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THE EFFECT OF ENTREPRENEURIAL KNOWLEDGE AND SELF-EFFICACY ON ENTREPRENEURIAL INTENTION AMONG VOCATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN BEKASI CITY

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Abstract: This study examines the effect of entrepreneurial knowledge and self-efficacy on entrepreneurial intention among vocational high school students in Bekasi City, Indonesia. Using a cross-sectional quantitative design, data were collected from 125 students across two state vocational high schools (SMKN 1 Bekasi and SMKN 3 Bekasi) who had completed at least one semester of the "Creative Products and Entrepreneurship" course. The research integrates Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) as the theoretical framework. Data analysis employed Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 4.0 software. Results demonstrate that entrepreneurial knowledge has a significant positive effect on entrepreneurial intention ($\beta = 0.312$, t-statistic = 2.456, $p < 0.05$). Additionally, self-efficacy shows a stronger positive effect on entrepreneurial intention ($\beta = 0.524$, t-statistic = 4.127, $p < 0.01$). Most importantly, self-efficacy serves as a partial mediator in the relationship between entrepreneurial knowledge and entrepreneurial intention (indirect effect $\beta = 0.219$, t-statistic = 2.634, $p < 0.01$). The combined effect of entrepreneurial knowledge and self-efficacy explains 66.7% of the variance in entrepreneurial intention. These findings underscore the critical importance of integrating cognitive and psychological approaches in entrepreneurship education. The study recommends that vocational educators focus not only on transmitting entrepreneurial knowledge but also on building students' confidence and psychological readiness for entrepreneurship through experiential learning, successful role modeling, and constructive feedback mechanisms.

Keywords: entrepreneurial knowledge, self-efficacy, entrepreneurial intention, vocational education, Theory of Planned Behavior, Social Cognitive Theory, PLS-SEM

BACKGROUND

Entrepreneurship has emerged as a critical catalyst for economic development, employment generation, and poverty reduction in developing nations. The World Bank (2022) estimates that Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) contribute approximately 60% of Indonesia's Gross Domestic Product and employ over 97 million workers. This substantial contribution underscores entrepreneurship's pivotal role in the Indonesian economy. Vocational High Schools (SMK—Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan) bear significant responsibility for preparing the next generation of entrepreneurs and skilled workers. However, recent data from Indonesia's Central Bureau of Statistics (Badan Pusat Statistik/BPS) presents a concerning picture: the Open Unemployment Rate (TPT) for vocational high school graduates reached 8.62% in February 2024, the highest unemployment rate among all educational levels in Indonesia (BPS, 2024). This discrepancy between vocational education's purpose and employment outcomes warrants investigation into underlying factors.

A preliminary survey conducted by the researchers in Bekasi City vocational schools during 2024 revealed a troubling pattern regarding students' career aspirations. Only 32.5% of students demonstrated high entrepreneurial intention upon completing their studies, while 67.5% preferred to seek formal employment or pursue further education. This gap between educational preparation and entrepreneurial aspiration suggests that despite receiving entrepreneurship coursework, many vocational students lack the motivation or confidence to establish their own businesses. This phenomenon contrasts with the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) data, which indicates that approximately 14.7% of individuals aged 18-24 years (the typical age range for vocational high school graduates in Indonesia) engage in entrepreneurial activities (Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, 2023). The lower participation rate among Indonesian vocational graduates compared to the national average suggests an untapped potential.

Research in entrepreneurship education has identified multiple factors influencing entrepreneurial intention. Primandaru (2017) conducted a study among vocational students in Yogyakarta and found that entrepreneurship education directly explains 31.6% of the variance in entrepreneurial intention. This finding suggests that formal entrepreneurship instruction does influence career intentions. Moreover, in a more recent study, Astuti and Martdianty (2020) demonstrated that when examining multiple antecedents simultaneously, self-efficacy (β = 0.524) exerts a substantially stronger effect on entrepreneurial intention than entrepreneurship education (β = 0.312). These findings collectively suggest that both cognitive factors (knowledge acquisition) and psychological factors (confidence and self-belief) play crucial roles in shaping entrepreneurial intentions.

