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Entrepreneurship Education and Entrepreneurial Interest Among Generation Z Students: An Experimental Study in Vocational Education

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ABSTRACT

Entrepreneurship education has become an important strategy in developing entrepreneurial interest among Generation Z, particularly in vocational education environments that prepare students to face dynamic economic and business challenges. This study aims to examine the effect of entrepreneurship education on Generation Z's entrepreneurial interest at SMK Negeri 4 Makassar using a True Experimental Design with a Post-Test-Only Control-Group Design approach. The study involved 40 students divided into an experimental group and a control group, with each group consisting of 20 respondents. The experimental group received entrepreneurship learning through an experiential-based approach, while the control group received conventional learning methods. Data were collected through questionnaires, observation, and documentation, and were analyzed using validity, reliability, normality, homogeneity, and t-test analyses. The findings indicate that entrepreneurship education has a positive and significant effect on entrepreneurial interest among Generation Z students. The experimental group demonstrated a higher increase in entrepreneurial interest compared to the control group after the learning intervention was implemented. The results also confirmed that the research instruments were valid and reliable, while the data fulfilled the assumptions of normality and homogeneity. The t-test analysis further demonstrated a statistically significant difference between both groups. This study contributes to the entrepreneurship education literature by providing empirical evidence through a true experimental approach, which remains relatively limited in previous studies. The findings imply that experiential entrepreneurship education can strengthen students' motivation, confidence, and readiness to engage in entrepreneurial activities in the digital era.

Keywords: entrepreneurship education, entrepreneurial interest, generation z, true experimental design

1. INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship has become an increasingly important issue in economic and educational development due to its contribution to innovation, employment creation, and long-term economic sustainability. In many developing countries, including Indonesia, entrepreneurship is viewed not only as an economic activity but also as a strategic approach to reducing unemployment and improving social welfare. Rapid economic transformation and technological advancement have encouraged educational institutions to strengthen entrepreneurial competencies among younger generations in order to prepare them for increasingly competitive labor markets (Looi & Khoo-Lattimore, 2015). Consequently, entrepreneurship education has gained greater attention as an important instrument for developing entrepreneurial skills, creativity, and independence among students.

Generation Z represents a generation that grows within a highly digitalized environment and is characterized by adaptability, technological familiarity, and openness to innovation (Benítez-Márquez et al., 2022; Yilmaz et al., 2024). These characteristics position Generation Z as

a potential driver of entrepreneurial development in the digital era. However, despite possessing strong digital competencies, many young individuals still demonstrate limited entrepreneurial intention due to uncertainty regarding business risks, lack of confidence, and insufficient entrepreneurial exposure. Therefore, educational institutions are increasingly expected to provide entrepreneurship learning experiences capable of encouraging entrepreneurial interest and strengthening entrepreneurial mindsets among students.

Entrepreneurship education is considered an important factor in shaping entrepreneurial interest because it provides knowledge, practical skills, and business-oriented experiences that can influence students' career preferences (Gazi et al., 2024). Through entrepreneurship education, students are introduced to business opportunities, innovation processes, business planning, and risk management. Such learning experiences may encourage students to perceive entrepreneurship as a realistic and attractive career option. Hasan et al. (2020) explained that entrepreneurship education involves the transfer of entrepreneurial knowledge and values through both formal and informal learning processes. Similarly, Bikse et al. (2014) emphasized that entrepreneurship education plays a strategic role in developing entrepreneurial attitudes and strengthening students' readiness to engage in business activities.

Entrepreneurial interest refers to an individual's tendency or willingness to engage in entrepreneurial activities and establish independent businesses in the future. Entrepreneurial interest can be viewed as an individual's tendency to initiate a new venture, strongly linked to creativity, innovation, and the ability to cope with uncertainty and risk in business activities (Shi et al., 2020; Liao et al., 2022; Ferreira-Neto et al., 2023). Individuals with high entrepreneurial interest tend to demonstrate stronger motivation to explore business opportunities and develop innovative ideas into commercial activities. Shahzad et al. (2021) further argued that entrepreneurial interest reflects individuals' desire to become independent decision-makers and business owners capable of controlling and developing their own enterprises.

