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FAMILY SUPPORT AND HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENTS' ENGAGEMENT IN ONLINE BUSINESS – AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The growth of online business has created new opportunities for higher education students to engage in entrepreneurial activities while pursuing their studies. However, students' engagement in online business is often shaped not only by individual motivation but also by their surrounding social environment, particularly family support. Prior studies have highlighted the importance of family support in influencing entrepreneurial-related attitudes and behaviors, especially among young individuals. Despite growing attention to student entrepreneurship, limited empirical work has focused on how students themselves perceive family support in relation to their engagement in online business. Understanding these perceptions is important, as family members often provide emotional encouragement, financial assistance, and role modeling that may shape students' willingness to engage in entrepreneurial activities. This study adopts the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) as a theoretical lens to contextualize the role of family support as a form of social influence in students' engagement in online business. Rather than testing the TPB model, the theory is used to help interpret students' perceptions within an exploratory and descriptive research design

.Keywords: *Family Support, Online Business, Student Entrepreneurship, Theory of Planned Behaviour, Entrepreneurial Intention, University Students, Digital Entrepreneurship*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This study explores students' perceptions of familial influence on students' engagement in online entrepreneurship. A pupil's family may establish either positive support or adverse resistance based on the heritage, combined with the core principles and educational expectations they provided. When students experience entrepreneurial activities through family members, they often perceive entrepreneurship as an achievable career path. The initial exposure may help students build confidence alongside practical entrepreneurial skills that they use for their future business ventures.

Students often perceive financial and emotional support from family members as helpful in alleviating concerns related to starting an online business. Families that assign value to stability, together with standard workplace employment, may be perceived by students as less supportive of online business activities, unstable and unconventional. Understanding how parental mindsets, cultural beliefs, and familial examples of entrepreneurship shape student actions is vital. This research explores the students' perception of family-related factors that affect students' readiness to start online business enterprises. As outlined in the research objective, to evaluate the impact of family influence on students' decisions to participate in online business and the research question, how do higher education students perceive family influence shapes students' decisions to participate in online business? In line with this, the study explores exploratory approaches to provide descriptive insight into how family support is perceived by students participating in online business. By focusing on this dimension, the study hopes to enhance the understanding of how social context and family dynamics contribute to or hinder entrepreneurial engagement among youth in the digital age.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Online Entrepreneurship

Online entrepreneurship participation by students has gained more academic focus in recent years because digital technology has transformed business operations. The research focuses on online entrepreneurship involvement as a key focus of this study because it measures their level of business activity participation. Students participate in the development of new business concepts as well as online marketplaces and apply social media for advertising and administer monetary aspects and logistical operations through digital platforms.

Multiple aspects can be analysed in online entrepreneurial involvement, ranging from entrepreneurial activity frequency and students' active online business fields to their resources and time investments needed to keep their ventures active. Online entrepreneurship requires students to improve digital communication abilities along with problem-solving expertise and customer connection through virtual platforms.

Online entrepreneurship participation by students is often discussed in relation to students' entrepreneurial intentions toward concrete entrepreneurial activities. The development process is influenced by a range of internal and external elements, including personal traits and educational background, together with technological accessibility as well as parental influence. Knowledge about how students interact with online entrepreneurship indicates the elements that promote or limit digital entrepreneurial conduct.

Online entrepreneurship requires students to improve digital communication abilities along with problem-solving expertise and customer connection through virtual platforms. Ndofirepi (2020) and Nabi et al. (2017), together with other researchers, stress that digital entrepreneurship holds increasing importance among young adults and university students since online platforms facilitate market access and reduce startup costs to decrease entry barriers. Online entrepreneurship stands as an appealing career path because it suits students who can handle digital tasks and want flexible, independent workplaces.

Online entrepreneurship participation by students indicates their evolving entrepreneurial intentions toward concrete entrepreneurial activities. The development process usually depends on diverse internal and external elements, including personal traits and educational background, together with technological accessibility as well as parental influence. Knowledge about how students interact with online entrepreneurship indicates the elements that promote or limit digital entrepreneurial conduct.

