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EVADING THE “ENTREPRENEURIAL BLOCKS” THROUGH ENTREPRENEURIAL MARKETING EDUCATION IN VOCATIONAL HIGH SCHOOLS IN AN EMERGING COUNTRY

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ABSTRACT

Entrepreneurial marketing education is considered an essential platform to stimulate successful entrepreneurs, especially for vocational high school (SMK) graduates in Indonesia, which has the highest open unemployment rate and mostly comes from low-income backgrounds. Hence, the researchers investigated why most SMK graduates, supposedly skilful, do not opt for entrepreneurship. This is an under-researched study that could carry enormous implications. The researchers interviewed participants from SMKs in Mataram, Indonesia, three entrepreneurship teachers and six students of entrepreneurship classes from grades 10 to 12. They referred to the extant literature as a basis for a proposed “Entrepreneurial Blocks” framework to explain the barriers and supporting factors for becoming an entrepreneur. Our findings show that entrepreneurial mindset, starting capital, challenges, risk aversion, and limited skills and resources were part of the entrepreneurial blocks. Conversely, working experience, desire for freedom, and the need for achievements were considered the factors to evade the entrepreneurial blocks for SMK graduates.

Keywords: *entrepreneurial marketing education; entrepreneurial blocks; vocational high school; venture creation; nascent entrepreneur*

INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship has been widely considered one of the critical factors that could lift people out of poverty and sustain economic growth. It also plays a fundamental role in forming the foundation of a country's economy, both as a growth engine and as a facilitator to support productive activities (Omoruyi et al., 2017). Entrepreneurship has also been an ongoing research focus in the academic discourse due to its strategic importance (Autio et al., 2014; Davidsson, 2015; Ferreira et al., 2019; Rauch et al., 2009). Naturally, an entrepreneurial marketing education that ensures the future generation is equipped with the concept, mindset, skills, spirit, and resources to become a full-fledged entrepreneur has also seen a significant rise. The United States is widely considered the first country that introduced entrepreneurial marketing education for students and promoted an education environment that supported the growth of entrepreneurship and led to central multinational companies (Şeşen & Pruet, 2014). In China, the government also encourages schools nationwide to incorporate entrepreneurial marketing education and spirit into their curriculum. At the higher education level, the Ministry of Education even directed colleges to have at least two-credit fundamental entrepreneurship courses for the student's (Ni & Ye, 2018). However, the legitimacy of entrepreneurial marketing education in ensuring a thriving and sustainable cohort of future entrepreneurs has also been put under the spotlight by several studies in recent years to ensure that the teaching has a real-life impact (Fayolle et al., 2016; Kuratko, 2005; G. West et al., 2009).

In Indonesia, entrepreneurship development has seen a significant improvement over the last decade or so. According to the press release by the Ministry of Industry of the Republic of Indonesia (2018), the proportion of entrepreneurs in the country by 2018 had reached 3.1 per cent of the total population. However, this was still considerably lower than other major economies in Southeast Asia, such as Singapore (7 per cent) and Malaysia (5 per cent). It was also lower than the minimum benchmark set by the World Bank at 4 per cent of the population (Ardia, 2016). A recent survey by the World Economic Forum (2019) found that more than a third (35.6 per cent) of young people in Indonesia (between the age of 15 and 35) have an aspiration to become an entrepreneur in the future, more than any other major countries in Southeast Asia, thanks in large part due to the seemingly endless series of successful start-ups highlighted on the news which encourage them to establish the next Gojek or Traveloka, some of the most successful start-up companies in the country.

This condition is supported by the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor data, which explains that the entrepreneurial attitude in Indonesia is relatively promising, in which 47.7 per cent of the adult population (aged between 18 and 64) perceived their place of residence as an excellent place to commence a new business venture, with decent entrepreneurship proficiencies to take advantage of such prospects. Unfortunately, nearly half of the population (47 per cent) are considered to be "risk-averse", which is much higher than the median rate of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) at only 37 per cent. Additionally, the Total

Entrepreneurial Activity (TEA rate) in Indonesia, which measures the proportion of new/nascent entrepreneurship, is also relatively low compared to other countries globally (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2018). In other words, there is a critical disconnect among the youngest cohorts in the country between their high aspirations to become an entrepreneur and the stark reality in which there is a low percentage of entrepreneurs, a high level of risk aversion, and poor performance of TEA.

In light of this condition, the Government of Indonesia, through the Ministry of Education, has already introduced a series of policies, regulations, curriculum reviews, and campaigns meant to improve students' entrepreneurial spirit and mindset from an early age. This is particularly relevant for holders of vocational high school (SMK) diploma, which, according to the Indonesian Statistics (BPS), have the highest rate of open unemployment in Indonesia, at 10.42 per cent in August 2019 out of the 7.05 million unemployed people (Ulya, 2019). Only 60-65 per cent of SMK graduates are employed every year. Additionally, out of the remaining SMK graduates who are not working in a company as a wage worker, only 5 per cent decide to become an entrepreneur (Larasati, 2018). This has become a national concern, especially since most people who get into SMK in Indonesia come from low-income families (Wirdana, 2017) which enrolled their children on SMK in the hopes that they would be able to work immediately after graduation. This condition is regrettable, especially since one of the leading solutions to tackling the graduate unemployment issue is to embark on an

entrepreneurial venture, highlighting the importance of entrepreneurial marketing education (Sandhu et al., 2011). Unfortunately, according to Winarno (2016), entrepreneurial marketing education for SMK in Indonesia focuses on theories instead of developing relevant values and skills to become self-employed. Therefore, well-prepared entrepreneurial marketing education for vocational high schools in Indonesia is imperative to open potential job opportunities for millions of young people.

