

Emotional and Cognitive Factors in Shaping Entrepreneurial Competence Among Accounting Education Students

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Abstract

The increasing unemployment rate among university graduates in Indonesia—reaching 6.23% in early 2025—underscores the urgent need to strengthen entrepreneurial competence in higher education. This study examines the effect of emotional intelligence and creative thinking on entrepreneurial competence, both partially and simultaneously, among Accounting Education students at Universitas Sebelas Maret who had completed entrepreneurship coursework. Drawing on the Entrepreneurial Value Creation Theory, emotional intelligence is defined as emotional capital, and creative thinking as cognitive adaptability, both of which serve as internal entrepreneurial resources. Using a quantitative survey design with proportional stratified random sampling, data from 116 students were analyzed through multiple linear regression. The results indicate that both variables have positive and significant effects on entrepreneurial competence, individually and simultaneously, with creative thinking demonstrating stronger relative influence. These findings suggest that entrepreneurship instruction in Accounting Education programs should be redesigned to deliberately cultivate emotional and cognitive internal resources, particularly empathy and originality, as foundational competencies for future teacher-entrepreneurs.

Keywords: EntreComp; entrepreneurship education; internal resources; value creation theory

INTRODUCTION

The increasingly competitive global economy has significantly reshaped the dynamics of Indonesia's labor market. Technological advancements, structural changes in industries, and the growing number of

university graduates have intensified job competition. According to Statistics Indonesia (BPS), the number of individuals in the labor force with higher education reached 16.04 million in 2024. However, this growth has not been fully matched by the labor market's absorption capacity. As of

February 2025, the open unemployment rate among individuals holding Diploma IV through Doctoral degrees was 6.23%. This figure reflects not only limited job availability but also a persistent mismatch between graduates' competencies and industry expectations (Ardian et al., 2022; Pramesti et al., 2024).

Entrepreneurship has emerged as one of the most promising answers to this challenge, as it has been proven to create jobs and stimulate economic growth (Diandra, 2019). In response to this, the Indonesian government has introduced various initiatives, including Presidential Regulation No. 68 of 2022 on the Revitalization of Vocational Education and Training. At the same time, universities play a crucial role by integrating entrepreneurship into their curricula (Almaidah, 2019). However, policy-level initiatives alone are not enough. Without strong internal resources – particularly the ability to manage emotions and think creatively – students will struggle to translate entrepreneurship education into real competence. This makes it essential to understand what psychological factors from within the individual actually drive entrepreneurial competence development.

This context is particularly relevant for Accounting Education students, who are trained within a compliance-oriented paradigm that prioritizes procedural accuracy and rule adherence – a disciplinary culture that may not naturally cultivate the divergent thinking and risk tolerance that entrepreneurship demands. Usman & Hamid (2022) found that entrepreneurship education in

Indonesian higher education remains largely theoretical and has yet to effectively shape an entrepreneurial mindset, a challenge that is especially consequential in accounting-based programs whose graduates are prepared as future teachers. Without a strong entrepreneurial competence foundation, they will be ill-equipped to foster entrepreneurial mindsets in the next generation of learners. Strengthening internal emotional and cognitive resources is therefore essential for bridging this gap.

Nevertheless, existing research indicates that student entrepreneurial competence remains suboptimal. Catacutan et al. (2023) reported that even among university graduates who have started their own businesses, essential competencies such as opportunity recognition, decision-making, and resource management are still insufficiently developed despite formal education. This suggests the need for further exploration of the internal factors influencing entrepreneurial competence. In line with this, Nabilla et al. (2025), through a systematic review, identified internal factors such as motivation, self-efficacy, and mindset as the primary drivers of entrepreneurial performance among young entrepreneurs. Consequently, this reinforces the importance of investigating individual psychological resources, particularly emotional and cognitive factors, as key antecedents of entrepreneurial competence.

Entrepreneurial competence encompasses teachable behavioural capabilities classified into entrepreneurial, management, human resource, and interpersonal competencies (Silveyra et al., 2021).

The EntreComp framework (Bacigalupo et al., 2016) divides these competencies into three interconnected areas: Ideas and Opportunities, Resources, and Into Action. The Ideas and Opportunities domain emphasizes processes such as idea generation and opportunity recognition, which are closely associated with creative thinking. In this context, creative thinking plays a crucial role in fostering entrepreneurial skills (Durnali et al., 2023). The Resources and Into Action domains highlight abilities such as self-management, social interaction, collaboration, and initiative, which are closely tied to emotional intelligence. Studies have shown that emotional intelligence plays an important role in shaping students' entrepreneurial behavior and entrepreneurial competence (Gazi et al., 2024). Individuals with higher emotional intelligence demonstrate better interpersonal relationships and more effective business networking (Omar & Hassan, 2016).

