
Perceived Government Support as an Antecedent of Attitude and Perceived Behavioural Control (PBC) Effect on Agricultural Entrepreneurship (Agropreneurship) Intention Among the Youth in Sabah

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ABSTRACT: Agropreneurship refers to producing, processing, and selling various agricultural products. Essentially, the Sabah Agriculture Blueprint 2021-2030 aims to attract more public involvement, particularly among graduates in the agriculture and fisheries sector, while lessening such imported goods. The Sabahan youth could benefit from this blueprint. Despite this significance, youth participation in the agricultural industry remains low. Therefore, this study examined the effect of the perceived government support on the attitude towards agropreneurship and PBC. On top of that, this study investigated the effect of perceived government support, the attitude towards agropreneurship, PBC, and social norms (SN) on the agropreneurship intention of Sabahan youth. In this study, 353 Sabahan youth participated in the survey. The data were analysed using Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) 3.2.9. The results revealed that all hypotheses were significant, except for social norms and agropreneurship intention. In sum, this study could contribute to formulating policies and relevant programmes, especially in increasing youth participation in agropreneurship.

Keywords: Agropreneur; agropreneurship intention; agricultural entrepreneurship; entrepreneurial intention; government support; Theory of Planned Behaviour

1. Introduction

Agriculture was at the centre of economic development in Malaysia until the 1970s. Although the industry has prevailed and grown, it fails to meet the country's market demands (The Edge Malaysia, 2018). Generally, the world population is predicted to hit 9.7 billion by 2050. Due to this increase in the human population, their access to safe, nutritious, and healthy food is challenging. Furthermore, the market for beef, dairy products, and speciality crops, such as bananas, nuts, and vegetables has inflated concurrently with the increased income in developed nations and better living standards (FAO, 2017). Moreover, the increased food demand has affected natural resources, causing soil contamination, loss of biodiversity, and environmental pollution worldwide, thus creating new problems in food safety and agricultural sustainability (Tilman et al., 2011).

Notably, Sabah could become a hub for agricultural producers in the region due to its location and natural resources. For instance, the East Coast province of Sabah had contributed to 25% of the country's export of crude palm oil. Thus, it is crucial for Sabahan youth to embrace agropreneurship as a career. Their involvement in the industry could ensure the continuous supply of food in the future through agricultural production and increase employment prospects for the younger generation.

Rural development in Malaysia remains a worrying issue despite the government's intervention in overcoming it through various poverty reduction strategies and sustainable alternative agriculture. In fact, agriculture is no longer the dominant contributor to this country's economic development. Hence, the number of workers in the agriculture sector and the high rate of rural poverty have pushed the government to prioritise agricultural development. Nonetheless, in terms of global instability, the unpredictable commodity prices that could disrupt Malaysia's economic growth could continue to negate the numerous initiatives to minimise the rural and regional gains. Therefore, participation in the agricultural sector is critical for the youth in Sabah.

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) was commonly used in past studies on entrepreneurship intention among youth to guide the structure of the studies (Murugesan & Jayavelu, 2015). Given the empirical evidence for the role of government support in agropreneurship intention, this study identified how government support affects agropreneurship intention. Hence, this study is vital as it determined the factors leading to youth participation in agropreneurship in Sabah.

2. Literature Review

2.1 *The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)*

The TPB was structured to predict and clarify human behaviour in a certain context. A fundamental issue in the TPB is a person's obligation to follow a specific action. According to Ajzen (1991), the purpose represents the desire and commitment to seek a person in his conduct. An analyst also stated that people's real behaviour is understood through behavioural expectations (Ajzen, 1991). The TPB explains that attitude towards the behaviour, SN, and PBC are the three predictors that influence behavioural intention. Firstly, an attitude refers to how people individually learn, experience, and evaluate, which is influenced by behaviour, pleasant or unpleasant, and reliably recognised well-defined deeds. Secondly, SN refers to how society directly influences a person's intention to participate in certain behaviour over values and norms (Ajzen, 1991). The last predictor is that PBC is the person's capability and certainty of their ability or confidence in whether they could perform a behaviour efficaciously.