Entrepreneurial marketing education can be applied in vocational high school education to prepare students to become competent entrepreneurs. Studies have shown that entrepreneurship education in vocational high schools is effective, with good scores in the entrepreneurship education variable and suitable forms of entrepreneurship learning (Stadler & Smith, 2017). Self-efficacy and adversity quotient have been found to influence entrepreneurial intentions in vocational students, and the intensity of the service model of entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial skills are essential variables in vocational high school education (Kurniawati & Marlana, 2018). Other factors that affect the entrepreneurial willingness of higher vocational students include the school's entrepreneurial atmosphere, individual entrepreneurial awareness, ability and skills, family and friends, and government policy support (Zhu, 2022).

Based on the empirical problems discussed above, the present study aims to delve deeper into the various factors (i.e., the entrepreneurial blocks) that could explain why most vocational high school graduates in Indonesia do not

choose to become entrepreneurs, despite the high unemployment rate. This is a substantial gap to explore since the extant works of literature focusing on the entrepreneurial barriers as a consequence of entrepreneurial marketing education in emerging countries are still challenging to come by (Sandhu et al., 2011), let alone the ones involving vocational high school students. Additionally, based on the findings, the researchers would propose the “Entrepreneurial Blocks” framework to envisage the various factors that could act as barriers for SMK graduates to become entrepreneurs and by what means such barriers can be avoided. To achieve this end, the researchers interviewed participants from three vocational high schools in Mataram, West Nusa Tenggara, namely Public Vocational High School (SMKN) 2, SMKN 4, and SMKN 5, to have a thorough understanding of the topic, and refer to the extant literature as a basis for the proposed framework. With this background, the researchers would like to answer the following research questions: Firstly, what are the reasons that the majority of SMK graduates, who supposedly have the relevant skills in their respective fields, do not opt for entrepreneurship as their career choice? This is reflected by the data from the Ministry of Education, which shows that only 5 per cent of SMK graduates turn into entrepreneurs (Larasati, 2018) despite the high level of unemployment. Secondly, what are some barriers to entrepreneurship for SMK graduates, and how can they break through them?

The subsequent sections in this paper are structured as follows: the researchers present the extant literature on the topic, followed by

an explanation regarding the research methods used in this study. Next, the researchers report on the findings and discussion of this study by incorporating the interviews with the participants and the empirical evidence of previous research to develop the “Entrepreneurial Blocks” framework in this research. Finally, the researchers will present the conclusion and recommendation of the present study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Entrepreneurial marketing education

Entrepreneurial marketing education can be understood as all-inclusive individual development and transformation. It offers students an understanding of the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of entrepreneurial thinking and mindset that can be implemented in their lives, surroundings, and business ventures (Gedeon, 2017). In other words, entrepreneurial marketing education can lead to the creation of budding young entrepreneurs (Egerová et al., 2017) who can acknowledge and appreciate entrepreneurship as a viable career choice (Schoof, 2006). Narrowly defined, entrepreneurial marketing education deals with new business venture creation, including opportunity seeking and risk management. Broadly defined, entrepreneurial marketing education focuses on cultivating people with an entrepreneurial mindset who can implement “enterprising behaviour” wherever they are (Küttim et al., 2014).

Entrepreneurial marketing education has been a topic of interest in recent years, as it is recognised as a critical component of

entrepreneurship education. The literature review by Peltier and Scovotti (2010) highlights the need to enhance entrepreneurial marketing education from the student perspective. The authors suggest that entrepreneurial marketing has received little attention in the business education literature, and there is a need to develop new approaches to teaching this subject. Harti et al. (2022) have explored the relationship between social science education, marketing mindset, and entrepreneurial interest. The authors suggest social science education can drive a marketing mindset and shape entrepreneurial interest.

Additionally, according to Lindner (2018), entrepreneurial marketing education is characterised as expanding individual ideas and accumulating the necessary skills and resources to carry out such ideas. In his extensive review of the theory and practice of entrepreneurial marketing education, Kuratko (2005) explained that entrepreneurship, or at least certain parts of it, can be formally taught. Although professionals and scholars in the field still argue about whether entrepreneurs are born with the skills and cannot be nurtured, a consensus has nearly been reached about the overall importance of entrepreneurial marketing education. Neck and Greene (2011) expanded on the concept by explaining that there are at least three ways to approach entrepreneurial marketing education: the entrepreneur world (i.e., understanding the “colossal” personality of the entrepreneur), the process world (i.e., more causal and process-oriented using analytical and empirical tools from other disciplines), and the cognition world (i.e., ways to think entrepreneurially).

