

**INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF
ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND
MANAGEMENT PRACTICES
(IJEMP)**
www.ijemp.com



**EXPLORING ENTREPRENEURIAL INTENTION THROUGH
INTEREST, SKILLS, AND STARTER KIT ASSISTANCE AMONG
EMPOWERNCER PARTICIPANTS**

Ganesan Vasudavan^{1*}, Mad Ithnin Salleh²

¹ Department of Management and Economics, Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris, Malaysia
Email: M20212003140@siswa.upsi.edu.my

² Department of Management and Economics, Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris, Malaysia
Email: mad.ithnin@fpe.upsi.edu.my

* Corresponding Author

Article Info:

Article history:

Received date: 30.10.2025

Revised date: 23.11.2025

Accepted date: 04.12.2025

Published date: 12.12.2025

To cite this document:

Vasudavan, G., & Salleh, M. I. (2025). Exploring Entrepreneurial Intention through Interest, Skills, and Starter Kit Assistance among empowerNCER Participants. *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Management Practices*, 8 (32), 193-207.

DOI: 10.35631/IJEMP.832013

This work is licensed under [CC BY 4.0](#)



Abstract:

This study investigates the determinants of entrepreneurial intentions among participants of the empowerNCER programme in Batang Padang, Malaysia. The research focuses on three critical factors which are entrepreneurial interest, skills, and starter kit assistance, which are considered essential for fostering entrepreneurship in socio-economic empowerment initiatives. A quantitative research design was adopted, utilizing a structured questionnaire distributed to 438 respondents enrolled in the empowerNCER programme. Data were analysed using SPSS, applying descriptive statistics and multiple regression analysis to assess the predictive strength of the selected variables. The findings reveal that entrepreneurial skills emerge as the most dominant factor influencing entrepreneurial intentions, followed by starter kit assistance and interest. Regression analysis confirms that skills have the strongest predictive effect, indicating that capability development plays a more significant role than material support or motivational aspects. These results suggest that while providing starter kits and stimulating interest are beneficial, skill enhancement remains the cornerstone for entrepreneurial success. The study underscores the importance of integrating skill development programmes with material assistance and motivational strategies to strengthen entrepreneurship initiatives. Policymakers and programme designers should prioritize comprehensive training modules alongside resource provision to ensure sustainable entrepreneurial growth. This research contributes to the understanding of entrepreneurship development within empowerment programmes and offers actionable insights for improving policy frameworks and implementation strategies.

Keywords:

Entrepreneurial Intention, EmpowerNCER, Interest, Skills, Starter Kit Assistance, Malaysia.

Introduction

Entrepreneurship is widely recognized as a catalyst for economic growth, innovation, and social development. In Malaysia, entrepreneurial activities have been prioritized under national agendas such as the Shared Prosperity Vision 2030 to reduce unemployment, enhance income generation, and foster competitiveness (Tan et al., 2021). The government has introduced various initiatives to empower individuals and communities, among which the empowerNCER programme stands out as a strategic intervention. This programme, implemented in the Northern Corridor Economic Region (NCER), aims to uplift socio-economic conditions by equipping participants with entrepreneurial knowledge, practical skills, and essential resources to start and sustain businesses.

Despite these efforts, the level of entrepreneurial participation among empowerNCER beneficiaries remains inconsistent. While some participants successfully transition into business ventures, others struggle to convert their intentions into action. This disparity raises critical questions about the underlying factors that influence entrepreneurial intentions within empowerment programmes. Entrepreneurial intention, defined as the cognitive state that precedes entrepreneurial behaviour, is considered a strong predictor of entrepreneurial action (Ajzen, 1991; Krueger et al., 2000). Understanding what drives intention is therefore essential for designing effective interventions.

Previous research highlights that entrepreneurial intention is shaped by multiple determinants, including personal attitude, perceived behavioural control, and access to resources (Teoh et al., 2024; Musa et al., 2023). In the Malaysian context, studies have emphasized the role of entrepreneurial education and experiential learning in strengthening entrepreneurial mindsets (Wiramihardja et al., 2022). However, beyond education, practical factors such as interest, skills, and material support have received growing attention. Interest reflects intrinsic motivation, skills represent capability to perform entrepreneurial tasks, and starter kit assistance provides tangible resources to reduce entry barriers.

Empirical evidence suggests that entrepreneurial skills significantly enhance confidence and perceived feasibility, which in turn strengthen intention (Ambad & Damit, 2016). Similarly, resource provision through starter kits can reduce financial constraints and encourage business start-ups (Al Mamun et al., 2019). Interest, while often considered a psychological factor, plays a crucial role in sustaining motivation and commitment (Liñán & Fayolle, 2015). Yet, limited studies have examined these three factors collectively within structured empowerment programmes in Malaysia, creating a gap in the literature.

