SEMARAK ILMU PUBLISHING
202103268166(003316878-P)

Semarak Proceedings of Social and Behavioural Sciences

Journal homepage:
https://semarakilmu.my/index.php/spsbs/index
ISSN: XXXX-XXXX

Malaysian Necessity Entrepreneurs: Drivers and Characteristics

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ABSTRACT

On 11th March 2020, World Health Organisation (WHO) declared COVID-19, a pandemic due to the nefarious '*SARS-CoV-2* virus'. The Malaysian Government implemented 'Movement Control Order' on 18th March, 2020 causing unprecedented unemployment to reach 4.55% at once and reached 5.3% in May 2020 (Unemployed was '826.1 thousand persons') - indicating the highest rate, for the past 20 years as reported by Department of Statistics Malaysia. Malaysia transitioned to an endemic phase, on the 1st April 2022, with the reopening of its international borders, and this era was the beginning of post COVID-19 period. This led to a gradual increase of its economic activities, such as opening up of more food and beverage (F&B) services businesses. This research aimed to identify the prevalent entrepreneurial drivers and characteristics of F&B services business 'necessity entrepreneurs' (NE). Literature reviews were carried out on Entrepreneurship, Theory of Planned Behaviour, Entrepreneurial Intention, *Krueger-Brazeal Model of Entrepreneurial Intention*, Necessity Entrepreneur (NE), *Serviere's Venture Creation Model for Necessity Entrepreneurs*, and Entrepreneurial Characteristics (*Ernst & Young's Entrepreneur Model*). The research design was an exploratory case study qualitative research with an in-depth semi-structured interview session, comprising of a pilot study, and followed by a main study of 21 necessity entrepreneurs who were involved in the F&B service businesses in Malaysia. Thematic analysis was carried out with the application of '*ATLAS.ti* 23' software. Findings suggested four novel drivers of NE, *viz*., family cohesion; inherited culinary skills; pursuit of culinary ambition; and unmotivated in their jobs. In addition, eight novel characteristics of NE comprising perseverance; patience; money management; wellness; kinship; creativity; communication network and self-discipline were indicated. The significance of this study would be important to policy-makers, practitioners and academics in Malaysia. Necessity entrepreneurship could be used to mitigate the present negative economic impacts of the post COVID-19 period and high inflation.

Keywords: *COVID-19 pandemic; theory of planned behaviour; entrepreneurial drivers and characteristics; necessity entrepreneurs; F&B services businesses*

1. Introduction

Policy makers, practitioners, and academics shared a common interest in understanding entrepreneurs, specifically in the realm of necessity (being pushed) and opportunity (being pulled) entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurship was recognised as a source of economic growth and employment creation, particularly for developing countries [1,2]. Malaysia, being a developing country in the Asian region, had a vision to be a developed nation by 2020 [3]. This vision was revised to 2030 due to the government changes in 2018. Thus, entrepreneurship could be one of the engines to grow the Malaysian economy. Numerous policies and programmes had been conducted to promote more Malaysians to engage in this sector, especially the younger generations since the National Economic Plan (NEP) 1970. As a result, many policy makers throughout the world explicitly pursued policies

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https://doi.org/10.37934/spsbs.1.1.2849a

that were aimed at increasing the amount of entrepreneurship [4,5]. Similarly, individuals were increasingly attracted by the option of becoming entrepreneurs, whether motivated because they had no other job options and needed a source of income (as necessity entrepreneurs) or by the perception that there was a business opportunity that has not yet been taken advantage of (or has been taken advantage of only incompletely) by existing companies (as opportunity entrepreneurs) [6]. The research background of the study described the socio-economic conditions and entrepreneurship landscape of Malaysia during the two (2) periods *viz*., COVID-19 pandemic and lockdowns; and post COVID-19 period.

1.1 During COVID-19 Pandemic and Lockdowns

The inauspicious 11th March 2020 was the day, World Health Organisation (WHO) acknowledged the coronavirus, 'COVID-19' a pandemic [7]. Due to the despicable 'SARS-CoV-2' virus, it was the source of the COVID-19 pandemic. With immediate effect, there was a decline in economic activities and many economists predicted both recession and depression [8]. The nefarious pandemic had a catastrophic effect on Malaysia's economy with an unbelievable amount of damage to the country in most the of business sectors, such as manufacturing sectors (except glove manufacturing); tourism sectors (airlines and hotels); bankruptcies; plummeting stock markets; and unemployment. In fact, the sentiments amongst economists and business entrepreneurs were of the opinion, that the economic penalties caused by the virus, were one of the worst in this century [9,10].

1.2 Chronology of Events from COVID-19 till 'Post COVID-19 Period'

The Malaysian Government had taken an unpleasant and unfavourable economic decision to lock down the whole nation on the 18th March 2020, known as 'Movement Control Order' (MCO); followed by 'National Recovery Plan' (NRP) with four (4) phases; and finally, the transition to the endemic phase on the 1st April 2022; with the reopening of its international borders followed by relaxing of SOPs on the 1st May 2022; leading to the gradual revival of its economic activities. The period from 1st May 2022 onwards till the present time was referred to as 'post COVID-19 period' or 'post-coronavirus period'.

The following sections elucidated several socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 pandemic and lockdowns affecting every Malaysian, *vis-à-vis* a chronology of events from the start of the COVID-19 pandemic till post COVID-19 period, i.e., a total of 774 days.

1.2.1 Business lockdowns due to phases of national recovery plan

At the end of July 2021, Entrepreneur Development and Cooperatives Ministry of Malaysia, issued a warning of which 580,000 enterprises, comprising half of the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), were at the brink of failure. This warning came about due to lengthy business interruptions and reduced operational performances of 60% for essential businesses, in the Greater Klang Valley (involving Selangor, Kuala Lumpur, Negeri Sembilan and Putrajaya), whilst the non-essential businesses had their operations stopped totally. It was reported that more than 90% of the own-account workers or self-employed, comprising 2.7 million people, experienced a reduction in income or faced a risk of loss of employment. The results of these disruptions, reduced or zero capacity of production, led to extended closure of many industries and increasing unemployment. In short, this was one of the reasons of unemployment in Malaysia due to the different phases of lockdowns as mandatory in Malaysian's National Recovery Plan (NRP).

1.2.2 Unemployment in Malaysia

In 2014, unemployment in Malaysia for the last two decades (1999 to 2020), reached its lowest level, with 2.88% (2014); reached 3.3% (2019); and conversely peaked at 4.54% during COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns [86]. The justification for the lowest unemployment rate of 2.88% in 2014 had no significant effect on people who became necessity entrepreneur. In 2013, the unemployment rate was 3.16%, and in 2015 the unemployment rate increased to 3.1%.

In addition, Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM, 2020) reported unemployment rate of 5.3% with ‘826.1 thousand persons’ in May 2020, the highest in almost a decade (or 778,800 people). More than a year later, it was a lower unemployment rate of 4.5% or involving ‘728.1 thousand persons’ in May 2021; and in October 2021, the unemployment rate declined slightly to 4.3%, respectively. These data were depicted in Figure 1.