This study is theoretically grounded in the Entrepreneurial Value Creation Theory (Mishra & Zachary, 2015), which posits that entrepreneurial value is created through the interaction of entrepreneurial intention, opportunity recognition, and entrepreneurial resources. Within this framework, emotional intelligence serves as emotional capital and creative thinking as cognitive adaptability both constituting internal entrepreneurial resources that support the development of entrepreneurial competence. Previous studies have established the individual positive effects of these variables on

entrepreneurial outcomes (Durnali et al., 2023). Notably, Mishra & Zachary (2015) themselves explicitly acknowledged that the role of emotional capital in the venture formulation process remains largely underexplored and warrants further investigation—an observation that underscores the theoretical urgency of the present study. However, their simultaneous examination, particularly using an EntreComp-based measure of entrepreneurial competence among Accounting Education students, remains limited. Therefore, this study makes a dual contribution: it responds directly to Mishra & Zachary's (2015) call by positioning emotional intelligence as emotional capital within an empirical competence-formation framework, while simultaneously offering a joint examination of both emotional and cognitive adaptability against an EntreComp-based measure of entrepreneurial competence among Accounting Education students—a combination that has not been previously explored.

Accordingly, this study aims to: (1) examine the effect of emotional intelligence on entrepreneurial competence; (2) examine the effect of creative thinking on entrepreneurial competence; and (3) examine the simultaneous effect of both variables on entrepreneurial competence of Accounting Education students at Universitas Sebelas Maret.

METHOD

This study was based on a quantitative survey design. The research was conducted as part of the accounting degree program in the Faculty of Teacher Education and

Pedagogy at Universitas Sebelas Maret, Surakarta, from September 2025 to March 2026. The population consisted of 164 students from the 2022 and 2023 cohorts who had completed the entrepreneurship coursework. A sample of 116 students was selected using proportional stratified random sampling, determined via the Yamane formula and cross-verified against the Isaac and Michael table at a 5% significance level.

Three variables were examined: emotional intelligence (X1), creative thinking (X2), and entrepreneurial competence (Y). Emotional intelligence was measured using 11 items adapted from Herut et al. (2024), creative thinking was assessed using 9 items based on Durnali et al. (2023), and entrepreneurial competence was measured using 15 items derived from the EntreComp framework (Bacigalupo et al., 2016). All items were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The instruments were tested for validity and reliability prior to data analysis. All items met the validity criteria (r -obtained $>$ r -critical at $\alpha = 0.05$), and the reliability coefficients exceeded the acceptable threshold (Cronbach's Alpha $>$ 0.70), with values of 0.763 for emotional intelligence, 0.831 for creative thinking, and 0.817 for entrepreneurial competence.

Data were collected through a structured questionnaire distributed directly to respondents during class sessions from January to February 2026. Participation was voluntary and respondents were assured of confidentiality. Completed questionnaires were screened for completeness prior to analysis,

resulting in 116 usable responses. Data were analyzed using multiple linear regression with SPSS. Before hypothesis testing, classical assumption tests were performed, including tests for normality (Kolmogorov-Smirnov), linearity, multicollinearity (variance inflation factor), and heteroscedasticity (scatter plot).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 summarizes the descriptive statistics of the three research variables, while Table 2 presents the indicator-level attainment scores. As shown in Table 1, emotional intelligence scores ranged from 30 to 55 ($M = 41.89$, $SD = 4.553$), with nearly half of respondents (47%) in the adequate category. As shown in Table 2, indicator-level analysis revealed a critical internal disparity: motivation was the strongest dimension (83.28%), yet empathy was the weakest at 51.95% – a gap exceeding 30 percentage points. This is substantively significant because empathy is foundational to understanding others' needs, market-oriented opportunity recognition, and collaborative relationship-building in entrepreneurship (Gazi et al., 2024).

Creative thinking scores ranged from 22 to 45 ($M = 33.24$, $SD = 4.573$), with respondents evenly distributed between good and adequate (41% each). As further shown in Table 2, elaboration was the strongest indicator (76.61%), while originality was the lowest (70.86%) – reflecting a limited capacity to generate genuinely novel ideas, which is the core cognitive input required for entrepreneurial

opportunity creation (Bacigalupo et al., 2016). Entrepreneurial competence scores ranged from 43 to 75 ($M = 54.06$, $SD = 5.189$). The majority of respondents were in the adequate category (65%), while 22% were classified as low. Among the three EntreComp domains presented in Table 2, Resources scored highest (79.14%), followed by Into Action (69.07%), while Ideas and Opportunities recorded the lowest attainment (65.95%).

