

The Role of Entrepreneurial Competencies in Strengthening Business Resilience: A Case Study of Young Entrepreneurs in Central Java

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Abstract

This study highlights the importance of entrepreneurial competencies for young entrepreneurs, particularly in facing the increasingly competitive and uncertain business environment. Utilizing five dimensions of entrepreneurial competencies—opportunity competency, relationship competency, strategic competency, conceptual competency, and organizing competency—this research aims to analyze the level of entrepreneurial competencies among young entrepreneurs mentored by the Youth, Sports, and Tourism Department (Disporapar) of Central Java. Additionally, the study explores the influence of gender and business sectors on the level of entrepreneurial competencies. The research analysis employs one-way ANOVA with 184 young entrepreneur respondents. The results show that relationship competency is the most dominant aspect of entrepreneurial competency, while gender and business sectors significantly affect several aspects of entrepreneurial competencies, particularly relationship, strategic, and organizing competencies.

Keywords: *entrepreneurial competencies; young entrepreneurs; gender; msme; central java*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini menyoroti pentingnya kompetensi kewirausahaan bagi wirausahawan muda, khususnya dalam menghadapi lingkungan bisnis yang semakin kompetitif dan tidak pasti. Dengan menggunakan lima dimensi kompetensi kewirausahaan—kompetensi kesempatan, kompetensi hubungan, kompetensi strategis, kompetensi konseptual, dan kompetensi organisasi—penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis tingkat kompetensi kewirausahaan di kalangan wirausahawan muda yang dibimbing oleh Dinas Pemuda, Olahraga, dan Pariwisata (Disporapar) Jawa Tengah. Selain itu, penelitian ini juga mengeksplorasi pengaruh jenis kelamin dan sektor bisnis terhadap tingkat kompetensi kewirausahaan. Analisis penelitian menggunakan ANOVA satu arah dengan 184 responden wirausahawan muda. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kompetensi hubungan adalah aspek yang paling dominan dalam kompetensi kewirausahaan, sementara jenis kelamin dan sektor bisnis berpengaruh signifikan terhadap beberapa aspek kompetensi kewirausahaan, khususnya kompetensi hubungan, strategis, dan organisasi.

Kata kunci: *kompetensi wirausaha; wirausaha muda; jenis kelamin; umkm; jawa tengah*

INTRODUCTION

The business world faces growing challenges in an increasingly complex and dynamic era of globalization. Rapid technological changes, intensifying competition, and economic uncertainty

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are some of the factors that can threaten the sustainability of a business. Therefore, it is crucial for entrepreneurs, especially young entrepreneurs, to possess strong competencies to survive and grow in uncertain conditions.

However, despite the significant potential of young entrepreneurship, the challenges faced in maintaining business continuity remain a major issue. There are quite a few young entrepreneurs who experience difficulties in management and business development; these businesses face market uncertainties and changing times. This is where entrepreneurial skills play a critical role as one of the distinguishing factors between those who can survive and thrive and those who fail. Entrepreneurship encompasses a range of skills, knowledge, and attitudes used by entrepreneurs in decision-making, resource management, and the required innovation. In this training, there is a focus on the absorption of technical competencies existing in business, managerial skills, and the skills necessary to adapt to a more active market.

Entrepreneurial competencies are "a constellation of skills, abilities, and knowledge that an aspiring entrepreneur must have in order to succeed in a competitive, unstable, and unpredictable environment" (Gustomo et al., 2019). This study highlights the importance of entrepreneurial competencies in enhancing company performance and achieving business success (Rahman et al., 2016). Curricula for entrepreneurship education frequently incorporate these competencies (Bolzani & Luppi, 2021; Gustomo et al., 2019; Okolie et al., 2021).

Research on entrepreneurial competencies has been growing in recent years. According to Hanifan and Dhewanto (2022), there has been a significant increase in academic publications related to this topic, as seen from the 416 articles indexed in Scopus in 2022. However, a comprehensive understanding of these competencies is still evolving. Gustomo et al. (2019) noted that research in this field is still in its early stages, indicating conceptual and methodological complexity in measuring and analyzing entrepreneurial competencies.

