

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 Cogniti

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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 research 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 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 positively and significantly influences 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, 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, which includes 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 who lack sufficient readiness often encounter difficulties in securing employment relevant to 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 (Forum, 2023). On the other hand, 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 (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 faces serious problems 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) of higher education graduates—Diploma IV/Bachelor/Master/Doctorate—stood at 5.63%. This fact demonstrates that completing higher education does not automatically guarantee 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. Moreover, many students are considered unable to leverage entrepreneurial literacy as a foundation 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. Based on 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 more 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 require 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 linear with 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, which creates 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), which emphasizes 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 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 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 reflects 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 outcome expectations, namely the belief that acquired skills will lead to specific 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 through formal or non-formal pathways. 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 shaped by the interaction of personal and environmental factors influences outcomes, one of which is 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. Research by Li et al. (2022) also confirmed that work readiness directly influences students' career readiness.

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

In addition, academic Indonesian language proficiency is believed to influence 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, which subsequently affects outcomes. In this context, academic language proficiency enhances students' communication self-efficacy, which in turn improves their work readiness, thereby impacting their career readiness. A study by Martín (2014) demonstrated that academic communication skills exert an indirect influence 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 influence 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.

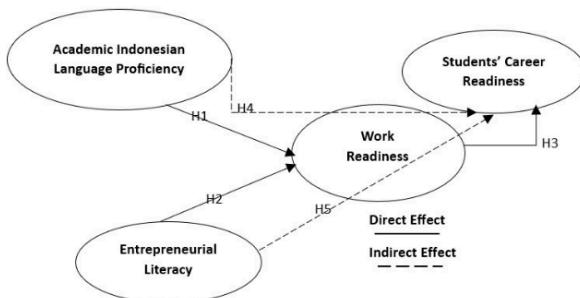


Figure 1. Research Framework

The purpose of this study is to analyze the effect of academic Indonesian language proficiency and entrepreneurial literacy on students' work readiness, to examine the influence of work readiness on students' career readiness, and to test the mediating role of work readiness in the relationship between academic Indonesian language proficiency and entrepreneurial literacy with students' career readiness from the perspective of Social Cognitive Theory, with a focus on universities in Malang City.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study adopts a quantitative research approach because it focuses on examining measurable relationships among academic Indonesian language proficiency, entrepreneurial literacy, work readiness, and students' career readiness. Guided by the 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 influence students' career readiness (see Table 1). A survey design was employed, as it is appropriate for collecting standardized responses from a large sample of students in order to evaluate both direct and mediated relationships among variables. Data were collected using 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 online and offline across multiple universities in Malang City during the period of March to August 2025, ensuring that respondents represented diverse academic programs.

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 ideas or	Likert

		research in formal academic Indonesian.	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 the 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 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

15 Population and Sample

The study population consists of undergraduate students enrolled in universities located in Malang City, including both public and private institutions. This population was chosen because Malang is recognized as an educational hub in East Java with a large concentration of students, 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 who met these criteria, allowing

the study to focus specifically on students who were 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, which is capable of analyzing complex models with relatively moderate sample sizes.

9 Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected through 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 through indicators such as academic writing ability, the capacity to construct logical arguments, and the proper use of academic vocabulary. Entrepreneurial literacy was measured through indicators of opportunity recognition, business planning, and innovation skills. Work readiness was measured through indicators of adaptability, professional attitude, teamwork, and problem-solving capacity. Career readiness was assessed through indicators such as clarity of career goals, confidence in facing 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 one university in Malang, and feedback from both participants and academic experts was used to refine item wording and improve clarity. The finalized questionnaire was then administered widely through both Google Forms and printed versions to maximize response rates across campuses.

