Building Students' Career Readiness through Work Readiness: An Analysis of the Influence of Academic Indonesian Language Proficiency and Entrepreneurial Literacy from the Perspective of Social Cognitive Theory

Encil Puspitoningrum[1], Abu Muna Almaududi Ausat[2], Muhammad Aqib Shafiq[3]. Suherlan[4]
[1]Universitas Nusantara PGRI Kediri, Jawa Timur, Indonesia
[2,4]Universitas Subang, Jawa Barat, Indonesia
[3]Ghazi University, Pakistan

DOI: https://doi.org/10.46245/ijorer.v7i1.1097

Sections Info	ABSTRACT
	Objective: This study aims to examine the influence of academic Indonesian language proficiency and entrepreneurial literacy on students' career readiness, with work readiness tested as a mediating variable. The study focuses on undergraduate students in Malang City, a recognized educational hub in East Java, where students are actively preparing for their future careers. **Method:** A quantitative research design was employed using survey data collected from 289 undergraduate students across several universities in Malang. Respondents were selected through purposive sampling, requiring them to have completed at least four semesters. The data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) with SmartPLS 4.0 to evaluate both direct and mediating effects among the variables. Measurement validity and reliability were confirmed through factor loadings, AVE, Composite Reliability, and Cronbach's alpha, while structural model significance was tested using bootstrapping. **Results:** The findings reveal that academic Indonesian language proficiency has a positive and significant effect on career readiness, with work readiness serving as a strong mediator. However, entrepreneurial literacy shows no significant indirect effect on career readiness through work readiness, indicating that entrepreneurial knowledge alone does not sufficiently translate into career preparation without contextual application. **Novelty:** This study contributes by highlighting the critical role of academic language proficiency often overlooked in employability research as a foundational capability that enhances both work readiness and career readiness, thereby offering new insights for higher education institutions in Indonesia.

INTRODUCTION

The transformation of the labor market in the era of globalization and digitalization demands that university students possess career readiness, including practical skills, communication abilities, and entrepreneurial literacy aligned with labor market requirements. Career readiness has become one of the key indicators in measuring graduates' preparedness to face job competition, as those lacking sufficient readiness often encounter difficulties in securing employment commensurate with their field of study (Caballero & Walker, 2010). In the context of higher education, career readiness is closely tied to the development of comprehensive competencies, including strong academic Indonesian language proficiency to support professional communication, as well as entrepreneurial literacy that fosters adaptive, creative, and solution-oriented mindsets in facing the increasingly competitive labor market dynamics.

Internationally, the challenges of global employment are becoming increasingly complex due to technological disruption, automation, and digital transformation. The 2023 World Economic Forum report emphasized that 44% of workers' skills are projected to change within the next five years, and companies worldwide require workers who can

think critically, adapt quickly, and demonstrate effective communication skills (World Economic Forum, 2023). Conversely, the International Labour Organization (ILO) has also noted that many university graduates in developing countries face competency mismatches with industry needs, leading to persistently high unemployment rates among graduates despite their relatively high education levels (International Labour Organization, 2025). This indicates that career readiness has become a global issue demanding serious attention from universities worldwide, including in Indonesia.

At the national level, Indonesia is confronting serious issues concerning the high unemployment rate among university graduates. According to data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) in February 2024, the open unemployment rate (OUR) for higher education graduates Diploma IV/Bachelor/Master/Doctorate stood at 5.63%. This fact demonstrates that completing higher education does not guarantee a graduate's readiness for immediate absorption into the labor market (Mashabi & Prastiwi, 2024). Many companies report that fresh graduates still lack professional communication skills, both oral and written, and demonstrate limited competitiveness in facing entrepreneurial and digitalization challenges. Furthermore, many students are considered unable to leverage entrepreneurial literacy as a basis for developing alternative careers, such as starting their own businesses when formal job opportunities are limited. This phenomenon highlights the gap between academic skills taught in universities and the actual demands of the labor market.

At the provincial level, East Java one of Indonesia's largest higher education hubs faces similar challenges. According to data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) of East Java, the open unemployment rate (OUR) in the province reached 4.88% in August 2023 (BPS, 2023), with most graduates struggling to compete due to limited academic communication skills applicable in the workplace and insufficient entrepreneurial literacy to adapt to market dynamics. Malang City, as one of the country's prominent educational centers with a large student population, serves as a tangible representation of this issue. Many students in Malang achieve strong academic performance, yet upon entering the workforce, they encounter barriers due to inadequate career readiness, particularly in academic Indonesian language skills essential for professional communication, as well as entrepreneurial literacy that could serve as vital capital in navigating an uncertain labor market.

The research phenomenon becomes particularly compelling when examined within universities in Malang City. Several alumni tracer studies conducted at both public and private universities in Malang reveal that most graduates take a relatively long period to secure their first job aligned with their field of study, and some eventually shift to employment sectors that are not directly related to their academic majors (Sudiongko, 2022). This is often caused by weak academic communication skills, including the use of the Indonesian language in professional and scientific contexts, creating barriers during job selection processes as well as workplace interactions. In addition, students' entrepreneurial literacy remains low, preventing them from developing alternative career paths through self-employment when formal job opportunities are limited. Consequently, universities in Malang City face significant challenges in integrating academic Indonesian language learning and entrepreneurial literacy as strategies to enhance students' work readiness.

