

Self-Confidence as a Mediator Between Entrepreneurship Education and Entrepreneurial Intention

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Abstract: Entrepreneurship education has been widely recognized as a strategic instrument for fostering entrepreneurial intention among students. However, the mechanism through which entrepreneurship education influences entrepreneurial intention, particularly through psychological factors, remains underexplored and shows inconsistent findings in prior studies. This study aims to examine the role of self-confidence as a mediating factor between entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial intention, highlighting its conceptual novelty as a psychological pathway. Using a qualitative approach with a systematic literature review method, this research analyzes and synthesizes peer-reviewed international journal articles selected based on relevance, credibility, and conceptual alignment. The analysis applies a structured content analysis technique to identify patterns, relationships, and theoretical explanations regarding the mediating role of self-confidence. The findings indicate that entrepreneurship education not only directly influences entrepreneurial intention but also indirectly strengthens it through the development of self-confidence. Specifically, experiential learning, exposure to role models, and practical simulations enhance students' confidence, which in turn increases their perceived capability to engage in entrepreneurial activities. This demonstrates that self-confidence functions as a critical psychological mediator that translates educational experiences into entrepreneurial motivation. This study provides an analytical contribution by clarifying the mediating mechanism linking entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial intention. The findings emphasize the importance of integrating confidence-building pedagogical strategies into entrepreneurship curricula to enhance students' readiness for entrepreneurial careers and support sustainable economic development.

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INTRODUCTION

Rapid population growth has become one of the major challenges in economic development because it can potentially increase unemployment if it is not accompanied by the expansion of employment opportunities. According to data from the Indonesian Central Bureau of Statistics, the population of Indonesia reached 278.69 million people in mid-2023, increasing from 275.77 million in 2022, indicating a consistent population growth trend in recent years (BPS, 2025). This demographic pressure highlights the urgency of developing sustainable employment strategies, particularly those that encourage self-employment and entrepreneurship. This increase in population has implications for the growing labor force that must be absorbed by the labor market, and if employment opportunities are insufficient, it can lead to higher unemployment rates (Isma et al., 2020).

Unemployment remains one of the most significant socioeconomic issues faced by many countries, including Indonesia. Data from the Indonesian Central Bureau of Statistics indicate that the open unemployment rate in Indonesia reached 5.45% in 2023, suggesting that a considerable number of individuals of working age remain unemployed (BPS, 2023). This condition underscores a critical structural problem, where the formal labor market is unable to fully absorb the increasing workforce, thereby necessitating alternative solutions such as entrepreneurship development. This condition highlights the need for alternative strategies to create employment opportunities, one of which is through the promotion of entrepreneurship among young people (Aini & Oktafani, 2020).

Entrepreneurship plays an important role in economic development because it contributes to job creation, innovation, and increased economic productivity. A higher number of entrepreneurs within a country can significantly contribute to national economic growth and societal welfare (Suryana & Si, 2006). Therefore, fostering entrepreneurial intention among young individuals is considered an important strategy to reduce unemployment and support sustainable economic development (Busro, 2017). In recent international discourse, entrepreneurial intention has been increasingly recognized as a key predictor of entrepreneurial behavior across diverse socio-economic contexts.

Entrepreneurial intention represents a psychological factor that motivates individuals to initiate entrepreneurial activities. According to the Theory of Planned Behavior, intention is the most immediate predictor of behavior because it reflects an individual's readiness to perform a particular action (Ajzen, 1991). In the context of entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial intention can be understood as an individual's commitment to starting a new business venture in the future (Wijaya et al., 2015). Thus, before engaging in entrepreneurial activities, individuals typically develop cognitive processes that shape their intention to become entrepreneurs.

Within the educational context, vocational high schools play a strategic role in preparing human resources who possess both professional skills and entrepreneurial competencies. Vocational education is designed to equip students with practical skills that enable them to enter the workforce or create employment opportunities independently through entrepreneurship (Mulyani, 2011). However, in reality, many vocational school graduates still face challenges in starting their own businesses due to limited entrepreneurial knowledge, practical experience, and self-confidence (Taufik et al., 2018). This indicates that educational interventions have not fully addressed the psychological readiness required for entrepreneurship.

One of the key approaches to strengthening students' entrepreneurial readiness is through entrepreneurship education. Entrepreneurship education refers to learning processes that aim to develop students' knowledge, skills, attitudes, and competencies required to identify and

exploit business opportunities (Isrososiawan, 2013). Through entrepreneurship education, students are expected to develop creativity, risk-taking abilities, and opportunity recognition skills that are essential for entrepreneurial activities (Blegur & Handoyo, 2020). Recent studies in international literature also emphasize that entrepreneurship education should not only focus on cognitive competence but also on psychological empowerment. Therefore, entrepreneurship education not only provides theoretical understanding but also offers practical learning experiences that may encourage students to pursue entrepreneurial careers.

