

## CAREER PATHWAYS IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP: HOW SELF-EFFICACY INFLUENCES ENTREPRENEURIAL INTENTIONS IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

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### Abstract

This study aims to analyze the relationship between career entrepreneurial self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intention among vocational high school students, as well as to identify factors supporting the development of entrepreneurship programs in vocational schools. The research method used a quantitative approach with a questionnaire adapted from the entrepreneurial intention and entrepreneurial self-efficacy scales, involving 276 vocational high school students in Malang City. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistical tests, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and Pearson correlation with the assistance of JASP and SPSS software. The results of the study indicate that vocational high school students have a fairly high level of entrepreneurial intention, with behavioral control perception as the most dominant aspect. Career entrepreneurial self-efficacy is also relatively high, particularly in human resource management and business planning. Correlation analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between career entrepreneurial self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intention, although other factors also influence this relationship. These findings emphasize the importance of strengthening students' self-confidence through integrated entrepreneurship programs, including financial literacy training, mentor guidance, and industry collaboration. This study recommends the development of a more comprehensive entrepreneurship learning model in vocational schools, considering affective aspects, practical skills, and ecosystem support to produce graduates who are ready to become entrepreneurs.

**Keywords:** : *entrepreneurship, self efficacy, entrepreneurial intentions, vocational education.*

### Introduction

Vocational education (SMK) plays a strategic role in preparing competent and competitive human resources for the contemporary labor market (Lubis, 2024; Safitri & Sutadji, 2025). Entrepreneurship has become a central pillar of the SMK curriculum, equipping students not only with technical competencies but also with the capacity to create employment opportunities (Janna & El Muna, 2025). Nevertheless, empirical data indicate that SMK graduates continue to encounter substantial challenges in transitioning into the workforce (Nurdina, Martono, & Sangka, 2019). According to Statistics Indonesia (BPS, 2023), the unemployment rate among SMK graduates reached 8.49%, surpassing that of senior high school graduates (6.89%), with only 7.2% of SMK graduates opting for entrepreneurship as a career path.

Low levels of entrepreneurial interest among students are influenced by multiple factors. Bandura's self-efficacy theory (1977) and the entrepreneurial intention model proposed by Liñán and Chen (2009) underscore that insufficient self-confidence is a

major inhibitor in the development of entrepreneurial intention (Garaika, Margahana, & Negara, 2019). Zichella and Reichstein (2023) further reveal that vocational students often perceive entrepreneurship as a high-risk, capital-intensive activity. This perception is exacerbated by limited hands-on experience and inadequate exposure to real-world business practices during their schooling.

The Indonesian government has sought to address these challenges through various policy interventions. Ministry of Education and Culture Regulation No. 34 of 2018 aims to cultivate learning environments that mirror industrial settings and enhance entrepreneurial competence through the Teaching Factory (TEFA) program. Despite these efforts, implementation remains suboptimal. Studies by Prasetyo, Setyadharma, and Kistanti (2020) indicate that entrepreneurship program adoption is still limited due to insufficient skills, low student interest, and unclear career prospects in entrepreneurship (Arianto & Masnawati, 2024). Prior research consistently highlights that entrepreneurship programs offer promising future prospects and are particularly relevant for vocational education, which aims to produce graduates who are not only job-ready but also capable of creating new employment opportunities (Desky et al., 2025; Jena, 2024).

Entrepreneurship as a viable career option underscores the critical role of Guidance and Counseling (BK) teachers in supporting students' career planning and development. According to Social Cognitive Career Theory (Lent & Brown, 1996), career guidance interventions can significantly strengthen students' entrepreneurial self-efficacy. Empirical studies conducted in Indonesian vocational schools (Fuady et al., 2024) demonstrate that school-based entrepreneurial mentoring programs enhance students' entrepreneurial interest (Pereyra, Aboal, & Rovira, 2021). BK teachers therefore play an essential role by providing relevant knowledge, skills, and motivational support. This finding is consistent with research by Ahmad, Idrus, and Rijal (2023), which emphasizes the importance of educational environments that nurture entrepreneurial values and capabilities.

Entrepreneurship education has increasingly become a focal point in global vocational systems. The OECD (2021) reports that countries with robust vocational education integrate entrepreneurship across the curriculum. Similarly, Mack and Honig (2024) found that enhanced self-efficacy is positively associated with the growth of startups among vocational graduates. This trend aligns with the increasing popularity of both traditional and digital entrepreneurship among Generation Z (Caliendo, Kritikos, Rodriguez, & Stier, 2023).

