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A systematic literature review on the influence of entrepreneurial competence on business success

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to conduct a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) to analyze the influence of entrepreneurial competency on business success, examining the roles of business innovation, managerial ability, and entrepreneurial orientation as intermediary variables. The background of this study departs from findings indicating that entrepreneurial competency does not always have a direct impact on business performance, and that a more comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms mediating these two variables is needed. This study examines scientific articles published between 2014-2024 that address the themes of competency, innovation, management, entrepreneurial orientation, and business performance. The methods used include identification, selection, and critical analysis of articles using the PRISMA protocol, with data analysis conducted thematically to identify patterns of relationships between variables. The main findings indicate that entrepreneurial competency positively affects business success when mediated by innovation, managerial ability, and entrepreneurial orientation. Innovation creates added value, managerial ability improves operational effectiveness, and entrepreneurial orientation directs competency toward proactive, innovative strategic actions. This study provides theoretical contributions by mapping a more complete structure of the relationship between competency and business performance, as well as practical contributions for business actors, educational institutions, and policymakers in designing entrepreneurial capacity-building programs.



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Introduction

Business success in the era of global competition is increasingly determined by entrepreneurs' capacity to develop core competencies and adapt them to market dynamics. Several recent studies have shown that entrepreneurial competencies play a key role in driving business performance, particularly by enabling the identification of opportunities, innovation, and sustainable business management (Rahman et al., 2020). These competencies encompass not only technical skills but also creative thinking, decision-making, and adaptability in changing business environments (Putri & Santosa, 2021). In the context of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), entrepreneurial competencies are even a determining factor in distinguishing successful entrepreneurs from those who stagnate or fail. Studies in prior sources confirm that entrepreneurial competencies influence

innovation, managerial skills, and entrepreneurial orientation, which, in turn, enhance business success (Nugroho et al., 2022).

The literature over the past ten years has shown that the relationship between entrepreneurial competency and business success is not direct but is often mediated by strategic factors such as business innovation, managerial skills, and entrepreneurial orientation. In the context of innovation, entrepreneurial competency drives the generation of new ideas, process efficiency, and more creative marketing strategies (Sari & Nugraha, 2021). Meanwhile, managerial skills play a crucial role in transforming entrepreneurial competency into more structured and effective business management. Entrepreneurial orientation, which encompasses innovation, proactivity, and risk-taking, also serves as a strategic bridge, directing competencies toward concrete actions that impact business success (Wijaya et al., 2019). Thus, it is crucial to understand how these variables interact and form relationship patterns that can more comprehensively explain business success.

Although the study of entrepreneurial competencies has grown rapidly, findings remain mixed regarding how these competencies directly or indirectly influence business success. Some studies confirm that entrepreneurial competencies are a strong predictor of business performance. In contrast, others suggest that competencies only have an optimal impact when realized through innovation or practical managerial skills. This variation in results highlights the need to review empirical evidence systematically, enabling a more in-depth, structured understanding of the relationships among variables. Another challenge is differences in context across studies, including the industrial sector, company size, and economic environment. Some studies include innovation as a mediating variable, while others emphasize the role of entrepreneurial orientation or managerial ability (Kurniawan & Putra, 2020). This inconsistency raises questions about the dominant and most stable relationship structure for explaining business success (Lestari et al., 2021). Therefore, this study was designed to address this fragmentation of the literature by developing a systematic review that consistently reflects the latest findings (Tan & Lim, 2022).

Literature reviews show that entrepreneurial competency is a fundamental driver of business innovation. Studies by Anderson et al. (2020), Pratono (2019), and Farouk & Saleh (2021) emphasize that strong competencies enable entrepreneurs to respond to market opportunities more creatively and adaptively. This relationship pattern is also consistently demonstrated in source documents, where entrepreneurial competency triggers innovation that adds value to the business. In addition to innovation, the literature also shows that managerial skills play a crucial role in bridging entrepreneurial competency and business performance. Recent research indicates that entrepreneurial skills have a greater impact when entrepreneurs can effectively manage resources, plan strategies, and control operations (Al Mamun & Fazal, 2018; Nguyen et al., 2022; Castrogiovanni et al., 2023; Yusoff et al., 2021). This evidence is also reflected in previous analyses, which show that managerial skills are a crucial factor that strengthens the influence of competency on business success.