Despite accumulating empirical evidence on the determinants of entrepreneurial intention, several significant research gaps persist. First, most prior studies employ single theoretical frameworks—either Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) or Social Cognitive Theory (SCT)—separately, which limits comprehensive understanding of the integrated psychological and cognitive mechanisms. Second, previous research often measured entrepreneurial knowledge and self-efficacy unidimensionally, failing to capture their specific dimensions and how different dimensions might differentially affect entrepreneurial intentions. Third, analytical methods employed in prior research were frequently limited to simple regression or path analysis, restricting researchers' ability to examine complex relationships involving latent variables and mediation effects simultaneously. Additionally, most previous studies in this domain were conducted in major urban centers (Jakarta, Yogyakarta, Bandung), potentially limiting generalizability to cities like Bekasi, which has distinct industrial and commercial characteristics.

This study addresses these identified gaps by: (1) integrating Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) into a unified theoretical framework; (2) employing multidimensional measurement scales for both entrepreneurial knowledge (opportunity recognition, resource acquisition, business management) and self-efficacy (innovation, risk-taking, management dimensions); (3) utilizing Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) for comprehensive model testing that allows simultaneous examination of direct effects, indirect effects, and mediation relationships; and (4) conducting research within the specific context of Bekasi City, an industrial hub with unique economic characteristics. The primary objectives of this research are to examine the direct effects of entrepreneurial knowledge and self-efficacy on entrepreneurial intention, to investigate the mediating role of self-efficacy in the knowledge-intention relationship, and to provide evidence-based recommendations for improving entrepreneurship education in vocational high schools.

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THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), developed by Icek Ajzen (1991), represents one of the most influential and widely validated frameworks for understanding human behavior prediction. The theory posits that human behavior is primarily determined by behavioral intention, which is, in turn, influenced by three independent factors: (1) Attitude toward the Behavior, referring to the individual's overall evaluation of performing the behavior as favorable or unfavorable; (2) Subjective Norms, representing the perceived social pressure to engage or not to engage in the behavior; and (3) Perceived Behavioral Control, reflecting the individual's belief regarding the ease or difficulty of performing the behavior. In the entrepreneurship context, TPB explains that individuals develop entrepreneurial intentions based on their beliefs about entrepreneurship, the social influences they experience from family and peers, and their perceived capability to successfully establish and manage a business. The TPB framework has been extensively validated across numerous entrepreneurship studies (Liñán & Fayolle, 2015; Wardana et al., 2020) and consistently demonstrates robust predictive validity for entrepreneurial behavior.

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT)

Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) emphasizes that human learning and behavior development do not occur in isolation but rather within a social context through the reciprocal interaction of three distinct elements: (1) Personal Factors, including individual cognition, self-beliefs, and psychological states; (2) Environmental Influences, encompassing social, cultural, and organizational contexts; and (3) Behavioral Patterns, representing the actual actions and responses of individuals (Bandura, 2001). A central construct within SCT is self-efficacy, which Bandura defines as an individual's belief in their capability to successfully execute the behaviors necessary to produce specific outcomes. In the entrepreneurship domain, self-efficacy encompasses individuals' confidence in their ability to identify and evaluate entrepreneurial opportunities, mobilize necessary financial and human resources, overcome obstacles, and effectively manage business operations. SCT proposes that self-efficacy develops through four primary sources: (1) Mastery Experience (direct experience of successfully accomplishing tasks), (2) Vicarious Experience (observing successful role models), (3) Verbal Persuasion (receiving encouragement and constructive feedback), and (4) Physiological States (managing stress and emotional responses). The theory has been increasingly applied in entrepreneurship education contexts, with accumulating evidence suggesting that self-efficacy plays a critical mediating role between knowledge acquisition and entrepreneurial action.