Winarno, Rahayu, Wijijayanti, and Agustina (2019) reasoned that entrepreneurial marketing education could provide vocational high school students with a massive head-start start, especially if they want to run a successful and sustainable business venture. This is supported by previous literature, which explained the tacit linkage between entrepreneurial marketing education and various societal outcomes, such as economic expansion, job creation, and improved solidarity within a community, among others (Lackéus, 2015; Sirelkhatim & Gangi, 2015). Jones et al. (2008) have explored student attitudes towards enterprise education in Poland and found that entrepreneurial education informs entrepreneurial intent and career aspirations.

Furthermore, Kusumawardani, Widyanto, and Iswara (2020) also found positive and significant relationships between entrepreneurial marketing education and personal attitude, perceived behavioural control, as well as subjective norm of women entrepreneurs in Bali, confirming the strategic importance that entrepreneurial marketing education has on new venture creation. In their comparative study of students in the United States and Turkey, Şeşen and Pruett (2014) concluded that entrepreneurial marketing education should also focus on increasing students’ awareness of the intrinsic benefits of entrepreneurship for their future. Therefore, it is only natural to see a growing trend wherein governments worldwide incorporate entrepreneurial marketing education into their national curriculum to inspire the younger generation to start their business (Fejes et al., 2019).

Entrepreneurship learning models, such as business centres, apprenticeships, and family backgrounds, have positively influenced vocational students' entrepreneurial competencies (Muslim et al., 2020). The primary strategy of entrepreneurship education is learning strategies of collaboration and integration of entrepreneurial subjects with vocational subjects and entrepreneurial growth strategies in schools. Teacher skills in teaching entrepreneurship need to be improved, and the entrepreneurial learning model in the form of an internet-based e-portfolio has proven effective (Yang, 2017). Factors such as entrepreneurial motivation, entrepreneurial knowledge, vocational guidance, and family support also influence the entrepreneurial readiness of vocational high school students (Pambudi et al., 2020). Finally, cultivating entrepreneurial intentions in vocational education students is important in preparing graduates for entrepreneurship (Fawaid et al., 2022).

Entrepreneurial barriers

Earlier studies have explored quite a few barriers to becoming an entrepreneur. According to Sandhu, Sidique, and Riaz (2011), the lack of readiness to take on risks associated with running a business is considered a significant barrier to entrepreneurship. The risk construct is strongly associated with the entrepreneurship (Choo & Wong, 2006; Miles, 2014; Nefzi, 2019; Van Praag & Cramer, 2001), which means that risk-averse people tend to evade the entrepreneurship route (Douglas & Shepherd, 2002; Sandhu et al., 2011). In this regard, Şeşen and Pruett (2014) argued that proper education in entrepreneurship is needed to

tackle the relatively high risk-aversion levels among students in their study. Conversely, relevant skills and resources are also considered critical barriers that could hinder someone from becoming an entrepreneur (Choo & Wong, 2006; Ramayah & Harun, 2005; Smith & Beasley, 2011). Without the skills to manage the business, potential entrepreneurial opportunities will effectively go to waste (Brixiová et al., 2009). Similarly, several studies in the past (Choo & Wong, 2006; Kebaili et al., 2017; Smith & Beasley, 2011; J. Wu et al., 2019) have also added that the lack of resources in the form of capital/access to funding is one of the significant constraints toward the business formation.

Another entrepreneurial barrier that could prevent aspiring entrepreneurs from realising their goals is the fear of failure (Kebaili et al., 2017; Nefzi, 2019; Sandhu et al., 2011), which is common when they have a lack of confidence (Choo & Wong, 2006) as well as knowledge regarding the industry and its ecosystem (Rajagopal, 2014; J. Wu et al., 2019). The lack of business experience and knowledge negatively affects the intention to take on entrepreneurial ventures (Kebaili et al., 2017), especially for young people with limited life and work experience (Schoof, 2006). Furthermore, Taormina and Lao (2007) argued that for aspiring entrepreneurs, some psychological barriers could make it difficult for them to start their business ventures if they do not possess these traits, namely, the need for achievement, social networking, and optimism. Schoof (2006) also noted the importance of personal environments, such as parents,

relatives, and friends, in shaping young people's attitudes towards entrepreneurship.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study utilised a qualitative approach by conducting in-depth interviews with selected participants, including entrepreneurship teachers from three public vocational high schools (SMKN) in Mataram City in February 2020. The city was chosen since it is the capital city of West Nusa Tenggara Province, the only province in Indonesia which recorded an economic downturn (-4.56%) in 2018, in part due to the devastating earthquake that hit the province in August of the year (Katadata, 2019). The three SMKs examined in this research are SMKN 2, SMKN 4, and SMKN 5. The three public vocational high schools were chosen for different reasons: SMKN 2 was chosen because they are well-known in the region as the go-to vocational school specialising in Accounting and office administration, with strong connections to the industry and a lot of entrepreneurial events being held regularly; SMKN 4 was selected because they have a unique program wherein more than 98 per cent of their graduates are already guaranteed job placements at their partner companies; and SMKN 5 was also picked since they have entrepreneurial solid roots with a focus on craftsmanship and on-the-job placements at various small businesses in the area (including a famous local Batik production company called Sasana Bumi Gora owned by one of the teachers) to inspire them to create their business ventures in the future.

