

The Effect of Hard Skill and Soft Skill on Student Entrepreneur Readiness: Evidence from Garut, Indonesia

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Abstract

The research is grounded in the pressing concern of rising educated unemployment and the growing expectation that entrepreneurship can serve as a strategic pathway for students to transition from job seekers to job creators, this study aims to examine the influence of hard skills and soft skills on students' entrepreneurial readiness. Adopting a quantitative approach with a descriptive method, this study involved 156 student respondents selected through proportionate stratified random sampling. Data were collected using a closed-ended Likert-scale questionnaire. Structural Equation Modelling-Partial Least Square (SEM-PLS), supported by Smart PLS 4, was employed as the data analysis technique. The findings: (1) hard skills exert a positive and significant effect on students' entrepreneurial readiness; (2) soft skills also have a positive and significant effect on entrepreneurial readiness; and (3) hard skills and soft skills simultaneously exert a significant influence on students' readiness to engage in entrepreneurship. These findings are particularly valuable as they offer an affirmative and evidence-based framework for cultivating the entrepreneurs urgently needed in Indonesia. The practical implications call for a strategic transformation of entrepreneurship curricula and pedagogical approaches by educational policymakers and lecturers. Specifically, greater emphasis should be placed on the integrated, intensive, and sustained development of both hard skills and soft skills, closely aligned with the needs of the local economic ecosystem. Finally, further research employing quasi-experimental or longitudinal designs is recommended to rigorously test and refine the proposed model.

1. Introduction

The phenomenon of educated unemployment remains a development paradox and a critical structural challenge in Garut regency. Recent data from *Badan Pusat Statistik* (Central Statistics Agency) indicate that the Open Unemployment Rate in this region continues to fluctuate at an alarming level. In 2024, 6.96% - equivalent to approximately 1.44 million residents of Garut regency, were recorded as unemployed, a figure exceeding the provincial average of West Java at 6.77% (Badan Pusat Statistik Kabupaten Garut, 2025). Tragically, university graduates constitute a significant proportion within the regional unemployment structure. The root of the problem lies not merely in the scarcity of job opportunities, but in a systemic imbalance wherein the labor market is dominated by the informal sector, while the capacity of the formal and manufacturing sectors remains insufficient to absorb the annual growth of new graduates.

This condition triggers a "misallocation of human resources," whereby local graduates are compelled to work in sectors unrelated to their academic competencies or to migrate to urban centers in search of better opportunities. This phenomenon reinforces the findings of Spiridonova et al. (2020), who argues that the imbalance between the supply of educated labor and the availability of formal employment generates intense socio-economic pressures on unemployment rates in peripheral regions. In this context, the transformation of mindset from job seeker to job creator is no longer merely an option, but an existential urgency. Jannah and Hasmidyani (2025) emphasizes that entrepreneurial readiness is not a momentary desire, but a mental construct developed through the harmonious integration of technical competence and psychological preparedness.

Empirically, Garut regency possesses promising economic modalities, with more than 30,000 Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME), deeply rooted in the leather industry, culinary sector, handicrafts, creative industries, and tourism. Yet, this vast potential has not been optimally capitalized upon due to the limited regeneration of competitive young entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurial readiness, as defined by Burns (2016), constitutes a prerequisite mental condition and skill set that individuals must possess before entering a dynamic business ecosystem.

The primary issue identified in the field is the wide gap between academic theory and market realities. Students often generate innovative business ideas, yet they frequently encounter obstacles stemming from limited technical skills (hard skills) and fragile mental resilience (soft skills). Bhoumick (2018) and Webb (2009) underscore that 80% of professional success, including entrepreneurship, is determined by emotional intelligence or soft skills. Conversely, in the current era of digital disruption, mastery of technology and operational management (hard skills) has become an indispensable instrument for enabling local businesses to compete at the national scale (Bell & Bell, 2026; Dabić et al., 2023).