Entrepreneurial Competency and Business Resilience

Entrepreneurship functions as an active force in creating resilience and sustainability for businesses in the face of uncertainty regarding economic factors and the changing dynamics of the market. This competency encompasses the skills, knowledge, and entrepreneurial attitudes that support efforts to identify opportunities, anticipate and manage risks, and adjust companies to changes in the environment. Meanwhile, in the context of young entrepreneurs, entrepreneurial competency is not only the ability to perform technical functions of business but also a part of a strategic vision, decision-making, and the social skills needed in high-productivity business networking activities (Khamis, 2021).

In addition, in line with the development of entrepreneurship theory, there are many works that are research-related and linked together, including manipulating objects at various levels of business capacity, to sacrifice increased physical loads without the biggest concern being the very business that would protect it. Business resilience is defined as the ability of a business enterprise to endure crises, the ability to adjust to changes in market conditions, and to recover after external disruptive events (Linnenluecke, 2017). In a turbulent environment, those who are well equipped with entrepreneurial competency appear to be more capable of seeking chances and better equipped to formulate strategies for overcoming challenges in their business undertakings.

Resource-Based View (RBV) states that internal competencies such as managerial ability, innovation, and adaptability have the potential to provide a competitive advantage for companies in the face of uncertainty (Enriquez, 2015). Prominent factors in effective communication, team dynamics, and timely decision-making during critical moments must be considered if the existence of the same company is to be sustained over time (Zhao et al., 2010).

Innovation is also increasingly needed in steering a company towards becoming more resilient. However, innovation is not limited to the development of new products but also includes processes, business models, and marketing, all of which are based on entrepreneurial competency

(Teece, 2018). In other words, young entrepreneurs who possess the competency to innovate and have the ability to develop creative solutions in facing market opportunity challenges are more likely to strengthen their business position amidst increasingly fierce market competition.

An equally important nuance from these findings is that entrepreneurial competency not only directs entrepreneurs to start and develop businesses but also to manage and sustain businesses in the long term. Entrepreneurship will always engage in an integrated design, with risk management, effective leadership, and change management becoming essential parts of business resilience, especially for young entrepreneurs who are facing the survival of the fittest in the world of business.

Role of Gender and Business Sectors in Influencing Entrepreneurial Competencies

The competitiveness of enterprises depends on a number of factors both internal and external, and there is nothing strange about this. Two of them, which are significant, are gender and sector of activity. By understanding these other aspects, editors, through their impact on entrepreneurial competencies, can memorise the great harm done to lower-tier entrepreneurs by a complex factor, as well as the troubles caused by how stimulating further activities and the development process of companies are.

Some studies have shown that entrepreneurship competence may be influenced by gender. There are, in fact, significant variations as to how males and females approach their businesses in terms of decision-making, responding to changing market conditions, and risk management. Women entrepreneurs are often seen to encounter greater social and cultural barriers compared to male entrepreneurs. For instance, they are frequently restrained by gender bias whereby entrepreneurship is deemed more relevant to men (Marlow dan Swail, 2015). Additionally, female entrepreneurs are reportedly less inclined to have access to resources such as capital and networks which have been identified as strengthening their entrepreneurial competencies (Osunmuyiwa dan Ahlborg, 2022). Research by Jennings & Brush (2013) showed that women tend to place more importance on social and community sustainability when making decisions regarding their businesses, which in turn impacts their entrepreneurial competence development, especially in terms of team leadership and management.

The business sector is also a crucial contributor to the trends of entrepreneurial competencies. Educating individuals across varying sectors will address the different types of competencies required in a business environment. For instance, a tech entrepreneur will need to have a higher level of technological management, innovation management, and other technical competencies. In other contexts, the business of retailing or personal services would require more skills in business operations, marketing, and customer care (Kuratko, 2016).

