Full research paper

EMPOWERING FUTURES: UNVEILING THE IMPACT OF CAREER READINESS ON JOB SEEKER AND CREATOR THROUGH SELF-EFFICACY

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ABSTRACT

Factors that represent the tendency to become job creators are proxied to entrepreneurial characteristics. Meanwhile, factors that represent career readiness include digital literacy, entrepreneurial mindset, work skills, and ICT skills. A population of economic education undergraduate students teaching at universities in Indonesia was used, using 455 samples. Later, the data were analyzed using the Structural Equation Model (SEM) with the IBM-SPSS AMOS 26 program. The findings prove that career readiness is not only important for job seekers but also necessary for those who will become job creators. From the hypothesis test, career readiness has a partial influence on the tendency to become a job seeker and job creator among undergraduate economic education students. The positive coefficient indicates that increasing career readiness can significantly increase the propensity to seek and create jobs. This research opens the view that work skills are also needed to make students become job creators. Therefore, this research has essential meaning as a blueprint for educational institutions to incorporate career development into their academic programs.

KEYWORDS

Career readiness, digital literacy, employability skill, entrepreneurial mindset, job creator, ICT skills, structural equation model

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Highlights

- *Career readiness plays an important role in influencing the tendency of economic education students in determining their future careers.*
- *Self-efficacy partially mediates between career readiness and the tendency to become job seekers and job creators.*
- *It is critical for higher education institutions to integrate career development into their academic programs, meeting the needs of both job seekers and job creators.*

INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship and its correlation with career readiness have become a focal point in contemporary discussions regarding workforce development. This is proven by previous research which shows that the entrepreneurial ecosystem has a strong relationship with students' entrepreneurial intentions and new business creation (Narmaditya et al., 2024). The nature and importance of career readiness have changed dramatically over the past several decades and are undergoing an even more rapid evolution (Conley, 2021). Career readiness is an entrepreneurial skill that individuals need to have minimum qualifications for entrepreneurial readiness, especially being competent to scan their abilities and environment to explore its potential (Ruiz, Soriano and Coduras, 2016; Rakicevic et al., 2022). In Indonesia, approximately 57.35% of bachelor's graduates obtain qualified jobs (PDDikti, 2021). At the moment, the number of entrepreneurs in Indonesia is only 3.4 percent, which needs to be enhanced to shift into a developed country that requires 12.

Some early studies acknowledge that career readiness is also a form of developing entrepreneurial skills, attitudes, and behaviors through entrepreneurship education that will help students make the right choices regarding entrepreneurial activities (Mayorga, 2019; Rodriguez and Lieber, 2020). Entrepreneurial culture and entrepreneurial career readiness influence entrepreneurial education (Samuel et al., 2021). Entrepreneurship education begins with an entrepreneurial mindset, which is continued with the formation of creative and

innovative behavior to become creative (Yar, Wennberg and Berglund, 2008; Wardana et al., 2020; Jiatong et al., 2021; Li, Cao and Jenatabadi, 2023). The discoveries that entrepreneurship can produce include wealth creation, business, innovation, change, employment, value, and growth (Morris, Lewis and Sexton, 1994). In this way, entrepreneurial activities can encourage economic growth and job creation in a country (Baumol, 1996; Mair and Marti, 2009; Mehmood et al., 2019).

Over the past few decades, national and worldwide governments have increasingly focused on involving more people in market activities, assuming that markets play an essential role in achieving sustainable living standards (Mair and Marti, 2009). This has been implemented in the university curriculum through mandatory courses, such as entrepreneurship courses taken by all undergraduate students at universities in Indonesia. The concept of entrepreneurship is not just the process of establishing a new business but is a process of value creation and appropriation led by entrepreneurs in an uncertain environment (Rapp and Olbrich, 2020). Entrepreneurship theory integrates ideas from several scientific disciplines, including economics, psychology, sociology, finance, decision science, and strategy, among others, to explain the complex and irregular dynamics of the entrepreneurial process with a parsimonious model (Frese and Gielnik, 2023).

Entrepreneurship theory, for the first time, put forward a new unified and comprehensive theory to enable expanded theoretical views and more rigorous empirical investigation (Mishra and Zachary, 2015). Even though being a job creator is an essential skill that every student must have, being a job seeker is also very important to be prepared to support competition in the job market. It is essential to recognize that different subgroups in society have different probabilities of being impacted by informality. The statistical overview (ILO, 2018) provides a detailed account of the heterogeneity of informality and its prevalence across different groups. The groups most at risk, besides certain occupations with too many informal employment sectors, are young people and women.

There is a positive association between entrepreneurial mindset gains and perceptions of future career success (Rodriguez and Lieber, 2020). In an era where digital transformation and job market dynamics continue to develop, career readiness is the main key for individuals who want to carve out a successful trail. This is not only related to digital literacy but also involves entrepreneurial thinking, work skills, and expertise in information and communication technology (ICT). Interestingly, there is a close relationship between career readiness and a person's tendency to become a job creator or entrepreneur, with self-efficacy acting as an important mediator. Self-efficacy is the belief in one's ability to succeed in a particular situation or accomplish a specific task (Goncalves, 2021).

Several studies have investigated the relationship between self-efficacy and career readiness. For example, a study found that a programmatic intervention to promote entrepreneurial self-efficacy, critical behavior, and technology readiness among underrepresented college students can be effective (Cadenas et al., 2020). Another study investigated whether working on an entrepreneurial project within a Level 7 fashion degree course can improve entrepreneurial self-efficacy and career readiness (Maxwell and Mc Clay, 2020). The study found that the intervention was effective in improving entrepreneurial self-efficacy, which is fundamental to an entrepreneurial mindset (Pihie and Bagheri, 2011; Burnette et al., 2019; Newman et al., 2019; Awotunde and van der Westhuizen, 2021; Adeniyi, 2023). Entrepreneurial self-efficacy (ESE) can stimulate entrepreneurial readiness, and it is a cognitive element that can stimulate entrepreneurial readiness (Adeniyi, Derera and Gamede, 2022). However, several studies have not discussed the role of self-efficacy as an intermediary in connecting career readiness with students' tendencies to become job seekers or job creators in the future.

This study contributes to the theme of the relationship between education and management. Where, in reality, undergraduate education students will become job seekers and job creators. In educational management, this study provides a new perspective on managing higher education curricula in preparing competent graduates. In addition, in the field of entrepreneurship, this study provides important input to policymakers both at universities and the Ministry of Education in considering policies on higher education and job provision regulations and the potential for ease of entrepreneurship among young people. Apart from that, career readiness is also influenced by digital literacy, which has become a mandatory skill in the modern world. The ability to understand, use, and adapt to information technology and digital media is very important in today's work environment. Readiness in digital literacy provides a solid foundation for someone to enter the ever-changing world of work. This not only helps individuals adapt to the latest technology but also expands career opportunities, enabling them to become innovators and business opportunity creators. Employers are looking for new workers with high levels of literacy, such as information literacy, digital literacy, and media literacy (Nikou, De Reuver and Mahboob Kanafi, 2022).

