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Identifying the Challenges of Involvement in Entrepreneurship Activities among a Group of Undergraduates

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Abstract

Entrepreneurship activities have been promoted in Malaysian universities through entrepreneurship education, mainly with the aim to minimize youth unemployment rate in Malaysia. The effort may have been hindered due to many reasons that may explain the lack of effectiveness of entrepreneurship education found in previous studies. The present study was conducted to identify the challenges of involvement in entrepreneurship activities among a group of undergraduates from a public university in Malaysia. Qualitative data was collected from three males and seven female undergraduates who were selected to participate in semi-structured interviews. They were asked to provide insights on their lives as students who participated in entrepreneurship activities under the entrepreneurship center in the university they attended. Information gathered in the interviews was then analyzed using thematic analysis. There were two major themes found in this study which are external challenges and personal challenges. The findings are expected to provide insight on the key challenges faced by students as a result of their involvement in entrepreneurship activities. It could also contribute to the efforts to improve entrepreneurship education in Malaysia, and in turn inform the development of programs to develop interventions that improve entrepreneurship activities in higher learning institutions.

Key words: Entrepreneurship education, Entrepreneurship education in Malaysia, Young entrepreneurs, Higher learning institution

Introduction

As a response to the impending slowdown of the Malaysian economy, the Government of Malaysia has developed several plans to prepare the people, especially youths, in facing the bad economic condition: lack of job opportunities and even increasingly high standards of living. In this regard, an entrepreneurship ecosystem has been developed in Malaysian public universities, aimed at helping university students to equip themselves with competencies that enable them to successfully deal with the scenario (Rahim et al., 2015). It helps students to face the adversities which lie ahead in life by being productive rather than only staying put without doing anything (Din et al., 2015). The initiative does not only help the students to improve their financial condition but boost the nation's economic development. It also provides opportunities for people to create jobs instead of being employed by others. In fact, the introduction to the world of entrepreneurship in universities is seen to be a suitable intervention as it exposes youths to many entrepreneurial experiences, hence preparing them for the real world outside of their universities (Rahim et al., 2015).

Entrepreneurship education is also being practiced in other higher learning institutions all around the world. In the western countries, particularly in the United States of America, many universities have employed various techniques of teaching entrepreneurship such as the provision of real-world entrepreneurship experiences, and allocation of entrepreneurship-related resources for universities or colleges (Morris et al., 2017; Barnard et al., 2018). According to Zhou and Xu (2012), colleges in China developed the awareness of entrepreneurship among their students by organizing systematic programs and competitions. Finland, in its efforts to encourage entrepreneurship activities, introduced multiple types of entrepreneurship education among its youths. Finland has adopted various strategies to avail entrepreneurship education programs, such as through learning, business competitions and co-ops education (Laurikainen et al., 2018).

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Despite the availability of various initiatives, it seems that the programs have yet to produce fruitful impacts (Khazanah Research Institute, 2019), reflected in the increase of unemployment rate among graduates despite the existence of entrepreneurship programs in universities. There were many studies conducted to assess undergraduates' lack of interest and successes in entrepreneurship programs during or post-university life. Some have attributed it to the readiness of students and universities in undergoing or executing the program, respectively (e.g., Othman et al., 2012; Iqbal et al., 2012). Apart from studies centered in Malaysia, there were indeed international studies that have discussed the subject of entrepreneurship education and challenges behind said program. Written below are studies amassing from researchers in America, Brazil, China, United Kingdom, Indonesia, Iran, Lebanon, Nigeria, Spain that have all but generally agreed on a few reasons as to why entrepreneurship education has not yet flourished as planned.