In addition to educational factors, psychological factors also play a significant role in shaping entrepreneurial intention. One of the most important psychological characteristics associated with entrepreneurship is self-confidence. Self-confidence refers to an individual's belief in their own abilities, competencies, and judgments in achieving certain goals (Santrock, 2003). In entrepreneurial contexts, self-confidence becomes an essential trait because entrepreneurial activities often involve uncertainty, risk-taking, and decision-making under pressure (Lauster, 2012).

Individuals with higher levels of self-confidence tend to demonstrate stronger motivation and greater willingness to pursue entrepreneurial opportunities compared to those with lower levels of self-confidence (Rajab, 2022). Consequently, self-confidence may function as a psychological mechanism that strengthens the relationship between entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial intention. This suggests that the influence of education on intention may not be purely direct, but also operates through internal psychological processes.

Previous empirical studies have examined the relationship between entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial intention. For instance, Susilawaty (2022) found that entrepreneurship education has a significant influence on students' entrepreneurial interest. Similarly, Wicaksono (2021) reported that entrepreneurship education significantly affects students' entrepreneurial intentions. Furthermore, Kardiana and Melati (2019) revealed that both entrepreneurship education and self-confidence have significant effects on entrepreneurial interest, either partially or simultaneously.

However, other studies have produced inconsistent findings. Research conducted by Agustin et al. (2023) reported that entrepreneurship education and self-confidence did not have a significant partial effect. These inconsistencies indicate a theoretical and empirical gap, particularly regarding how and under what conditions entrepreneurship education influences entrepreneurial intention.

More importantly, prior studies have predominantly focused on direct relationships using quantitative approaches, with limited attention to the mediating role of psychological variables through integrative and conceptual analysis. This limitation creates a gap in understanding the underlying mechanism linking entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial intention.

Therefore, this study highlights the importance of examining the relationship between entrepreneurship education, self-confidence, and entrepreneurial intention through a literature-based approach. Unlike previous empirical studies, this research emphasizes a conceptual synthesis to explain the mediating mechanism in a more comprehensive manner.

The novelty of this study lies in the development of a conceptual framework that integrates entrepreneurship education and self-confidence as a mediating mechanism. This study differs from prior research by explicitly positioning self-confidence as a central psychological pathway, rather than merely as an independent or supporting variable. By synthesizing existing empirical findings, this study provides a broader theoretical perspective on the role of psychological factors in entrepreneurship education.

Based on the identified background and research gap, the objective of this study is to analyze the influence of entrepreneurship education on entrepreneurial intention through the mediating role of self-confidence. This study is expected to provide a clearer theoretical explanation of the indirect relationship between variables, which has not been sufficiently addressed in previous literature.

In addition, from a practical perspective, the results of this study may provide insights for educational institutions, particularly vocational high schools, in designing entrepreneurship education programs that not only focus on knowledge and skill development but also emphasize the importance of strengthening students' self-confidence as a key factor in fostering entrepreneurial intention.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research approach using a literature study (library research) to examine the role of self-confidence as a mediator between entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial intention. Library research was chosen because it enables researchers to systematically review, interpret, and synthesize theoretical and empirical findings from various scholarly sources related to the research variables. According to Sugiyono, qualitative research aims to understand social phenomena through the interpretation of existing information and theoretical perspectives. In the context of this study, the literature review approach allows for a comprehensive conceptual exploration of how entrepreneurship education influences entrepreneurial intention and how self-confidence functions as an intervening psychological factor within this relationship. This approach also aligns with the conceptual framework derived from the Theory of Planned Behavior, which explains that behavioral intention is shaped by psychological and cognitive determinants (Ajzen, 1991).

To ensure methodological rigor, this study adopts a structured systematic literature review procedure adapted from widely recognized review frameworks, involving identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion stages.

The data sources used in this research consisted of secondary data obtained from books, scientific journal articles, dissertations, conference proceedings, and official statistical publications relevant to entrepreneurship education, self-confidence, and entrepreneurial intention. The literature search was conducted through academic databases such as Google Scholar, Scopus-indexed journals, and other reputable sources using keywords including "entrepreneurship education," "self-confidence," and "entrepreneurial intention." The references were selected based on their relevance to the research variables and conceptual framework.