Hypothesis Development

To see undergraduate students' career readiness as an independent variable, which is described in four measurement indicators, namely digital literacy, entrepreneurial thinking, work skills, and ICT skills, which will see the relationship through the mediation of self-efficacy and resilience of job seekers and job creators as the dependent variable. The framework refers to the boundaryless career theory created by Michael Arthur and Denise Rousseau in 1996 as a response to paradigm shifts in the world of work. This framework in career studies describes significant changes in how individuals manage and understand their careers in an ever-changing and global work environment. Apart from the leading theory, this research uses learning theory, career development theory, motivation theory, and entrepreneurship theory as supporting theories to build the conceptual framework below.

Boundaryless Career Theory provides a valuable framework for understanding contemporary career paths and the changing nature of work (Gerli, Bonesso and Pizzi, 2015; Guan et al., 2019; Wang, Liu and Deng, 2022; Adeniyi, 2023). Therefore, this can be a guide in career readiness research. There are several ways that Boundaryless Career theory can be used to guide career readiness research, including stating that understanding

the competencies required to succeed in a boundaryless career. Boundaryless Career theory defines the competencies that individuals need to achieve boundaryless success. career (Gerli, Bonesso and Pizzi, 2015).

Additionally, research could focus on identifying the competencies most important for career readiness in open-ended careers. Boundaryless Career Theory states that individuals must be mobile and self-directed in their careers to be successful in a boundaryless career (Lichtenstein et al., 1998). Boundaryless career theory provides a framework for understanding how individuals can pursue job opportunities across organizations, sectors, and even countries. This theory closely relates to digital literacy, entrepreneurial thinking, work, and ICT skills.

The boundaryless career model requires individuals to be mobile and self-directed (Sullivan, 2010; Chan et al., 2012; Guan et al., 2019; Wang, Liu and Deng, 2022). To achieve this, individuals must be digitally literate to access job opportunities, network with potential employers, and manage their careers online. The digital competencies and skills that individuals need to succeed in a borderless career emphasize the importance of entrepreneurial thinking, which involves taking risks, being innovative, and seeking new opportunities, and requires individuals to have a variety of employability skills that can be transferred to different organizations and sectors (Inkson et al., 2012). This means that individuals must be able to adapt to new work environments quickly and be able to use their skills in different contexts.

Digital technology allows individuals to work remotely, collaborate with colleagues in different locations, and access work opportunities across borders (Brit Astrid Toven-Lindsey, 2017). Therefore, individuals need strong ICT skills to succeed in a career without boundaries. The Boundaryless Career Theory provides a valuable framework for understanding how vital digital literacy, entrepreneurial thinking, employability skills, and ICT skills are for individuals who want to pursue a boundaryless career (Defillippi and Arthur, 1994; Ituma and Simpson, 2009; Chan et al., 2012; Inkson et al., 2012; Guan et al., 2019). These concepts are closely related to the ability to move and direct oneself in one's career, a vital characteristic of the boundaryless career model.

The concept of career readiness is closely related to self-efficacy, which has been studied by several previous studies (Makki, Javaid and Bano, 2016; Maxwell and Mc Clay, 2020; Sholikah et al., 2021). Career readiness is also closely related to the tendency to become a job seeker (Hirschi, 2011). In addition, becoming an entrepreneur is also related to career readiness (Ruiz, Soriano and Coduras, 2016; Rodriguez and Lieber, 2020).

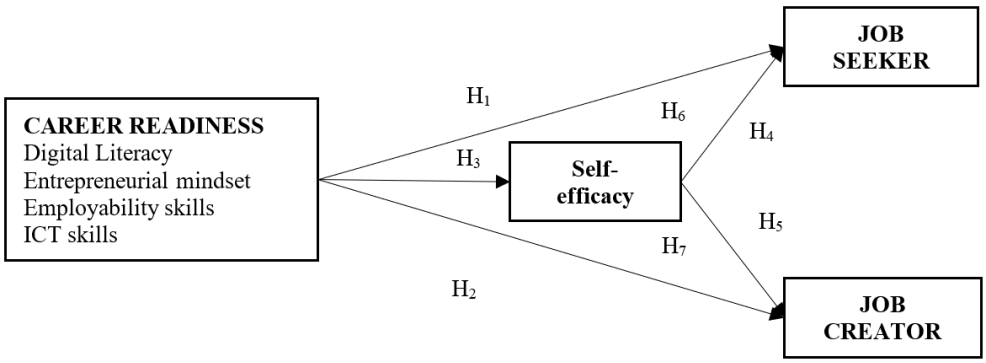


Figure 1*:* **Conceptual framework**

H_1. Career readiness has a significant relationship and influence on the tendency to become a job seeker

H_2. Career readiness has a significant relationship and influence on job creator

H_3. Career readiness has a significant relationship and impact on self-efficacy

H_4. Self-efficacy has a significant relationship and influence on the tendency to become a job seeker

H_5. Self-efficacy has a significant relationship and impact on the tendency to become a job creator

H_6. Self-efficacy mediates the relationship between Career Readiness and the tendency to become a job seeker

H_7. Self-efficacy mediates the relationship between Career Readiness and the propensity to be a job creator

This research contributes to providing different views regarding how self-efficacy mediates the relationship between career readiness and the tendency of students to become job seekers, as well as the relationship between career readiness and the tendency to become job creators in students. Hopefully, this research can significantly contribute to higher education institutions in developing students' careers, whether they become job seekers or job creators in the future.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study adopted a quantitative method with a self-administered survey. Therefore, variable-level variation qualifications are reflected in quantitative values rather than narrated in qualitative attribute description sentences. The implementation is classified as survey research with the focus and scope of a sample survey, data obtained from a portion of the population selected as the research sample. Regarding the time dimension, this research was designed as a cross-sectional study because the research was limited to a specific time, namely in 2022.

Population, Sample, and Data Collection Procedures

The population in this study is undergraduate students of Economics Education at seven of the best teaching universities in Indonesia. The sample in this study was developed using

a random sampling technique, totaling 455 undergraduate economics education students based on the population. The population and sample are provided in Table 1 in detail. Data was collected online using an online questionnaire distributed with the help of the coordinator of each university. The target for each university was 100 respondents, but the sample collected was 455. However, this sample exceeded the minimum sample size specified.

University	Population
Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta UNY	569
Universitas Negeri Malang UM	449
Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia UPI	407
Universitas Negeri Semarang UNNES	337
Universitas Negeri Surabaya UNESA	221
Universitas Negeri Jakarta UNJ	616
Universitas Negeri Makassar UNM	453
Total	3.052

Table 1*: Population of research (Source: PDDikti, 2021)*

Instrument Development

The development of instruments for the career readiness variable was carried out by constructing four indicators: digital literacy, entrepreneurial thinking, work skills, and ICT skills. In this research, the definition of Career Readiness uses the definition of skills and attributes that prepare students for success in the transition to the world of work (Muñiz and Eimerbrink, 2018). The indicators in the career readiness concept were adapted based on several sources, including digital literacy (Martin and Grudziecki, 2006), entrepreneurial mindset (Naumann, 2017), employability skills (International Labour Organization, 2013; ILO, 2018), ICT skills (ITU, 2021). Meanwhile, the instrument for the tendency to become a job creator refers to (Meredith, Nelson and Neck, 1982). The instrument was developed based on the adaptation of several reference sources, which will later be tested for content validity by experts.

