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Entrepreneurship Starts in the Classroom: Behavioral Mediation in the Education and Intention

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the influence of entrepreneurship education on entrepreneurial intention, with entrepreneurial behavior serving as a mediating variable. Data were collected from 128 students of the Faculty of Economics and Business at the University of PGRI Kanjuruhan Malang using a structured questionnaire. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire using a Likert scale and analyzed using path analysis. The findings reveal that entrepreneurship education has a significant effect on both entrepreneurial behavior and entrepreneurial intention. Specifically, students who get more exposure to entrepreneurship education show a higher tendency in developing entrepreneurial behavior, which in turn positively impacts their intention to start a business. Furthermore, entrepreneurial behavior significantly influences entrepreneurial intention. These results support the reinforcement of entrepreneurship curricula in higher education to foster the development of young entrepreneurs within academic environments.

Keyword: Entrepreneurship Education, Entrepreneurial Behavior Entrepreneurial Intention.

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pengaruh kewirausahaan terhadap intensi berwirausaha, dengan kewirausahaan sebagai variabel mediasi. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan jenis explanatory research, melibatkan 128 mahasiswa dari Fakultas Ekonomi dan Bisnis Universitas PGRI Kanjuruhan Malang. Data dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner terstruktur menggunakan skala Likert dan dianalisis menggunakan analisis jalur. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pendidikan kewirausahaan berpengaruh signifikan terhadap perilaku kewirausahaan dan intensi berwirausaha. Secara khusus, mahasiswa yang mendapatkan paparan lebih terhadap pendidikan kewirausahaan menunjukkan kecenderungan yang lebih tinggi dalam mengembangkan perilaku kewirausahaan, yang pada akhirnya berdampak positif terhadap niat mereka untuk memulai usaha. Selain itu, perilaku kewirausahaan terbukti memiliki peran mediasi yang signifikan dalam memperkuat hubungan antara pendidikan kewirausahaan dan intensi berwirausaha. Temuan ini menegaskan pentingnya integrasi pembelajaran praktis dan berbasis pengalaman dalam pendidikan kewirausahaan guna meningkatkan keterlibatan mahasiswa dan pola pikir kewirausahaan. Dengan demikian, perguruan tinggi dapat memainkan peran strategis dalam mencetak lulusan yang tidak hanya menjadi pencari kerja, tetapi juga pencipta lapangan kerja. Penelitian ini merekomendasikan pengembangan program kewirausahaan yang lebih komprehensif, mencakup mentoring, magang, dan pembelajaran berbasis proyek.

Keyword: Pendidikan Kewirausahaan, Perilaku Kewirausahaan, Intensi Berwirausaha



1. Introduction

Entrepreneurship has become a central strategy for reducing unemployment and accelerating economic growth. However, the proportion of entrepreneurs in Indonesia remains relatively low compared to other ASEAN countries. Even more concerning is the growing unemployment rate among higher education graduates. One of the key indicators of entrepreneurial activity in a country is the percentage of its population engaged in entrepreneurship. In this regard, Indonesia still lags behind its ASEAN counterparts, as shown in Table 1

Table 1. Comparison of Entrepreneurial Population Percentage in ASEAN (2023)

No.	Country	Entrepeneurship (%)
1	Indonesia	1.65
2	Singapore	7.00
3	Malaysia	5.00
4	Thailand	4.00

Source: ASEAN Data Center, 2021

As illustrated in Table 1, Indonesia ranks the lowest among ASEAN nations in terms of the percentage of its population engaged in entrepreneurship. For example, Malaysia and Thailand have more than double Indonesia's rate, while Singapore despite its smaller population leads with 7%. According to Saiman (2009), a country requires at least 2% of its population to be entrepreneurs in order to achieve sustainable prosperity. Thus, as a developing nation, Indonesia must significantly increase its entrepreneurial population to boost national economic performance.

Entrepreneurship involves a process that individuals must navigate, encountering various challenges and difficulties stemming from both personal factors and business competition. However, these processes can foster and train positive entrepreneurial behavior, enabling business owners to mature day by day in facing business challenges. In reality, the entrepreneurial behavior possessed by an entrepreneur needs to be developed, for instance, by expanding knowledge and insights. This expansion of knowledge and insights should be done gradually and continuously through a learning process. Kirkley (2016) states that sometimes every learning process is not consciously recognized as a tool for developing entrepreneurial behavior, as it's usually considered part of experience. Yet, experience itself can serve as a mirror to always determine the best path forward. Through these experiences, every entrepreneur is expected to continuously learn and acquire more knowledge. Furthermore, Sanchez et al. (2013) assert that consistently well-developed entrepreneurial behavior can become a personal motivation to achieve better entrepreneurial goals.

