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(AIJBES)**www.aijbbs.com**DETERMINANTS OF YOUTH-PRENEURIAL READINESS FOR
SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP: PROPOSING A CONCEPTUAL
MODEL**

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Abstract:

Social entrepreneurship has increasingly been recognized as a dynamic approach for addressing various social, environmental, and economic issues. Despite the growing prominence of social entrepreneurship, Malaysia is experiencing a noticeable disparity in youth participation in this field. This conceptual study aims to examine the factors influencing the readiness of young individuals to participate in social entrepreneurship, with the objective of empowering both youth and the broader community. Previous researches have established that critical factors such as empathy, prior experience, entrepreneurship education, and self-efficacy are instrumental in shaping the readiness of youth to engage in social entrepreneurship. This study is expected to provide significant insights, which will serve as the foundation for developing a comprehensive framework specifically designed for Malaysian youth. It is intended to clarify the complex dynamics involved, revealing both the facilitating and inhibiting factors affecting Malaysian youth's participation in social entrepreneurship. This framework will provide policymakers with essential insights to foster a more supportive environment for promoting social entrepreneurship among Malaysian youth. These efforts are ultimately aligned with the broader goals set forth in the National Entrepreneurship Policy 2020-

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2030, which seeks to position Malaysia as a leading example of entrepreneurial excellence by the year 2030.

Keywords:

Social Entrepreneurship Readiness, Empathy, Entrepreneurship Education, Prior Experience, Self-Efficacy

Introduction

Social entrepreneurship has a double-edged effect; while promoting sustainable economic development, it creates social values (Wang, 2022). This orientation is instrumental for sustainable development and stimulating innovation, thereby promoting societal progress and welfare. In Malaysia, social entrepreneurship is at a developing stage whereby social enterprises continue to grow (MEDAC, 2022). In 2019, ESCAP and the British Council estimated that Malaysia had roughly 20,749 social enterprises, which included MSMEs, NGOs, and co-operatives. Social enterprises account for around 2% of Malaysia's total commercial establishments, which number over nine million. Despite government assistance, Malaysia's social entrepreneurship ecosystem is still in its infancy stage, unlike cooperatives and the rest of the ecosystem. Therefore, the number of social enterprises has not yet reached the target set by the Government for 2025.

Despite the growth in the social entrepreneurship sector, Malaysia also confronts two fundamental challenges. First, there is a notable lack of participation by young people in social entrepreneurship. Mohd. Riza, (2021) asserts that while young participation in social entrepreneurship is on growing, it remains comparatively low due to reasons such as insufficient information regarding social businesses. According to updated statistics, ESCAP and the British Council (2019) found that the participation rate of individuals aged 31-40, commonly referred to as Gen Y or late youth, in social entrepreneurship, is higher compared to those aged 18-25, known as Gen Z or early youth. Ong et al., (2021) assert that youth engagement in social entrepreneurship promotes personal development and further advances the community's overarching social and economic goals. Figure 1 presents the percentage of social enterprise leadership by gender and age.

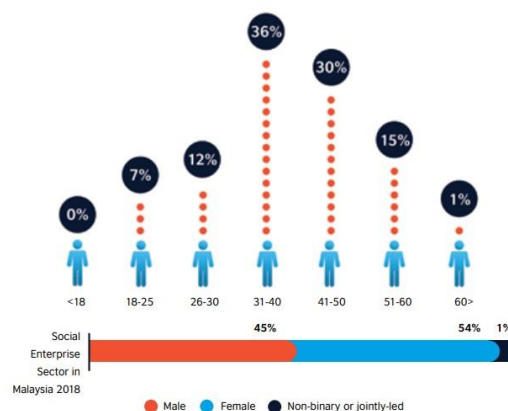


Figure 1: The Percentage of Social Enterprise Leadership by Gender and Age

Source: ESCAP & Council (2019)