Test Validity and Reliability

To measure the validity of the content in this research, among others:

1. Researcher designs the instruments or questionnaires covering all essential aspects of the studied concept. This involves selecting questions or statements that are relevant and related to the concept.
2. Expert Consultation: the researcher consults with experts in the field of social research to get their views on whether the instrument covers all the necessary conceptual aspects. Experts can provide input based on their knowledge and experience. In this research, the experts who assisted in testing content validity consisted of 5 experts with expertise in educational evaluation, education, economics, and economic education.
3. Trial: Before being used in the main research, the instrument can be tested first with a small group of respondents to ensure that all critical aspects of the concept have been covered. The test results can be used to make instrument adjustments if necessary.
4. Content Analysis: Content analysis is carried out to analyze whether the questions or statements in the instrument cover all relevant conceptual dimensions. This involves further evaluation of existing theory and literature.

Construct validity is an essential concept in social research. It refers to the degree to which a research instrument (such as a questionnaire, survey, or measurement scale) accurately measures the theoretical construct or concepts it is intended to measure. Before checking construct validity, researchers ensure that the conceptual model describes the relationship between the constructs or variables to be measured. This conceptual model is based on theories and hypotheses that have been developed. Furthermore, this research explains the measurement model, which explains the relationship between theoretical constructs and the observed variables used in the analysis. This includes identifying latent factors or constructs that underlie the measurement of observed variables.

Additionally, discriminant validity is an essential part of construct validity. It measures the extent to which different constructs are genuinely different. Discriminant validity is measured by checking whether latent factors differ significantly in your model and whether correlations between factors make sense. Then, convergent validity measures how well a measurement variable (observation) represents the latent construct. This is tested by testing the loading factors of the variables observed in this research model. High factor loadings indicate good convergent validity. Next, evaluate how well the resulting model fits the data. This involves examining the chi-square statistic, as well as other fit statistics such as CFI (Comparative et al.), TLI (Tucker-Lewis Index), RMSEA (Root et al. of Approximation), and SRMR (Standardized Mean Mean Residual). A good model must have appropriate goodness-of-fit statistics.

In this study, a validity test was carried out to determine whether the questionnaire used for research was valid. A reliable instrument

does not necessarily mean it is valid. According to (Malhotra and Birks, 2007), validity ensures a significant correlation between variables. Factor analysis is used to see the validity of the correlation. Factor analysis is a multivariate method used to analyze variables of mutual importance. The factor analysis used in this research is EFA (Exploratory Factor Analysis) and CFA (Confirmatory Factor Analysis).

Data Analysis

The data analysis approach in this study refers to stages (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988), which involve two main stages: testing the measurement model and the structural model. The Fit Index in SEM for measurement model is divided into three parts: the absolute fit index, the incremental fit index, and the parsimony fit index. Researchers used Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) techniques using AMOS 26 software. The purpose of using Structural Equation Models is to provide a powerful and flexible framework for testing complex hypotheses, understanding relationships among variables, and improving the accuracy of model estimation by accounting for measurement error and latent variables. In addition, testing of the self-efficacy mediator variable was carried out by adopting the (Preacher and Hayes, 2004) procedure.

RESULTS

Before the questionnaire was tested on students, the researcher carried out content validity, i.e., a readability test, and asked for expert judgment regarding the instrument that had been prepared. In this study, researchers sought the help of five experts from several universities in Indonesia and Malaysia. The questionnaire was tested by experts and scheduled using Aiken's formula, explained in Table 2.

Expert	Expertise	*S*	*n*(*c* - 1)	*V*	Category
1	Education Evaluation	2291	2400	0.961	Valid
2	Economics				
3	Education				
4	Economic Education				
5	Economy and business				

Table 2: Instrument Expert Validation Results (Source: own calculation)

The expert verification results above show that the items in each instrument are valid with a V number of 0.961. This is tested using the Aiken (Aiken, 1985) validator formula. Even though the validation results from 5 experts showed high validity of the instrument items, each expert provided input and suggestions for improving the instrument. Therefore, researchers made several improvements in editing items and deleting repetitive items.

		Frequency	Percent %
University	UNNES	103	18.10
	UNY	102	17.93
	UNM	101	17.75
	UM	100	17.57
	UNESA	87	15.29
	UNJ	64	11.25
	UPI	12	2.11
Semester	>8	26	4.57
	7-8	357	62.74
	5-6	169	29.70
	3-4	13	2.28
	1-2	4	0.70
Age	<18	3	0.53
	19-21	319	55.96
	22-24	246	43.16
	>24	2	0.35
Gender	Female	402	70.65
	Male	167	29.35
Domicile	East Java	185	32.51
	Central Java	109	19.16
	West Java	22	3.87
	DIY Yogyakarta	93	16.34
	DKI Jakarta	55	9.66
	South Sulawesi	92	16.17
	others	13	2.28

Table 3: Respondent Demographics (Source: own data processing)

Measurement Model Testing

The number of items in this study is presented in Table 4, which indicates that there are 59 items in the career readiness variable, described through four sub-constructs (digital literacy, entrepreneurial mindset, employability skills, and ICT skills), as well as seven items that measure students' self-efficacy, 14 items that measure the tendency of students to become job seekers, and 11 items that measure the tendency of students to become job creators or entrepreneurs. Based on Table 4, the items in the Career Readiness variable are valid with an SLF of 59 items greater than 0.5 and a reliable variable with a career readiness CR value of 0.963 > 0.7 and AVE 0.866 > 0.5. The Digital Literacy sub-variable has nine valid items, and the reliable sub-variable has a CR value of 0.925 > 0.7 and AVE 0.577 > 0.5. The sub-variable Entrepreneurial Thinking has 13 valid items and reliable sub-variables with a CR value of 0.946 > 0.7 and AVE 0.572 > 0.5. The Employability Skill sub-variable has 15 valid items, and the reliable sub-variable has a CR value of 0.976 > 0.7 and AVE 0.727 > 0.5. The ICT Skills sub-variable has 22 valid items and reliable sub-variables with a CR value of 0.983 > 0.7 and AVE 0.728 > 0.5.