This study is grounded in the perspective of Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986), emphasizing that an individual's career readiness is shaped by the reciprocal interaction

between personal factors (e.g., language and literacy skills), environmental factors (e.g., support from the universities and the labor market), and behavioral factors (e.g., students' efforts in preparing themselves). Within this theoretical framework, academic Indonesian language proficiency can be interpreted as a form of self-efficacy in communication, while entrepreneurial literacy plays a role in shaping students' outcome expectations and motivation in preparing for their careers. Thus, this theory provides a conceptual foundation for understanding that students' work readiness is determined by internal capacities such as academic language skills and entrepreneurial literacy.

Based on Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986), self-efficacy is one of the most influential personal factors affecting individual behavior and readiness to face challenges, including those in the world of work. Proficiency in academic Indonesian language demonstrates students' level of self-efficacy in communication, as these skills allow them to be more confident in writing scientific reports, presenting ideas systematically, and engaging in professional interactions. A previous study by Kleckner & Butz (2022) found that academic communication skills are closely related to students' readiness in undergoing job selection processes.

H1: Academic Indonesian Language Proficiency has a positive effect on students' Work Readiness.

Entrepreneurial literacy, within the framework of Social Cognitive Theory, can be associated with positive outcome expectations, namely the belief that acquired skills will lead to positive results. Students with high entrepreneurial literacy tend to adopt creative, innovative, and solution-oriented thinking in responding to labor market dynamics. A study conducted by Rini et al. (2024) demonstrated that entrepreneurial literacy contributes significantly to students' readiness in developing careers, whether pursued through formal or non-formal pathways. Therefore, this strengthens the theoretical basis that entrepreneurial literacy fosters students' preparedness to face the labor market.

H2: Entrepreneurial Literacy has a positive effect on students' Work Readiness.

Furthermore, in Social Cognitive Theory, behavior is shaped by the interaction of personal and environmental factors, subsequently affecting outcomes, including students' career readiness. Work readiness serves as an adaptive behavior that mediates the relationship between personal competencies and preparedness to enter the labor market. Students with higher levels of work readiness demonstrate mental preparedness, technical skills, and flexibility to engage in a dynamic labor market. A study by Li et al. (2022) also confirmed that work readiness has a direct effect on students' career readiness.

H3: Work Readiness has a positive effect on Students' Career Readiness.

In addition, academic Indonesian language proficiency is believed to affect career readiness not only directly but also indirectly through work readiness. This aligns with Bandura's (1986) view that self-efficacy plays a role in shaping behavior, subsequently affecting outcomes. In this context, academic language proficiency enhances students' communication self-efficacy. This, in turn, improves their work readiness, thereby impacting their career readiness. A study by Martín (2014) demonstrated that academic communication skills have an indirect effect on successful entry into the labor market through work readiness.

H4: *Work Readiness mediates the relationship between Academic Indonesian Language Proficiency and Students' Career Readiness.*

Similarly, entrepreneurial literacy also has the potential to affect career readiness indirectly through work readiness. Outcome expectations shaped by entrepreneurial literacy encourage students to be more adaptive, resilient, and innovative, thereby enhancing their work readiness before fully entering the workforce. A previous study by Wicaksono et al. (2023) revealed that entrepreneurial literacy impacts career readiness not only directly but also indirectly through work readiness as a mediating variable.

H5: *Work Readiness mediates the relationship between Entrepreneurial Literacy and Students' Career Readiness.*
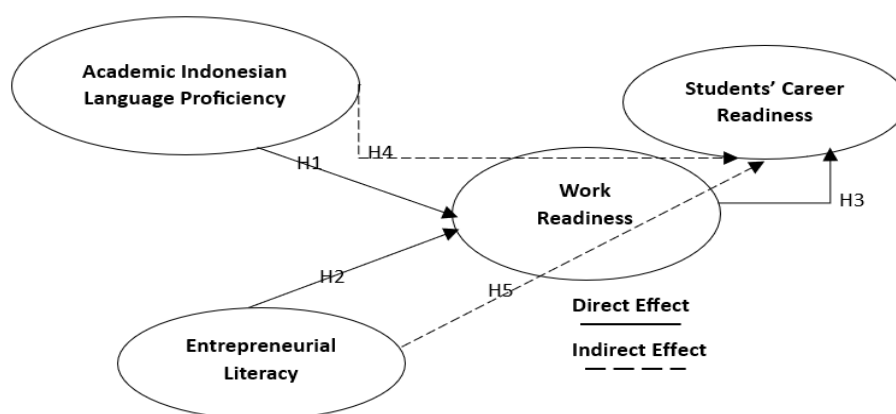

Figure 1. Research Framework

Therefore, the present study is formally designed to pursue the following research objectives:
1. to analyze the effect of academic Indonesian language proficiency on students' work readiness,
2. to examine the effect of entrepreneurial literacy on students' work readiness,
3. to investigate the effect of work readiness on students' career readiness, and
4. to test the mediating role of work readiness in the relationship between academic Indonesian language proficiency and entrepreneurial literacy with students' career readiness within the framework of Social Cognitive Theory.

