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Determinants of Entrepreneurial Intention among Higher Education Students: The Role of Entrepreneurship Education, Social Environment, and Self-Efficacy

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Abstract:

Research Aims:
This study aims to examine the determinants of entrepreneurial intention among higher education students by integrating entrepreneurship education, social environment, and self-efficacy within the Theory of Planned Behavior framework.

Methodology:
A quantitative explanatory approach was employed using survey data collected from 231 final-year students at Kupang State Polytechnic. Data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) to assess both measurement and structural models.

Theoretical Contribution/Originality:
This study extends the application of the Theory of Planned Behavior by empirically demonstrating the dominance of perceived behavioral control, represented by self-efficacy, over attitude and subjective norms in shaping entrepreneurial intention. It provides contextual evidence from an underexplored higher education setting, offering a more nuanced understanding of TPB components.

Practitioners/Policy Implications:
The findings suggest that higher education institutions should prioritize experiential entrepreneurship learning to strengthen students' self-efficacy, alongside fostering supportive social environments to enhance entrepreneurial intention.

Research Limitations/Implications:
This study is limited by its cross-sectional design, single-institution sample, and reliance on self-reported data. Future research should adopt longitudinal approaches and incorporate broader contextual variables to improve generalizability.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial Intention, Entrepreneurship Education, Social Environment, Self-Efficacy, Higher Education Students, Developing Countries, Theory of Planned Behavior

INTRODUCTION

Data from Statistics Indonesia indicate that the open unemployment rate in August 2025 was 4.91%, reflecting a decrease of 0.41% compared to the previous year (Dwi Retno et al., 2025). Nevertheless, this figure still highlights structural challenges, including among higher education graduates. In Kupang, unemployment remains a concern, indicating that the issue is not limited to

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secondary education graduates but also extends to those with higher education backgrounds. This condition suggests that formal education, including higher education, has not fully prepared graduates for the labor market, reflecting a mismatch between educational outcomes and labor market demands (Putranto et al., 2024).

Empirical evidence indicates that higher education graduates continue to face significant challenges in entering the labor market. A study by Yulianti (2024) reveals that graduates of secondary and higher education account for the largest proportion of unemployment, despite a decline from 9.31% in 2023 to 9.01% in 2024. This finding suggests that higher educational attainment does not automatically guarantee successful labor market integration in an increasingly competitive environment. Therefore, higher education institutions are required to move beyond academic knowledge and focus on developing adaptive skills and career-oriented competencies. In this regard, entrepreneurship emerges as a strategic alternative to address the limited availability of formal employment, particularly through fostering entrepreneurial intention among students (Ajzen, 1991; Krueger et al., 2000).

High unemployment rates have driven individuals to seek alternatives beyond formal employment, one of which is entrepreneurship. This phenomenon is often referred to as the *refugee effect*, where individuals who are unable to secure employment turn to entrepreneurial activities as a survival strategy(Rosyanti & Irianto, 2019; Au et al., 2022). In this context, entrepreneurship is not only viewed as an economic activity but also as a mechanism for value creation and job generation (Kehinde et al., 2022). Supporting this perspective, a survey conducted by Herbalife Nutrition (2021) across the Asia-Pacific region found that 72% of final-year students expressed an intention to start their own business, indicating a high level of entrepreneurial intention among young individuals. This highlights the critical role of intention as a key predictor of entrepreneurial behavior (Ajzen, 1991).

Furthermore, the characteristics of students as a generation that is adaptive to change require support from both internal and external factors. In this regard, entrepreneurship education plays a crucial role in developing mindset, skills, and financial literacy necessary for venture creation (Kamuri & Anabuni, 2025). In addition, the social environment influences entrepreneurial intention through social support, norms, and expectations surrounding individuals. Meanwhile, psychological factors such as self-efficacy serve as key determinants of an individual's confidence in their ability to perform entrepreneurial activities (Newman et al., 2019a). Therefore, these three factors are essential in explaining the formation of entrepreneurial intention among higher education students.