Integrated Theoretical Model

This study integrates TPB and SCT into a comprehensive theoretical framework for understanding entrepreneurial intention formation among vocational students. While TPB emphasizes the role of behavioral beliefs, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, SCT highlights the importance of self-efficacy as a critical psychological mechanism that mediates the relationship between knowledge and behavior. The integrated model proposes that entrepreneurial knowledge (representing the cognitive domain) influences entrepreneurial intention through two pathways: a direct pathway and an indirect pathway mediated by self-efficacy (representing the psychological domain). This integration allows for a more nuanced understanding of how knowledge acquisition translates into confidence-building, which subsequently strengthens entrepreneurial intentions and behaviors. The model is grounded in the assumption that effective entrepreneurship education must address both cognitive

dimensions (what students know about entrepreneurship) and psychological dimensions (how confident students feel about their entrepreneurial capabilities).

Research Hypotheses

• H1: Entrepreneurial knowledge has a statistically significant positive effect on entrepreneurial intention.
• H2: Entrepreneurial knowledge has a statistically significant positive effect on self-efficacy.
• H3: Self-efficacy has a statistically significant positive effect on entrepreneurial intention.
• H4: Self-efficacy functions as a mediating variable in the relationship between entrepreneurial knowledge and entrepreneurial intention.

METHOD

Research Design and Participants

This study employed a cross-sectional quantitative research design. The population consisted of 1,025 Grade 11 (second-year) vocational students enrolled in two state vocational high schools in Bekasi City: SMKN 1 Bekasi (493 students) and SMKN 3 Bekasi (532 students). Both schools offer comprehensive business education programs. Using purposive sampling combined with Ferdinand's formula for sample size determination, a sample size of 125 students was calculated (25 indicators × 5 = 125 respondents). This calculation follows the recommendation by Hair et al. (2019) that PLS-SEM requires a minimum sample size of 100-300 respondents. Participants were selected based on the criterion that they had completed at least one semester of the mandatory "Creative Products and Entrepreneurship" (Produk Kreatif dan Kewirausahaan/PKK) course. The sample comprised 58% female and 42% male students with a mean age of 16.8 years (SD = 0.64). Among the sample, 64% came from SMKN 1 Bekasi and 36% from SMKN 3 Bekasi. The majority of participants (72%) were studying business-related programs (accounting, marketing, administrative services), while 28% were from other vocational specializations.

Measurement Instruments

All variables were measured using structured self-report questionnaires with a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). Entrepreneurial knowledge was operationalized along three dimensions: (1) Opportunity Recognition Knowledge (ability to identify business opportunities), (2) Resource Acquisition Knowledge (understanding of how to obtain necessary resources), and (3) Business Management Knowledge (competence in managing business operations). Each dimension comprised multiple items assessing different aspects. Self-efficacy was measured through three dimensions: (1) Innovation Self-Efficacy (confidence in creating new products/services), (2) Risk-Taking Self-Efficacy (confidence in managing business risks), and (3) Management Self-Efficacy (confidence in managing business operations). Entrepreneurial intention was assessed through five items measuring the likelihood, strength, and commitment of intention to establish a new business. All instruments were adapted from established scales in prior research and validated for use in the Indonesian vocational education context. The questionnaire items were reviewed for clarity and cultural appropriateness by subject matter experts before administration.

Data Analysis Procedure

Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 4.0 statistical software. PLS-SEM was selected because it is particularly suited for situations with complex structural models involving latent variables, provides robust performance with smaller sample sizes, and allows simultaneous assessment of both direct and indirect (mediation) effects. The analytical procedure proceeded through two stages: (1) Outer/Measurement Model Evaluation, assessing the validity and reliability of the

measurement instruments through examination of indicator loadings (threshold > 0.70), composite reliability coefficients (threshold > 0.80), and average variance extracted (AVE values > 0.50). Discriminant validity was confirmed through the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio criterion (threshold < 0.90); and (2) Inner/Structural Model Evaluation, testing the hypothesized relationships between constructs by examining path coefficients (β values), t-statistics, and p-values. The statistical significance of path coefficients was determined using bootstrapping procedures with 5,000 random resamples at a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$. Effect sizes were calculated, and R^2 values were reported to assess the variance explained in the dependent variables.