Another perspective suggests that entrepreneurship education is systematically structured to foster predetermined behaviors, namely entrepreneurial behaviors. Based on Ajzen's (1991) theory of intention, behavior emerges after an individual possesses an intention or will, which then motivates them to act. Ajzen (1991) defines intention as an indication of how hard people are willing to try and how much effort they plan to exert to perform a behavior or action. Thus, intention is a cognitive representation of a person's readiness to engage in a specific behavior. According to Mandy et al. (2018), the stronger a person's intention to perform a specific behavior, the greater the likelihood that this behavior will be effectively executed. One group of variables previously studied as antecedents of entrepreneurial intention includes demographics, such as age, origin, gender, work experience, religion, training, and family entrepreneurial background. Furthermore, individual characteristics, such as risk-taking, the need for autonomy and achievement, and internal locus of control, also appear to have a positive relationship with intention.

Finally, a set of skills acquired from business and/or entrepreneurship education also tends to increase intention. These antecedents can all directly influence entrepreneurial intention. However, much research has found that entrepreneurial behavior is a planned decision-action involving beliefs about outcomes and the potential entrepreneur's self-efficacy. The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) relates to beliefs about outcomes and social norms (i.e.,values) and behavioral control (i.e., expectations). TPB eventually became the dominant theory in the overall concept of intention. Buli and Yesuf (2015) state that researchers have highlighted several concerns in developing countries, including unemployment, rural-urban balance, industrialization, capital formation, and labor utilization. It is said that vocational education can improve a country's economic conditions through effective labor absorption, especially if it's directed towards enhancing work culture through entrepreneurship and vocational education.

Buli and Yesuf (2015) state that an analysis of various studies reveals researchers have gathered preliminary evidence that entrepreneurship can be taught. This contradicts the hypothesis that entrepreneurship

is a result of genetic inheritance. In other words, individuals can learn how to become entrepreneurs. Volkmann (2004) emphasizes that entrepreneurship is not something acquired at birth or innate, but rather something developed through education. As previously stated, entrepreneurship depends on learned beliefs about expectations and behavioral control. From this perspective, entrepreneurship education can foster relevant attitudes and intentions in students, as well as the ability to create new ventures.

The growth in the development of entrepreneurship curricula and programs has been so strong that entrepreneurship classes have been added to higher, secondary, and even primary education programs (Marquez, 2012). Educational methods for the subject of entrepreneurship can occur in several ways, such as specialized classes, modules introduced as part of other curricular units, short training programs lasting one or two days, and entrepreneurship bootcamps and workshops. Despite this expansion, the lack of consensus in the literature on what can be understood as entrepreneurship education poses several problems, including ongoing discussions about various objectives and different types of education. Linan (2004) defines entrepreneurship education as: "The set of education and training activities, within the educational system or not, that attempt to develop the intention to perform entrepreneurial behavior, or some elements that affect this intention, such as entrepreneurial knowledge, the desire for entrepreneurial activities, or their feasibility."

In relation to this, this study develops research through Research Gaps that have been compiled as follows. This study aims to develop and compare studies related to entrepreneurship education in Indonesia with other countries that may have different education management systems between developed and developing nations, such as Glavo et al. (2018) in Italy, Marquez et al. (2012) in Spain, and Buli and Yesuf (2015) in the UK.

In addition to economic benefits, entrepreneurs also contribute to reducing unemployment by creating new jobs. One effective method to nurture entrepreneurship is through higher education. The University of PGRI Kanjuruhan Malang has integrated entrepreneurship courses into its academic curriculum. However, it is critical to assess whether such education effectively shapes students' entrepreneurial intentions, particularly by examining how it influences their entrepreneurial behavior. Therefore, this study investigates the role of entrepreneurship education in shaping entrepreneurial intention, with entrepreneurial behavior as a mediating factor.

Research Questions

- 1. Does entrepreneurship education influence entrepreneurial behavior?
- 2. Does entrepreneurship education influence entrepreneurial intention?
- 3. Does entrepreneurial behavior influence entrepreneurial intention?

