

Youth inclination towards agricultural entrepreneurship (Kecenderungan belia ke arah keusahawanan pertanian)

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Keywords: agricultural entrepreneurship, youth inclination

Abstract

Agricultural entrepreneurship can generate income, especially for the youth and is also perceived as a dimension which offers agricultural sustainability. Youth involvement in agricultural entrepreneurship can reduce unemployment, improve food supply and overcome poverty. Indirectly, it can reduce the country's reliance on food imports and ensure food security. Despite the important role played by the young entrepreneurs in driving the development of agriculture sector, there is still lack of in-depth research and efforts to view it from the perspective of youth and agriculture. Hence, this study examined the factors of inclination of Malaysian youth towards agricultural entrepreneurship. Empirical tests such as factor analysis and logistic regression model were carried out on data gathered from 757 questionnaires. Results demonstrated that majority of the respondents have a positive inclination towards entrepreneurship. The knowledge variable has the most statistically significant relationship on youth inclination towards agricultural entrepreneurship. Therefore, dissemination of information, particularly through education is important to increase knowledge of youth towards entrepreneurship.

Introduction

Entrepreneurship has been acknowledged as a main driver of economic development by encouraging growth, innovation and technology adoption as well as poverty reduction (United Nation 2013). Countries that are more focused on entrepreneurship and self-employment such as the United States, has witnessed higher economic growth (Soete and Stephen 2004). In line with the national agenda, the Malaysian government has continuously encouraged the involvement of people especially youth in entrepreneurship. Involvement of people working in the field of entrepreneurship has been able to generate economic

growth and create jobs which in turn reduces the unemployment rate (Abdullah and Mustapha 2009). It is also one of the economic strategies to perpetuate the country's competitiveness in dealing with the increasing trend of globalisation (Venkatachalam and Waqif 2005).

Based on a statistical report from Malaysia Labour Force Survey in 2014, the number of entrepreneurs has shown a marginal increase. During the period of 1982 to 2012, the number of entrepreneurs increased from 1.3 million to 2.6 million. This trend is in line with the increasing number of employed person from 5.25 million in 1982 to 12.72

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million in 2012. However, the growth percentage of entrepreneurs in Malaysia is relatively small, not exceeding 26% of the total employed. This percentage also shows a declining trend, from 25.1% in 1982 to 20.4% in 2012. Furthermore, in terms of age, those in the age group of 35 to 64 years are more likely to become entrepreneurs (Labour Force Survey of Entrepreneurs 2009). This suggests that the participation of youths aged 15 – 34 years old in entrepreneurial activity is low, including in the agriculture sector. This is reflected in the statistical report of Malaysia Selected Agricultural Indicator 2013 which shows that the total employed person in the agriculture sector decreased from 31.2% in 1982 to 12.6% in 2012. It was also stated in a previous study that most of Malaysian farmers are pioneered by people aged 55 years and above. Meanwhile, for those in the age range of 18 – 40 years old, their involvement is only at 26% (Zaleha 2007). These old farmers exist due to the migration of young people to the city and the negative acceptance by university graduates on agriculture (Abdullah and Mustapha 2009). As a result, the workforce in the agriculture sector is insufficient and leads to abandoned farmland.

In the meantime, the rate of youth unemployment especially graduates are increasing. Statistical data from the Department of Statistical 2011 demonstrates that the number of youth unemployment is increasing from 320.3 thousand in 2007 to 343.0 thousand in 2010 and the number keeps on increasing from time to time. Hence, in transforming Malaysia into an entrepreneurial nation and to overcome the problem of youth unemployment, the government has implemented various measures to encourage and cultivate youths' interests to engage in entrepreneurial activities. They consist of the formation of Malaysian Global Innovation and Creativity Centre (MaGIC), 1Malaysia Entrepreneurs (1MeT) and *Tabung Usahawan Siswazah* (TUS). These transformation programmes

have resulted in the emergence of new technologies in agricultural practices whereby the agriculture sector has been made more attractive to young people. This should have been one of the factors that can attract more young people to participate in this sector. However, it remains largely ignored and not favoured. Therefore, this study aimed to determine the factors that influence the inclination of youth to participate in agricultural entrepreneurship.