The empowerNCER programme offers an ideal context to explore these relationships. By providing training, starter kits, and motivational support, the programme seeks to address both capability and resource gaps. However, the relative influence of these interventions on entrepreneurial intention remains unclear. Identifying which factor exerts the strongest effect

can help policymakers allocate resources more effectively and design targeted strategies to maximize programme impact.

This study addresses this gap by investigating the influence of interest, entrepreneurial skills, and starter kit assistance on entrepreneurial intentions among empowerNCER participants in Batang Padang district. Understanding these relationships is vital for designing effective strategies that not only stimulate entrepreneurial interest but also provide the necessary capabilities and resources for sustainable business development.

Research Objectives:

1. To examine the relationship between interest, skills, and starter kit assistance with entrepreneurial intentions among empowerNCER participants.
2. To identify the most dominant factor influencing entrepreneurial intentions.
3. To provide recommendations for enhancing entrepreneurship development strategies within empowerment programmes.

Literature Review

There are five sections that will be discussed in the literature review: entrepreneurial intention, interest and entrepreneurial intention, entrepreneurial skills, starter kit assistance and empowerment programmes and previous findings

Entrepreneurial Intention

Entrepreneurial intention is widely regarded as the most reliable predictor of entrepreneurial behaviour because it precedes actual entrepreneurial action (Krueger et al., 2000). Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) provides a comprehensive framework for understanding this concept. TPB suggests that intention is shaped by three determinants which is attitude toward the behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. In the context of entrepreneurship, attitude reflects an individual's positive or negative evaluation of starting a business, subjective norms represent social influences from family and peers, and perceived behavioural control refers to confidence in one's ability to perform entrepreneurial tasks. Numerous studies have validated TPB in predicting entrepreneurial intention globally and in Malaysia (Liñán & Fayolle, 2015; Teoh et al., 2024), making it a suitable theoretical foundation for this study.

TPB framework adapted to the current research context. It shows how attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control collectively influence entrepreneurial intention. In this study, interest is associated with attitude, skills strengthen perceived behavioural control, and starter kit assistance enhances perceived feasibility, indirectly supporting behavioural control. This conceptual alignment provides a clear basis for examining how psychological and resource-based factors interact to shape entrepreneurial intention among empowerNCER participants. Figure 1 illustrates the Theory of Planned Behaviour framework.

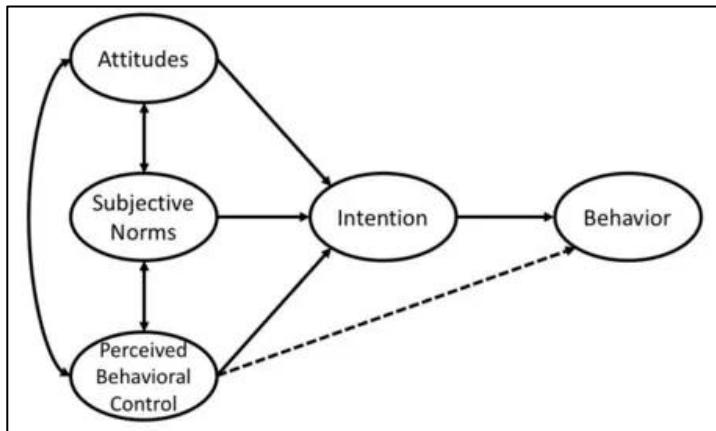


Figure 1: The Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991)

Interest and Entrepreneurial Intention

Interest represents intrinsic motivation and personal enthusiasm toward entrepreneurship. Individuals with strong entrepreneurial interest are more likely to develop positive attitudes and intentions to start a business (Musa et al., 2023). Within the framework of Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), interest aligns closely with the attitude toward the behaviour component, as it shapes perceptions of desirability and enjoyment in entrepreneurial activities. A positive attitude often translates into stronger intention, which is a critical precursor to entrepreneurial action.

Research indicates that interest sustains commitment and resilience, especially in challenging environments where external support may be limited (Liñán & Fayolle, 2015). For example, individuals who are genuinely interested in entrepreneurship tend to persist despite financial or operational obstacles. However, interest alone may not guarantee entrepreneurial success without adequate skills and resources. This highlights the importance of integrated support systems that combine motivational factors with practical capabilities and material assistance to ensure that entrepreneurial intentions can be transformed into actual ventures.

Skills and Entrepreneurial Intention

Entrepreneurial skills are widely recognized as a critical determinant of entrepreneurial success and strongly influence perceived behavioural control in TPB. Competencies such as financial management, marketing, and problem-solving enhance confidence and perceived feasibility, which in turn strengthen intention (Ambad & Damit, 2016). When individuals believe they possess the necessary skills, they are more likely to perceive entrepreneurship as achievable, thereby increasing their intention to start a business.