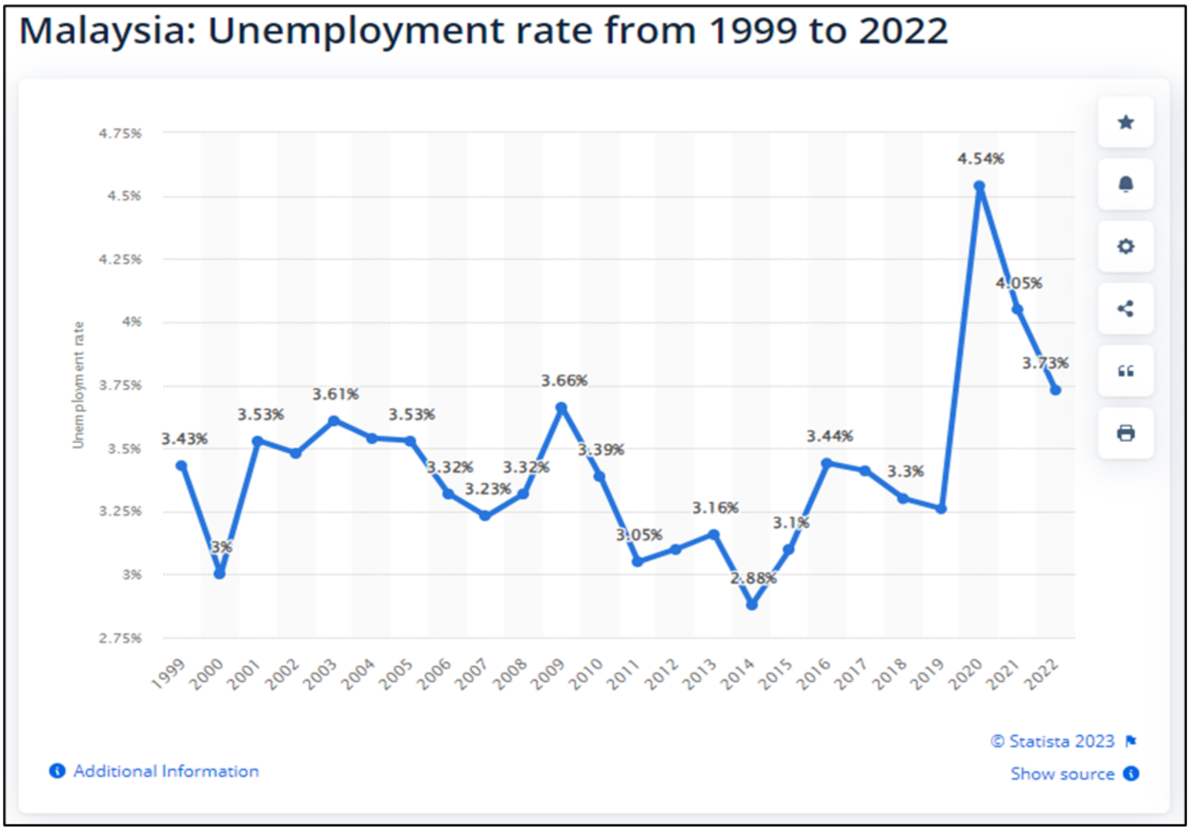

Fig. 1. Unemployment rate in malaysia from 1999 to 2022 [86]
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1.2.3 Malaysian companies winding-up

Furthermore, the three (3) Malaysian Chinese newspapers namely, *Oriental Daily*, *Sin Chew Daily*, and *China News*, reported that a majority of factories and manufacturers; agriculture, mining and construction sectors; wholesale and retail trades (e.g., apparel and books); F&B with accommodation services; tourism sectors (tours agencies, hotels and commercial airlines), rest and recreation (R & R) sectors (cinemas, entertainment lounges, nightclubs, and gymnasiums); transportation and storage sectors; and lastly information and communication sectors; were either closed down or its staff were on furlough, respectively. Literally, the whole country of Malaysia ‘stood still’ with bankruptcies and businesses winding up, albeit with the only exception of specific manufacturers which benefitted from COVID-19 pandemic-induced demand for health-related products (e.g., rubber gloves and pharmaceuticals).

1.2.4 Reduction of Malaysian household income

Malaysia has an 'income classification system' developed by Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM), where each Malaysian household is organised into any one of the three categories (B40, M40 or T20) based on the household monthly income.

The publication entitled, '*The Household Income Estimates and Incidence of Poverty Report, Malaysia, 2020*' by DOSM discussed findings of COVID-19 impacted on household income. DOSM reiterated there were overall decreases in all the four (4) sources of income of households, i.e., paid employment; self-employment; property and investment; and receiving of current transfer. The decrease was caused by unemployment (income loss) and reduction of income, primarily to two (2) contributing factors, which were the scaling down of working hours and increase in skill-related underemployment.

This was confirmed in a new paper report by in *New Straits Times* (21st September 2021) by Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob, Prime Minister of Malaysia, who mentioned M40 households, numbering 580,000 had been re-categorised as B40 [11]. He further reiterated that "Over half a million middle-income group (M40) households have slipped into the bottom 40% (B40) category due to the current health and economic crises caused by the COVID-19 pandemic." In a nutshell, the outbreak of the pandemic and lockdowns affected significantly household income of every B40s, M40s, and T20s respectively, for more or less.

1.2.5 Employees with high debt and low pay

It was reported by Kana, G. [12] in *The Star* (2nd April, 2022) that "Malaysian households have nearly RM1.38 trillion worth of debt". The article disclosed further that household debt increased by nearly 17% between 2018 and 2021. Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM) reported that majority of Malaysian households had low savings, and the alarming fact that only 76% of households had savings that could only sustain living expenditure of three (3) months or less. In the Bank Negara Malaysia Annual Report 2021, the bottom 40% (B40) households had a monthly net income RM230 per month; whilst the middle 40% (M40) and top 20% (T20) households, had a monthly net income of RM1,127 and RM4,081 respectively in 2019 (after accounting for expenditures and financial obligations). This was illustrated in Figure 2.

Outwardly, the B40s had a net income of RM230 to survive on in 2019, but this was before the lockdowns. In reality, during the lockdowns, the impact of unemployment on the B40s had deteriorated and exasperated their average income and expenditure.

Firstly, there was no more income due to unemployment, but the expenditure remained the same, resulting in a deficit income, (-) RM2,770 [Calculation was RM3,000 – RM230 = RM2,770]. This implied that the unemployed B40s did not have any income at all, but still required to pay for their expenditure, including financial obligations.

A majority of Malaysian households had low savings, and no proper 'safeguard' or 'safety net', compounded by unemployment, jobs loss, jobs on furlough, and salary reduction; inevitably forced these B40s to withdraw their retirement funds from Employees Provident Fund (EPF). For those unfortunate and unemployed B40s who did not have any EPF savings, it was near impossible to eke out a living on a tiny net income of RM230 only.