Challenges of Involvement in Entrepreneurship Activities: Literature Review

Khazanah Research Institute (2019) reports that the number of unemployed youths has increased 0.33% in the year 2018, showing 10.9% of the total youths unemployed, the highest ever recorded data in Malaysian history of youth unemployment. Beginning of the year 2010, the Government of Malaysia introduced various initiatives to reduce unemployment rates by introducing and promoting entrepreneurship program in universities (Din et al., 2016). This plan aimed to help students becoming entrepreneurs, or at least acquiring entrepreneurial skills to be utilized later in life so that they may resort to self-employment, and in turn gradually overcome unemployment issues among graduates. Despite the efforts, unemployment issue remains a worrying concern to many, warranting many researchers to conduct studies which attempted to find answers for the issues, especially on why entrepreneurship education is not able to produce entrepreneurs among graduates. There were many underlying problems over the implementation of entrepreneurship program in Malaysia (Yusoff et al., 2014). There are studies from literature all over the world which has reported several aspects that contribute to the drawbacks: including the following:

1. Entrepreneurship education has been found to have low effectiveness and weak efficiency, which are attributed to:
 - a. the lack of skills among staff who promote, teach and train entrepreneurship programs in universities (Karimi et al., 2010; Olorundare & Kayode, 2014; Welsh & Drăgușin, 2011; Yusoff et al., 2014);
 - b. the low commitment of staff and management towards the government's entrepreneurship agenda (Rahim et al., 2015);
 - c. the low effectiveness of entrepreneurship education in motivating or equipping youths to survive outside their university life (Chiekezie et al., 2016);
 - d. the limited entrepreneurial skills among entrepreneurship educators (Othman et al., 2012);
 - e. create meaningful experiences in in the program with such limited time (McGuigan, 2016);
 - f. non-blending of the subject matter in entrepreneurship education with different majors at the university, while also being based on the realities of life (Karimi et al., 2010; Welsh & Drăgușin, 2011);
 - g. traditional methods of teaching and learning that makes entrepreneurship stimulation difficult (Sanchez et al., 2017);
 - h. lack of training provision for instructors (Ozdemir, 2018; Wang, 2013).
2. Entrepreneurship development ecosystem is shaped by universities' internal environment despite the availability of Government's supports and supplies for universities to conduct the program. The unconducive or poor ecosystem are attributable to:
 - a. universities inefficiency to promote or greaten entrepreneurship culture. The rigid university rules and administrator's negative attitude towards entrepreneurship programs have caused difficulties for entrepreneurship education program to run smoothly (Othman et al., 2012);
 - b. students' family role on students' entrepreneurial intentions. Some parents have unfavourable attitude towards entrepreneurship program, hence influenced their children's attitude and motivation towards entrepreneurship program (Rengiah & Sentosa, 2016);
 - c. roles of the society, the absence of positive perception on entrepreneurship program might hinder the development of entrepreneurial activities. On the contrary, it was found that the support provided by the society would enable students to develop positive attitudes towards entrepreneurship; and motivate them to acquire relevant skills to survive as entrepreneur (Ferreira et al., 2016);

- d. the difficulties of teaching a large number of students with different learning rates, motives, backgrounds and capabilities (Vanevenhoven, 2013);
 - e. poor entrepreneurship culture within the community (Karimi et al., 2010; Olorundare & Kayode, 2014; Welsh & Drăguşin, 2011).
3. There are personal psychological issues confronting students who participated in entrepreneurship education programs, some of them are:
 - a. low readiness to undergo entrepreneurship education (Othman et al., 2012);
 - b. lack of skills to become participants of entrepreneurship programs (Ustyuzhina et al., 2019; Yusoff et al., 2014);
 - c. lack of commitment towards the Government's entrepreneurship agenda (Yusoff et al., 2014);
 - d. inability to deal with self and psychological barriers, making it challenging for them to convert their entrepreneurial intentions into a reality (Sandhu et al., 2011);
 - e. lack of skills to deal with stress, leading them to avoid risk that are present in entrepreneurship activities (Sandhu et al., 2011);
 - f. lack of knowledge and skills in financial matters. They need financial literacy and other entrepreneurial skills in order to develop entrepreneur mindset (Bagheri & Pihie, 2012);
 - g. lack of favourable attitude towards, and weak intention in, entrepreneurship program. Both attitude and strong intention are important predictors for the program to become successful and effective (Rengiah & Sentosa, 2016);
 - h. lack of interest on entrepreneurship activities despite the many initiatives to nurture entrepreneurship skills. They are reluctant to invest their time and energy in entrepreneurship programs (Bagheri et al., 2013);
 - i. absence of prior knowledge and experience on entrepreneurship, dampening the entrepreneurship education process even if they have high desires or intentions towards entrepreneurship (Bagheri et al., 2013);
 - j. lack of motivation to acquire entrepreneurial skills, potentially due to their low needs for achievement (Chiekezie et al., 2016).