The interaction of gender dimensions with the sectoral dimensions of business must also be considered. For instance, women entrepreneurs working in the technology sector may have to face a double jeopardy; the first being that they must deal with gender barriers that can limit them regarding the resources available, and they are also required to master very high technical skills that are necessary in this sector. On the other hand, male entrepreneurs in the service sector may gain advantages such as stronger social networks and larger market access; however, they too need to work on building competencies related to operational management and effective marketing engagement.

It is essential to note that entrepreneurship competencies are not only outcomes of individual characteristics such as gender or business sector but also of broader social and economic conditions, including the entrepreneurial culture embedded in societies (Mitchelmore dan Rowley, 2010). Consequently, policies and programs seeking to foster entrepreneurship development in the country should take these factors into consideration to achieve a more nurturing environment for all forms of entrepreneurs.

Entrepreneurial Competency for MSME's

Entrepreneurial competency is an essential factor that supports the success and sustainability of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). The increasing prevalence of MSMEs in Indonesia is directly associated with enhancing entrepreneurial skills among business proprietors. In this sense, entrepreneurial competence includes the skills, knowledge, attitudes, and abilities necessary for a business's effective and efficient establishment, management, and development. In light of the difficulties and transformations in the global market, cultivating entrepreneurial competency is crucial for MSME owners to maintain competitiveness and ensure sustained growth.

Entrepreneurial competence fundamentally encompasses various characteristics pertinent to business operations, such as decision-making proficiency, financial planning, marketing strategies, and innovation in products and services. Messersmith dan Wales (2013) asserts that a proficient entrepreneur must be able to plan and organize their enterprise, make strategic decisions, and comprehend the principles of financial and human resource management principles. These competencies are necessary for a firm to avoid growth difficulties and adapt to progressively changing market conditions.

A crucial competency for MSME proprietors is the capacity to adjust to market fluctuations and oversee innovation. In a dynamic business environment, both nationally and internationally, market fluctuations frequently transpire swiftly and can profoundly affect numerous operational facets of a corporation. Consequently, MSME proprietors who can identify market openings and create innovative products or services can capitalize on these shifts to enhance performance. Octasyuva et al. (2020) assert that the capacity to innovate and adapt to technological progress is a crucial competency that will influence the market competitiveness of MSMEs.

Moreover, managerial proficiency is essential for the viability of MSMEs. Numerous MSME proprietors need help sustaining their enterprises due to deficiencies in essential management abilities, including financial management, human resource management, and strategic planning. Proficiency in financial management is crucial for MSMEs, notably in addressing cash flow challenges, securing funding, and implementing cost control measures. Teece (2014) asserts that successful entrepreneurs are adept at managing financial risks and optimizing capital use in their everyday operations.

Entrepreneurial competence contributes to developing a positive mental attitude, including resilience and tenacity. Failures and problems in business are unavoidable, yet entrepreneurs possessing entrepreneurial competence may recover and derive lessons from these setbacks. Salisu et al (2020) contends that resilience and perseverance are critical components of entrepreneurship that motivate entrepreneurs to maintain optimism and persist in innovation while encountering challenges. The capacity to endure market volatility and setbacks is essential for sustained success.

The cultivation of entrepreneurial skills fosters national economic progress. Indonesia's micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are pivotal to the economy, significantly impacting employment, job creation, and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) contributions. Enhancing entrepreneurial competency among MSME proprietors can bolster Indonesia's economic resilience, generate additional company chances, and elevate the population's well-being.

To augment entrepreneurial competency, diverse stakeholders, such as the government, educational institutions, and the private sector, must cooperate to deliver pertinent training and information access for MSME proprietors. Comprehensive entrepreneurial training programs may assist MSME proprietors in recognizing the significance of managerial principles, innovation, marketing strategies, and proficient financial administration. By enhancing these competencies, MSMEs may improve, compete internationally, and contribute to sustainable economic growth.