Main Construct	Sub Construct/item	Loading Factor	Construct Reliability *CR ≥ 0.70*	Average Variance Extracted *AVE ≥ 0.50*
Career readiness	Digital literacy	0.892	0.963	0.866
	Entrepreneurial mindset	0.848		
	Employability skills	0.997		
	ICT skills	0.977		
Self-efficacy	7 items	0.769 – 0.827	0.929	0.650
Job seeker	14 items	0.772 – 0.810	0.959	0.624
Job creator	11 items	0.842 – 0.869	0.969	0.738

Table 4*:* Validity and Reliability of Measurement Models

Then, the theme in the Self-Efficacy variable is valid with SLF 7 items more significant than 0.5, and the variable is reliable with a CR value for the self-efficacy variable of 0.929 > 0.7 and AVE 0.650 > 0.5. Apart from that, the items in the Job Seeker variable are valid with an SLF of 14 items greater than 0.5, and the variable is reliable with a CR value for the Job Seeker variable of 0.959 > 0.7 and an AVE of 0.624 > 0.5. Moreover, the items in the Job Creation variable are valid with an SLF of 11 items greater than 0.5, and the variable is reliable with a CR value for the Job Creation variable of 0.969 > 0.7 and AVE 0.738 > 0.5. It can be concluded that the indicators and variables in this model structure are valid and reliable.

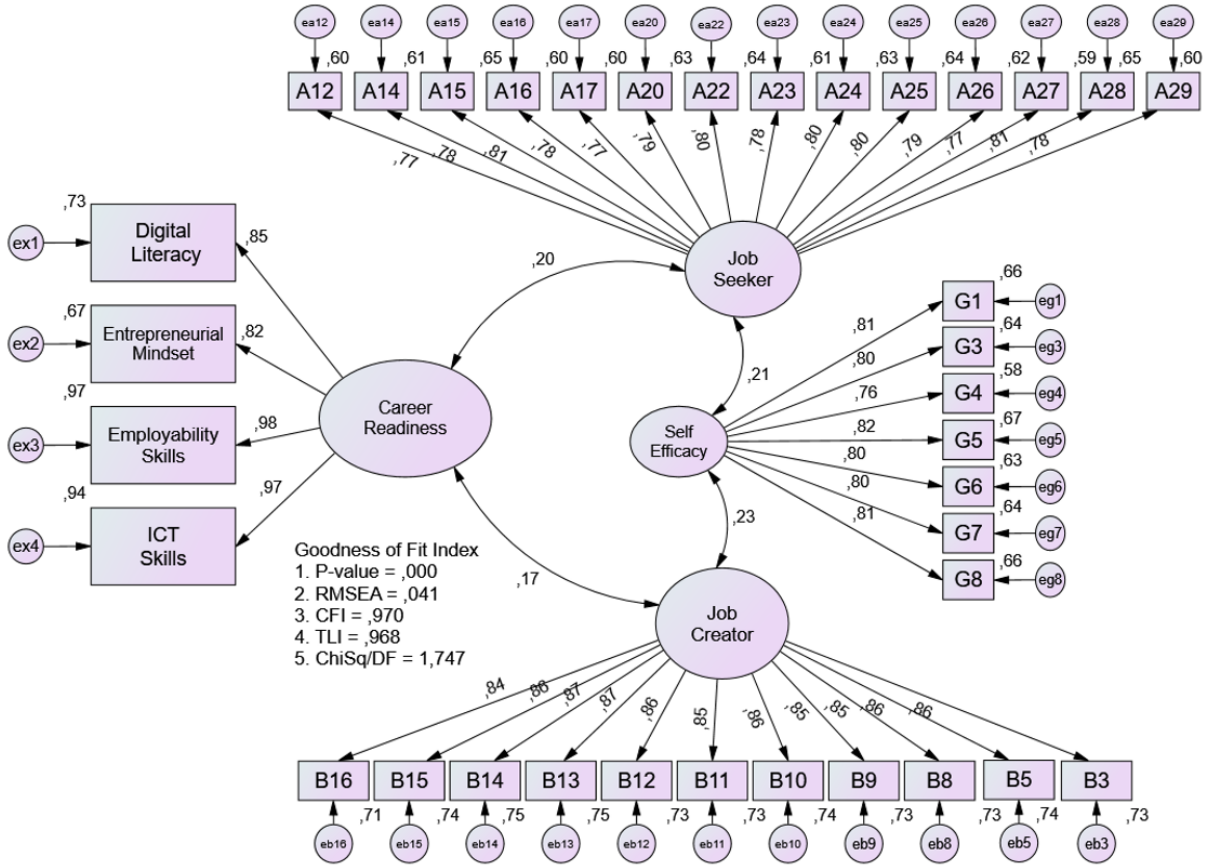


Figure 2*:* Measurement model pooled CFA (Source: data processing results with Amos)

Structural model

Apart from using the results of the standardized loading factor (SLF), AVE, and CR tests, discriminant validity tests were also carried out. In the Fornell-Larcker criterion test, discriminant validity is likely good if the root AVE of the construct is higher than the correlation of the construct with other latent variables. In contrast, the cross-loading test must show that each construct's indicator value is higher than the indicators of the other constructs (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016). The results of the Fornell-Larcker Criterion calculation in this study show that the root AVE value for each construct is greater than the correlation value between one construct and another; discriminant validity is declared good. The following Table 5 presents the results of the descriptive validity of this research. (Fornell and Larcker, 1981) It is said that the AVE value should be greater than 0.50 to meet the requirements for convergent validity and reliability.

Latent Constructs	AVE	Latent Constructs			
		X	*Z*	*Y1*	*Y2*
Career readiness (X)	0.866	**0.930**			
Self-efficacy (Z)	0.650	0.289	**0.806**		
Job seeker (Y1)	0.624	0.329	0.365	**0.790**	
Job creator (Y2)	0.738	0.319	0.367	0.525	**0.859**

