



## Building Independence and Innovation: Challenges of Entrepreneurship Education in Vocational High Schools

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### ABSTRACT

Entrepreneurship education in Vocational High Schools (SMK) is crucial for equipping students with practical skills and soft skills needed to be self-reliant and innovative in pursuing job opportunities or creating their own businesses. However, despite the implementation of entrepreneurship education, many SMK graduates have yet to succeed in becoming independent and innovative entrepreneurs. Previous research has primarily focused on curriculum development, teaching methods, and the role of educators, with limited attention to how students' perceptions of entrepreneurship education impact their success as entrepreneurs. This issue reveals a gap between the delivery of entrepreneurship education and students' readiness to apply this knowledge in real-world scenarios. This study aims to analyze the perceptions of SMK Tourism students toward entrepreneurship education and its implications for entrepreneurial capabilities, as well as to identify barriers hindering the development of entrepreneurial spirit. The study adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative methods with descriptive analysis. The qualitative approach includes in-depth interviews with teachers, principals, and alumni from four SMK Tourism schools in Jakarta, along with observations of infrastructure and cooking practice activities. Quantitative data were collected through a Google Form-based questionnaire survey targeting students from 13 SMK Tourism schools with a focus on Culinary Arts. The study results show that while most students hold positive perceptions of entrepreneurship education, challenges such as knowledge gaps, learning intensity, financial limitations, mental and emotional preparedness, entrepreneurship materials, collaboration and communication skills, and marketing and location barriers are the main obstacles for students aiming to become self-reliant entrepreneurs.

**Keywords:** *Entrepreneurship Education, Entrepreneurial Skills, SMK Tourism*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Entrepreneurship education has become an integral part of the curriculum at various educational levels, including Vocational High Schools (SMK) in Indonesia. Facing global economic challenges and labor market competition, the development of entrepreneurial skills among SMK students is increasingly essential. This education encompasses content, methods, and activities that support students' motivation, competence, and experience to enable them to apply, manage, and engage in the value-creation process (Rasmussen et al., in Sumarno & Gimin, 2019). Optimizing entrepreneurship education is necessary to prepare students to do business ethically, innovatively, and independently, while also addressing cultural challenges (Murwaningsih, T. 2022). With global economic changes, entrepreneurial skills are becoming even more essential to equip young generations. Entrepreneurship education in SMK plays a significant role in preparing students to enter the business world and supports national economic development, especially in alleviating poverty through entrepreneurial capabilities. Successful entrepreneurship can improve the economy of low-income families. Research by Azamat et al. (2023) shows that entrepreneurial activities contribute to poverty alleviation and human development.

Entrepreneurship plays an essential role in advancing a country's economy, prompting many developed countries to integrate entrepreneurship education into compulsory curricula at various levels. In Europe, entrepreneurship education has become a national movement adopted by all citizens (Brunila, 2012; Eurydice, 2016). By making it a national movement, these countries strongly promote its implementation, viewing entrepreneurship as a core competency everyone should possess (Minna et al., 2018). They recognize that productive citizens contribute significantly to economic development. Consequently, entrepreneurship education is not merely a curriculum element but an investment for a better economic future.

An individual's entrepreneurial potential can be shaped through integrated learning, including both theory and practice, such as training and apprenticeships (Jendela.kemendikbud.go.id, 2024). In the 2013 SMK curriculum, revised in 2018, entrepreneurship education was incorporated into the Productive Creative and Entrepreneurship (PKK) course (Endarta, 2017). This education is designed to prepare students with an entrepreneurial spirit, develop creative business ideas, and contribute to the economy through their own ventures. Its goal is to create young people with a deep understanding of business and strong entrepreneurial capabilities (Government of Indonesia, 2003). This government action reflects a commitment to advancing entrepreneurship education and enhancing the quality of SMK graduates who are ready to contribute to the business world. Despite the implementation of PKK, its impact and effectiveness are not yet fully evident.