RESEARCH METHOD
Research Design
This study adopts a quantitative research approach, as it focuses on examining the measurable relationships among academic Indonesian language proficiency, entrepreneurial literacy, work readiness, and students' career readiness. Guided by Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986), the study aims to test how individual capabilities (language proficiency and entrepreneurial literacy) and behavioral factors (work readiness) interact to affect students' career readiness. A survey design was employed, given its suitability for collecting standardized responses from a large number of students and for evaluating both direct and mediated relationships among variables. Data collection utilized a structured questionnaire based on a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree), allowing students to self-assess their competencies and readiness levels. The survey was distributed both online and offline

across multiple universities in Malang City during the period from March to August 2025, ensuring representation from diverse academic programs. SEM-PLS was chosen over covariance-based SEM (CB-SEM) for several methodological reasons. First, SEM-PLS is more appropriate when the primary aim is prediction and theory development rather than theory confirmation, a focus that aligns with this study's objective of exploring the mechanisms linking students' academic and entrepreneurial competencies to readiness outcomes. Second, SEM-PLS is more robust for data that may deviate from multivariate normality an essential consideration since survey data from heterogeneous student populations often fail to meet the strict normality assumptions required by CB-SEM. Third, SEM-PLS performs effectively with complex models and moderate sample sizes, whereas CB-SEM typically requires substantially larger samples to achieve stable parameter estimates. These methodological advantages make SEM-PLS the most suitable analytical approach for the objectives and data characteristics of the present study.

Table 1. Operational Research Variables

Variable	Indicators	Statements	Scale
Academic Indonesian Language Proficiency	Reading academic texts	I am able to understand Indonesian academic articles, journals, or research papers with ease.	Likert 1–5
	Academic writing	I can write academic reports, essays, or research papers using appropriate Indonesian language rules.	Likert 1–5
	Academic speaking	I am confident in presenting my ideas or research in formal academic Indonesian.	Likert 1–5
	Academic listening	I can follow and comprehend lectures, seminars, or academic presentations in Indonesian effectively.	Likert 1–5
Entrepreneurial Literacy	Understanding entrepreneurial concepts	I understand key concepts of entrepreneurship such as innovation, business opportunities, and risk-taking.	Likert 1–5
	Business management knowledge	I have sufficient knowledge of business management, including marketing, finance, and operations.	Likert 1–5
	Business plan ability	I am capable of preparing a business plan that includes a strategy and risk analysis.	Likert 1–5
	Entrepreneurial orientation	I am creative, innovative, and willing to take risks to create a business opportunity.	Likert 1–5
Work Readiness	Work knowledge	I understand the basic knowledge required for the type of job I want to pursue.	Likert 1–5
	Work skills	I have the skills (soft skills and hard skills) needed to perform effectively in the workplace.	Likert 1–5
	Professional attitude	I always maintain discipline, responsibility, and professionalism in completing tasks.	Likert 1–5
	Work motivation	I am highly motivated to contribute and succeed in the workplace.	Likert 1–5
Career Readiness	Career planning	I can create a clear and realistic plan for my future career.	Likert 1–5
	Transition readiness	I am prepared to face challenges when entering the professional work environment for the first time.	Likert 1–5
	Career confidence	I am confident in my ability to achieve my career goals.	Likert 1–5
	Career commitment	I am committed to developing and advancing my career in line with my chosen field.	Likert 1–5

Population and Sample

The study population consists of all undergraduate students enrolled in universities located in Malang City, including both public and private institutions. This population was chosen as Malang is recognized as an educational hub in East Java with a large concentration of students, thereby making it an appropriate context for analyzing academic language use, entrepreneurial literacy, and career readiness. The inclusion criteria required that respondents were active undergraduate students, had completed at least four semesters (to ensure adequate exposure to academic writing and entrepreneurship courses), and were willing to participate voluntarily. A purposive sampling technique was applied to select participants meeting these criteria, enabling the study to focus specifically on students in the stage of preparing for their careers. From a total of 350 distributed questionnaires, 310 were returned, and after screening for completeness and eligibility, 289 responses were retained for analysis. This sample size exceeds the minimum requirement for SEM-PLS, capable of analyzing complex models with relatively moderate sample sizes.

Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed to measure four main constructs: academic Indonesian language proficiency, entrepreneurial literacy, work readiness, and career readiness. Academic Indonesian language proficiency was assessed using indicators such as academic writing skills, the capacity to construct logical arguments, and the proper use of academic vocabulary. Entrepreneurial literacy was measured using indicators of opportunity recognition, business planning, and innovation skills. Work readiness was measured using indicators of adaptability, professional attitude, teamwork, and problem-solving capacity. Lastly, career readiness was assessed using indicators such as clarity of career goals, confidence in navigating job selection processes, and preparedness to enter the labor market. Each construct was measured with multiple items on a Likert scale. The instrument was subjected to a pilot test involving 30 students from a single university in Malang, and feedback from both participants and academic experts was used to refine item wording and improve clarity. The finalized questionnaire was broadly distributed through both Google Forms and printed versions to maximize response rates across campuses.

