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Empowering Vocational Students' Entrepreneurial Readiness Through Field Practice Experience, Self-Reliance, and Interest in Entrepreneurship

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ABSTRACT

Objective: *This study aims to analyze the influence of Field Work Practice (PKL), self-reliance, and entrepreneurial interest on students' entrepreneurial readiness, with perceived competence in productive subjects as a mediating variable. The research focuses on students of the Light Vehicle Engineering (TKR) major at vocational high schools in the Kediri region of East Java, Indonesia.* ***Method:*** *The study employed a quantitative approach using Structural Equation Modeling with the Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) technique. Data were collected via a structured, validated questionnaire distributed to 388 respondents and analyzed using SmartPLS 3.0 software.* ***Results:*** *The findings indicate that PKL experience, self-reliance, and entrepreneurial interest significantly influence students' entrepreneurial readiness. Moreover, perceived competence mediates the relationship between the exogenous variables and entrepreneurial readiness. The integrated model demonstrated good reliability, validity, and explanatory power.* ***Novelty:*** *This study offers a comprehensive model by integrating experiential, psychological, and academic constructs to predict entrepreneurial readiness in vocational students. Unlike previous studies that treated these variables independently, this research highlights the mediating role of perceived competence, providing new insight for vocational education development and curriculum design.*

INTRODUCTION

One of the government's expectations in strengthening the link and match between the industrial world and education is that Vocational High School (SMK) graduates will possess the entrepreneurial readiness to create jobs independently (Maulina & Yoenanto, 2022; Ma'arif et al., 2023). This goal is consistent with Presidential Instruction No. 9 of 2016 regarding the revitalization of vocational schools, which emphasizes the development of graduates capable of either entering the workforce or becoming entrepreneurs (Maulina & Yoenanto, 2022).

However, this idealistic expectation often contrasts with the actual conditions faced by SMK graduates in Indonesia, particularly those in the field of Light Vehicle Engineering (Teknik Kendaraan Ringan, or TKR). The Central Statistics Agency (BPS) reported that the open unemployment rate in Indonesia in 2022 reached 5.86%, with SMK graduates having the highest unemployment rate at 9.42% compared to other educational levels (Falah & Marlena, 2022; Wicaksono et al., 2022). This stark reality highlights the ineffectiveness of current vocational education in preparing students for the job market, particularly in equipping them with entrepreneurial skills (Sutanto et al., 2025; Renaningtyas et al., 2021).

Several factors contribute to this issue, including a lack of practical experience, weak independence, and low entrepreneurial interest among students (Ambarwati & Rusdarti, 2020; Mustakim et al., 2024). In the context of TKR students in East Java especially the

Kediri region, which is heavily populated with automotive vocational schools this problem becomes even more pronounced. The regional labor market is saturated, and opportunities for industrial placement are limited, making entrepreneurship not just an option, but a necessity for many students (Falah & Marlena, 2022; Ramadan et al., 2023).

The gap between expectations and reality raises a critical question: what factors significantly influence entrepreneurial readiness among SMK students? Field Work Practice (PKL) is one of the core components of vocational education aimed at providing students with real-world industry experience (Hakim, 2010; Lestari & Siswanto, 2015; Purnomo et al., 2022). Several studies have demonstrated that internship programs positively impact students' practical skills and work readiness (Rohman, 2020; Wicaksono et al., 2022; Yuliani & Yuniarsih, 2019; Mustofa et al., 2021; Irwansyah et al., 2020). Likewise, student self-reliance or independence is vital in shaping responsible and self-directed learners who are capable of managing business risks (Edy et al., 2019; Edy et al., 2020a; Edy et al., 2020b; Sukardi, 2018; Sunarsih et al., 2019; Khwarizmi, 2022). This aligns with Kholid's (2020) findings that self-reliance strongly correlates with entrepreneurial behavior.