Entrepreneurship education should ideally foster entrepreneurship among graduates, given that its implementation has been in place since the launch of the whole-

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school development program ([jendela.kemdikbud.go.id](http://jendela.kemdikbud.go.id), 2024). Numerous policies supporting this program (Government of Indonesia, 2003, 2011, 2018, 2020, 2022) serve as essential assets for effective implementation in Vocational High Schools (SMK). One of the government programs, in partnership with The Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO), is the Entrepreneurial School initiative. This program encourages students to gain skills through online-based entrepreneurship practices, supported by technical assistance and funding (Ministry of Education, 2018), which can enhance learning quality and produce entrepreneurs. Despite the long-standing practice of entrepreneurship education in SMKs, the work ethic of graduates regarding an entrepreneurial mindset remains low, with many tending to become job seekers rather than job creators ([jendela.kemdikbud.go.id](http://jendela.kemdikbud.go.id), 2024). Finding employment is not easy for SMK graduates; data from 2022 shows that 14.82% of the 4,461,218 SMK graduates aged 20-24 years and 12.64% of the 3,149,450 graduates aged 25-29 years are still unemployed (BPS Statistics Indonesia, 2023). Research also reveals that SMK graduates contribute to 11.45% of unemployment in Indonesia (Safira & Nadhira, 2022). The objectives of vocational education, which include enhancing intelligence, knowledge, and independent living skills, should ideally prepare students to become entrepreneurs.

Entrepreneurship education in SMKs plays a crucial role in preparing young generations to face labor market dynamics, yet its implementation in Indonesia faces numerous challenges. Studies show that entrepreneurship education in SMKs is still hindered by the low interest of graduates in entrepreneurship, due to limited resources, lack of exposure to business opportunities, and the educational institution's focus on preparing students for formal employment (Rohman, 2020). Usman and Hamid (2022) highlight that these challenges stem from both internal and external factors. Entrepreneurial interest is not inherent but grows according to influencing factors. According to Priyanto in Nagel et al. (2018), entrepreneurial spirit is shaped by internal factors, such as locus of control, need for achievement, risk-taking, entrepreneurial drive, emotions, and creativity, as well as external factors, such as family environment and socioeconomic conditions. They note the presence of limited financial support and cultural value differences that influence students' mindsets, which tend to lean more towards job seeking than business creation, indicating a need for a paradigm shift in education to foster entrepreneurial interest. Haryanto et al. (2022) add that a lack of entrepreneurial mindset, perceptions of high startup capital, and risk aversion also act as obstacles to the implementation of entrepreneurship education. Developing a positive mindset toward entrepreneurship is crucial. Aryawan (2023) identifies major barriers in entrepreneurship learning, such as inadequate school facilities, limited teacher training, and a lack of collaboration between schools and industries. Aligning the curriculum with the skills demanded by the labor market is also a key concern. Lastly, Muklir et al. (2024) find that the implementation of entrepreneurship education in SMKs is constrained by limited teacher collaboration and

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the scarcity of supportive textbooks. These factors suggest the need for a holistic approach in developing and implementing an entrepreneurship curriculum.

The above discussion reveals that the implementation of entrepreneurship education still faces a gap between policy and field practice, hindering its effectiveness. One of the explanatory factors is students' perceptions of entrepreneurship education, encompassing their understanding of the importance of entrepreneurship, the relevance of the material taught, and its impact on their future lives. The novelty of this research lies in linking students' perceptions of entrepreneurship education with their entrepreneurial capabilities, as entrepreneurship education is not merely about material delivery but also involves internalization, application, and inspiration from what is learned. Understanding students' perceptions enables the identification of barriers and ways to increase the relevance and appeal of entrepreneurship education.

This study aims to analyze the perceptions of SMK Tourism students with a focus on Culinary Arts toward entrepreneurship education and its implications for their entrepreneurial capabilities, as well as to identify factors that hinder the development of their entrepreneurial spirit. The research results are expected to contribute positively to enhancing the quality of entrepreneurship education in SMKs and creating an educational environment that supports future entrepreneurial growth.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methods to gain a comprehensive understanding of the data. This approach was chosen as qualitative methods can provide richer context in understanding the phenomenon being studied (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The research is conducted in Jakarta, selected due to the high unemployment rate among vocational school graduates in this province (BPS Statistics Indonesia, 2023). As the capital and a global business center in Asia, Jakarta offers numerous economic opportunities and a rapidly growing culinary business potential (Dewi, 2023). Additionally, the city is conducive to business innovation, with a booming culinary tourism sector, especially among Generation Z tourists (Harsono et al., 2023; Abduh et al., 2024).