Table 5*:* Descriptive Validity Test Results

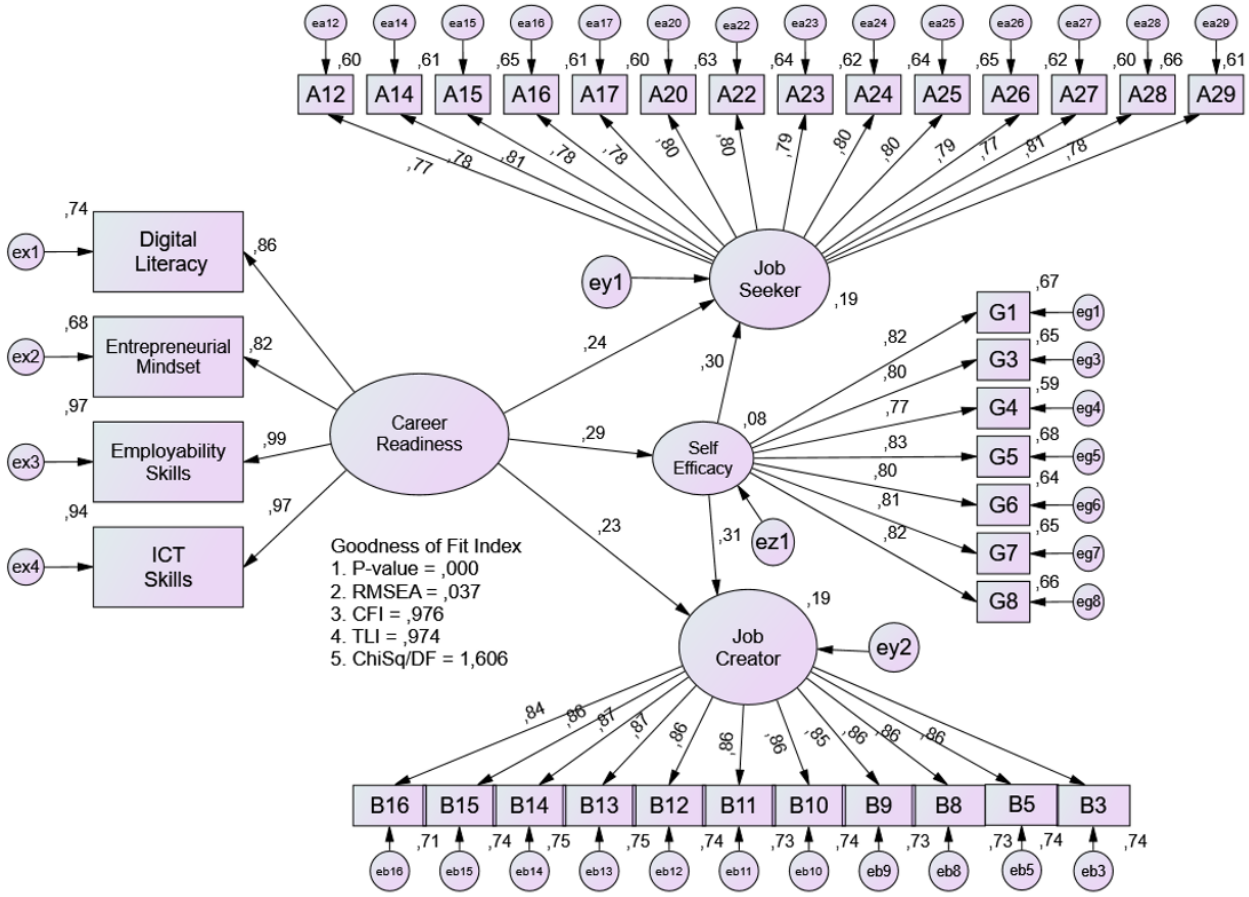


Figure 3*:* A Structured Model of career readiness, self-efficacy, job seeker, and job creator (Source: data processing results with Amos)

Hypothesis 1: Career Readiness has a significant relationship and impact on job seeker skills

In this section, the hypothesis directly between variables is tested based on the significance value of the P-value. The significance value is < .001, which meets the criteria of < .05. Apart from that, the direct effect can be seen based on the absolute value of the path coefficient in the SEM analysis output. The standardized estimated value is known to be 0.290 for the career readiness construct. This shows that if career readiness experiences an increase of 1 standard deviation, it will be followed by an increase in job seekers of 0.176 or 17.6%. This means that the effective contribution of the career readiness construct to the job seeker construct is 17.6%. Meanwhile, the unstandardized estimated value is known to be 0.197; this shows that if there is a change in the career readiness construct of 1 unit, it will be followed by a change in the value of the job seeker construct of 19.7%.

Regression Path	Standardized estimate	Unstandardized estimate	SE	CR	*P*
Self-efficacy ← career readiness	.290	.345	.059	5.826	0.000
Job seeker ← career readiness	.176	.197	.058	3.415	0.000
Job creator ← career readiness	.160	.193	.061	3.148	0.002
Job seeker ← self-efficacy	.287	.291	.047	5.817	0.000
Job creator ← self-efficacy	.292	.295	.049	5.993	0.000

*SE (Standart Error); CR (Critical Ratio); * significant p < .05*

Table 6: Summary of Direct Effect Output Results

Apart from looking at the significant value (p-value) and path coefficient to see the direct influence between variables, you can also look at the CR (critical ratio) value. The effect is declared significant if the CR value is greater than the limit value, and the effect is declared insignificant if the CR value is less than the limit value. Smaller than the limit value or by using a *p*-value, which, if it is less than .05, then it is declared to have a significant effect. Based on the test results above (table 6) show that the Career Readiness variable has a positive and significant influence on the job seeker variable, with a CR greater than the limit (3.415 > 1.96) or a *p*-value less than α 5% (< .001). The positive coefficient indicates that increasing the Willingness to Work variable can significantly increase the job seeker variable.

Hypothesis 2: Career readiness has a significant relationship and impact on job creator skills

The analysis results are listed in Table 6; the significance value is .002, which meets the criteria < .05. Apart from that, the direct effect can be seen based on the absolute value of the path coefficient in the SEM analysis output. The standardized estimated value is known to be 0.160 for the career readiness construct in Table 4.16. This shows that if career readiness experiences an increase of one standard deviation, it will be followed by an increase in job creators of 0.160 or 16%. This means that the effective contribution of the career readiness construct to the job creation construct is 16%. Meanwhile, the unstandardized estimated value is known to be 0.193; this shows that if there is a change in the career readiness construct of one unit, it will be followed by a change in the value of the job creation construct of 19.3%.

Apart from looking at the significant value (*p*-value) and path coefficient to see the direct influence between variables, the CR value is also examined. The effect is declared significant if the CR value is greater than the limit value, and the effect is declared insignificant if the CR value is less than the limit value. Smaller than the limit value or by using a *p*-value, which, if it is less than.05, then it is declared to have a significant effect. Based on the test results above show that the Career Readiness variable has a positive and significant influence on the Job Creation variable, with a CR greater than the limit (3.148 > 1.96) or *p*-value less than α 5% (.002 < .050). A positive coefficient indicates that increasing the Willingness to Work variable can significantly increase the Job Creation variable.

Hypothesis 3: Career Readiness has a significant relationship and effect on Self-Efficacy

The analysis results in Table 6, the significance value is < 0.01, fulfilling the criteria < .05. Apart from that, the direct effect can be seen based on the absolute value of the path coefficient in the SEM analysis output. The standardized estimated value for the career readiness construct is known to be 0.290, as shown in Table 6. This shows that if career readiness experiences an increase of one standard deviation, it will be followed by an increase in self-efficacy of 0.290 or 29%. This means that the effective contribution of the career readiness construct to the self-efficacy construct is 29%. Meanwhile, the unstandardized estimated value is known to have a value of 0.345; this shows that if there is a change in the career readiness construct of 1 unit, it will be followed by a change in the value of the self-efficacy construct of 34.5%.

Apart from looking at the significant value (*p*-value) and path coefficient to see the direct influence between variables, you can also look at the CR value. The effect is declared significant if the CR value is greater than the limit value, and the effect is declared insignificant if the CR value is less than the limit value. Smaller than the limit value or by using a *p*-value, which, if it is less than.05, then it is declared to have a significant effect. Based on the test results above show that the Career Readiness variable has a positive and significant influence on the self-efficacy variable, with a CR greater than the limit (5.826 > 1.96) or *p*-value less than α 5% (< .001). The positive coefficient indicates that increasing the career readiness variable can increase the self-efficacy variable significantly.

