

# ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION AND CAREER INTENTION: THE PERKS OF BEING A WOMAN STUDENT

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## ABSTRACT

*This paper explores the extent whether entrepreneurship education in its relation with female student's experiences contribute to their career intention. This paper employed a qualitative study with semi-structured interviews on 75 respondents in Makassar State University, Indonesia. The findings show that despite the existing knowledge on entrepreneurship education is perceived as gendered, this study results shows the benefits as the female students in higher education, since the cultural and religious teaching in the patriarchal values settings are support them in crafting their career intention. This will bring such theoretical and practical implication. For theoretical implication, this research fills the gaps in existing research. Moreover, for practical implications, it is expected that the decision makers in higher education settings should be able to preserve the privileges of the women students in order to achieve the equality in education, to create potential pool of talents in entrepreneurship field, to encourage the emerge of start-up companies initiated by women and lastly to overcome the unemployment problem.*

**Keywords:** Career Intention, Developing Countries, Entrepreneurship Education, Gender in Higher Education, Qualitative Method.

## INTRODUCTION

Unemployment has been a global problem. Indonesia is no different. Faced with escalating number of unemployment problem - around 7.6 million people (Utami, 2017) with a total population of over 250 million people per 2015 (Indonesian National Resilience Board, 2017) – Indonesia government emphasises the importance of entrepreneurship in overcoming the problem by enforcing every higher education institution to include entrepreneurship education as a compulsory course. If this remains unsolved, then Indonesia will be in a great loss as since year 2016 Indonesia commenced to participate in a regional economic forum, the ASEAN Economic Community.

Culturally, it is argued that Indonesian people tend to has a mind-set of being a government employee (public servants) rather than being an entrepreneur, since the public servants jobs offer such income stability and job security (Haeruddin, 2016). It is a national problem since the quantity of public servant jobs is limited and it is hard to get in. At the same time, entrepreneurship has been extensively hailed as important global issue. As for this paper,

the term entrepreneur is defined as “a person who starts a business, while the creative process including formulating ideas, developing business plans, applying skills and competencies and overcoming barriers is generally referred to as entrepreneurship” (Ghina, Simatupang & Gustomo, 2017, p. 12). Moreover, it is argued that entrepreneurship can minimize the unemployment problem by generating more income for people, particularly in the developing countries (Potishuk & Kratzer, 2017; Ghina, Simatupang & Gustomo, 2017). Therefore, many nations are putting their concerns in entrepreneurship education, not only in the primary schools but also in the higher education level (Malach & Kristová, 2017; Nabi et al., 2017). Entrepreneurship education is defined as a structured course offered in higher education level, which “contribute to the development of students’ entrepreneurial attitudes, abilities and skills and hence enhance their intentions to launch new ventures” (Piperopoulos & Dimov, 2015, p. 3).

In terms of context, Indonesia offers an abundant setting for the study of entrepreneurship education (EE) and its relation to women. It is argued that Indonesia is a largest Muslim country by population which not only practice the Islamic values but also remain coloured by more than 300 ethnic and traditions (Haeruddin, 2016) which predominantly embrace their patriarchal values (Azra, Afrianty & Hefner, 2007). The number of female students in Indonesia in 2018 is as much as 2,665,462 students compared with their male counterparts totalling 2,309,065 students (Ristekdikti, 2018) and all of the students at the tertiary education level in Indonesia are obliged to undertake the subject of Entrepreneurship during their studentship. This is assumed that the EE will encourage the career intention in entrepreneurship field.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Entrepreneurship Education and Career Intention

Several scholars claim that the career intention of entrepreneurship can be generated from the entrepreneurship education (Packham et al., 2010; Zhang, Duysters & Cloodt, 2014; Kusmintarti et al., 2016; Malach & Kristová, 2017; Potishuk & Kratzer, 2017). Entrepreneurship education is not merely focuses on theoretical aspects, but it should be focused toward practical aspects, hence the university students and alumni will possess such vision, preparation, experiences and support to actively engage in the entrepreneurial world. Moreover, career intention in entrepreneurship can be defined as the process of deciding to begin and to continue operating as an entrepreneur (Bird, 1988), Wu & Wu (2008) claims that entrepreneurial intention as a state of mind in term of starting new venture which is rejecting the traditional notion of career (Lau, 2002), whereas one would choose to be an entrepreneur where the promotion and career path is not available. This research use definition of entrepreneurial career intention as “a state of mind that people wish to create their own business and to act different roles in running their own business and to engage to entrepreneurial activities needed, during the period of his/her working life” (Sondari, 2014, p. 48).