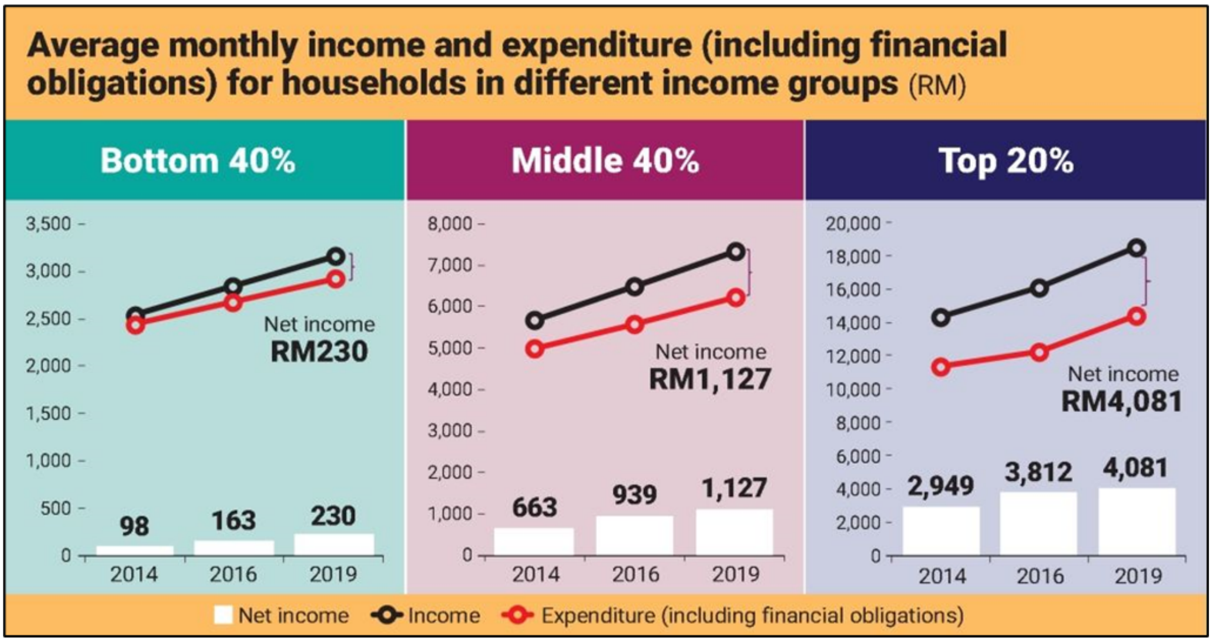

Fig. 2. Average monthly income and expenditure (including financial obligations) for households in different income groups (RM)
(Source: "Average monthly income and expenditure (including financial obligations) or households in different income groups," 2021, *Bank Negara Malaysia Annual Report 2021*. Copyright 2020 by Bank Negara Malaysia. Permission not sought.)

Hence, to increase the net income of the B40s who were in abject poverty with a deficit income of (-) RM2,770, the unemployed B40s affected during the COVID-19 pandemic for the past three (3) years, were forced to emerge, probably as sustainable F&B services entrepreneurs to eke out a living. This was one of the aspects of this research.

1.2.6 Employees Provident Fund (EPF) withdrawals

It was reported by Yeap. C [13] in 'The Edge Malaysia' (24th June, 2021) that during the MCO, employees were allowed to withdraw from 2 accounts, (up to RM10,000-RM60,000) from 'i-Sinar' (Account 1) and RM10,000 from 'i-Lestari' (Account 2).

It was reported that Datuk Seri Amir Hamzah Azizan, CEO of the Employees Provident Fund (EPF), mentioned 6.49 million members (out of 15 million total members) during the 1Q2021, applied from 'i-Sinar' (Account 1), where RM57.97 billion had been approved and paid out. He reiterated that people who had withdrawn from 'i-Sinar' were B40 and M40 households, comprising about 42% of the total EPF membership. These withdrawers had taken out their own savings to increase their earnings (shortfall in income), as most of them had lost their jobs, and the money withdrawn was allowing them to ride out the COVID-19 pandemic. It was reported by Azman, F. of 'Astro Awani' (27th February, 2021) that RM18.1 billion had been withdrawn by 5.16 million members from 'i-Lestari' (Account 2). The third round of withdrawals from EPF, known as 'i-Citra' was launched in 15thJuly 2021 and ended in 30th September 2021, with a maximum withdrawal amount of RM5,000 only.

To sum up, under the previous three rounds of withdrawals from EPF, namely 'i-Lestari', 'i-Sinar', and 'i-Citra' which were executed since the pandemic and lockdowns, RM101.1 billion had been withdrawn by a total of 7.34 million members by October 2021.

Yet, on the 1st April, 2022, EPF announced the latest benefits of allowing contributors to withdraw further (which was the fourth round of withdrawal), another RM10,000 under 'Special Withdrawal facility'. This fourth round of withdrawal indicated that the economic fiasco of COVID-19 pandemic was far from over. As a record, EPF had received more than 5.3 million members' applications amounting to RM40.1 billion, as of 14th April 2022, and disbursement payments were given out on the 18th April, 2022.

In short, millions of employees from the three strata of society, *vis-à-vis*, B40, M40 and T20, as of April, 2022, were still badly knockout by the calamitous effect of the pandemic and lockdowns, with the only legal source of borrowings of money was from EPF to tide over their loss of income (unemployment) or shortfall in income.

In summing up, Malaysia with its rapid growth of digitalisation and the COVID-19 pandemic's ripple effects lasting more than two years (mandatory MCO coupled with three lockdowns and various SOPs), a large number of people who lost their jobs, reduced working hours or reduced income, were forced to transition into self-employment during the pandemic, whether by choice or necessity. Many of these B40s were compelled to shift into the 'informal sector of employment', as a social safety net or an alternative option to earn money and to support their families. The above mentioned 'informal sector of employment' was necessity entrepreneurship, mainly in food and beverages (F&B) services businesses.

1.3 Post COVID-19 Period

Malaysia transitioned to the 'Endemic Phase' on the 1st April 2022; with the reopening of its international borders followed by relaxing of SOPs on the 1st May 2022; leading to the gradual revival of its economic activities. The period from 1st May 2022 onwards till the present time was referred to as 'post COVID-19' or 'post-coronavirus period'. The economic catastrophes from COVID-19 pandemic which lasted for more than two (2) years, not only affected small firms and large multinational corporations, but also Malaysians from all walks of life; from young, self-employed, and migrant workers.

Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim was appointed and sworn in as the 10th Prime Minister of Malaysia, on 24th November, 2022. He formed a unity government and introduced '*Malaysia Madani*', as an effort to drive and to restore Malaysia's dignity and glory in the global arena, and raising hopes for political stability and economic growth in all business sectors.

According to the Statistics of the Labour Force, published by the DOSM (8th December, 2023), the unemployment rate stayed at a constant of 3.4% for September and October, 2023, respectively. This unemployment rate of 3.4% (2023), surprisingly was higher than the unemployment rate of 3.3% (2019) before COVID-19 pandemic.

The significance of the above data implied that Malaysia being in post COVID-19 period, and under the auspices of a new and extraordinary Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, should have the unemployment rate below 3.3%. However, the unemployment rate could not be reduced further due to the exceptional and unique dimensions of Malaysia's labour ecosystem; low salaries and the mandatory minimum wage at RM1,500 (with effect from 1st May 2023); and the various economic landscape and background, being discussed in the sections below.

1.3.1 3D's jobs (dirty, dangerous, and difficult)

"THREE D' jobs or 3D's jobs referred to such jobs which are "dirty, dangerous, and difficult", and presently are found in the plantation, manufacturing, construction, agriculture, and cleaning service sectors. An overview of existing literature pointed towards several factors that contributed to a lack of number of Malaysian working in local 3D's sectors. First, for the locals, the availability of job options, mobility factor and matter of convenience allowed them to avoid the difficult, dangerous, and dirty jobs [14]. Second, a study by World Bank 2013 [15] on the Malaysian policy on 'Immigrant Labour' suggested that a sufficient number of Malaysian workers were highly mobile across industries mainly, those who opted for better salaries,improved economic opportunities; and healthier work conditions including the use of modern technology and facilities, of which were not found in the ambit of 3D's jobs [16].

Therefore, the lack of interest among Malaysians to take up 3D's jobs were reflected in the high number of foreign workers being hired by many employers in Malaysia. The number of foreign workers had been increasing steadily year by year and were spread over various industries in Malaysia (plantation, cleaning services, etc.). Despite the current Malaysia's healthy economic situation which provided many job opportunities to the people, most Malaysians chose not to work in 3D's sectors, leaving a huge employment gap in demand [17]. The employment gap had been filled up by foreign workers from Bangladesh, Myanmar, and Nepal.