This is the most critical descriptive finding of this study. The low attainment in Ideas and Opportunities is not coincidental. Empathy functions as the perceptual foundation of entrepreneurial ideation: it enables students to sense unmet needs, understand others' perspectives, and identify gaps in the market—the very signals from which original business ideas are constructed (Bacigalupo et al., 2016; Gazi et al., 2024). When empathy is underdeveloped, students lack the contextual input needed to direct their creative thinking toward relevant

opportunities (Durnali et al., 2023). As a result, even students with adequate creative capacity may generate ideas that are technically novel but contextually disconnected from real market needs—reflected in the low originality score (70.86%). This compounding effect converges in the Ideas and Opportunities domain (65.95%), which demands precisely the integration of empathic market sensing and original ideation that both predictor variables fail to fully provide in this sample (Bacigalupo et al., 2016).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of research variables

Variable	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Emotional Intelligence (X1)	30	55	41.89	4.553
Creative Thinking (X2)	22	45	33.24	4.573
Entrepreneurial Competence (Y)	43	75	54.06	5.189

Table 2. Indicator-level attainment (%)

Variable	Indicator	Attainment (%)
Emotional Intelligence (X1)	1. Self-Awareness	79.48
	2. Self-Regulation	67.07
	3. Motivation	83.28
	4. Empathy	51.95
	5. Relationship Management	79.54
Creative Thinking (X2)	1. Fluency	75.86
	2. Flexibility	72.47
	3. Originality	70.86
	4. Elaboration	76.61
Entrepreneurial Competence (Y)	1. Ideas and Opportunities	65.95
	2. Resources	79.14
	3. Into Action	69.07

Assumption Tests

Classical assumption tests confirmed that all requirements for multiple linear regression were met. Residuals were normally distributed (Kolmogorov-Smirnov, $p = 0.200 > 0.05$), indicating that the error terms do not violate the normality assumption. Both predictors demonstrated linear relationships with the dependent variable ($p < 0.05$), confirming that the regression model appropriately captures the direction and magnitude of each predictor's effect. Multicollinearity was absent ($VIF < 2$), meaning emotional intelligence and creative thinking function as independent predictors without redundancy. No heteroscedasticity was detected, indicating that error variance is consistent across all levels of the predicted values and that the regression estimates are reliable. Having satisfied all classical assumptions, the multiple linear regression analysis was conducted as follows.

Multiple Linear Regression

The results of the multiple linear regression analysis are presented in Table 3. As shown in Table 3, the regression equation obtained is: $Y = 18.225 + 0.397X_1 + 0.578X_2$. The constant (18.225) represents the base value of entrepreneurial competence when both predictors equal zero. Each one-unit increase in emotional intelligence corresponds to a 0.397-unit increase in entrepreneurial competence, while each one-unit increase in creative thinking corresponds to a 0.578-unit increase. Based on the standardized Beta coefficients in Table 3, creative thinking ($\beta = 0.509$) exerted a stronger relative influence than emotional intelligence ($\beta = 0.348$). These results indicate that both emotional intelligence and creative thinking are significant and positive predictors of entrepreneurial competence, with creative thinking demonstrating a greater contribution to the model. The results of the F-test, and coefficient of determination are presented in Tables 4 and 5.

Table 3. Multiple linear regression results

Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta	t-value	Sig.
Constant	18.225	2.853	-	6.429	
Emotional Intelligence (X1)	0.397	0.089	0.348	4.463	<0.001
Creative Thinking (X2)	0.578	0.089	0.509	6.531	<0.001

Table 4. Results of F-test (simultaneous significance test)

Model	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	955.410	90.982	<0.001
Residual	10.501	-	-

Table 5. Coefficient of determination

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.785	0.617	0.610	3.241

The Effect of Emotional Intelligence on Entrepreneurial Competence

As shown in table 3, the t-test result showed that emotional intelligence had a significant positive effect on entrepreneurial competence ($t = 4.463 > t\text{-table} = 1.658; p < .001$), supporting H1. These results suggest that students with higher emotional intelligence tend to demonstrate higher entrepreneurial competence. Theoretically, this finding is consistent with the Entrepreneurial Value Creation Theory (Mishra & Zachary, 2015), which positions emotional intelligence as emotional capital—an internal resource that enables individuals to develop entrepreneurial competence through self-management, empathy, and the capacity to build productive relationships.