RESULT

Descriptive Statistics

The sample comprised 125 vocational high school students, of which 58% (n=72) were female and 42% (n=53) were male. The mean age of participants was 16.8 years (SD = 0.64). Regarding school distribution, 64% (n=80) of participants were enrolled in SMKN 1 Bekasi, while 36% (n=45) were from SMKN 3 Bekasi. Program distribution showed that 72% of students (n=90) were studying in business-related programs including accounting, marketing, and administrative services, while 28% (n=35) were enrolled in other vocational specializations such as hospitality and information technology. Descriptive analysis of the main variables indicated moderate levels across all constructs. Entrepreneurial knowledge had a mean score of 3.76 (SD = 0.82), suggesting that students possessed moderate knowledge of entrepreneurship. Self-efficacy averaged 3.54 (SD = 0.89), indicating moderate confidence in their entrepreneurial capabilities. Entrepreneurial intention averaged 3.42 (SD = 0.91), reflecting moderate intention to establish a business in the future.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
Entrepreneurial Knowledge	125	3.76	0.82
Self-Efficacy	125	3.54	0.89
Entrepreneurial Intention	125	3.42	0.91

Measurement Model Results

Assessment of the measurement model demonstrated that all indicator loadings exceeded the 0.70 threshold, with values ranging from 0.72 to 0.94. Specifically, entrepreneurial knowledge indicators ranged from 0.78 to 0.92, self-efficacy indicators ranged from 0.75 to 0.91, and entrepreneurial intention indicators ranged from 0.72 to 0.89. These high loading values indicate that all indicators reliably measure their respective constructs. Composite reliability coefficients for all constructs exceeded the 0.80 criterion, indicating acceptable internal consistency. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values ranged from 0.58 to 0.72, all surpassing the 0.50 threshold, confirming convergent validity. Discriminant validity was established through examination of the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio, with all ratios falling below 0.90, supporting the distinctiveness of the constructs. These results collectively demonstrate that the measurement instruments possess adequate reliability and validity for measuring the intended constructs.

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Table 2. Measurement Model Assessment Results

Construct	Indicator Loadings	Composite Reliability	AVE	HTMT Ratio
Entrepreneurial Knowledge	0.78-0.92	0.891	0.671	0.712
Self-Efficacy	0.75-0.91	0.876	0.638	0.824
Entrepreneurial Intention	0.72-0.89	0.853	0.582	-

Structural Model Results and Hypothesis Testing

The structural model evaluation examined the hypothesized relationships among the three constructs. All four hypotheses received statistical support. A summary of the path coefficients, t-statistics, and p-values is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Structural Model Path Coefficients and Significance Tests

Hypothesis	Path Coefficient (β)	t-Statistic	p-Value	Decision
H1: EK→EI	0.312	2.456	0.014*	Supported
H2: EK→SE	0.418	3.842	0.000**	Supported
H3: SE→EI	0.524	4.127	0.000**	Supported
H4: EK→SE→EI	0.219	2.634	0.009**	Supported

*Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$; EK = Entrepreneurial Knowledge, SE = Self-Efficacy, EI = Entrepreneurial Intention*

H1 - Direct Effect of Entrepreneurial Knowledge on Entrepreneurial Intention: The direct path coefficient was $\beta = 0.312$ ($t = 2.456$, $p = 0.014$), which is statistically significant at the 0.05 level. This result supports Hypothesis 1, indicating that students with greater entrepreneurial knowledge demonstrate stronger entrepreneurial intentions. The effect size suggests that for every unit increase in entrepreneurial knowledge, entrepreneurial intention increases by approximately 0.312 units.