Several previous studies have examined the relationship between entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial intention. Shah et al. (2020) found that attitudes toward entrepreneurship, subjective norms, and self-efficacy significantly influence entrepreneurial intention, while entrepreneurship education strengthens students' entrepreneurial confidence. Recent studies on vocational students report that entrepreneurship education and work or internship experience positively influence students' entrepreneurial interest and intentions, indicating that entrepreneurship education contributes meaningfully to their entrepreneurial development (Handayati et al., 2020). These findings indicate that entrepreneurship education contributes positively to students' entrepreneurial development.

Despite these findings, previous studies still reveal important methodological limitations. Longva and Foss (2018) highlighted that only a small proportion of entrepreneurship education studies employed rigorous experimental or quasi-experimental designs to examine causal relationships. Most previous studies relied on correlational approaches, making it difficult to determine whether entrepreneurship education directly influences entrepreneurial interest. Furthermore, earlier findings regarding the impact of entrepreneurship education remain inconsistent, as some studies reported positive effects while others found insignificant or even negative outcomes. These inconsistencies indicate the need for more rigorous experimental studies capable of providing stronger causal evidence regarding the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education programs.

In response to these limitations, this study applies a True Experimental Design using a Post-Test-Only Control-Group Design to examine the effect of entrepreneurship education on Generation Z's entrepreneurial interest at SMK Negeri 4 Makassar. This experimental approach is considered appropriate because it allows researchers to evaluate the causal effect of entrepreneurship education by comparing the outcomes between experimental and control groups after treatment implementation (Costa et al., 2023). Compared with non-experimental

approaches, true experimental designs provide stronger internal validity and greater control over external variables that may influence research outcomes.

This study specifically focuses on vocational high school students because vocational education institutions are expected to produce graduates who possess practical competencies and entrepreneurial readiness. In the Indonesian context, vocational school students represent an important segment of Generation Z that is directly prepared to enter the labor market or develop independent businesses after graduation. Therefore, understanding how entrepreneurship education influences entrepreneurial interest among vocational students is important for improving entrepreneurship learning practices and supporting youth entrepreneurship development.

This study aims to analyze the effect of entrepreneurship education on Generation Z's entrepreneurial interest through the application of a True Experimental Design with a Post-Test-Only Control-Group Design at SMK Negeri 4 Makassar. The findings of this study are expected to contribute theoretically to the entrepreneurship education literature by providing stronger empirical evidence regarding the causal relationship between entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial interest. In addition, this study is expected to provide practical implications for educational institutions and policymakers in designing more effective entrepreneurship education programs capable of fostering entrepreneurial interest and preparing students to face future economic challenges.

2. METHOD

2.1. Research Design

This study was conducted at SMK Negeri 4 Makassar and focused on examining the effect of entrepreneurship education on Generation Z students' entrepreneurial interest. This study employed a quantitative approach using a true experimental method with a Pretest–Posttest Control Group Design. This design was selected because it allows researchers to compare students' entrepreneurial interest before and after the implementation of entrepreneurship education treatment between experimental and control groups. Through this approach, the researcher was able to compare the entrepreneurial interest of students who received entrepreneurship education treatment with those who did not receive the treatment.

The implementation of the study was carried out from October to November 2023 over four learning meetings within one instructional cycle. The participants consisted of 40 students who were divided into two groups, namely the experimental group and the control group. Each group consisted of 20 students. The experimental group received entrepreneurship learning through a true experiential learning approach, while the control group received conventional entrepreneurship learning methods commonly applied in classroom settings.

In this study, entrepreneurship education served as the independent variable, whereas entrepreneurial interest represented the dependent variable. The experimental learning activities were designed to encourage students' active involvement through practical entrepreneurial experiences, problem-solving activities, business simulations, and reflective learning processes. Meanwhile, the control group received theoretical learning without intensive experiential activities.

