

Entrepreneurship Education, Role Models, and Entrepreneurial Intention: Implications for High School Students' Entrepreneurial Action

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Abstract

This study examines the role of Entrepreneurship Education (EE) and Entrepreneurial Role Models (ERM) in fostering Entrepreneurial Action (EA) among Indonesian high school students, using Entrepreneurial Intention (EI) as a mediating factor. While national economic growth relies on entrepreneurship, Indonesia's entrepreneurship rate remains low, highlighting a critical gap in high school students' transition from learning to action. Employing a quantitative approach with Structural Equation Modeling-Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) on data from 322 public high school (SMA and SMK Negeri) students in Mojokerto, the results show that EE and ERM significantly and positively influence EA both directly and indirectly through EI. Specifically, ERM exhibits a stronger indirect effect on EA ($\beta = 0.268$) compared to EE ($\beta = 0.196$), confirming that the presence of successful figures is more effective in galvanizing students' intention to act compared to classroom learning. This research validates the Theory of Planned Behavior and the Social Cognitive Career Theory in the context of Indonesian youth, emphasizing that EI serves as a crucial psychological bridge linking external motivators to tangible entrepreneurial behavior. The findings suggest that educational policy should integrate experiential learning with active, diverse role model exposure to cultivate robust entrepreneurial action in future generations..

Key words: entrepreneurial education, role model, entrepreneurial intention, entrepreneurial action, high school students.

INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship plays a vital role in economic development by fostering job creation, innovation, and social mobility. However, as of 2023, Indonesia's entrepreneurship

105

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rate remains at approximately 3.47%, far below the benchmark of developed countries such as the United States and Japan, which exceed 10% (Kementerian Koperasi dan UKM, 2023). This gap underscores the urgent need for effective strategies to cultivate entrepreneurial behavior, particularly among adolescents who are at a critical stage of shaping their career paths. In response, the Indonesian government has embedded Entrepreneurship Education (EE) in the secondary school curriculum (SMA and SMK) to build entrepreneurial awareness, skills, and self-reliance at an early age.

Entrepreneurship Education has been widely recognized as a significant factor in shaping knowledge, attitudes, and skills for self-employment (Fayolle & Gailly, 2008). However, its effectiveness remains contested, especially regarding its ability to bridge the gap between Entrepreneurial Intention (EI) and actual Entrepreneurial Action (EA) (Bae et al., 2014). The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991) posits that intention is the strongest predictor of behavior, suggesting that EE shapes entrepreneurial attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control that ultimately influence EI. Yet, existing studies primarily focus on university students, with limited research examining high school students' transition from entrepreneurial learning to action. This highlights an "intention-action gap" that warrants further exploration.

Beyond formal education, Entrepreneurial Role Models (ERM)—including parents, teachers, alumni, and local business leaders—have been shown to inspire entrepreneurial behaviors by enhancing self-efficacy and providing concrete examples of success (Bosma et al., 2012; Nowiński & Haddoud, 2019). The Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) (Bandura, 1986) reinforces this perspective, asserting that observing role models can strengthen self-efficacy, thereby motivating individuals to transform intentions into action. Despite growing literature, studies often examine EE and ERM in isolation or emphasize readiness over action, leaving a gap for an integrated model that links EE, ERM, EI, and EA in adolescent populations.

This study addresses these gaps by examining the direct and mediating effects of EE and ERM on EA through EI among high school students in Mojokerto, Indonesia. Mojokerto provides a relevant context due to its regional government's emphasis on Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) as drivers of local economic development. Grounded in TPB and SCCT, the following hypotheses were formulated:

- H1: EE significantly and positively influences EA.
- H2: ERM significantly and positively influences EA.
- H3: EI significantly and positively influences EA.
- H4: EE significantly and positively influences EI.
- H5: ERM significantly and positively influences EI.

H6: EE indirectly influences EA through EI.

H7: ERM indirectly influences EA through EI.

This study advances the literature on entrepreneurship by addressing three key contributions. First, it extends the application of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) to a younger population, namely Indonesian high school students, who are often overlooked in entrepreneurship research dominated by university samples. Second, it integrates Entrepreneurship Education (EE) and Entrepreneurial Role Models (ERM) into a single explanatory model, allowing for a more holistic understanding of how external factors shape Entrepreneurial Intention (EI) and, subsequently, Entrepreneurial Action (EA). Third, it empirically quantifies the mediating role of EI, thereby contributing to the ongoing debate on the intention–action gap in entrepreneurship studies. From a practical standpoint, this research provides actionable insights for policymakers and educators, suggesting that the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education can be amplified when combined with exposure to diverse and inspiring role models. By situating the analysis within the context of Mojokerto’s dynamic SME-driven economy, the study also offers regionally relevant implications that may inform broader strategies for youth entrepreneurship development in emerging economies.