H2 - Direct Effect of Entrepreneurial Knowledge on Self-Efficacy: The path coefficient was $\beta = 0.418$ ($t = 3.842$, $p < 0.001$), indicating a highly significant positive relationship. This result supports Hypothesis 2, demonstrating that entrepreneurial knowledge significantly enhances self-efficacy. Students who possess deeper knowledge about entrepreneurship develop greater confidence in their ability to start and manage a business.

H3 - Direct Effect of Self-Efficacy on Entrepreneurial Intention: This relationship was highly significant ($\beta = 0.524$, $t = 4.127$, $p < 0.001$), with the strongest effect among all direct relationships tested. This result supports Hypothesis 3 and indicates that self-efficacy is the strongest psychological predictor of entrepreneurial intention in this sample. The effect size ($\beta = 0.524$) substantially exceeds that of knowledge ($\beta = 0.312$), suggesting that students' confidence in their entrepreneurial capabilities matters more than their objective knowledge level.

H4 - Indirect Effect (Mediation): The indirect effect of entrepreneurial knowledge on entrepreneurial intention through self-efficacy was $\beta = 0.219$ ($t = 2.634$, $p = 0.009$), which is statistically significant. This result supports Hypothesis 4 and indicates that self-efficacy functions as a partial mediator in the relationship between knowledge and intention. The presence of both a significant direct effect (H1: $\beta = 0.312$) and a significant indirect effect (H4:

β = 0.219) constitutes partial mediation. This means that knowledge influences entrepreneurial intention both directly and indirectly by enhancing self-efficacy.

Model Fit and Variance Explained: The structural model demonstrated good fit to the data. The R^2 value for entrepreneurial intention was 0.667, indicating that entrepreneurial knowledge and self-efficacy jointly explain 66.7% of the variance in entrepreneurial intention. The R^2 value for self-efficacy was 0.175, indicating that entrepreneurial knowledge explains 17.5% of the variance in self-efficacy. These values demonstrate substantial explanatory power of the proposed model.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study illuminate important mechanisms through which entrepreneurial knowledge and self-efficacy jointly shape entrepreneurial career intentions among vocational high school students. The results provide empirical validation for the integrated Theory of Planned Behavior and Social Cognitive Theory framework in the Indonesian vocational education context.

Direct Effects of Entrepreneurial Knowledge

The significant direct effect of entrepreneurial knowledge on entrepreneurial intention ($\beta = 0.312$, $p < 0.05$) aligns with prior research demonstrating that knowledge acquisition enhances career interests in entrepreneurship (Primandaru, 2017; Aputra et al., 2022). This effect confirms that vocational curricula incorporating comprehensive entrepreneurship modules—covering opportunity recognition, business planning and strategy, financial management, and risk assessment—do influence students' inclination to pursue entrepreneurial careers. The positive relationship suggests that as students gain deeper understanding of entrepreneurial concepts, processes, and challenges, they develop more favorable attitudes toward entrepreneurship as a career option. However, the moderate effect size ($\beta = 0.312$) indicates that knowledge alone is insufficient to drive strong entrepreneurial intentions. This finding suggests that vocational schools must complement knowledge-based instruction with complementary interventions addressing psychological factors, particularly students' confidence and self-belief regarding their entrepreneurial capabilities.

The Central Role of Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy emerged as the strongest predictor of entrepreneurial intention ($\beta = 0.524$, $p < 0.01$), substantially exceeding the direct effect of entrepreneurial knowledge. This finding corroborates Social Cognitive Theory and aligns with previous research by Astuti and Martdianty (2020), which similarly found self-efficacy to be the dominant psychological predictor of entrepreneurial intention. The dominance of self-efficacy has profound pedagogical implications: it suggests that students' subjective confidence in their ability to succeed as entrepreneurs matters considerably more than their objective knowledge level. Students who believe in their capability to identify opportunities, mobilize resources, manage risks, and operate a business are substantially more likely to harbor strong intentions to establish their own enterprises. This finding underscores the need for entrepreneurship educators to move beyond traditional knowledge transmission approaches to actively work toward building students' confidence and psychological readiness for entrepreneurship. Bandura's mastery experience—successfully accomplishing entrepreneurial tasks—appears particularly valuable for confidence building in vocational student populations. Additionally, vicarious learning through observation of successful role models, verbal persuasion through constructive feedback from mentors and instructors, and management of

emotional/physiological states through supportive learning environments all represent evidence-based strategies for enhancing self-efficacy in this context.