The steady yearly increase in the number of foreign workers in Malaysia which, as at 30th June 2022, had amounted to around 2.1 million workers, (as compared to 1.9 million workers who were recorded in the previous year, 2021), clearly indicated that employers preferred to employ foreigners rather than locals as stated by the Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Economy), Datuk Seri Mustapa Mohamed in *The Star* (20th October 2022).

In addition, poor working condition, long and odd hours as well various safety and health issues which were prevalent in these sectors were the other negative push factors for the locals as posited by Trakic [18]. A considerable number of injuries and accidents at workplace hindered the locals to opt for the sectors [19]. Besides, the status of job was another important variable as the 3D's jobs were looked down socially and people doubted the 3D's jobs were given any recognition at all.

Despite the severity of a major accident, and manifestation of minor accidents, also caused damage to the employee's (worker) health and these had been occurring much more frequently in all industries [20]. Employers had the role to guarantee that workers were receiving, at least, the maximum basic wage by considering the nature of their job as dirty, dangerous, and difficult. Low wages did not offer an opportunity for local workers' family to sustain a good livelihood unless housing and other facilities were supplied to them. With good salary, a worker knew that he could survive on, albeit the hard work each day [21,22].

Hence, this dilemma had developed into a paradox where Malaysia depended on these foreign workers to take up 3D's jobs, whilst many of the able-bodied Malaysians rather preferred to be unemployed than unhappy at working in a job they did not like, albeit with the plentiful vacant, yet disdained 3D's sectors.

1.3.2 Low salary and mandatory minimum wage, RM1,500

The Malaysian Government, with the agreement of the 'Malaysian Trades Union Congress (MTUC)' and the 'Congress of the Union of Employees in the Public and Civil Services (CUEPACS)' had set the minimum wage for workers in Malaysia at RM1,500. This mandatory minimum wage came into force on 1st May, 2023.

In the Malaysian context, median salaries varied across industries, sectors, and job roles; *vis-à-vis*, the median salary painted a picture of the economic landscape. In Q42022, the median income from wages and salaries was RM3,149 per month, which was double the minimum wage of RM1,500 per month. It implied that a worker who earned a minimum wage of RM1,500 could not survive at all. This was further exacerbated by the current inflationary economic environment of Malaysia with the inflated cost of living; rising food prices; reduction in subsidies; 'sticky' mandatory minimum wage of RM1,500; weak exchange rate of the Malaysian ringgit; which inevitably reduced the purchasing power of the Malaysian worker.

It was reported in *Free Malaysia Today* (FMT) (11th Aug, 2022), that Malaysians who were working in Singapore with an average income range from S$1,900 (RM6,095) to S$3,000 (RM9,624) [23]. Hence, this led to the fact that many Malaysians migrating and working overseas such as in Singapore and Australia even in 3D's jobs, were due to the lucrative options that they have, namely, mobility; higher wages and higher exchange rate of the Singapore and Australian dollars [24,25]. This scenario opened up for labour shortages in 3D's job sectors locally which created demand for foreign workers especially unskilled workers.

1.3.3 Own-account workers

Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM) defined 'Own-Account Worker' "as a person who operates his or her own farm, business, or trade without employing any paid workers assisting in the conduct of the farm, business, or trade." Examples include freelancers, traders, food stall owners and delivery riders. Gig workers were classified as part of own-account workers. DOSM categorised these own-account workers as 'informal sector employment'. The number of own-account workers rose from 1.3 million in 2019 to 3.5 million in 2021, (partly due to the impact of pandemic) and thus, contributing 23.2% of the country's total employment as reported by Chief Statistician Datuk Seri Dr. Mohd Uzir Mahidin from DOSM, in *The Star* (30th December 2021). He said more than 70% of the employment in the 'informal sector employment' was in the own-account worker's category, with an increase of 2% from 2019.

For Malaysians who neither sought 3D's jobs locally nor migrate to Singapore, they 'morphed' or involved as own-account workers in various occupations like freelancers, artists, traders, F&B services operators, delivery riders, and gig workers.

[***NB*:** In this research, the term 'own-account workers' (a DOSM definition) has been replaced by the term 'necessity entrepreneurs', as both the terms refer to self-employment].

In summing up, during the post COVID-19 period, many Malaysian workers shunned abundant 3D's jobs and engaged in gig economy or as necessity entrepreneurs which not only earned higher income, but also enhanced their social respects (as a boss and being independent); a promising career; and a healthy work-life balance, by engaging for example, in F&B services businesses. There were differences in the mindsets of necessity entrepreneurs during the COVID-19 pandemic, which basically was a need to survive without any available jobs. On the other hand, during the post COVID-19 era, many Malaysians were faced with several options, which were either a choice of 3D's jobs locally, or overseas 3D's job in Singapore, or worked as necessity entrepreneurs. Amongst the various necessity entrepreneurship such as gardening, tailoring and hair-dressing, which required specific skills and training. On the other hand, F&B services businesses required manual labour and low skills relatively (as some of the female F&B entrepreneurs had learnt and acquired cooking skills from their mothers and grandmothers).

In a nutshell, there were two different groups of F&B services business necessity entrepreneurs, the first group emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the second group emerged during the post pandemic period, in which each group of F&B services business necessity entrepreneurs possessed different mind sets, options and intentions.

1.1 Research Objectives

In this research, there were two objectives, and they were as follows:

i. The first objective was to find out the drivers of necessity entrepreneurs who were involved in the food and beverage services businesses.
ii. The second objective was to find out the entrepreneurial characteristics of necessity entrepreneurs who were involved in the food and beverage services businesses.

2. Literature Review
2.1 Entrepreneurship

It is widely acknowledged that the field of entrepreneurship lacked a well-accepted definition [26-35]. According to the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM), entrepreneurship was 'any attempt at new business or new venture creation, such as self-employment, a new business organisation, or the expansion of an existing business, by an individual, a team of individuals, or an established business' [36]. Nevertheless, a definition of entrepreneurship given by Venkataraman [35] was 'Entrepreneurship is defined as an activity that involves the discovery, evaluation and exploitation of opportunities to introduce new goods and services, ways of organising, markets, processes and raw materials through organising efforts that previously had not existed.'
In brief, the journey of entrepreneurship usually began with the first initial steps, i.e., the discovery of an opportunity, the decision to exploit that opportunity as a venture creation, vis-à-vis with the ability to develop, organise and manage a business enterprise to make a profit, which occurred at the end of the entrepreneurial journey. This journey of entrepreneurship was based on the 'Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)' of an individual, who underwent his or her own perception of feasibility; perception of desirability; self-efficacy; and attitudes, which eventually crystallised into the 'entrepreneurial intention' of an individual; and unless that entrepreneurial intention was developed, that particular individual would not engage with an identified opportunity who would 'morphed' and developed into an entrepreneur later.

2.1 Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)

For entrepreneurship to exist, there must be the potential or intentions for entrepreneurship, whether in a large organisation seeking to innovate or as an individual necessity entrepreneur. Thus, before embarking on the journey of entrepreneurship, a potential entrepreneur must had possessed the pre-requisite entrepreneurial intentions, such as the discovery of an opportunity and the decision to exploit that opportunity as a venture creation. Therefore, entrepreneurial potential however, needed potential entrepreneurs, and this was explained by the 'Theory of Planned Behaviour'.

The 'Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)' was developed by Icek Ajzen [37,38], as a general model to predict and explain behaviour across a wide range of different types of behaviours with the assumption that an individual would act rationally. Ajzen [38] proposed that 'the individual's behaviour is best predicted by one's intentions, whereas intentions are, in turn, predicted by attitudes about the behaviour; the subjective norms (which are related to a person's perception of important others' beliefs that he or she should or should not perform); and the perceived behavioural control.' These factors were not necessarily actively or consciously considered during decision-making, but formed the backdrop for the decision-making process.