Another challenge is a significantly low level of awareness, outreach, and understanding of the social entrepreneurship concept. Although the sector holds considerable potential for fostering positive social change, awareness and understanding among key stakeholders – including potential entrepreneurs, investors, policymakers, and the public, remain insufficient. It has been reported by Serojai et al. (2021) that these issues are particularly severe in Sabah and Sarawak, where awareness of social enterprises is markedly low, and few programs exist to enhance capacity or offer accreditation. According to Ramasamy et al., (2024), social entrepreneurship education acts as a catalyst for creating an awareness of social responsibility and ethical leadership in young people. By immersing themselves in the complexities of social issues and connecting with various stakeholders, young people better understand their position as change agents and the ethical implications of their actions. ESCAP and the British Council have also identified similar limitations in the data depicted in Figure 2.

Common challenges



Figure 2: Social Entrepreneurship in Malaysia

Source: ESCAP & British Council (2019)

Based on the two major challenges discussed, it is essential to examine the readiness of youth to engage in social entrepreneurship. Therefore, this study will focus on individuals aged 15 to 40 years old. Within this demographic, social entrepreneurship is recognized as a promising strategy for advancing youth development. As mentioned by Tam et al. (2021), it is conceptualized as a transformative business approach designed to address social issues through innovative and sustainable methods.

Zamry and Sahid (2021) viewed entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship as viable career options that enhance career readiness among young people. The benefits of these fields extend beyond improving the abilities and skills of prospective youth; they also increase their confidence as they enter the workforce. These approaches address challenges such as the mismatch between youths' skills and job requirements, as well as the shortage of opportunities due to economic crises. Additionally, Othman et al. (2012) described that social entrepreneurship is becoming increasingly popular among Malaysian undergraduate students. Consequently, it is essential to understand the factors that influence the readiness of young people to become social entrepreneurs.

Past studies have identified empathy (Zulkifle & Sarhan, 2022), prior experience (Zulkifle & Sarhan, 2022), entrepreneurship education (Cahyani et al., 2022), and self-efficacy (Zulkifle &

Sarhan, 2022) as the four main factors that could enhance social entrepreneurship readiness among young people. However, only a limited number of studies have integrated these four factors into a comprehensive research model that explains social entrepreneurship readiness. Table 1 summarizes relevant research by various authors, specifically examining the relationships between empathy (E), prior experience (PE), and entrepreneurship education (EE), with self-efficacy (SE) considered as a mediator in the Social Entrepreneurship Readiness Model. The present study, as detailed in Table 1, aims to address the research gap by focusing on the relationships between empathy and self-efficacy, entrepreneurship education and self-efficacy, and prior experience and self-efficacy, as well as the mediating role of self-efficacy between entrepreneurship education and social entrepreneurship readiness.

Table 1: The Relationship of Four Select Latent Constructs with Social Entrepreneurship Readiness in The Past Study and Proposed Study

No.	Past Study	E – SE	E – SER	EE – SE	EE – SER	PE – SE	PE – SER	EE – SE – SER
1.	Adebusuyi & Adebusuyi, (2023)	-	-	-	-	/	-	-
2.	Sulistyowati et al., (2022)	-	-	-	/	-	-	-
3.	Singh (2020)	-	-	/	-	-	-	-
4.	Younis et al. (2021)	/	-	-	-	-	-	-
5.	Rakicevic et al. (2022)	-	-	-	/	-	-	-
6.	Cahyani et al. (2022)	-	-	-	/	-	-	-
7.	Aziz et al. (2023)	-	/	-	-	-	/	-
8.	Adeniyi (2023)	-	-	-	/	-	-	-
9.	Zulkifle & Sarhan (2022)	-	-	-	-	-	-	/
	Present Study	/	/	/	/	/	/	/

Note: Empathy (E), Self-efficacy (SE), Entrepreneurship Education (EE), Prior-experience (PE), Social Entrepreneurship Readiness (SER)