Entrepreneurial Competencies: Young Entrepreneurs in Central Java

This study employs five entrepreneurial competencies: opportunity competency, relationship competency, strategic competency, conceptual competency, and organizing competency. Opportunity competency refers to the entrepreneur's ability to recognize, evaluate, and capitalize on business opportunities (Hatammimi and Nurafifah, 2023). The competency encompasses the ability to identify market trends, consumer needs, and potential business gains. Relationship competency refers to the ability to build and maintain effective interpersonal relationships with various parties, such as customers, business partners, suppliers, and teams (Setiawan et al., 2024). This competency is crucial for collaboration, networking, and partnerships in business development. Strategic competency is the ability to formulate, implement, and adapt business strategies to achieve long-term goals (Hanum et al., 2024). It includes the ability to set visions, define objectives, and develop targeted plans for business sustainability. Conceptual competency is the ability to think abstractly and analytically, including identifying problems, finding innovative solutions, and developing new business concepts. This competency helps entrepreneurs in decision-making and innovation. Lastly, organizing competency refers to the ability to plan, organize, and manage available resources, including time, labor, capital, and information, to achieve operational efficiency.

In addition to examining entrepreneurial competencies across these five aspects, this study also delves into the role of gender and business sectors in influencing entrepreneurial competencies. Previous research explains that men are more dominant in starting businesses compared to women, and women tend to be more involved in labor-intensive sectors, such as trade and services, compared to capital-intensive industries like manufacturing (Díaz-García and Jiménez-Moreno, 2010; Klapper and Parker, 2011; Thébaud, 2015). In terms of gender's impact on entrepreneurship education outcomes, women report lower learning outcomes compared to men in business plan methodology, although there are no significant differences in the impact of competencies on learning results (Ferrerías-García, Hernández-Lara, and Serradell-López, 2021). Regarding business sectors and growth potential, women are more involved in sectors that require less capital and have lower growth potential, which may be due to barriers in accessing financing (Klapper & Parker, 2011; Edmond, Brannon, Stewart, and Williams, 2016).

The object of this research is young entrepreneurs mentored by the Youth, Sports, and Tourism Department (Disporapar) of Central Java. Data shows that the majority of these entrepreneurs are part of MSMEs. The MSME sector is one of the most difficult to sustain, especially in the post-pandemic era (Soetjipto, 2020). This study, titled "The Role Of Entrepreneurial Competencies In Strengthening Business Resilience: A Case Study Of Young Entrepreneurs In Central Java" aims to analyze entrepreneurial competencies in strengthening business resilience, particularly for young entrepreneurs. The purpose of this study is to analyze how specific entrepreneurial skills such as opportunity recognition, relationship management, strategic thinking, conceptualization, and organization could increase the ability of a firm to survive over prolonged periods. The purpose of this research is thus to discover the key needed competencies that would assist in tackling the market problems of today and the changing environment. Ignoring these gaps in entrepreneurship skills could result in increased firm failures and economic imbalance, especially in the youth. This study is relevant and important to young entrepreneurs as it helps equip them with the required skills to cope in an unfriendly business environment.

Based on the background information provided above, this study aims to answer two research questions: 1) What are the entrepreneurial competencies of young entrepreneurs mentored by the Youth, Sports, and Tourism Department of Central Java overall? 2) How do gender and business sectors affect entrepreneurial competencies?

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses purposive sampling, selecting samples based on specific criteria (Sugiyono, 2016). The Youth, Sports, and Tourism Department (Disporapar) of Central Java mentored a total of 200 young entrepreneurs, from which the researchers selected 184 participants based on criteria such as the duration of their business, monthly business turnover, and the type of business they engaged in. The respondent categories in this study consisted of 89 (48.4%) males and 95 (51.6%) females, with 135 (73.4%) aged 21-25 years and 49 (26.6%) aged 26-30 years.

69 (37.5%) of the business sectors were in the food and beverage (FnB) sector, 17 (9.2%) in agriculture, livestock, and fisheries, 28 (15.2%) in the fashion and crafts sector, and 70 (38%) in other sectors. Based on turnover, 156 (84.8%) had a turnover of less than 5 million, and 28 (15.2%) had a turnover of 5-10 million. Based on the duration of business, 76 (41.3%) had been in business for less than 1 year, 85 (46.2%) for 1–3 years, and 23 (12.5%) for more than 3 years.