In short, the Theory of Planned Behaviour was used to explain and to predict the reasons, drivers, motivations, and rationale of a cause which consisted of two questions: 'Why do we do what we do? and 'Why do we act the way we act?' Theory of Planned Behaviour had gained an important place in the entrepreneurship literature over the last two decades as mentioned by the researchers, Lortie and Castogiovanni [39], as it provided a theoretical background for explaining and predicting the development of entrepreneurial intentions and its correspondingly entrepreneurial actions [40-44].

2.2 Entrepreneurial Intention

Entrepreneurship was a personal decision based on planned action [45]. 'Intention' was an internal reflection of people's potential behaviour. It could be described as the ability to predict future behaviour and then exploit this behaviour [46]. This led to the term '*entrepreneurial intention*', which could be described as the basis for individual action in the establishment of a new venture and the corresponding plan before action [47]. This was supported by Ayub *et al.,* [48] who defined entrepreneurial intention as 'the commitment to perform a behaviour that is necessary to physically start a business venture'. In other words, entrepreneurial intention was a conscious mental state that precedes the action and directs attention towards the goal of establishing a new business. Entrepreneurial intention represented "the individual's or a group of people's intentions to create a new business, and work as an entrepreneur in the future" [48].

Moreover, Bird [49] posited that entrepreneurial intention could further be defined as 'a state of mind that people wish to create a new firm or a new value driver inside existing organizations' He further advanced that existing literature had postulated individual factors such as temperament, previous experiences, social relations, individual abilities, and other contextual factors like environment and organisation as the main factors associated with the determination of entrepreneurial intention. Therefore, unless an entrepreneurial intention was developed, an individual might not ever engage with an identified opportunity. It was important to note that the influence of new ventures on the economy and society at large was determined by the potential causes for starting new businesses [50,51].

This led to the opportunity-based entrepreneurial intention, which was not only associated with innovation activities, but interconnected to prospects of reducing unemployment and raising production efficiency in the economy [52]. On the contrary, whereas necessity-based entrepreneurial intention was frequently associated with global economic downtown, unemployment, economic hardship, livelihood difficulties, war and invasion, and global calamities like the COVID-19 global pandemic crisis, and 'long COVID' [53,54].

In a nutshell, entrepreneurial intentions were the conceptual developments of influencing the individual decisions to start a business (e.g., as a necessity entrepreneur).

In this research, the theoretical model proposed by Krueger and Brazeal [55] was chosen, as they had developed a model of entrepreneurial intentions which had been applied in various contexts [45, 56-59]. This choice was further reinforced and supported by a recent meta-analysis of Schlaegel and Koenig [42], who presented that the perceived desirability and feasibility were the best predictors of the entrepreneurial intentions. In a nutshell, these two variables of perceived desirability and feasibility, were similar with the two main components of the entrepreneurial intentions in the theoretical model of Krueger and Brazeal [55].

2.3 Krueger-Brazeal Model of Entrepreneurial Intention

The 'Krueger-Brazeal Model of Entrepreneurial Intention' [or Krueger-Brazeal Model of Entrepreneurial Potential (simplified)] suggested that two (2) pertinent factors which were antecedents of the 'entrepreneurial intentions' to start a business, notably the 'perceived feasibility' and 'perceived desirability' of an individual who had the intention of being an entrepreneur. In addition, two (2) further moderating variables, namely, 'propensity to act' and 'precipitating event (displacement)'; followed by another two (2) mediating variables, namely, 'credibility' and 'potential', which influenced the final formation of entrepreneurial intentions [55,60]. The six individual components mentioned above were discussed in the following sections, with reference to the 'Krueger-Brazeal Model of Entrepreneurial Potential' as depicted in Figure 3.

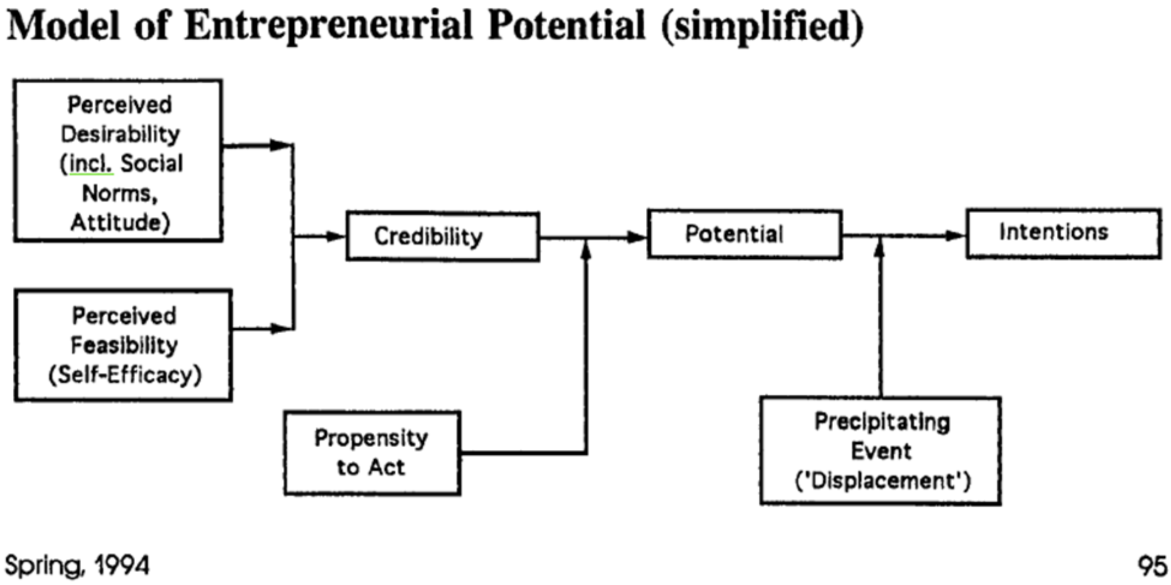

Fig. 3. Krueger-Brazeal Model of entrepreneurial potential (simplified) [55]
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To sum up 'Krueger-Brazeal Model of Entrepreneurial Intention', a widely used behavioural model to explain entrepreneurial activity or new venture creation which focused on entrepreneurial intentions [55]. It assumed that individuals became entrepreneurs because they believed that they possessed the capabilities and skills (perceived self-efficacy) to do this, and that the significant others thought that becoming an entrepreneur was desirable (perceived desirability). Beyond that, the propensity to act) or risk tolerance and a precipitating event may also had influenced the final formation of entrepreneurial intentions [55,61].

2.4 Necessity Entrepreneurs

The terms, 'necessity entrepreneur' and 'necessity entrepreneurship' were created by Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) in 2001 [62]. The definition meant that "individuals who start small scale enterprises out of necessity." The ideas of necessity and opportunity entrepreneurs referred to earlier researches on "push versus pull" motivations for starting a business venture [63]. Researchers had found necessity entrepreneurship were influenced by several factors. For example, necessity entrepreneurs used to start an enterprise when they were on furlough being jobless; '*hitting a glass ceiling*' (which implied something that prevented someone from getting a more important position in one's organisation or overcoming the barriers set to prevent access to advancement); hardship in a family such as difficulties of putting food on the table; burnout and high work pressure; low salary; and finally, unhappiness and exasperation at workplace, were alluded as necessity entrepreneurs' push issues [64].

Necessity-driven entrepreneurs not only had sparse or lack of capital, but also low level of education and knowledge, and limited skills, found that employment a bane and tribulation.