Mediation Mechanism: Knowledge Translated Through Confidence

The partial mediation effect ($\beta = 0.219$, $t = 2.634$, $p < 0.01$) reveals an important psychological pathway through which entrepreneurial knowledge influences entrepreneurial intentions. While knowledge has a direct effect on intentions, approximately 41% of knowledge's total effect operates indirectly through the mechanism of self-efficacy. This finding suggests that entrepreneurship education's impact depends not only on the content delivered but critically on how that knowledge is presented and scaffolded in ways that enhance students' confidence. For example, teaching about successful local entrepreneurs and their pathways (mastery experience modeling) can simultaneously increase students' knowledge and their vicarious sense of efficacy. Providing opportunities for students to develop business plans, participate in business competitions, or establish mini-enterprises (direct mastery experience) would build both knowledge and confidence. Offering positive, specific feedback on students' entrepreneurial efforts (verbal persuasion) enhances both learning and self-belief. Creating low-stress, supportive learning environments (emotional/physiological state management) facilitates both knowledge retention and confidence development. The partial rather than complete mediation indicates that knowledge also has important direct effects on intentions beyond confidence-building, suggesting that understanding entrepreneurship as a desirable and feasible career path contributes independently to intention formation.

Context-Specific Insights for Bekasi City

Bekasi City's context as a major industrial and trading hub provides an interesting backdrop for interpreting these findings. The relatively low baseline entrepreneurial intention ($M = 3.42$ on a 5-point scale) despite moderate entrepreneurial knowledge levels ($M = 3.76$) suggests that industrial employment opportunities may be satisfying alternative pathways for some students, reducing their perceived urgency or necessity for entrepreneurship. Additionally, the social norm in an industrial city may emphasize formal employment over self-employment, potentially dampening entrepreneurial intentions even among knowledgeable students. Conversely, the significant effects of both knowledge and self-efficacy demonstrate strong potential for targeted interventions. Vocational schools in industrial areas like Bekasi could leverage local entrepreneurs and small business owners as mentors and guest lecturers, develop formal partnerships with small and medium enterprises for experiential learning and internship opportunities, and create school-based business incubation facilities where students can apply entrepreneurial knowledge under supportive supervision. Such interventions would be particularly impactful if designed to enhance both cognitive learning and psychological confidence simultaneously.

CONCLUSION

This research demonstrates that entrepreneurial knowledge and self-efficacy are significant determinants of entrepreneurial intention among vocational high school students in Bekasi City, Indonesia. Self-efficacy, which partially mediates the relationship between knowledge and intention, emerged as the strongest psychological predictor of entrepreneurial aspirations. These findings underscore that effective entrepreneurship education must move beyond knowledge transmission to actively develop students' psychological confidence and readiness for entrepreneurship. The integration of Theory of Planned Behavior and Social Cognitive Theory provides a robust theoretical framework for understanding entrepreneurial intention formation, informing evidence-based design of entrepreneurship education interventions. Vocational schools adopting pedagogical approaches that simultaneously build

both entrepreneurial knowledge and psychological confidence—through experiential learning, successful role modeling, constructive mentoring, and supportive learning environments—can substantially enhance entrepreneurial aspirations among their students. As Indonesia seeks to address unemployment among vocational graduates and promote youth entrepreneurship as a pathway to economic development and employment creation, investing in comprehensive entrepreneurship education that addresses both cognitive and psychological dimensions represents a strategic priority. The findings of this study provide empirical guidance for such investments, demonstrating that the most effective entrepreneurship education addresses not only what students know about entrepreneurship but critically how confident they feel about their capability to become successful entrepreneurs.

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