Data collection combines quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative data is obtained through a survey distributed via Google Forms to 320 students from 13 vocational high schools in Jakarta, all of whom are currently active and enrolled in entrepreneurship courses. Qualitative data is gathered from in-depth interviews with school principals, teachers, alumni who have become entrepreneurs, and direct observations of facilities and learning activities in four Tourism Vocational High Schools specializing in the Culinary Arts Department.

Data analysis is conducted through quantitative and qualitative approaches. Quantitative data is analyzed using descriptive statistics to understand students' perceptions of entrepreneurship education. Descriptive statistics provide an overview of student views and their needs in entrepreneurship education. Qualitative data is first transcribed, then organized into categories such as internal challenges, external challenges,

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and other factors that hinder the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education in vocational schools. Data reduction is conducted to focus the analysis on information relevant to the research objectives. This qualitative analysis involves an in-depth interpretation of interview and observation results to identify key patterns that support an understanding of the entrepreneurship education context.

Data triangulation is achieved by combining multiple information sources, including interviews with principals, teachers, alumni, and direct observations of school facilities and learning activities. This step ensures data validity and provides a holistic view of the challenges in implementing entrepreneurship education in vocational high schools. The integration of quantitative and qualitative data is expected to provide complementary insights, resulting in a deeper understanding of students' perceptions and the barriers in entrepreneurship education.

Conclusions will be formulated based on the main findings from the quantitative and qualitative data analysis. The primary focus of this study is to identify tourism vocational high school students' perceptions of entrepreneurship education and the obstacles they face in developing entrepreneurial skills, particularly in the Culinary Arts Department. The results of data triangulation are expected to provide valid and comprehensive insights for formulating relevant conclusions that align with the research objectives. The conclusions drawn will underpin recommendations for improving entrepreneurship education programs that are more relevant and tailored to the needs of vocational high school students in the tourism sector.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The findings of this study outline the key outcomes based on the primary research objective: to analyze the perceptions of vocational high school students specializing in Culinary Arts toward entrepreneurship education and its implications for their entrepreneurial abilities. The research findings cover areas such as students' perceptions of entrepreneurship education, the role of teachers in entrepreneurship learning, and challenges students face in entrepreneurial activities.

Regarding the perceptions of vocational high school students, the findings indicate a positive outlook, with a significant majority demonstrating a favorable view of entrepreneurship education. An analysis of survey responses from 320 vocational high school students who completed an entrepreneurship education questionnaire via Google Forms reveals that 270 students (84.4%) expressed a keen interest in pursuing entrepreneurship following their exposure to entrepreneurship courses in school.

This indicates a positive perception of the importance of entrepreneurship education. This finding aligns with Ajzen's (1991) theory of planned behavior, which posits that an individual's intention, including entrepreneurship, is influenced by their beliefs in their abilities and the anticipated outcomes. Entrepreneurship education can foster students' confidence in pursuing entrepreneurship. Studies by Saryadi et al. (2024) indicate that self-efficacy and entrepreneurship knowledge positively and significantly impact entrepreneurial motivation. Similarly, Sholaluddin et al. (2023) found that

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vocational school education influences students' entrepreneurial intentions, enhancing entrepreneurial skills and innovation readiness. Hasanah et al. (2023) also found that entrepreneurship education improves students' creative thinking and initiative, as well as their perceived readiness for entrepreneurship. "The research results by Suasana et al. (2019) show that entrepreneurship education has a significant impact on entrepreneurial intentions. The better the implementation of entrepreneurship education at FEB-Unud, the stronger the graduates' intentions to pursue entrepreneurship as a career option. Fostering and developing entrepreneurial intentions among university graduates can be achieved through the development of an entrepreneurship education curriculum."

While this high level of interest is promising, other factors must also be considered. High interest does not always guarantee entrepreneurial success; access to information, leadership skills, and communication are also vital. While essential, interest should be accompanied by motivation and skills to contribute effectively to entrepreneurial success (Oktaviani, R. F., 2024). Thus, fostering student interest should be accompanied by reinforcing technical and soft skills, such as business management and creativity, to better equip them for the challenges of the entrepreneurial world.

Therefore, entrepreneurship education needs to be strengthened in terms of curriculum, teaching methods, and industry collaboration to ensure that students are not only interested in entrepreneurship but also equipped with the capacity and readiness to launch successful ventures. This supports the idea that entrepreneurship education should cultivate interest while also shaping the mindset, skills, and networks necessary for business success.