2.5 Drivers of Necessity Entrepreneurs

Nevertheless, it was the drivers of the necessity entrepreneurs which acted not only as 'precursors, catalysts, and agents of change', but also as driving and synergistic forces, which finally, transformed these entrepreneurial intentions being only perceptions, and ultimately into concrete entrepreneurial activities.

Drivers of entrepreneurs consisted of both external and internal variables which influenced an individual to venture into entrepreneurial activities, eventually making an entrepreneur out of him [65]. The researcher, Alam and Ikhtiar [65] put forward the proposition that there were several aspects of entrepreneurial drivers, such as 'personal drivers', 'socio-economic drivers', 'regulatory and government drivers', 'skill drivers or 'human capital', 'market drivers', and 'financial drivers'.

2.5 Theoretical Model for Drivers of Necessity Entrepreneurs

Necessity was the factor that forced a person into entrepreneurial activities. The person did not choose to become an entrepreneur; entrepreneurship was the only viable option left for survival. In short, necessity entrepreneurs perceived entrepreneurship as the only viable option for their survival [66].

The researchers, Spencer and Gomez [67] and Boyd [68] reiterated that self-employment was the simplest activity available as it was only related to tasks requiring manual labour and specific low skills, which were similar to vocations, for example, barbering, laundering, gardening, boarding, and housekeeping.

2.6 Dissatisfaction

Dissatisfaction was identified as the state or attitude of not being satisfied; discontent; and displeasure [69]. Ben-Ze'ev [70] emphasised that dissatisfaction was explained as "The feeling of being unfulfilled when something happens that is different from what you expected. You feel that it should be changed to meet your expectations."

Dissatisfaction and frustration with their jobs were the intrinsic factors which pushed employees to leave their organisations and to start a business.

In brief, dissatisfaction was the driving force that compelled and pushed individuals with low income, lack of job opportunities, and limited government support to become necessity entrepreneurs [71]. In a nutshell, individuals would operationalise the decision of venture creation via self-employment, or necessity entrepreneurship because they observed it to be their most optimal decisions and simultaneously, mitigated their personal negative cognitions, such as dissatisfaction and frustration in their workplaces.

Researchers had developed theoretical models on the interactions of the of the intrinsic and extrinsic drivers of necessity entrepreneurs. In particular, Serviere [72] was amongst the researchers who developed a theoretical model known as 'Venture Creation Decision Model for Necessity Entrepreneurship' to explain the drivers of necessity entrepreneurs. It consisted of the following dimensions, firstly, 'Personal Factors' which were made up of 'parental altruism' (i.e., positive effects of parental income on child outcomes, as explained by Altonji *et al.,* [73] and 'low educational level'.

Secondly, 'Socio-Economic Environment' which were made up of 'insufficient job opportunities'; 'low income'; and 'social marginalisation' (or social turbulence).

The above dimensions created a negative cognition known as 'dissatisfaction' which led to 'Venture Creation Decision (self-employment') or 'Necessity Entrepreneurship'. The model was illustrated in Figure 4.

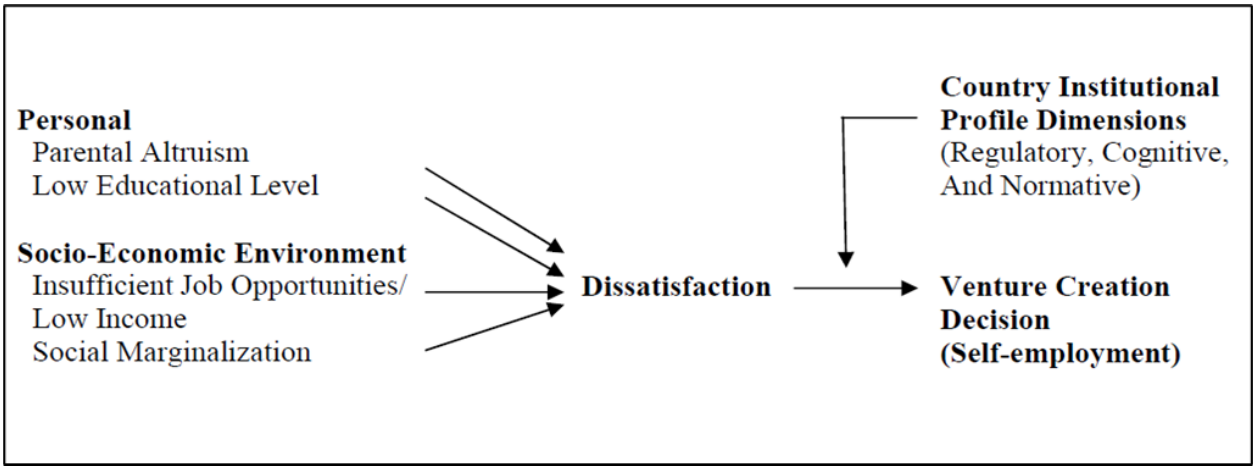

Fig. 4. Venture creation decision model for necessity entrepreneurship

2.7 Entrepreneurial Characteristics of Necessity Entrepreneurs

Ernst & Young's Strategic Growth Markets Network (EYGM Limited) in the year 2011, had developed a theoretical model of an entrepreneur which was discussed in the following sections. Nonetheless, Pinelli [74] in her report entitled '*Nature or nurture? Decoding the DNA of the entrepreneur*' published by EYGM Limited (2011), was based on the research into the mindset of today's entrepreneurial leaders, comprising a survey and in-depth interviews of 685 entrepreneurial business leaders from around the world, had developed a 'DNA of the entrepreneur model' of what comprised an entrepreneurial leader. The 'DNA of the entrepreneur model' was illustrated in Figure 4.

With reference to Figure 4, Pinelli [74] from EYGM Limited, had developed a theoretical model of what comprised an entrepreneurial leader, notably "at the nucleus of this model were the opposite, yet complementary characteristics of an 'opportunistic mindset' combined with a unique 'attitude to risk and failure'. This was followed by the second concentric circle, comprising the 'internal locus of control', representing personal confidence and self-efficacy, that one could overcome any situation. Around the middle of the model and located in the third concentric circle, were six (6) '*guides to action*' or 'Behaviours construct' that characterised entrepreneurs in their daily lives. In simple words, Pinelli [74] posited that "entrepreneurial leaders live every day: passion, persistence, the ability to work with a team yet follow their own instincts, the creation of a 'success culture,' an eye for niches and market gaps, and focus on building an ecosystem to support the venture."

Fig. 4. The DNA of the entrepreneur model [74] (Copyright 2011 by EYGM Limited. Permission not sought.)

Finally, the outer ring or the fourth concentric circle of the entrepreneur model, were made up of the 'Attributes construct' identified as those held by exceptional entrepreneurial leaders, *viz.* resilience, teamwork, innovation, passion, leadership, integrity, quality, customer focus, flexibility, and vision. Pinelli [74], reiterated that "The core of the entrepreneur is ultimately about a way of viewing the world and the ability to act on those views". Entrepreneurial leaders are personally characterised by a strong internal locus of control, an opportunistic outlook and a willingness to take risks (and potentially fail). These characteristics are at the core of the model. The model should be viewed as a combination of all four layers that sets entrepreneurial leaders apart from their peers."

In summing up, Pinelli [74] reiterated that entrepreneurs' characteristics were not only concerned with their entrepreneurial 'Attributes construct'; 'Behaviours construct'; 'internal locus of control' (consistent 'attitude to risk and failure', and 'opportunistic mindset') with motivation and drivers, but also involved the underlying forces of the business set-up, growth and expansion. She strongly advocated that the 'The DNA of the entrepreneur model', could provide a useful addition to the existing literature of entrepreneurs. Simply put, nurture was more important than nature in shaping the entrepreneurial mindset.