LITERATURE ANALYSIS AND METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative explanatory research design to examine the causal relationships among Entrepreneurial Education (EE), Entrepreneurial Role Models (ERM), Entrepreneurial Intention (EI), and Entrepreneurial Action (EA), with EI serving as a mediating variable. The research framework was grounded in the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) and the Social Cognitive Career Theory (Bandura, 1986), which emphasize the importance of intention and self-efficacy in shaping entrepreneurial behavior.

The research utilized primary data collected from high school students in Mojokerto, East Java, Indonesia, through a structured online questionnaire. Secondary data, including official statistics and government reports, were used to provide contextual background. The study population consisted of 1,973 Grade XII students enrolled in State Senior High Schools (SMA Negeri) and State Vocational High Schools (SMK Negeri) in Mojokerto during the 2025/2026 academic year, all of whom had completed entrepreneurship coursework. Using the Raosoft sample size calculator with a 5% margin of error and a 95% confidence level, the required sample size was determined to be 322 students. To ensure representativeness, a Proportionate Stratified Random Sampling technique was applied, so that each school contributed respondents proportional to its student population.

Data were collected using a closed-ended questionnaire distributed via Google Forms, with responses measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree). The questionnaire consisted of four constructs: Entrepreneurial Education (EE), Entrepreneurial Role Models (ERM), Entrepreneurial Intention (EI), and Entrepreneurial Action (EA). EE was defined as formal in-school learning designed to enhance entrepreneurial knowledge, skills, and motivation, while ERM referred to observable figures such as parents, teachers, and entrepreneurs who inspire entrepreneurial behavior. EI was measured as students' planned intent to start a business, and EA represented actual entrepreneurial behaviors, such as conducting market research, preparing business plans, and selling products or services. All constructs and indicators were adapted from validated scales in prior studies (Fayolle & Gailly, 2008; Bosma et al., 2012; Liñán & Chen, 2009; Edelman et al., 2008).

The collected data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) with SmartPLS 3.0 software. Following the guidelines of Hair et al. (2017) and Sarstedt (2014), the analysis was conducted in three stages. First, the measurement model (outer model) was assessed for reliability and validity using factor loadings, Average Variance Extracted ($AVE \geq 0.50$), Composite Reliability ($CR \geq 0.70$), Cronbach's Alpha ($\alpha \geq 0.70$), and the Fornell-Larcker criterion for discriminant validity. Second, the structural model (inner model) was evaluated using the coefficient of determination (R^2), effect size (f^2), and predictive relevance (Q^2). Finally, hypothesis testing was carried out using a bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples, where t-values ≥ 1.96 and p-values < 0.05 indicated statistical significance.

To ensure data credibility, convergent and discriminant validity were rigorously tested, and internal consistency reliability was confirmed through Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability. The bootstrapping procedure further established the robustness of the hypothesized relationships, strengthening confidence in the empirical findings of this study.

Table 1. Summary of Research Methods

Aspect	Description
Research Approach	Quantitative, explanatory design, grounded in TPB (Ajzen, 1991) and SCCT (Bandura, 1986).
Types & Sources of Data	Primary data from questionnaires; secondary data from official reports and statistics.

Aspect	Description
Population	1,973 Grade XII SMA and SMK Negeri students in Mojokerto (2025/2026).
Sample & Sampling	322 students; Raosoft calculator (95% CL, 5% error); Proportionate Stratified Random Sampling.
Instrument	Structured questionnaire, Google Forms, 5-point Likert scale.
Variables	EE, ERM, EI, EA (validated from prior studies).
Data Collection	Online questionnaire; voluntary participation; confidentiality assured.
Data Analysis	SEM-PLS with SmartPLS 3.0; outer model (AVE, CR, α , Fornell-Larcker); inner model (R^2 , f^2 , Q^2); bootstrapping (5,000 resamples).
Data Credibility	Reliability (CR, $\alpha \geq 0.70$), validity (AVE ≥ 0.50 , Fornell-Larcker), bootstrapping robustness.