Additionally, entrepreneurial interest has also been proven to be a strong predictor of entrepreneurial intention and action (Rofadho, 2018; Hilmi, 2020; Supandi, 2022; Bae et al., 2014; Petrescu & Suciu, 2024; Johnson & Mulyani, 2014; Chiang & Lee, 2016; Yunizar et al., 2021). Although each of these factors PKL, self-reliance, and entrepreneurial interest—has been studied individually, there remains a significant gap in literature that integrates all three into a comprehensive model of entrepreneurial readiness (Nafiati et al., 2025; Mustakim et al., 2024; Sutiman et al., 2022). Prior studies tend to analyze one or two factors without addressing the mediating role of productive subject skill perceptions (Kasiyati et al., 2022; Sukardi, 2017; Yuliyanto et al., 2024).

This study fills that gap by constructing an integrated model to examine the simultaneous and mediated influence of PKL, self-reliance, and entrepreneurial interest on students' readiness to become entrepreneurs. The strength of this research lies in its methodological and contextual contributions. Methodologically, it employs Structural Equation Modeling-Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS), a robust statistical tool that allows for the analysis of complex variable relationships (Renaningtyas et al., 2021). Contextually, the study focuses specifically on students majoring in TKR a field that represents one of the highest contributors to SMK graduates but also one with limited absorption in the formal job market (Zulatama et al., 2022; Yunizar et al., 2021).

Despite its strengths, this research acknowledges certain limitations in previous studies, such as the lack of a mediating variable and limited generalizability across regions and majors (Rianto & Rindrayani, 2023; Ramadan et al., 2023; Obschonka & Audretsch, 2019; Ramos-Rodriguez et al., 2024). It also highlights the need for further studies that explore the role of school management, industrial collaboration, and curriculum quality in shaping entrepreneurial readiness (Muladi, 2018; Tentama et al., 2019). Thus, the present study seeks to provide a more nuanced understanding by proposing a model that incorporates both direct and indirect effects of PKL, self-reliance, and entrepreneurial interest on students' entrepreneurial readiness, mediated by their

perception of productive skill competencies (Gustiawan et al., 2025; Chakravarty et al., 2020).

Based on these considerations, the objective of this study is to analyze the influence of field work experience, student self-reliance, and entrepreneurial interest on the perception of productive subject competencies, and their subsequent impact on students' entrepreneurial readiness. This research is expected to contribute to the academic literature by offering a holistic model of entrepreneurial readiness that is empirically tested in the context of vocational education in Indonesia, especially in regions with high unemployment rates and saturated job markets. The novelty of this research lies in its integrated approach that connects educational experience, psychological disposition, and entrepreneurial behavior in one structural model.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research is a quantitative study that aims to examine the influence of field work practice experience (PKL), self-reliance, and entrepreneurial interest on the perception of productive subject competencies and their impact on entrepreneurial readiness among vocational high school (SMK) students majoring in Light Vehicle Engineering in the Kediri region, East Java. The approach taken is explanatory research with a causal associative design, and the analysis was conducted using the Structural Equation Modeling-Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) method with the assistance of SmartPLS 3.0 software (Hair et al 2017).

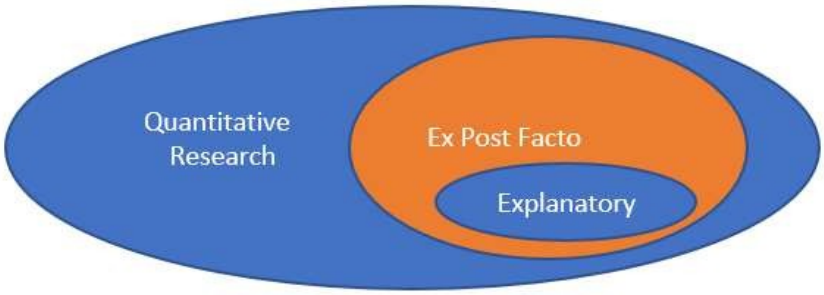

Figure 1. Research design

The population of this study consists of grade XII students majoring in Light Vehicle Engineering (TKR) from 13 SMK schools located in Kediri City, Kediri Regency, and Nganjuk Regency. These schools were selected through purposive sampling based on the criteria of having implemented productive learning and field work practices (PKL). Using the Slovin formula with a margin of error of 5%, a total sample of 275 students was determined from a total population of 920 students. The sampling technique used was proportional stratified random sampling, ensuring that the representation from each school was balanced relative to its population proportion.