3. Methods

The research design was based on exploratory case study qualitative research based not only on Yin [75-77], but other researchers whilst the research process was carried out with semi-structured interviews, (based on an interview protocol which was developed by the researcher), on purposive selected sampling of necessity entrepreneurs who were involved in the F&B services businesses [78-80]. The research process involved a pilot study, followed by the collection of main data, until data saturation. Thematic analysis was applied to process qualitative data and finally transformed the results to significant and novel findings of this research.

3.1 Sampling Technique

The sampling technique used in this research was a non-random purposive sampling method that was categorised under a non-probability sampling. The reason was that in this research, specific participants were chosen (not random) for the sample, and who met the criteria for the study, i.e., necessity entrepreneurs operating the F&B services businesses.

3.2 Inclusion Criteria for Necessity Entrepreneurs

The researcher through face-to-face direct observations, basic and initial 'vetting' and 'interviewing' processes (based on the Interview Protocol) being simultaneously carried out on the potential research participants, would review whether these participants were valid (or 'bona fide') necessity entrepreneurs. The rationale was that necessity entrepreneurs had already been identified as persons who were unemployed; on furlough; faced with a job loss; reduced income; and finally, hardship in a family such as difficulties of 'putting food on the table' (e.g., during the COVID-19 pandemic). In addition, other researchers posited that necessity entrepreneurs could be classified as persons who experienced dissatisfaction with their current positions as workers (e.g., 'hitting a glass ceiling'); lack of career opportunities; burnout; high work pressure; low salary; unhappiness and exasperation at workplace (e.g., post COVID-19 period), were alluded as necessity entrepreneurs.

3.3 Sample Size

Qualitative research studies had indicated that the sample size, of thirty (30) seemed to be a suitable sample size [81,82]. Notwithstanding, a smaller sample size would suffice, provided that the total research participants still yielded extremely fruitful and significant results on reaching data saturation.

3.4 Data Collection

The data collection method consisted of purposive interviews of selected research participants until saturation of data.

3.5 Saturation of Data

The paramount importance of failure to reach data saturation had an impact on the quality of the research conducted and hampered content validity [83]. Saturation of data indicated that, on the basis of the data that had been collected and analysed, implying further data collection and analysis were no longer needed [84]. In short, saturation of data was mandatory in exploratory case study design of qualitative research. Hence, saturation of data was an expression in qualitative research to show no 'newer or fresher' information was expected to be added that would enhance or change the findings of a study.

3.6 Anonymity

The anonymity of the research subjects or participants would not be reviewed in the research. The present researcher use pseudonym to hide the identity of the research participants with, e.g., NE1, NE2, NE3, and so on.

3.7 Pilot Study Conducted

The pilot study was conducted in April 2023, and the pilot research participant was a free-lance tour guide who was terminated from a tour company, due to MCO and lockdowns, and was recommended to the present researcher by a friend. The pilot research participant was identified as NE0 in this research, as she satisfied the inclusion criteria and the following conditions, namely, unemployment due to the COVID-19, low educational level, insufficient job opportunities and low income. Without employment and income, NE0 started off as a home-based F&B services business necessity entrepreneur, baking various types of cheese cakes, banana cakes, and brownies as her forte, with the help of the family members. This pilot study confirmed the feasibility and acceptability of the research study.

3.8 Main Study Conducted – Data Collection

After completion of the pilot study, the present researcher conducted a main and final study on twenty-one (21) participants who were involved in the F&B services businesses. The main research was conducted from April 2023 till June 2023. The 21 sets of in-depth semi-structured interview data from the 21 research participants had to be converted to interview transcripts in the English Language, (Microsoft Word format) before they could be analysed by the '*ATLAS.ti* 23' software. When the interview was conducted in the English Language (n=3), the interview data was directly changed to interview transcript in the English Language. On the other hand, majority of other interviews (n=18), were either conducted in Bahasa Melayu (Malay Language) or in the Chinese Language, required a transliteration, and followed by a translation respectively.

3.9 Member Check

'Member check', or respondent validation, was a qualitative research technique where the present researcher and research participants collaborated to ensure data accuracy, credibility, validity and transferability of this research study. Stahl and King [85] noted that member checks were important because "the degree of trust one has in the person telling the tale has much to do with the degree of trust attributed to the telling."

3.10 Thematic Analysis using 'ATLAS.ti 23' Software

It was used to analyse 21 sets of semi-structured data interviews, which had been earlier translated (from the Malay Language or Chinese Language), and transcribed into word documents in the English Language (Word format); and member checked. The software was able to process and produced relevant and significant quotations; codes; sub-themes; and themes.

Results from the ‘*ATLAS.ti* 23’ software, indicated that there were 21 documents; 1,069 quotations; generated 827 newly created codes; and depicted seven (7) top co-occurring codes.

Themes were created from a combination of relevant codes and sub-themes, which were generated by the ‘*ATLAS.ti* 23’ software. For the first example, the codes and sub-themes generated by the ‘*ATLAS.ti* 23’ and they were listed as children’s education; business planning; children not helping in the F&B operation; and educational investment. As, these four (4) sub-themes and codes were inter-related and could be replaced by a theme ‘Parental Altruism’.

4. Findings

4.1 Research Findings of the Drivers of F&B Necessity Entrepreneurs

The research findings indicated that the drivers of F&B service necessity entrepreneurs were influenced by not only personal factors such as parental altruism; low educational level; family cohesion; inherited culinary skills; pursuit of culinary ambition; and unmotivated in job, but also by the socio-economic environment of low income in combination with insufficient job opportunities.

Additionally, the research findings indicated that there were four (4) additional ‘novel’ personal factors, namely, family cohesion; inherited culinary skills; pursuit of culinary ambition; and unmotivated in job, which were mentioned by the research participants as drivers of F&B service necessity entrepreneurs, but these were not mentioned at all, in the original Serviere’s Theoretical Model on drivers of necessity entrepreneurs. It was probably due to the fact that, *Serviere’s Theoretical Model* focused not only on ‘personal’ factors and ‘socio-economic environment’ factors, but also on ‘social marginalisation’ and a moderator variable, *viz*. ‘country institutional profile dimensions’ which influenced the venture creation decision or drivers of necessity entrepreneurs in developing countries (Figure 3). The author, Serviere neither discussed nor mentioned the F&B services business necessity entrepreneurs.

In a nutshell, the ‘novel’ drivers mentioned in the above section, had significantly increased the academic understanding of the drivers of F&B services business necessity entrepreneurs within the Malaysian context. This led to the justification of the modified model as depicted in Figure 5.