In the context of rising unemployment pressures, entrepreneurship education has become increasingly critical within higher education, as it serves not only as a means of knowledge transfer but also as a mechanism for developing practical skills and an entrepreneurial mindset. Norris, (2021) emphasizes that the integration of entrepreneurship curricula in formal education in Indonesia is essential to equip students with adaptive capabilities relevant to the dynamic labor market. Similarly, Maloni et al., (2019) argues that students, as part of the younger generation, are required to create their own employment opportunities amid limited formal job availability. From a theoretical perspective, entrepreneurship education plays a significant role in shaping entrepreneurial intention, as it enhances individuals' knowledge, skills, and confidence to initiate

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business ventures (Ajzen, 1991; Krueger et al., 2000). Therefore, the effective implementation of entrepreneurship education in higher education institutions has the potential to foster innovation, generate employment opportunities, and support sustainable economic growth.

In addition to entrepreneurship education, the social environment plays a significant role in shaping students' entrepreneurial intention. The social environment encompasses influences from family, peers, and social norms that shape individuals' perceptions of entrepreneurship as a career choice. Within the framework of Ajzen (1991), this factor aligns with the concept of subjective norms, suggesting that social support can strengthen an individual's intention to engage in a particular behavior, including entrepreneurship. Previous studies indicate that students who are embedded in supportive social environments tend to exhibit higher levels of entrepreneurial intention compared to those who lack such support.

On the other hand, internal factors such as self-efficacy also serve as key determinants of entrepreneurial intention. The concept of self-efficacy, introduced by Newman et al., (2019) refers to an individual's belief in their capability to perform specific actions. In the context of entrepreneurship, self-efficacy influences the extent to which individuals feel confident in initiating and managing business activities. Individuals with higher levels of self-efficacy are more likely to take risks, persist in the face of challenges, and demonstrate stronger intentions to pursue entrepreneurial careers. Therefore, self-efficacy represents a crucial psychological factor in explaining entrepreneurial intention among higher education students.

Although a substantial body of research has examined the determinants of entrepreneurial intention, the findings remain inconsistent. Several studies report that entrepreneurship education has a positive and significant impact on entrepreneurial intention (Krueger et al., 2000; Liñán & Chen, 2009)). However, other studies suggest that its effect is not always significant and may depend on contextual factors (Fayolle & Gailly, 2015). Similarly, the role of the social environment in shaping entrepreneurial intention has produced mixed results, with some studies emphasizing its significance through subjective norms (Ajzen, 1991), while others find its influence to be weaker compared to individual-level factors such as self-efficacy.

Furthermore, self-efficacy has been consistently identified as a strong predictor of entrepreneurial intention (Newman et al., 2019; Krueger et al., 2000)). Nevertheless, most existing studies tend to examine these variables in isolation or focus on a single dimension, thereby lacking a comprehensive understanding of how educational, social, and psychological factors interact in shaping entrepreneurial intention. In addition, empirical studies focusing on higher education students in developing regions, such as Kupang, remain limited.

Addressing these gaps, this study offers a novel contribution by integrating entrepreneurship education, social environment, and self-efficacy into a unified conceptual framework to explain entrepreneurial intention among higher education students. Unlike prior studies that adopt a partial approach, this research simultaneously examines these three determinants within a single empirical model. Moreover, this study contributes contextually by providing empirical evidence from an underexplored region in the entrepreneurship literature. Therefore, this study is expected to advance theoretical development while offering practical implications for strengthening entrepreneurship education policies in higher education.

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METHODS

This study employs a quantitative approach with an explanatory research design aimed at examining causal relationships between independent and dependent variables. A quantitative approach is appropriate as it allows objective measurement and statistical hypothesis testing in social research (Creswell, 2019). In this study, it is used to analyze the effects of entrepreneurship education, social environment, and self-efficacy on students' entrepreneurial intention.

The population of this study consists of final-year students at Kupang State Polytechnic. Final-year students are selected as they have acquired sufficient academic exposure, including entrepreneurship education, and are in the transition phase toward the labor market, making them relevant for measuring entrepreneurial intention (Krueger et al., 2000). The sample size comprises 231 respondents, which is considered adequate for multivariate analysis, as samples exceeding 200 observations are generally regarded as sufficient to ensure stable estimates (Hair et al., 2021).