Data Analysis Techniques

The data collected were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS), suitable for testing complex relationships among latent variables, including mediation effects. The analysis was conducted using SmartPLS 4.0 software. The evaluation process was carried out in two stages: measurement model assessment (outer model) and structural model assessment (inner model). In the outer model analysis, convergent validity was tested using factor loadings, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and Composite Reliability (CR). Indicators are considered valid if their factor loading values exceed 0.70, although values between 0.60 and 0.70 may be accepted in exploratory research. The AVE values should be greater than 0.50, indicating that the constructs explain more than 50% of the variance in their indicators. CR values above 0.70 confirm construct reliability, while internal consistency reliability was further assessed using Cronbach's alpha, which should also exceed 0.70. In the inner model analysis, the explanatory power of the model was assessed using R^2 values, with thresholds of 0.75 (substantial), 0.50 (moderate), and 0.25 (weak). Predictive relevance was examined

through the Q^2 statistic, where values greater than 0 indicate that the model has predictive capability. The significance of the hypothesized relationships, including both direct and mediated effects, was tested using the bootstrapping method with 5,000 resamples, with relationships considered statistically significant at a t-statistic > 1.96 or p-value < 0.05.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Respondent Demographics

Based on the demographic data of 289 student respondents from various universities in Malang, the majority were female, accounting for 59.2%. This figure indicates the predominant participation of female students in this study. In terms of age, the largest group was 20–22 years old at 54%, demonstrating that most respondents were in their active undergraduate study period and fell into the productive age category. Viewed from the study program, the largest proportion came from the Education field at 32.5%, suggesting that students from education-related disciplines had the strongest representation in this study. Regarding year of entry, the highest number of respondents came from the 2022 cohort with 36.3%, indicating that mid-level students in their study progression were more dominant in providing responses. Furthermore, regarding entrepreneurial experience, the majority of respondents (57.1%) had never engaged in entrepreneurship. This provides clear insights into how entrepreneurial literacy affects career readiness among students with limited practical business experience. In terms of university origin, the largest distribution of respondents came from the State University of Malang (UM) at 29.1%, underscoring this institution as the primary representation in the study, followed by other major universities in Malang (see Table 2).

Table 2. Respondents' Demographics (n = 289)

Category	Sub-Category	Number (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	118	40.8%
	Female	171	59.2%
Age	< 20 years	52	18.0%
	20–22 years	156	54.0%
	23–25 years	67	23.2%
	> 25 years	14	4.8%
Study Program	Education	94	32.5%
	Social Sciences & Humanities	77	26.6%
	Science & Technology	71	24.6%
	Economics & Business	47	16.3%
Year of Entry	2021	88	30.4%
	2022	105	36.3%
	2023	96	33.2%
Entrepreneurial Experience	Ever engaged in entrepreneurship	124	42.9%
	Never engaged in entrepreneurship	165	57.1%
University	State University of Malang	84	29.1%
	Brawijaya University	61	21.1%
	Muhammadiyah University of Malang	55	19.0%
	State Islamic University of Malang	39	13.5%
	Merdeka University of Malang	28	9.7%
	State Polytechnic of Malang	22	7.6%
Location	Malang	289	100%

Outer Model Evaluation

The initial stage of SEM-PLS analysis focuses on evaluating the outer model, aiming to assess whether the research constructs meet the criteria of measurement validity and reliability. This step is crucial to ensure that the measurement instruments accurately represent the constructs under study, while also confirming that the collected data are consistent and suitable for further analysis at the structural model stage.

Convergent Validity

Convergent validity is used to examine the extent to which indicators reflecting each construct are strongly correlated and effectively able to capture the underlying theoretical concept. A construct is considered valid if its indicators have a loading factor value exceeding 0.70, although in exploratory studies a value of 0.60 may still be acceptable. Based on the results of data processing using SmartPLS 4.0, all indicators of the constructs Academic Indonesian Language Proficiency, Entrepreneurial Literacy, Work Readiness, and Career Readiness indicated loading factor values greater than 0.70 (see Table 3). This confirms that all indicators have sufficient correlations and can be considered valid representations of their respective constructs.

Reliability Test

Construct reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha (CA) and Composite Reliability (CR) values to evaluate the internal consistency among indicators. A construct is deemed reliable when its CA and CR exceed 0.70. Based on the analysis results (Table 3), all constructs in this study had Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values above the threshold. This indicates that the research instrument demonstrates high consistency in measuring the variables under study, establishing it as a stable and trustworthy measurement tool.

Table 3. Outer Model Evaluation Results

Construct / Latent Variable	Indicator	Loading Factor	AVE	CR	CA
Academic Indonesian Language Proficiency (AILP)	AILP1	0.81			
	AILP2	0.79	0.62	0.88	0.83
	AILP3	0.76			
	AILP4	0.82			
Entrepreneurial Literacy (EL)	EL1	0.77			
	EL2	0.80	0.64	0.89	0.85
	EL3	0.83			
	EL4	0.81			
Work Readiness (WR)	WR1	0.84			
	WR2	0.82	0.66	0.90	0.86
	WR3	0.80			
	WR4	0.81			
Students' Career Readiness (SCR)	SCR1	0.83			
	SCR2	0.85	0.68	0.91	0.87
	SCR3	0.82			
	SCR4	0.84			

Inner Model Evaluation

The second stage of the SEM-PLS analysis focuses on the inner model, which involves evaluating the structural relationships between the constructs and determining the explanatory power of the research model. This step is essential to verify whether the hypothesized paths are supported by the data and whether the model demonstrates predictive relevance.