2. Literature Review

Entrepreneurship Education and Its Cognitive Role

Entrepreneurship education is a systematic process aimed at equipping students with knowledge, attitudes, skills, and motivation to recognize and create business opportunities (Ali, 2013; Souitaris et al., 2007). Beyond the transfer of knowledge, such education also cultivates entrepreneurial mindsets and encourages proactive action. Nabi et al. (2020) highlight that experiential learning methods including business simulations, internships, and case studies significantly enhance entrepreneurial intention. Contextual and practice-oriented learning approaches are more effective than purely theoretical models in fostering entrepreneurial aspirations.

Entrepreneurial Behavior and Its Mediating Role

Entrepreneurial behavior encompasses self-confidence, initiative, innovation, and a willingness to take risks (Soininen et al., 2013). In this study, entrepreneurial behavior is found to be a strong mediating variable between entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial intention. Supporting this, Nowiński et al. (2020) demonstrate that self-efficacy developed through hands-on entrepreneurial experiences significantly contributes to the formation of entrepreneurial intention. Students actively engaged in business projects tend to exhibit greater confidence and a more realistic outlook toward entrepreneurial careers.

Theory of Planned Behavior and Its Relevance

Entrepreneurial intention aligns closely with the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) proposed by Ajzen (1991), which posits that intention is influenced by attitude toward behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Among university students, a positive attitude toward entrepreneurship, support from peers and faculty, and confidence in their entrepreneurial abilities serve as key predictors of intention. According to Shirokova et al. (2021), university support systems, entrepreneurial campus environments, and

access to business incubators enhance perceived control, thereby facilitating the transition from intention to action.

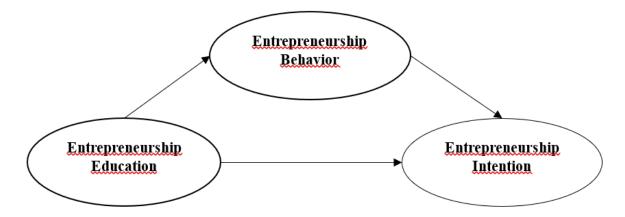


Figure 1. Research Model

3. Method

This study employed a quantitative explanatory research design aimed at examining causal relationships among the variables under investigation. A purposive sampling technique was used to select respondents who met specific criteria: (1) students who have taken an entrepreneurship course, (2) students who have experience managing or initiating a business, and (3) students with a family background in business. These criteria were chosen to ensure the respondents had sufficient exposure to entrepreneurial concepts both academically and practically, making them suitable participants for the research. The population for this study comprised active students of the Faculty of Economics and Business (FEB) at the University of PGRI Kanjuruhan Malang, with a total sample of 128 respondents. This sample size is considered adequate based on minimum sample requirements for path analysis and was determined with reference to similar studies involving student populations in entrepreneurship research.

Data were gathered through a structured questionnaire utilizing a five-point Likert scale, which measured respondents perceptions and attitudes toward entrepreneurship education, entrepreneurial behavior, and entrepreneurial intentions. Prior to distribution, the questionnaire underwent expert validation to ensure content relevance and clarity. To ensure data quality, validity and reliability tests were conducted using construct validity (factor loading and average variance extracted) and internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability). Descriptive statistics were employed to provide an overview of the respondents' profiles and variable distributions. For hypothesis testing, path analysis was performed using a structural equation modeling approach, which allowed for simultaneous examination of both direct and indirect relationships among variables. The analysis was conducted using SmartPLS 4.0, which is particularly suitable for small to medium-sized samples and complex models involving mediation.

Ethical considerations were also taken into account, including informed consent from all participants and ensuring the confidentiality and anonymity of the data collected.

4. Result and Discussion

From the 128 respondents, 52% were female and 48% were male, indicating a relatively balanced gender distribution. In terms of experience, 67% of the respondents had participated in entrepreneurship training programs, either through campus initiatives or external events. This reflects a significant level of student interest and early engagement with entrepreneurship. Furthermore, 60% of the respondents expressed intentions to start a business in the near future, indicating a high entrepreneurial orientation. Notably, 18% had already launched a business, demonstrating the practical realization of entrepreneurial intentions and underscoring the initial success of the entrepreneurship education program implemented by faculty of economic management in PGRI Kanjuruhan University.