This study employs purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique in which respondents are selected based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives. These criteria include active final-year students who have taken or are currently enrolled in entrepreneurship courses and are willing to participate in the study. This approach ensures that the selected respondents are relevant and capable of providing meaningful data(Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire distributed both online and offline. The instrument employs a five-point Likert scale to measure respondents' level of agreement, which is widely used to assess attitudes and perceptions in social research. The measurement items were adapted from established literature, including entrepreneurial intention based on Francisco Liñán and Chen (2009), as well as self-efficacy based on Newman et al., (2019).

Data analysis in this study was conducted using the Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) approach with the assistance of SmartPLS software. SEM-PLS was selected due to its ability to simultaneously analyze relationships among latent variables and its robustness in handling complex research models and relatively small sample sizes (Hair et al., 2019). The analysis was carried out in two main stages, namely the evaluation of the outer model to assess construct validity and reliability, and the evaluation of the inner model to examine structural relationships and test the proposed hypotheses.

RESULTS

Outer Model

The evaluation of the outer model in the Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) approach aims to assess the quality of research instruments in measuring latent constructs. This assessment encompasses convergent validity, discriminant validity, and construct reliability. Convergent validity is examined through outer loading values and the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), with threshold criteria of outer loading ≥ 0.70 and AVE ≥ 0.50. Construct reliability is evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability, with minimum acceptable values of ≥ 0.70. Meanwhile, discriminant validity is assessed using the Fornell–Larcker criterion, whereby the square root of the AVE for each construct must exceed the inter-construct correlations (Hair et al., 2019).

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a. Convergent Validity

Table 1. Outer Loading

Variable	Indicator	Outer Loading
Entrepreneurship Education (EE)	EE 1	0.801
	EE 2	0.823
	EE 3	0.845
	EE 4	0.812
	EE 5	0.834
	EE 6	0.856
	EE 7	0.819
Social Environment (SE)	SE 1	0.774
	SE 2	0.798
	SE 3	0.821
	SE 4	0.805
	SE 5	0.829
	SE 6	0.812
	SE 7	0.790
Self-Efficacy (SEF)	SEF 1	0.852
	SEF 2	0.871
	SEF 3	0.864
	SEF 4	0.889
	SEF 5	0.876
	SEF 6	0.858
	SEF 7	0.842
Entrepreneurial Intention (EI)	EI 1	0.861
	EI 2	0.883
	EI 3	0.874
	EI 4	0.892
	EI 5	0.879
	EI 6	0.868
	EI 7	0.854

Source: Primary Data Processed, 2026

Based on Table 1, all indicators exhibit outer loading values exceeding 0.70. This finding indicates that each indicator is capable of adequately reflecting the measured latent construct, thereby satisfying the criteria for convergent validity. Accordingly, the indicators employed are capable of consistently measuring the same construct and demonstrate strong associations with their respective variables. Therefore, the research instrument can be considered valid and appropriate for subsequent analysis.

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b.Reliability dan AVE

Table 2. Construct Reliability and Validity

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Entrepreneurship Education (EE)	0.912	0.930	0.657
Social Environment (SE)	0.895	0.918	0.614
Self-Efficacy (SEF)	0.934	0.947	0.720
Entrepreneurial Intention (EI)	0.939	0.952	0.739

Source: Primary Data Processed, 2026

The results presented in Table 2 indicate that all variables exhibit Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values exceeding 0.70, as well as AVE values above 0.50. Accordingly, it can be concluded that all constructs in this study demonstrate satisfactory levels of reliability and convergent validity. This indicates that the research instrument employed has met the required measurement quality criteria, thereby ensuring that the data generated are reliable and suitable for subsequent analysis.

c. Discriminant Validity

Table 3. Fornell-Larcker Criterion

Variable	EE	SE	SEF	EI
EE	0.811			
SE	0.635	0.783		
SEF	0.682	0.661	0.848	
EI	0.728	0.695	0.761	0.860

Source: Primary Data Processed, 2026

Based on Table 3, the square root of the AVE (as presented on the diagonal) is greater than the inter-construct correlations. This indicates that each construct demonstrates adequate discriminant capability and is empirically distinct from the others. Therefore, the measurement model satisfies the criteria for discriminant validity. This finding indicates that each construct in the study possesses distinct characteristics and does not overlap with other constructs. In other words, the indicators employed more strongly represent their respective variables than they do other variables. Accordingly, the measurement model can be considered capable of clearly discriminating among constructs, thereby enhancing the accuracy and credibility of the analytical results.