Although discourse on entrepreneurship has been widely developed, a research gap underlies the urgency of this study. First, international literature, such as Smith et al. (2022), tends to generalize entrepreneurial competencies without adequately considering aspects of local wisdom in developing regions such as Garut, which exhibits specific characteristics in agrotechnology and leather industries. Consequently, a disconnection emerges between local higher education curricula and the sociocultural characteristics of Garut society, which possesses a strong trading ethos yet still requires acceleration in digital transformation. Second, a confrontation of findings between two studies has produced a partial discourse. Jones et al. (2021) position hard skills as the primary determinant of success, whereas Brown et al. (2023) argues that without robust soft skills, entrepreneurs will fail during the resilience phase. Both perspectives strongly assert their conclusions, yet they implicitly suggest a separation between hard skills and soft skills as though they operate independently.

This study seeks to bridge that debate by integrating the variables of soft skills and hard skills within the context of the local economic ecosystem. Its objective is to examine the extent to which these two variables shape students' entrepreneurial readiness in Garut regency. Through a more contextualized approach, this study aspires to propose a readiness model that is more relevant to regional students, while simultaneously offering a strategic solution to break the cycle of educated unemployment through the creation of stable and competitive self-generated employment opportunities.

We have analyzed a literature globally which is align with our concern – including entrepreneur readiness, hard skill, and soft skill as well. Firstly, the entrepreneur readiness. Within the discourse of strategic management and economic psychology, entrepreneurial readiness is no longer perceived merely as a pragmatic intention; rather, it is defined as a holistic mental force that propels individuals to actualize their business potential into economic reality (Audretsch, 2012; Bafera & Kleinert, 2023). From a humanistic perspective, this readiness reflects an individual's existential courage to step beyond the comfort zone and embrace creative uncertainty. Audretsch (2012) emphasizes that without internalized mental strength, financial capital and market opportunities lose their leverage. Furthermore, Bafera and Kleinert (2023) underline that such readiness represents the accumulation of self-belief and cognitive capacity that enables individuals to recognize opportunities amid crisis. The most relevant theoretical foundation for examining this phenomenon is the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) developed by Ajzen (2020). Within this framework, entrepreneurial readiness is stimulated by the interaction of three principal pillars: attitude toward behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. This construct explains that readiness is not merely an impulsive drive or willingness, but rather a manifestation of intellectual and emotional capability in confronting unpredictable market fluctuations (La Barbera & Ajzen, 2020). The humanistic dimension becomes evident in how the social environment (subjective norms) and perceived self-efficacy (perceived behavioral control) shape the mental resilience of aspiring entrepreneurs before they fully engage in a competitive business ecosystem. Operationally, entrepreneurial readiness represents an individual's willingness to undertake calculated risks and the capacity to manage resources innovatively in order to generate sustainable added value. This readiness encompasses a broad spectrum of competencies which, according to Khetarpal et al. (2025), can be measured through six fundamental indicators: Leadership and Self-Confidence, Task and Results Orientation, Risk-Taking Courage, Originality and Innovation, and Future Orientation. Through the integration of these indicators, entrepreneurial readiness evolves from a purely theoretical construct into a vital instrument that determines individual resilience and success in navigating the modern economic landscape.

Second, the concept of soft skill. Within a dynamic business ecosystem, soft skills have evolved from complementary attributes into primary determinants of success. Taxonomically, this variable encompasses two crucial dimensions: intrapersonal skills (self-management, integrity, motivation) and interpersonal skills (communication, leadership, teamwork). Banks et al. (2023) and Mishra et al. (2022) position soft skills as the essential "driving engine" that enables entrepreneurs to establish legitimacy and build trust with stakeholders. From a humanistic standpoint, the essence of entrepreneurship resides in human interaction. The findings of Bhoumick (2018) and Webb (2009) consistently demonstrate that empathy and negotiation competence often exert a stronger influence on successful business transactions than purely technical or mathematical calculations. This confirms that beneath rigid business structures lies an emotional dimension that demands resilience and adaptability. Furthermore, Robbins et al. (2025) emphasizes that soft skills serve as a vital instrument for expanding business networks. As a theoretical synthesis, Wahyuni et al. (2025) conceptualizes a successful entrepreneurial profile through five principal indicators: communication effectiveness, emotional intelligence, cognitive sharpness, professional ethics, and agility in problem-solving. The integration of these

pillars shapes an entrepreneurial character that is not only cognitively competent but also mature in character when navigating market uncertainty.