Hypothesis 4: Self-efficacy has a significant relationship and impact on job seeker skills

By looking at the analysis results listed in Table 6, the significance value is 0.00, fulfilling the criteria < .05. Apart from that, the direct effect can be seen based on the absolute value of the path coefficient in the SEM analysis output. It can be seen that the standardized estimated value for the self-efficacy construct is known to be 0.287 in Table 6. This shows that if self-efficacy experiences an increase of one standard deviation, it will be followed by an increase in job seekers of 0.287 or 28.7%. This means that the effective contribution of the self-ability construct to the job seeker construct is 28.7%. Meanwhile, the unstandardized estimated value is known to have a value of 0.271, this shows that if there is a change in the self-efficacy construct of 1 unit, it will be followed by a change in the value of the job seeker construct of 27.1%.

Apart from looking at the significant value (*p*-value) and path coefficient to see the direct influence between variables, you can also look at the CR value. The effect is declared significant if the CR value is greater than the limit value, and the effect is declared insignificant if the CR value is less than the limit value, smaller than the limit value, or by using a *p*-value which,

if it is less than.05, then it is declared to have a significant effect. Based on the test results above it shows that the Self-Efficacy variable has a positive and significant influence on the Job Seeker variable, with a CR greater than the limit (5.817 > 1.96) or a *p*-value smaller than α 5% (< .001). A positive coefficient indicates that an increase in the Self-Efficacy variable can increase the Job Seeker variable significantly.

Hypothesis 5: Self-Efficacy has a significant relationship and impact on job creator skills

As in the above section, in this section, the hypothesis directly between the variables is tested based on the significance value of the *p*-value. If you look at the analysis results listed in Table 6, the significance value is < .001, which meets the criteria of < .05. In addition, the direct influence is seen based on the absolute value of the path coefficients (path coefficients) in the output of SEM analysis results. Shown in the Standardized estimate value known to have a value of 0.292 for the self-efficacy construct in Table 6. This shows that if self-efficacy experiences an increase of one standard deviation, it will be followed by an increase in job creators of 0.292 or 29.2%. This means that the effective contribution made by the self-efficacy construct to the job creator construct is 29.2%. While the unstandardized estimate value is known to have a value of 0.295, this shows that if there is a change in the self-efficacy construct of 1 unit, it will be followed by a change in the value of the job creator construct by 29.5%.

Apart from looking at the significant value (*p*-value) and path coefficient, the direct influence between the variables is also done by looking at the CR value. The effect is declared significant if the CR value is greater than the limit value, and the effect is declared insignificant if the CR is smaller than the limit value or by using a *p*-value that is less than.05, then it is declared as a significant effect. Based on the test results above show that the Self-Efficacy Variable has a positive and significant influence on the job creator variable, with a CR value greater than the limit (5.993 > 1.96) or *p*-value less than α 5% (< .001). A positive coefficient indicates that an increase in the self-efficacy variable can significantly increase the Job Creation variable.

Hypothesis Testing with Mediation

This section presents the results of indirect effect testing with the bootstrap method with the hypotheses that will be tested in this study, including:

H6. Self-efficacy mediates the relationship between career readiness and job seeker.

H7. Self-efficacy mediates the relationship between career readiness and job creator.

Relationship	Coefficient	*P*-value	Decision
Career readiness → self-efficacy → job seeker	0.088	0.004	Significant
Career readiness → self-efficacy → job creator	0.090	0.004	Significant

Table 7*:* Regression Analysis Results of Indirect Influence Hypothesis Testing

Based on Table 7, all the paths in the studied construct have significant values at $p < .05$. This means that the requirements for the first stage of the mediation test have met the testing criteria. The next step is to conduct the mediation test by comparing the unstandardized estimated values before and after the mediation of the construct and calculate the bootstrap value with the criteria of the supported hypothesis test or the mediator constructs that can be used as mediator relationships and effects between constructs studied at $p < .05$ or $p < .01$.

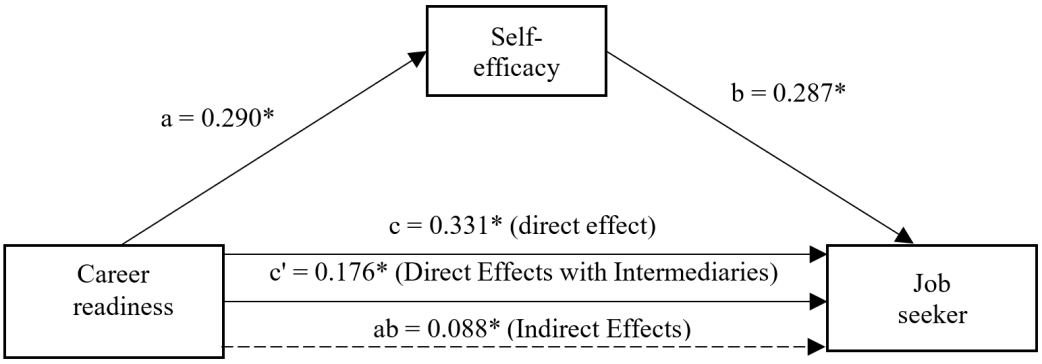
Hypothesis H6: Self-Efficacy mediates the relationship between career readiness and job seeker

The self-efficacy test was used to determine the relationship between career readiness and job seekers after the mediating effect of self-efficacy; this is used to answer hypothesis 6. The results of the analysis show that the relationship between the path career readiness → self-efficacy [$p < .001$] has a significant value at the p-level < .001, and the relationship between the path career readiness → job seeker [$p < .001$] has a significant value at the p < .01 level (Table 7). The requirement for a mediation test in the first stage has met the test criteria. The next step is to conduct a mediation test by comparing the value of the unstandardized estimate before and after the mediation construct and calculate the bootstrapping value with the support of hypothesis testing criteria or the mediation construct can be used as a mediator of the relationship and influence between the constructs studied at $p < .05$.

Regression path			Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	Decision
Career readiness	→	Self-efficacy	0.290	0.000	Significant
Self-efficacy	→	Job seeker	0.287	0.000	Significant
Career readiness	→	Job seeker	0.176	0.156	***a*b* significant**

Table 8*:* Results of Bootstrapping Hypothesis 6

To test hypothesis H6, this study uses the method developed by (Preacher and Hayes, 2004), which was previously developed by (Baron and Kenny, 1986). The analysis for hypothesis (H6) with mediation begins by showing that the direct influence of career readiness on job seekers is significant. The direct influence of career readiness on job seekers is quite strong. However, when we enter the mediating variable self-efficacy into the model, the career readiness coefficient decreases. In other words, the direct effect of career readiness on job seekers decreases when mediators are included in the model. As illustrated in Figure 4, there is a significant decrease in the relationship and direct effect between career readiness and job seekers after self-efficacy is included in the model.



** = Significant; ^{ns} = Not significant*

Figure 4: Intermediate Self-Efficacy Test Results on Career Readiness and Job Seeker

The direct effect of career readiness on job seekers is reduced from 0.176 (*c*') to 0.088 (*ab*) and remains at the significance level [$p < .001$, $p < .05$ in Table 7]. This suggests that self-efficacy can partially explain the relationship between career readiness and job search. This type of mediation is called partial mediation because the direct influence of career readiness on job seekers is still significant after self-efficacy is included in the model. In this context, career readiness has a significant direct effect on job seekers and a significant indirect effect on job seekers through the mediating variable of self-efficacy.