Table 1. Number of class XI automotive engineering students, light vehicle engineering expertise, Kediri Region, East Java

No	School Name	Number of Students		
		Male	Female	Total
1	SMK CANDA BHIRAWA PARE	103	1	104
2	SMKS MUHAMMADIYAH NGADILUWIH	32	0	32
3	SMKN 1 PURWOASRI	34	1	35
4	SMK NEGERI 1 PLOSOKLATEN	35	1	36
5	SMKS PEMUDA PAPAR	50	0	50
6	SMKN 1 SEMEN	100	2	102
7	SMKS HIDAYATUS SHOLIHIN	18	0	18
8	SMKN 1 KEDIRI	101	0	101
9	SMKS PGRI KRAS KEDIRI	188	1	189
10	SMK KARTANEGARA WATES	184	2	186
11	SMKS PEMBANGUNAN KANDANGAN	188	8	196
12	SMK NEGERI 1 NGASEM	97	2	99
13	SMKS PUTERA UTAMA KEPUNG	17	0	17
14	SMKS KOSGORO PARE	25	0	25
15	SMKS PAWYATAN DAHA 3	130	1	131
16	SMKS AR-RAHMAH	46	1	47
17	SMKS AL IKHLAS TAROKAN	52	0	52
18	SMKS GLOBAL MANDIRI TAROKAN	17	0	17
19	SMKS AL HUDA KEDIRI	135	0	135
20	SMKN 1 KRAS	68	3	71
21	SMKN 1 GROGOL	35	0	35
	Grand Total	1655	23	1678

Source: Basic Data of Vocational High Schools in Kediri, East Java (2022/2023)

Data collection in this study was conducted using a structured questionnaire that had been validated and tested for reliability. The questionnaire encompassed five main constructs: Field Work Practice Experience (PKL), Self-Reliance, Entrepreneurial Interest, Perception of Productive Subject Competencies, and Entrepreneurial Readiness. Each construct was operationalized into several indicators and items, which were measured using a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The instrument underwent expert validation to ensure content accuracy, while construct validity and reliability were tested using Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability, and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). The research procedure included the distribution of questionnaires via Google Form to maximize coverage and efficiency, followed by data screening and cleaning. Subsequently, descriptive and inferential analyses were conducted using SmartPLS 3.0.

Table 2. School where the research was conducted

No	School Name	Number of Students	Accreditation
1	SMK CANDA BHIRAWA PARE	104	A
2	SMKN 1 NGASEM	99	A
3	SMKN 1 SEMEN	102	B
4	SMKS PGRI KRAS KEDIRI	189	B
5	SMKN 1 KEDIRI	101	A
6	SMK PAWYATAN DAHA 3 KEDIRI	131	B
7	SMK AL HUDA KEDIRI	135	A
8	SMKN 1 KRAS	71	A
9	SMK AR RAHMAH PAPAR	47	A
10	SMKN 1 PURWOASRI	35	B
11	SMKS PEMBANGUNAN KANDANGAN	196	B
Grand Total		905	

Source: basic data of Kediri Vocational High School, East Java (2022/2023)

The analytical method employed in this study is Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) using the Partial Least Squares (PLS) approach. This method was selected for its robustness in handling complex models involving multiple latent variables and its suitability for small to medium sample sizes. The data analysis process included several key stages: outer model testing, which examined convergent validity, discriminant validity, and construct reliability; inner model testing, which evaluated path coefficients, R-square values, and hypothesis testing; and mediation testing, which assessed the mediating effect of the perception of productive subject competencies on the relationship between the exogenous and endogenous variables. To ensure the accuracy and significance of the model estimations, bootstrapping with 5000 resamples was conducted, and the results were interpreted using a significance level of 0.05 (Hair et al., 2017; Chin, 1998; Henseler et al., 2009).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

To provide a general overview of the students' characteristics and variable distributions, descriptive analysis was conducted. The results showed high average scores across all variables, particularly in entrepreneurial interest and self-reliance, indicating a strong tendency among students toward entrepreneurship.

