



# THE INFLUENCE OF DIGITAL LITERACY AND RELATIONSHIP BUILDING ABILITY ON STUDENTS' ENTREPRENEURIAL DECISIONS WITH ENTREPRENEURIAL MOTIVATION AS A MEDIATING VARIABLE: A STUDY ON STUDENTS OF THE ENTREPRENEURSHIP STUDY PROGRAM

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**Abstract.** *Entrepreneurship Study Programme students at Universitas Negeri Makassar's Faculty of Economics and Business had their digital literacy and relationship-building skills examined to see how they affected their entrepreneurial decision-making. Additionally, it determines if entrepreneurial drive is a factor in the relationship between these variables. Data for the study is collected quantitatively via questionnaires. The 427 students who completed the programme between 2019 and 2024 are the ones included in the study. With a 5% margin of error, 207 students were selected by proportional random sampling using the Slovin algorithm. A Google Form questionnaire was used to gather the data. After that, SmartPLS version 4 was used to analyse the data using the PLS-SEM approach. According to the findings, digital literacy significantly impacts entrepreneurial decision-making for the better. Entrepreneurial decision-making is positively and significantly impacted by the capacity to develop connections. There was a positive and statistically significant association between digital literacy and the capacity to form relationships, which in turn influenced entrepreneurial drive. There was a positive and statistically significant relationship between entrepreneurial motivation and entrepreneurial decision-making. Students' entrepreneurial decision-making is influenced by their entrepreneurial drive, which in turn is influenced by their digital literacy and relationship-building abilities.*

**Keywords:** *Digital Literacy, Ability to Build Relationships, Entrepreneurial Motivation, Entrepreneurial Decision-Making.*

## INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship is crucial in today's interconnected and digital economy for boosting national and global GDP. The role of entrepreneurs is not only limited to creating jobs; They also encourage innovation, bolstering the formalization of the informal sector and establishing formality, and increasing the level of mutual neutrality. In developing countries such as Indonesia, entrepreneurship is considered a key solution to diversify social and economic prosperity to promote inclusive entrepreneurship (Vargas zeledon & Lee, 2024)

Students, as an educated young generation, have a strategic position as agents of change who are expected to be able to encourage change in the social, technological, and economic fields. Students are not only learning science, but also as future value creators through creative ideas, the use of technology, and the courage to take risks when starting a business (Afiati & Balkan, 2023)

Students of the Entrepreneurship Study Program are prepared from the beginning of their studies to become independent entrepreneurs through a curriculum that integrates theory and practice. Courses such as Business Information Systems, Brand and Selling Management, E-Commerce, Business Creativity and Innovation, and Startup Entrepreneur equip students with technological competence, marketing strategies, and brand management skills. Meanwhile, practical courses such as Business Practice and Entrepreneurship provide hands-on experience in managing a business and solving problems. With this foundation, entrepreneurship students are expected to possess the mental, technical, and strategic readiness to start a real business, either individually or in teams (Tristya & Harald, 2021)

The reality in the field shows the existence of serious challenges. Data from Statistics in February 2023 recorded more than 800,000 educated unemployed individuals (bachelor's degree graduates). This figure indicates that there is still a gap between the competencies of university graduates and the needs of the labor market. This situation requires students not only to seek employment but also to be capable of creating jobs through entrepreneurial activities (Huang et al., 2025)

Based on preliminary observations of students in the Entrepreneurship Program at Universitas Negeri Makassar regarding the learning curriculum related to digital literacy, it is evident that students have a positive perception of digital-based courses that help them understand the concepts of online business, e-commerce, and digital branding. This indicates that students already possess a good level of digital literacy, particularly in technical skills and the use of technology to make business decisions. Furthermore, based on observations regarding business ownership, although students in the Entrepreneurship Study Program have a fairly good understanding, the number of students who actually run a business is still relatively low, with only 28.6% of students owning a business. Meanwhile, the majority of students, 71.4%, do not own any business at all. This condition indicates a gap between the entrepreneurial knowledge and skills acquired during their studies and their practical implementation in real-world settings. The

phenomenon of the low number of students who actually start a business also shows that mastery of digital literacy alone is not sufficient to serve as the main driving factor for someone in making the decision to engage in entrepreneurship.