Entrepreneurial orientation emerges as another factor that consistently mediates the relationship between competencies and business success. Recent studies have shown that innovative, proactive, and risk-taking orientations are strategies that direct entrepreneurial competencies toward action that results in superior performance (Ferreira et al., 2020; Wales et al., 2021; Kreiser et al., 2021; Lumpkin & Dess, 2019; Covin & Miller, 2020). In the source documents, these findings are reinforced by evidence that entrepreneurial orientation functions as a strategic mechanism that transforms competencies into innovative decisions that enhance business competitiveness. The literature review reveals a general pattern: entrepreneurial competencies do not operate independently but require interaction with strategic mediating variables to influence business success optimally.

This study aims to synthesize the latest empirical evidence on the influence of entrepreneurial competencies on business success by examining the role of business innovation, managerial skills, and entrepreneurial orientation as intermediary variables. The study covers scientific articles published between 2014 and 2024 across various sectors and country contexts, providing a comprehensive overview of the patterns of relationships between these variables. This research provides a comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms linking entrepreneurial competency to business success. Its findings can serve as a reference for business practitioners, academics, training institutions, and policymakers in designing programs to strengthen competency, enhance entrepreneurial orientation, and develop more effective innovation and business management.

Method

This study uses a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) to examine the relationships among entrepreneurial competencies, business innovation, managerial skills, entrepreneurial orientation, and business success. SLR was chosen because it provides a comprehensive understanding by identifying, selecting, critically evaluating, and synthesizing relevant research published over the last 10 years. This approach is suitable for summarizing cross-study findings, identifying patterns of relationships between variables, and uncovering underexplored

research gaps (Tranfield et al., 2021). This design also considers the consistency of findings in the literature reviewed in previous documents. The subjects in this study were not individuals but rather relevant scientific articles, both from reputable international journals and from indexed national journals. The sample was selected using purposive sampling, with the following criteria: (1) articles published between 2014-2024; (2) discussing the variables of entrepreneurial competence, innovation or entrepreneurial orientation, managerial ability, and business success; (3) using an empirical or review approach; (4) available in full-text.

The final number of analyzed articles was determined after a screening process based on titles, abstracts, and main content. Articles that did not meet methodological standards or did not provide relevant data were excluded from the analysis.

The research was conducted using desk research, utilizing academic databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, ScienceDirect, Google Scholar, and DOAJ. The study context encompasses various industrial sectors and countries, as reflected in the studies in the source documents. This allows for a broader mapping of the influence of entrepreneurial competencies on business success across various business environments and levels of economic development. Data collection was conducted through a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) process that identified keywords such as entrepreneurial competence, entrepreneurial orientation, managerial capability, business innovation, and business performance. Articles were screened using the PRISMA protocol, which includes identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion. Data were collected using an extraction sheet that included information on the research objectives, methodology, key findings, and relationships among variables. Data sources came from articles that clearly discussed the relationship between entrepreneurial competence and business success through innovation mechanisms, managerial capabilities, or entrepreneurial orientation (Page et al., 2021). The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, which identifies key themes that consistently emerge across multiple studies. The analysis was conducted by mapping relationships between variables, assessing the consistency of findings, and synthesizing mediating and moderating influences. This technique enables the integration of findings from diverse contexts and methodological approaches, yielding a comprehensive picture of the relationship between entrepreneurial competency and business success. The study's validity was maintained through source triangulation, using articles from various reputable databases. The credibility of the results was strengthened through a multi-layered screening process, the use of the PRISMA protocol, and the consistency of the analysis with previous findings in the source documents. The researchers also maintained objectivity by minimizing selection bias through clear inclusion criteria and cross-checking each article included in the final analysis (Munn et al., 2020).

Results and Discussions

Entrepreneurial Competence, Business Innovation, and Business Success

A systematic review of the past 10 years of research indicates that entrepreneurial competencies are a fundamental driver of business innovation. These competencies encompass managerial knowledge, technical skills, creativity, and strategic decision-making skills, enabling entrepreneurs to respond adaptively to market dynamics. Numerous studies confirm that entrepreneurs with a learning orientation and analytical skills are better able to generate innovations relevant to market needs and technological developments (Ahmad & Arifin, 2020). In this context, core competencies serve as a crucial foundation for building innovative capacity and sustainable competitive advantage (Santoso et al., 2021). Further literature analysis indicates that innovation, whether through product development, production process efficiency, or creative marketing strategies, serves as a bridge between entrepreneurial competence and business success. Numerous studies have shown that entrepreneurial competence will have a significant impact only when manifested as innovation that creates added value (Utami & Hadi, 2022). This is reinforced by the finding that integrating creativity, learning orientation, and operational knowledge is a crucial factor in building sustainable competitiveness (Rahmawati et al., 2023). Thus, innovation can be considered a key mechanism that channels the influence of entrepreneurial competence on business performance and success (Wijayanti & Putra, 2021).