Coefficient of Determination (R²)

R² values represent the proportion of variance in endogenous variables explained by their predictors. According to Hair et al. (2011), R² values of 0.75, 0.50, and 0.25 can be interpreted as indicating substantial, moderate, and weak explanatory power, respectively. In this study, the R² value for Work Readiness is 0.612, indicating moderate explanatory power from Academic Indonesian Language Proficiency and Entrepreneurial Literacy. Meanwhile, Career Readiness has an R² value of 0.578, indicating that Work Readiness moderately explains Career Readiness (see Table 4).

Predictive Relevance (Q²)

Q² values were obtained using the blindfolding technique. A Q² value greater than 0 indicates that the model has adequate predictive relevance. The results reveal Q² values of 0.421 for Work Readiness and 0.387 for Career Readiness, confirming that the model has strong predictive power in explaining the endogenous variables (see Table 4).

Table 4. R² and Q² Values for Endogenous Variables

Endogenous Variable	Predictor Variable(s)	R²	Q²	Results
Work Readiness	Academic Indonesian Language Proficiency, Entrepreneurial Literacy	0.612	0.421	Moderate
Career Readiness	Work Readiness	0.578	0.387	Moderate

Path Coefficients and Hypothesis Testing

Path coefficients describe the magnitude and direction of relationships between constructs, while hypothesis testing evaluates their statistical significance. The significance of each path was examined using the bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples. A hypothesis is considered supported when the t-statistic exceeds 1.96 at a 5% significance level, or when the p-value < 0.05 (see Table 5). The results indicate that Academic Indonesian Language Proficiency → Work Readiness has a positive and significant effect with a coefficient of 0.341, t-statistic of 4.12, and p-value of 0.000, implying that stronger academic language skills enhance students' workplace readiness. Conversely, the path Entrepreneurial Literacy → Work Readiness is negative and non-significant, with a coefficient of −0.092, t-statistic of 1.12, and p-value of 0.263, suggesting that entrepreneurial knowledge alone does not directly strengthen work readiness. Furthermore, Work Readiness → Career Readiness exhibits a strong and significant positive effect with a coefficient of 0.761, t-statistic of 12.33, and p-value of 0.000, confirming that work readiness is a crucial determinant of students' transition into professional careers. Mediation analysis also reveals that Work Readiness significantly mediates the relationship between Academic Indonesian Language Proficiency and Career Readiness (indirect effect β = 0.260, t = 3.45, p = 0.001), but does not significantly mediate the relationship between Entrepreneurial Literacy and Career Readiness (indirect effect β = −0.070, t = 1.05, p = 0.293).

Table 5. Hypotheses Test Results

Hypothesis	Path	Path Coefficient (β)	t-statistic	p-value	Decision
H1	Academic Indonesian Language Proficiency → Work Readiness	0.341	4.12	0.000	Supported
H2	Entrepreneurial Literacy → Work Readiness	−0.092	1.12	0.263	Not Supported

Hypothesis	Path	Path Coefficient (β)	t-statistic	p-value	Decision
H3	Work Readiness → Students' Career Readiness	0.761	12.33	0.000	Supported
H4	Academic Indonesian Language Proficiency → Work Readiness → Students' Career Readiness (indirect)	0.260	3.45	0.001	Supported
H5	Entrepreneurial Literacy → Work Readiness → Students' Career Readiness (indirect)	−0.070	1.05	0.293	Not Supported

Discussion

Academic Indonesian Language Proficiency and Work Readiness

The results indicate that Academic Indonesian Language Proficiency has a positive and significant effect on Work Readiness. This suggests that students with stronger academic reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills tend to show higher levels of work knowledge, skills, professional attitudes, and motivation. These findings are consistent with Social Cognitive Theory, underscoring that self-efficacy built through cognitive and communication abilities enhances individuals' confidence and readiness for professional challenges (Bandura, 1986).

This finding is also consistent with prior studies, which have found that students' academic literacy skills significantly contribute to work readiness through the mastery of scientific writing and presentation skills (Wollscheid et al., 2021). Similarly, another study has emphasized that academic communication competence is a key factor affecting youth career readiness, as academic language proficiency can be translated into professional communication skills in the workplace (Braga & Abreu, 2023). Thus, the present study strengthens the existing literature, demonstrating that a mastery of academic language is beneficial in building an essential foundation for students' work readiness across diverse fields.

When associated with the demographic characteristics of respondents, the majority of students in the sample were aged 20–22 years old (54%) and were enrolled in Education study programs (32.5%), a group generally at a productive stage in developing academic competencies and preparing for the transition into the workforce. This suggests that the dominance of respondents within a younger age group and a strong academic background makes them more adaptive in sharpening their academic language skills, which subsequently has a positive impact on enhancing their work readiness. In addition, the majority of respondents were female (59.2%). As highlighted in numerous studies, female students often demonstrate greater attentiveness in academic literacy, further reinforcing the relationship between academic language proficiency and work readiness. These findings indicate that enhancing academic Indonesian language competence is a key factor that universities should prioritize in preparing graduates to enter the labor market more competitively.