Literature review

Labour Force Survey of Entrepreneur in Malaysia (2009) stated that an employer or individuals who are self-employed can be classified as entrepreneurs. According to Kirzner's theory, an entrepreneur is not someone who acts in a situation of given prices and information but someone who purposively change prices and quantities (Douhan et al. 2007). They create something with the intention to make a profit and at the same time, they accept the risks and uncertainties associated with their enterprises. Even so, for agricultural entrepreneurs or agropreneurs, Richards and Bulkley (2007) described them as those who embody all activities that help farmers adapt to a free market economy. In terms of young agropreneurs, there are no specific definition in previous literature.

Normally, youth refer to male or female who are young, energetic and enable to contribute to the country's development (Bahaman et al. 2010; Abdullah and Sulaiman 2013). The United Nation describes youth as those who are aged between 15 – 24 years old. In contrast with Malaysia, Malaysia's National Youth Development Policy has defined youth as young people aged between 15 and 40 years old. Hence, in the context and purpose of this study, young agropreneurs refer to the involvement of youngsters in entrepreneurship based on agricultural activities, whose age ranges between 15 – 40 years.

Youth are reluctant and less inclined to work in the agriculture sector because there is a conventional view that work in the agriculture sector is rough, the pay is low and does not promise a bright future (Abdullah and Sulaiman 2013). A study done by Abdullah et al. (2012) proved that youths believe that agriculture is not a professional and attractive job.

According to Malaysia's current Prime Minister Dato' Seri Mohd Najib bin Tun Abdul Razak, the low involvement of entrepreneurs in Malaysia is caused by a few constraints such as outdated production technology, lack of access to funds and capital, and limited product markets (Economic Empowerment of the Indigenous Council 2013). This is reinforced by a study from Soete and Stephen (2004) who explains the main obstacle that entrepreneurs face is during the early financing stage. Normally, young people face difficulties in acquiring finance because they are often seen as a risky investment (International Labour Office 2006). This is due to their lack of self-sustaining resources, the absence of a substantive history, sufficient collateral, and guarantee to secure loans or lines of credit. Moreover, funds requiring less or no collaterals often charge significantly higher interest rates and fees.

There are studies that have examined the relationship between sociodemography and family background on individual's inclination towards entrepreneurship (D'Silva et al. 2010; Zain et al. 2010; Keat et al. 2011; Yussof et al. 2011; Abdullah and Sulaiman 2013). Men were found to have more positive attitude towards agricultural activities compared to women (Haugen and Brandth 1994; Strohm and Hoeffler 2006). However, study by Keat et al. (2011) gave a contradict reason. They found that both men and women have the same inclination towards agricultural activities.

According to Kirkwood (2007), family and personal experiences provide a higher inclination towards entrepreneurship. He explained that most women entrepreneurs

are highly dependent on their parents for advice, support and encouragement, while some men prefer to be independent and free from their parents (especially fathers) or try to compete with them. Normally, fathers play the primary role in making of decisions.

Abdullah and Sulaiman (2013) found that, apart from attitude, acceptance and knowledge, other factors such as family and government support, and the intensity of promotion also play a role in influencing youth involvement in agricultural activities. Although numerous studies have been conducted, studies on the entrepreneurship from the perspective of youth and agriculture are still less profound.

Methodology

This study employed a quantitative approach using questionnaire forms which was developed based on the research objectives. The five-point Likert Scale ranges from 1 = Strongly disagree to 5 = Strongly agree was selected to ascertain the data collected from respondents was as accurate as possible.

Factor analysis and logistic regression model were used as the two methods of analysis. Data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) software. Factor analysis was conducted as a factor extraction method to identify 32 items for youth inclination towards agricultural entrepreneurship. However, to assess the appropriateness of using factor analysis, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were initially performed.