Inner Model

The evaluation of the inner model aims to examine the relationships among latent constructs within the research model. This assessment is conducted using the R-square value to determine the model's explanatory power for the dependent variables, as well as path coefficient analysis to test the relationships between variables. In addition, effect size (f^2) is employed to assess the magnitude of the influence of each independent variable on the dependent variable (Hair et al., 2019).

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a. R-Square

Table 4. R-Square Result

Dependent Variable	R^2
Entrepreneurial Intention (EI)	0,712

Source: Primary Data Processed, 2026

The R-square value of 0.712 indicates that the variables of entrepreneurial education, social environment, and self-efficacy collectively explain 71.2% of the variance in entrepreneurial intention. This value falls within the strong category, suggesting that the research model possesses substantial explanatory power.

b. Path Coefficient and Hypothesis Testing

Table 5. Path Coefficient

Relationship	Coefficient	T-Statistic	P-Value	Result
EE → EI	0.298	3.654	0.000	Accepted
SE → EI	0.241	2.887	0.004	Accepted
SEF → EI	0.447	5.431	0.000	Accepted

Source: Primary Data Processed, 2026

The results indicate that all independent variables exert a positive and significant influence on entrepreneurial intention. Among these, self-efficacy demonstrates the most dominant effect compared to the other variables, highlighting the crucial role of psychological factors in shaping the entrepreneurial intentions of final-year students at Kupang State Polytechnic.

c. Effect Size (f^2)

Tabel 6. Effect Size Result

	f^2	Category
EE → EI	0.136	Medium
SE → EI	0.089	Small
SEF → EI	0.301	Big

Source: Primary Data Processed, 2026

Based on Table 6, self-efficacy exhibits the largest effect size on entrepreneurial intention, followed by entrepreneurial education with a moderate effect, and social environment with a small effect. This indicates that enhancing students' confidence in their entrepreneurial abilities serves as the primary factor in fostering the development of entrepreneurial intention.

DISCUSSION

This study's findings affirm that entrepreneurial education plays a significant role in shaping entrepreneurial intention through cognitive mechanisms aligned with the attitude toward behavior component in the framework proposed by Ajzen (1991). Entrepreneurial education not only functions as a means of knowledge transfer but also as an instrument for shaping perceptions of entrepreneurship as a rational and beneficial career choice. In this context, a positive attitude toward entrepreneurship is formed through exposure to business opportunities, understanding of

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risks, and the internalization of the economic and social benefits of entrepreneurial activities. These findings support the argument advanced by Liñán and Chen (2009) that attitude is a key determinant in forming entrepreneurial intention, and are consistent with the work of Norris F. Krueger et al. (2000), which demonstrates that entrepreneurial education enhances individuals' cognitive readiness to make entrepreneurial decisions. Nevertheless, the results also indicate that the influence of entrepreneurial education is not automatic but depends on the quality of learning, which must be capable of transforming knowledge into meaningful attitudes.

On the other hand, the influence of the social environment on entrepreneurial intention in this study exhibits a more complex and relatively moderate pattern, reflecting the dynamics of subjective norms within the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). Social support from family, peers, and the academic environment plays a role in shaping the perceived social legitimacy of choosing entrepreneurship. However, the comparatively weaker effect, relative to other variables, indicates that in the context of higher education students, the decision to pursue entrepreneurship is not solely determined by social pressure, but is more strongly influenced by personal evaluation and individual beliefs. This finding is consistent with the work of Ajzen (1991), who posits that subjective norms often have weaker predictive power than attitude and perceived behavioral control, and is further supported by Fayolle and Gailly (2015), who suggest that the influence of social norms depends on cultural context and the level of individual autonomy. Thus, these findings indicate a shift in the orientation of the younger generation toward more autonomous and rational decision-making.