Table 2. Operationalization of Variables

Variable	Definition	Indicators (Examples)	Measurement Scale	Source
Entrepreneurship Education (EE)	Formal in-school learning aimed at enhancing entrepreneurial knowledge, skills, and motivation.	Understanding concepts, enthusiasm after class, interest in owning a business, practical skills gained.	5-point Likert scale	Fayolle & Gailly (2008); Walter & Block (2016)
Entrepreneurial Role Models (ERM)	Observable figures (parents, teachers, entrepreneurs) providing inspiration and influence.	Acquaintance with entrepreneurs, business involvement, advice received, observing activities.	5-point Likert scale	Bosma et al. (2012); Austin & Nauta (2015)
Entrepreneurial Intention (EI)	Consciously planned intent to start a business.	Plans after graduation, seriousness, readiness to work hard, maturity of thought, exploiting opportunities.	5-point Likert scale	Liñán & Chen (2009)

Variable	Definition	Indicators (Examples)	Measurement Scale	Source
Entrepreneurial Action (EA)	Concrete entrepreneurial behavior.	Market research, business plan creation, promotion, selling products, generating income.	5-point Likert scale	Edelman et al. (2008)

RESEARCH AND RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

The average scores for all four variables were categorized as "High" (3.40 – 4.19). This indicates that students perceive their EE, exposure to ERM, EI, and engagement in EA as relatively high or positive.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

Variable	Average Score	Category	Highest-Rated Item
Entrepreneurial Education (X ₁)	3.60	High/Good	"After studying at school, I became interested in having my own business someday" (3.73)
Entrepreneurial Role Model (X ₂)	3.60	High/Good	"I often talk or chat with that person about business or how to sell" (3.78)
Entrepreneurial Intention (Z)	3.58	High/Good	"School lessons make me more enthusiastic and brave to start something" (3.65)
Entrepreneurial Action (Y)	3.59	High/Good	"I have made a financial estimate for my business, such as profit and loss projections" (3.77)

Measurement Model Evaluation

Table 4. Results of Goodness of Fit (GoF) Evaluation

Construct	α	CR	AVE	Conclusion
Entrepreneurial Education (X ₁)	0.838	0.892	0.674	Reliable and Valid (α , CR>0.70, AVE>0.50)
Entrepreneurial Role Model (X ₂)	0.887	0.914	0.638	Reliable and Valid (α , CR>0.70, AVE>0.50)

Construct	α	CR	AVE	Conclusion
Entrepreneurial Intention (Z)	0.836	0.892	0.674	Reliable and Valid (α , CR>0.70, AVE>0.50)
Entrepreneurial Action (Y)	0.965	0.969	0.644	Reliable and Valid (α , CR>0.70, AVE>0.50)

All indicators met the required factor loading threshold (0.70), confirming convergent validity. The Fornell-Larcker Criterion was satisfied, as the square root of the AVE for each construct was greater than its highest correlation with other constructs, confirming discriminant validity.

Structural Model Evaluation

The predictive power of the model is categorized as very strong.

Table 5. R² Value and Interpretation

Endogenous Variable	R ² Value	Interpretation
Entrepreneurial Action (EA)	0.987	98.7% of the variance is explained by EE, ERM, and EI.
Entrepreneurial Intention (EI)	0.925	92.5% of the variance is explained by EE and ERM.

The structural model exhibited strong predictive relevance with a value of 0.999 (where indicates a strong model).

Table 6. Results of Direct and Indirect Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Relationship	Path Coeff. (β)	t-statistic	P-value	F ²	Result
H1	EE → EA (Direct)	0.304	3.255	0.001	0.503	Accepted (Strong Effect)
H2	ERM → EA (Direct)	0.228	2.271	0.024	0.249	Accepted (Medium Effect)
H3	EI → EA (Direct)	0.477	10.467	0.000	1.342	Accepted (Very Strong Effect)
H4	EE → EI (Direct)	0.410	5.041	0.000	0.184	Accepted (Medium Effect)

Hypothesis	Relationship	Path Coeff. (β)	t-statistic	P-value	F ²	Result
H5	ERM $\rightarrow$ EI (Direct)	0.561	7.070	0.000	0.345	Accepted (Medium Effect)
H6	EE $\rightarrow$ EI $\rightarrow$ EA (Indirect)	0.196	4.139	0.000	-	Accepted
H7	ERM $\rightarrow$ EI $\rightarrow$ EA (Indirect)	0.268	6.874	0.000	-	Accepted

Hypothesis Testing Summary

All seven hypotheses were accepted, with all t-statistics exceeding the critical value of 1.96 and all P values less than 0.05.