This result is empirically supported by multiple prior studies. Gazi et al. (2024) demonstrated that emotional intelligence—particularly through the dimensions of relationship management, social awareness, and self-management—significantly promotes entrepreneurial behavior and social entrepreneurial intention among university students. Nwibe & Ogbuanya (2024) further confirmed that emotional intelligence has a significant positive impact on entrepreneurial intention, mediated by perceived competence and perceived perseverance, both of which are fundamental elements in the development of entrepreneurial competence. Salim (2025) additionally found that emotional intelligence enhances networking capability—a competency central to the Resources domain of EntreComp. This domain emphasizes students' ability to

collaborate and build supportive relationships. Ihemeje et al. (2021) established that the self-management component of emotional intelligence specifically drives innovativeness in entrepreneurial orientation.

At the indicator level, motivation (83.28%) was the strongest emotional intelligence dimension among respondents, reflecting a robust internal drive. However, empathy (51.95%) was the weakest dimension, indicating that students' capacity to understand others' needs—crucial for market orientation and customer-centric venture creation—requires deliberate development. This finding aligns with the EntreComp framework's Into Action domain, which emphasizes the ability to work with others and mobilize resources through social intelligence. Without adequate empathy, students may struggle to build collaborative business relationships and respond to stakeholder needs—a core entrepreneurial competency highlighted by Esteves et al. (2024), who found that emotional regulation and understanding of others' emotions positively shape transformational entrepreneurial leadership. Practical implications include the need for learning activities that require students to actively engage in social problem-solving, peer collaboration, and stakeholder interaction, all of which can foster empathetic understanding alongside emotional self-regulation.

The Effect of Creative Thinking on Entrepreneurial Competence

Table 3 further shows that the t-test result showed that creative thinking exerted a significant positive

effect on entrepreneurial competence ($t = 6.531 > t\text{-table} = 1.658$; $p < .001$), supporting H2. Students with higher creative thinking ability tended to demonstrate higher entrepreneurial competence. This finding aligns with the Entrepreneurial Value Creation Theory (Mishra & Zachary, 2015) which identifies creative cognitive ability as cognitive adaptability – an internal resource that supports opportunity recognition and the transformation of ideas into actionable entrepreneurial initiatives. Within the EntreComp framework, the Ideas and Opportunities domain specifically requires creative competencies such as generating ideas, spotting patterns, and identifying unmet needs, all of which are dimensions of creative thinking (Bacigalupo et al., 2016).

Empirically, Yanuarto & Hapsari (2022) found that creative thinking significantly enhances students' entrepreneurial skills, particularly in developing business ideas and capitalizing on market opportunities. Du & Qiao (2026) further demonstrated that innovative, scenario-based learning approaches that cultivate student creativity led to stronger entrepreneurial competencies, especially in generating creative business solutions. These findings are further corroborated by the work of Chang & Chen (2020) who established that entrepreneurial creativity positively relates to opportunity recognition and the generation of commercially valuable ideas.

Durnali et al. (2023) specifically investigated the interaction between creative thinking and entrepreneurial skills and found that promoting creative thinking skills increases the

impact of emotional intelligence on entrepreneurial performance – suggesting that creative thinking is not only a direct predictor but also a multiplier of other internal resources. At the indicator level, elaboration (76.61%) was the strongest creative thinking dimension, indicating that students are capable of developing and refining ideas in depth. However, originality (70.86%) was the lowest, suggesting that the ability to generate genuinely novel ideas – rather than variations of existing ones – requires further cultivation. This is particularly relevant to the Ideas and Opportunities domain of EntreComp, which demands not only idea fluency but also the capacity to produce innovative, non-conventional solutions to social and market problems (Farrokhnia et al., 2026). Educational interventions such as design thinking exercises, brainstorming challenges, and exposure to diverse business cases can encourage students to move beyond conventional thinking and develop more original entrepreneurial ideas.

The Simultaneous Effect of Emotional Intelligence and Creative Thinking on Entrepreneurial Competence

As shown in Table 4, the F-test confirmed that emotional intelligence and creative thinking jointly and significantly influenced entrepreneurial competence ($F = 90.982 > F\text{-table} = 3.08$; $p < .001$), supporting H3. As presented in Table 5, the coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.617$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.610$) indicates that 61.7% of the variance in entrepreneurial competence is explained by the combined

contribution of these two variables, with the remaining 38.3% attributable to other factors such as self-efficacy, entrepreneurship education quality, and prior entrepreneurial exposure (Nabilla et al., 2025; Usman & Hamid, 2022). This represents a strong explanatory power, affirming that both emotional and cognitive resources together constitute the primary internal drivers of entrepreneurial competence among Accounting Education students.