An additional significant finding is the predominantly positive perception among students regarding the role of educators in cultivating entrepreneurial spirit. Specifically, the data reveal that 69.9% of respondents perceive their teachers as proactive in delivering support for entrepreneurship education. This encompasses various aspects, from planning to executing business practices, which are essential elements in entrepreneurship education. The role of teachers is not only to deliver content but also to act as mentors who can inspire students to develop business ideas. Interviews with alumni affirm that teachers can encourage critical thinking and innovation through assignments such as business analysis papers using SWOT analysis techniques, highlighting the importance of practical approaches in learning.

Proactive teacher support plays a significant role in the development of students' entrepreneurial skills. Bandura's (1997) social learning theory emphasizes that students tend to learn from the role models they observe. When teachers actively participate in the learning process, students feel more motivated and confident. This support encompasses not only theoretical knowledge but also practical guidance that can create a conducive learning environment.

Interview with Alumni: "Teachers inspire critical thinking, innovation, and the creation of business ideas through the preparation of business analysis papers using SWOT techniques."

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However, despite the high positive perception of teachers' roles, challenges remain. Some students may face limitations in terms of resources or opportunities to gain real experience in business practices. This indicates that while teacher support is crucial, it is not sufficient on its own. It is essential for schools to ensure that teachers are equipped with adequate resources, both in terms of teaching materials and access to practical experiences.

Thus, to enhance the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education, concrete steps need to be taken. First, the curriculum should be strengthened to ensure that students receive not only theory but also relevant practical experiences. Second, providing supportive facilities, such as adequate learning spaces, access to technology, and collaboration with industry practitioners, is crucial for creating an environment conducive to entrepreneurship learning.

These measures are expected to better prepare students to become successful entrepreneurs, equipped with the right skills and knowledge to face challenges in the business world. The role of teachers as mentors should be integrated with the development of an appropriate curriculum and facilities so that students receive holistic and effective entrepreneurship education.

Although many students demonstrate interest and potential in entrepreneurship, several significant challenges hinder their ability to become independent and innovative. The primary constraint identified is related to the knowledge base, both theoretical and practical, provided by educational institutions. Additionally, other identified challenges that may influence their readiness and independence in entrepreneurship include access to capital, mental and emotional well-being, commitment, and marketing.

While the majority of vocational high school students exhibit a positive perception of entrepreneurship education, they express concerns regarding the inadequacy of the entrepreneurial content provided to them. The findings of this study reveal that 61.3% of students perceive the lessons on entrepreneurship theory as insufficient, particularly in the areas of entrepreneurial strategies and business plan development. This discrepancy highlights a significant gap between the curriculum offered in vocational schools and the practical requirements faced by aspiring entrepreneurs. Addressing this gap underscores the critical need for reforms in entrepreneurship education, specifically aimed at delivering content that is both applicable and relevant to the demands of the contemporary business landscape.

A theory-heavy approach in entrepreneurship education leaves students feeling unprepared to face business challenges after graduation. Concepts like business strategy and business planning require practical application and understanding beyond theoretical exposition. Therefore, an entrepreneurship education focused primarily on theory without hands-on experience risks leaving students inadequately prepared to develop their own businesses.

To address this issue, it is essential for the entrepreneurship curriculum in vocational high schools to incorporate more experiential learning approaches, such as business simulations, entrepreneurship projects, or internship programs in companies.

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These approaches can provide students with opportunities to apply the theories they learn in real-world situations, deepening their understanding of business strategies and business plan development. By integrating theory with practice, students can develop more comprehensive entrepreneurial skills, ready to be applied in real-world scenarios.

These steps will not only help strengthen students' abilities to develop realistic business plans but will also equip them with strategic thinking and management skills essential for sustaining future businesses.

Conversely, the practical experience essential for effective entrepreneurship education is provided in very limited quantities. This is evidenced by survey results indicating that 57.2% of vocational high school students who participated in the questionnaire reported engaging in business planning activities only 1 to 2 times during their entrepreneurship courses. This highlights a significant lack of intensity in business planning practice, which should be a fundamental component of entrepreneurship education. Business planning is crucial as it encompasses various elements, including market analysis, marketing strategies, financial projections, and risk management. Such The very limited hands-on practice, consisting of only 1 to 2 instances, is inadequate for mastering entrepreneurial skills comprehensively.