Given the difference of time and ecosystem between the time when the above researches were conducted and the current context of undergraduates' entrepreneurship involvement, the scenario encountered by the latter might be different from that of the former. Besides the potential obsolescence of explanation from the previous research findings (e.g psychological capital; or the mediating role of attitude towards entrepreneurship) there has been less research that was conducted to identify issues and challenges faced by undergraduates who participated in entrepreneurship activities. There were only few researches that dove into the subjective realm of this topic such as the study to identify real life challenges faced by the students during their involvement in university entrepreneurship activities. Furthermore, research on entrepreneurship programs at universities is still at an infancy stage as researchers have yet to understand the topic well (Frese & Gielnik, 2014), underscoring the need to investigate entrepreneurship programs in a deeper sense. Additionally, Welsh and Drăguşin (2011) has noted that there is a lack of feedback coming from the students who go through said program in order to improve the curriculum. This was also echoed by Lorcu and Erduran (2016) in their writing of the need to further analyse the effect of entrepreneurship education on the students as well as institutions. The same was written in a report by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills of the UK government in 2013, which was to record students' individual experiences of enrolling in enterprise and entrepreneurship education programs. That said, it is imperative that an in-depth study to be conducted to identify the consequences of undergraduates' involvement in entrepreneurship activities, giving more focus to assess the challenges faced by undergraduates when joining entrepreneurship activities.

This study is conducted by anchoring on the study by Oparaocha and Pokidko (2013) which focused on assessing the impact of entrepreneurship education on Finnish students in the MSc Entrepreneurship program (see Table 1). This study explores information beyond the quantitative data and identifies issues that have hindered the process of cultivating entrepreneurship competencies amongst undergraduates through entrepreneurship education. It is expected that the findings from this study could expand the body of knowledge on entrepreneurship education in Malaysia; and provide necessary information for universities and the Government, on issues which concern the development of entrepreneurial culture among undergraduates in the country. The insight could be used to inform the design of better entrepreneurship intervention programs in the future.

Method

Participants

10 participants from a Malaysian public university consisting three males and seven females were interviewed for this study. All of them are student entrepreneurs who also involved themselves in activities under the University's Entrepreneurship Development Centre, namely Entrepreneurship Club, Social Entrepreneurship Club, Agrosis and Kosiswa. This study employed a purposive sampling technique where participants were selected from the Entrepreneurship Development Centre of the University. The reason for these participant criteria is that they directly receive entrepreneurship education from the university, which is the objective of the establishment of each entrepreneurship center at universities in Malaysia. This would enable them to relay rich information about the subject of this study better than other students as they have under gone the entire learning process first hand (Creswell, 2011).

Design

According to the authors, Oparaocha and Pokidko (2013), qualitative research is suitable in order to capture information that transcends numbers such as experiences of participants and more. As this research attempts to explore the challenges faced by entrepreneurship education students, this research adopted semi-structured interview which facilitates a flexible conversation between the researchers and participants, leading to open ended answers and giving deeper analysis on issues and challenges face by students who participated in entrepreneurship program (Oparaocha & Pokidko, 2013). This interview enabled the researchers to gather verbal information and capture non-verbal elements of face-to-face communication from the selected participants (Saunders et al., 2012). This technique allows different participants to comment on the subject-in-question based on their point of views and emphasize on details that they consider important (Charmaz, 2006). The researchers have developed and used the following interview protocol in the semi-structured interview.