Entrepreneurial Literacy and Work Readiness

The findings reveal that Entrepreneurial Literacy does not have a significant effect on Work Readiness. Students' understanding of entrepreneurial concepts and business management alone is insufficient to build work knowledge, skills, professional attitude,

or motivation. This suggests that theoretical knowledge must be supported by practical experience and direct exposure to business or industry settings to enhance work readiness.

This finding is consistent with a study revealing that entrepreneurial literacy, without the support of real business practice, does not make a significant contribution to students' work readiness (Rini et al., 2024). Conversely, other studies have emphasized that students' work readiness is more effectively shaped through experiential learning such as internships, business incubators, or direct involvement in entrepreneurial projects (Lantu et al., 2022). This can be explained using Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986), stating that individual behavior is shaped through the interaction of cognitive factors, environment, and experience. In this context, despite the fact that students may have entrepreneurial knowledge, the lack of direct practice prevents the formation of self-efficacy that would enhance professional attitude and work motivation.

The demographic characteristics of respondents further reinforce these findings. The majority of students were aged 20–22 years (54.0%) and most had no prior entrepreneurial experience (57.1%), meaning that their entrepreneurial literacy remains largely theoretical and less applicable. Furthermore, respondents were predominantly from Education (32.5%) and Social Sciences & Humanities (26.6%), fields that typically offer less exposure to entrepreneurship. In contrast, only 16.3% were enrolled in Economics or Business programs. This condition explains why entrepreneurial literacy has no significant effect on work readiness, as students were more accustomed to theory-based learning rather than business practice. Therefore, this study underscores the importance for universities to integrate entrepreneurial literacy with real-world experiential learning in order to meaningfully enhance students' work readiness.

Work Readiness and Students' Career Readiness

Work Readiness has a positive and significant effect on Students' Career Readiness. Students with higher levels of work-related knowledge, skills, professionalism, and motivation tend to have more defined career plans, stronger confidence, and higher commitment. This supports Social Cognitive Theory, positing that individuals' experiences and competencies enhance their confidence in pursuing career goals (Bandura, 1986).

This finding is consistent with previous studies stating that students' work readiness is closely related to confidence in making career choices, particularly when they possess work skills relevant to industry needs (Zhou et al., 2023). Similarly, other studies have found that work motivation and professional attitude play a vital role in strengthening students' commitment to achieving long-term career goals (Sholikah et al., 2021). Thus, this study reinforces the empirical evidence that work readiness functions as a psychological factor that fosters students' confidence and preparedness to navigate career transitions more effectively.

When linked to respondents' demographic characteristics, the majority of students were aged between 20–22 years (54%), a critical transition phase from education to employment, where high work readiness significantly contributes to building career readiness. In addition, most respondents hailed from the Education program (32.5%). This program typically emphasizes preparation for formal employment such as roles as educators or other professionals within the education sector, resulting in more defined career planning and commitment. The majority of respondents were female (59.2%), a

demographic that prior research has frequently associated with a stronger tendency toward structured career planning. This further reinforces the relationship between work readiness and career readiness. Taken together, these findings suggest that universities' investment in enhancing students' knowledge, skills, professional attitudes, and work motivation will directly reinforce their readiness to enter an increasingly competitive labor market.

Work Readiness, Academic Indonesian Language Proficiency, and Students' Career Readiness

Work Readiness mediates the relationship between Academic Indonesian Language Proficiency and Career Readiness. Strong academic reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills help students develop professional competence and motivation, which in turn enhance their career planning and confidence. This finding aligns with Social Cognitive Theory, emphasizing that cognitive and communication abilities foster self-efficacy and proactive career preparation (Bandura, 1986).

This result is also consistent with prior studies indicating that students' academic literacy skills enhance work readiness, which in turn affects career readiness, as academic language skills serve as the foundation for developing professional competencies (Wollscheid et al., 2021). Similarly, another study emphasized that strong academic communication skills allow students to more quickly master industry-relevant competencies, thereby increasing their confidence in navigating career transitions (Oliveira & Marques, 2024). Therefore, this study offers additional empirical support for the role of work readiness as a key mediator in the relationship between academic language proficiency and students' career readiness, positioning academic literacy as a strategic factor in preparing a competitive workforce.

Regarding respondents' demographic characteristics, the majority of respondents were between 20–22 years (54%) and were enrolled in Education programs (32.5%), a stage in which students typically develop academic skills while beginning to formulate career plans. This supports the finding that robust academic language proficiency at a productive age aids students in strengthening work readiness, thereby supporting their career readiness. Furthermore, with the majority of female participants (59.2%), the results also suggest a tendency among female students to engage more meticulously in developing academic literacy skills, positively impacting both work readiness and career readiness. These findings underscore the importance of enhancing academic Indonesian language proficiency within university curricula, as it plays a significant role in advancing work readiness, an essential mediating pathway toward students' career readiness.

Work Readiness, Entrepreneurial Literacy, and Students' Career Readiness

The results indicate that Entrepreneurial Literacy does not have a significant effect on Career Readiness when mediated by Work Readiness. While Entrepreneurial Literacy enhances students' conceptual understanding of business, it has not led to increased work readiness in terms of knowledge, skills, professionalism, or motivation. This outcome is likely attributable to the fact that the majority of respondents (61%) were aged 20–24 years and still transitioning from university to the workforce. At this stage, entrepreneurial knowledge remains largely theoretical and has not yet been applied in real work settings.