2.2 *Perceived Government Support Effect on the TPB and Agropreneurship Intention*

In Malaysia, the government plays a pivotal role in fostering agropreneurship growth, where Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) Corporation Malaysia has listed some of the government's initiatives to support agropreneurship, namely access to financing, human capital development, market access, technology, innovation adoption, and infrastructure. Furthermore, the Malaysian government has emphasised agropreneurship training to promote younger agropreneurs working independently in the

agriculture industry instead of working for other organisations that add to the national food drain (Aman, Abdul Rahim, & Din, 2015; Mohammad Nor, Nik Mohd Masdek, & Maidin, 2015).

Admittedly, agropreneurs face multiple challenges throughout their agropreneurship journey, including cultural boundaries, inadequate funding, legislation, capital requirements, knowledge, and an individual's management capability to handle and exploit opportunities involving risks and changes (Kahan, 2012). Additionally, Khoshmaram, Shiri, Shinnar, and Savari (2020) suggested the need for government intervention by focusing on external factors to encourage entrepreneurship participation in the agriculture sector. Agropreneurship is undeniably a demanding field, and the readily-available government support could develop confidence and interest in the potential of agropreneurship, especially among the Sabahan youth. Therefore, this study investigates the effectiveness and importance of government efforts in increasing agropreneurship interest among the youth in Sabah. Hence, the following hypotheses are postulated:

Hypothesis 1: Perceived Government support positively influences attitude towards agropreneurship.

Hypothesis 2: Perceived Government support positively influences PBC.

Hypothesis 3: Perceived Government support positively influences agropreneurship intention.

2.3 The Influence of Attitude Towards Agropreneurship Intention

Rudhumbu, Sivotwa, Munyanyiwa, and Mutsau (2016) mentioned that positive attitudes over a particular behaviour, such as entrepreneurship, significantly influence a person's intention towards entrepreneurship. Besides, a study by Ambad and Damit (2016) and Saptu, Ambad, and Sumin (2020) conducted among undergraduate students in Malaysia confirmed that youth attitude towards agropreneurship is the strongest predictor of entrepreneurship intention. Moreover, the decisive attitude of youth towards agropreneurship, such as interest and confidence, inspires them to be associated with agropreneurship (Yusoff et al., 2017). Overall, the individual's positive attitude towards entrepreneurship clearly shows that entrepreneurship is a desirable and viable option. Hence, the following hypothesis is suggested:

Hypothesis 4: Attitude towards agropreneurship positively influences agropreneurship intention.

2.4 The Influence of PBC on Agropreneurship Intention

A study stated that PBC is an individual interpretation of the capability to perform a certain action (Ndungu & Anyieni, 2019). People believe that their actions determine the future and are more likely to work and achieve success and the desired goals, whereby they might start a business and keep it going. Another study presented that youth who reported a high level of PBC have a better perception of the viability of entrepreneurship (Yusoff et al., 2019). From the viewpoint of agropreneurship behaviour, PBC could help establish an agro-based enterprise (Eid et al., 2019). In a similar vein, based on the findings on TPB, the present study also considers the establishment of constructive justification that PBC could predict agropreneurship intentions. Hence, the ensuing hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 5: PBC positively influences agropreneurship intention.

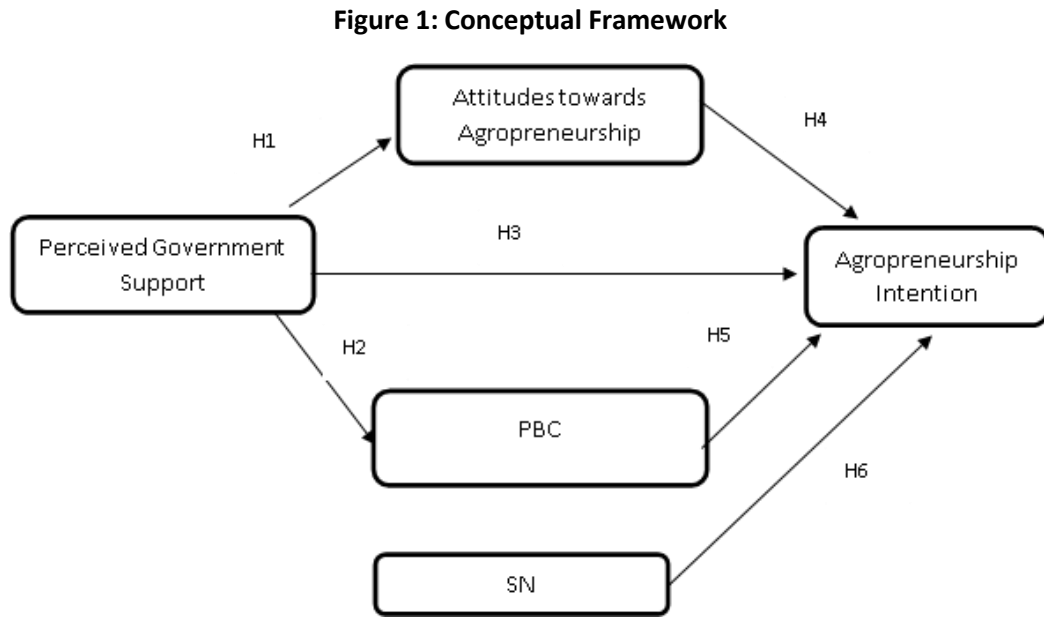
2.5 The Influence of SN on Agropreneurship Intention