Interview Protocol

Based on Oparaocha and Pokidko (2013), the researchers have structured their interview as follows:

Phase	Purpose
Initial contact by phone or e-mail	a) Making short introduction of the researchers
	b) Introducing the identified participants to the research by informing them about research on entrepreneurship education program.
	c) Placing request to interview the identified participants
Confirmation of interview (phone/e-mail)	a) Making gentle reminder about the time for interview
	b) Informing the participants about the content of the interview: best and worst times
First phase of the interview	a) Initiating the interview session by doing warm-up with the participants. <i>"Tell us a bit about yourself"</i> question.
	b) Gathering information on memorable events and incidents during their involvement in
	c) Placing supportive questions to the participants - "Why and How"- for deeper reflection
Break	a) Serving coffee or tea with snacks
Second phase of the interview	b) Soliciting meaning on the information provided over the subject-in-question from the participant's current life- stage
	c) Gathering additional comments from the participants. Allowing each to elaborate any information they provided earlier.

Procedure

The researchers have secured approval from the Ethics Committee to conduct the study. Participants were approached face-to-face and also through digital communication medium (WhatsApp messages). The

researchers briefed the participants on the topic of this study, the objectives of the study and also informed them of their rights in having their information not disclosed. This is done by assigning each participant to a participant code, for example, Participant 001 or participant one, so that the participants remain anonymous (Fleming & Zegwaard, 2018). They were informed that each of them is protected at all times and that they have the right to withdraw from the interview without being given any penalty. Participants were also informed that the interview is to be done in places or times that they deem comfortable; and it would be conducted without exposing them to any harm or danger. The participants were allowed to contact the researchers if they want to know the result of the study or for any kind of enquiries. They were also invited to ask the researchers if they wanted to know more about the study.

Before the interview session began, participants were given an informed consent form which required their signature if they agreed with the term of reference stated in the form. The informed consent entails the information of the study, the right to withdraw and the confidentiality of the information given by the participants (Roshaidai, 2018). The interview took 15 to 30 minutes per participant and the interview was guided by the researchers with open-ended questions. This type of interview technique is considered to be the most effective in gaining open-ended answers and at the same time providing a guidance for participants to answer (Oparaocha & Pokidko, 2013). The data of this interview is recorded after securing permission from the participants. Each of them was given a token of appreciation for participating in the study.

Data Analysis

The data of this study has been analyzed using thematic analysis (TA). TA, as mentioned by Braun and Clarke (2014), is a suitable approach to reflect qualitative data that are more application-based, such as practices or policies. TA is a useful toolkit to analyze large sets of data for its well-structured guidelines; and to reflect the core information from the data collected in a study (Nowell et al., 2017). The data of this study was analyzed in six stages, as proposed by Braun and Clarke (as cited in Howitt & Cramer, 2017). The data is first familiarized by researchers through reading and re-reading of the information available in the transcription of the 10 interviews for several times. This is to see whether any information occurs regularly over several reviews. Next, chunks of data from the 10 transcriptions were initially coded to summarize the key parts of the texts. Then, coding that share similar meaning were joined together to form themes. This were done several times by the researchers, to ensure that the similarities of the coding are in congruent and clear. The themes were then further refined and inspected repetitively, so that each data fits with the themes well. After that, themes and sub-themes were identified as well as labelled, which were then scrutinized again for the final report. The finalized themes and sub-themes were reported in the findings section.

Findings

The findings of this research have yielded several themes which serve as a basis to understand the challenges faced by undergraduates on their involvement in entrepreneurship. Two categories of main themes have been derived from the data, external challenges and personal challenges.

External Challenges

The challenges have been extrapolated from the interview with the participants, presented below.