Empirical evidence suggests that skill development programmes significantly increase entrepreneurial readiness among participants (Teoh et al., 2024). In empowerment initiatives such as empowerNCER, skill acquisition is often prioritized to ensure participants can manage business operations effectively. This approach reflects the understanding that capability development is not only a predictor of intention but also a foundation for sustainable entrepreneurial performance.

Starter Kit Assistance and Entrepreneurial Intention

Starter kit assistance refers to the provision of tangible resources by external agencies or institutions to help new entrepreneurs overcome initial barriers. Unlike factors that originate from personal capability or motivation, starter kit assistance is an external influence, aligning closely with subjective norms in Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB). Subjective norms represent perceived social pressure or support from significant others or institutions, which can strongly influence an individual's decision-making process. In this context, receiving starter kits from empowerNCER or related agencies signals institutional endorsement and encouragement, thereby reinforcing the intention to start a business.

Previous studies have shown that external support mechanisms, such as financial aid and resource provision, positively impact entrepreneurial intention by reducing perceived risk and increasing confidence (Al Mamun et al., 2019). Starter kits typically include essential tools, equipment, and materials that enable participants to implement their business plans immediately after training. This form of assistance not only alleviates financial constraints but also creates a sense of obligation and social expectation to utilize the provided resources effectively. Consequently, starter kit assistance serves as a normative influence that motivates participants to pursue entrepreneurship, complementing psychological factors like interest and capability factors such as skills. However, the relative strength of this normative influence compared to other determinants remains underexplored, making it an important area for empirical investigation.

Empowerment Programmes

Empowerment programmes globally aim to integrate training, financial support, and motivational Empowerment programmes globally aim to integrate training, financial support, and motivational strategies to foster entrepreneurship among marginalized communities. These initiatives often combine skill development, access to capital, and mentorship to create sustainable entrepreneurial ecosystems (Ittehad Foundation, 2023; CARE, 2023). Studies highlight that such holistic interventions are more effective than isolated measures because they address multiple barriers simultaneously, including lack of knowledge, limited access to capital, and low confidence levels (Diop Institute, 2023; FasterCapital, 2025).

In Malaysia, empowerment programmes targeting rural and B40 communities have demonstrated positive outcomes when combining education, resource provision, and market access. For example, guided micro-entrepreneurship programmes under the Social Welfare Department have helped reduce welfare dependency by equipping participants with business management skills and coping strategies for sustainability (Tajudin, 2024). Similarly, initiatives like PKD Mobile have extended entrepreneurship training and government services to rural areas, improving outreach and participation among underserved groups (Sharif, 2025). Research also shows that social entrepreneurship models in rural Malaysia empower women economically by promoting skill development and challenging traditional gender norms (Rozali et al., 2025).

Despite these efforts, there remains limited research examining the relative impact of interest, skills, and starter kit assistance within a single framework, particularly in rural empowerment contexts. Understanding these relationships is crucial for designing effective strategies that maximize programme impact and ensure sustainable entrepreneurial development (Hassan, 2025; Azis et al., 2023). Future studies should explore integrated approaches that combine

psychological, capability-based, and resource-driven factors to bridge the intention-behaviour gap and enhance long-term outcomes.

Research Gap

Although entrepreneurial intention has been widely studied, most existing research focuses on individual psychological factors or educational interventions in isolation. Few studies have examined the combined influence of interest, entrepreneurial skills, and external support mechanisms such as starter kit assistance within structured empowerment programmes. This is particularly relevant in rural contexts where socio-economic constraints and institutional support play a critical role in shaping entrepreneurial behaviour.

In Malaysia, programmes like empowerNCER aim to integrate training, resource provision, and motivational strategies, yet empirical evidence on their effectiveness in influencing entrepreneurial intention remains limited. Furthermore, while Ajzen's Theory of Planned behaviour (TPB) has been extensively applied in entrepreneurship research, its adaptation to include practical support elements such as starter kit assistance as a form of subjective norm is underexplored. This creates a theoretical and practical gap that warrants investigation.

By addressing these gaps, the present study contributes to the literature by offering a holistic perspective that combines psychological, capability-based, and normative influences on entrepreneurial intention. The findings are expected to inform policymakers and programme designers in developing more targeted strategies for socio-economic empowerment and sustainable entrepreneurship development.

Methodology

The methodology adopted in this study is quantitative in nature, designed to examine the influence of interest, entrepreneurial skills, and starter kit assistance on entrepreneurial intention among empowerNCER participants. The theoretical basis of the research is grounded in Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned behaviour (TPB), which explains how attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control shape intention. This framework guided the selection of variables and the development of the research instrument. Figure 1 shows the theoretical framework for this study.