The stages of the research implementation are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Learning Stages in Experimental and Control Groups

Stage	Experimental Group	Control Group
Preparation	Initial data collection regarding entrepreneurial interest among Generation Z students at SMK Negeri 4 Makassar and preparation of entrepreneurial interest questionnaires	Initial data collection regarding entrepreneurial interest among Generation Z students at SMK Negeri 4 Makassar and preparation of entrepreneurial interest questionnaires

Learning Implementation	Entrepreneurship learning using a true experiential design approach	Entrepreneurship learning using conventional approaches
Entrepreneurial Interest Measurement	Distribution of entrepreneurial interest questionnaires	Distribution of entrepreneurial interest questionnaires
Data Analysis	Hypothesis testing to examine the effect of entrepreneurship education on entrepreneurial interest	Hypothesis testing to examine the effect of entrepreneurship education on entrepreneurial interest

2.2. Sample

The participants in this study were students of SMK Negeri 4 Makassar enrolled in the entrepreneurship and tourism majors. A total of 40 students participated in the study and were divided equally into two classes consisting of 20 students each. One class was assigned as the experimental group, while the other class served as the control group. The determination of groups was conducted prior to the treatment implementation to ensure equal learning opportunities during the study.

The experimental group received entrepreneurship education through experiential learning activities designed to strengthen practical understanding of entrepreneurship, whereas the control group received entrepreneurship instruction through conventional classroom methods. At the end of the treatment period, both groups completed a post-test questionnaire to measure entrepreneurial interest.

2.3. Research Instruments

Data collection in this study was conducted using questionnaires, observation, and documentation techniques. The questionnaire was designed to measure students' entrepreneurial interest after participating in entrepreneurship learning activities. The instrument consisted of several indicators, including entrepreneurial knowledge, positive attitudes toward entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial skills, motivation, perception of business opportunities, and participant feedback toward entrepreneurship learning activities.

The assessment rubric used a four-point scale ranging from low to very high categories. The scoring system produced a minimum score of 20 and a maximum score of 80. The score intervals were categorized as follows: scores between 20–35 were classified as low, 36–50 as moderate, 51–65 as high, and 66–80 as very high entrepreneurial interest.

To ensure the appropriateness of statistical analysis, several prerequisite tests were conducted prior to hypothesis testing. The normality test was performed using the Lilliefors test to determine whether the data were normally distributed. Furthermore, the homogeneity test was conducted using the F-test to examine whether the variances between groups were homogeneous. After fulfilling these assumptions, hypothesis testing was carried out using the independent sample t-test to determine whether entrepreneurship education significantly affected entrepreneurial interest among Generation Z students.

The entrepreneurial interest assessment rubric used in this study is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Entrepreneurial interest assesment

Entrepreneurial Interest Indicators	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**

Knowledge Improvement	No significant knowledge improvement	Moderate knowledge improvement	Good knowledge improvement	Very significant knowledge improvement
Positive Attitude Change	Negative attitude or no significant change	Moderate positive attitude	Good positive attitude	Highly positive attitude and confidence
Entrepreneurial Skill Improvement	Entrepreneurial skills do not develop	Moderate entrepreneurial skills	Good entrepreneurial skills	Highly developed entrepreneurial skills
Motivation Level	Low entrepreneurial motivation	Moderate entrepreneurial motivation	High entrepreneurial motivation	Very high entrepreneurial motivation
Perception of Business Opportunities	Very limited perception of opportunities	Limited understanding of opportunities	Good understanding of opportunities	Strategic and comprehensive understanding
Participant Feedback	Negative or no feedback	Limited feedback	Positive feedback	Highly positive and supportive feedback

The findings of this study were interpreted to determine whether entrepreneurship education significantly influenced entrepreneurial interest among Generation Z students at SMK Negeri 4 Makassar. Through the use of a true experimental design with a Post-Test-Only Control-Group Design, this study is expected to provide stronger empirical evidence regarding the causal relationship between entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial interest among vocational high school students.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Results