Student Participation for Entrepreneurship Programs

Many participants stated that entrepreneurship program is such an important program and most of them are organized by entrepreneurship clubs at the University. Nevertheless, some of the participants highlighted a number of issues pertaining to managing the participants of entrepreneurship activities, especially on the difficulties to manage students who were in entrepreneurship clubs. The participant said that “it was quite segregated in two groups. We communicated but we did not bond well. We don’t always meet each other. Also, there are some who do not feel a sense of responsibility”.

Among the issues gathered in this study is the recruitment of students to participate in entrepreneurship programs. There were difficulties in attracting participation from students. Participant two and three said that it was a difficult effort to make them feel interested to attend entrepreneurship activities. They said that it was “difficult to get an audience for these programs”.

The other issue is on the development of good entrepreneurship activities. Equipping students with entrepreneurship activities is a huge task, especially in grabbing students' attention towards the program. Participant two, three, four, five and eight have given similar factors as to why it is difficult to attract students in joining entrepreneurship programs. It is found that this is attributable to the mismatch between the entrepreneurship activities and students' program of studies. This causes very little chance for students to enhance their interest in entrepreneurship activities, especially when entrepreneurship activities are only suitable for undergraduates in certain field of knowledge. One participant has told that he "realized that in this university nobody knows about it unlike in other places. This is because no one is a student of agriculture here, no project venues too".

Entrepreneurship Education Program

The participants expected they would gain the much-needed knowledge by joining entrepreneurship development program. Nevertheless, participant four, five and nine have also reported that they felt that the office which is in charge of entrepreneurship education did not help them much. In effect, the participants have to search for entrepreneurship knowledge on their own, outside the university. A participant said that she "if things on my own. I go for outside programs myself".

Participant ten has said that the students need to themselves find a way to gain extra knowledge, thus, they are involved in any entrepreneurial activities mainly as their accomplishment of work, instead of the effort to acquire knowledge of entrepreneurship. The participant highlighted that "the students need to find a way themselves to gain extra knowledge". They have also attained information on their respective clubs or even entrepreneurial knowledge on their own; most of them were not given by the management. Participant ten said that the Office "does not play that much of a part in shaping a student to become an entrepreneur".

This is also echoed by participant one who has said that "they did not explain anything to us, we had to dig the information ourselves". Participant four felt disappointed with the roles of entrepreneurship education program. Some students enrolled into entrepreneurship niche class but were quite disappointed with it because they already know most of the theories taught in the class. The participant said that the "the area class is all theory which I already known before I enroll in the class. I expect more from that class that is why I enrolled". One of the participants have said that enrolling in entrepreneurship niche class "can be a bit boring".

Incompetent administrative or management staff

One of the main challenges that the students faced during their involvement in entrepreneurship program at their university is difficulties in dealing with the staff at the university. This may stem from the incompetence of the management in terms of dealing with students and entrepreneurial activities. The management may have not been able to connect with the students well and may not have managed the programs properly. These can be exemplified in many instances in the data where students have complained about the difficulty to communicate with the university staff who are in charge of managing their programs or businesses. Participant one talked at length about how tough it is to be on the same page with the management, with regard to the club that the participant had joined. One participant has noted that "they don't explain anything about it, how the business was used and how much capital, how much is left. I have asked personally, to get this clear. They don't give us the information".

The negative vibes shown by trainers to participants who attend entrepreneurship programs is also a challenge. Some participants in this study highlighted that they could not even understand what the trainers wanted to do with them. Participant four said: "Those negative vibes, mostly negative thought against us, don't understand what we are trying to do and do not want to listen to what we want to do".

The other issue is on the unpleasant experiences when dealing with the University management. Participant five have experienced confusion with the university over the permission to utilize facilities (e.g venue) in the University. Participant five and eight have also stated that the explanation they received from the management is irrelevant and should not have happened considering all the factors they have taken into consideration to avoid the problem. The participant told that "people came and questioned us on the approval of using this venue. We did not understand why that became an issue where we were banned from doing this project when we have clearly inquired them on it".