The researchers also interviewed six students of the entrepreneurship classes from Grades 10 and 12 from the three SMKNs to better understand their impression and understanding of the courses. The authors need to elucidate the objective behind including two types of respondents: teachers and students. Clarifying the rationale for including both groups will provide insights into how their perspectives contribute to the overall understanding of entrepreneurial marketing education. This information will help readers appreciate the unique insights gained from each group and understand the holistic nature of the study.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A Framework to Understand the "Entrepreneurial Blocks"

According to Sandhu et al. (2011), pinpointing potential issues that could deter someone from becoming an entrepreneur is critical to ensure they can act upon their entrepreneurial intentions. Based on the entrepreneurship case studies of the vocational high schools in Mataram, West Nusa Tenggara and the extant literature reviews on the topic, the researchers propose a framework to have a thorough understanding concerning the various possible barriers to entrepreneurship (i.e., the "entrepreneurial blocks") for students as well as graduates of vocational high schools (SMK), and ways in which these would-be entrepreneurs can break through the supposed "blocks" and become self-employed, leading to the establishment of their business ventures in the end. The entrepreneurial blocks framework proposed in this study is depicted in Figure 1.

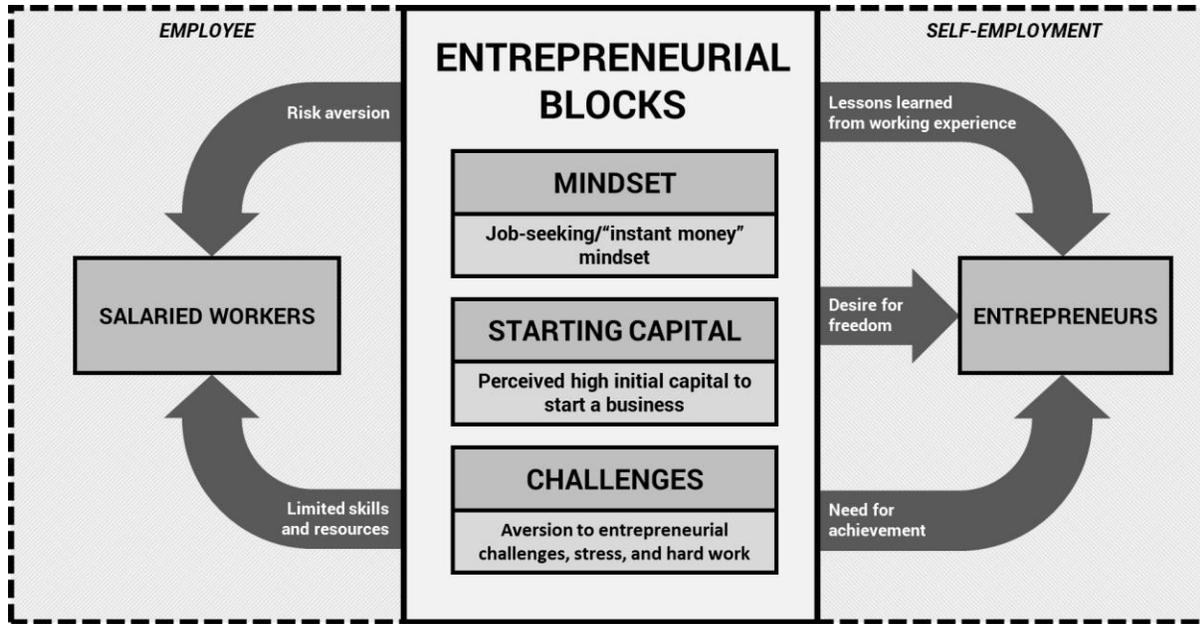


Figure 1. The Entrepreneurial Blocks Framework for Vocational High Schools in Indonesia

Based on the interviews with the participants from the three SMKs, the researchers concluded that one of the most fundamental aspects that must be changed to ensure a successful entrepreneurial marketing education program is the students' entrepreneurial mindset. Davis, Hall, and Mayer (2016) defined an entrepreneurial mindset as the collection of intentions, skills, and conceptions which set entrepreneurs apart from others to ensure entrepreneurial success. Neneh (2012) concluded that to survive and prevail in running a business venture, more than having the necessary skills needed, an entrepreneurial mindset is needed to ensure that aspiring entrepreneurs can compete in the marketplace. Additionally, having an entrepreneurial mindset could increase the performance of several critical factors essential for entrepreneurial success, such as creativity, risk-taking appetite, and growth mindset, among many others. Rajagopal (2014) added

that having an entrepreneurial mindset can control various challenges and opportunities associated with running a business and come up with new competitive ventures despite limited resources. However, it is considered an “entrepreneurial block” since it is one of the most difficult “self-growth” obstacles for an aspiring entrepreneur. While this sounds almost like a cliché, in reality, it is tough to achieve and manage, which is reiterated by some of the participants in the current study.