Table 3. Results of the validity test of the entrepreneurial interest variable instrument

Variable	Item	r count	r table	Cronbach's Alpha	Conclusion
Internship Experience	PKL1	0.721	0.266	0.878	Valid
	PKL2	0.785	0.266		Valid
	PKL3	0.756	0.266		Valid
	PKL4	0.769	0.266		Valid
	PKL5	0.746	0.266		Valid

Variable	Item	r count	r table	Cronbach's Alpha	Conclusion
Independence	KMD1	0.684	0.266	0.861	Valid
	KMD2	0.708	0.266		Valid
	KMD3	0.762	0.266		Valid
	KMD4	0.740	0.266		Valid
	KMD5	0.788	0.266		Valid
Entrepreneurial Interest	MWU1	0.752	0.266	0.874	Valid
	MWU2	0.726	0.266		Valid
	MWU3	0.784	0.266		Valid
	MWU4	0.812	0.266		Valid
	MWU5	0.748	0.266		Valid
Perceived Vocational Skills	SKP1	0.789	0.266	0.893	Valid
	SKP2	0.804	0.266		Valid
	SKP3	0.794	0.266		Valid
	SKP4	0.827	0.266		Valid
	SKP5	0.842	0.266		Valid
Entrepreneurial Readiness	KBW1	0.832	0.266	0.902	Valid
	KBW2	0.841	0.266		Valid
	KBW3	0.857	0.266		Valid
	KBW4	0.875	0.266		Valid
	KBW5	0.871	0.266		Valid

The outer model evaluation ensured the validity and reliability of the measurement indicators. All indicator loadings exceeded the threshold of 0.7, indicating strong convergent validity. Composite Reliability and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) also met the criteria, confirming internal consistency and construct validity.

Table 4. Results of the validity test of the instrument variable perception of productive subject skills

Variable	Statement Item	r count	r table	Cronbach's Alpha	Conclusion
Perception Of Productive Subject Skills	KET1	0.817	0.361	0.993	Valid
	KET2	0.865	0.361		Valid
	KET3	0.918	0.361		Valid
	KET4	0.879	0.361		Valid
	KET5	0.839	0.361		Valid
	KET6	0.873	0.361		Valid
	KET7	0.795	0.361		Valid
	KET8	0.852	0.361		Valid
	KET9	0.830	0.361		Valid
	KET10	0.867	0.361		Valid
	KET11	0.869	0.361		Valid
	KET12	0.817	0.361		Valid
	KET13	0.831	0.361		Valid
	KET14	0.769	0.361		Valid
	KET15	0.742	0.361		Valid
	KET16	0.802	0.361		Valid

Variable	Statement Item	r count	r table	Cronbach's Alpha	Conclusion
	KET17	0.740	0.361		Valid
	KET18	0.725	0.361		Valid
	KET19	0,792	0,361		0,792
	KET20	0.869	0.361		Valid
	KET21	0.811	0.361		Valid
	KET22	0.866	0.361		Valid
	KET23	0.817	0.361		Valid
	KET24	0.865	0.361		Valid
	KET25	0.918	0.361		Valid
	KET26	0.817	0.361		Valid
	KET27	0.865	0.361		Valid
	KET28	0.918	0.361		Valid
	KET29	0.879	0.361		Valid
	KET30	0.839	0.361		Valid
	KET31	0.873	0.361		Valid
	KET32	0.795	0.361		Valid
	KET33	0.852	0.361		Valid
	KET34	0.830	0.361		Valid
	KET35	0.867	0.361		Valid
	KET36	0.869	0.361		Valid
	KET37	0.817	0.361		Valid
	KET38	0.831	0.361		Valid
	KET36	0.869	0.361		Valid

Table 5. Results of the validity test of the instrument for the student learning independence variable

Variable	Statement Item	r count	r table	Cronbach's Alpha	Conclusion
Independence	KEM1	0.766	0.361	0.978	Valid
	KEM2	0.832	0.361		Valid
	KEM3	0.883	0.361		Valid
	KEM4	0.850	0.361		Valid
	KEM5	0.833	0.361		Valid
	KEM6	0.869	0.361		Valid
	KEM7	0.787	0.361		Valid
	KEM8	0.847	0.361		Valid
	KEM9	0.826	0.361		Valid
	KEM10	0.840	0.361		Valid
	KEM11	0.852	0.361		Valid
	KEM12	0.796	0.361		Valid
	KEM13	0.813	0.361		Valid
	KEM14	0.767	0.361		Valid
	KEM15	0.749	0.361		Valid
	KEM16	0.798	0.361		Valid
	KEM17	0.748	0.361		Valid
	KEM18	0.721	0.361		Valid
	KEM19	0.798	0.361		Valid
	KEM20	0.881	0.361		Valid
	KEM21	0.821	0.361		Valid