The relevance of strengthening entrepreneurship in SMK has become even more pronounced in the digital era. Recent research shows that vocational students with high levels of self-efficacy are more likely to leverage digital platforms to initiate business ventures (Chen et al., 2023; Guo & Kiratikarnkul, 2024). However, such capacities remain concentrated in certain schools. If scaled more broadly, the digital entrepreneurial potential of SMK students could contribute substantially to job creation (Ratna et al., 2024). Key enabling factors include technical competence, managerial skills both team-based and financial social communication abilities, and a range of soft skills that enhance students' employability, well-being, and long-term career sustainability (Mohammed & Ozdamli, 2024).

Given these complexities, this study aims to investigate the patterns and relationships between entrepreneurial self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intention among SMK students. A quantitative approach employing validated psychometric instruments will be used. The findings are expected to provide an empirical foundation for developing more effective entrepreneurship-based career guidance models and offer practical insights to support the improvement of vocational graduate quality in Indonesia.

## Method

### Research Design

A quantitative research design was employed in this study to identify students' levels of interest in entrepreneurial careers and to examine the correlation between entrepreneurial interest and entrepreneurial self-efficacy. The study also aimed to assess key aspects that contribute to the development of entrepreneurial career pathways using an inventory designed to generate foundational empirical findings. In addition, the research sought to identify the relationships among the components and indicators of each inventory item, including the underlying data constructs and linguistic dimensions embedded in the instrument.

### Participants

The study sample consisted of 276 adolescents enrolled as students across public and private vocational high schools (SMK) in Malang City, Indonesia. Participants, aged 15 to 18 years, were recruited voluntarily through online announcements distributed via social media and community networks. The sample comprised 163 female students and 113 male students, reflecting the general gender distribution of vocational school populations in Malang, East Java.

**Table 1.** Research Sample Description

Participant	n	276
Gender	Frequencies	Percentages (%)
Male	113	41%
Female	163	59%
Usia		
A. < 15 Years	2	0.007%
B. 15 Years	79	28%
C. 16 Years	118	42%
D. 17 Years	57	20%
E. 18 Years	18	0,6%
F. > 18 Years	2	0.007%

### Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected between June and August 2025. During this period, adolescents enrolled in vocational high schools (SMK) across Malang City, East Java received questionnaires distributed through social media platforms and email. The questionnaire consisted of two primary sections. The initial section gathered demographic information, including initials, gender, age, school affiliation, and field of study, accompanied by an informed consent statement confirming participants' willingness to take part in the research.

The first substantive section of the questionnaire measured students' entrepreneurial interest through four dimensions comprising a total of 20 items. The second section assessed entrepreneurial self-efficacy, consisting of 19 items across five dimensions that explored students' confidence in their entrepreneurial skills. The scale measuring entrepreneurial career interest was adapted from the Entrepreneurial Intention Questionnaire developed by Liñán and Chen (2009), whereas the entrepreneurial self-efficacy instrument was adapted from McGee, Peterson, Mueller, and Sequeira (2009). All items were rated using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Inappropriate) to 5 (Strongly Appropriate). The blueprint for the entrepreneurial intention instrument is presented in Table 2, and the validity testing results for the instrument are shown in Table 3.

**Table 2.** Blueprint Entrepreneur Instrument

Variable	Indicator	Item
<b>Entrepreneursip Intention</b>	Personal Attitude	1,2,3,4,5
	Subjective Norm	6,7,8
	Perceived Behavioral Control	9,10,11,12,13,14
	Entrepreneurial Intention	15,16,17,18,19,20
<b>Efficacy Entrepreneurship Career</b>	Research and Development	1,2,3
	Planning	4,5,6,7
	Marshalling	8,9,10
	Implementing Human Resource	11,12,13,14,15,16
	Implementing Financial Resource	17,18,19

### Instrument Adaptation Procedures

The adaptation procedures for the entrepreneurship questionnaire began with identifying students' tendencies related to entrepreneurial interest, skill readiness, and self-efficacy as potential indicators of entrepreneurial career development. A comprehensive theoretical review was then conducted to ensure that the adapted measurement instrument aligned with established theories relevant to entrepreneurial intention and entrepreneurial self-efficacy. The questionnaire employed a five-point rating scale to assess the extent to which each statement reflected students' entrepreneurial interests and perceived competencies.