“I believe what needs to be changed is the mindset (of the students). Many of our students often think that becoming an entrepreneur is a difficult ordeal to carry out and requires much-starting capital...”

(Latifah, entrepreneurship teacher)

“To get the students to open up their minds about the possibility of becoming an entrepreneur is such a challenging ordeal

for me as an entrepreneurship teacher. I must repeatedly tell them what it takes to be an entrepreneur...”

(Fajar, entrepreneurship teacher)

Interestingly, all the entrepreneurship teachers in this research shared the same view that the 2016 Revision to the 2013 Curriculum is not necessarily better than its predecessor regarding entrepreneurial mindset development. Although the 2016 Revision is much more applicable and relevant to the various specialisations in a vocational high school, it moves the entrepreneurship subject to be taught exclusively in grades 11 and 12. It focuses primarily on creative product creations instead of fundamental entrepreneurial values and attitudes. In comparison, the 2013 Curriculum already taught entrepreneurship from grade 10, emphasising nurturing the students with the essential competencies expected from an entrepreneur, such as having the right mindset, attitude, values, and determination. All the entrepreneurship teachers from the three SMKs interviewed agreed that changing the students' mindset to be more entrepreneurial was paramount. This aligns with the discussions and findings of several studies in the past et al. et al. (e.g. Ja`been, Faisal, & Katsioloudes, 2017; Ridley, Davis, & Korovyakovskaya, 2017; Schoof, 2006; Winarno, 2016; Winarno et al., 2019). Additionally, according to Neck and Greene (2011), the fundamental principles of entrepreneurship (often referred to as “the soft stuff”) include having an entrepreneurial mindset, seeking opportunity, making decisions, nurturing compassion, and taking

risks, among others, are essential traits that must be an inherent part of any entrepreneurial marketing education.

Moreover, since most SMK students in this area come from low-income families, changing their mindset is a lot more challenging than changing the mindset of other students from more affluent backgrounds. Most students from low-income neighbourhoods already have a burning aspiration to start working in a company and earn an income once they graduate from school to support their family's finances. Many of these students take up vocational schools in the first place because they believe they could be readily employable and earn some income once they graduate instead of continuing their studies to higher education.

“To be an entrepreneur requires much initial capital, and honestly, I did not come from money. I would rather find work after graduation to earn money and provide for my family. That has been my plan since the beginning...”

(Dedi, grade 11 student)

The viewpoint is also echoed by one of the entrepreneurship teachers:

“Usually, once (the students) graduate, they want to find employment to get some income immediately. Becoming an entrepreneur does not guarantee them to be successful immediately, and they also have to start over from nothing...”

(Fitri, entrepreneurship teacher)

This is in line with Blanchflower and Oswald's (1998) study, which discovered that one of the significant obstacles for aspiring entrepreneurs is the difficulties associated with obtaining capital to start a business. People born into money are more likely to become self-employed than those from a lower income bracket. This finding is supported by Burke et al. (2008). They argued that having an inheritance from parents could foster perseverance and support one's journey to start a business venture instead of with limited financial means. Irwin and Scott (2010) expanded on this notion by explaining that underprivileged communities typically had the most difficulties raising money for their business ventures. Furthermore, Smith and Beasley (2011) and Field Arranz, Arroyabe, and de Arroyabe (2019) also highlighted that the lack of financial access is one of the most restraining factors in establishing a new business venture for would-be entrepreneurs.

Teachers' role in promoting financial literacy for the students to prepare them for a future as entrepreneurs is also crucial. Latifah, one of the entrepreneurship teachers, explained that she always advocated in her class the importance of saving up at least 30 per cent of the income that the students would receive in their future careers to be used as a "starting capital" for the students' business ventures at some point.

"I always tell my students that once they are employed in a company and start making money, they must set aside a fraction of their income for savings. For instance, if they receive 4 million rupiahs in income, they should save up at least 1 million rupiahs

that should not be withdrawn unless in times of emergency. One of my former students, currently working as an employee in a company, aspires to open her beauty salon in the future. So, I told her to save money to buy the dressing tables. Afterwards, she can save up for the beauty salon chairs until she has all the basics to open her beauty salon."

(Latifah, entrepreneurship teacher)

Field Burke, Fitzroy, and Nolan (2008) also supported this approach to entrepreneurship. He explained that many entrepreneurs had experience working in a company before creating their business venture to gain experience and save up enough money to prepare for their entrepreneurship journey.