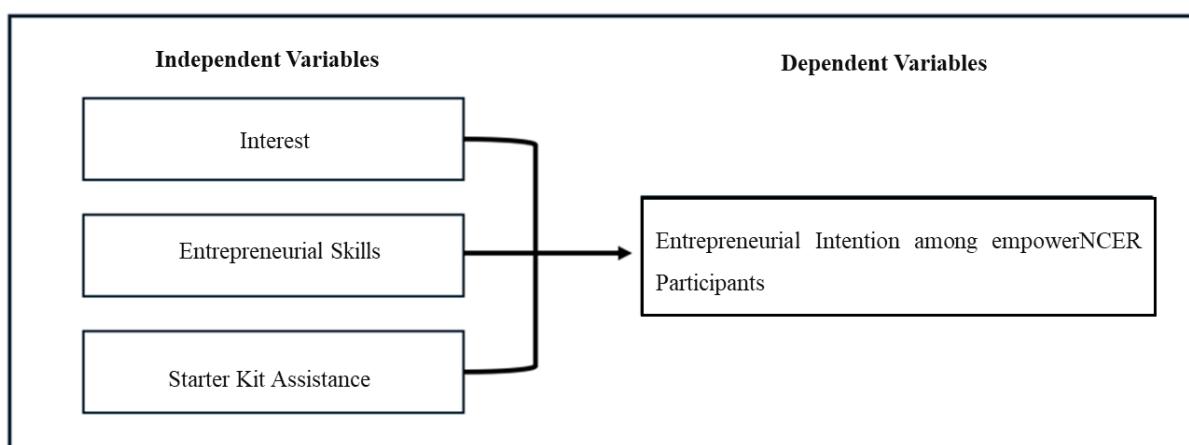


Figure 2: Theoretical Framework

Population and Sampling Technique

This quantitative study examines the influence of interest, skills, and starter kit assistance on entrepreneurial intention among empowerNCER participants. The population consists of more than 5,000 registered participants across Perak; however, the study focused on Batang Padang district with 550 participants. A purposive sampling technique was applied to select respondents who had completed the programme and received the starter kit. In total, 438 participants took part in the study, representing those who returned valid questionnaires out of 450 distributed. Data were collected through face-to-face questionnaire distribution, chosen for its effectiveness in achieving a high response rate.

Research Instrument

The questionnaire was adapted and modified from validated instruments used in prior studies, including Liñán and Chen (2009), Krueger et al. (2000), Hani Umairah (2021), Ramli and Abu Seman (2020), and Rao & Radin Siti Aishah (2022). It consisted of 25 questions divided into five sections: demographic profile, entrepreneurial intention (adapted from the Entrepreneurial Intention Questionnaire by Liñán & Chen, 2009), interest, skills, and starter kit assistance. All items were measured using a six-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 6 = Strongly Agree), chosen to capture nuanced attitudes and perceptions in line with the quantitative approach. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, with all constructs exceeding 0.70, indicating strong internal consistency.

Instrument Validity

Instrument validity was assessed to ensure accurate measurement of the intended constructs. Content validity was established through adaptation from prior studies (Liñán & Chen, 2009; Krueger et al., 2000; Hani Umairah, 2021; Ramli & Abu Seman, 2020; Rao & Radin Siti Aishah, 2022). Convergent and discriminant validity were evaluated using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) within the Structural Equation Modelling framework. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) values ranged from 0.637 to 0.714, exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.50 (Field, 2007), and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant ($p < 0.001$), confirming data suitability for factor analysis. Eigenvalues for all constructs were above 1, and explained variance ranged from 55.96% to 81.58%, indicating strong construct validity. Table 1 presents the results of the factor analysis, including KMO values, Bartlett's Test significance, Eigenvalues, and percentage of variance explained for each construct. Table 1 presents the results of the factor analysis, including KMO values, Bartlett's Test significance, Eigenvalues, and percentage of variance explained for each construct.

Table 1: Factor Analysis Results for Study Constructs

	KMO	Barlett's Test	Eigenvalues	% of Variances
Entrepreneurial Intention	0.714	< 0.001	3.004	60.09%
Interest	0.637	< 0.001	2.798	55.961%
Skills	0.656	< 0.001	3.128	62.56%
Starter Kit Assistance	0.699	< 0.001	4.079	81.58%

Data Analysis

Data were analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 30.0, a widely used tool for quantitative research in social sciences. Two main analyses were conducted. First, descriptive statistics were applied to summarize demographic characteristics such as gender, age, course selection, income, and entrepreneurial background. Second, multiple regression analysis was performed to determine the influence of interest, skills, and starter kit assistance on entrepreneurial intention among empowerNCER participants. This approach allowed simultaneous assessment of the relationships between independent variables and the dependent variable.