Intensive practice is crucial for preparing students to become competent entrepreneurs. If business planning is conducted only 1-2 times, students are unlikely to gain a deep understanding of the complexities involved, leaving them ill-prepared to develop realistic and applicable plans for the business world. This limitation impacts their mastery of essential skills such as financial analysis, strategy formulation, and business risk management.

With the lack of intensity in practice, students miss the opportunity to learn from real experiences that are vital for building entrepreneurial skills. The iterative process of drafting and refining business plans through continuous feedback should be integral to entrepreneurship education. This hands-on experience helps students identify mistakes, evaluate strategies, and adjust their business plans to be more relevant to actual market conditions.

Therefore, one solution to address this issue is to increase the frequency of practice in the entrepreneurship curriculum at vocational schools. Project-based learning and simulations that emphasize business planning with diverse scenarios should be expanded. Additionally, intensive guidance during the business planning process is necessary to better prepare students for various challenges in the real business world.

By increasing the frequency of practice, students will become more adept at developing comprehensive and applicable business plans while also building confidence in executing their business ideas. A more intensive implementation of these activities will help students not only understand the theory but also experience how to run a business in reality, thus better equipping them for the entrepreneurial world with the necessary skills.

The knowledge and experience constraints faced by 20% of students in entrepreneurship represent a significant barrier to entrepreneurial development among youth. A lack of understanding of basic business concepts, such as planning, financial

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management, marketing, and risk management, leaves students feeling insecure about starting and growing a business. Without a deep understanding of how to operate a business, students often find themselves confused when making strategic decisions, which may increase the risk of business failure.

Additionally, a lack of practical experience exacerbates the situation. Entrepreneurship requires not only theoretical knowledge but also the ability to face real-world challenges. Without hands-on experience, such as internships or entrepreneurial projects, students may be unprepared to handle market dynamics, interact with customers, or manage daily operations. When confronted with complex problems, they tend to struggle in finding effective solutions due to their lack of practical insights.

These knowledge and experience constraints often lead students to hesitate in taking the first step towards entrepreneurship. They may feel overwhelmed by the vast amount of information they need to grasp or fear failing due to insufficient practical skills. Furthermore, these constraints can also affect how students plan their businesses, as a lack of adequate knowledge may hinder their ability to identify market opportunities or develop competitive business strategies.

Although entrepreneurship education is offered in vocational schools, 61% of students feel that the material provided is still inadequate. According to an online survey, 73% of students need deeper knowledge about entrepreneurial strategies, 64.3% emphasize the importance of business planning, and 54.6% believe that communication skills are essential for understanding entrepreneurship theory. However, less than half of the students consider knowledge of marketing and market targeting as priorities. These findings indicate that students require a more comprehensive understanding of entrepreneurship, covering various aspects from business strategies to marketing.

An alumnus revealed that understanding business strategies, such as recognizing target markets and demographics, was acquired through self-learning. In school, they were only taught to evaluate product strengths and weaknesses and analyze market data. Entrepreneurship education also imparts important values through experiences, such as learning from failures and managing costs. Respondents acknowledged that market analysis before starting a business is key to avoiding losses and achieving success.

Knowledge in entrepreneurship is vital, both direct knowledge gained before starting a venture and indirect knowledge acquired during the entrepreneurial process. Both types of knowledge help entrepreneurs recognize and capitalize on opportunities (Elistia, 2020).

Another study shows that entrepreneurial skills are increasingly important in today's job market, even surpassing digital skills. Research highlights the importance of exploring the roles and capabilities of entrepreneurs in a complex global economy. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), facing stiff competition in a rapidly changing business environment, must develop new entrepreneurial skills to remain competitive (Pennetta et al., 2023).

As many as 59.4% of students feel that the entrepreneurial skills taught are still inadequate. The data indicates that communication skills are deemed very important for

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negotiation, followed by skills in creating business plans that require creativity and systematic thinking. Other skills considered important include selecting products that align with market demand and the ability to identify target markets.

A critical constraint that may diminish students' interest in pursuing entrepreneurship after graduating from vocational high school is the lack of necessary financial capital. The research findings indicate that 25% of students perceive financial constraints as a significant barrier to their entrepreneurial aspirations. This finding is particularly relevant, as it reflects the real challenges faced by students, especially those from lower-middle socioeconomic backgrounds.