Some reported that they have not been politely or respectfully attended to for the mistakes they did when handling application processes, like proposal making or meetings, which they felt should not have happened (Participant three, four, seven and eight). One said that “there were mistakes in the proposal but no need to yell at us”. Management are also not equipped with the real knowledge of entrepreneurship. Participant one explained that the management did not understand certain information with regards to their entrepreneurship clubs. The participant said that for them “the challenge is the administration, I don’t know. Business cooperatives have resources, network hence there is no problem in facilities. It’s just the administration”.

Participant four and ten stated that the management does not really help student entrepreneurs to flourish in the university by saying that “the office is just for managerial stuff, like when you want to open up a business here. You need them for the place to set up and operate your business. The rest is on the students”.

The office is said to not being objective when processing the application for approval of programs (participant one, four and five). One of them has said that “they don’t really take these four clubs seriously; they don’t manage them well”.

Personal Challenges

With regard to the personal challenges, the following are the findings which present the experiences of participants’ personal competencies and attitudes towards entrepreneurship programs.

Lack of interest in university entrepreneurship program

There is a lack of interest in entrepreneurship programs organized by the University. It has been reported that some students show low favorable attitude towards being tied with the university’s entrepreneurship agenda. Participant one has said that the office “makes simple things complicated which in my opinion may make people feel that they don’t want to become an entrepreneur here. They just do it alone, not wanting to affiliate as university student entrepreneurs”.

Low understanding of the concept of entrepreneurship

Lack of understanding on important concepts in entrepreneurship activities, such as the concept of business cooperatives or social entrepreneurship have been reported as unpleasant issues which affect participants’ motivation to involve in entrepreneurship activities. Participant four explained the difficulties to make students understand certain concepts in entrepreneurship, such as executing business in a cooperative. The participant said, “the correct foundations of the cooperative here, which stems since its opening in 2011. That’s the struggle, to correct the systems”.

Participant two, three and five have given a set of similar factors to this issue. Firstly, there is little manpower to manage entrepreneurship program. This has made the program a burden and a struggle to them. One of them said that they “were still having a program that day that left us with very little manpower”. All of them have also recalled of times when club members do not engage with no matter what promotions they have put out for the program. “The club members we have is around 70. We spread the message to ask them to join, but they hardly engage with us”, said participant two. Secondly, low level of cooperation among members of the entrepreneurship society. Participant six said that many of them left the WhatsApp Group of the entrepreneurship society so that they will not be bothered by any messages disseminated by the club”. The participant said that “we already have their data, but they do not participate. Some of them left the group”.

Group Conformity

This is about conformity to friends with less favorable attitude towards entrepreneurship program. This has caused some participants who joined entrepreneurship program to follow their friends who left the entrepreneurship activities. This is also admitted by participant three and ten. One of them highlighted that their “friend asked me to join. It was an induction, so I think that was what is not good. We just go there for an induction so we did not think of the responsibilities that come with it”. Another said that the “main reason for joining this is to add more experience, but really, I got into this because of a friend. They asked me to tag along so I came”.

Physical exhaustion

Almost all participants complained about physical exhaustion, in that they feel extremely tired from working in the entrepreneurship club or handling entrepreneurship programs. They said that it is tiring to go from their residential college to the program venue, classes and back to the program venue again after their class. They said that “because of the things we had to do, the schedule, the venue. It was all time consuming. The distance from place to place is far”. One also said that it “kind of puts pressure on me. It is really tiring and it also affects my schedule”.

Emotional exhaustion

Participants have also talked about how emotionally drained they were due to their involvement in entrepreneurship activities. One of the participants said that she and her team members were affected by all the negativities that surround them. Participants two and three felt anxious from all the work due to lack of knowledge and experience for being new in this area. They have a lot more to learn. So, when the work piles, they feel the pressure to complete them well. The participant noted that she “also have not joined anything before, so I felt pressured. I don’t understand anything”. They also felt pressured to keep up with all the work and responsibilities so much so that they thought of quitting from the position they held in the entrepreneurship club. One of them said “it makes me sad”. They also said that they “cried a lot”.