Findings

Demographic Profile

Table 2 presents the demographic profile of the respondents, consisting of 438 empowerNCER participants from Batang Padang district. The results indicate that most of respondents are female (70.1%), while males constitute 29.9%. Most respondents fall within the 31–40 age group (39.2%), followed by those aged 21–30 years (25.7%). In terms of course participation, the largest proportion of respondents attended Bakery & Barista training (23.3%), followed by Catering & Frozen Food (14.6%). Geographically, most respondents reside in Mukim Batang Padang (45.2%), with smaller proportions from Bidor (24.0%), Chenderiang (19.2%), and Sungkai (11.6%). Regarding income before joining the programme, nearly half (46.3%) earned below RM500 per month, indicating a predominantly low-income background. Finally, more than half of the respondents (55.5%) reported prior involvement in small-scale business activities, while 44.5% had no previous entrepreneurial experience.

Table 2: Demographic Profile of The Respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	131	29.9
Female	307	70.1
Age (years old)		
Below 20 years	6	1.4
21 – 30 years	113	25.7
31 – 40 years	172	39.2
41 – 45 years	74	16.9
46 years and above	73	16.7
Course		
Bakery & Barista	102	23.3
Catering & Frozen Food	64	14.6
Massage Wellness	44	10.0
Air conditioner Maintenance	53	12.1
Hair Styling	43	9.8
Tailoring	45	10.3
Handphone Services	13	3.0
Multimedia Creative	16	3.7
Advanced Digital Marketing	21	4.8

Security Alarm Maintenance	5	1.1
Craft Creative	10	2.3
Empowering Product Entrepreneur	11	2.5
Lata Kinjang Special Programme	11	2.5
Mukim		
Batang Padang	198	45.2
Bidor	105	24.0
Sungkai	51	11.6
Chenderiang	84	19.2
Income		
Below RM 500.00	203	46.3
RM 501.00 – RM 1,200.00	114	26.0
RM 1,201.00 – RM 2,000.00	88	20.1
RM 2,001.00 – RM 3,000.00	26	5.9
RM 3,001.00 – RM 4,000.00	6	1.4
RM 4,001.00 – RM 4,850.00	1	2
Entrepreneurial Experience		
Yes	243	55.5
No	195	44.5

Inferential Statistical Analysis

To examine the influence of interest, skills, and starter kit assistance on entrepreneurial intention among empowerNCER participants in Batang Padang, both simple linear regression and multiple regression analyses were conducted. Pearson correlation tests were first used to determine the strength and direction of relationships, followed by regression models to assess predictive power.

Correlation and Simple Regression Results

The correlation analysis indicates that all three independent variables interest, skills, and starter kit assistance are positively and significantly associated with entrepreneurial intention among empowerNCER participants ($p < 0.01$). Among these, skills ($r = 0.660$) and starter kit assistance ($r = 0.650$) exhibit moderate positive relationships, while interest ($r = 0.337$) shows a smaller positive relationship. These findings suggest that practical and capability-based factors, such as skills and starter kit support, have a stronger influence on entrepreneurial intention compared to psychological factors like interest.

Simple regression results reinforce this pattern, with skills explaining the largest proportion of variance in entrepreneurial intention (Adjusted $R^2 = 0.435$), followed by starter kit assistance (Adjusted $R^2 = 0.421$), and interest contributing only 11.2% (Adjusted $R^2 = 0.112$). This implies that enhancing participants' entrepreneurial skills and providing tangible resources are more effective strategies for fostering entrepreneurial intention than focusing solely on motivational aspects. Table 4 presents the correlation coefficients and simple regression results for the three independent variables interest, skills, and starter kit assistance in relation to entrepreneurial intention.

Table 3: Correlation and Simple Regression Results

Predictor	r	P	Adjusted R ²	Interpretation
Interest	0.337	0.000	0.112	Small positive relationship; explains 11.2% of variance
Skills	0.660	0.000	0.435	Moderate positive relationship; explains 43.5% of variance
Starter Kit Assistance	0.650	0.000	0.421	Moderate positive relationship; explains 42.1% of variance

Multiple Regression Analysis

To evaluate the combined effect of all three factors, a multiple linear regression was performed. The model was statistically significant ($F = 319.047$, $p = 0.000$), with an Adjusted R^2 of 0.536, meaning that 53.6% of the variance in entrepreneurial intention can be explained by the three predictors together. Table 4 shows the correlation and simple regression results for the three predictors interest, skills, and starter kit assistance in relation to entrepreneurial intention.

Table 4: Multiple Regression Coefficients

Predictor	B	Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	-0.353		-1.209	
Interest	0.166	0.111	3.221	0.001
Skills	0.480	0.386	9.022	0.000
Starter Kit Assistance	0.376	0.380	9.084	0.000

All three predictors significantly influence entrepreneurial intention ($p < 0.05$). Skills emerged as the most dominant factor ($\beta = 0.386$), followed closely by starter kit assistance ($\beta = 0.380$), while interest had a smaller effect ($\beta = 0.111$). This pattern suggests that practical and capability-based factors, such as skills and starter kit support, play a more substantial role than psychological factors like interest in shaping entrepreneurial intention. In other words, participants who possess higher entrepreneurial skills and receive tangible resources are more likely to develop stronger intentions to start a business compared to those who rely solely on intrinsic interest. These findings highlight the importance of skill development and resource provision in entrepreneurship programmes, as they appear to have a greater impact on participants' readiness and confidence to engage in entrepreneurial activities.