Following instrument development, a pilot test was administered to students across three grade levels (Grades X to XII) to evaluate item clarity, response patterns, and preliminary psychometric properties. Data obtained from the pilot study were analyzed using statistical software such as JASP and SPSS. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted to examine the validity and structural fit of the measurement model. Finally, instrument reliability was assessed using Composite Reliability to ensure internal consistency and the overall dependability of the measurement tool.

**Tabel 3.** Confirmatory Factor Analysis Test

Instrument	N	Reliability Test		Validity Test				
		McDonald's	Cronbach's	Chi-Square	GFI	RFI	CFI	TLI
<i>Entrepreneursip Intention</i>	276	0.881	0.878	<.001	0.975	0.953	0.970	0.965

McDonald > 0,60 (Reliable). Cronbach alfa > 0.60 (Reliable). GFI (Goodness of Fit) = 0 (poor fit)- 1,0 (perfect fit). RFI ≥ 0,95 (Very Good Fit). CFI ≥ 0,95 (Accepted Model). TLI ≥ 0,95 (Very Good Fit). \*p <0.001

Based on the CFA results presented in Table 3, the Entrepreneurial Intention instrument demonstrated strong validity and reliability according to the following criteria: (1) The values of McDonald's Omega (0.881) and Cronbach's Alpha (0.878) exceeded the minimum threshold of 0.60, indicating excellent internal consistency; (2) The Goodness-of-Fit indices met acceptable model fit criteria, with GFI (0.975), RFI (0.953), CFI (0.970), and TLI (0.965) all reaching or surpassing the recommended benchmark of 0.95, reflecting a very good model fit; and (3) The Chi-square value was statistically significant ( $p < 0.001$ ), suggesting that the measurement model adequately represents the empirical data.

Collectively, these findings confirm that the instrument is appropriate for assessing entrepreneurial intention within this study and meets the psychometric standards recommended by Hair et al. (2019) and Kline (2015).

**Tabel 4.** Confirmatory Factor Analysis Test

Instrument	N	Reliability Test		Validity Test				
		McDonald's	Cronbach's	CMIN/DF	GFI	RMSEA	CFI	TLI
<i>Efficacy</i>								
<i>Entrepreneurship</i>	276	0.723	0.700	2.595	0.984	0.76	0.979	0.974
<i>Career</i>								

McDonald  $> 0,60$  (Reliable). Cronbach alfa  $> 0,60$  (Reliable). RMSEA  $\leq 0,08$  (Accepted Model). GFI (Goodness of Fit) = 0 (poor fit)- 1,0 (perfect fit). CMIN/DF  $\leq 2,0$  (Accepted Model). CFI  $\geq 0,95$  (Accepted Model). TLI  $\geq 0,95$  (Very Good Fit). \*p  $< 0.001$

Based on the CFA results presented in Table 4, the Efficacy Entrepreneurship Career instrument met the required validity and reliability criteria. First, McDonald's Omega (0.723) and Cronbach's Alpha (0.700) exceeded the minimum threshold of 0.60, indicating adequate internal consistency. Second, the CMIN/DF value (2.595), although slightly above the ideal value of  $\leq 2.0$ , remained within an acceptable range for large-sample behavioral research. Third, the GFI (0.984) and TLI (0.974) values, both nearing 1.0, demonstrated excellent model fit. Fourth, the RMSEA value (0.076) fell below the critical upper limit of 0.08, indicating an acceptable approximation error. Fifth, the CFI value (0.979), substantially higher than the recommended cut-off of 0.95, further confirmed excellent model compatibility. The significance level ( $p < 0.001$ ) provided additional support for the robustness of the measurement model. Overall, these results indicate that the instrument is valid and reliable for assessing entrepreneurial career self-efficacy in the context of this study.

### Data Analysis Techniques

Data were analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Prior to analysis, responses were screened to ensure the accuracy and validity of the dataset. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted using maximum likelihood estimation, applying fit indices such as Chi-square, Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) to evaluate the measurement model.

Descriptive statistical analyses including frequency distributions, means, and percentage breakdowns were employed to examine categorical variables such as gender, age, and field of study, as well as patterns in entrepreneurial interest, skill readiness, and self-efficacy. Chi-square tests of independence were used to identify differences in categorical responses (Robson & Langdridge, 2002).

Correlation and regression analyses were conducted using simple linear regression to assess the predictive relationship between the independent variable (entrepreneurial career interest) and the dependent variable (entrepreneurial self-efficacy). All analyses were carried out using JASP and SPSS software to generate descriptive statistics, regression coefficients, and additional indicators supporting the study's findings.