Academic struggles

Almost all participants have told that they struggled with academic workload during their involvement in entrepreneurship activities. Some participants had to skip a lot of classes whenever they have entrepreneurship programs. The participant on this matter said that “when the program comes, we always skipped class”. They had to handle huge responsibilities in entrepreneurship club alone because there were limited number of committee members to help them. They recalled that they “had to resort to outside help, we interviewed students other than our club to participate”. They have also had to sacrifice studies and priorities work in entrepreneurship club as said by participant two and three. They said that “it affects our study. When things go wrong with the proposal, we have to spend time on that”.

Participant five reported that their “examination result dropped after being involved in entrepreneurship activities”. Participant six have said that they continued thinking about work in entrepreneurship club even if they have already gone back to hostel room. The participant said that “when we go back to the dorm that is all we think about. That’s the biggest concern, I also need to focus on my studies”. Participant seven added that they “had to provide too much time for entrepreneurship activities, and less time on work and personal management”.

Discussion

Students who took the decision to involve themselves in entrepreneurship activities in their university years may risk facing challenges in their journey. This research was based from studies by Rahim et al. (2015), Bagheri et al. (2013), Rengiah & Sentosa (2016) and Ridzwan et al. (2017) which have discussed the challenges of youth entrepreneurs, especially those who participated in entrepreneurship activities at their universities. Findings from the research show no conclusive reason for students’ lack of interest to become entrepreneurs after they graduate from universities. Building from there, this research follows the recommendation of Frese and Gielnik (2014) as well as Rengiah and Sentosa (2016) who believe that a qualitative study should be done to further investigate this matter.

The findings show that most participants went through similar experience despite being affiliated to different clubs under the university’s entrepreneurship development programs. Most of them have encountered problems when communicating with the management, and that each of them has talked about how such situation affected them mentally throughout their involvement in entrepreneurship activities. They have also reported that their difficulties in engaging their fellow students or convincing them to join entrepreneurship activities.

On the findings that concern the administrative or management staff, there were previous research which found that there were lecturers who taught entrepreneurship in universities who lack readiness or credibility in the area (Karimi et al., 2010; Olorundare & Kayode, 2014; Rahim et al., 2015; Welsh & Drăguşin, 2011; Yusoff et al.,

2014). This is in line with the data collected from the participants in this study, who said that the management is not really ready to take on this job and that some classes were too easy for them that it bores them. The fact that most students had to find information themselves shows that the management is still yet to master the knowledge of this area. This has also caused the students to not be exposed to the much-needed knowledge. This could also be one of the causes of miscommunication between the management and the students. This has been identified as one of the factors that may hinder the delivery of a quality entrepreneurship education in Nigeria by Chukwudi and Nwosu (2018) and in India by Joshi (2014) as well as in Finland (Seikkula-Leino et al., 2019). In comparison, universities in the United States of America have frequently employed real entrepreneurs to become educators of the subject, giving the students an opportunity to learn directly from the people in the industry (Moses & Akinbode, 2014). Students who participated in entrepreneurship clubs were also facing problems that relate to the management of students. The researchers found that it was difficult for students to convince other students to seek entrepreneurial knowledge. This has caused student participants to avoid purely joining because they wanted to learn, to just working in achieving all the club's main goals. This was also a similar concern that was brought up in previous researches involving the culture of the community surrounding the students in terms of entrepreneurship (Ferreira et al., 2016; Karimi et al., 2010; Olorundare & Kayode, 2014; Welsh & Drăguşin, 2011). Similarly, this research also found that participants struggle to find loyal and committed members who will not flee off whenever there is a problem. This might be because entrepreneurship may not be something that university students are interested in because of their different majors, or personal background and more. This was stated by one of the participants in the findings of this study, which can also be seen in the writings of previous research (Karimi et al., 2010; Ustyuzhina et al., 2019; Vanevenhoven, 2013; Welsh & Drăguşin, 2011; Yusoff et al., 2014).