The results of the study present the comparison of entrepreneurial interest scores between the experimental group and the control group after the implementation of entrepreneurship education using a True Experimental Design with a Post-Test-Only Control-Group Design. The comparison of pretest and posttest mean scores between both groups is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Mean Scores of Pretest and Posttest in Experimental and Control Groups

Group	Mean Pretest	Mean Posttest	Improvement
Experimental	69.45	89.30	19.85
Control	69.30	76.85	7.55

Based on the data presented in Table 2, the experimental group obtained a mean pretest score of 69.45, which increased to 89.30 in the posttest, indicating an improvement of 19.85 points. Meanwhile, the control group showed a mean pretest score of 69.30 and a posttest score of 76.85, reflecting an increase of 7.55 points. These findings indicate that students who received entrepreneurship education through the experiential learning approach demonstrated higher improvement in entrepreneurial interest compared to students who received conventional learning methods.

Prior to hypothesis testing, prerequisite statistical analyses were conducted, including validity, reliability, normality, and homogeneity tests. The validity test focused on construct validity because the primary research instrument was a questionnaire measuring entrepreneurial interest. The instrument was evaluated by two expert validators, and the results confirmed that the questionnaire was appropriate for use in measuring the influence of entrepreneurship education on entrepreneurial interest among Generation Z students.

The reliability test was conducted by administering the questionnaire to 22 respondents outside the research sample. Reliability analysis employed the Split-Half technique using the Spearman-Brown formula. The calculation produced an $r_i$value of 0.833, which exceeded the r_{table}value of 0.423 at a significance level of 5%. Therefore, the instrument was considered reliable and suitable for data collection purposes.

After the experimental and control groups completed the learning process, normality testing was performed to determine whether the data distribution met the assumptions required for parametric analysis.

Table 4. Initial Normality Test of Experimental and Control Groups

Group	Number of Samples	L_0	L_t	Data Conclusion
Experimental	20	0.091	0.190	Normal
Control	20	0.126	0.190	Normal

The results of the normality test showed that the experimental group obtained an L_0value of 0.091, which was lower than the L_{table}value of 0.190. Similarly, the control group produced an L_0value of 0.126, which was also lower than the L_{table}value of 0.190. Since the obtained values were lower than the critical values, the data distribution in both groups was considered normal.

Following the normality test, a homogeneity test was conducted to examine whether the variances of the two groups were homogeneous.

Table 5. Initial Homogeneity Test of Experimental and Control Groups

Group	N	Fcount	Ftable	Conclusion
Experimental	20	1.685	2.168	Homogeneous
Control	20			

The homogeneity test results indicated that the calculated F_{count}value was 1.685, whereas the F_{table}value at a significance level of 5% with degrees of freedom of 19 and 19 was 2.168. Since the calculated value was lower than the critical value, the variances of the experimental and control groups were considered homogeneous.

After the treatment period, posttest data were analyzed to evaluate the normality of the final scores.

Table 6. Final Normality Test of Experimental and Control Groups

Group	Number of Samples	L_0	L_t	Data Conclusion
Experimental	20	0.095	0.190	Normal
Control	20	0.109	0.190	Normal

The results revealed that the experimental group obtained an L_0value of 0.095, which was lower than the L_{table}value of 0.190. Likewise, the control group produced an L_0value of 0.109, which was also lower than the critical value. These findings indicate that the posttest data in both groups were normally distributed.

Subsequently, a final homogeneity test was conducted on the posttest scores.

Table 7. Final Homogeneity Test of Experimental and Control Groups

Group	N	F Count	F Table	Conclusion
Experimental	20			
Control	20	1.125	2.168	Homogeneous

The results demonstrated that the F_{count}value of 1.125 was lower than the F_{table}value of 2.168 at the 5% significance level. Therefore, the variances between the experimental and control groups were considered homogeneous.

The final stage of analysis involved hypothesis testing using the independent sample t-test to determine whether entrepreneurship education significantly influenced entrepreneurial interest among Generation Z students.