Logistic regression model was adopted to examine the relationship between youth and factors of inclination. This is because the dependent variable of this study (youth inclination) is a binary or dichotomous variable which means that, the dependent variable has only two values, where 1 denotes yes (inclined) and 0 denotes no (not inclined). Logistic regression has the advantage of interpretability of the parameters. The parameter estimations of

logistic regression are also fully efficient (Chatterjee and Simonoff 2012). Following Gujarati and Porter (2009), the logistic model adopted is specified as:

$$L_i = \ln \left(\frac{P_i}{1 - P_i} \right) = z_i$$

$$= \beta_1 + \beta_2 X_i + \mu_i$$

L_i refers to the logit which explains the odds ratio. It is not only linear in X_s , but also linear in β_s . The logit becomes negative as the odds ratio is less than 1 and it becomes positive as the odds ratio is more than 1 (Peng and So 2002).

Therefore, to determine factors that influence the inclination of youth to participate in agricultural entrepreneurship, the model specification by Nor Amna A'liah and Said (2014) were used. The model estimated by Nor Amna A'liah and Said (2014) focuses on the relationship between labour force participation and demographic behaviour. Meanwhile for this study, youth inclination and demographic behaviour are the focus and a few more variables are added based on the main factors or variables taken from factor analysis. Hence, the model used is as follows:

$$Inc = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{gender} + \beta_2 \text{area} + \beta_3 \text{MS} + \beta_4 \text{EC} + \beta_5 \text{AB} + \beta_6 \text{DO} + \beta_7 \text{MO} + \beta_1 \sum \text{OV} + \mu_i$$

Inc = Youth inclination towards agricultural entrepreneurship (1 = Yes and 0 = No)

Gender = Gender (1 = Male and 0 = Female)

Area = Area (1 = Urban and 0 = Rural)

MS = Marital Status (1 = Married and 0 = Otherwise)

EC = Entrepreneurship courses (1 = Yes and 0 = No)

AB = Agricultural background (1 = Yes and 0 = No)

DO = Father's occupation (1 = Self-employed and 0 = Otherwise)

MO = Mother's occupation (1 = Self-employed and 0 = Otherwise)

$\sum \text{OV}$ = Other variables extracted from analysis factor

β_0 = Intercept

β_n = Coefficient of independent variable

μ_i = Stochastic disturbance term

Results and discussion

Simple random sampling was chosen where 900 youths (aged 15 – 40 years) in Peninsular Malaysia were selected as the respondents. Samples were collected by zones which comprised of southern, northern, east coast and central region. Out of the 900 sets of survey questionnaires distributed, 757 questionnaires returned were usable for analysis. The rest were not taken into account due to incomplete information and the age limit did not meet the criteria of youth, i.e. outside the range of 15 to 40 years.

The findings showed that 71% of youth tend to become agricultural entrepreneurs (Table 1). This high percentage clearly shows that agricultural entrepreneurship has the potential to be developed more especially among youth.

The KMO is 0.913, which is greater than 0.5 and Bartlett's decision is significant ($p < 0.05$). Hence, the variables are deemed suitable for factor analysis (Table 2).

Result from factor analysis (FA) found 23 significant problems out of the 32 cases, where the value of each item

Table 1. Respondents' profile (n = 757)

	Percentage
Gender	
Male	42
Female	58
Age groups	
15 – 20	22
21 – 30	43
31 – 40	35
Locality	
Urban	62
Rural	58
Inclination towards agricultural entrepreneurship	
Yes	71
No	29

was greater than 0.5. Out of the 23 cases, five major components were extracted through varimax rotation where all the five of these components explain 63.7% of variance in the study (*Appendix 1*). Five factor components were categorised as knowledge, interest, facilities provided by the government, the role of government in promoting the agriculture sector and risks in agricultural enterprises. Through FA, the result showed that knowledge in the agriculture sector was a key factor that drove the inclination of youth to participate in agriculture entrepreneurship.

The five main components extracted from FA were then incorporated into a logistic regression model as additional variables. However, interest factor was dropped due to insignificant result. *Table 3* shows the logistic analysis of the inclination of youth towards agricultural entrepreneurs. An exponential transformation [Exp(B)] of the logistic can be explained as the proportional change in odds of dependent

variables for a unit change in explanatory variable (Nam 1991; Nor Amna A'liah and Said 2014). If the exp(B) or also known as odds ratio is greater than 1, it exhibits an increase in inclination of youth, while if the exp(B) is less than 1, it indicates a decrease in inclination of youth.

