling mediation analysis report that the standardised indirect effect of subjective norms were significant ( $b=0.384$ ,  $p=0.004$ ). However, the mediation type is full mediation, means that trait emotional intelligence does not influence social entrepreneurship intentions directly but indirectly through subjective norms. The present result is consistent with Kirkwood (2007) and Zhao et al. (2010) who indicated that the influence of subjective norms on entrepreneurial activities is undeniable. In other words, entrepreneurial subjective norms may channel trait emotional intelligence towards entrepreneurial behaviour. In another study, Zampetakis et al. (2009) mentioned that there were significant differences in the characteristics of students who came from an entrepreneurial family background. They claimed that by living with a family that operates a business, the student may build up resistance to counter potential stress. Alternatively, students for whom no parent owns a business need to be initiative-taking and creative to overcome potential stress.

3. **Perceived behavioural control mediates the relationship between** trait emotional intelligence **and** social entrepreneurship intentions

The results of the Bootstrapping Resampling mediation analysis report that the standardized indirect effect of perceived behavioural control was significant ( $b=0.301$ ,  $p=0.004$ ). The results of this study reveal that perceived behavioural control fully mediates the relationship between trait emotional intelligence and social entrepreneurship intentions. This signifies that trait emotional intelligence does not influence social entrepreneurship intentions directly but indirectly through perceived behavioural control. Similar explanation as the preceding paragraph, trait emotional intelligence has no direct relationship with social entrepreneurship intentions. Although Nga & Shamuganathan

(2010) confirmed that traits may affect the tendency to become a social entrepreneur, Ernst (2011) found that trait does not show strong signs influencing social entrepreneurship intentions formation.

Justifying the result, Ernst (2011) stated, it could be a SE-specific phenomenon that should concerns on the type of entrepreneurship. She suggested that there may be nothing to do with trait that affects the actual intention formation process. On a cautious note, it must be added that the trait variable had the lowest reliability values within the quantitative research study (Ernst 2011).

Furthermore, Chen *et al.* (1998) provides empirical support that entrepreneurial self-efficacy was positively related to students' intentions to start their own business. Evidently, Zhao *et al.* (2005) proposed the mediating role of self-efficacy in the development of student's intentions to become entrepreneurs. It should be noted that the presence of subjective norms and perceived behavioural control as mediators help to enhance a student's intention to be a social entrepreneur. Enactus students are advised to carefully identify their surroundings to avoid negative feelings, depression and stress before starting an enterprise.

As postulated by Kibler (2013), the more a student believes they could start a business, the stronger their intention to become an entrepreneur. When the surroundings are not encouraging or supportive, it will negatively affect the social enterprise process.

### **Limitations and Future Avenues**

Despite the contributions yielded from this present study, the findings should be interpreted within the limitations of the methodology employed. Firstly, this study used only a sample of Enactus Malaysia students and disregarded the larger population of students in the country. The choice of sample could be problematic as one could argue that the sample is homogenous as they are all existing members of Enactus.

In addition, focusing only on Malaysian students inhibited the model from controlling

for other macro-level confounding variables. Therefore, for future work, we recommend enlarging the sample size and try to collaborate with international parties to understand SE better.

Secondly, this present study applied the method of quantitative research design, and the data was collected via questionnaire survey. Although, quantitative research methods can be used to determine the degree to which students undertakes behaviours, but it limits the ability to examine the thoughts and feelings of research participants as well as the meaning that students ascribe to their experiences.

To rectify the limitation, this present study followed a suggestion by Harrington (1993), a psychiatrist professor at University of Manchester, United Kingdom. He stated that information supplied by the questionnaire survey is far beyond the data collected from an interview-based study. Moreover, the data collection on problem related to emotions (i.e., depression, stress) via questionnaire survey is as sharp as interview-based study. We recommended for future researchers to use the mixed-method approach combining both quantitative and qualitative data to better explain social entrepreneurship intentions (Nga & Shamuganathan, 2010; Norasmah & Tengku Nor Asma Amira, 2018).

In fact, a combination of quantitative and qualitative analyses will reinforce findings related to trait emotional intelligence and students' entrepreneurial intention (Norasmah & Tengku Nor Asma Amira, 2018)

### **Conclusion**

This present study was driven by the gap in the literature on the mediating effect of the attitudinal constructs of the TPB (i.e., attitudes towards social entrepreneurship, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control) on the relationship between trait emotional intelligence as the exogenous variables with social entrepreneurship intentions as endogenous variable. The literature for these variables



showed few theoretical and empirical studies on the relationship between exogenous factors stimulating condition for social entrepreneurship intentions. Empirical evidence on social entrepreneurship were limited, thus leading us to study the relationship between these variables among Enactus students in the Malaysian context.

A total of 419 (61.3%) questionnaires were returned with usable data for analysis. The demographic profile showed that two-thirds or, 60.9% (N=255) of the respondents were female and most of the respondents were Malay (54.9%, N=230).

Most respondents were 24 years old whereby this age distribution implied that the students were more mature and therefore were able to report their perceptions better. A majority of the students, 81.1% (N=340), attended public universities, and most (60.9%, N=255) were bachelor's degree holders, followed by 39.1% (N=164) of diploma holders. Many of the students were from science stream (52.3%, N=219), meanwhile non-science students composed 47.7% (N=200) of the sample.

Most of the students, or 55.1% (N=231) came from an entrepreneurial family background, and all had been active Enactus students for more than a year. Additionally, the data on this study were analyzed using IBM SPSS software for descriptive analysis and IBM AMOS software was used to test H1-H7.

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