Shook and Bratianu (2010) stated that the desire to pursue agropreneurship could be more likely influenced as long as the action is encouraged by the people with a clear incentive to obey their SN. Basically, SN is people's views of their ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and practices, especially those close to them with a substantial influence on their lives (Ndungu & Anyieni, 2019). The research administered by Ng, Ahmad, and Ibrahim (2016) discovered that SN has the most robust value in entrepreneurial intention, particularly among the youth in public universities in Malaysia. Prior research also mentioned that the impact of SN on development intention is generally more inadequate than the significance of attitudes (Ham, Jeger, & Ivković, 2015). Thus, the next notion is suggested:

Hypothesis 6: SN positively influences agropreneurship intention.

2.6 Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 illustrates the framework of this study. Perceived government support is the antecedent of attitudes towards agropreneurship, PBC, and agropreneurship intention.



3. Methodology

3.1 Sampling and Data Collection Method

Respondents of this study are youth aged 18 to 30 years old from Sabah. This definition of youth is based on the new amendment made to the Youth Societies and Youth Development Act (Amendment) Bill 2019. The respondents were selected based on the eligibility criteria established to select the samples in this study. Since there is no sampling frame available for the number of Sabahan youth aged 18 to 30 years old, the sample size was calculated based on the G*Power minimum sample size of 129 respondents (4 tested predictors and $f^2 = 0.15$). Additionally, Roscoe (1975) provided the rule of thumb for the sample size calculation, wherein for some experiments, the sample size is considered greater than 30 and smaller than 500. In contrast, a range of data between 5 and 10 times the number of items in use (Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010) was suggested by various statistical experts. Considering the recommendation by Black et al. (2010), it is advisable to have ten times the number of items or the sample size of the instrument. Therefore, the sample size of this study is 270 samples (27 items \times 10) based on the 10 times rule of thumb. However, this study distributed 500 questionnaires face-to-face and online.

In this study, convenience sampling was used as the sampling technique, which refers to collecting information from samples which are available to provide the related data. Convenience sampling could be the best method to quickly and efficiently obtain information (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). The self-administered questionnaire was used to collect data in-person, while electronic questionnaires were sent to the youth population in several colleges and universities in Sabah. Meanwhile, the data collection was conducted in March 2020 and the information obtained was analysed using the statistical Smart-PLS 3.2.9 software.

3.2 Measurement

The measurements used in this study were adapted and modified from previous research. Regarding the perceived government support, the scales developed by Malebana (2014) were used. Meanwhile, the attitude towards agropreneurship employed six items adapted and modified from Liñán and Chen (2009). For the second measurement, the PBC was measured using six adapted and modified items from Kolvereid (1996). Concurrently, the independent variable, i.e., SN, was measured using four items suggested by Autio, Keeley, Klofsten, Parker, and Hay (2001). On the other hand, the dependent variable applied the six adapted and modified items developed by Thompson (2009). Finally, a 5-point Likert scale was used to reflect the respondents' answers.