Digital entrepreneurship represents a growing domain, particularly among youth who are tech-savvy and value autonomy (Nambisan, 2017). Fatoki (2019) emphasised the role of psychological capital, such as resilience and optimism, in shaping entrepreneurial intent among university students in South Africa. These factors are relevant to online business, where digital skills and confidence are crucial.

2.2 Family Supports

A person's career direction, together with entrepreneurial motivations, greatly depends on family influences. This research defines family influence as the various forms of support family members, particularly parents or guardians, apply to students who want to pursue online entrepreneurship. These family influences express themselves through different channels, including emotional backing, financial backing, and knowledge sharing, as well as showing exemplary conduct.

Students often report greater confidence in dealing with business-related challenges. Children receive encouragement to launch their enterprise after their parents join them in entrepreneurial initiatives and provide financial backing or business feedback. Failure apprehension or diminished motivation might emerge from family member doubts or lack of support, which creates psychological barriers. Studies demonstrate that children from entrepreneurial families tend to seek entrepreneurial ventures because they monitor their parents operating and owning businesses (Carr & Sequeira, 2007). The early experience of seeing business operations makes these children develop stronger entrepreneurial self-efficacy. The entrepreneurial inclination is often shaped by the activity of a person, which actively changes based on family values and cultural norms that surround them. People from collectivist communities base their entrepreneurial decisions on preserving family heritage alongside meeting cultural norms in matters of business. Tangible business prospects require students to perhaps take over existing family businesses or start their own ventures to secure economic stability for their household.

Family influences exhibit dynamic characteristics because they interact with peer influence, institutional support, and individual motivational elements within their environment. Research demands analysis of family influence through its various emotional and social, as well as economic, dimensions.

Family support, as a form of social capital, significantly impacts students' willingness to start a business. Edelman et al. (2016) found that family encouragement positively influences startup actions, especially for young entrepreneurs. Aldrich and Cliff (2003) introduced the concept of 'family embeddedness,' suggesting that family norms, resources, and expectations create a unique entrepreneurial environment for youth.

2.4 Theory of Planned Behaviour

The research bases its theoretical foundation on the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) to better understand how psychological factors determine student interest in online entrepreneurship. The Theory of Planned Behaviour, as developed by Icek Ajzen in 1991, explains how human behaviour follows from deliberate intentions, while three critical aspects drive these intentions: attitude towards the behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. The Theory of Planned Behaviour remains a widely used model to explain entrepreneurial intention. A meta-analysis by Schlaegel and Koenig (2014) confirmed TPB's applicability across various entrepreneurial contexts. Liñán and Fayolle (2015) further proposed that integrating cultural and family variables can enhance TPB's explanatory power in student-based entrepreneurship studies. The Theory of Planned Behaviour, as developed by Icek Ajzen in 1991, explains how human behaviour follows from deliberate intentions, while three critical aspects drive these intentions: attitude towards the behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control.

The extent of personified evaluation regarding specific conduct makes up this assessment dimension. Students show their positive view about starting and overseeing online businesses through this measure. People develop positive thoughts through the recognition of benefits, including self-determination, financial possibilities, skill improvement, and creative drive. An unfavourable outlook regarding starting an online business emerges from concerns about risks, along with fears of business failure and the academic workload that consumes time.

Family support can be conceptually understood as part of the social influence of the environment. The study gives paramount importance to family-based influences throughout its research structure. Students tend to conduct their actions similarly to their family beliefs when they notice their family supports entrepreneurial activities, in light of these apparent expectations. When relatives impose pressure to choose established jobs rather than starting a business, students might abandon their business development goals.

According to the Theory of Planned Behaviour model, an individual assesses their ability to carry out specific actions in this component. For students engaged in online entrepreneurship, their confidence in their capabilities, along with their professional knowledge base and access to necessary tools like technology, monetary backing, and mentoring, counts as perceived behavioural control. The family's support of resources and their creation of independent problem-solving conditions drive students to experience better behavioural self-control.