The path analysis results showed that Entrepreneurship Education (X) significantly influenced Entrepreneurial Behavior (M) with a path coefficient of $\beta=0.531$ (p < 0.001). It also had a direct effect on Entrepreneurial Intention (Y) with $\beta=0.412$ (p < 0.001). Additionally, Entrepreneurial Behavior (M) significantly affected Entrepreneurial Intention (Y) with $\beta=0.452$ (p < 0.001). The coefficient of determination (R²) for Entrepreneurial Behavior was 28.1%, indicating that Entrepreneurship Education explained nearly one-third of the variation in this variable. Meanwhile, 47.9% of the variation in Entrepreneurial Intention was explained by the combined influence of both Entrepreneurship Education and Entrepreneurial Behavior. These findings reinforce the role of Entrepreneurial Behavior as a critical mediating variable, highlighting that entrepreneurship education impacts intention both directly and indirectly. Below are the complete results of the path analysis statistics.

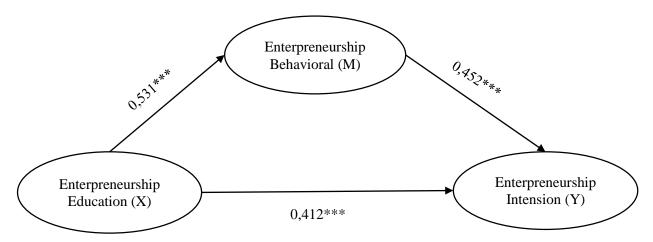


Figure 2. Path Analysis Diagram Results

Based on Figure 2, it can be observed that Entrepreneurship Education has a significant influence on Entrepreneurial Behavior. Furthermore, Entrepreneurship Education is also found to directly influence Entrepreneurial Intention. Lastly, Entrepreneurial Behavior significantly influences Entrepreneurial Intention. The findings of this study corroborate those of Souitaris et al. (2007), who concluded that student involvement in entrepreneurship education programs positively affects the development of entrepreneurial intentions. Entrepreneurship education is not only a channel for knowledge transfer but also a catalyst for internal inspiration and motivation. Ali (2013) further supports this by emphasizing the importance of both formal education (through curricula) and informal learning (via workshops and hands-on experience) in shaping students' perceptions and intentions toward entrepreneurship. Consequently, comprehensive entrepreneurship education has the potential to transform students' mindsets from job seekers to job creators.

Moreover, the results align well with the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991), which posits that intention is determined by attitude toward behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. These components were evident in the students who had been exposed to entrepreneurship education. The data revealed that 67% of respondents had participated in entrepreneurship training, and 60% expressed plans to start a business, reflecting strong entrepreneurial attitudes, supportive environments, and a high level of self-efficacy.

Entrepreneurial behavior has also proven to be a crucial link between entrepreneurship education and intention. The relatively high path coefficients (β = 0.53 from X to M, and β = 0.45 from M to Y) indicate that enhanced understanding and skills acquired through education significantly strengthen entrepreneurial behaviors such as confidence, creativity, and risk-taking. As Soininen et al. (2013) argued, these traits are essential indicators of a student's readiness to become an entrepreneur. The empirical data, particularly the 18% of students who have already initiated a business, underscore the practical transformation from intention into action.

These findings imply that entrepreneurship education must go beyond theoretical instruction and be grounded in practical and experiential learning. This can be achieved through campus-based business incubators, entrepreneurship competitions, and collaboration with local business practitioners. As highlighted by Nabi et al. (2020) and Nowiński et al. (2020), experiential learning approaches are effective in building students' entrepreneurial intention and self-confidence. Higher education institutions, must optimize their

entrepreneurial ecosystems to ensure that students are not only willing but also capable of turning their business ideas into real ventures.

The results of this path analysis provide significant insights into the relationships among Entrepreneurship Education, Entrepreneurial Behavior and Entrepreneurial Intention. The significant path coefficients for each relationship strongly support the proposed hypotheses and enhance the understanding of the pathways involved in shaping entrepreneurial intention. The first hypothesis, stating that Entrepreneurship Education significantly influences Entrepreneurial Behavior, is robustly This finding is highly relevant to the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), where entrepreneurship education can be regarded as an external factor influencing an individual's perceived behavioral control and attitude towards entrepreneurial behavior. Through education, students acquire knowledge and skills that boost their self-efficacy in engaging in entrepreneurial activities, simultaneously fostering a positive outlook on entrepreneurship as a career choice.