Another factor that could discourage people from becoming self-employed is the perceived perpetual challenges vis-à-vis the upcoming business venture. This could typically come in the form of daily uncertain yet relentless entrepreneurial challenges, which ultimately lead to anxiety and stress, as opposed to the relatively more contained and manageable problems associated with becoming an employee (Sandhu et al., 2011). In their study, Cardon and Patel (2015) found that entrepreneurs suffered from stress more than other people who worked as an employee. Such entrepreneurial stressors could eventually lead to burnout (Wei et al., 2015). For a new business venture, the most fundamental entrepreneurial challenges occur when the market does not respond favourably to the offerings and values provided by the company (Rajagopal, 2014), another critical entrepreneurial block for

aspiring entrepreneurs. This is echoed by one of the SMK students in this study.

“Honestly, I can see the perks and benefits of becoming a successful entrepreneur.

However, I am just being realistic here. What if (my business) failed? For now, it is safer and much more convenient for me to work in an established company and earn some money to make ends meet rather than having to endure a lot of risks and challenges of running my own business... To be clear, I want to be an entrepreneur, but it will come down later in life... perhaps once I am settled down.”

(Widhi, grade 12 student)

Conversely, risk is a mentality shaped by certain conditions when something valuable is at stake during particularly demanding and unclear circumstances. A true entrepreneur is considered a moderate “risk-taker” (Kuratko, 2011). There is a significant and linear relationship between risk and entrepreneurship (Rishipal & Jain, 2012) to the point where entrepreneurship is almost synonymous with risk and is considered one of the giant entrepreneurial blocks (Miles, 2014). The higher one’s aversion to risk, the less likely they are to embark on an entrepreneurial journey (Douglas & Shepherd, 2002). Therefore, since people tend to avoid entrepreneurial risks, it is considered one of the entrepreneurial blocks that could hinder SMK students from realising their aspirations to create business ventures. The fear of failure in running a business is also attributed as a significant cause of perceived entrepreneurial risk (Nefzi, 2019).

“I have seen first-hand how challenging it is to run a business since my parents own a small diner outside Mataram. Some days, it could be profitable, but it could be tough to get by on most days, especially during low seasons. It was tough when they had to lay down some employees... That is why I become an SMK student to have a steady job working in a big company once I graduate.”

(Sinta, grade 10 student)

Finally, various studies have also found the need for more skills and resources to be a significant entrepreneurial block for would-be entrepreneurs. Brixiová et al. (2009) discovered that lacking relevant skills has prevented young people from transforming potential business prospects into productive ventures. Field Sousa (2018) states that entrepreneurship skills entail being creative and resourceful, recognising and taking advantage of commercial opportunities, and assuming business risks. In her exhaustive study on skills in the entrepreneurial context, Chell (2013) argued that the fundamental skills required by entrepreneurs are the “alertness to opportunity” and cognitive skills to execute and manage such opportunity. Despite their apparent importance for aspiring entrepreneurs, these skills are challenging to obtain, so they are considered an entrepreneurial block in this study.

“In our vocational high school, we specifically educate our students to be skilful in their chosen specialisation by partnering with various companies to provide relevant training so that later in life, they could be independent and hopefully able to establish

their business venture... It is not an easy undertaking, but we have seen many alumni who opened up their businesses once they acquired the skills, networking, and resources they needed.”

(Fitri, entrepreneurship teacher)

On the other hand, Sandhu et al. (2011) explained that the lack of resources and government assistance could also serve as an entrepreneurial block. Similarly, in their study on entrepreneurship challenges, Kaburi, Mobegi, Kombo, Omari, and Sewe (2012) noted the importance of acquiring and managing resources as a prerequisite to

creating value for entrepreneurs. Kickul, Gundry, Barbosa, and Simms (2010) argued that capturing and managing resources is one of the most crucial aspects of creating a new business. Omoruyi et al. (2017) also stressed that entrepreneurship primarily deals with managing resources well. However, Ferreira et al. (2019) acknowledged the complexities of acquiring the pertinent resources for aspiring entrepreneurs, mostly when external sources own them and cannot be obtained through necessary contracts. In this regard, Rishipal and Jain (2012) also concluded that the lack of resources could lead to a lower degree of achievement among aspiring entrepreneurs.

Table 1. Summary of the Entrepreneurial Blocks

No	Entrepreneurial Blocks	Description	Sources
1	Lack of entrepreneurial mindset	The absence of inventive and vigorous pursuit of entrepreneurial opportunities – opting for a salaried work instead	(Schoof, 2006; Winarno et al., 2019)
2	High starting capital	Perceived difficulties in raising funds/start-up capital to start a new business venture	(Blanchflower & Oswald, 1998; Smith & Beasley, 2011)
3	Aversion to entrepreneurial challenges	Identified challenges associated with starting up a new business venture, such as stress and hard work	(Cardon & Patel, 2015; Sandhu et al., 2011)
4	Risk aversion/fear of failure	Hesitation about the possibility of entrepreneurial risks and loss	(Gifford, 2003; Miles, 2014; Nefzi, 2019; Rishipal & Jain, 2012; Van Praag & Cramer, 2001)
5	Lack of skills and resources	The limitation of skills and supporting resources for aspiring entrepreneurs to start a company	(Brixiová et al., 2009; Ramayah & Harun, 2005; Rishipal & Jain, 2012; Sandhu et al., 2011; Smith & Beasley, 2011)

Evading the Entrepreneurial Blocks

Many disciples of entrepreneurship, whereas their peers are pursuing careers, are pursuing a life path (Neck & Greene, 2011). Unfortunately, despite the dreams of many to become an entrepreneur, only a few realised their aspirations and managed to sustain them in the long run (Timmons, 1992). Therefore, in conjunction with the discussion on the “entrepreneurial blocks” that could explain some of the barriers that budding entrepreneurs from vocational high schools might encounter in their journey to become self-employed and establish their business venture in due course, the researchers also come up with some rationales that could explain how students and alumni of vocational high schools could “escape” the entrepreneurial blocks.