Third, the concept of hard skill. In contrast to the psychological nature of soft skills, hard skills represent measurable and specific forms of theoretical, technical, and operational mastery (Brethower et al., 2022; Luthans, 2020). Within the realm of entrepreneurship, hard skills function as the infrastructure of execution; without adequate technical competence, even the most innovative business ideas are unlikely to be transformed into sustainable operations. In the era of Industry 4.0, the relevance of hard skills for entrepreneurs extends far beyond conventional production capabilities, encompassing digital literacy, financial management, operational management, market data analysis, and regulatory compliance (Bell & Bell, 2026; Dabić et al., 2023). Putri et al. (2023) asserts that the principal indicators of hard skills include deep mastery of specific technical abilities, theoretical knowledge of the business domain, and the capacity to leverage technology effectively. Strategically, this study places particular emphasis on digital literacy and basic financial management as core competencies that enable young entrepreneurs in Garut to manage efficiency and business scalability within an increasingly digitalized ecosystem.

Based on the literature review and the conceptual interrelationships identified therein, the hypotheses proposed in this study are as follows: H1) Hard Skills exert a positive and significant influence on the Entrepreneurial Readiness of university students in Garut regency. H2) Soft Skills exert a positive and significant influence on the Entrepreneurial Readiness of university students in Garut regency. H3) Soft Skills and Hard Skills simultaneously exert a significant influence on Entrepreneurial Readiness.

2. Method

2.1. Research Approach and Location

This study adopts a descriptive quantitative approach (Jamieson et al., 2023) employing a correlational model (Rana et al., 2022; Sidel et al., 2018), which is particularly effective for analyzing the magnitude of influence exerted by one or more variables on a specific variable (Charli et al., 2022; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The objects of this research comprise students' Entrepreneurial Readiness (Y) as the dependent variable, and Soft Skills (X1) and Hard Skills (X2) as the independent variables. The selection of this method is grounded in its relevance to the research objective, namely to examine the influence of hard skills and soft skills on students' entrepreneurial readiness. This study was conducted in Garut regency, West Java, Indonesia, in consideration of the persistently alarming rate of the Open Unemployment Rate in this region.

2.2. Population and Sample

The population of this study fundamentally comprises all active students enrolled in the 11 higher education institutions operating in Garut regency. The total number of these students is 24.369. Its value is escalated result from students' number from Higher education which organized by the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, and Technology which is 19.088, and Higher education which organized by the Ministry of Religious Affair, which is 5.281 (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2023b, 2023a). Considering that entrepreneurship courses are typically undertaken by students in Semester II, III, or IV across various study programs, the scope of the population was narrowed to focus exclusively on Semester V students - on the justification that, at this stage, they have completed the entrepreneurship course in its entirety. A manual survey of student data through the official websites of the respective campuses indicates that the total number of students within this category is 2,997. From this population, the Slovin formula with a proportionate stratified random sampling technique (Ozturk, 2019; Yavuz, 2023) was employed to determine the sample size, resulting in 156 respondents. This sampling technique was selected to ensure that each higher education institution or subgroup within the population received proportional representation in accordance with its respective student enrolment (Nguyen et al., 2021).

2.3. Instrument, Data Compilation, and Duration

The research instrument was developed based on the indicators of soft skills (Wahyuni et al., 2025), hard skills (Bell & Bell, 2026; Dabić et al., 2023), and students' entrepreneurial readiness (Bafera & Kleinert, 2023). The instrument was structured in the form of a Likert-scale questionnaire ranging from 1 to 5 (Robinson, 2023), consisting of closed-ended statements from which respondents selected their answers. The development process was conducted under the supervision of experts in educational research, followed by a pilot testing phase prior to its full implementation. The study was carried out over a period of 69 days, including 61 days of data collection from 1 December 2025 to 30 January 2026. Subsequently, data analysis and the preparation of the research report were completed within 15 days, culminating on 14 February 2026.