Discussion

The findings of this study provide strong evidence that interest, skills, and starter kit assistance significantly influence entrepreneurial intention among empowerNCER programme participants in Batang Padang, thereby fulfilling the first research objective of examining these relationships. However, the magnitude of these influences varies considerably, indicating that not all factors contribute equally to shaping entrepreneurial intention. Skills emerged as the most dominant predictor ($\beta = 0.386$), followed closely by starter kit assistance ($\beta = 0.380$), while interest had a smaller effect ($\beta = 0.111$). This directly addresses the second research objective by identifying skills as the most influential factor, suggesting that practical and capability-based elements exert a stronger influence than psychological factors in shaping entrepreneurial intention. In other words, while interest reflects an individual's positive attitude toward entrepreneurship, it alone may not be sufficient to drive intention without the presence of enabling conditions such as relevant skills and tangible resources.

These results align closely with Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), which posits that intention is determined by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control (Ajzen, 1991). Skills and starter kit assistance can be interpreted as components of perceived behavioural control, as they enhance participants' confidence and ability to perform entrepreneurial tasks. The strong influence of these factors indicates that when individuals feel competent and have access to tangible resources, their intention to engage in entrepreneurship increases significantly. Conversely, interest reflects an attitudinal component, which, while important, appears less influential compared to capability-based factors. This finding reinforces the argument that perceived behavioural control often outweighs attitudes in predicting entrepreneurial intention, as reported in previous studies (Milohnić & Licul, 2025; Bayona-Oré, 2023). By improving participants' skills and providing starter kits, programmes like empowerNCER effectively reduce perceived barriers and strengthen the sense of control, which is critical for translating intention into action.

The results are consistent with prior research emphasizing the critical role of skills and resource support in fostering entrepreneurial intention. For instance, Malhotra and Kiran (2025) found that entrepreneurial training significantly enhances competencies, which in turn strengthen entrepreneurial intention by improving participants' confidence and perceived ability to manage business challenges. Similarly, Xiong and Sun (2025) highlighted that resource-based support systems, such as starter kits and financial assistance, reduce perceived barriers and improve confidence among aspiring entrepreneurs, thereby increasing their likelihood of translating intention into action. These findings suggest that capability-building interventions and tangible resources are not merely supplementary but essential components of entrepreneurship development programmes, fulfilling the third research objective by providing actionable recommendations for enhancing entrepreneurship development strategies within empowerment programmes.

In contrast, studies focusing solely on motivational factors such as interest or passion have shown mixed results. While intrinsic motivation can spark initial curiosity and positive attitudes toward entrepreneurship, psychological readiness alone may not translate into entrepreneurial action without adequate skills and resources (Jeon & Luley, 2024; Liu & Peng, 2025). This discrepancy underscores the importance of integrating practical support with motivational strategies. Programmes that rely exclusively on motivational workshops risk creating an "intention-behaviour gap," where participants express interest but fail to act due to a lack of capability or resources. Therefore, a balanced approach that combines psychological stimulation with skill development and resource provision appears to be the most effective strategy for fostering entrepreneurial intention and subsequent behaviour.

Theoretical Contribution

This study makes a significant contribution to the entrepreneurship literature by demonstrating that capability-based factors specifically skills and resource support have a stronger predictive power than psychological factors such as interest in shaping entrepreneurial intention. While previous research has often emphasized attitudinal components like interest and passion, the findings of this study highlight that these factors alone are insufficient to drive entrepreneurial intention without the presence of enabling conditions. By showing that skills and starter kit assistance exert a greater influence, this research underscores the importance of integrating resource-based variables into theoretical models of entrepreneurial intention.

The results reinforce Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) by providing empirical evidence that perceived behavioural control, operationalized through skills and tangible resources, plays a dominant role in predicting entrepreneurial intention. This suggests that future extensions of TPB should incorporate resource accessibility and capability-building as critical determinants of perceived behavioural control. Furthermore, the study addresses the widely discussed intention-behaviour gap by proposing that interventions targeting perceived behavioural control such as skill development programmes and starter kit provision may bridge this gap more effectively than motivational strategies alone. This insight advances theoretical understanding by shifting the focus from purely psychological constructs to a more holistic framework that combines attitudes with structural and capability-based factors.