The inclusion criteria in this study were: (1) peer-reviewed journal articles and academic publications, (2) studies published within the last 10–15 years to ensure relevance, (3) literature that explicitly discusses at least two of the main variables, and (4) sources with clear methodological and theoretical foundations. Meanwhile, the exclusion criteria included: (1) non-academic sources, (2) articles lacking full text access, and (3) studies not directly related to the research focus.

Key academic sources include studies discussing entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial intention (Bharata, 2019; Lestari & Wijaya, 2012; Susanti, 2021), research on self-confidence and entrepreneurial motivation (Ermawati & Widodo, 2015; Rahmatullah et al., 2023), as well as theoretical references related to entrepreneurship and psychology (Alma, 2010; Hurlock, 1997; Suryana & Si, 2006). Additional supporting data were obtained from official

publications issued by the Statistics Indonesia to provide contextual information related to employment and entrepreneurship trends in Indonesia.

The data collection technique used in this study was documentation and literature review. The researcher systematically identified, collected, and examined relevant literature from academic databases, printed books, and reputable journals. This process involved selecting credible sources, reading and categorizing key concepts, and extracting important information related to the research variables (Arikunto, 2006). The selection process followed a step-by-step screening procedure, including title and abstract review, full-text assessment, and final inclusion based on predefined criteria.

The data analysis method used in this research was qualitative descriptive analysis through content analysis. The analysis process was carried out through several stages: data reduction, data organization, interpretation, and synthesis of findings. First, the researcher reviewed and selected relevant literature. Second, the information obtained was categorized according to the main themes. Third, the researcher interpreted and compared findings from various studies.

To enhance analytical rigor, this study applied a thematic content analysis approach, where recurring patterns, conceptual relationships, and mediating mechanisms were systematically identified and coded across the selected literature. The analysis also involved cross-study comparison to identify consistencies, contradictions, and emerging theoretical insights regarding the mediating role of self-confidence.

Finally, the findings were synthesized to construct a conceptual explanation of how entrepreneurship education can influence entrepreneurial intention through self-confidence. This analytical process follows qualitative analysis procedures proposed by Sugiyono (2017), which emphasize interpreting and integrating information from various sources. Through this structured and systematic approach, the study ensures transparency, replicability, and methodological robustness in synthesizing the literature.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study are derived from a systematic literature review examining the relationships between entrepreneurship education, self-confidence, and entrepreneurial intention. Through the analysis of various empirical studies and theoretical references, several important findings were identified regarding the mediating role of self-confidence in strengthening the influence of entrepreneurship education on entrepreneurial intention.

First, the literature indicates that entrepreneurship education has a positive contribution to the development of entrepreneurial intention among students. Entrepreneurship education provides individuals with knowledge, skills, and understanding related to business creation, opportunity recognition, and risk management. Through entrepreneurship learning processes, students gain insights into the entrepreneurial world and develop a stronger motivation to start their own businesses. Previous studies have shown that exposure to entrepreneurship education significantly increases students' interest in entrepreneurship because it helps them understand the opportunities and challenges involved in entrepreneurial activities (Bharata, 2019; Lestari & Wijaya, 2012; Susanti, 2021). According to Buchari Alma, entrepreneurship education plays an important role in shaping entrepreneurial mindsets and preparing individuals to become independent and innovative economic actors.

Second, the findings also show that self-confidence is a significant psychological factor that influences entrepreneurial intention. Self-confidence reflects an individual's belief in their ability

to perform certain tasks and achieve desired outcomes. Individuals who possess high levels of confidence tend to be more willing to take risks, make decisions, and face uncertainty, which are common characteristics required in entrepreneurial activities. According to Peter Lauster, self-confidence is closely related to a person's positive self-evaluation and belief in their own abilities. Empirical studies further indicate that individuals with strong self-confidence tend to demonstrate greater motivation and intention to become entrepreneurs because they believe they are capable of managing and developing business ventures (Ermawati & Widodo, 2015; Rahmatullah et al., 2023; Rajab, 2022).

Third, the synthesis of literature reveals that self-confidence acts as a mediating variable between entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial intention. Entrepreneurship education not only provides knowledge but also helps develop psychological characteristics such as independence, courage, and self-belief. When students receive entrepreneurial education and engage in practical entrepreneurial learning experiences, their confidence in their ability to start and manage a business tends to increase. This increased level of confidence subsequently strengthens their entrepreneurial intention. This relationship is also consistent with the behavioral framework proposed in the Theory of Planned Behavior developed by Icek Ajzen, which explains that an individual's behavioral intention is influenced by cognitive beliefs and perceived control over their abilities.

