

## Empowering Graduates through Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy: A Framework to Reducing Unemployment in Malaysia

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### Abstract

The persistent issue of graduate unemployment in Malaysia continues to pose a serious socioeconomic challenge, despite various policy interventions and the growing emphasis on entrepreneurship education. Reports indicate that a significant proportion of Malaysian graduates remain unemployed six months after graduation, with limited interest in self-employment as a viable career path. This study aims to investigate the role of entrepreneurial self-efficacy (ESE) in enhancing self-employment intentions among Malaysian public university graduates, within the framework of Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT). Drawing on SCCT, which highlights the influence of self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and personal goals in career development, the research explores how entrepreneurship education affects graduates' ESE and their willingness to pursue self-employment. A mixed-methods approach was employed, comprising a quantitative survey involving graduates from selected public universities in Malaysia, and in-depth qualitative interviews with entrepreneurship experts, policymakers, and academic leaders. The findings reveal that while entrepreneurship education is widely implemented, its effectiveness in cultivating entrepreneurial self-efficacy remains inconsistent. Notably, graduates with higher ESE exhibit stronger entrepreneurial intentions and greater openness to self-employment as a career alternative. The qualitative data further supports this by highlighting gaps in practical training, confidence building, and the integration of real-world entrepreneurial experiences within academic curricula. The study contributes to the discourse on graduate employability by providing empirical evidence on the mediating role of entrepreneurial self-efficacy in the education-to-employment pipeline. It also offers practical implications for higher education institutions and policymakers aiming to redesign entrepreneurship education as a strategic response to graduate unemployment. This research underscores the urgent need to strengthen entrepreneurial thinking and self-efficacy development to foster a resilient, opportunity-driven graduate workforce in Malaysia.

### Keywords

Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy, Graduate Unemployment, Entrepreneurship Education, Malaysian Public Universities, Graduate Employability.