2.4. Data Analysis

Upon completion of the data collection process, the dataset consisted of numerically coded responses derived from the completed questionnaires. Subsequently, the Structural Equation Modelling-Partial Least

Square (SEM-PLS) technique was employed for data analysis, supported by the Smart PLS 4 software (J. Hair & Alamer, 2022). As noted by J. F. Hair et al. (2021), SEM is a multivariate analytical technique used to estimate relationships among variables that cannot be measured directly, namely latent variables – as well as observable or manifest variables (Legate et al., 2023). This analytical framework is therefore fully aligned with the contextual and methodological requirements of the present study.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Reliability Test

The reliability test was conducted to ensure that the indicators accurately and consistently measure their respective constructs. All indicators for variables X1, X2, and Y demonstrated outer loading values exceeding 0.7. These results indicate that all indicators meet the criteria for satisfactory reliability in measuring their latent variables. Please attention to Table 1.

Table 1. Outer Loading

| Indicator | Score of Outer Loading | Description |
|-----------|------------------------|-------------|
| X1.1 | 0.744 | Reliable |
| X1.2 | 0.792 | Reliable |
| X1.3 | 0.758 | Reliable |
| X1.4 | 0.753 | Reliable |
| X1.5 | 0.810 | Reliable |
| X1.6 | 0.736 | Reliable |
| X1.7 | 0.746 | Reliable |
| X1.8 | 0.785 | Reliable |
| X1.9 | 0.757 | Reliable |
| X1.10 | 0.765 | Reliable |
| X2.1 | 0.752 | Reliable |
| X2.2 | 0.741 | Reliable |
| X2.3 | 0.764 | Reliable |
| X2.4 | 0.789 | Reliable |
| X2.5 | 0.811 | Reliable |
| X2.6 | 0.801 | Reliable |
| X2.7 | 0.783 | Reliable |
| X2.8 | 0.769 | Reliable |
| X2.9 | 0.774 | Reliable |
| X2.10 | 0.733 | Reliable |
| Y.1 | 0.818 | Reliable |
| Y.2 | 0.791 | Reliable |
| Y.3 | 0.850 | Reliable |
| Y.4 | 0.780 | Reliable |
| Y.5 | 0.800 | Reliable |
| Y.6 | 0.826 | Reliable |
| Y.7 | 0.742 | Reliable |
| Y.8 | 0.834 | Reliable |
| Y.9 | 0.796 | Reliable |
| Y.10 | 0.744 | Reliable |
| Y.11 | 0.803 | Reliable |
| Y.12 | 0.829 | Reliable |

Furthermore, for reflective indicators, the reliability of latent variables can be assessed using two methods: Cronbach’s Alpha and Composite Reliability. Both values must exceed 0.7 to be considered reliable (J. Hair & Alamer, 2022). Cronbach’s Alpha and Composite Reliability values range from 0 to 1, with higher values indicating a greater level of reliability. The detailed results of the Cronbach’s Alpha and Composite Reliability tests for each variable are presented in Table 2. Table 2 demonstrates that the Composite Reliability and Cronbach’s Alpha values for all variables (X1, X2, and Y) exceed 0.7. This confirms that the three variables employed in this study possess strong Internal Consistency Reliability.

Table 2. Cronbach’s Alpha & Composite Reliability

| | Cronbach’s alpha | Composite reliability (rho_a) | Composite reliability (rho_c) |
|----------------------------|------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Hard Skill (X1) | 0.921 | 0.923 | 0.934 |
| Soft Skill (X2) | 0.925 | 0.928 | 0.937 |
| Entrepreneur Readiness (Y) | 0.949 | 0.951 | 0.956 |

3.2. Convergent Validity Test

The validity test was conducted to assess the extent to which indicators exhibit positive correlations with other indicators within the same latent variable (J. Hair & Alamer, 2022; J. F. Hair et al., 2021). Convergent validity is measured using the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), with a minimum threshold value of 0.5 required for a latent variable to be considered valid. The AVE values for each variable in this study are presented in Table 3. In Table 3, variables X1, X2, and Y each demonstrate AVE values exceeding 0.5. This indicates that all three latent variables satisfy the criteria for satisfactory convergent validity.