The indirect influence between career readiness on Job Seekers through self-efficacy is significant, with the *p*-value of the results of the indirect bootstrap test being less than α (.004 < .05). Self-efficacy variables mediate the influence of career readiness on job seekers. (This includes the partial mediation category because the direct influence of career readiness on job seekers is significant.)

Hypothesis H7: Self-Efficacy mediates the relationship between career readiness and job creator

The self-efficacy test determines the relationship between career readiness and job creation after the mediating effect of self-efficacy; this is used to answer hypothesis 7. The results of the analysis show that the relationship between the path career readiness → self-efficacy [$p < .001$] has a significant value at the *p*-level < .001, and the relationship between the path career readiness → job creator [$p = .002$] has a significant value at the $p < .01$ level (see Table 7). The requirement for a mediation test in the first stage has met the test criteria. The next step is to conduct a mediation test by comparing the value of the unstandardized estimate before and after the mediation construct and calculate the bootstrapping value with the support of hypothesis testing criteria or the mediation construct can be used as a mediator of the relationship and influence between the constructs studied at $p < .05$.

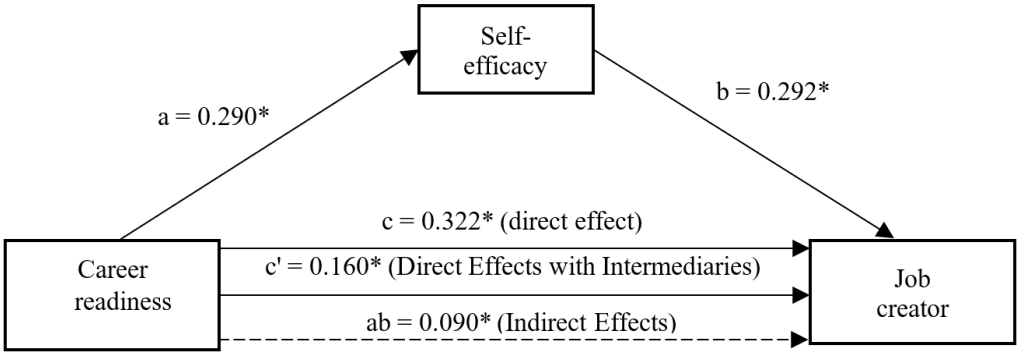
Regression path			Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	Decision
Career readiness	→	Self-efficacy	0.290	0.000	Significant
Self-efficacy	→	Job creator	0.292	0.000	Significant
Career readiness	→	Job creators	0.160	0.162	***a*b* significant**

Table 9*:* Results of Bootstrapping Hypothesis

The analysis for hypothesis (H7) with mediation begins by showing that the direct influence of career readiness on job creators is significant. The direct influence of career readiness on job creators is quite strong. However, when we enter the mediating variable self-efficacy into the model, the career readiness coefficient decreases. In other words, the direct effect of career readiness on job creation decreases when mediators are included in the model. As illustrated in Figure 5, there is a significant decrease in the relationship and direct effect between career readiness and job creation after self-efficacy is included in the model.

The direct effect of career readiness on job seekers is reduced from 0.160 (*c*') to 0.090 (*ab*) and remains at the significance level [$p < .001$, $p < .05$ in Table 7]. This suggests that self-efficacy can partially explain the relationship between career readiness and job creation. This type of mediation is called partial mediation because the direct influence of career readiness on job seekers is still significant after self-efficacy is included in the model. In this context, career readiness has a significant direct effect on job creators and also has a significant indirect effect on job creators through the mediating variable of self-efficacy.

Thus, the indirect influence of the career readiness variable on the job creator through self-efficacy is significant, with the p-value of the results of the indirect bootstrap test being less than α (.004 < .05). self-efficacy variables mediate the influence of career readiness on job creators (Including the partial mediation category because the direct influence of career readiness on job creators is significant).



** = Significant, ns = Not significant*

Figure 5: Intermediate Test Results of Self-Efficacy on Career Readiness and Job creator

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Discussion

Career readiness and tendencies of job seeker and creator

Based on the results of the study, career readiness has a significant direct relationship with and influence on the tendency of Economic Education students to become either job seekers or job creators. This indicates that career readiness, which encompasses digital literacy, an entrepreneurial mindset, employability skills, and ICT skills, plays a crucial role in shaping their inclination toward these career paths. While career readiness has a slightly greater influence on the tendency to become job seekers compared to job creators, the difference, as indicated by the findings, is not very substantial. The results of this study were as previously predicted in the hypothesis study (H1, H2, H3, H4, H5).

It is, therefore, essential to continuously monitor and assess students' career readiness using these factors. By evaluating the extent to which students have developed digital literacy, entrepreneurial mindset, work skills, and ICT competencies, study programs can make necessary adjustments to address students' needs. These considerations should be integrated into the planning and implementation of the Economic Education study program to better prepare students for the challenges of the ever-evolving job market. Additionally, this effort helps students equip themselves for competition in an increasingly digital and dynamic workforce, providing them with the tools to become efficient job seekers or successful entrepreneurs. As stated in several previous studies, career readiness influences the tendency to become a job seeker (Reimers-Hild, 2010; Garrido, Sullivan and Gordon, 2012; Fajaryati et al., 2020; Mushi, 2020; Hu et al., 2022; Iqbal et al., 2022).

The influence of self-efficacy on the connection between career readiness and the tendency to engage as either job seekers or job creators

Based on the study results, self-efficacy acts as a mediator between career readiness and the tendency to become either a job seeker or a job creator (H6, H7). An in-depth analysis was conducted using bootstrapping tests to assess the strength of self-efficacy's role as a mediator. In both cases, significant results were obtained, indicating that self-efficacy partially mediates the relationship. Specifically, self-efficacy influences students' career readiness in shaping their tendency to become either job seekers or job creators. This partial mediation implies that self-efficacy explains only part of the relationship. It contributes to the connection between career readiness and the tendency to become a job seeker, as well as to the connection between career readiness and the tendency to become a job creator. However, other factors not accounted for by self-efficacy also influence these relationships, suggesting the need for further exploration.

As a mediator, students who feel career-ready exhibit greater confidence in their ability to secure employment (high self-efficacy). They are more assured of possessing the necessary skills and knowledge to compete in the job market. Furthermore, high self-efficacy motivates students to be more proactive in their job search and better equipped to overcome challenges encountered during the process. In line with that, self-efficacy also connects or explains how career readiness affects their tendency to become entrepreneurs or job creators. When students feel sufficiently prepared for a particular career and have high self-efficacy related to entrepreneurship, then they will become job creators or entrepreneurs. However, the role of self-efficacy varies from individual to individual and other factors can influence their decisions.

