

# THE ROLE OF THE INDEPENDENT ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROGRAM (WMK) IN ENHANCING ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS AND SUPPORTING SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH IN INDONESIA: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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## ABSTRACT

*This study aims to evaluate the role of the Independent Entrepreneurship Program (WMK) in enhancing entrepreneurial skills among university students and its impact on Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 8 in Indonesia. Using a literature review approach, this research shows that WMK significantly improves managerial, marketing, and innovation skills among participants. Although challenges such as access to capital and market uncertainty remain, collaboration between educational institutions and the industrial sector has proven crucial in providing practical support for students to realize their business ideas. WMK holds great potential in creating a sustainable entrepreneurial environment, which, in turn, can contribute to inclusive economic growth in Indonesia.*

**Keywords:** Sustainable Development, SDG 8, Entrepreneurship, Independent Entrepreneurship Program

## INTRODUCTION

Sustainable development has become a global agenda recognized by all countries as a response to increasingly complex environmental, social, and economic challenges. In 2015, the United Nations (UN) formulated 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a roadmap to achieve sustainable development by 2030. One of these goals is SDG 8, which focuses on inclusive and sustainable economic growth, as well as the creation of decent work for all individuals (United Nations, 2020; Mazzucato, 2020). In this context, inclusive economic growth not only contributes to poverty reduction but also helps to reduce social and economic inequalities (Zhao et al., 2021).

In Indonesia, the challenge of achieving SDG 8 is evident, especially with the high unemployment rate, which reached 5.86% in 2023 according to the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) (BPS, 2023). As many as 6.53 million unemployed individuals in Indonesia are dominated by the younger generation, highlighting the need for effective strategies to create new job opportunities (BPS, 2023; Ministry of Manpower, 2024). Additionally, data shows that around 60% of the workforce in Indonesia is involved in the informal sector, which often lacks adequate access to training and support necessary for sustainable growth (Ministry of Manpower, 2024; Fatimah et al., 2023). Therefore, enhancing entrepreneurship is seen as a potential solution to contribute to job creation and more stable economic growth.

The Independent Entrepreneurship Program (WMK), launched by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology in 2021, aims to support the achievement of SDG 8 by focusing on the development of entrepreneurial skills among university students (Kemendikbudristek, 2021). This program not only offers entrepreneurship education but also establishes partnerships with various industrial sectors to create job opportunities (Prabowo,

2023). Research has shown that entrepreneurship education can enhance entrepreneurial skills and intentions among students, which is crucial for the future economy of Indonesia (Iskandar & Mulyani, 2022; Nugroho et al., 2021). Through participation in WMK, students are expected to gain practical experience that can prepare them for a competitive job market (Sari et al., 2022). However, despite the great potential of the WMK program, its implementation on the ground faces several challenges, including limited access to capital and business knowledge (Udin, 2024; Zulkarnain, 2022). Therefore, it is important to evaluate the effectiveness of WMK in supporting the development of entrepreneurship in Indonesia and provide recommendations for future improvements.

Through a literature review approach, this study aims to explore the contribution of WMK to the achievement of SDG 8 through industry partnerships that have not been previously studied in the literature. By analyzing various relevant sources, including government reports, academic articles, and case studies related to WMK and the achievement of SDG 8, this study is expected to provide in-depth insights into the impact of the program on the development of entrepreneurship in Indonesia.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### The Independent Entrepreneurship Program (WMK)

The Independent Entrepreneurship Program (WMK) at higher education institutions is one of the steps in implementing the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology's policy to enhance students' competencies in entrepreneurship. In accordance with the Minister of Education and Culture Regulation No. 3 of 2020 on National Standards for Higher Education, WMK is part of the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) initiative, which provides students with opportunities to develop skills outside the classroom, including entrepreneurship. This program supports students in gaining practical experience through activities such as internships, business development, and entrepreneurial projects. The approach aims to create graduates who are creative, innovative, and able to contribute to economic development by creating new job opportunities (Kemendikbud, 2020).

The WMK program includes stages such as idea generation, mentoring, onboarding at MSMEs (micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises), boot camps, product prototyping, investment summits, and marketing and selling products to the general public through the WMK Expo. The learning process in WMK consists of three phases: Pre-Immersion, Immersion, and Post-Immersion. The Pre-Immersion phase involves learning the basic knowledge and skills of entrepreneurship. Students are expected to develop the right mindset and validate their business ideas in collaboration with entrepreneurship lecturers, practitioners, and coaches.

The Immersion phase involves students directly participating in business processes by onboarding at MSMEs. This hands-on experience aims to improve their competency in developing business models and creating validated prototypes. The Post-Immersion phase focuses on market validation and feasibility studies, equipping students with the necessary skills to start their own businesses. It is expected that after this stage, students will have the necessary foundation to run their businesses as planned.

The Ministry of Education and Culture emphasizes the importance of strengthening entrepreneurship education at universities to encourage students to develop innovative business ideas. WMK provides opportunities for students to engage in the entrepreneurial ecosystem through support facilities such as business incubators, mentoring programs, and access to funding. With a combination of theoretical and practical approaches, WMK aims to

create graduates who are ready to become competitive global entrepreneurs, supporting the achievement of sustainable development goals based on innovation (Susanti, 2021).