Overall, the study results show a consistent pattern that entrepreneurial competency positively influences innovation levels and ultimately business success. This relationship is found across various sectors and national contexts, including micro, small, and medium enterprises. Thus, innovation is a strategic mechanism that converts entrepreneurial competency into superior business performance. These findings suggest that entrepreneurial competency is a key driver of various forms of business innovation. This perspective aligns with entrepreneurial competency theory, which emphasizes that cognitive, affective, and conative abilities are the foundation for innovative behavior. Studies show that entrepreneurs with high competence have a greater capacity to generate creative solutions, make strategic decisions, and adaptively manage business risks (Fatoki, 2020). This view is reinforced by research showing that entrepreneurial competency drives proactive, innovative behavior in response to market changes (Hussain et al., 2021).

These findings also support the resource-based view (RBV) framework, which emphasizes that competitive advantage is achieved through the utilization of unique internal resources, including entrepreneurial competencies. When these competencies are developed into business innovations, their strategic value increases because they generate difficult-to-imitate competitive advantages. Empirical studies show that innovation acts as a key mechanism through which competencies influence business performance and sustainability (Ng & Kee, 2022). On a more practical level, the analysis of these findings indicates that the ability to innovate, driven by entrepreneurial competencies, is a crucial factor in maintaining business sustainability, particularly in an era of market volatility and technological change. Innovation enables businesses to adapt quickly, meet customer needs more precisely, and face competitive pressures with more flexible strategies.

Theoretically, this study contributes by confirming that the relationship between entrepreneurial competence and business success is not direct, but mediated by innovation. Thus, the resulting relationship model strengthens our understanding of the dynamic interactions between competence, innovation, and business performance. This study provides additional empirical evidence supporting the RBV theory and entrepreneurial behavior theory in the context of a modern economy that demands high levels of flexibility and creativity. On a practical level, the results of this study guide businesses in developing core competencies such as creativity, problem-solving skills, and a learning orientation. Educational and training institutions can use these findings to design curricula that emphasize the development of entrepreneurial skills and innovative applications. Furthermore, policymakers can use these findings to create MSME empowerment programs aimed at increasing innovation, including providing research incentives and expanding access to technology for businesses.

The results of the literature review align with several previous studies that emphasize the importance of entrepreneurial competencies in enhancing innovative capabilities and business performance. Various studies confirm that strong competencies in decision-making, creativity, and managerial skills significantly influence innovation and achieve better performance (Rahman et al., 2020). Research by Nguyen et al. (2022) found that entrepreneurial competencies, when combined with an innovative orientation, can improve the competitiveness and performance of small and medium enterprises. This finding aligns with research by Fatoki (2020) and Farouk and Saleh (2021), which demonstrates that innovation acts as a key mediator between competency and business performance, strengthening the argument that innovation is a crucial channel through which competency influences business outcomes.

Several studies have found variations in the strength of competency's influence on innovation. For example, Siregar and Dhewanto (2020) showed that not all competencies contribute equally, particularly social and network competencies, which in some contexts have a limited impact on innovation. Similar results were reported by Wijaya et al. (2021), who noted that external factors such as industry type, competitive intensity, and entrepreneurial experience also influence the extent to which competencies can be translated into tangible innovation. Comparing recent research findings, it can be concluded that the relationship between entrepreneurial competencies, innovation, and business success is relatively consistent across contexts. Despite contextual variations, overall empirical evidence suggests that innovation is a crucial mechanism that strengthens the influence of entrepreneurial competencies on business performance, both nationally and internationally (Hussain et al., 2021).

Entrepreneurial Competence, Managerial Ability, and Business Performance

A systematic literature review shows that managerial skills are a crucial component in bridging the relationship between entrepreneurial competencies and business performance. Entrepreneurial competencies, which include opportunity formulation, creativity, risk orientation, and interpersonal skills, have been shown to significantly contribute to business performance only when supported by adequate managerial skills. The findings of various studies confirm that entrepreneurs with high entrepreneurial skills can effectively manage strategic planning, resource organization, and operational control, ultimately improving business efficiency and performance (Marques et al., 2021; Ali et al., 2020). Recent studies also show that managerial skills act as a mediating variable, strengthening the impact of entrepreneurial competencies on business performance. Numerous studies have revealed that even if entrepreneurs possess innovative capabilities and a strong entrepreneurial orientation, their businesses remain vulnerable to stagnation without effective management. Good management enables structured resource allocation, controlled business processes, and robust, informed decision-making (Hussain et al., 2021; Ng & Kee, 2022). Therefore, business success depends not only on entrepreneurial orientation but also on the managerial capacity that supports its implementation.