### Women and Entrepreneurship

Globally, it is claimed that women hold significant role in entrepreneurship (Wilson, Kickul & Marlino, 2007). Specifically, in global emerging economies, 25% businesses were owned by women and the women and entrepreneurship topic is likely to be the focus by scholars

and educators (Wilson, Kickul & Marlino, 2007). However, current trends mask the fact that men continue to be more active in entrepreneurship than women worldwide.

Despite of the growing number of women' participation in the higher education level, it is argued that education remain gendered (Van Den Brink & Stobbe, 2009; Bussey, 2011; Haeruddin, 2016) and tend to disadvantage women in their career, particularly in the context where patriarchy values are embedded (Haeruddin, 2016). It is found that gender discrimination already takes place during the early years of academic education, when women are encouraged to pursue 'soft' subject areas instead of 'hard' and masculine subjects such as engineering and construction. A question emerged, is this gendered practices also take place in the entrepreneurial education at higher education level?

Several studies have been made in linking entrepreneurship education and gender. One of these studies is Westhead & Solesvik's study (2016). Their study focused on how the entrepreneurship education in students will stimulate such career intention at Ukrainian universities. It was found that female students were lacks of career intention and the advantages of entrepreneurship education were different for female and male students. This current paper tries to answer the research gap as addressed by Westhead & Solesvik's study (2016) which mentioned that the future research can confirm the generalizability of their findings by conducting evaluations of entrepreneurship education in different national contexts. Another attempt also conducted by Wilson, Kickul & Marlino (2007). Their study in USA context confirms that entrepreneurship is largely regarded as "male field" (p. 402) and female may be restraining their own entrepreneurial aspirations because these women felt that they do not possess adequate entrepreneurship skills and abilities. A study from Mehta et al. (2016) covers a topic on entrepreneurship education in a multi-cultural setting. Their study discovers that "an almost equal gender ratio was interesting when observing group dynamic, especially when different cultures were present" (p. 131). However, again, a question emerged, what is the shape of the female student's career intention when there are such a dominant patriarchy cultures and values are present? Therefore, based on aforementioned research results, this paper designed to perform research in a developing country such as Indonesia, which has significant differences in terms of cultural (dominant patriarchy) and religious teachings.

## **METHODOLOGY OF RESEARCH**

### **The Researcher's Role**

In this study, the researchers' roles consist of interviewers, observers, transcribers and analysers. Having worked in the academic profession as associate professor, assistant professor and lecture, authors were able to access the data from the respondents. Also, to minimize bias and misjudgement - which would hinder data collection and data analysis - it was important for the researchers to undertake bracketing. This step is also known as epoché in transcendental phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994). Moreover, researchers acted as the instrument of the investigation as their presence in the lived experiences of respondents are central (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

## **Theoretical Perspective**

To obtain better understanding of the female students' career intention, then a subjectivist stance is embraced. Subjectivist stance allows us to capture the ways in which female students vary in how they experience particular phenomenon, how they interpret particular events and how they react and interact with social environment in their career intention crafting. In detail, a phenomenological approach is used to collect and analyse data to provide an effective way of describing the ways in which the respondents make sense of their world and how their career intention is socially constructed (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012). The phenomenological approach allows us an understanding that helps us fulfil the aims and objectives of this research.

## **Sample**

In this study, authors employed a qualitative study as it configured to answer the research entrepreneurship education in its relation with female student's experiences and its relationship with career intention. Semi-structured interviews were performed whereas data saturation was reached on 75 respondents in Makassar State University, Indonesia during mid-2017. The selection of this institution is based on the university's vision which promotes the entrepreneurship education as the value added of the students and alumni. The interviews also involved several questions to stimulate demographic details including age, study details, family status, cultural background and social environments. Criteria for inclusion in this study were: 1) Women who are registered as an active student in the university; and 2) Passed the subject on entrepreneurship education. The entire interview recordings consist of 87 hours of interview, complemented with 655 pages of transcribed text. The data was then imported into the NVivo software package for coding. Before commencing the data collection, authors sought approval from ethic committee from the university research centre and all of the ethical considerations (requirements) were cleared. Also, to ensure interviewees' anonymity, pseudonyms were assigned and all identifying detail was removed from the transcripts.