Variable	Statement Item	r count	r table	Cronbach's Alpha	Conclusion
	KEM22	0.897	0.361		Valid
	KEM12	0.796	0.361		Valid
	KEM13	0.813	0.361		Valid
	KEM14	0.767	0.361		Valid
	KEM15	0.749	0.361		Valid
	KEM16	0.798	0.361		Valid
	KEM17	0.748	0.361		Valid
	KEM18	0.721	0.361		Valid
	KEM19	0.798	0.361		Valid
	KEM20	0.881	0.361		Valid
	KEM21	0.821	0.361		Valid
	KEM22	0.897	0.361		Valid
	KEM16	0.798	0.361		Valid
	KEM17	0.748	0.361		Valid
	KEM18	0.721	0.361		Valid
	KEM19	0.798	0.361		Valid
	KEM20	0.881	0.361		Valid
	KEM21	0.821	0.361		Valid
	KEM22	0.897	0.361		Valid

Table 6. Results of the validity test of the entrepreneurial readiness variable instrument

Variable	Statement Item	r count	r table	Cronbach's Alpha	Conclusion
Entrepreneurial Readiness	KEW1	0.809	0.361	0.982	Valid
	KEW2	0.864	0.361		Valid
	KEW3	0.911	0.361		Valid
	KEW4	0.871	0.361		Valid
	KEW5	0.820	0.361		Valid
	KEW6	0.860	0.361		Valid
	KEW7	0.766	0.361		Valid
	KEW8	0.832	0.361		Valid
	KEW9	0.813	0.361		Valid
	KEW10	0.852	0.361		Valid
	KEW11	0.859	0.361		Valid
	KEW12	0.796	0.361		Valid
	KEW13	0.817	0.361		Valid
	KEW14	0.750	0.361		Valid
	KEW15	0.724	0.361		Valid
	KEW16	0.791	0.361		Valid
	KEW17	0.720	0.361		Valid
	KEW18	0.733	0.361		Valid
	KEW19	0.798	0.361		Valid
	KEW20	0.875	0.361		Valid
	KEW21	0.816	0.361		Valid
	KEW22	0.891	0.361		Valid
	KEW23	0.809	0.361		Valid
	KEW24	0.864	0.361		Valid
	KEW25	0.911	0.361		Valid

The inner model analysis revealed the strength and direction of the relationships among latent variables. R-square values indicate a substantial explanatory power for entrepreneurial readiness, and path coefficients showed significant direct effects from PKL experience, self-reliance, and entrepreneurial interest toward both perceived competence and entrepreneurial readiness.

Table 7. Results of the validity test of the PKL experience variable instrument

Variable	Statement Item	r count	r table	Cronbach's Alpha	Conclusion
Experience internship experience	KES1	0.838	0.361	0.984	Valid
	KES2	0.885	0.361		Valid
	KES3	0.929	0.361		Valid
	KES4	0.884	0.361		Valid
	KES5	0.806	0.361		Valid
	KES6	0.850	0.361		Valid
	KES7	0.747	0.361		Valid
	KES8	0.818	0.361		Valid
	KES9	0.800	0.361		Valid
	KES10	0.859	0.361		Valid
	KES11	0.861	0.361		Valid
	KES12	0.793	0.361		Valid
	KES13	0.818	0.361		Valid
	KES14	0.734	0.361		Valid
	KES15	0.703	0.361		Valid
	KES16	0.783	0.361		Valid
	KES17	0.697	0.361		Valid
	KES18	0.740	0.361		Valid
	KES19	0.796	0.361		Valid
	KES20	0.868	0.361		Valid
	KES21	0.810	0.361		Valid
	KES22	0.884	0.361		Valid
	KES23	0.838	0.361		Valid
	KES24	0.885	0.361		Valid
	KES25	0.929	0.361		Valid
	KES26	0.838	0.361		Valid
	KES27	0.885	0.361		Valid
	KES28	0.929	0.361		Valid