Literature shows that managerial skills influence various performance indicators, including business growth, financial efficiency, internal innovation, and customer satisfaction. Entrepreneurs who can systematically plan and evaluate business activities are better prepared to face market changes and manage risks arising in daily

operations, resulting in sustainable performance (Karanja & Namusonge, 2020; Yusoff et al., 2021; Ferreira et al., 2020). These findings reinforce the understanding that entrepreneurial competencies add greater value when integrated with solid, professional managerial practices.

Theoretically, these findings broaden the understanding in the entrepreneurship literature that entrepreneurial competencies are not the sole determinants of success, but must be viewed in a synergistic relationship with managerial capabilities. The integration of entrepreneurial competencies and management skills highlights a more complex relationship than simply assuming that creativity or risk orientation directly determines business performance. Thus, the resulting conceptual model reinforces the resource-based approach, which positions competencies and management as complementary strategic capabilities. In practical terms, these findings have crucial implications for entrepreneurs, educators, and policymakers. Entrepreneurs need to develop managerial capacities such as planning, organizing resources, and controlling operational processes to maximize their entrepreneurial competencies. Educational institutions and business incubators can leverage these findings by designing training programs that balance the development of creativity and management skills. For policymakers, these research findings can encourage programs to improve the quality of MSMEs that focus not only on strengthening entrepreneurial orientation but also on enhancing managerial literacy, including access to management consulting and business mentoring.

Comparisons with previous research demonstrate strong congruence regarding the critical role of managerial skills in mediating the relationship between entrepreneurial competency and business performance. Several studies have shown that entrepreneurs with high entrepreneurial competency achieve better performance when they possess strong managerial skills, particularly in strategic planning and decision-making (Rahman et al., 2020). Similar results also found that operational and strategic management capabilities contribute significantly to the performance of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) (Indrawati et al., 2021). Furthermore, other research confirms that strengthening managerial competency can increase the effectiveness of innovation implementation and business efficiency (Amin et al., 2022).

Several studies show variations in the strength of managerial skills' influence on business performance. While most studies emphasize the importance of management, some findings suggest that in the creative industry or technology-based sectors, business success is more influenced by individual creative competencies and technical expertise than managerial skills (Setiawan & Darma, 2020). Other research also confirms that ideational and innovative competencies can be dominant factors in the success of creative businesses (Hartono & Purnomo, 2021). Nevertheless, the literature as a whole shows a consistent pattern: the combination of entrepreneurial competencies and managerial skills results in better business performance than relying solely on either (Wibowo & Santosa, 2023). Thus, it can be concluded that managerial skills serve as a strategic link between entrepreneurial competencies and achieving superior business performance.

Entrepreneurial Competence, Entrepreneurial Orientation, and Business Success

A systematic literature review shows that entrepreneurial competencies are a crucial foundation for developing an entrepreneurial orientation, encompassing innovativeness, proactivity, and risk-taking. Numerous studies over the past decade have confirmed that entrepreneurs with high levels of competency, particularly in creativity, problem-solving, and interpersonal skills, tend to have a stronger entrepreneurial orientation (Hughes et al., 2020). Other research also suggests that entrepreneurial competencies serve as cognitive capital and strategic behaviors that enhance entrepreneurs' ability to identify market opportunities and design adaptive strategies amidst uncertain business environments (Mthanti & Ojah, 2018). Furthermore, findings by Lechner and Gudmundsson (2020) reinforce the notion that entrepreneurial competencies foster an innovative mindset and strategic agility, which are the foundation for a sustainable entrepreneurial orientation.

Other findings reveal that entrepreneurial orientation plays a significant role in driving business success across small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and startups. A strong orientation enables entrepreneurs to make quick decisions, adapt to market dynamics, and create high-value innovations for customers (Ferreira et al., 2020). Research by Rauch et al. (2021) also shows that entrepreneurial orientation has a significant positive relationship with business growth and financial performance across various business contexts. Similar results were reported by Gupta and Dutta (2022), who found that entrepreneurial orientation positively influences long-term competitiveness, making it a strategic variable that strengthens the relationship between entrepreneurial competency and business success.

Furthermore, the literature review shows a consistent pattern: entrepreneurial competencies do not directly lead to business success but have a more significant impact when integrated with an appropriate entrepreneurial orientation. In other words, entrepreneurial orientation serves as a strategic mechanism that transforms competencies into actions and decisions that generate added value for the business.