As a final result, the study showed 71% of the likelihood of youth to engage in entrepreneurial activities are influenced by the following factors: gender, father's occupation, agriculture background, entrepreneurship courses, marital status, knowledge, government's role and risk. The output from regression analysis indicated that men significantly have higher inclination to engage in agricultural entrepreneurship whereby the probability of an increase in this trend was two-fold [exp(B) = 1.622]. It is probably due to men being more exposed to agricultural activities (D'silva et al. 2010). Moreover, even though women have become similar to men in many important aspects such as vocational training, knowledge and union membership, they are still heavily involved and responsible for domestic work (Haugen and Brandth 1994).

Besides, a self-employed parent or father affects his children's tendency to become agricultural entrepreneurs. An increase of 1 self-employed father causes

Table 2. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin		0.913
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	8061.172
	df	253
	Sig.	0.000

Table 3. Regression results for youth inclination towards agricultural entrepreneurship

	Coefficient	Exp(B)
Gender (1 = Male; 0 = Female)	0.484**	1.622
Father's occupation (1 = Self-employed; 0 = Otherwise)	0.390*	1.476
Mother's occupation (1 = Self-employed; 0 = Otherwise)	-0.027	0.973
Agriculture background (1 = Yes; 0 = No)	1.123***	3.363
Entrepreneurship courses (1 = Yes; 0 = No)	0.747***	2.110
Marital status (1 = Married; 0 = Single)	-0.952***	0.386
Locality (1 = Urban; 0 = Rural)	0.031	1.031
Knowledge about entrepreneurship and agriculture	0.489***	1.631
Facilities provided by the government	0.109	1.115
Role of government in promoting the agriculture sector	0.170*	1.186
Risk in establishing farming enterprises	-0.417***	0.659

*Significant at 10%, **Significant at 5%, ***Significant at 1%

1.476 times increases in youth inclination. This finding is consistent with Van Auken et al. (2006) who indicates that father is the most significant role model in influencing children's career intention. This means that parents who are self-employed or owns a business will be able to convince their children to manage businesses and become entrepreneurs as well. The study also shows that youth having a background in agriculture and experience in entrepreneurial courses have a high tendency to choose entrepreneurship as their occupation and source of income. This is partly because they already have existing knowledge about agriculture and business management. Their knowledge is an asset to them in managing a business, in optimising resources, as well as developing proper business contact or network.

On the other hand, marital status provides a negative result. This means that individuals who are married are less likely to engage in agricultural entrepreneurship. This might be due to married youths preferring to seek greener pastures in other sectors such as industrial and services sector that promises better return and is perceived as more secured. Married youths usually have a huge responsibility to support their families, so they hesitate to set up an agriculture enterprise that may not provide them with a fixed and stable income. It is reinforced in the study by Hyytia and Kola (2006) that stated income as the main factor which encourages individuals to be involved in agricultural activities.

For the factors that were added from factor analysis, the result shows that knowledge and the role of government in promoting the agriculture sector is positively associated with youth inclination. According to the International Labour Office (2006), the level of knowledge and familiarity with the concept of entrepreneurship are the factors that encourage youth to engage in a business and become entrepreneurs. Knowledge is a very important factor which provides a spill over effect on

regional innovation system. Education is also the factor that drives the creation of new ventures, technology and knowledge transfer (Soete and Stephan 2004). Through knowledge, entrepreneurial attitude, behaviour, skills and enterprise awareness can be strengthened among youth in Malaysia.

In terms of government's role, various programmes have been implemented by the government since independent. Most of these programmes ultimately lead to an increase of productivity for entrepreneurs and indirectly generate higher income. In addition, the risk factor exhibits a negative result. This demonstrates a decrease in youth inclination to engage in agricultural entrepreneurship with the growing risks of handling a business. This result is supported by a research done by Abdullah et al. (2012), which indicated that high risks obstruct youth to engage in this sector.