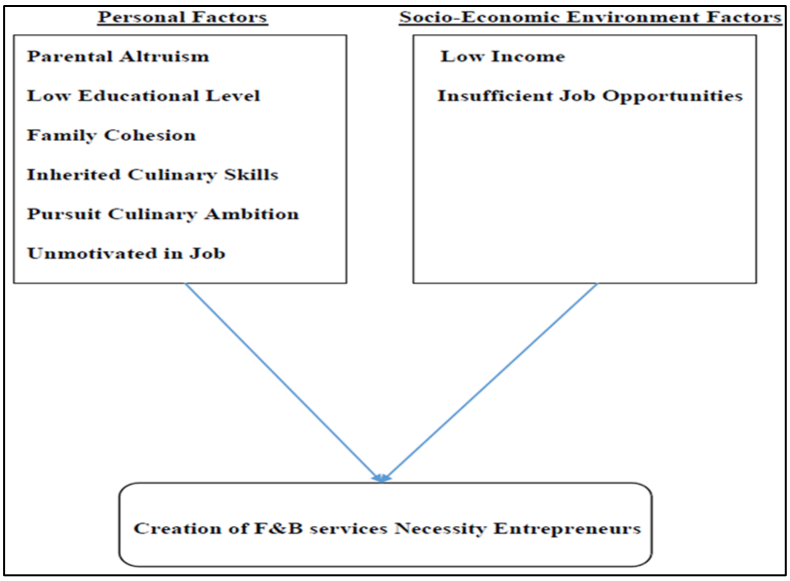

Fig. 5. Modified theoretical model on drivers for creation of f&b services necessity entrepreneurs

4.2 Research Findings of the Characteristics of F&B Necessity Entrepreneurs

Thematic analysis had reviewed certain findings, especially in the realm of 'Behaviours construct' which not only provided better explanations of the entrepreneurial characteristics of necessity entrepreneurs, but also as an iterative process for to improve on the earlier theoretical model (Figure 6). This led to the justification of the modified model as depicted in Figure 7.

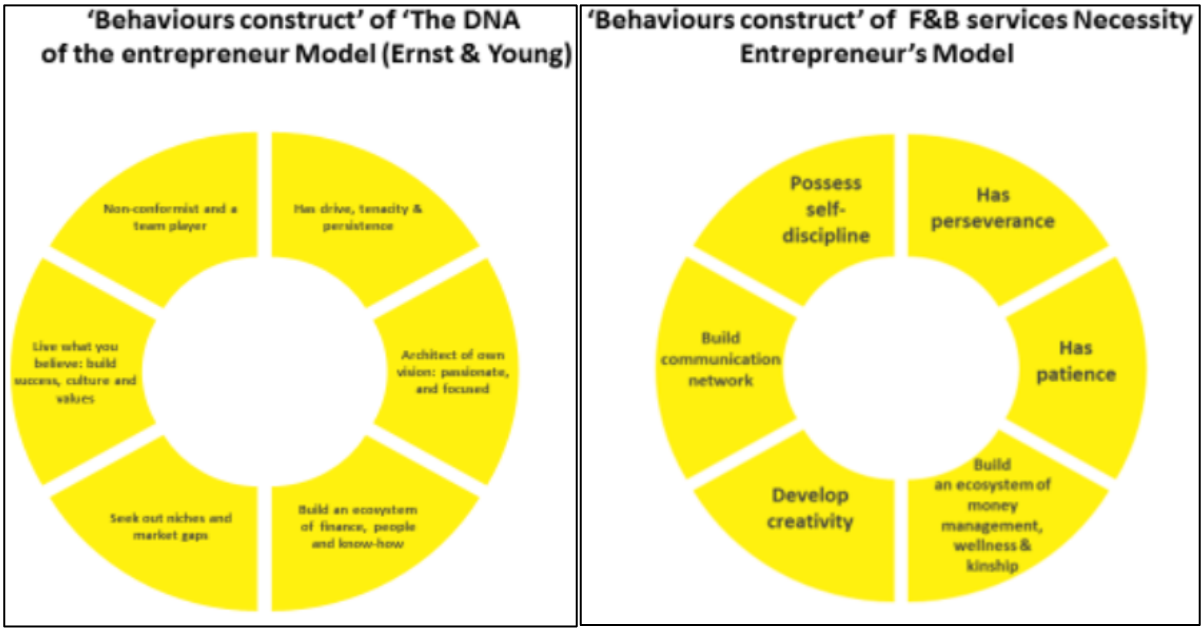

Fig. 6. Comparison of 'behaviours construct' of 'the DNA of the entrepreneur model (Ernst & Young) versus 'behaviours construct' of f&b services necessity entrepreneur's model'

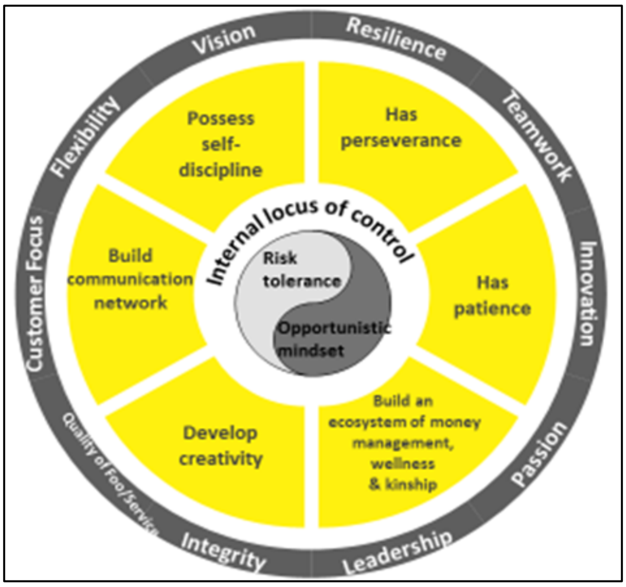

Fig. 7. Modified model: 'E*rnst & Young's* modified model of entrepreneurial characteristics of F&B services necessity entrepreneur'

5. Conclusion

This research, entitled 'Malaysian Necessity Entrepreneurs: Drivers and Characteristics', was a qualitative research, neither focusing on the broad and universal accepted drivers, nor characteristics of the common, ubiquitous, and ordinary entrepreneurs (well-structured organisations), but on specified F&B services necessity entrepreneurs in Ipoh. Most studies on entrepreneurship concentrated on characteristics of successful ordinary entrepreneurs (multinational corporations) with its characteristics of ordinary entrepreneurs such as leadership; teamwork; and vision. In other words, there was a need to find out characteristics of necessity entrepreneurs, that could help them to be successful and this was exasperated with not enough literature on characteristics for necessity entrepreneurs.

The research design was an exploratory case study qualitative research with an in-depth semi-structured interview session, comprising of a pilot study, and followed by a main study of 21 necessity entrepreneurs involved in the F&B service businesses in Ipoh city, Perak. '*ATLAS.ti* 23' software was used for thematic analysis. Findings suggested four (4) 'novel' drivers of necessity entrepreneurs, namely, family cohesion; inherited culinary skills; pursuit of culinary ambition; and unmotivated in job. In addition, six (6) 'novel' characteristics of necessity entrepreneurs comprising perseverance; patience; an eco-system of money management with wellness and kinship; creativity; communication network; and self-discipline were indicated. Therefore, the significance and implication of two (2) entrepreneurship frameworks (i.e. Figure 5 and Figure 6) developed in this research, which comprised of drivers and characteristics of necessity entrepreneurs who were involved in the F&B services businesses, had not only been explored, but revealed on how these unemployed workers on-going efforts to simplify their transition from low-income individuals or unemployed individuals to become necessity entrepreneurs vis-à-vis by pursuing an innovative and sustainable entrepreneurial career in the F&B services businesses.

In conclusion, the F&B services necessity entrepreneurs and their businesses were here to stay, as most time-harried Malaysians, after work would patronise the ubiquitous F&B services enterprises for a 24-hour outdoor food culture which were not only reasonably priced and nutritious, but of varied food dishes, spawned to cater for factory workers with free public spaces to socialise as well. In other words, Malaysia's renowned omnipresent street food culture, provided quick and cheap meals for all strata of workers, young and old. Therefore, for young Malaysians who possessed the passion in culinary skills and the initial drive to become necessity entrepreneurs, albeit it was a multifaceted juxtapose of drivers and characteristics, with the aspiration that one fine day they would achieve world class standard as a 'Michelin star' chef or owner of a 'Michelin' star restaurant in Malaysia.

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