The research instrument consists of 20 statements across five dimensions: opportunity competency (4 questions), relationship competency (4 questions), strategic competency (4 questions), conceptual competency (4 questions), and organizing competency (4 questions). For each question, participants indicated their level of agreement or disagreement using a 5-point Likert scale. The scale was as follows: 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (slightly agree), 4 (agree), and 5 (strongly agree), indicating that the higher the scale selected by the participants, the higher their level of entrepreneurial competency.

The data analysis in this study uses the one-way ANOVA method. First, a quantitative descriptive statistical analysis is performed, followed by One Way ANOVA to analyze the influence of gender and business sectors on entrepreneurial competencies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Entrepreneurial Competencies of Young Entrepreneurs Mentored by Disporapar Central Java

Below is a visual representation of entrepreneurial competencies in the form of a horizontal bar chart. The diagram presents five aspects of entrepreneurial competencies, namely:

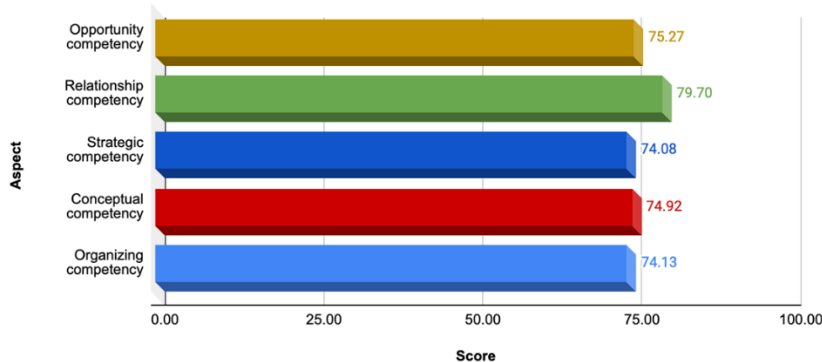


Figure 1. Entrepreneurial Competencies of Young Entrepreneurs Mentored by Disporapar Central Java in 2024

Based on Figure 1, the opportunity competency score is 75.27, indicating that entrepreneurs' ability to recognize and exploit business opportunities is relatively high. This ability is crucial as it reflects their capacity to adapt to market changes and the dynamics of new business opportunities. The relationship competency aspect achieved the highest score, 79.70, suggesting that interpersonal relationships and the ability to build strong networks with stakeholders, partners, or customers are the most dominant aspects. This competency significantly influences business success, as in business relationships and networks can determine access to resources, information, and support.

The strategic competency score is 74.08, indicating that the ability to formulate long-term business strategies is in a high category. Strategic competency reflects entrepreneurs' capacity to plan business goals while considering external and internal factors and adapting to a competitive business environment. The score for conceptual competency is 74.92, slightly higher than strategic competency. Conceptual competency reflects entrepreneurs' ability to understand and process abstract concepts related to business. This includes creative thinking, problem-solving, and the development of innovative ideas that support business growth. Finally, the organizing competency score is 74.13, reflecting entrepreneurs' ability to organize resources—whether human, financial, or technological—to achieve business goals. This competency is important because efficient resource management can contribute to more effective and cost-efficient operations.

From the data presented, it can be concluded that relationship competency is the most prominent entrepreneurial competency aspect, with the highest score (79.70), indicating that the ability to build and maintain relationships is critical to the success of entrepreneurs in this study's context. Meanwhile, other competencies, such as opportunity competency and conceptual competency, also have excellent scores, showing that the utilization of opportunities and strong conceptual thinking are key components of entrepreneurial capabilities. On the other hand, strategic competency and organizing competency, while categorized as good, suggest that strategic planning and resource organization aspects could still be improved to achieve an optimal balance in the overall attainment of higher entrepreneurial competencies.

The Influence of Gender and Business Sectors on Entrepreneurial Competencies

The following table presents the results of a One-Way ANOVA analysis regarding the role of gender and business sectors in entrepreneurial competencies.