The second hypothesis found that Entrepreneurship Education also has a direct influence on Entrepreneurial IntentionThis direct effect indicates that education not only shapes behavior but also directly stimulates intention. This aligns with the TPB, where exposure to information and experiences (through education) can directly form an individual's intention, independent of behavioral mediation. Education provides a cognitive and motivational framework that directly cultivates the desire to engage in entrepreneurship, possibly by enhancing the understanding of opportunities or reducing the perception of risk. Furthermore, the third hypothesis, that Entrepreneurial Behavior significantly influences Entrepreneurial Intention is central to the mediation model. This suggests that practical experience and engagement in entrepreneurial activities strengthen an individual's intention to become more deeply involved. Within the TPB framework, this can be interpreted as prior behavior (or simulated behavioral experience gained from training) reinforcing an individual's perceived behavioral control and attitude. When an individual successfully demonstrates entrepreneurial behavior (e.g., participating in a campus business project), it strengthens their belief in their own capabilities and the prospects of future success, which in turn drives a stronger intention. This behavior serves as concrete evidence for individuals regarding what they can achieve, thereby maturing their intentions.

Collectively, the path analysis model effectively illustrates how Entrepreneurship Education serves as a crucial antecedent. This education not only directly influences Entrepreneurial Intention but also indirectly through Entrepreneurial Behavior. This mediating relationship is highly relevant to the TPB, where experiences and skill development (represented by entrepreneurship-inspired behavior) reinforce key determinants of intention, such as perceived behavioral control and attitude towards behavior. The strong coefficients indicate that both direct and indirect pathways are equally vital in shaping Entrepreneurial Intention.

Based on these robust statistical results, several areas warrant deeper exploration for future research. First, regarding the specific mechanisms underlying the influence of Entrepreneurship Education. Future studies could identify which particular curriculum components or teaching methodologies in entrepreneurship education are most effective in shaping Entrepreneurial Behavior and Intention. For instance, are project-based learning, business simulations, entrepreneurial internships, or case studies the most impactful? Second, while the results demonstrate significant impact, it is crucial to explore potential moderators within these relationships. Demographic factors (age, gender, family entrepreneurial background), personality characteristics (risk tolerance, proactiveness), or environmental contexts (local startup ecosystem support, government policies) might moderate the strength of the relationships among the variables. Future research could investigate how these factors alter or strengthen the identified pathways. Third, focusing on Entrepreneurial Intention as the dependent variable. Although intention is a strong predictor of behavior, intention does not always translate into action. Subsequent research could investigate the factors that facilitate or hinder the transition from Entrepreneurial Intention to Entrepreneurial Action (Venture Creation Behavior). This might involve longitudinal studies to track students post-graduation and ascertain who actually starts businesses and why. Fourth, exploring the long-term impact of Entrepreneurship Education and Entrepreneurial Behavior. This study provides a snapshot at a single point in time. Future research could adopt a longitudinal approach to understand how these effects persist or evolve over time. Do students with strong current intentions and behaviors remain successful entrepreneurs in the future? Fifth, considering additional mediating or moderating variables that might further enrich the TPB model. For example, how do subjective norms (social pressure from peers, family, or mentors) influence Entrepreneurial Behavior and Entrepreneurial Intention? Or, are there other psychological mediators (e.g., resilience, self-efficacy) that could further explain these relationships? Thus, the results of this study lay a solid foundation for developing more complex and comprehensive models in the future.

5. Conclusion

Entrepreneurship education has consistently demonstrated a significant influence on both entrepreneurial behavior and entrepreneurial intention. Through structured learning experiences, exposure to entrepreneurial role models, and the application of real-world business concepts, students develop not only the cognitive understanding of entrepreneurship but also the behavioral competencies required to take initiative, manage uncertainty, and seize opportunities. Importantly, entrepreneurial behavior serves as a robust mediating variable in this relationship, indicating that the impact of educational interventions is most effectively realized when they lead to observable entrepreneurial actions. This suggests that fostering experiential learning, project-based assignments, and business simulations can greatly enhance the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education in shaping students' intentions to engage in entrepreneurial activities.

For future research, it is recommended to expand the model by incorporating variables such as entrepreneurial motivation, social environment (including family and peer influence), and prior work or business experience. These factors are known to interact dynamically with education and behavior, potentially amplifying or moderating the pathway to entrepreneurial intention. Additionally, adopting a longitudinal research design would offer valuable insights into the sustained impact of entrepreneurship education, revealing how intentions and behaviors evolve over time and how educational experiences translate into actual business creation or self-employment in the post-graduation phase. Such an approach would provide a more holistic understanding of how entrepreneurship education contributes not only to short-term attitudinal shifts but also to long-term entrepreneurial outcomes in students' careers.

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