This finding is consistent with prior studies indicating that entrepreneurial literacy only has a significant effect when students possess real-world experience in professional or business environments (Kassean et al., 2015). In other words, without hands-on application, entrepreneurial literacy remains theoretical and does not enhance students' readiness for the world of work. Within the framework of Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986), this can be explained by the fact that while students may acquire cognitive knowledge about entrepreneurship, key components of the theory such as self-efficacy and observational learning are not yet fully developed. As a result, they do not effectively contribute to improving work readiness. This suggests that entrepreneurial literacy alone does not significantly contribute to career readiness through work readiness, as a gap remains between conceptual knowledge and the actual demands of the labor market.

Additionally, the results suggest a potential mismatch between the entrepreneurial skills taught to students and the professional demands of the workforce. Many students tend to focus more on developing an orientation toward new venture creation, while paying less attention to cultivating skills required of professional employees, such as workplace discipline, goal-oriented work motivation, and professional attitude. Therefore, although entrepreneurial literacy provides valuable foundational knowledge, its impact on work readiness remains insignificant unless complemented by practical experiences such as internships, field practice, or business incubation programs. This finding implies that university-level entrepreneurship education should strive to balance theoretical instruction with practical application, ensuring that students develop work readiness aligned with the needs of both industry and entrepreneurial pursuits.

CONCLUSION

Fundamental Finding: The results of this study demonstrate that Academic Indonesian Language Proficiency has a positive and significant effect on Work Readiness, whereas Entrepreneurial Literacy has a negative and insignificant effect. Furthermore, Work Readiness is shown to have a positive and significant effect on Students' Career Readiness and serves as a significant mediator in the relationship between Academic Indonesian Language Proficiency and Career Readiness. However, Work Readiness does not serve as a significant mediator in the relationship between Entrepreneurial Literacy and Career Readiness. These findings underscore that mastery of academic literacy in Indonesian plays an essential role in building students' work readiness, which subsequently enhances their career readiness, while entrepreneurial literacy without practical experience has not yet been able to support students' career readiness. **Implication:** This study reinforces the relevance of Social Cognitive Theory, underscoring the interaction between cognitive abilities, experience, and self-efficacy in shaping behavior and individuals' readiness to face career challenges. The findings confirm that work readiness functions as a key mechanism linking academic skills to career readiness. For universities, these results indicate a need to reinforce academic Indonesian language learning as a foundation for developing students' work readiness. Entrepreneurial literacy programs should also be supplemented with practical experiences including internships, business simulations, or entrepreneurship incubation to generate a stronger, more meaningful impact on students' career readiness. For students, the findings suggest that career readiness can be enhanced by strengthening academic competence, developing professional skills, and actively engaging in real-

world entrepreneurial activities. However, a significant limitation of this study is its cross-sectional design. As data were collected at a single point in time, the study cannot capture the longitudinal development or changes in students' work readiness or career readiness. This limitation also restricts the ability to draw strong causal inferences regarding the developmental processes underlying readiness formation. Future studies employing longitudinal or experimental designs are therefore needed to trace changes in readiness more accurately over time and to strengthen the causal interpretation of these relationships. **Limitation:** This study has several limitations. First, data were collected solely from students in Malang. Therefore, the results may not be fully representative of conditions in other regions. Second, the entrepreneurial literacy variable used was limited to theoretical dimensions and academic concepts of entrepreneurship without considering real entrepreneurial practice experiences. Third, as a cross-sectional study, it cannot capture the dynamic changes in students' work readiness and career readiness over time. **Future Research:** Future studies are recommended to expand the scope of respondents across diverse regions and academic disciplines to enhance the generalizability of the findings. Moreover, entrepreneurial literacy should be measured by incorporating real business practice experiences. Employing a longitudinal method would also allow for the observation of how students' work readiness and career readiness evolve over time. For universities, a practical recommendation is to strengthen the Academic Indonesian Language curriculum through applied approaches and integrate entrepreneurial literacy with field practice programs relevant to labor market demands.

REFERENCES
Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*. Prentice-Hall, Inc.

BPS, P. J. T. (2023). *Tingkat Pengangguran Terbuka (TPT) Jawa Timur pada Agustus 2023 sebesar 4,88 persen*. Jatim.Bps.Go.Id. https://jatim.bps.go.id/id/pressrelease/2023/11/06/1379/tingkat-pengangguran-terbuka--tpt--jawa-timur-pada-agustus-2023-sebesar-4-88-persen.html

Braga, I., & Abreu, A. (2023). Communication Skills in Higher Education Versus the Labor Market: Different Perceptions and Valuations. In *Smart Innovation, Systems and Technologies* (pp. 229–245). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-19-9960-4_21

Caballero, C. L., & Walker, A. (2010). Work readiness in graduate recruitment and selection: A review of current assessment methods. *Journal of Teaching and Learning for Graduate Employability*, *1*(1), 13–25. https://doi.org/10.21153/jtlge2010vol1no1art546

Forum, W. E. (2023). *The Future of Jobs Report 2023*. Www.Weforum.Org. https://www.weforum.org/publications/the-future-of-jobs-report-2023/in-full/4-skills-outlook/

Hair, J. F., Sarstedt, M., Ringle, C. M., & Mena, J. A. (2011). An assessment of the use of

partial least squares structural equation modeling in marketing research. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *40*(3), 414–433. https://doi.org/10.1007/S11747-011-0261-6