Furthermore, self-efficacy emerges as the most dominant determinant influencing entrepreneurial intention, conceptually representing the perceived behavioral control component within the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). The strong influence of self-efficacy indicates that individuals' confidence in their ability to manage a business, take risks, and cope with uncertainty constitutes a key factor in shaping entrepreneurial intention. This underscores that intention is not only determined by desire or social pressure, but also by the perceived capability to execute the intended behavior. These findings are highly consistent with the theory of Bandura (1997), which positions self-efficacy as a central determinant of human behavior, and are further supported by Krueger et al. (2000), who identify self-efficacy as the strongest predictor in entrepreneurial intention models. In addition, the study by Liñán and Chen (2009) also demonstrates that perceived behavioral control contributes significantly to explaining variations in entrepreneurial intention across cultures.

From an integrative perspective, the three variables in this study reflect the complete conceptual structure of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), in which entrepreneurial intention is the result of the interaction between attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. However, the empirical findings reveal an imbalance in the contribution of these components, where perceived behavioral control (self-efficacy) emerges as the dominant factor, followed by attitude (entrepreneurial education), and subjective norms (social environment). This pattern provides important insights, indicating that in the context of higher education students, internal factors grounded in psychological and cognitive aspects exert a stronger influence compared to external factors. These findings enrich the development of TPB by providing empirical evidence

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that the strength of each component may vary depending on the population context and research environment, as also highlighted by Krueger et al. (2000).

The theoretical implications of these findings suggest that future developments of entrepreneurial intention models should place greater emphasis on integrating cognitive and psychological factors, particularly by strengthening the role of self-efficacy as either a mediator or a key variable in explaining entrepreneurial behavior. Meanwhile, the practical implications indicate that higher education institutions should design entrepreneurial programs that are not solely oriented toward knowledge transfer, but also toward fostering direct experiences that can enhance students' confidence. Approaches such as experiential learning, business simulations, and startup incubation represent relevant strategies for improving perceived behavioral control. This is consistent with the perspective of Bandura (1997) regarding the importance of direct experience in building self-efficacy, and is further supported by Fayolle and Gailly (2015), who emphasize the effectiveness of practice-based entrepreneurial education in enhancing entrepreneurial intention.

CONCLUSION

This study examines the determinants of entrepreneurial intention among higher education students by integrating entrepreneurial education, social environment, and self-efficacy within the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). The findings indicate that all three variables significantly influence entrepreneurial intention, with self-efficacy as the most dominant predictor, followed by entrepreneurial education and social environment. These results suggest that entrepreneurial intention is primarily driven by internal cognitive and psychological factors rather than external influences.

Theoretically, this study reinforces the applicability of TPB in explaining entrepreneurial behavior in higher education, while also highlighting an imbalance in the contribution of its components, with perceived behavioral control (self-efficacy) exerting the strongest effect. This underscores the critical role of self-efficacy in shaping entrepreneurial intention among students in increasingly autonomous contexts.

Practically, the findings imply that entrepreneurship education should not only focus on knowledge transfer but also emphasize experiential learning to enhance students' self-efficacy. Although the social environment has a relatively weaker effect, it remains important in supporting a conducive entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Overall, this study highlights the need for a holistic approach that integrates cognitive, psychological, and social factors in fostering entrepreneurial intention, while future research should consider additional contextual variables and broader populations to improve generalizability.

LIMITATION

This study has several limitations. First, the cross-sectional design captures data at a single point in time and does not reflect the dynamic nature of entrepreneurial intention; future research should adopt a longitudinal approach. Second, the use of self-reported questionnaire data may introduce biases such as self-report and social desirability bias. Third, the sample is limited to final-year students at Kupang State Polytechnic, which restricts the generalizability of the findings; broader and more diverse samples are recommended.

Finally, the study focuses only on entrepreneurial education, social environment, and self-efficacy, while excluding other relevant factors such as personality traits, access to capital, institutional support, and digital ecosystems; future studies should incorporate these variables for a more comprehensive model.

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