Capital constraints as a primary factor in diminishing entrepreneurial interest are critical to address. The availability of capital not only plays a role in meeting the needs to start a business but also influences students' decisions to engage in entrepreneurial activities. This finding is supported by interviews with entrepreneurship teachers, who state that "the limited number of graduates involved in entrepreneurial activities is due to a lack of capital." Furthermore, research by Arniati (2020) shows that socioeconomic status has a positive and significant influence on students' entrepreneurial attitudes, as parents' socioeconomic status can encourage entrepreneurial spirit, motivating students to pursue entrepreneurship education at school.

Capital is a key element in the sustainability of entrepreneurship, as highlighted by Sihombing & Meilani (2019), who identify capital, location, family support, regular customers, and trading skills as main factors. The absence of capital or misalignment of these factors can hinder ventures. Vocational school students, often from lower-middle-income families, perceive limited capital as a significant barrier. While capital is crucial at the initial stages, the sustainability of a business also requires a combination of human and social capital (Linder et al., 2020), although some argue that capital remains essential for business development (Nofrizal et al., 2019).

Entrepreneurs must maintain a stable mental and emotional state to ensure the success of their ventures. However, these aspects continue to present challenges for individuals transitioning to entrepreneurship after graduating from vocational high schools. In this context, approximately 22% of students identify mental and emotional barriers as significant obstacles to entrepreneurial success. Specifically, these barriers include factors such as lethargy, lack of enthusiasm, low self-confidence, and insufficient courage. Collectively, these factors significantly influence an individual's attitude, motivation, and readiness to engage in entrepreneurial activities.

The mental and emotional barriers faced by students, such as laziness, lack of enthusiasm, low self-confidence, and lack of courage, represent significant challenges that can impact their success in starting a business. This discussion will explore various aspects of these barriers and strategies that can be used to overcome them.

An entrepreneur needs to possess a resilient mindset, discipline, and the courage to take risks. Additionally, they must have high motivation, creativity, negotiation skills, positive thinking, and the ability to identify opportunities, lobby effectively, and provide constructive assessments. Effective entrepreneurship education can enhance students'

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entrepreneurial intentions. High entrepreneurial motivation plays a crucial role in shaping these intentions. Therefore, if effective entrepreneurship education is accompanied by strong entrepreneurial motivation, students' intentions to enter the entrepreneurial world will increase (Hafizhah, 2019).

These mental and emotional constraints, if not addressed properly, can become significant obstacles for students in starting and managing their businesses. Therefore, it is essential to develop support programs focused on strengthening students' mental and emotional well-being, as well as enhancing the interpersonal and intrapersonal skills necessary in the entrepreneurial world. Such programs may include motivational training, leadership workshops, and activities that stimulate courage and self-confidence, preparing students to pursue their entrepreneurial aspirations more boldly.

"According to Isnaini (2024), the concept of entrepreneurship in vocational schools should develop independence, self-confidence, and the ability to identify opportunities. Aspects of creativity, innovation, risk management, self-marketing, and network development need to be integrated into the curriculum so that vocational school graduates have the technical skills and entrepreneurial mindset needed to compete in a dynamic workforce. Chakrani & Pathak (2024) note that entrepreneurs must possess characteristics in risk-taking, goal-setting, adaptability, and decision-making that influence business success, while Watabakomola & Silpcharub (2023) emphasize the importance of leadership, personality, management skills, and ethics for successful entrepreneurs."

"As highlighted by interviews with successful vocational school graduates, capital is not everything; high motivation and enthusiasm are also crucial for carrying out entrepreneurial activities."

In addition to mental and emotional factors, the commitment necessary for success in entrepreneurship is perceived as a significant barrier to achievement. This is evidenced by student responses, with approximately 15% of students indicating that their commitment to entrepreneurship remains low, highlighting the challenges in fostering determination and dedication among students aspiring to become entrepreneurs. In interviews, an alumnus noted that potential causes of this low commitment may include economic uncertainty, a lack of support from family or the surrounding environment, and insufficient mental preparedness to confront risks. Furthermore, students' perceptions of entrepreneurship as inherently risky also diminish their motivation, compounded by a lack of practical understanding that contributes to their hesitance.