Entrepreneurial Intention (Z) is the strongest direct predictor of Entrepreneurial Action (Y) ($\beta = 0.477$, t-statistic= 10.467).

The total indirect effect is significant. The path ERM $\rightarrow$ EI $\rightarrow$ EA ($\beta = 0.268$) is stronger than EE $\rightarrow$ EI $\rightarrow$ EA ($\beta = 0.196$).

DISCUSSION

Direct Effects on Entrepreneurial Action (H1, H2, H3)

The findings confirm that Entrepreneurship Education (EE) significantly and positively influences Entrepreneurial Action (EA) (H1 accepted). This supports the literature that EE is not merely a transfer of knowledge but a catalyst for behavior, fostering courage, creativity, and the initial execution of simple business ideas. This aligns with the TPB which suggests external factors like education positively influence the components of intention.

Similarly, the Entrepreneurial Role Model (ERM) significantly and positively influences EA (H2 accepted). Role models serve an essential function beyond inspiration, providing a tangible template for entrepreneurial processes, which strengthens students' self-efficacy and willingness to act. This is consistent with Social Learning Theory, where individuals learn by observing and imitating credible models, making role models a powerful social factor in initiating concrete actions.

Crucially, Entrepreneurial Intention (EI) is confirmed as the strongest direct predictor of EA (H3 accepted). This strongly validates the core tenet of the Theory of Planned Behavior, asserting that a robust intention to start a business is the primary driver for students to engage in real-world activities such as creating business plans or conducting market research.

Formation of Entrepreneurial Intention (H4, H5)

Both EE (H4 accepted) and ERM (H5 accepted) were found to be highly significant predictors of EI.

EE to EI: Education forms a positive attitude, provides basic managerial skills, and reinforces a long-term commitment to entrepreneurship, leading to a stronger EI. ERM to EI: Role models provide social legitimacy and a practical, successful example, which significantly boosts students' hopes and self-belief in their capability, directly strengthening their intention. This is particularly explained by the SCCT, where vicarious learning from a role model is crucial for building self-efficacy.

Mediating Role of Entrepreneurial Intention (H6, H7)

The findings demonstrate that EI significantly mediates the relationship between EE and EA (H6 accepted), and between ERM and EA (H7 accepted). This is the central contribution of this study:

Indirect Effect of EE: EE's influence on action is not spontaneous but must first be internalized and converted into a strong psychological commitment (EI). Indirect Effect of ERM: The inspiration from a role model first crystallizes into a strong intention (EI), and this intention then propels the student toward actual entrepreneurial behavior.

The result that ERM's indirect effect ($\beta = 0.268$) is stronger than EE's ($\beta = 0.196$) suggests that for high school students, the tangible, inspiring influence of a successful role model (often observed through interaction or family background) is a more potent initial driver for forming a robust intention to act, compared to formal classroom education alone. To effectively produce entrepreneurs, educational strategies must therefore be strengthened with real-world exposure and interaction with diverse role models, ensuring that the knowledge gained in the classroom is powerfully connected to the psychological driver of intention.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

Based on the SEM-PLS analysis, all hypothesized relationships in this study were confirmed as positive and significant. This research concludes:

1. EE and ERM both significantly and positively influence EA and EI in high school students in Mojokerto.
2. EI is the strongest direct determinant of EA, reinforcing its role as the critical psychological driver for converting motivation into tangible behavior.
3. EI acts as a significant mediator in the relationship between both EE and ERM with EA.

The Entrepreneurial Role Model (ERM) has a stronger indirect influence on EA through EI compared to Entrepreneurship Education (EE), highlighting the superior role of inspirational figures in forming the intention that ultimately drives action.

Recommendations

Sector	Recommendation
Academia	Future research should employ a longitudinal approach to track the evolution of and over time, and incorporate additional key variables such as entrepreneurial self-efficacy and locus of control to develop a more complex and predictive theoretical model.
Education/Policy	Schools must transform the EE curriculum to prioritize experiential learning (e.g., small business practice, business simulations, incubators) over purely theoretical teaching. Policy should actively facilitate routine, hands-on exposure to diverse local entrepreneurs as role models (mentoring programs, guest speakers) to strengthen student intention and readiness to act.

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