## **Data Analysis**

To analyse data, this research employed the NVivo© (v. 10) program for qualitative research. Authors employed the code relationship feature in NVivo which enabled us to undertake coding into different conceptual categories. The analysis commenced without an explicit basis in existing theory. This meant that authors identified a multitude of initial codes (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012; Silverman, 2013). Authors examined and identified the meaning of the data by asking questions, making comparisons, looking for similarities and differences between the comments. In this way, similar comments (or incidents and events, i.e., phenomena) are grouped together to form categories. Moreover, multiple categories are then grouped into a relevant concept based on the pattern as seen in the following table:

<b>Table 1 CATEGORISATION</b>		
<b>Codes</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Grouping Concepts with Common Meaning</b>
Support from Family	Family Intervention & Religious Teaching	Women Students and Their Career Intention
Example (role model) from the Religious Teaching		
Self-reliance (autonomy)	Inner Motivation (generated from EE)	
Achievable vision of entrepreneurship		
Unfair treatment from peers	Gendered Practices in Higher Education	
Unfair treatment from lecturers		

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the data analysis, it was discovered that there are several major factors (coded themes; Table 1) in relation with entrepreneurship education, gender and their career intention. The themes were divided into 2 major categories, they are: The barrier and the enablers. The barrier is in the form of *gendered practices in higher education*. On the other hand, the enablers consist of 2 major categories, they are: 1) *Inner Motivation (generated from entrepreneurship education)* and 2) *family intervention & religious teaching*. These factors will be specifically elaborated in the following section.

### The Barrier

#### Gendered Practices in Higher Education

As claimed by previous research, entrepreneurship education remains gendered particularly in higher education level (Van Den Brink & Stobbe, 2009; Bussey, 2011; Haeruddin, 2016). It was found that female students who are enrolled in the compulsory subject of entrepreneurship education were experiencing gendered discrimination during the class. This discrimination can be in the form of assignment distributions and assignments' level of difficulty. This is exemplified by following quotes:

*I don't know whether if I can be a master in this subject, because I only got the easiest assignment in my group. I mean...come on, please give me responsibilities [because I can do it too] (CST).*

*My male friends will always assign me as the treasurer. They said that's a woman's work (JL).*

*People will always see a woman as the weakest [person] in a group. When I volunteering myself to work on the project, they rejected it and told me that I am not good enough to carry the responsibilities (RL).*

Another interesting finding in this theme is that the discrimination is not only come from their fellow students, but also from the instructor (lecturer).

*I used to appeal on my Entrepreneurship education final mark. I was given a moderate mark on my final test and assignments. I was sure that my works were great, because this male student who got an A+ was copying my works (DS).*

*The lecturer wanted me to be the secretary instead of being the group leader. He said that that's a perfect position for a female student (DO).*

Nevertheless, these gendered practices were used by the female students as their source of motivation to prove that they also can success in their career intention, if they have such opportunities to develop the entrepreneurship skills and knowledge. For example, DL mentioned that “okay, all of these men can be proud now, but I tell you this, I will be a boss at my own company in the next 5 years. Let us see who will laugh at the end” and “I will show to those who always underestimate me, who did not believe in my abilities that I can be a great entrepreneur in the future”.

The result confirms that the career intention is shaped by the entrepreneurship education as argued by several scholars (Packham et al., 2010; Zhang, Duysters & Cloodt, 2014; Kusmintarti et al., 2016; Malach & Kristová, 2017; Potishuk and Kratzer, 2017). At the same time, this study' finding contradicts results from Wilson, Kickul & Marlino's study (2007). Their study discovered that female students are restraining their own entrepreneurial aspirations because they felt that they do not possess adequate entrepreneurship skills and abilities, whereas this current study discovers the opposite, as the female students in this study were motivated to prove, which enable and restrengthen their career intention.

## **The Enablers**

### **Inner Motivation**

According to the respondents, the EE provides them to have such self-reliance (autonomy) in their personal life. This is perceived will bring them high level of confidence in having career in entrepreneurship as exemplified by the following quotes:

*I guess we never know, because before I commenced on this subject (EE), I never have such confidence in deciding my own life, not to mention my own future career (DPE).*

*I really appreciate the EE subject because it shows us how to be ourselves and at the same time we be productive as well as the male (JGO).*

Moreover, the achievable vision of entrepreneurship is playing role in one's career intention. It is discovered that the respondents are motivated by the realistic entrepreneurship vision. This is understandable because so far the vision of entrepreneurship is regarded as impossible to achieve and only men can achieve it and be successful entrepreneur.

*I used to think that only men can be successful person. But now I realize that EE is giving us an opportunity to be equal (with men) in order to be a successful entrepreneur (PFO).*

### **Family intervention & Religious teaching**

It is surprisingly discovered that family is playing significant role in determining a woman's career intention. In spite of their enrolment in the subject of entrepreneurship education, female students admitted that their family' role is somewhat supporting their career intention. Generally, all respondents claimed that at first their family (parents) was expecting these respondents to become a public servant.