4. Result and Discussion

4.1 Respondent Profile

In this study, 500 questionnaires were distributed to the Sabahan youth, where the remaining samples consisted of 353 respondents (177 males and 176 females) after removing the questionnaires with incomplete and irrelevant answers. Many of the respondents were aged 18 to 20 years old (184), demonstrating a valid percentage of 52.9%. In terms of the respondents' educational level, the data showed that the majority of the respondents, 53.3% (188), were Diploma holders, exceeding those with SPM/STPM/Sijil Kemahiran Malaysia (SKM) qualification which made for % (97) of the respondents.

4.2 Reliability and Validity of Measurement

During the PLS-SEM, the first stage involved performing the measurement assessment to ensure that all variables' validity and reliability were satisfactory before hypothesis testing. As shown in Table 1, only one item from PBC was removed due to low loading (less than 0.7), as per Chin (1998). After the item was removed, all internal consistency and convergent validity were found to be satisfactory. Each construct had achieved the composite reliability coefficients above the recommended cut-off of 0.7 (see Table 1). Therefore, the items within each variable have shown high internal consistency and high reconstruction of the findings proposed by Fornell and Larcker (1981).

Variables and Items	Loading	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Agropreneurship Intention (AI)		0.945	0.742
I intend to start my own agropreneurship business in the future.	0.837		
I am constantly looking for agropreneurship opportunities.	0.837		
I start saving to have my own agropreneurship business.	0.856		
I read books on procedures for initiating agropreneurship business.	0.833		
I make plans to start my own agropreneurship business.	0.914		
I dedicate time to learn how to create an agropreneurship business.	0.890		
Perceived Government Support			
I know the different types of support offered to people who want to start new agropreneurship businesses.	0.779	0.779	0.779

Information about government support is accessible.	0.800		
My level of knowledge about the types of support offered to people who want to start an agropreneurship business is high.	0.780		
The government provides adequate support to start an agropreneurship business.	0.811		
The government provides quality support to start an agropreneurship business.	0.788		
Attitude		0.919	0.653
In my opinion, being an agropreneur has more advantages than disadvantages for me.	0.726		
I would like to make a career as an agropreneur.	0.827		
If I had the opportunity, I would start my own agropreneurship business.	0.848		
If I had the resources, I would start my own agropreneurship business.	0.785		
In my opinion, being an agropreneur gives me great satisfaction.	0.842		
Among several options, I would rather choose to become an agropreneur as a career.	0.815		
PBC		0.864	0.614
If I wanted, I could easily become an agropreneur.	0.791		
In my opinion, by becoming an agropreneur, I would have sufficient control over my business.	0.797		
There are very few circumstances outside my control that could prevent me from becoming an agropreneur.	0.795		
If I become self-employed in the agriculture sector, the chances of success would be very high.	0.751		
If I pursue a career as a self-employed in the agriculture sector, the chances of failure would be very low.	0.791		
SN		0.924	0.752
If I become an agropreneur, my family would consider it to be a good career.	0.833		
If I become an agropreneur, my close friends would consider it to be excellent.	0.884		
If I become an agropreneur, my colleagues would consider it to be marvellous.	0.898		
If I become an agropreneur, other people close to me would consider it to be wonderful.	0.852		

4.3 Discriminant Validity

This study performed the discriminant validity of Fornell and Larcker Criterion, Cross Loadings, and Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio of Correlations (HTMT). In view of this study, it was demonstrated that Fornell and Larcker's criterion was adequate. Besides, the cross-loading indicates that discriminant validity was achieved, as the constructs were distinctly different from each other. The results in Table 2 shows that HTMT values fulfilled the recommendations by Henseler et al. (2015), which were not more than 0.90. Hence, demonstrating evidence of the discriminant validity indicates the degree to which one construct differs from the other.

	AI	ATT	GS	PBC	SN
AI					
ATT	0.618				
GS	0.702	0.582			
PBC	0.696	0.686	0.653		
SN	0.723	0.585	0.506	0.651	

Results of Hypotheses Testing

The second stage in the PLS-SEM is assessing the structural model or hypotheses testing. The hypotheses in this study were tested using the bootstrap resampling technique with an iteration of 5,000 sub-samples. As shown in Table 3, H1, H2, H3, H4, and H5 were supported. Only H6 was found to be not significant and not supported. Next, the effect size of the independent variables was assessed to determine their effect on agropreneurship intention. As suggested by Cohen (1988), the effect size (f^2) values of above 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 represent small, medium, and large effects