To begin with, the researchers would like to highlight an important insight from one of the interviewees in the current study:

“I always tell my students to start their career by working for others in a company. However, they need to ‘steal’ the expertise, networking, capital, and, most importantly, practical experience that they receive from their workplace to kickstart their future business venture...”

(Latifah, entrepreneurship teacher)

In this regard, previous working experience has been widely acknowledged as one of the main reasons people decide to become self-employed, which is the critical first step toward entrepreneurship (Sandhu et al., 2011). There are at least two main benefits gained from this: first, aspiring entrepreneurs can gain knowledge and experience about the

business and industry, and second, they can also set aside some of their incomes to save up for their eventual business venture (Burke et al., 2008). The experience gained from previous workplaces can also provide aspiring entrepreneurs the ability to become a better decision-makers – an important quality to possess when managing a business – than their counterparts with little to no prior employment backgrounds. The experience cannot be taught in a classroom through formal education (Mintzberg, 2004). This is why modern educational institutions try to instil practical or on-the-job training into their entrepreneurial marketing education to provide students with real-life experience before embarking on the latter’s entrepreneurial venture (Albort-Morant & Oghazi, 2016). Such a line of thinking is also supported by one of the entrepreneurship teachers:

“SMK (vocational high school) students will typically be trained in certain skill sets based on their specialisations. I believe it is important to ensure that with the skills they acquire, they can improve themselves, not just to work as an employee in a company, but also to accumulate and use the experiences they get from their workplace as a foundation to establish their venture...”

(Arief, entrepreneurship teacher)

Graduating SMK students could accumulate experience, resources, and networking by taking upon formal employment opportunities for a certain period to prepare themselves mentally, morally, and financially for a potential future as an entrepreneur. For instance, an alumnus of SMKN 4 who

worked in Bandung at Upnormal, a rapidly-expanding fast-food chain in Indonesia, has recently returned to Mataram to establish his restaurant by leveraging the experience and contacts that he had amassed during his time working for his former employer. In his opinion, the Entrepreneur DeMers (2015) argued that having working experience in relevant fields before becoming entrepreneurs could provide people with the essential skills, intuitions, and the starting capital needed to succeed going forward. The act of accumulating work experience, skills, and knowledge before deciding to transition into entrepreneurship at some point later in life is dubbed by Colombatto and Melnik (2007) as “conversion”. Entrepreneurs are proficient at their trades because of their inherent competence or because they work hard to amass the skills and experience they do not initially possess. Arranz et al. (2019) concluded that it would be difficult for aspiring entrepreneurs to start their own companies without proper experience and training.

“What is particularly appealing about becoming an entrepreneur is the ability to manage my time independently and become my boss. That is the dream. I also want to open up employment opportunities for others, especially during difficult times like this.”

(Lalu Surya, grade 11 student)

“If you ask me, the main advantage of having my own company would be that I would be the master of my destiny. Even when I am tired, I know it would be worth it

since I would reap the rewards of my endeavours.”

(Abdullah, grade 12 student)

As revealed by the students in the current study, the desire for freedom is ascribed by earlier literature as a strong predictor for someone to break free from the entrepreneurial blocks. Ettl and Welter (2010) found that entrepreneurs are motivated by the desire to work independently and the ability to control their life by having flexibility in terms of time and decision-making processes. This aligns with Carter, Gartner, Shaver, and Greene (2007), who explained that one of the justifications for entrepreneurship as a career choice is an individual’s desire for independence: to have more freedom and control to manage their time more flexibly. In their study on the entrepreneurial intention of university students in Andalusia, Arranz et al. (2019) also considered the “desire for freedom” as one of the main appeals for entrepreneurship. Tomski (2014) also concluded in his study that a career as an entrepreneur is predicted by a “sense of freedom”, whereby people develop the intention to become their boss and have a certain degree of financial independence. This is further supported by Davis et al. (2016), which found that the desire for freedom and independence is the most important motivation for opening a new business venture.

“Since elementary school, I have aspired to be a successful entrepreneur. I always wanted to create the next Gojek or Bukalapak and travel worldwide... I know it

is not easy, but I sincerely believe it will ultimately pay off if I put my mind to it.”

(Fadhil, grade 12 student)

“My father always reminded me that my presence in the world should matter to and benefit other people. For me, in order to be able to help others, I need to accumulate enough capital, and the only way for me to do so is by becoming a successful entrepreneur... I want to open many restaurant chains, so I took the ‘tata began’ (culinary) major in my SMK.”