Table 1. The Influence of Gender and Business Sectors on Entrepreneurial Competencies

Aspect	Gender		Business sectors		Gender x Business sectors	
	F	η_p^2	F	η_p^2	F	η_p^2
Opportunity competency	1.034	0.006	1.912	0.032	0.618	0.01
Relationship competency	5.450*	0.030	2.156	0.035	0.836	0.014
Strategic competency	2.311	0.013	2.666*	0.043	0.742	0.012
Conceptual competency	1.114	0.006	1.972	0.033	0.765	0.013
Organizing competency	2.322	0.013	4.051**	0.065	0.39	0.007

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Several important findings emerged from the analysis on the influence of gender and business sectors on entrepreneurial competencies. The aspect of relationship competency is significantly influenced by gender, with women demonstrating higher abilities than men. This is indicated by the value of $F(1,176) = 5.450$ and $p < 0.05$, along with a partial eta-squared (η_p^2) value of 0.030, which suggests a small effect according to Cohen (1969). Thus, gender has a small but significant influence on interpersonal relationship abilities in the context of entrepreneurship. On the other hand, the business sector significantly impacts two main aspects: strategic competency and organizing competency. Entrepreneurs in the fashion and craft sectors demonstrate better strategic and organizational abilities compared to entrepreneurs in other

sectors. This is indicated by the value of $F(3,176) = 2.666$, $p < 0.05$ for strategic competency, and $F(3,176) = 4.051$, $p < 0.01$ for organizing competency, with eta-squared values of 0.043 and 0.065, respectively. Cohen's benchmark classifies the influence of the business sector on organizing competency as having a medium effect. There is no significant interaction effect between gender and business sectors across all aspects of entrepreneurial competencies. In other words, the influence of gender and business sectors on entrepreneurial competencies is independent, with no notable combined effects.

Discussion

This study extends the research on entrepreneurial competencies and presents the findings on the relation between the competencies in detail. Of interest is that relationship competency represented the highest score, which means that networking and social relationships are vital for success in entrepreneurship within the scope of the present study. This supports previous studies that note the need for strong networks in order to be able to procure resources and information and support invaluable in an industry-oriented climate. The male performance is somewhat more excellent than the female performance, as statistics also indicated ($F = 5.450$, $p = 0.030$). The lower relationship competency in female entrepreneurs indicates gender differences in interpersonal relationships. Such trends may be attributed to gender socialization, where norms encourage ladies to become more relational and communicative. These are also in consonance with existing literature, which suggests that women entrepreneurs have a higher propensity in all forms of relationship management, which significantly benefits working with clients and in teams.

In addition, the business sector's influence on entrepreneurial competencies is also striking. Fashion and craft entrepreneurs scored much higher in strategic ($F = 2.666$, $p = 0.043$) and organizational competencies ($F = 4.051$, $p = 0.0065$). This could be due to the sectoral characteristics of these industries since fashion and craft businesses are fast-changing, trend-oriented, and resource-demanding, which need strategic and organizational competencies. Also, there are times when these entrepreneurs must change the structure of their organizations efficiently in response to competition within the market. The lack of interaction between gender and sector also shows the same thing: that gender and business sector do not interact in influencing entrepreneurial competencies, which allows one to focus on variations of entrepreneurial capacity in different environments.

These results could be of great interest to entrepreneurs and policymakers as they suggest that it may be beneficial to encourage strong personal relationships and promote competencies particular to the sector/industry. In subsequent research, it will be important to examine how and why the gender and sector variations described arise, perhaps considering cultural, educational, or social factors to explain the patterns observed.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that relationship competency is the most prominent aspect of entrepreneurial competency among young entrepreneurs mentored by the Youth, Sports, and Tourism Department of Central Java. The influence of gender on entrepreneurial competencies is evident in relationship competency, where female entrepreneurs demonstrate higher abilities compared to male entrepreneurs. Additionally, the business sector significantly impacts strategic competency and organizing competency, with entrepreneurs in the fashion and craft sectors showing better capabilities. We found no significant interaction between gender and business sectors in relation to entrepreneurial competencies, suggesting that both factors independently influence these competencies. These findings have important implications for the formulation of entrepreneurship development strategies, particularly in strengthening competencies that are crucial for business sustainability.

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