Table 8. Description of respondent characteristics

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	298	94.9%
	Female	16	5.1%
School Origin	SMK Canda Bhirawa Pare	27	8.6%
	SMKN 1 Ngasem	24	7.64%
	SMKN 1 Semen	31	9.87%
	SMK PGRI KRAS	31	9.87%
	SMKN 1 Kediri	28	8.92%

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage
	SMK Pawyatan Daha 3	29	9.24%
	SMK Al Huda Kediri	29	9.24%
	SMKN 1 Kras	34	10.83%
	SMK Ar Rahmah Papar	34	10.83%
	SMKN 1 Purwosari	24	7.64%
	SMK Pembangunan Kandangan	23	7.32%

The mediating role of perceived productive subject competencies was tested using bootstrapping. The results showed that the perception of competence partially mediated the effect of PKL experience, self-reliance, and entrepreneurial interest on entrepreneurial readiness.

Table 9. Frequency distribution and average score calculation results for respondents' answers on the experience variable dimension

Statement	Code	SD	D	N	A	SA
I would feel more appreciated if I had my own business	MW1	0	0	18	145	15
I would be more confident if I had my own business	MW2	0	0	21	146	14
Saya akan lebih nyaman berbicara dengan orang lain jika punya suatu usaha yang dapat saya banggakan	MW3	0	0	16	173	12

The final structural model that visualizes all relationships, including the strength of each path, is shown in Figure 2.

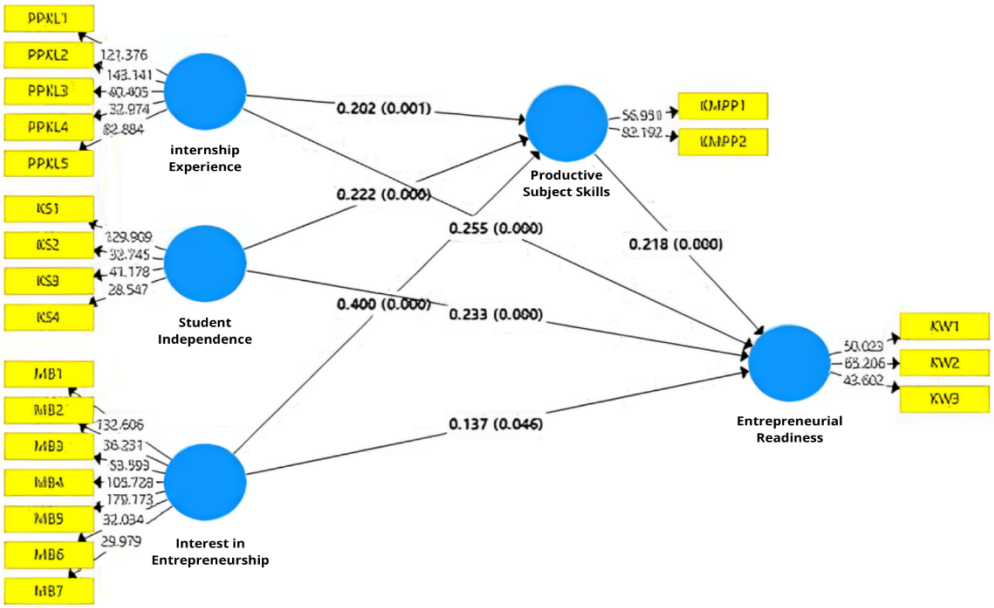

Figure 2. Bootstrapping model estimation results

The structural model tested using the Partial Least Squares (PLS) approach and bootstrapping with 500 resamples revealed several significant and non-significant relationships among the variables. Out of the total ten hypothesized paths, seven relationships were statistically significant, while three were found to be non-significant. The analysis showed that Field Work Practice Experience (PKL) had a significant positive effect on Perceived Competence in Productive Subjects (path coefficient = 0.202, p = 0.001), but its direct effect on Entrepreneurial Readiness was not significant, indicating that its influence is mediated. Similarly, Self-Reliance positively influenced both Perceived Competence (0.222, p = 0.000) and Entrepreneurial Readiness directly (0.400, p = 0.000), marking it as the strongest direct predictor in the model.