To enhance commitment, entrepreneurship programs need to provide hands-on experiences, such as business simulations, internships, and real projects, allowing students to develop skills and entrepreneurial courage. Support from teachers, mentors, and the community is also crucial in building student commitment. Low commitment, weak collaboration, and poor communication skills can hinder business progress, particularly in establishing partnerships, negotiations, and creating a productive work environment. Without effective communication and collaboration, mistakes and missed opportunities can obstruct business growth.

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Lestari (2022) mentions that in the culinary industry, five key actors—business owners, academics, government, media, and the community—collaborate to build a business ecosystem. The role of business owners as primary drivers is supported by media that promotes, government that facilitates permits, communities that support activities, and academics as concept developers. This collaboration can encourage creativity, innovation, and enhance regional income and job absorption.

"In addition to collaboration, communication skills are also crucial in culinary entrepreneurship. According to Martiningtiyas et al. (2023), business owners need to build good relationships with all relevant parties, which requires effective communication and strategies to resolve business issues. Low collaboration and communication skills can hinder the courage to take risks in entrepreneurship." Surveys show that 9% of students find it difficult to collaborate and lack confidence in business communication, indicating that entrepreneurship education needs to emphasize the enhancement of these skills.

An additional challenge impacting the interest of vocational high school graduates in pursuing entrepreneurship is marketing. The findings of this research underscore the critical importance of marketing strategies as a fundamental element of business success. An entrepreneur's comprehension of marketing principles and their capacity to implement effective strategies profoundly influence various business dimensions, including brand awareness, sales performance, brand identity, and customer relationship management. Moreover, research conducted by Mariani (2018) reveals a regression correlation of 0.619 between marketing strategies and business success, suggesting that well-executed marketing strategies significantly enhance overall business performance.

Well-planned marketing strategies help businesses capture the attention of the right potential consumers. This is essential because high awareness of a product or brand can enhance sales potential. With strong marketing strategies, companies can reach a broader audience and drive higher conversions, both through promotional techniques and personalized approaches. This increases sales volume and ultimately profitability. According to Ardhiyanti, L.L. et al. (2023), students who succeed as young entrepreneurs use strategies such as expanding promotional reach through social media, building networks with resellers, and considering sale prices to maintain customer loyalty. In their learning, students also practice sales by promoting products on online shopping platforms, uploading to social media, and conducting market price surveys."

A well-known and trusted brand has a significant competitive advantage. Marketing strategies, through consistent and relevant branding campaigns, build an identity and brand image that can be remembered by consumers. Brand success also supports business sustainability in the long term. Marketing focuses not only on sales but also on retaining customers through relationship development. Customer loyalty can be built through positive experiences, ongoing communication, and effective complaint handling, all rooted in a strategic marketing approach.

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## CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this study indicates that entrepreneurship education has a positive influence on the interest and readiness of vocational school (SMK) students to engage in entrepreneurship. This is because entrepreneurship education contributes to enhancing self-efficacy, attitudes, and entrepreneurial mindsets. Students involved in entrepreneurship education programs tend to have a more positive outlook on the entrepreneurial world, although the impact varies based on personal interest, background, and involvement in entrepreneurship subjects.

However, despite the positive effects of entrepreneurship education, the theoretical and practical knowledge provided in the Entrepreneurship Education curriculum is still considered inadequate for preparing students to become independent and innovative entrepreneurs. Students feel that their understanding of entrepreneurial strategies, business planning, communication, and marketing is not sufficiently deep. Additionally, relevant practical industry experience is crucial for enhancing entrepreneurial interest but is often not adequately accommodated.

Internal factors such as mindset, financial limitations, and a lack of entrepreneurial skills also pose challenges to students' readiness to engage in entrepreneurship. External factors, including collaboration, communication, and marketing skills, further influence their preparedness, particularly in the culinary business sector.

To improve students' interest and readiness for entrepreneurship, there is a need for a balanced enhancement of entrepreneurship education between theory and practice. Furthermore, a focus on developing entrepreneurial skills, collaboration, communication, marketing, and selecting suitable business locations is essential.

Overall, entrepreneurship education holds significant potential for producing independent and innovative vocational school graduates who can face the challenges of the business world. With improvements in entrepreneurship education programs, it is hoped that students will be better prepared to succeed as entrepreneurs.

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