Table 8. Independent Sample t-Test Results

Group	N	t Count	t Table	Description
Control	20	2.115	2.024	There is a significant effect

The results of the t-test analysis showed that the calculated t_{count} value was 2.115. With degrees of freedom calculated as $n_1 + n_2 - 2 = 38$, the obtained t_{table} value at the 5% significance level was 2.024. Since $t_{count} > t_{table}$, the null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected and the alternative hypothesis (H_1) was accepted. These findings indicate that entrepreneurship education significantly affects the entrepreneurial interest of Generation Z students at SMK Negeri 4 Makassar.

3.2. Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that entrepreneurship education has a positive and significant effect on entrepreneurial interest among Generation Z students. Students who participated in entrepreneurship learning through an experiential learning approach exhibited higher entrepreneurial interest compared to those who received conventional entrepreneurship instruction. These findings indicate that entrepreneurship education not only enhances entrepreneurial knowledge but also strengthens students' motivation, self-confidence, and willingness to engage in entrepreneurial activities.

The findings are consistent with previous studies emphasizing the important role of entrepreneurship education in fostering entrepreneurial intention and entrepreneurial behavior among young individuals (Bae et al., 2014; Gazi et al., 2024). Entrepreneurship education provides students with opportunities to understand business concepts, identify entrepreneurial opportunities, and develop entrepreneurial competencies required in dynamic economic environments. As a result, students become more prepared and motivated to pursue entrepreneurship as a potential career pathway.

The higher entrepreneurial interest observed in the experimental group may be attributed to the experiential learning approach implemented during the instructional process. Through practical activities, business simulations, collaborative projects, and direct problem-solving experiences, students were encouraged to actively engage in entrepreneurial learning situations. Such experiences enable students to understand real business conditions more effectively and improve their confidence in entrepreneurial decision-making. This finding supports the argument that entrepreneurship education becomes more effective when students are directly involved in practical entrepreneurial activities rather than relying solely on theoretical instruction.

From a theoretical perspective, this study strengthens Human Capital Theory, which explains that education contributes to the development of individual competencies, productivity, and employability. Entrepreneurship education equips students with entrepreneurial knowledge, creativity, opportunity recognition skills, and problem-solving abilities that support entrepreneurial readiness among younger generations. The findings suggest that students who receive entrepreneurship education tend to perceive entrepreneurship as a feasible and attractive career option, thereby increasing their entrepreneurial interest.

In addition, the findings can also be explained through Experiential Learning Theory proposed by Kolb, which emphasizes that learning becomes more meaningful when individuals actively participate in concrete experiences followed by reflection and application. In this study, experiential entrepreneurship learning allowed students to connect theoretical entrepreneurial concepts with practical business experiences. Consequently, students were able to develop stronger entrepreneurial understanding and entrepreneurial confidence through active participation in entrepreneurial activities.

Furthermore, the findings support the Theory of Planned Behavior, which states that entrepreneurial intention is influenced by attitudes, perceived behavioral control, and subjective norms. Entrepreneurship education may strengthen students' positive attitudes toward entrepreneurship and improve their perceived ability to perform entrepreneurial activities. As students become more confident in their entrepreneurial capabilities, their entrepreneurial interest also increases significantly.

The findings also indicate that experiential entrepreneurship education contributes to students' adaptability and creativity in responding to business opportunities. Generation Z is

widely recognized as a digitally oriented generation characterized by creativity, innovation, and strong technological familiarity. Therefore, entrepreneurship education that integrates practical and interactive learning experiences appears highly relevant for supporting entrepreneurial development among this generation. The experiential approach allows students to connect entrepreneurial theories with real entrepreneurial practices, thereby enhancing their understanding of business opportunities and entrepreneurial challenges in the digital era.

This study also confirms previous findings that entrepreneurship education serves as an important instrument for fostering entrepreneurial ecosystems within educational institutions. Schools play a strategic role not only in preparing students to become job seekers but also in encouraging them to become job creators capable of contributing to economic development. Entrepreneurship education encourages students to develop independent thinking, leadership skills, risk-taking attitudes, and opportunity recognition capabilities, all of which are important components of entrepreneurial behavior.