*My mother always asks me to become a public servant, because it will bring prestige in our family (RL).*

*I was raised and told by my family to become government employee, as it offers a stability and flexibility in the working hours (OD).*

It is found that by being a public servant is perceived as something prestigious in Indonesian society. This finding confirms Haeruddin's work (2016), which claims that by becoming public servant, one can achieve a respectable status in Indonesian society. At the same time, as being a public servant, one can have a flexible working hour and stable monthly income. However, due to the strict selection of government employee recruitment, respondents admitted that their parents then become more realistic with their aspirations toward them. Respondents then encouraged by their parent to become an entrepreneur eventually.

*My father finally gave up. He told me to be an entrepreneur while my brother was told to be a soldier. My father told me that by becomes an entrepreneur, I still can take care of my parents and my family in the future (OF).*

*My family encourages me to become entrepreneur as I will be able to manage my own business, my own time and my own family. However, my parents do not want me to engage in any other male dominated entrepreneurial*

*activities, but my family want me to become an entrepreneurial in the more feminine field one such as online shopping (FP).*

According to the above quote from FP, despite of her parents wanted her to be an “*entrepreneur in the more feminine field one such as online shopping*”, her parents played significant role in shaping her career intention. It can be seen from the designated field as suggested by the parents. Also, this means that there are fields that destined to be women/female area and also several fields that are perceived as destined to be men/male domains. This is in line with the works from Bussey (2011) and Eccles et al. (2000). Particularly in Indonesian context, this finding confirms Zulfikar’s work (2013). He argues that Indonesian parents tend to dictate their children including their children’s private live (marriage, career and crucial decisions), whereas their children are expected to be able to conform to their parents’ will.

Furthermore, it is discovered that religious understanding also plays an important role in shaping a woman's career intentions. All the respondents with Muslim background mentioned that they believe that the entrepreneurship education is important for them; this is because Prophet Muhammad’s wife was an entrepreneur and rich businesswoman. This is exemplified in the following quote:

*My father now wants me to be an entrepreneur, because he says that Prophet Muhammad’s wife was also an entrepreneur. Therefore I should follow her path and at the same time this is my way devotion toward the Islam teachings (IH).*

As the patriarchy values in Indonesian society are strongly embedded, it was found that many women are not allowed to work outside the house, not to mention to be a breadwinner in a family. Therefore by gaining such skills and knowledge in entrepreneurship education, the respondents argued that it will benefit them because they do not have to work outside the house and at the same time they can take care of their domestic matters (family).

This paper’s result in discovering relationship between entrepreneurship education and female’s career intention which is moderated by religious teaching is claimed as a new contribution to the existing literature.

## **CONTRIBUTION TO ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION AND FUTURE DIRECTION**

The importance of entrepreneurship education coupled with positive intervention from family and supporting religious teaching has positive impacts on the career intention of women students in higher education level. The main implication of this study for education and training of entrepreneurs is that importance should be put on educators’ awareness on the gendered practices in higher education level and strict intervention should be implemented in order to minimize the gendered practices. Based on the results and the above discussion, the following conclusions can be drawn. First, despite of the gendered practices, entrepreneurship education has a positive and significant effects on female students’ career intention as the gendered practices were used by these students as the source of their motivation, which would drive their career intention. Secondly, regardless of the family intervention and strong patriarchy cultural

values, female students perceived that these factors would benefit their career intention in the future, not to mention the benefits brought by the religious teaching in crafting their career intention. These results generated further implications both theoretical and practical. From the theoretical perspective, this study not only confirms the results from previous literature, but also fills the gaps and at the same time it contributes to the extant literature in the field of entrepreneurship education. Next, the practical implication of this study is that decision and policy makers need to formulate such regulation in order to minimize the gendered practices in the entrepreneurship education, particularly in higher education level. By doing this, it is expected that the pool of human resource talent in entrepreneurship can be maximized regardless of their gender. Eventually, this will reduce the unemployment problem at national level as stated earlier.

Although there are contributions offered by this paper, several limitations are worth to be acknowledged. Firstly, as this study employed a qualitative method then it is difficult to provide a generalization. Further study needs to obtain a bigger picture in order formulating best practices in the entrepreneurship education, particularly in higher education level. Secondly, a time series data would be a complement for this study; therefore the female students' career intention can be explored in its progress to capture the holistic description of the studied phenomenon. Thirdly, a homogeneous respondent in terms of religious background was a limitation of this study. Therefore, to obtain a rich and complex data, future research may benefit from the female students' with various backgrounds in the data collection processes.

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