Kassean, H., Vanevenhoven, J., Liguori, E., & Winkel, D. E. (2015). Entrepreneurship education: a need for reflection, real-world experience and action. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research*, *21*(5), 690–708. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEBR-07-2014-0123

Kleckner, M. J., & Butz, N. T. (2022). Developing Entry-Level Communication Skills: A Comparison of Student and Employer Perceptions. *Business and Professional Communication Quarterly*, *85*(2), 192–221. https://doi.org/10.1177/23294906221078300

Lantu, D. C., Suharto, Y., Fachira, I., Permatasari, A., & Anggadwita, G. (2022). Experiential learning model: improving entrepreneurial values through internship program at start-ups. *Higher Education, Skills and Work-Based Learning*, *12*(1), 107–125. https://doi.org/10.1108/HESWBL-01-2021-0014

Li, J., Huang, Y., Fong, D. Y. T., Chen, J., & Song, Y. (2022). Work readiness: Its determinants and association with work-related outcomes among new graduate nurses. *Journal of Nursing Management*, *30*(7), 2968–2981. https://doi.org/10.1111/jonm.13691

Martín, R. D. (2014). The Importance of Communication Competency for Employability. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, *139*, 387–394. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.08.024

Mashabi, S., & Prastiwi, M. (2024). *Data BPS: Ada 7,2 Juta Pengangguran di Indonesia, Mayoritas Lulusan SMK*. Www.Kompas.Com. https://www.kompas.com/edu/read/2024/08/07/135459571/data-bps-ada-72-juta-pengangguran-di-indonesia-mayoritas-lulusan-smk

Oliveira, Í., & Marques, C. (2024). The Role of Career Adaptability and Academic Engagement in College Student's Life Satisfaction. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *21*(5), 596. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph21050596

Organization, I. L. (2025). *Skills and jobs mismatches in low- and middle-income countries*. Www.Ilo.Org. https://www.ilo.org/publications/major-publications/skills-and-jobs-mismatches-low-and-middle-income-countries

Rini, R. S., Hairunisya, N. H., Sudarmiani, S., & Trisnantari, H. E. T. (2024). The Influence of Entrepreneurial Literacy and Entrepreneurial Practice on Entrepreneurial Readiness In The Industrial Era 4.0. *IJE : Interdisciplinary Journal of Education*, *2*(2), 101–119. https://doi.org/10.61277/ije.v2i2.89

Sholikah, M., Muhyadi, M., Indartono, S., Kenzhaliyev, O. B., & Kassymova, G. K. (2021). Self-Efficacy and Student Achievement for Enhancing Career Readiness: The Mediation of Career Maturity. *Jurnal Pendidikan Teknologi Dan Kejuruan*, *27*(1), 15–25. https://doi.org/10.21831/jptk.v27i1.35657

Sudiongko, A. (2022). *Tracer Study 2022: Keterserapan Lulusan Fakultas Humaniora UIN Maliki Malang dalam Dunia Kerja Memuaskan*. Jatimtimes.Com. jatimtimes.com/baca/279534/20221209/120900/tracer-study-2022-keterserapan-lulusan-fakultas-humaniora-uin-maliki-malang-dalam-dunia-kerja-memuaskan

Wicaksono, A. B., Muwarni, F. D., Wishnu Wardana, L., & Ibadil Maula, F. (2023). Digital

Marketing Literacy as A Mediation of Online Business Readiness Influenced by Entrepreneurship Education (Study on Business Operators in Malang Raya). *Journal of Applied Business, Taxation and Economics Research*, 2(6), 646–664. https://doi.org/10.54408/jabter.v2i6.203

Wollscheid, S., Lødding, B., & Aamodt, P. O. (2021). Prepared for higher education? Staff and student perceptions of academic literacy dimensions across disciplines. *Quality in Higher Education*, 27(1), 20–39. https://doi.org/10.1080/13538322.2021.1830534

Zhou, D., Peng, Z., & Zhou, H. (2023). The influence of career decision-making self-efficacy on employability of higher vocational students: mediated by emotional intelligence. *Frontiers in Education*, *8*, 1–12. https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2023.1274430

*Encil Puspitoningrum (Corresponding Author)
Department of Indonesian Language and Literature Education, Universitas Nusantara PGRI
Jl. Ahmad Dahlan No.76, Mojoroto, Kota Kediri, Jawa Timur 64112, Indonesia.
Email: encilpuspitoningrum.unp.kediri@gmail.com

Abu Muna Almaududi Ausat
Department of Business Administration, Universitas Subang
Jl. Raden Ajeng Kartini No.KM. 3, Pasirkareumbi, Subang, Jawa Barat 41285, Indonesia.
Email: abumuna742@unsub.ac.id

Muhammad Aqib Shafiq
Department of Business Administration, Ghazi University
College Rd, BLOCK 18, Dera Ghazi Khan, Pakistan
Email: mastoiaqib@gmail.com

Suherlan
Department of Public Administration
Universitas Subang
Jl. Raden Ajeng Kartini No.KM. 3, Pasirkareumbi, Subang, Jawa Barat 41285, Indonesia.
Email: suherlan@unsub.ac.id