In addition, the findings contribute to the growing discourse on entrepreneurship education and policy by offering evidence that resource-based interventions are not merely complementary but essential for translating entrepreneurial intention into action. This theoretical perspective opens avenues for future research to explore integrated models that account for both psychological readiness and practical enablers, thereby enhancing the explanatory power of entrepreneurial intention frameworks.

Practical Implications

From a programmatic perspective, these findings underscore the importance of designing entrepreneurship programmes that go beyond motivational activities. While cultivating interest remains valuable for shaping positive attitudes toward entrepreneurship, it is insufficient on its own to drive strong entrepreneurial intention. Greater emphasis should be placed on skill-building initiatives and providing tangible resources such as starter kits, as these factors significantly enhance participants' perceived behavioural control—a critical determinant of intention according to the Theory of Planned Behaviour.

Such interventions not only improve technical and managerial competencies but also reduce perceived barriers, thereby increasing participants' confidence to start and sustain a business. For NCIA and similar agencies, this means prioritizing practical training modules, hands-on workshops, and mentorship programmes as core components of entrepreneurship development strategies. Additionally, resource provision such as starter kits, financial support, and access to business networks should be integrated into programme design to ensure participants have the tools and capabilities needed to translate intention into action.

These measures are critical for empowering participants to overcome both structural and psychological barriers to entrepreneurship (Xiong & Sun, 2025). By combining motivational strategies with capability-building and resource support, programmes can effectively bridge the intention-behaviour gap, leading to higher rates of entrepreneurial start-ups and sustainable business ventures. This approach not only benefits individual participants but also contributes to broader socio-economic development by fostering self-employment and reducing dependency on traditional job markets.

Limitations and Future Research

Despite providing valuable insights, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the sample was limited to participants of the empowerNCER programme in Batang Padang district, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to other regions or entrepreneurship programmes. Future research should consider expanding the

sample to include participants from multiple districts or different socio-economic contexts to enhance external validity.

Second, the study employed a cross-sectional design, which captures entrepreneurial intention at a single point in time. While this approach is useful for identifying relationships among variables, it does not allow for causal inferences or examination of changes in intention over time. Longitudinal studies are recommended to track how interest, skills, and resource support influence entrepreneurial behaviour beyond intention, providing a clearer understanding of the intention-behaviour gap.

Third, the study focused on three predictors—interest, skills, and starter kit assistance—while other potential factors such as social support, financial literacy, and access to markets were not included. Future research should incorporate these additional variables to develop a more comprehensive model of entrepreneurial intention. Moreover, qualitative approaches such as interviews or focus groups could complement quantitative findings by exploring participants' perceptions and experiences in greater depth.

Finally, the reliance on self-reported data may introduce response bias, as participants might overstate their interest or confidence due to social desirability. Future studies could mitigate this limitation by triangulating survey data with behavioural measures, such as actual business start-up rates or participation in entrepreneurship activities.

Conclusion

This study examined the influence of interest, skills, and starter kit assistance on entrepreneurial intention among empowerNCER programme participants in Batang Padang. The findings reveal that all three factors significantly affect entrepreneurial intention, but their impact varies. Skills emerged as the most dominant predictor, followed closely by starter kit assistance, while interest had a smaller effect. These results highlight that practical and capability-based factors exert a stronger influence than psychological factors in shaping entrepreneurial intention.

The study reinforces the Theory of Planned Behaviour by demonstrating that perceived behavioural control enhanced through skills and resource provision plays a critical role in fostering entrepreneurial intention. For policymakers and programme designers, this suggests that entrepreneurship development strategies should prioritize skill-building initiatives and tangible resource support alongside motivational activities. By integrating these elements, programmes can effectively bridge the intention-behaviour gap, leading to higher rates of entrepreneurial start-ups and sustainable ventures.

Future research should expand the scope beyond Batang Padang to include diverse regions and programme contexts, employ longitudinal designs to track intention-to-behaviour transitions, and incorporate additional variables such as social support and financial literacy. These efforts will provide a more comprehensive understanding of entrepreneurial intention and inform the design of more effective entrepreneurship programmes.

Acknowledgement

The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to the Northern Corridor Implementation Authority (NCIA) for providing access to the empowerNCER programme data

and for their continuous support throughout this research. Special thanks are extended to the programme participants in Batang Padang district for their cooperation and willingness to share their experiences, which made this study possible. The authors also acknowledge the valuable guidance and constructive feedback provided by academic supervisors and colleagues during the preparation of this manuscript.

References

Ajzen, I. (1991). The theory of planned behavior. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 50(2), 179–211. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0749-5978\(91\)90020-T](https://doi.org/10.1016/0749-5978(91)90020-T)

Al Mamun, A., Nawi, N. B. C., & Shamsudin, S. F. F. (2019). Examining the effects of entrepreneurial competencies on micro-enterprise performance. *International Journal of Entrepreneurship*, 23(1), 1–9.