In this study, TPB is employed as a theoretical lens to help interpret the role of family support in students' engagement with online entrepreneurship. The theoretical framework provides extensive awareness of what drives university students toward online entrepreneurial activities during this digital age.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a quantitative descriptive research design to explore higher education students' perceptions of family support in relation to their engagement in online business. A quantitative research framework was selected because it generates numerical and objective information that statisticians can use for variable pattern recognition. Data collection from a large population enables objective statistical analyses, which improves research reliability and extends its applicability across different groups.

A standardised questionnaire was distributed to 200 university students. The research used purposive sampling to select participants from groups that included entrepreneurial enthusiasts and operators of online businesses. The research instrument consisted of sections which collected information about demographics and participant involvement in online business activities and their observations regarding family support.

The research questionnaire contained statements about family influences that assessed levels of parental backing, together with economic assistance, motivational backing, and whether family members acted as role models in entrepreneurship. The questionnaire required participants to rate each statement using a scale from 1 to 5.

4.0 ANALYSIS

3.1 Analysis of Quantitative Data

Data analysis included descriptive statistics in combination with reliability tests for examining the obtained data sets.

3.2 Descriptive Analysis

The researcher used descriptive statistics to present important data information through mean scores together with frequency distributions and standard deviations. The collected research data helped the researcher detect general patterns from pupils participating in online business ventures and understand how family dynamics shaped their behavior. Students who participate in online commercial activities demonstrate strong positive relationships with their families because their family support measures show consistently elevated mean scores in research results.

Using population data statistics, the study evaluated individual connections between dependent and independent variables and different demographics, such as age and gender, and academic areas of study. Various types of tables combined with charts delivered visual explanations, which helped readers understand the course information.

Table 1: Descriptive Analysis

N	COMPONENT	MEAN	STD DEVIATION
199	Family Influence 1	4.25	0.812
199	Family Influence 2	4.07	0.913
199	Family Influence 3	4.06	0.877

Table 1 above presents the descriptive statistics for three components of familial impact. The three items in this study gauge higher mean scores, where Family Influence 1 reaches the most elevated level at 4.25. Most students believe that family influences determine their decisions regarding business management. A weak variability in scores between 0.812

and 0.913 reveals that most student participants shared similar thoughts, although their experiences differed slightly. The table presents evidence for students who believe familial background plays a positive role in shaping their startup experience, thus impacting their online business participation rates.

3.3 Reliability Analysis (Cronbach's Alpha)

Cronbach's Alpha calculations by the researcher evaluated the questionnaire items for the "Family Influence" variable to determine their reliability level. The high Cronbach's Alpha scores prove that the chosen items successfully detect particular construct elements, which sustains the scale's dependability. The method serves as a crucial requirement to ensure authentic research findings will be reliable. The evaluation of questionnaire items for potential changes emerges from changes in the reliability score before additional study commences.

Multiple statistical analysis approaches work together as an extensive research method for complete analysis of a subject issue. The analysis of quantitative data helps researchers detect variable relationships and perform hypothesis tests to justify future research about student entrepreneurial behavior affected by family influences.

Table 2: Reliability Analysis

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Acceptable (>0.6)	Result
Family Influence	0.748	Yes	Reliable

Cronbach's Alpha displayed the outcomes of a reliability assessment in Table 2. The Family Influence value exceeds 0.6 therefore indicating statistical reliability while having a value of 0.748. The questionnaire items measuring family influence show internal consistency which establishes their ability to precisely capture respondent genuine thoughts.

Testing under the Family Influence variable proves that the selected components maintain validity to use in statistical analysis starting from correlation and moving toward regression assessment.

Most students consider their family relations as supportive resources during their entrepreneurial pursuit. The Cronbach's Alpha test confirms that the collected data maintain dependability as well as consistency. The results confirm the hypothesis (H3) that family influences substantially influence students to become involved with online entrepreneurship.

5.0 DISCUSSION

Researchers analysed the family-related aspects that shape students prospects for online business startup activities through the Theory of Planned Behaviour analytical method. Students make decisions with considerable influence from their families through the evaluation domains of attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioural control.

Perception of Online Entrepreneurship:

Students whose families offer support toward online business development tend to develop positive attitudes toward launching their own enterprises online. They believe entrepreneurship combines positive qualities of being desirable, along with excitement and being reachable. Students demonstrate increased motivation and better idea acceptance of entrepreneurship through positive feedback from their family members about their abilities and business success.