The primary objective of this study is to develop a new conceptual model that examines social entrepreneurship readiness in a comprehensive manner. This study specifically targets youth entrepreneurs rather than the general population of entrepreneurs in Malaysia. Focusing on this demographic is essential for understanding the unique challenges and opportunities faced by young entrepreneurs as they prepare to engage in social enterprises within Malaysia's socio-economic context. This study aims to identify adaptive factors that can effectively enhance and support the readiness of these young social entrepreneurs. To achieve this, it seeks to create a novel model of youth social entrepreneur readiness by incorporating several critical constructs: empathy, prior experience, entrepreneurship education, and social entrepreneur self-efficacy. The findings are expected to offer valuable insights for developing a framework tailored to youth social entrepreneurship. This framework will assist policymakers in understanding both the facilitating and hindering factors affecting Malaysian youth, ultimately supporting the advancement of social entrepreneurship and community development. This research aligns with the objectives of the National Entrepreneurship Policy 2020-2030, aiming to contribute to Malaysia's goal of becoming a leading entrepreneurial nation by 2030.

Literature Review

Social Entrepreneurship – Social Entrepreneur Readiness

Social entrepreneurship is a unique business approach, and readiness for social entrepreneurship involves a unique behaviour of an individual in which they create sustainable public wealth, rather than simply focusing on their success and performance (Pangriya, 2019). Ferreira et al. (2017) explain that entrepreneurship theory focuses on economic growth, whereas social entrepreneurship theory argued by Pangriya (2019) focuses on social development through economic sustainability. Social entrepreneurs can create a venture that aims to create social impact and social change (Saebi et al., 2019). The readiness of youth for social entrepreneurship is influenced by their ability to identify environmental opportunities and leverage their capabilities and resources effectively. Hwee Nga and Shamuganathan (2010) emphasized that social entrepreneurial readiness depends on the mindset of youth toward social values, social welfare, and entrepreneurial activities. Olugbola (2017) notes that entrepreneurs are more likely to engage positively in social entrepreneurial activities if they perceive themselves as prepared and capable of contributing to society through successful ventures. Several factors can affect young people's readiness for entrepreneurial activities. Social entrepreneurial readiness among youth is created by analyzing and interpreting their society, environment, lifestyle, and social attachments (Coduras et al., 2016). Furthermore, educational and training institutions and institutional environments can play an essential role in encouraging entrepreneurship among youth (Adeniyi, 2023).

Empathy

Empathy is defined as the ability to intellectually recognize and emotionally share the feelings of others (Hockerts, 2017). In the context of entrepreneurship, empathy includes both cognitive and affective processes that involve understanding and appreciating the thoughts, emotions, and experiences of others (Korte et al., 2018). Bublitiz et al. (2021) mentioned that youth social entrepreneurs typically exhibit a high degree of empathy, which includes understanding others' thoughts, sharing their emotions, and responding with kindness and concern. Social empathy, along with education and training in both formal and informal settings, significantly influences individual entrepreneurial intentions and subsequently impacts social entrepreneurial readiness (Zulfiqar et al., 2019). Therefore, individuals with a high degree of empathy may have high social-entrepreneurial self-efficacy (Younis et al., 2021). Bacq and Alt (2018) argue that high levels of empathy enhance social entrepreneurial self-efficacy by diminishing an individual's visceral response to the challenges faced by beneficiaries of social entrepreneurship. Zulfiqar et al. (2019) hypothesized that empathy affects Social Entrepreneurship Readiness (SER) through self-efficacy, considering both empathy and self-efficacy as precursors of SER. Empathy has been widely recognized for its positive influence on Social Entrepreneurial Intentions (SEI) within the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) perspective (Hockerts, 2017). Based on these considerations, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Empathy has a significant positive effect on self-efficacy.

H2: Empathy has a significant positive effect on Social Entrepreneurship Readiness.