Table 3. Average Variance Extracted

| | Average Variance Extracted (AVE) | Criteria | Description |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------|----------|-------------|
| Hard Skill (X1) | 0.585 | 0.5 | Valid |
| Soft Skill (X2) | 0.596 | 0.5 | Valid |
| Entrepreneur Readiness (Y) | 0.643 | 0.5 | Valid |

3.3. Discriminant Validity Test

The discriminant validity test is grounded in the principle that indicators belonging to different latent variables should not exhibit high correlations with one another (Sidel et al., 2018). Discriminant validity can be evaluated using the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) (see Table 4). In Table 4, the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) values for all latent variables are below 0.9. Therefore, these variables satisfy the criteria for discriminant validity.

Table 4. Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio

| | Hard Skill (X1) | Entrepreneur Readiness (Y) | Soft Skill (X2) |
|----------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|-----------------|
| Hard Skill (X1) | 0.765 | | |
| Entrepreneur Readiness (Y) | 0.655 | 0.802 | |
| Soft Skill (X2) | 0.551 | 0.635 | 0.772 |

3.4. Inner Model

3.4.1. Structural Model Collinearity Test

The Structural Model Collinearity Test aims to detect potential collinearity issues within the structural model. This assessment utilizes the Inner Model Collinearity Statistics (VIF), where the ideal VIF value should be less than 3 to ensure that collinearity does not exert a significant influence on the estimation results (J. Hair & Alamer, 2022; Rana et al., 2022). In this structural model collinearity, we found that VIF from X1 on Y is 1.436, and the same value has obtained as a VIF of X2 on Y. This value is even less than 50% of the threshold value of 3. This indicates that the structural model in this study is free from collinearity issues. Consequently, it can be confirmed that collinearity does not exert a significant influence on the model estimation.

3.4.2. Significance and Relevance of Structural Model Relationships

Within the structural model, significance is evaluated by examining the t-statistic or p-value of each path coefficient obtained through the bootstrapping method. A coefficient is considered statistically significant if the t-statistic exceeds the critical value, which in a two-tailed test is 1.96 at a 5% significance level (J. F. Hair et al., 2021). In the context of this study, this means that the directional test from hard skills to entrepreneurial readiness, as well as from soft skills to entrepreneurial readiness, must each exceed 1.976. Additionally, significance can be assessed through the p-value, where a coefficient is deemed significant if the p-value is less than 0.05. The results of our hypothesis testing are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Path Coefficient, T Values, dan P Values

| | Original sample (O) | Sample mean (M) | Standard deviation (STDEV) | T statistics (O/STDEV) | P values |
|---|---------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|----------|
| Hard Skill (X1) -> Entrepreneur Readiness (Y) | 0.438 | 0.437 | 0.092 | 4.741 | 0.000 |
| Soft Skill (X2) -> Entrepreneur Readiness (Y) | 0.394 | 0.400 | 0.084 | 4.713 | 0.000 |

Variable X1 demonstrates a t-statistic value of 4.741 > 1.976 with a p-value of 0.000 < 0.05; therefore, H01 is rejected. This indicates that variable X1 exerts a significant influence on variable Y. Furthermore, variable X2 shows a t-statistic value of 4.713 > 1.976 and a p-value of 0.000 < 0.05; thus, H02 is rejected. Variable X2 is empirically proven to have a positive and significant effect on variable Y.