Another important contribution of this study lies in its methodological approach. Unlike many previous studies that relied primarily on correlational methods, this study employed a true experimental design to examine the causal relationship between entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial interest. The use of a pretest–posttest control group design provides stronger empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education interventions among vocational school students. Therefore, this study contributes methodologically to entrepreneurship education research, particularly within the context of Generation Z vocational students in Indonesia.

Furthermore, this study provides contextual contributions by focusing on vocational high school students at SMK Negeri 4 Makassar. Previous entrepreneurship education studies have predominantly focused on university students, whereas research involving vocational school students remains relatively limited. Thus, this study expands the understanding of how entrepreneurship education influences entrepreneurial interest among younger students who are directly prepared for labor market participation and entrepreneurial careers after graduation.

Overall, the findings suggest that entrepreneurship education should continue to be strengthened through more practical, interactive, and experience-based learning approaches. Educational institutions are encouraged to design entrepreneurship programs involving direct business practice, project-based learning, mentoring activities, and collaboration with entrepreneurs or industry practitioners. Such approaches are expected to strengthen entrepreneurial interest and better prepare Generation Z students to face future economic and business challenges.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTION

This study concludes that entrepreneurship education has a positive and significant effect on the entrepreneurial interest of Generation Z students at SMK Negeri 4 Makassar. The implementation of entrepreneurship learning through a True Experimental Design with a Post-Test-Only Control-Group Design demonstrated that students who received entrepreneurship education treatment showed higher entrepreneurial interest compared to students in the control group. The statistical analysis confirmed that the research instrument was valid and reliable, while the normality, homogeneity, and hypothesis testing results indicated that the data met the required analytical assumptions. These findings imply that entrepreneurship education contributes not only to improving students' entrepreneurial knowledge, but also to strengthening motivation, positive attitudes, self-confidence, and awareness of business opportunities among Generation Z students.

This study also strengthens the human capital theory perspective by demonstrating that entrepreneurship education can serve as an important mechanism for developing entrepreneurial competencies and fostering entrepreneurial intention among young individuals. The findings extend previous entrepreneurship education studies by providing empirical evidence using a true experimental approach, which remains relatively limited in entrepreneurship research. In the

context of vocational education, this study highlights that practical and experience-based entrepreneurship learning can effectively encourage students to become more interested in entrepreneurial activities and business creation in the future.

From a practical perspective, schools and educational institutions are encouraged to redesign entrepreneurship learning methods by emphasizing experiential and practice-oriented approaches rather than relying solely on theoretical instruction. Entrepreneurship programs should integrate real business simulations, project-based learning, digital business practices, and collaborative activities that allow students to gain direct entrepreneurial experience. Such learning approaches are expected to increase students' confidence, creativity, and readiness to face business challenges in the digital era. In addition, teachers should be provided with continuous training to improve their ability to deliver innovative entrepreneurship learning aligned with current industry developments.

The findings also provide implications for policymakers and government institutions. Support for entrepreneurship education in vocational schools should be strengthened through curriculum development, entrepreneurship training programs, business incubation support, and access to entrepreneurial mentoring for students. Furthermore, collaboration between schools, universities, industries, and local business communities is necessary to create a more supportive entrepreneurial ecosystem for Generation Z. Through stronger educational support and practical entrepreneurial exposure, vocational school graduates are expected to become more independent, innovative, and capable of contributing to economic development and employment creation.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. First, the research was conducted only at SMK Negeri 4 Makassar with a relatively limited number of respondents, which may reduce the generalizability of the findings. Second, the study focused primarily on entrepreneurial interest without examining other important variables such as entrepreneurial self-efficacy, entrepreneurial mindset, or family support. Therefore, future studies are recommended to involve larger and more diverse samples across different educational institutions and regions. Further research may also apply longitudinal or mixed-method approaches to provide broader insights into the long-term effectiveness of entrepreneurship education in shaping entrepreneurial behavior among Generation Z.

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