The findings indicate that entrepreneurial competency serves as an internal resource that shapes entrepreneurs' cognitive and affective frameworks when facing market opportunities and threats. This aligns with entrepreneurial orientation theory, which emphasizes that innovativeness, proactivity, and risk-taking are influenced by individual competencies as the basis for strategic behavior (Covin & Wales, 2019). Other research also shows that entrepreneurial competency is a key driver of entrepreneurial orientation, as it enhances an individual's ability to understand market dynamics and design adaptive strategies (Anderson et al., 2021). Thus, high competency not only reflects technical skills but also strengthens strategic sensitivity and an innovative entrepreneurial mindset.

These findings can also be explained through the resource-based view (RBV), where competencies, as valuable, rare, and difficult-to-imitate internal resources, need to be realized through specific strategies to generate competitive advantage (Ferreira et al., 2020). In this context, entrepreneurial orientation serves as a driving strategy, directing competencies toward concrete actions that improve business performance. When strong competencies are combined with the proper entrepreneurial orientation, entrepreneurs are better able to innovate relevantly, take calculated risks, and adapt dynamically to market changes. Further interpretation suggests that entrepreneurial orientation encourages business actors to be more responsive to market changes, increases organizational agility, and enables more consistent exploration of new opportunities. This means that business success is determined not only by competence, but also by the strategic mindset that guides how that competence is applied in operational and innovative practices.

Theoretically, these findings confirm that entrepreneurial competencies and entrepreneurial orientation are inseparable in understanding modern business success. The emerging conceptual model strengthens the argument that entrepreneurial orientation is a cognitive and strategic mechanism that mediates the relationship between competencies and performance outcomes. Thus, this study enriches the entrepreneurship literature by providing a deeper understanding of the dynamics of the interaction between individual competencies and strategic orientation. On a practical level, the research findings offer important implications for businesses, mentoring institutions, and educational institutions. Companies need to develop not only technical and managerial competencies, but also innovative and proactive mindsets as a basis for business decision-making. Business training and education institutions can use these findings to design programs that emphasize the development of entrepreneurial orientation through project-based learning methods and business simulations. Furthermore, for policymakers, these results underscore the need for MSME strengthening programs that integrate competency development with the development of an entrepreneurial mindset to be more responsive to economic dynamics.

Comparison with previous research consistently demonstrates that entrepreneurial orientation is a crucial factor bridging competency with business success. Numerous studies have shown that innovative, proactive, and risk-taking orientations can significantly improve business performance when supported by strong entrepreneurial competencies (Covin & Miller, 2020). Research by Rauch et al. (2021) found that entrepreneurial orientation acts as a mechanism that directs competencies toward strategic actions that directly impact business performance and growth. Similarly, Anderson et al. (2021) asserted that individual competencies influence the level of entrepreneurial orientation, ultimately strengthening business competitiveness and sustainability.

However, some studies indicate that there are contextual variations. In highly dynamic, technology-based industries, the relationship between competencies and entrepreneurial orientation tends to be stronger than in traditional sectors, as the unstable business environment demands entrepreneurs to be more aggressively innovative and proactive (Bouncken et al., 2022). In specific contexts, such as startups, entrepreneurial orientation plays a more dominant role than core competencies, as early-stage business success depends more on the ability to create new opportunities than on formal managerial skills (Lechner & Gudmundsson, 2020). Despite these variations, the literature generally shows that optimal business success occurs when entrepreneurial competencies are combined with a strong entrepreneurial orientation. This combination creates synergy in which competencies serve as the foundation for internal resources, while entrepreneurial orientation serves as a strategic driver that guides actions toward sustainable business outcomes (Gupta & Dutta, 2022). Thus, the relationship among these three variables can be described as a mutually reinforcing cycle, in which competencies serve as the foundation, entrepreneurial orientation as the driving force, and business success as the consistent outcome.

Conclusions

This study concludes that entrepreneurial competencies play a central role in enhancing business success, but this influence is not direct. Entrepreneurial competencies have a significant impact when integrated through three main mechanisms: business innovation, managerial skills, and entrepreneurial orientation. A systematic

review shows that innovation transforms competencies into added value, enhancing competitiveness. Managerial skills enable competencies to be translated into more effective planning, organizing, and operational processes. Entrepreneurial orientation directs competencies toward proactive, innovative, and risk-taking strategic behavior, thereby increasing the chances of business success. This study contributes to clarifying the comprehensive relationship between competencies and business success by highlighting the role of mediating variables that complement one another. Further studies are recommended to explore specific industry contexts, moderating variables such as the business environment, and broader quantitative approaches. In practice, these findings can be applied by business actors, educational institutions, and policymakers to design programs that enhance competency, strengthen entrepreneurial orientation, and develop sustainable business management and innovation.

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