This result substantiates the central proposition of Entrepreneurial Value Creation Theory (Mishra & Zachary, 2015), which holds that entrepreneurial competence emerges from the integration of multiple capital resources in a process that is iterative and multidimensional. Emotional intelligence (emotional capital) and creative thinking (cognitive adaptability) are not independent contributors but complementary forces that reinforce one another in the formation of competence. Durnali et al. (2023) confirmed this synergistic relationship, demonstrating that emotional intelligence and creative thinking jointly and positively affect entrepreneurial skills among students, with creative thinking amplifying the effect of emotional intelligence rather than simply adding to it.

The stronger relative contribution of creative thinking ($\beta = 0.509$) compared to emotional intelligence ($\beta = 0.348$) is theoretically consistent with the developmental stage of this sample. Consistent with Mishra & Zachary's (2015) Entrepreneurial Value Creation Theory, the participants in this study are pre-venture students operating within Stage 1 – Venture Formulation

– where the primary entrepreneurial task is generating ideas, recognizing opportunities, and constructing the conceptual foundation of a venture. At this stage, cognitive adaptability in the form of creative thinking is the most directly activated internal resource, as students are primarily engaged in ideation rather than interpersonal execution. The EntreComp framework similarly positions idea generation and opportunity recognition as the entry-level competencies that precede resource mobilization and action-taking (Bacigalupo et al., 2016), both of which rely more heavily on emotional intelligence. Furthermore, Farrokhnia et al. (2026) emphasized that opportunity identification capability among university students is fundamentally a cognitive process driven by creative and analytical thinking, rather than an affective one. Emotional intelligence, while significant, operates most powerfully in relational and execution contexts – negotiating, collaborating, and leading – which pre-venture students have yet to fully encounter (Catacutan et al., 2023).

Radiman et al. (2024) further showed that emotional intelligence promotes both proactivity and creativity – captured respectively in EntreComp's Resources and Ideas and Opportunities domains – suggesting that affective regulation provides the psychological foundation for creative ideation: students who manage emotions constructively are better positioned to sustain open-ended thinking and tolerate the ambiguity inherent in business ideation. Esteves et al. (2024) similarly found that emotional regulation and transformational leadership

characteristics—both rooted in emotional intelligence—positively shape the kind of collaborative, innovative entrepreneurial orientation that EntreComp's competence model describes.

The simultaneous effect is therefore not merely additive: it reflects a functionally integrated competence formation process in which emotional capital provides the motivational and relational foundation, while cognitive adaptability generates the ideas and strategies that translate into entrepreneurial action. This integrated view aligns with the EntreComp framework, which emphasizes that entrepreneurial competence emerges through the integration of multiple internal resources, including cognitive and affective capabilities (Bacigalupo et al., 2016). Usman & Hamid (2022) found that developing entrepreneurial competence holistically remains a key challenge in Indonesian higher education, calling for curriculum improvements that integrate both cognitive and affective dimensions—directly supporting the practical implications of the present study.

CONCLUSION

This study confirms that emotional intelligence and creative thinking are significant positive predictors of entrepreneurial competence among Accounting Education students at Universitas Sebelas Maret, with creative thinking demonstrating stronger relative influence ($\beta = 0.509$ vs. $\beta = 0.348$), and together explaining 61.7% of the variance in entrepreneurial competence—providing strong

empirical support for the Entrepreneurial Value Creation Theory (Mishra & Zachary, 2015). A distinctive contribution of this study lies in the convergent deficit pattern identified across all three variables: empathy was the weakest emotional intelligence dimension (51.95%), originality was the lowest creative thinking indicator (70.86%), and Ideas and Opportunities recorded the lowest EntreComp domain score (65.95%)—revealing that students' limited capacity to sense market needs and generate novel ideas systematically converges into weakened opportunity recognition competence.

Findings are bounded by a single-institution sample and cross-sectional design, limiting causal inference and generalizability beyond pre-venture students in Stage 1 of venture formulation. Entrepreneurship curricula should embed empathy-building and originality-fostering activities—particularly through experiential and design-based learning—as core instructional components to strengthen students' opportunity recognition competence. Future research should replicate this study across institutions and venture stages, and incorporate self-efficacy and entrepreneurship education quality to capture a fuller picture of competence development.

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