3.5. Model Explanatory Power

The coefficient of determination, or R-Square (R^2), is calculated to measure the extent to which exogenous latent variables contribute to explaining the endogenous latent variable within the structural model. The R^2 value reflects the proportion of variance in the endogenous variable that can be explained collectively by the relevant exogenous constructs (J. Hair & Alamer, 2022). The R^2 value ranges from 0 to 1. The higher the value, the greater the model's explanatory power with respect to the endogenous variable. An $R^2 \geq 0.75$ is categorized as strong, an R^2 between 0.50 and 0.74 is categorized as moderate, and an $R^2 \leq 0.25$ is categorized as weak (Sidel et al., 2018). The calculating result of R^2 is 0.551 with Adjusted R-Square 0,545. This value falls within the range of 0.50 to 0.75, which is categorized as moderate. This indicates that 55.1% of the variance in variable Y can be explained by variables X1 and X2. Meanwhile, the remaining 44.9% is explained by other factors not included in this study. Furthermore, the Effect Size (f^2) is calculated to assess the magnitude of the influence exerted by exogenous variables on the endogenous variable within the model. The effect size (f^2) values are categorized as follows: 0.02 indicates a weak effect, 0.15 indicates a moderate effect, and 0.35 indicates a strong effect (J. Hair & Alamer, 2022). The effect size from X1 on Y is 0.325 (moderate), and X2 on Y is 0.264. There is indicates that its influence on Y falls within the moderate category. Meanwhile, variable X2 has an f^2 value of 0.264, which is also classified as moderate. Although both variables exert a moderate influence on Y, X1 provides the greater effect compared to the influence of X2 on Y.

3.6. Hypothesis Testing

In this analysis, hypothesis testing was conducted by evaluating the significance and relevance of relationships within the structural model using the bootstrapping method. The criterion for rejecting H_0 is as follows: if the t-statistic value > 1.976 or if the p-value $<$ the 5% significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$). Please look at Figure 1. The detailed p-value and t-statistic results obtained from the SmartPLS bootstrapping procedure, as illustrated in Figure 1, can be elaborated as follows:

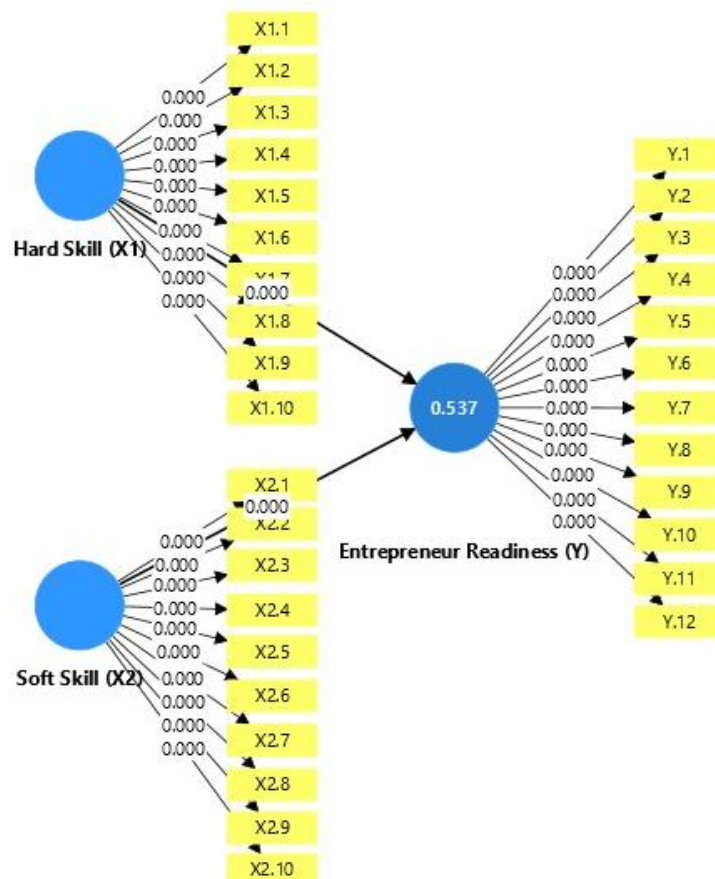


Figure 1. p-value and t-statistic in Research Model

The Effect of X1 on Y. The Smart PLS 4 bootstrapping analysis indicates a t-statistic value of 4.741 $>$ the critical t-table value of 1.976. In addition, the obtained p-value of 0.000 is lower than the significance level $\alpha < 0.05$. It is empirically demonstrated that Hard Skills partially exert a significant influence on Entrepreneurial Readiness, with a path coefficient value of 0.437. **The Effect of X2 on Y.** From the same bootstrapping analysis, a t-statistic value of 4.713 $>$ 1.976 was obtained. The p-value of 0.000 indicates significance below $\alpha < 0.05$. It