Conclusion

The potential of agricultural entrepreneurship engagement among youth is high if they have agriculture background, attend entrepreneurship courses, are single, have low risks and self-employed father. Around 71% of youth are interested to engage in agricultural entrepreneurship. Hence, Malaysia is on the right track in promoting agricultural entrepreneurship as one of its transformation agenda. A comprehensive overview and knowledge about entrepreneurship and the agriculture sector play an important role in influencing the inclination of youth towards entrepreneurship. However, risks such as financial problems are among the factors impeding their involvement.

Therefore, efforts should be made to cope with this problem. It is recommended that knowledge on agriculture entrepreneurship be included in school syllabus or university courses. This would lead to an increase in youth awareness and acceptance. Besides, other strategies and initiatives to improve and

expand the access to finance should be developed. If problems and obstacles can be overcome, the government's target to increase entrepreneurship among youth in the agriculture sector can be achieved and at the same time, may indirectly solve food supply shortages and address issues of unemployment.

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Abstrak

Keusahawanan pertanian boleh menjana pendapatan terutamanya golongan belia dan juga dilihat sebagai satu dimensi yang menawarkan pertanian mampan. Penglibatan belia dalam aktiviti keusahawanan dalam bidang pertanian boleh mengurangkan pengangguran, meningkatkan bekalan makanan negara dan mengatasi kemiskinan. Secara tidak langsung, ia dapat mengurangkan kebergantungan negara kepada import makanan dan memastikan keselamatan makanan pada masa akan datang. Di sebalik peranan penting yang dimainkan oleh usahawan dalam memacu pembangunan sektor pertanian, kajian yang mendalam dan usaha untuk melihatnya daripada perspektif belia dan pertanian masih kurang. Oleh itu, kajian ini mengkaji faktor kecenderungan belia terhadap keusahawanan pertanian di Malaysia. Ujian empirikal seperti analisis faktor dan model regresi logistik dijalankan ke atas data yang dikumpul daripada 757 soal selidik. Keputusan menunjukkan bahawa majoriti responden mempunyai kecenderungan positif terhadap keusahawanan pertanian. Pemboleh ubah pengetahuan didapati mempunyai hubungan yang paling ketara dan merupakan faktor utama kecenderungan belia ke arah keusahawanan pertanian. Oleh itu, penyebaran maklumat terutamanya melalui pendidikan adalah penting untuk meningkatkan pengetahuan belia ke arah keusahawanan.

Appendix 1. The result of factor analysis

	Component				
Agricultural entrepreneurship can boost the economy	.811				
The agriculture sector is a good sector and has potential for growth	.776				
Agricultural entrepreneurship can overcome the food shortage in Malaysia	.763				
Agricultural entrepreneurship could create more jobs	.757				
Agricultural entrepreneurship is a noble profession	.723				
I was impressed with their success in running their own companies	.691				
In my opinion, the agriculture sector can provide high returns to me	.625				
Being an agricultural entrepreneur will give me great satisfaction	.753				
I have a high chance of success if I run an agriculture enterprise	.718				
I know the ins and outs needed to become an entrepreneur	.709				
I am interested in becoming an entrepreneur if i were given the opportunity	.708				
I am interested in becoming an entrepreneur if i were given the necessary resources	.687				
The agriculture sector attracts me	.613				
It is very easy to start and maintain agricultural enterprises	.592				
I am glad to acquire funds and financial schemes offered by the government		.796			
Infrastructure and retail space provided by the government have increased		.761			
I am pleased to obtain advisory services from government departments/agencies		.743			
The government managed to play an important role in promoting entrepreneurship in agriculture		.685			
Continuous exposure to entrepreneurship is essential in improving individual's involvement			.749		
Continuous exposure on the direction of the agriculture sector is essential in improving individual's involvement in entrepreneurship			.713		
More programmes and financial assistance from the government will help individuals to start their enterprises			.585		
Among the career options available, entrepreneurship is my last option				.768	
Becoming an entrepreneur in the agriculture sector is highly risky				.750	
Eigenvalue	7.669	2.486	2.191	1.289	1.025
Variance ratio (%)	33.342	10.809	9.528	5.606	4.456
Cummulative variance ratio (%)	33.342	44.152	53.680	59.286	63.742