Relationship	Path Coefficient	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T-Value	LLCI (5%)	ULCI (95%)	Supported	f^2	R ²	Q ²
H1: GS -> Attitude	0.546	0.059	7.227	0.344	0.541	Yes	0.415	0.291	0.187
H2: GS -> PBC	0.569	0.042	15.97	0.531	0.656	Yes	0.473	0.487	0.355
H3: GS -> AI	0.175	0.059	2.941	0.072	0.270	Yes	0.035	0.319	0.194
H4: Attitude -> AI	0.44	0.061	7.227	0.344	0.541	Yes	0.186		
H5: PBC -> AI	0.216	0.056	3.888	0.186	0.186	Yes	0.051		
H6: SN -> AI	-0.029	0.061	0.484	-	0.070	No	0.001		

This study has successfully achieved its research objective of examining the effect of perceived government support on the TPB and agropreneurship intention among the youth in Sabah. The government should give the agriculture sector more attention to increase food security and ensure sufficient and nutritious food availability in Malaysia. Generally, Sabah is considered one of the poorest states in Malaysia. Low youth participation in agropreneurship could create a bigger unemployment crisis and reduce food production due to low agricultural activities (Swarts & Aliber, 2013). It was found that attitude towards agropreneurship and PBC is influenced by perceived government support. In addition, perceived government support is positively related to agropreneurship intention. It should be noted that only SN was discovered to have no relationship with agropreneurship intention. In sum, the government should continuously improve the types of support system that are more relevant to the youth.

5. Contribution and Implication of The Study

The present study offers valuable theoretical, practical, and technical limitations. Besides, its many contributions would benefit other researchers, educators, and policymakers. The subsequent parts address in considerable detail the results and consequences of this study.

This study attempted to fill the literature gap by expanding the analysis of TPB to determine the factors influencing agropreneurship intention. Thus, this study expanded the TPB's scope and connected it with entrepreneurship literature, specifically in the field of agropreneurship. This research also focused on perceived government support as an antecedent of TPB. This inclusion is timely since the government had been allocating a substantial budget for the development of existing entrepreneurs and attracting more graduates and youths to delve into entrepreneurship. This study's remarkable findings revealed that the youths' perceived government support on entrepreneurship activities has a large and strong effect on PBC ($f^2 = 0.473$) and attitude towards agropreneurship ($f^2 = 0.415$) (Cohen, 1988). Currently, the youths' involvement in agropreneurship is quite limited, as they consider the agricultural sector a field solely for those without a better future and the elderly. The findings of this study contribute to further knowledge and information concerning youth and agropreneurship in Sabah. Thus, assisting the government and policymakers in formulating policies and programmes could fulfil the recently launched Sabah Agriculture Blueprint. The government and policymakers could intervene by organising more activities and programmes involving youth and selected agropreneurs as motivators, especially successful agropreneurs in Sabah. This initiative could also provide a broad business network and a support system for young agropreneurs. Also, the government should ensure the availability of funding or financial assistance to establish agropreneurship among the youth in Sabah. On top of that, a better understanding and dissemination of information on numerous government incentives regarding agropreneurship is crucial to boost the youths' perception of the availability of government support. Consequently, this aspect could further strengthen agropreneurship intentions, particularly among Sabahan youths.

6. Limitation and Future Research Suggestions

It should be noted that the present study applied the self-administered questionnaire method in its data collection, which tends to produce unfavourable practices. Although the best efforts were undertaken to deal with the implementation of point of view preference, it does not guarantee the findings of the study. Thus, the outcomes of this study should be scrutinised, as there is a possibility of distortion. Despite the appropriate precautions taken to minimise and regulate any distortion, survey polling is admittedly difficult (MacKenzie & Podsakoff, 2012). As a result, the standard interpretation of bias was not adequately and entirely resolved in this analysis. In terms of limitation, this study focused solely on the youth in Sabah, Malaysia. Future research should consider collecting data from all the states in Malaysia. Additionally, this study solely used TPB in its model. Future studies should consider integrating more theories, such as Shapero's Entrepreneurial Event theory, John Holland's Theory of Career Choice, Social Cognitive Theory, and others. The integration of these theories could contribute to a more robust and holistic understanding of agropreneurship intention.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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