can be concluded that Soft Skills partially exert a significant influence on Entrepreneurial Readiness, with a path coefficient value of 0.400. **The Simultaneous Effect of X1 and X2 on Y.** The coefficient of determination (R²) analysis yields a t-statistic value of 7.877 > 1.976. Furthermore, the p-value of 0.000 demonstrates statistical significance, as it is below $\alpha < 0.05$. Finally, it can be known that Hard Skills and Soft Skills simultaneously exert a significant influence on Entrepreneurial Readiness, with a coefficient of determination value of 0.551.

3.7. Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that hard skills and soft skills exert a positive and significant influence on students' entrepreneurial readiness in Garut regency. This result indicates that entrepreneurial readiness constitutes a multidimensional construct shaped by the integration of technical capacity and psychological capacity. Entrepreneurial readiness is not merely associated with intention, but also with an individual's ability to regulate entrepreneurial behavior. These findings reinforce the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 2020; La Barbera & Ajzen, 2020).

The influence of hard skills on entrepreneurial readiness underscores that mastery of technical competencies, such as digital literacy, financial management, and operational management – serves as a crucial factor in enhancing students' business preparedness. Brethower et al. (2022) and Luthans (2020) recently emphasized that hard skills are measurable competencies that can be systematically developed through formal education and practice-based training. This implies that higher education institutions can assume a strategic role in facilitating such learning processes. Moreover, within the entrepreneurial context, technical capability enables individuals to implement business ideas systematically and sustainably (Bell & Bell, 2026; Dabić et al., 2023). In another linkage, these findings are consistent with Putri et al. (2023), who asserts that hard skills enhance individual work capacity and productivity in economic activities.

Furthermore, soft skills are empirically proven to have a positive and significant effect on entrepreneurial readiness. This result suggests that communication ability, leadership, emotional regulation, and problem-solving skills contribute substantially to shaping an entrepreneurial mindset. Soft skills enable individuals to build business relationships, foster trust, and endure conditions of uncertainty (Robbins et al., 2025). The assertions of Bhoumick (2018) and Webb (2009) that emotional intelligence contributes more significantly to personal success than intellectual ability alone, provide relevant empirical foundations that further strengthen our findings. Within the student context, soft skills function as social capital for building entrepreneurial networks and identifying market opportunities. While Wahyuni et al. (2025) emphasizes the influence of soft skills on students' work readiness, this study extends the discussion by demonstrating their influence on entrepreneurial readiness.

Simultaneously, hard skills and soft skills together exert a significant influence on entrepreneurial readiness. This indicates that entrepreneurial preparedness cannot be cultivated solely through technical mastery; it also requires psychological maturity. Entrepreneurship is a process that demands the capacity to manage resources, assume calculated risks, and create sustainable added value. This interpretation aligns with the findings of Bafera and Kleinert (2023), Burns (2016) as well Doherty and Stephens (2023), who strongly emphasize the integration of hard skills and soft skills within the entrepreneurial sector. Therefore, the integration of hard skills and soft skills becomes a key determinant in building students' entrepreneurial readiness. In the context of Garut regency, which possesses substantial potential in Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), students' entrepreneurial readiness becomes a strategic factor in fostering job creators and high-quality MSME developers. Accordingly, in such regional contexts, strengthening hard skills and soft skills in alignment with the needs of the local economic ecosystem represents a relevant strategy for increasing the number of young entrepreneurs, reducing unemployment, empowering creative actors, and enhancing regional economic growth.