### Result and Discussion

Based on the descriptive analysis presented in Table 5, the respondents demonstrated a generally high level of entrepreneurial intention, with an overall mean score of 82.785 (SD = 10.615). More specifically, the Perceived Behavioral Control component recorded the highest mean score (M = 23.322, SD = 2.868), followed by Entrepreneurial Intention itself (M = 25.670, SD = 3.287), Personal Attitude (M = 21.094, SD = 2.934), and Subjective Norms (M = 12.699, SD = 1.526). This pattern indicates that respondents tend to possess strong confidence in their ability to regulate entrepreneurial behavior, which is a central element of the Theory of Planned Behavior. However, the relatively large standard deviations observed in several components particularly Entrepreneurial Intention (SD = 3.287) and Personal Attitude (SD = 2.934) suggest substantial variability among respondents. This variation may reflect differences in students' backgrounds,

exposure to entrepreneurial learning experiences, or prior engagement in entrepreneurial activities.

**Tabel 5.** Descriptive Statistical Test of Entrepreneurial Intention Variable

<b>Entrepreneursip Intention</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
Personal Attitude	276	21.094	2.934
Subjective Norm	276	12.699	1.526
Perceived Behavioral Control	276	23.322	2.868
Entrepreneurial Intention	276	25.670	3.287
<b>Total</b>		<b>82.785</b>	<b>10.615</b>

**Tabel 6.** Descriptive Statistical Test of Entrepreneurship Career Efficacy Variable

<b>Efficacy Entrepreneurship Career</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
<i>Research and Development</i>	276	11.399	1.447
<i>Planning</i>	276	15.304	1.900
<i>Marshalling</i>	276	11.199	1.552
<i>Implementing Human Resource</i>	276	23.917	2.256
<i>Implementing Financial Resource</i>	276	11.946	1.671
<b>Total</b>		<b>73.765</b>	<b>8.856</b>

Based on the descriptive analysis, respondents exhibited a generally high level of entrepreneurial career self-efficacy ( $M = 73.765$ ,  $SD = 8.856$ ). The most dominant components were Implementing Human Resources ( $M = 23.917$ ,  $SD = 2.256$ ) and Planning ( $M = 15.304$ ,  $SD = 1.900$ ), indicating strong confidence in students' abilities to manage human resources and develop business plans. In contrast, Research and Development ( $M = 11.399$ ), Marshalling ( $M = 11.199$ ), and Implementing Financial Resources ( $M = 11.946$ ) recorded lower but still positive mean scores, with relatively small standard deviations (1.447–1.671). These results suggest that while students' confidence in innovation- and finance-related tasks is comparatively lower, their perceptions remain consistently positive. The narrow variability also indicates a relatively homogeneous perception among respondents across all dimensions of entrepreneurial career self-efficacy.

**Tabel 7.** Correlation Test

<b>Correlations</b>			
		<b>Entrepreneursip Intention</b>	<b>Efficacy Entrepreneurship</b>
<b>Pearson Correlation</b>	Entrepreneursip Intention	1.000	.523
	Efficacy Entrepreneurship	.523	1.000
<b>Sig. (1-tailed)</b>	Entrepreneursip Intention	.	.000
	Efficacy Entrepreneurship	.000	.
<b>N</b>	Entrepreneursip Intention	276	276
	Efficacy Entrepreneurship	276	276

The correlation analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between entrepreneurial career self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intention ( $r = 0.523$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). According to Cohen's (1988) classification, this coefficient represents a moderate effect size, indicating that higher levels of entrepreneurial career self-efficacy are associated

with stronger entrepreneurial intentions among students. The statistical significance ( $p < 0.001$ ), which is well below the conventional alpha level of 0.05, confirms that this relationship is unlikely to have occurred by chance. With a sample size of 276 students, these findings provide robust empirical evidence that entrepreneurial career self-efficacy is positively correlated with entrepreneurial intention among vocational high school students.

**Tabel 8.** Correlation Test

Table 3: Correlation Test									
Coefficients <sup>a</sup>		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Correlations		
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta			Zero-order	Partial	Part
1	(Constant)	25.721	5.633		4.566	.000			
	Efficacy Entrepreneurship	.774	.076	.523	10.159	.000	.523	.523	.523
a. Dependent Variable: Entrepreneurship Intention									

a. Dependent Variable: Entrepreneurship Intention

The regression analysis further confirmed a significant positive association between entrepreneurial career self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intention ( $r = 0.523$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). The regression equation, *Entrepreneurial Intention* =  $25.721 + 0.774$  (*Entrepreneurial Career Self-Efficacy*), indicates that for every one-unit increase in self-efficacy, entrepreneurial intention increases by 0.774 units. The t-value ( $t = 10.159$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and the standardized beta coefficient ( $\beta = 0.523$ ) both demonstrate a strong and statistically significant predictive effect. Additionally, the model explains 27.4% of the variance in entrepreneurial intention ( $R^2 = 0.274$ ), suggesting a meaningful contribution of self-efficacy to students' entrepreneurial intentions.