Entrepreneurship Education

Entrepreneurship education involves a learning process designed to develop skills and knowledge necessary for managing a business (Ambarita & Suwatno, 2024). Numerous studies have highlighted the impact of entrepreneurship education on entrepreneurial readiness (Kamilah & Nasori, 2022; Farkhan, 2019). It has been shown that entrepreneurship education

enhances students' business knowledge and skills, thereby motivating them to start their own businesses upon graduation (Zulfiqar et al., 2021). In addition, Othman et al., (2012) stated that entrepreneurship education helps develop students' entrepreneurial knowledge, skills, and mindset, which are critical for entrepreneurial readiness. Furthermore, Rakicevic et al. (2022) found that students who participate in entrepreneurship education demonstrate higher levels of entrepreneurial readiness, increased intention, improved abilities, and greater appeal towards entrepreneurship. Additionally, entrepreneurship education has been positively correlated with entrepreneurial self-efficacy (Singh, 2020). Cahyani et al. (2022) similarly concluded that entrepreneurship education significantly enhances entrepreneurial readiness. This type of education boosts students' entrepreneurial self-efficacy, reflecting their confidence in their ability to mobilize economic resources for new ventures (Adeniyi, 2023). Based on these insights, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: Entrepreneurship education has a significant positive effect on self-efficacy.

Prior Experience

Prior experience refers to having direct contact with social issues or previous involvement as a volunteer with social organizations (Krisnaningtyas et al., 2022). According to Aziz et al. (2023), prior experience has a significant positive relationship with social entrepreneurship readiness among undergraduates in Malaysia. This type of experience influences entrepreneurial readiness through entrepreneurial self-efficacy by providing opportunities to observe and learn from experienced entrepreneurs (Zhao et al., 2005). However, the impact of an entrepreneur's prior experience on a startup's performance can vary, depending on the specific context and the nature of their previous roles (Shi & Weber, 2020). Hockerts (2017) explains that prior experience, including entrepreneurial experience, education, and engagement with social issues, serves as a contextual factor influencing self-efficacy and outcome expectations. Similarly, Lent and Brown (2008) suggested that personal factors and learning experiences significantly affect self-efficacy. Based on these considerations, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H4: Prior experience has a significant positive effect on self-efficacy.

H5: Prior experience has a significant positive effect on social entrepreneurship readiness.

Social Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy

Albert Bandura defines self-efficacy as individuals' beliefs in their capabilities to achieve specific performance levels, which influence events affecting their lives (Gerbino, 2020). In the context of social entrepreneurship, Hockerts (2017) describes social entrepreneurial self-efficacy as the belief that one can effectively contribute to solving societal problems. Higher self-efficacy leads to more positive expectations for entrepreneurial outcomes, and both self-efficacy and these expectations are positively associated with entrepreneurial readiness (Segal et al., 2022). The relationship between entrepreneurship education and self-efficacy is interrelated (Raharjo et al., 2023). Mediation analysis shows that entrepreneurial self-efficacy partially mediates the relationship between entrepreneurship education and start-up readiness, affecting activities such as searching, planning, and implementing (Adeniyi, 2023). Adeniyi (2023) also found that entrepreneurial self-efficacy has a direct and significant correlation with start-up readiness. Additionally, Bacq and Alt (2018) assert that individuals with higher levels of social entrepreneurial self-efficacy are more confident in establishing a social enterprise. Based on these findings, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H6: Self-efficacy has a significant positive effect on social entrepreneurship readiness.

H7: Self-efficacy mediates the relationship between entrepreneurship education and social entrepreneurship readiness.

Developing A New Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework is designed to organize the theoretical framework and define the research problem. This study employs Albert Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory (SET) to investigate the relationship between its constructs. Bandura's self-efficacy theory states that an individual's belief in their capacity to complete a task effectively influences their behaviors and preparation processes such as goal-setting and resource mobilization. According to self-efficacy theory, behavior is influenced by four major sources of information: performance accomplishments (i.e., previous experiences), vicarious learning (i.e., modeling by others), verbal persuasion (i.e., evaluative feedback), and physiological and emotional states (Bandura, 1977). This study investigates a component of self-efficacy theory, namely mastery experience, which will be replaced by the factor of prior experience. Furthermore, this theory will be expanded to include two new constructs: empathy and entrepreneurial education.