Ambad, S. N. A., & Damit, D. H. D. (2016). Determinants of entrepreneurial intention among undergraduate students in Malaysia. *Procedia Economics and Finance*, 37, 108–114. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2212-5671\(16\)30100-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2212-5671(16)30100-9)

Azis, R. A., Mohamed, N. A., Nasni Naseri, R. N., Ahmad, N. Z. A., Mohd Abas, N., & Ahmad, F. H. M. (2023). Rural women entrepreneurship in Malaysia: Issues and challenges. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 13(9), 18643. <https://doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v13-i9/18643>

Bayona-Oré, S. (2023). The Theory of Planned Behaviour and entrepreneurial intention of university students. *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business*, 50(1), 45–62.

CARE. (2023). Women's entrepreneurship: Reducing barriers. Retrieved from <https://www.care.org/our-work/economic-growth/womens-entrepreneurship/>

Diop Institute. (2023). 10 effective strategies for empowering marginalized communities. Retrieved from <https://www.diopinstitute.com/blog/10-effective-strategies-for-empowering-marginalized-communities>

Ettehta, C., Smith, J., & Kumar, R. (2025). Bridging the relationship between entrepreneurial intention and behavior: A systematic review. *Journal of Entrepreneurship Research*, 18(2), 101–120.

FasterCapital. (2025). Breaking barriers: How inclusive entrepreneurship is changing the game. Retrieved from <https://fastercapital.com/content/Breaking-Barriers--How-Inclusive-Entrepreneurship-is-Changing-the-Game.html>

Hassan, R. (2025). The impact of entrepreneurship knowledge transfer on economic empowerment among housewives of the FELDA second-generation in Bera, Pahang. *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, 13(6), 220–231. <https://doi.org/10.4236/jss.2025.136015>

Ittehad Foundation. (2023). Entrepreneurship & economic empowerment programme. Retrieved from <https://www.ittehadfoundation.org/activities/entrepreneurship-economic-empowerment-programme/>

Jeon, S., & Luley, C. (2024). What influences entrepreneurial intentions? *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, 31(4), 567–584.

Krueger, N. F., Reilly, M. D., & Carsrud, A. L. (2000). Competing models of entrepreneurial intentions. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 15(5–6), 411–432. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0883-9026\(98\)00033-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0883-9026(98)00033-0)

Liñán, F., & Fayolle, A. (2015). A systematic literature review on entrepreneurial intentions: Citation, thematic analyses, and research agenda. *International Entrepreneurship and Management Journal*, 11(4), 907–933. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11365-015-0356-5>

Liu, Q., & Peng, M. (2025). Exploring factors influencing university students' entrepreneurial intentions. *Asian Journal of Entrepreneurship*, 12(3), 215–230.

Malhotra, S., & Kiran, R. (2025). Assessing the role of entrepreneurial training in the entrepreneurship behavior-intention-success link. *Journal of Entrepreneurship Education*, 28(1), 45–59.

Milohnić, I., & Licul, I. (2025). Factors influencing students' entrepreneurial intentions using TPB. *International Journal of Management Studies*, 32(2), 89–104.

Musa, S. N. S., Abu Seman, A. S., & Hamzah, S. R. (2023). Entrepreneurial intention among university students in Malaysia. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 13(12), 2247–2260. <https://doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v13-i12/19876>

Rozali, N., Salleh, S. M., Abdul Halim, N., Ismail, I. A., & Abdullah, S. (2025). Social entrepreneurship as a catalyst for women's economic empowerment in rural areas: A conceptual framework. *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Management Practices*, 8(29), 355–369. <https://doi.org/10.35631/IJEMP.829023>

Sharif, A. (2025, May 24). Mobile PKD initiative empowers rural entrepreneurs across Malaysia. *New Straits Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nst.com.my/news/nation/2025/05/1220842/mobile-pkd-initiative-empowers-rural-entrepreneurs-across-malaysia>

Tajudin, P. N. M. (2024). Towards sustainable empowerment: A guided micro-entrepreneurship programme for unlocking welfare dependency in Malaysia. *Asian Review of Public Administration*, 32(1), 10. <https://doi.org/10.64423/arpa.v32i1.10>

Teoh, W. M. Y., Chong, S. C., & Ravichander, S. (2024). Entrepreneurial intentions among business undergraduates: The Malaysian case. *Journal of Education for Business*, 99(7–8), 411–421. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08832323.2023.2174567>

Wiramihardja, K., N'dary, V., & Al Mamun, A. (2022). Sustainable economic development through entrepreneurship: A study on attitude and entrepreneurial intention among university students in Malaysia. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, 866753. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.866753>

Xiong, R., & Sun, H. (2025). Impact of entrepreneurship support on entrepreneurship performance. *Journal of Business and Economic Development*, 10(1), 33–47.