Moreover, Perceived Competence significantly affected Entrepreneurial Readiness (0.218, p = 0.000), confirming its role as a mediating variable. The indirect effect of PKL and Self-Reliance on Entrepreneurial Readiness through Perceived Competence was also statistically significant. On the other hand, Entrepreneurial Interest showed a significant direct effect on Entrepreneurial Readiness (0.137, p = 0.046), although relatively weak, and did not exhibit a significant indirect effect via Perceived Competence, suggesting that students' motivation translates more directly into readiness rather than through academic competence.

Overall, the results emphasize the importance of Self-Reliance and Perceived Competence as central variables in enhancing students' entrepreneurial readiness. Meanwhile, PKL and Interest play supporting roles, either through indirect pathways or weaker direct effects. These findings suggest the need for integrated strategies in vocational education that simultaneously enhance personal independence, experiential learning, and subject-specific competence to foster entrepreneurship among students.

Discussion

The results of this study confirmed that Field Work Practice Experience (PKL) significantly influences students' perceptions of their productive subject competencies, which in turn affects their entrepreneurial readiness. This finding is consistent with previous research by Lestari and Siswanto (2015), who emphasized that industrial internship experiences provide students with practical skills and confidence that enhance their employability and entrepreneurial mindset. Similarly, Falah and Marlena (2022) reported that experiential learning through PKL plays a pivotal role in shaping students' intentions and readiness to pursue entrepreneurship.

Self-reliance was also found to have a significant direct effect on both perceived competence and entrepreneurial readiness. This aligns with the theoretical framework suggesting that self-reliant students are more proactive and capable of adapting to real-world challenges (Ma'arif et al., 2023). Prior studies by Sunarsih et al. (2019) and Sukardi (2017) also demonstrated a strong link between self-reliance and students' preparedness for the world of work, highlighting the role of independence in vocational education outcomes.

Entrepreneurial interest emerged as the most dominant variable influencing both perception and readiness. This aligns with research by Supandi (2022), which showed that students with higher entrepreneurial motivation are more engaged in productive learning and more likely to pursue self-employment. Moreover, Tentama et al. (2019)

emphasized that interest in entrepreneurship should be nurtured early through contextual teaching strategies to improve students' future readiness.

The mediating role of students' perception of productive subject competencies strengthens the model. The perception variable significantly mediates the relationship between PKL, self-reliance, and entrepreneurial readiness. This supports the findings of Wicaksono et al. (2022) and Zulatama et al. (2022), who found that students' understanding of the relevance and usefulness of their productive subjects influences their attitudes and confidence toward entrepreneurial ventures.

Another important implication is the integrative structure of the model, which combines academic competence, psychological attributes, and experiential learning into a cohesive framework for assessing entrepreneurial readiness. This integrative approach addresses the gap in prior research, which typically analyzed these factors separately (Edy et al., 2020a; Hakim, 2010). By incorporating mediation analysis, this study reveals the indirect but significant roles of perception as a bridge between foundational experiences and future entrepreneurial behavior.

In summary, the results not only reaffirm but also expand upon existing literature by illustrating how multiple school-based factors interact to shape students' entrepreneurial potential. The findings encourage vocational institutions to design more holistic learning experiences that integrate PKL, build student autonomy, and enhance motivational interest toward entrepreneurship. Future research may further explore these relationships in other vocational domains or use longitudinal designs to assess sustainability of readiness over time.

CONCLUSION

Fundamentals finding: This study found that entrepreneurial readiness among vocational students is influenced by PKL experience, self-reliance, and entrepreneurial interest, with perceived competence mediating these relationships. The integrated SEM-PLS model confirms that entrepreneurial readiness is shaped by both internal traits and school experiences. **Implications:** The findings suggest that schools should improve PKL quality, foster student independence, and enhance learning relevance in productive subjects to strengthen entrepreneurial preparation. **Limitations:** The study is limited to a specific vocational major and region, with data collected cross-sectionally and through self-reporting, which may limit generalizability. **Future Research:** Future studies should explore other vocational fields, use longitudinal designs, and include external factors such as family and community support in shaping entrepreneurial outcomes.

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