These findings were consistent across zero-order, partial, and part correlations (all  $r = 0.523$ ), indicating a direct relationship without the influence of moderating variables. Therefore, it can be concluded that increased confidence in entrepreneurial abilities significantly enhances students' intentions to pursue entrepreneurial careers. This result carries important implications for the development of entrepreneurship programs in vocational schools, highlighting the need to strengthen students' self-efficacy as a central component of entrepreneurial education.

The findings of this study reveal several important insights regarding the relationship between entrepreneurial career self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intention among vocational high school students. The descriptive analysis indicates that students exhibit relatively high levels of entrepreneurial intention, with perceived behavioral control emerging as the most dominant component. This aligns with Liñán and Chen (2009), who highlight perceived behavioral control as a strong predictor of entrepreneurial intention, a conclusion also supported by subsequent studies (Majeed et al., 2021; Vamvaka et al., 2020). Conversely, subjective norms recorded lower scores, suggesting that social support from family, peers, and the surrounding environment may still be limited in encouraging students' entrepreneurial aspirations (Bazan et al., 2020; Osorio et al., 2017).

In terms of entrepreneurial career self-efficacy, students demonstrated the highest confidence in human resource management abilities, while research and development skills and financial management competencies scored comparatively lower. This pattern is consistent with Bandura's (1977) assertion that efficacy related to interpersonal and managerial tasks tends to develop more readily than efficacy tied to innovation and financial decision-making (Lussier & Hendon, 2025). The weaker mastery of financial-related skills reinforces earlier findings by Wibowo et al. (2021), which highlight low

levels of financial literacy among vocational students—a key barrier to cultivating entrepreneurial readiness (Ahmad, Mohamad Fazil, & Yusof, 2025).

The significant positive correlation found between entrepreneurial career self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intention supports the propositions of Social Cognitive Career Theory (Oulhou & Ibourk, 2023). However, the moderate strength of the correlation coefficient suggests that additional factors also influence entrepreneurial intention. Previous studies (Effendy et al., 2021) have identified variables such as attitudes toward entrepreneurship and the quality of entrepreneurship education as influential determinants (Duong, 2022). Future research should therefore incorporate broader predictors, including entrepreneurial mindset (Cui & Bell, 2022), access to financial capital (Rusu et al., 2022), and support from the digital entrepreneurial ecosystem (Maheshwari & Kha, 2022), to provide a more comprehensive understanding of factors shaping entrepreneurial intention.

These findings have meaningful implications for vocational education development. Recommendations include enhancing student responsibility, optimism, and self-competence; strengthening collaboration with industry partners to provide experiential soft-skills training in entrepreneurship (Alamsyah et al., 2024); and optimizing the role of Guidance and Counseling teachers as entrepreneurial mentors (Hu et al., 2021). Such integrated policies and educational interventions are expected to produce vocational graduates who are not only ready for employment but also capable of creating new entrepreneurial opportunities.

## Conclusion

This study confirms a significant positive relationship between entrepreneurial career self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intention among vocational high school students, underscoring the need to explore additional factors such as risk-taking attitudes, access to capital, and digital ecosystem support that may further contribute to entrepreneurial intention. These findings reinforce the importance of strengthening entrepreneurship programs in vocational schools, not only by enhancing students' self-efficacy but also by developing complementary competencies including financial literacy, innovation skills, and environmental support through industry collaboration and the optimization of Guidance and Counseling teachers as entrepreneurial mentors.

Recommendations for future research include employing longitudinal designs that integrate both cognitive and affective variables to capture the dynamic development of entrepreneurial intention. Furthermore, advancing a Teaching Factory 4.0 model that incorporates best practices from high-performing vocational systems may help cultivate graduates who are not only job-ready but also capable of becoming adaptive job creators in the digital era.

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## Author Contributions Statement

All authors, IH, M, and DK contributed to the development of the research idea, checking the quality of the research, collecting data, developing research instruments, validating data, analyzing data, and preparing the article



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