9 Data Analysis Techniques

The data collected were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS), which is 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 still be accepted in exploratory research. The AVE values should be greater than 0.50, indicating that 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 City, the majority were female, accounting for 59.2%, indicating the dominant

participation of female students in this study. In terms of age, the largest group was 20–22 years old at 54%, reflecting that most respondents were in their active undergraduate study period and belonged to 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 research. By year of entry, the highest number of respondents came from the 2022 cohort with 36.3%, showing 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, which provides clearer insights into how entrepreneurial literacy influences 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%, highlighting this institution as the primary representation in the study, followed by other major universities in Malang City (see Table 2).

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 City	289	100%

Outer Model Evaluation

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

20 **Convergent Validity**

Convergent validity is used to examine the extent to which indicators reflecting each construct are strongly correlated and able to capture the underlying theoretical concept. A construct is considered valid if its indicators have a loading factor value above 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—showed 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.

11 **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, making it a stable and trustworthy measurement tool.

33 **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 SEM-PLS analysis focuses on the inner model, which evaluates the structural relationships between constructs and determines 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 (R^2)

R^2 values represent the proportion of variance in endogenous variables explained by their predictors. According to Hair et al. (2021), R^2 values of 0.75, 0.50, and 0.25 can be

interpreted as substantial, moderate, and weak explanatory power, respectively. In this study, the R^2 value for Work Readiness is 0.612, indicating moderate explanatory power from Academic Indonesian Language Proficiency and Entrepreneurial Literacy. Meanwhile, Career Readiness has an R^2 value of 0.578, showing that Work Readiness moderately explains Career Readiness (see Table 4).

8 Predictive Relevance (Q^2)

Q^2 values were obtained using the blindfolding procedure. A Q^2 value greater than 0 indicates that the model has predictive relevance. The results reveal Q^2 values of 0.421 for Work Readiness and 0.387 for Career Readiness, confirming that the model has strong predictive capability in explaining the endogenous constructs (see Table 4).

Table 4. R^2 and Q^2 Values for Endogenous Variables

Endogenous Variable	Predictor Variable(s)	R^2	Q^2	Results
Work Readiness	Academic Indonesian Language Proficiency, Entrepreneurial Literacy	0.612	0.421	Moderate
Career Readiness	Work Readiness	0.578	0.387	Moderate

3 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 show 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, meaning that stronger academic language skills enhance students' workplace readiness. Conversely, the path Entrepreneurial Literacy → Work Readiness is negative and not significant, with a coefficient of -0.092, t-statistic of 1.12, and p-value of 0.263, indicating 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 $\beta = 0.260$, $t = 3.45$, $p = 0.001$), but does not significantly mediate the relationship between Entrepreneurial Literacy and Career Readiness (indirect effect $\beta = -0.070$, $t = 1.05$, $p = 0.293$).

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
H3	Work Readiness → Students' Career Readiness	0.761	12.33	0.000	Supported

Career Readiness						
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

Based on the results of hypothesis testing for H1, the relationship between Academic Indonesian Language Proficiency and Work Readiness shows a path coefficient value of 0.341, with a t-statistic = 4.12 and a p-value = 0.000, thus proving to have a positive and significant effect. This finding indicates that the better students' skills in academic reading, academic writing, academic speaking, and academic listening, the higher their readiness to enter the workforce, as reflected in the improvement of work knowledge, work skills, professional attitude, and work motivation. These results support the framework of Social Cognitive Theory, which emphasizes that self-efficacy shaped by cognitive, linguistic, and communication abilities influences individuals' confidence in facing challenges and enhances their preparedness in professional contexts (Bandura, 1986).