Figure 3 shows the proposed theoretical framework, specifically the Youth Social-preneur Model, which outlines the relationships between the selected independent variables and the dependent variable, which are empathy, entrepreneurship education, prior experience, and self-efficacy on young entrepreneurs' readiness for social entrepreneurship. Additionally, it examines how self-efficacy mediates the relationship between entrepreneurship education and social entrepreneurship readiness.

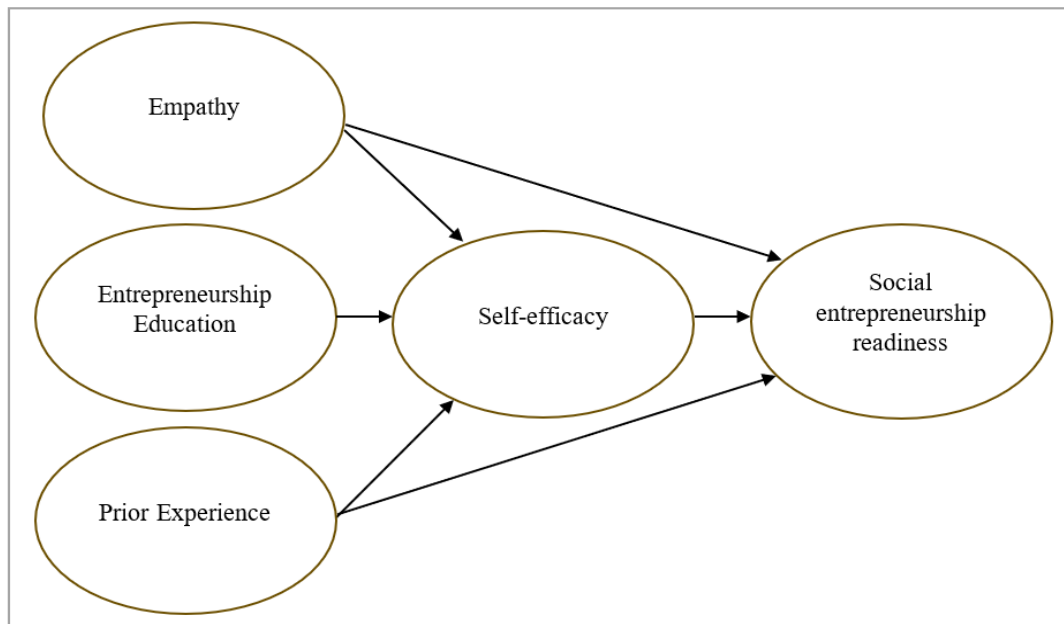


Figure 3: Theoretical Framework of Youth Social-preneur Model

Research Methodology

Research Design

This research will employ a quantitative approach, utilizing an online survey. Online surveys offer several benefits, including the ability to quickly contact a more significant number of participants, particularly those who are geographically distant or difficult to reach. Online

surveys are much more cost-effective than traditional techniques since they eliminate the requirement for physical materials and save logistical costs (Menon & Muraleedharan, 2020). Moreover, this approach's advantage is that it helps to understand how empathy, entrepreneurship education, prior experience, and self-efficacy affect social entrepreneurship readiness. The survey question will be adapted from a previous study. Simple random sampling has been chosen for this study as it is a well-established method in which every unit in the population has an equal and known chance of being selected (Bilgin, 2019). The population in this study is youth entrepreneurs. The Ministry of Youth and Sports (KBS) defines youth as individuals aged 15 to 40 years (KBS, 2024). Consequently, this study focuses on young individuals in this age range who are involved in entrepreneurship. According to the calculations, G*Power determines that a minimum sample size of 85 is necessary for this study. To improve the analysis's efficacy, a sample size of 200 will be utilised. This decision is consistent with Memon et al. (2020), who propose that a sample size ranging from 160 to 300 is typically appropriate for multivariate statistical analysis methods, including CB-SEM and PLS-SEM.