### ***Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 8***

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is a global agenda formulated by the United Nations to achieve sustainable development by 2030. Goal 8, SDG 8, focuses on promoting inclusive and sustainable economic growth, as well as creating decent work opportunities for all (United Nations, 2021). According to research by Mazzucato (2020), inclusive economic growth is crucial for reducing social and economic inequalities and improving societal well-being. In Indonesia, the challenge in achieving SDG 8 is evident in the high unemployment rate, particularly among the younger generation, which reached 6.53 million individuals in 2023 (BPS, 2023). Therefore, effective interventions are needed to enhance employment opportunities and entrepreneurship, particularly among students.

### **Entrepreneurship and the Independent Entrepreneurship Program (WMK)**

Entrepreneurship is the process of creating value through the development of ideas and taking risks to capitalize on business opportunities. According to Kuratko (2016), entrepreneurship not only involves the establishment of new businesses but also innovation that can contribute to economic growth. In the context of education, the development of entrepreneurial skills among students is crucial, as they are the future generation expected to become tomorrow's entrepreneurs (Fayolle & Gailly, 2015). The Independent Entrepreneurship Program (WMK), launched by the Ministry of Education and Culture of Indonesia, aims to strengthen entrepreneurship education among students through practical field experience (Iskandar & Mulyani, 2022). Research by Prabowo and Lestari (2023) shows that student participation in WMK enhances their entrepreneurial skills and intentions to start businesses, which aligns with the achievement of SDG 8. Therefore, this program plays an important role in supporting the development of entrepreneurship and creating better job opportunities for the younger generation.

## **METHODS**

This study is a literature review aimed at analyzing and evaluating the contribution of the Independent Entrepreneurship Program (WMK) to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 8 in Indonesia. The methodology used in this research is a literature review approach, which involves gathering and analyzing data from various sources, including academic articles, government reports, and case studies related to WMK and SDG 8 (Booth et al., 2016). The research process involves identifying, evaluating, and interpreting the results of previously published studies. The primary focus of this study is to identify how the WMK program helps students develop entrepreneurial skills, evaluate the impact of the program on students' entrepreneurial intentions, and examine the challenges students face in running businesses after participating in WMK, such as access to capital and market uncertainty (Iskandar & Mulyani, 2022).

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

The research findings indicate that the Independent Entrepreneurship Program (WMK) has made a significant contribution to the improvement of entrepreneurial skills among students. A study by Iskandar and Mulyani (2022) revealed that students who

participated in this program experienced substantial improvements in managerial and marketing skills. This aligns with the findings of Sari et al. (2022), who noted that the practical experiences gained during WMK helped students understand the technical aspects of entrepreneurship, including business planning, financial management, and marketing strategies. These enhanced skills not only positively impacted students' readiness to start businesses but also contributed to the creation of a more sustainable entrepreneurial environment in Indonesia.

Additionally, the impact of WMK on students' entrepreneurial intentions is also highly significant. According to research by Fatimah et al. (2023), students who participated in WMK showed a higher level of entrepreneurial intention compared to those who did not. Entrepreneurial intention is a critical first step toward actual entrepreneurial action. Mardiyah and Hartono (2023) highlighted that the hands-on experience provided by the program gave students the confidence to take risks and explore new ideas. However, to ensure that these intentions lead to tangible action, support from educational institutions and the industry sector is crucial. A close collaboration between universities and the industry can create opportunities for students to apply their ideas in real business settings.

Despite the various benefits offered by WMK, challenges in the program's implementation remain. One of the main obstacles students face when starting businesses is limited access to capital (Aulia, 2023). Without adequate financial support, students' entrepreneurial intentions and skills may be hindered, preventing them from fully realizing their potential as entrepreneurs. Therefore, it is essential for the program to establish partnerships with financial institutions and investors to facilitate access to capital. Additionally, challenges related to market uncertainty must also be addressed. Mardiyah and Hartono (2023) pointed out that students often hesitate to make business decisions due to a lack of understanding about market dynamics. In this regard, WMK plays an important role in enhancing the education on market dynamics within the curriculum, enabling students to better prepare for the realities of the business world.

Overall, the Independent Entrepreneurship Program (WMK) plays a critical role in supporting the achievement of SDG 8 by improving students' entrepreneurial skills and intentions. To enhance the program's effectiveness, several recommendations can be made, such as improving students' access to capital through partnerships with financial institutions and investors, providing intensive mentoring for students in running businesses, and strengthening the education on market dynamics in the curriculum. With these steps, WMK is expected to continue contributing to inclusive and sustainable economic growth in Indonesia.

## CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this study indicates that the Independent Entrepreneurship Program (WMK) has a significant impact on improving students' entrepreneurial skills and intentions, aligning with the goals of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 8. The enhancement of managerial and marketing skills, as well as students' confidence to start businesses, are key contributions of this program. However, challenges such as limited access to capital and market uncertainty remain barriers that need to be addressed in order to maximize students' potential. Therefore, it is important for educational institutions to establish stronger partnerships with the industry and financial institutions to provide the necessary support for students. Recommendations for further development of WMK include enhancing the curriculum with components on market dynamics, providing intensive mentoring for students, and creating better networks between students, entrepreneurs, and investors. With these steps, WMK is expected to continue contributing to inclusive and sustainable economic growth in Indonesia.

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