Family support makes students feel confident that essential people in their lives, including parents and brothers, endorse their business venture. By granting their support, family members provide students with social validation so they feel capable of following an entrepreneurial path since it fulfils their family's standards.

Students who receive financial help together with educational counselling from their families experience greater self-assurance to tackle entrepreneurship hurdles. Students who perceive their family members as supportive become more confident about their capability to manage a business; thus, they become more likely to start their own venture.

Research indicates that family support provides emotional backing to students together with strengthened self-efficacy and builds positive outlooks during goal achievement so students feel their goals are acceptable and reachable. The intentions to establish internet businesses are affected by three psychological elements that work together.

6.0 CONCLUSION

The students demonstrate their understanding of the perceived behavioural control aspect articulated in the TPB model. Students develop higher confidence in overcoming obstacles and reaching task success when their families provide them with monetary and informational resources and emotional support. An increased sense of control regarding entrepreneurial responsibilities leads students to develop entrepreneurial intentions, which results in increased participation.

The data stresses that family members play a vital role as essential participants in programs focused on entrepreneurship development and education. Schools, together with universities, must take familial influences into account along with their entrepreneurship programs to deliver optimal outcomes. The development of entrepreneurial systems for youth can receive significant improvements through initiatives that activate parental participation in entrepreneurial teaching or establish family-based student teamwork pathways.

The research findings establish that familial context affects student entrepreneurial development by actively forming their attitudinal, behavioural, and motivational tendencies toward entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurial self-efficacy improves through emotional help from family members, monetary backing, mentorship, and hands-on business practice opportunities. The understanding of family dynamics permits institutions, educators, and politicians to create personalised support structures, which generate digital entrepreneurs among the next generation.

The research highlights external motivating factors, which include internet infrastructure together with societal attitudes, as well as personal drive or passion, which act as driving forces independent of family influence. The mentioned factors retain their importance yet function together with the influence coming from family relationships. Students who receive constant positive family backing develop stronger self-confidence regarding their entrepreneurship potential while gaining defence against the internet business management challenges and uncertainties. Research demonstrates the importance of family-based entrepreneurial instruction, which begins in early childhood.

The discovered knowledge produces significant implications for educational institutions and both governmental bodies and programs for entrepreneurship development. Current student entrepreneurship promotional initiatives primarily focus on institution-based elements consisting of curriculum training units alongside access to incubators and university-supplied mentor programs. The research points out that these key factors might not deliver effective outcomes unless family influences are integrated into the analysis.

Upcoming entrepreneurial programs should implement an all-encompassing, family-inclusive strategy that encompasses students as well as their parents. Workshops or seminars that unite students with their parents will create mutual understanding, build entrepreneurial awareness, and support the home environment. Family involvement in entrepreneurial mentoring through policy support should form the basis for developing enduring entrepreneurial environments.

Students must experience a complete integration of teaching toward online entrepreneurship development. While institutional variables together with individual factors are vital elements, researchers should maintain the recognition of family dynamics and their impact. Research findings show that students who benefit from supportive families can realise their business concepts and overcome mental and monetary barriers while boosting digital entrepreneurship through generational transfer. Knowledge of family influence as an entrepreneurial factor leads to policy development that supports technological growth within evolving digital markets.

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8.0 CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in the paper.

9.0 AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

Author 1 contributed to the conceptualisation, research design, and writing of the original draft.

Author 2 was responsible for data collection, analysis, and validation of the results.

Author 3 provided supervision, critical review, and editing of the final manuscript.

All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

10.0 ETHICS STATEMENT

This research was conducted in accordance with the ethical standards of Universiti Poly-Tech Malaysia and adhered to the principles outlined in the Declaration of Helsinki. Ethical approval was obtained from the [Institutional Ethics Committee/Review Board] under reference number [Approval Number, if applicable]. All participants were informed about the purpose of the study and provided written informed consent prior to participation. Participants' privacy and confidentiality were strictly maintained, and the data collected were used solely for academic purposes.

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