This finding is also consistent with prior studies, which found that students' academic literacy skills significantly contribute to work readiness through mastery of scientific writing and presentation skills (Wollscheid et al., 2021). Similarly, other research has emphasized that academic communication competence is one of the key factors 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 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 between 20-22 years old (54%) and came from 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 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%), who, as highlighted in many studies, often show greater attentiveness in academic literacy, further reinforcing the relationship between academic language proficiency and work readiness. These findings indicate that improving 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

Based on the results of hypothesis testing for H2, the findings show that Entrepreneurial Literacy has a negative and insignificant effect on Work Readiness, with a path coefficient (β) = -0.092, t-statistic = 1.12, and p-value = 0.263. Since the p-

value is greater than 0.05, the hypothesis is not supported. This means that students' understanding of entrepreneurial concepts, business management knowledge, business plan ability, and entrepreneurial orientation does not significantly contribute to the development of work knowledge, work skills, professional attitude, or work motivation. These results suggest that entrepreneurial literacy at the cognitive level alone is insufficient to build students' work readiness, as readiness for work requires more practical experience and direct interaction with the business and industrial world.

This finding is consistent with research that shows 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), which states that individual behavior is shaped through the interaction of cognitive factors, environment, and experience. In this context, although 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%), which means their entrepreneurial literacy remains largely theoretical and less applicable. Furthermore, only 16.3% of respondents came from Economics and Business study programs, while the majority were from Education (32.5%) and Social Sciences & Humanities (26.6%), fields that typically provide less exposure to entrepreneurial activities. This condition explains why entrepreneurial literacy did not significantly affect work readiness, as students were more accustomed to theory-based learning rather than business practice. Therefore, this study highlights 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

Based on the results of hypothesis testing H3, the relationship between Work Readiness and Students' Career Readiness shows a path coefficient value of 0.761, with a t-statistic of 12.33 and a p-value of 0.000, thereby proving a positive and significant effect. This indicates that the higher the level of students' work readiness, reflected in work knowledge, work skills, professional attitude, and work motivation, the higher their career readiness as measured by career planning, transition readiness, career confidence, and career commitment. These results align with Social Cognitive Theory, which emphasizes that an individual's confidence in facing new tasks or situations is strongly influenced by their experiences and competencies (Bandura, 1986), meaning students with strong work readiness are more confident in planning and pursuing their desired career paths.

This finding is consistent with previous studies stating that students' work readiness is closely related to confidence in making career choices, especially 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 research reinforces 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 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 came from Education programs (32.5%), which generally emphasize preparation for formal employment such as educators or professionals in the education sector, resulting in clearer career planning and commitment. The majority of respondents were female (59.2%), who in previous research have often shown a greater tendency to plan their careers in a structured manner, further strengthening the relationship between work readiness and career readiness. This condition indicates 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

Based on the results of hypothesis testing H4, the indirect effect path coefficient was 0.260, with a t-statistic of 3.45 and a p-value of 0.001, indicating that Work Readiness positively and significantly mediates the relationship between Academic Indonesian Language Proficiency and Students' Career Readiness. This means that students' ability to read academic texts, write academically, speak academically, and listen academically indirectly enhances career readiness through improved work readiness. Students with strong academic language proficiency are more capable of developing work knowledge, work skills, professional attitudes, and work motivation, which ultimately contribute to career planning, transition readiness, career confidence, and career commitment. This finding is consistent with Social Cognitive Theory, which emphasizes that cognitive and communication skills play a key role in shaping self-efficacy and proactive behavior in preparing for future careers (Bandura, 1986).

This result is also consistent with prior studies showing that students' academic literacy skills strengthen 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 students with strong academic communication skills are quicker to master work skills relevant to industry needs, making them more confident in facing career transitions (Oliveira & Marques, 2024). Therefore, this study provides further empirical evidence that work readiness serves as a crucial mechanism mediating the effect of academic language proficiency on students' career readiness, positioning academic literacy as a strategic factor in preparing competitive human resources.

Considering respondents' demographic characteristics, most students were aged 20–22 years (54%) and enrolled in Education programs (32.5%), a stage in which they are simultaneously building academic skills and beginning to plan career paths. This supports the finding that strong academic language proficiency at a productive age helps students enhance work readiness, which in turn strengthens their career readiness. Moreover, with the majority being female (59.2%), the results also reflect the tendency for female students to be more meticulous in developing academic literacy skills, positively impacting both work readiness and career readiness. These findings highlight that strengthening academic Indonesian language proficiency through

university curricula plays an important role in developing work readiness as a significant mediation pathway to students' career readiness.