Self-efficacy influencing the job search process and outcomes. Self-efficacious job seekers are more confident and optimistic about their job search process and outcomes, which can lead to more frequent job search behaviors and, ultimately, a higher likelihood of finding employment (Petruzziello et al., 2021). Self-efficacy is an individual's belief in their ability to perform tasks and achieve goals (Safari, Davaribina and Khoshnevis, 2020). It plays a crucial role in the job search process and outcomes, as it encourages people to engage in activities and cope with difficulties, stressful situations, or setbacks during the job search process.

However, the mediation role partially affected the relationship between career readiness, job seekers, and job creators. As several previous studies stated, career readiness influences self-efficacy (Baker et al., 2017; Goncalves, 2021; Pignault, Rastoder and Houssemand, 2023). Self-efficacy's influence on the tendency to become a job seeker has been investigated by several previous authors (Saks, Zikic and Koen, 2015; Liu et al., 2021; Petruzziello et al., 2021; Teye-Kwadjo, 2021). Likewise, self-efficacy also influences the tendency to become a job creator (Caliendo et al., no date; Wei et al., 2020; Ferreira-Neto et al., 2023).

Another study (Haidari, Koçoğlu and Kanadlı, 2023) revealed a robust correlation between self-efficacy and its profound impact on student achievement. This research underscores self-efficacy as the most influential factor in shaping student success and sheds light on its broader implications beyond academic performance. Self-efficacy plays a crucial role in shaping students' attitudes toward their future endeavors, influencing their inclination to become job seekers or creators. Students with high levels of self-efficacy are more likely to exhibit entrepreneurial tendencies and take initiative in creating opportunities for themselves and others, thus contributing to economic growth and innovation. Therefore, cultivating self-efficacy among students is vital for academic success and fostering a mindset conducive to entrepreneurial ventures and workforce readiness.

Career readiness combines self-concept, self-interest in a career, and motivation to learn. It is crucial for every individual to be well-prepared and equipped with the necessary skills and qualifications to enter the job market and pursue the career they desire (Petruzziello et al., 2021). Improvements in the quality of the educational process must be implemented, as they significantly influence students' interest in lessons and courses (Depoo, Urbancová and Smolová, 2022). Therefore, the tendency to become a job seeker is influenced by career readiness because well-prepared individuals with the necessary skills and qualifications will be more active in seeking and pursuing job opportunities. Self-efficacy plays a significant role in the job search process and outcomes, and it acts as a mediator between career readiness and the tendency to become a job seeker. By enhancing self-efficacy, individuals can improve their job search process and outcomes, making them more likely to become job seekers.

Recent studies have explored the mediating role of self-efficacy between career readiness and the tendency to become an entrepreneur or job creator. For instance, a study found that entrepreneurial self-efficacy (ESE) mediates the relationship between entrepreneurship education and start-up readiness (Adeniyi, 2023). ESE is considered a precursor for entrepreneurial action and has been found to influence innovation behavior. Another study found that self-efficacy mediates the relationship between entrepreneurial education and entrepreneurial intention in college students (Li, Cao and Jenatabadi, 2023). Self-efficacy is a critical element that influences a person›s behavior through cognitive processes, proactive personality, and result expectations (Schwarzer and Warner, 2013; Blom et al., 2021; Adeniyi, 2023). Additionally, self-efficacy is essential in affecting entrepreneurial intentions as it fosters commitment and persistence and boosts the possibility of achieving entrepreneurial success (Ferreira-Neto et al., 2023). Therefore, self-efficacy can mediate the relationship between career readiness and the tendency to become an entrepreneur or job creator by influencing entrepreneurial intentions, fostering commitment, and boosting the possibility of achieving entrepreneurial success.

In theoretical studies, career readiness is a concept that is often discussed in the context of career development theory. One such theory is Bandura's Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) (Zikic and Saks, 2009). This study found that career-related activities, such as environmental and career exploration, career resources, and training, were positively related to job search self-efficacy and clarity. This research also examines the contribution of personality, gender, and other factors to job search behavior. Overall, this article suggests that career-related activities play an essential role in job search behavior and that SCCT may be a helpful framework for understanding this relationship. This theory emphasizes individual and environmental changes and sees career selection as a relatively dynamic system that is more adaptable to contemporary society than traditional career theory (Wang, Sun and Wu, 2022). Although SCCT does not explicitly state that career readiness influences the propensity to become a job seeker, it suggests that self-efficacy, outcome expectations, goals, and interests influence an individual's career path. These factors can impact an individual's willingness to pursue a particular career path or job opportunity. Other career development theories, such as Holland's Career Choice Theory, suggest that an individual's personality and environment interact to determine their career path (Nauta, 2010).

Conclusions

Career readiness based on digital literacy, entrepreneurial mindset, employability skills, and ICT skills can also influence a person's tendency to become a job seeker. High digital literacy will provide a competitive advantage for someone looking for work, especially in jobs that require technology. The ability to use digital tools and adapt to technological changes will make this job increasingly sought after by employers. Digital literacy can also help search for jobs online using digital search platforms.

Career readiness can also influence a person's tendency to become a job creator or entrepreneur. Digital literacy includes a person's ability to use information and communication technology (ICT) to access, evaluate, and use information effectively. High digital literacy skills can help students run an online business or utilize technology to expand the reach of their business. Therefore, career readiness based on digital literacy, entrepreneurial mindset, employability, and ICT skills can be critical factors that support a person's tendency to become a job creator or entrepreneur. This combination of skills can help students plan, implement, and manage their businesses more successfully.

In addition, self-efficacy can mediate between career readiness and students' tendency to become job seekers. Students who feel career-ready usually have more substantial confidence in their ability to find work (high self-efficacy). High self-efficacy can motivate students to be more active in looking for work and overcome the obstacles faced in the job search process so that self-efficacy can act as an intermediary that bridges relationships between careers. Students' willingness and tendencies as job seekers. This means that career readiness not only directly affects the tendency to look for work but also has an effect through self-efficacy. Mediation analyses like this can provide a deeper picture of how these factors are interrelated and how self-efficacy bridges career readiness and students' job search tendencies.

Meanwhile, the mediation of self-efficacy in the relationship between career readiness and students' tendency to become job creators or entrepreneurs is a psychological phenomenon that can influence how individuals develop an interest and

commitment to entrepreneurship as a career choice. Hence, in this context, self-efficacy mediation refers to the role of self-efficacy that connects career readiness with students' tendency to become job creators or entrepreneurs. Students who feel they have high entrepreneurial abilities (high entrepreneurial efficacy) tend to be more confident in starting their own business, regardless of how well they feel prepared for a career regarding skills and knowledge. In this situation, self-efficacy mediates career readiness and students' tendency to become job creators. This means that entrepreneurial self-efficacy functions to relate or explain how career readiness influences their tendency to become entrepreneurs.

LIMITATION

This research is limited by the size of the sample used. Therefore, future research should consider using larger and more diverse samples to increase the representativeness of the results. Apart from that, the results of this research only reflect the conditions of a geographical region in Indonesia or a particular educational institution. For stronger generalizations, future research could consider geographic and institutional variations. Time limitations in measuring the long-term influence of career readiness on the tendency to become a job seeker or job creator are also limitations in this research. Thus, longitudinal studies can help overcome this.

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