Questionnaire Development

Data collection utilized a closed-ended structured questionnaire, where all items measuring Constructs were developed using a 10-point interval scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 10 (strongly agree). The implementation of a 10-point scale, as recommended by Awang et al. (2015), was deemed appropriate due to its increased independence and compatibility with the criteria for parametric analysis. The questionnaire for the online survey will be adapted from past studies, including Bacq & Alt (2018), Quagraine (2024), Obi-Anike et al. (2022), and Maziriri et al. (2024).

Data Analysis

The collected data will be analysed using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM). The Covariance-based Structural Equation Modelling (CBSEM) method is selected because it allows for the simultaneous analysis of multiple constructs (Sarstedt et al., 2016). This approach is expected to provide robust results that can effectively explain the proposed model (Sarstedt et al., 2016). This advanced method will use various statistical techniques to assess the measurement model (Brown & Moore, 2012).

First, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) will be conducted to identify the underlying structure of the measured variables and to determine the number of factors that best represent the data. EFA helps to explore how items group together and is particularly useful during the early stages of scale development to refine constructs and eliminate poorly performing items. Following EFA, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) will be used to assess the quality of items for each construct by examining their factor loadings, fitness indices, construct correlations, reliability, and validity (Brown & Moore, 2012). CFA, a specific type of structural equation modelling, focuses on measurement models that explore the relationships between observed measures or indicators (such as test items, test scores, or behavioral observation ratings) and latent variables or factors (Brown & Moore, 2012). Second, the structural model involving causal effects from exogenous to endogenous constructs is performed by estimating their path coefficients using a maximum likelihood estimator. Third, mediation assessments will be conducted using two approaches: the Baron and Kenny method and the bootstrapping method. Both approaches are necessary to test the significance of indirect effects within the model. Figure 4 summarizes the research process of the study.