Work Readiness, Entrepreneurial Literacy, and Students' Career Readiness

Based on the results of hypothesis testing H5, the indirect effect path coefficient was -0.070 , with a t -statistic of 1.05 and a p -value of 0.293 . This result confirms that although Entrepreneurial Literacy is an important aspect in enhancing students' conceptual understanding of business, its effect on career readiness through Work Readiness shows a negative and insignificant direction. In other words, students' understanding of entrepreneurial concepts, business management knowledge, business plan ability, and entrepreneurial orientation does not automatically improve their work readiness in terms of work knowledge, work skills, professional attitudes, or work motivation. This may be influenced by the fact that most respondents were between 20–24 years old (61%), still in transition from university to the workforce, where entrepreneurial literacy has not yet been effectively internalized into practical work readiness.

This finding is consistent with earlier studies showing that entrepreneurial literacy only has a significant impact if students have real-world experience in the workplace or business practice (Kassean et al., 2015). In other words, without hands-on experience, entrepreneurial literacy remains theoretical and does not strengthen students' readiness for the world of work. Within the framework of Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986), this can be explained by the fact that although students may possess cognitive knowledge about entrepreneurship, the self-efficacy and observational learning components essential to the theory are not yet fully developed, thus failing to support the improvement of work readiness. This indicates 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 focus more on developing new business creation orientation but less on cultivating skills required of professional employees, such as workplace discipline, goal-oriented work motivation, and professional attitude. Therefore, although entrepreneurial literacy is valuable as foundational knowledge, its impact on work readiness remains insignificant without being coupled with practical experiences through internships, field practice, or business incubation programs. This finding implies that entrepreneurship education in universities should balance theory and practice to ensure that students achieve work readiness aligned with the needs of both industry and entrepreneurship.

CONCLUSION

Fundamental Finding: The results of this study show 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 proven to have a positive and significant effect on Students' Career Readiness and acts 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 emphasize that mastery of academic

⁶³ literacy in Indonesian plays an essential role in building students' work readiness, which in turn enhances their career readiness, while entrepreneurial literacy without practical experience has not yet been able to support students' career readiness. **Implication :** This study strengthens the relevance of Social Cognitive Theory, which highlights the importance of 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 is an important mechanism bridging academic skills and career readiness. For universities, these results highlight the importance of strengthening academic Indonesian language learning as a foundation for building work readiness. In addition, entrepreneurial literacy programs need to be enriched with practical experiences such as internships, business simulations, or entrepreneurship incubation so they can have a greater impact on career readiness. For students, the findings underline that career readiness can be improved through strengthening academic competence, developing professional skills, and engaging in real entrepreneurial activities. **Limitation :** This study has several limitations. First, data were collected only from students in Malang City, so the results may not fully represent conditions in other regions. Second, the entrepreneurial literacy variable used was limited to literacy dimensions and academic concepts of entrepreneurship without considering real entrepreneurial practice experiences. Third, this research is cross-sectional in nature, thus 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 different regions and academic disciplines to produce more generalizable findings. Moreover, entrepreneurial literacy should be measured by incorporating real business practice experiences. A longitudinal method could also be employed to observe the development of students' work readiness and career readiness over time. For universities, a practical recommendation is to strengthen the Academic Indonesian Language curriculum with applied approaches and integrate entrepreneurial literacy with field practice programs relevant to labor market demands.

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PAGE 1

PAGE 2

PAGE 3

PAGE 4

PAGE 5

PAGE 6

PAGE 7

PAGE 8

PAGE 9

PAGE 10

PAGE 11

PAGE 12

PAGE 13

PAGE 14

PAGE 15

PAGE 16