Most of the participants also agreed that their experience can be regarded as participating in a life lesson. They felt that their hardships have made them better people, although it does not necessarily make them to become entrepreneurs in the future with one of them referring to entrepreneurship as only a potential *'side job'*. Only a couple of them really stated that they have taken entrepreneurship activities seriously and as a job, referring to how they have already decided to become even before involving in the university's entrepreneurship activities as a couple of participants said that they may *'continue with entrepreneurship'* and that they *'have always wanted to become an entrepreneur'*. Participants also commented on their struggles in their studies. Some of them missed classes, some of them have seen the deterioration of their academic performance, as reflected in their decreased cumulative grade point average score (CGPA). However, they think that it is part of student life which does not need to be all academic-related activities, and a number of them also think that the life outside the university is harsher than it is inside. Pittaway et al. (2015) and Wang (2013) have also said that despite the challenges of managing other students as club leaders, these students walked away feeling that they achieved more in terms of experience and skills rather than when they are not involved. The researchers have also reported that students felt like they are valued more in employment than their counterparts in university due to their experiences in these student entrepreneurship clubs.

There are limitations to this study, one of it being the type students who became the participants to this research. There are many other students who do not affiliate themselves to the university's entrepreneurship development centre but still got involved in entrepreneurship. They may present different types of data than the ones collected from the students who become members of entrepreneurial clubs of the university. This may lead to the inappropriateness to generalise the findings to other settings, as this may also not be the case in other universities. Other limitations to this study are that it is interviewing participants who has time constraints. This has caused the interview to be conducted in a limited time.

Conclusion

Students who have involved themselves in entrepreneurship at their universities have indeed gone through challenges along the way. There were some key findings gathered in this research, divided into two categories; external and personal challenges. Students have found that it is a difficult task to deal with the management aspects of entrepreneurship activities, which have resulted to other problems such as the feeling of stress and the inability to continue as members of their club. One finding in particular talks about how the environment in the university has hindered them from expanding the club to a larger scale. Most of them have also told about the way they searched for certain information, which was not given to them by the management. They took it to themselves to add more knowledge and experience in entrepreneurship. They have also explained how they were drained physically and mentally from all the work that they have done. Most of them have also struggled academically but felt that it was understandable and acceptable considering how students should actually be spending their student life by not only dedicating themselves only to academic work. These findings are

consistent with. Rahim et al. (2015) and Rengiah and Sentosa (2016) have discussed the issues of entrepreneurship educator and the readiness of universities in entrepreneurship education.

The findings are essential to inform the development, change or improvement of entrepreneurship policies. Entrepreneurship education programs must continue to be reviewed so as to ensure that students are equipped to meet the challenges they might face when participating in the program. It is, hence, recommended that this type of research to be conducted at other universities and perhaps with wider set of criteria for participant selection. This is because this finding is generalizable to every setting. Other universities or students who do not affiliate themselves with the entrepreneurship development center may show different data due to the different ways they operate. These diverse selections of participants may bring researchers to new findings.

In conclusion, the research has shed some light into identifying the challenges these students face in their entrepreneurial journey. The researchers believe that there are still more to be explored in order to understand why graduates do not opt to become an entrepreneur later after graduation as suggested in many researches. More work in this area of research will surely bring researchers closer to the understanding of the situation the youth around the world have at hand, especially young Malaysians, in terms of entrepreneurship involvement. Future researchers are recommended to collect data from student entrepreneurs who are not affiliated to university entrepreneurship clubs to explore the bigger picture of the challenges faced by university students in entrepreneurship. It is also recommended that researchers consider better planning in interviewing participants. This is so in order to enable researchers to collect a more detailed and in-depth data from the participants, avoiding matters such as participants' time restraint, environmental noises and more. Researchers may also interview educators of entrepreneurship education or relevant university personnel who are responsible for entrepreneurship in universities. This would really help relevant authorities to work about the ways to solve existing issues faced in the efforts in nurturing entrepreneurial competencies among university students and graduates.

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