A deeper reflection on the effect size values, classified within the moderate category, reveals that both variables make strategic contributions within the model. This suggests that hard skills and soft skills must be developed concurrently, as both function as strategic contributors capable of projecting entrepreneurial readiness. Considering the studies of Prasetyo (2021) and Spiridonova et al. (2020), which propose entrepreneurship as a solution to the imbalance between the growth of university graduates and the limited availability of formal employment without specifying how such transformation may be realized, this research advances the discourse by offering concrete pathways for implementation. Specifically, it proposes an affirmative approach through the strengthening of hard skills and soft skills to enhance entrepreneurial readiness and cultivate future entrepreneurs, many of whom currently contribute to the open unemployment rate as university graduates. Notably, entrepreneurship curricula in higher education must be directed not only toward business knowledge transfer, but also toward the formation of entrepreneurial character. The development of experiential learning models becomes essential to integrate technical and interpersonal competencies simultaneously.

3.8. Implications

The theoretical implication of this study lies in the broader reach of its findings compared to prior relevant studies. Unlike Prasetyo (2021) and Spiridonova et al. (2020), which position entrepreneurship merely as a solution amid high graduate unemployment, this study goes further by offering concrete mechanisms for realization, namely through the strengthening of students' hard skills and soft skills. Another theoretical implication concerns curriculum development in higher education. Entrepreneurship courses that function merely as knowledge-transfer platforms must be transformed into approaches that substantively strengthen both technical and interpersonal competencies. Practically, this study provides valuable insights for higher education policymakers. It encourages the reformulation of nationally standardized entrepreneurship course content in Indonesia to incorporate more intensive training in both soft skills and hard skills. In non-formal and informal education sectors, these findings may serve as a new compass. For instance, community education programs or vocational training centers (LPK), which often emphasize either hard skills or soft skills in isolation, should now consider integrating both dimensions simultaneously.

3.9. Limitations

Despite its contributions beyond several relevant prior studies, this research acknowledges certain limitations. These limitations relate to construct boundaries and the scope of generalization. Given that the study was conducted in Garut regency, Indonesia, the interpretations derived from this research may be generalized primarily to regions with similar characteristics, namely areas within developing countries that possess significant MSME potential within their economic landscape.

4. Conclusion

Amid the persistently high rate of educated unemployment which has intensified public expectations toward the entrepreneurial sector, this study investigates the influence of hard skills and soft skills on students' entrepreneurial readiness. The findings reveal that: (1) Hard skills exert a positive and significant effect on students' entrepreneurial readiness, indicating that mastery of technical competencies is a crucial factor in enhancing students' capacity to operationalize business ideas. (2) Soft skills exert a positive and significant effect on students' entrepreneurial readiness, suggesting that communication ability, leadership, emotional intelligence, and problem-solving skills play a central role in shaping entrepreneurial mental resilience. (3) Hard skills and soft skills simultaneously exert a significant influence on entrepreneurial readiness. Rather than merely expecting university graduates to reduce the unemployment rate, this study calls upon stakeholders to concentrate on concrete measures, namely, preparing students to become entrepreneurially ready individuals. Without such preparation, the structural factors that position university graduates as contributors to educated unemployment remain fundamentally unaddressed. The practical implications of this research point to the necessity of transforming entrepreneurship curricula and pedagogical approaches. Educational policymakers and lecturers are encouraged to place greater emphasis on the integrated, intensive, and sustained strengthening of hard skills and soft skills, aligned with the needs of the local economic ecosystem. Finally, further research employing quasi-experimental or longitudinal designs is recommended to rigorously test and refine the model proposed in this study.

Author Contributions

Inten Noor Imania: Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Funding acquisition, Investigation, Methodology, and Writing the original draft. Hari Mulyadi: Project administration, Resources, and Software. Disman: Supervision, Validation. Heni Mulyani: Visualization, and review. All authors have equal contributions to the paper. All the authors have read and approved the final manuscript.

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Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/ or publication of this article.

Data Availability

The data supporting this study's findings are available on request from the corresponding author. The data, which contains information that could compromise the privacy of research participants, is not publicly available due to certain restrictions.

Declaration on AI Use

The authors state that the Artificial Intelligence (AI) based application - Grammarly, is used to check the accuracy of language structure under strict human oversight. Other stages in the research report preparation

process - such as conceptualization, methodology, data collection and analysis, supervision, visualization, writing, citation, and final editing - are all carried out by the authors without AI assistance.

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