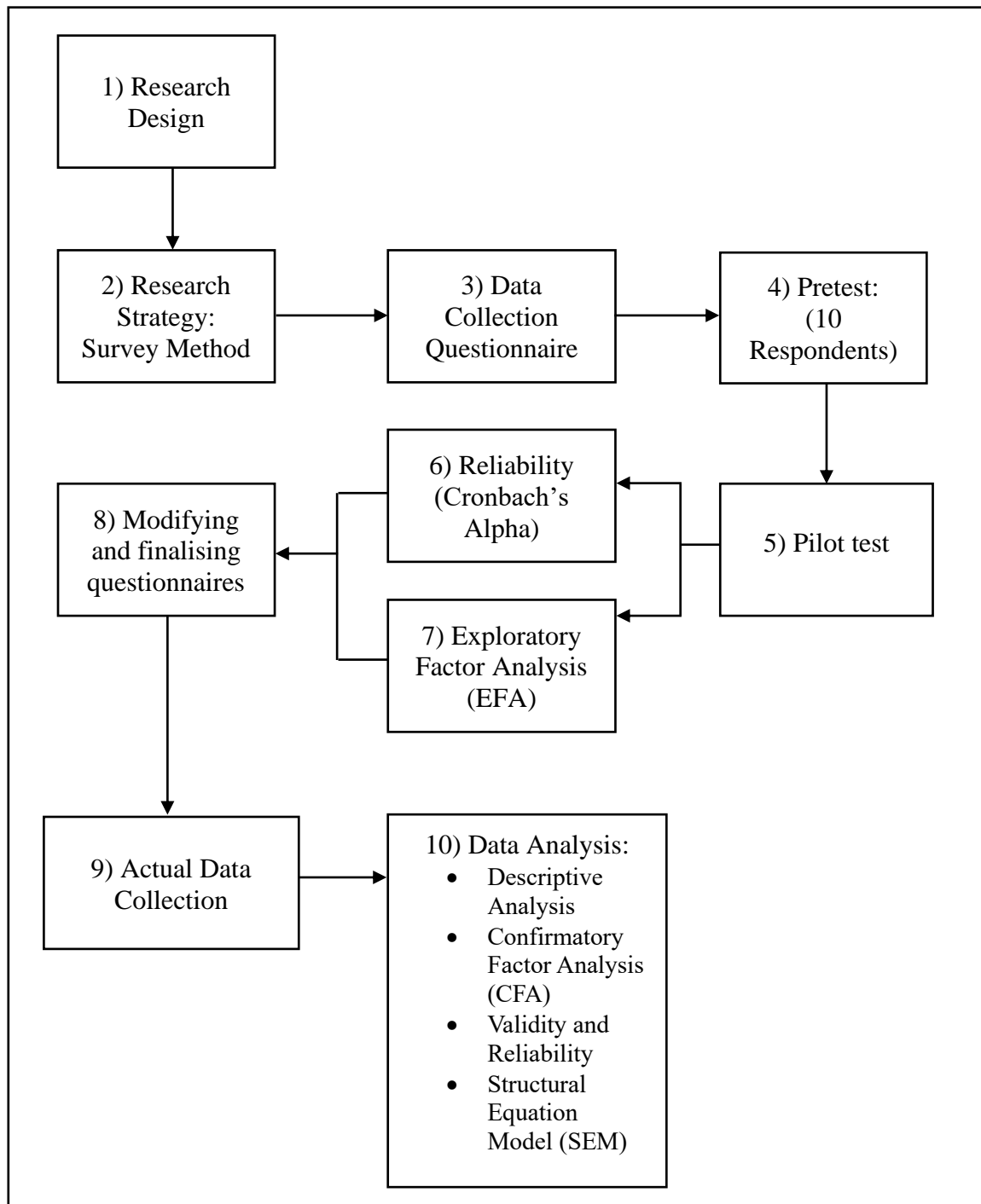


Figure 4: Flow Chart of Research Process

Conclusion

As social entrepreneurship is still in its early stages, this paper provides new insights into the literature by providing a well-organized conceptual model of social entrepreneurial readiness. The conceptual model itself also presents important theoretical contributions. It is potentially promising because it combines a diversity of the supported relationships between antecedents and cognitive constructs found in existing theoretical models of readiness entrepreneurship. The present study suggests a new conceptual model that includes empathy, prior experience, entrepreneurship education, and self-efficacy as key factors influencing social entrepreneurship readiness among youth entrepreneurs. Developing a model for youth social entrepreneur readiness is critical in implementing effective initiatives and measures that empower youth and foster community development.

Besides, in practice, the research outcomes will provide valuable insights to formulate a framework for youth social-preneurs, helping policymakers understand the factors that promote or hinder social entrepreneurship among Malaysian youth. This framework is timely to guide the Malaysian government such as the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) and the Ministry of Youth and Sport, to re-examine and reformulate its current initiatives and measures based on essentials to achieve a tremendous entrepreneurial nation by 2030. The following steps of this conceptual paper are to conduct Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) with pilot data, followed by Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), and finally, Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) using data collected from fieldwork. These statistical analyses are essential for validating the relationships among the constructs in the proposed Youth Social-preneur Model.

Conducting this study on youth entrepreneurs' social entrepreneurship readiness in Kelantan offers various problems, including the possibility of low response rates, limited access to respondents, and reliable measurement of social entrepreneurship readiness. Another problem is the lack of current research on this topic in Malaysia, requiring the adaptation of international findings to the local setting. Despite these limitations, strategic data collection approaches, clear survey forms, and a thorough literature review will improve the reliability and applicability of this study's findings. Future studies should examine additional factors that may contribute to social entrepreneurial readiness. Exploring variables such as cultural influences, access to digital technology and government policies, could provide a deeper understanding of how individuals become prepared for social entrepreneurship. Moreover, psychological constructs like resilience and moral obligation might also play a critical role in fostering readiness. Longitudinal research could help identify how these factors evolve over time and influence the development of social entrepreneurial readiness. By expanding the scope of inquiry, researchers can build a more comprehensive model that reflects the diverse pathways individuals take toward becoming socially driven entrepreneurs.

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