(Abdullah, grade 12 student)

As aptly expressed by the students in this study, the achievement is an essential factor that could stimulate SMK students and graduates to evade the entrepreneurial block and become self-employed. Need for achievement is characterised as one’s sincere conviction that they control the consequences

of their actions and have dependable inputs throughout their journey to achieve their objectives (Locke & Latham, 1994). The higher one’s need for achievement, the more likely they are to undertake an entrepreneurial journey to satisfy their desire for more achievement than could be fulfilled by any other type of work opportunities (Stewart Jr. et al., 2003). According to Rishipal and Jain (2012), the need for achievement is considered an important trait that could counteract the aversion to risks typically associated with entrepreneurship. The need for achievement is also a significant antecedent of entrepreneurial persistence. In other words, aspiring entrepreneurs always push themselves to achieve more in life and discover opportunities amid certain impediments (S. Wu et al., 2007). The need for achievement is also regarded as an inherent trait that could distinguish the behaviour between entrepreneurs and non-entrepreneurs (Indarti et al., 2010).

Table 2. Summary of the Pathways to Evade the Entrepreneurial Blocks

No	Pathways for Evasion	Description	Sources
1	Previous working experience	The practical experience, resources, and networking obtained from prior workplaces which could serve as a fundamental basis to start a business	(Albort-Morant & Oghazi, 2016; Burke et al., 2008; Mintzberg, 2004; Sandhu et al., 2011)
2	Desire for freedom	The inherent aspiration to work autonomously and control one’s life with a certain degree of flexibilities in terms of scheduling and managerial aspects	(Arranz et al., 2019; Carter et al., 2007; Tomski, 2014)

No	Pathways for Evasion	Description	Sources
3	Need for achievement	An aspiring entrepreneur's earnest belief that they are in control over the consequences of their actions and that they have dependable inputs throughout their journey to achieve their objectives	(Locke & Latham, 1994; Rishipal & Jain, 2012; Stewart Jr. et al., 2003)

Source: Developed by the researchers from various sources

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusion

In this study, the researchers presented a thorough understanding of the state of entrepreneurial marketing education in several vocational high schools (SMKs) in Mataram, West Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia, which has seen some success stories in preparing their students to become entrepreneurs. The researchers also developed and proposed an entrepreneurial block framework to help understand the various factors that could hinder would-be entrepreneurs from creating their business ventures, namely, lack of entrepreneurial mindset; perceived high starting capital; aversion to entrepreneurial challenges, stress, and hard work; risk aversion; and limited skills and resources. On the other hand, some counteracting factors could help people break free from the supposed entrepreneurial blocks and become self-employed, namely, previous working experience, desire for freedom, and need for achievement. The outcomes of the present study can be used to improve the entrepreneurial marketing education taught at vocational high schools in Indonesia. Eventually, it is expected that

entrepreneurial marketing education at SMKs can contribute to the development of "entrepreneurship capital", which is a form of social capital that could provide students and alumni of SMK with the access and abilities to act entrepreneurially in keeping with the findings of Audretsch (2017).

Recommendation

Based on the entrepreneurial blocks model that the researchers proposed in this study, it is expected that vocational high school students can be educated about some of the external hurdles and inherent challenges they must cope with to become budding entrepreneurs. This is consistent with Carter et al. (2007), which explained that entrepreneurial marketing education students can be nurtured and educated about the knowledge, competencies, and behaviours to become an effective entrepreneur. Skills and knowledge could have the most impact on one's decision to start a business than any other presumed intrinsic desires. Therefore, understanding the factors that could make or break individuals from becoming an entrepreneur through the proposed entrepreneurial blocks could guide decision-makers and relevant stakeholders of vocational high schools in shaping the

entrepreneurial minds of tomorrow and designing the appropriate business incubation programs for entrepreneurship.

At the same time, to the concerns raised by Kuratko (2011), it is also worth considering integrating the concept of “entrepreneurial risk” in a more practical sense (by sharing, for instance, the personal experience of the teachers in managing risks in the past) to provide SMK students and graduates with a better empirical understanding of how to deal with and manage such a risk. Additionally, future research on the topic can also try to expand on the research scope by investigating other levels of education or analysing the subject using quantitative methods to understand better the causal relationship between the outcomes of the current study and the intention to become an entrepreneur.

While this study provides valuable insights into the barriers and supporting factors for entrepreneurship among vocational high

school graduates in Mataram, Indonesia, some limitations exist. First, the study focused on a specific geographic location and a relatively small sample size, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Future research should include a more extensive and diverse sample from multiple regions to enhance the study's external validity. Additionally, the study primarily focused on identifying the barriers and supporting factors without exploring specific interventions or strategies to address these issues. Future research should investigate the effectiveness of educational programs, interventions, and policies to mitigate the identified barriers and foster entrepreneurship among SMK graduates. This would provide practical insights for policymakers and educators seeking to promote entrepreneurial opportunities for vocational high school students in Indonesia and beyond.

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