Overall, the results of this literature study indicate that entrepreneurship education can influence entrepreneurial intention both directly and indirectly through self-confidence. Educational experiences that combine theoretical understanding with practical entrepreneurial activities can strengthen students' confidence in their entrepreneurial abilities. As a result, students become more motivated and willing to pursue entrepreneurship as a future career option.

Discussion

The findings of this study highlight the important role of entrepreneurship education in shaping entrepreneurial intention, particularly through the mediating role of self-confidence. Based on the literature synthesis, entrepreneurship education is shown to provide knowledge, skills, and experience that encourage students to consider entrepreneurship as a potential career path. This finding is consistent with the view of Alma (2010), who argues that entrepreneurship education is an important instrument for developing an entrepreneurial mindset, creativity, and independence among individuals. In the current global economic context, where employment competition continues to increase and formal job opportunities are limited, entrepreneurship education becomes increasingly relevant. Data published by the Statistics Indonesia shows that unemployment remains a significant issue in Indonesia, particularly among young people and university graduates. Therefore, strengthening entrepreneurship education in higher education institutions can serve as a strategic solution to encourage graduates to create their own employment opportunities rather than relying solely on formal job markets.

Furthermore, the findings confirm that self-confidence plays a crucial psychological role in influencing entrepreneurial intention. Self-confidence reflects an individual's belief in their ability to perform entrepreneurial tasks and overcome challenges associated with business activities. According to Hurlock (1997), self-confidence is an important psychological factor that influences individual motivation, decision-making, and behavior. Individuals who have strong self-confidence tend to be more optimistic, proactive, and willing to take risks when facing uncertain situations. In the context of entrepreneurship, such characteristics are essential

because entrepreneurial activities often involve uncertainty, competition, and financial risks. Empirical studies also support this argument, indicating that individuals with higher levels of self-confidence are more likely to demonstrate stronger entrepreneurial intentions and greater willingness to start a business (Ermawati & Widodo, 2015; Rahmatullah et al., 2023; Rajab, 2022).

The mediating role of self-confidence identified in this study provides a deeper understanding of how entrepreneurship education influences entrepreneurial intention. Entrepreneurship education not only transfers theoretical knowledge but also strengthens psychological readiness, including self-confidence, creativity, and independence. This finding aligns with the framework of the Theory of Planned Behavior proposed by Ajzen (1991), which explains that behavioral intention is influenced by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. In the context of entrepreneurship, self-confidence can be interpreted as part of perceived behavioral control, which reflects an individual's belief in their ability to perform entrepreneurial behavior successfully. When students receive entrepreneurship education that includes practical learning experiences such as business simulations, entrepreneurial projects, and mentorship programs, their confidence in their entrepreneurial abilities increases, which in turn strengthens their entrepreneurial intentions.

From the author's perspective, these findings indicate that the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education depends not only on the delivery of theoretical knowledge but also on the development of students' psychological readiness. Educational programs that focus solely on theoretical aspects may not be sufficient to foster strong entrepreneurial intentions among students. Instead, entrepreneurship education should be designed to provide experiential learning opportunities that allow students to practice entrepreneurial skills directly. Activities such as startup projects, business competitions, internships, and collaboration with industry practitioners can help students develop both competence and confidence in entrepreneurship.

In addition, the author argues that universities should adopt a more holistic approach to entrepreneurship education by integrating psychological development into the learning process. Strengthening students' self-confidence can be achieved through mentoring programs, entrepreneurial role models, and supportive learning environments that encourage creativity and risk-taking. By doing so, entrepreneurship education can become more effective in developing entrepreneurial intentions among students and contribute to the creation of new entrepreneurs who are capable of supporting economic growth and reducing unemployment.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results and discussion, it can be concluded that entrepreneurship education plays an important role in fostering entrepreneurial intention among students, both directly and indirectly through the development of self-confidence. Entrepreneurship education equips students with knowledge, skills, and insights that enhance their understanding of business opportunities and challenges.

More importantly, this study provides a theoretical contribution by confirming that self-confidence acts as a key mediating mechanism linking entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial intention, thereby strengthening the psychological perspective within entrepreneurship education literature. Students with higher self-confidence tend to demonstrate stronger entrepreneurial intentions because they feel more capable of managing risks and challenges.

From a practical perspective, this finding implies the need for entrepreneurship education programs to explicitly integrate confidence-building pedagogical strategies, such as experiential learning and business simulations. However, this study is limited by its reliance on a literature-based qualitative approach, which does not provide empirical validation and depends on prior studies with varying contexts.

Future research is recommended to employ quantitative or mixed-method approaches, particularly using techniques such as structural equation modeling (SEM), to empirically test the mediating role of self-confidence and explore additional variables across different contexts.

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