Based on the theoretical foundations, empirical findings, and previous research results, there is a gap in the existing studies. Preliminary research data indicate that students' digital literacy has a positive influence on their tendency to make entrepreneurial decisions. This is reflected in their high level of understanding of how to use digital technology to support business activities. However, when viewed from the data on business ownership, the number of students who actually engage directly in entrepreneurial activities remains relatively low, even though they come from an Entrepreneurship Study Program that is specifically designed to equip them with business skills. This condition indicates a gap between the digital literacy competencies possessed by students and their actual implementation in the form of real entrepreneurial decisions. Therefore, more in-depth research is needed to examine other factors, such as the ability to build networks and entrepreneurial motivation, which have the potential to serve as mediating variables between digital literacy and students' entrepreneurial decisions in the era of digital transformation.

According to Paul Gilster, in the digital world, digital literacy refers to an individual's ability to use digital technology effectively to create data, communicate, collaborate, and make decisions (Gilster, 1997). The ability to apply technology and information through digital tools to the maximum in various contexts related to academics, careers, and daily life is called digital literacy (Armanda et al., 2022). Digital literacy can be understood as the ability of students to utilize digital technology effectively, critically, and productively to support entrepreneurial activities. Students who have good digital literacy are not only able to access and use technological devices, but also understand how to use social media, websites, and other digital platforms as a means of promotion, communication, and business management (Onwubuya & Uju Nkiru, 2023) According to (Ralkib et al., 2024) Digital literacy plays an important role in supporting the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises. It helps business owners access and utilize information, manage online marketing, improve operational efficiency, and expand their business networks. Digital literacy not only includes technical skills in using social media and marketplaces but also the ability to manage content and digital

marketing strategies to support entrepreneurial intentions (Rakib, Isma, et al., 2024). Digital literacy also plays an important role in supporting the effectiveness of business operation management, in addition to being interpreted as the ability of business actors to understand, use, and evaluate information through digital media effectively to support business activities (Bahri et al., 2021). According to (Oktavianti & Soetjipto, 2025) The use of digital technology in the management of MSME operations, such as inventory management, production planning, and business analysis, is able to increase business productivity and competitiveness. Therefore, students who have good digital literacy tend to be better prepared in managing business operational aspects, so that they have a higher level of motivation and confidence in making decisions to be entrepreneurs.

The ability to build relationships is an important interpersonal skill that helps individuals create, establish, and strengthen professional and personal connections that benefit all parties involved. In the context of entrepreneurship, this skill is crucial because relationships form the foundation for accessing information, funding, resources, support, and market opportunities that cannot be achieved alone. Successful entrepreneurship is not only about having a good business idea but also about being able to leverage the networks one possesses (Haroon et al., 2024). Building relationships is not only about creating connections but also about maintaining them to ensure they remain high-quality and managing them to support the success of a business. Therefore, entrepreneurial experience is highly valuable in developing soft skills, particularly the ability to build relationships, which is crucial when navigating a constantly changing and competitive business environment. The entrepreneurial communication model involves the ability to build interpersonal relationships between entrepreneurs and their customers, partners, and business environment. This ability is essential for strengthening business networks and facilitating the development of strategic relationships.

Motivation comes from the Latin word "*movere*", which means to drive or to move. Motivation can be understood as a mental state and attitude that provides energy, encourages activity, drives, and directs individuals to channel their behavior toward fulfilling basic needs or reducing imbalances (Citra Indri Septiyani, 2023). Entrepreneurial motivation is an internal factor that drives students to start, manage, and develop their businesses independently. This motivation is not only oriented toward economic goals, such as generating income, but also includes the desire to be more creative, self-reliant, and to contribute socially (Duan et al., 2025). In the context of

entrepreneurship, the motivation to start a business is not only about the desire to earn money but also includes the desire to develop personal skills, the courage to take risks, forward-thinking attitudes, and an appreciation for creativity and innovation. Individuals with a high level of entrepreneurial motivation tend to be more proactive, consistent, and persistent in running their businesses, thereby increasing the likelihood of business success.

According to (Mensah & Adu, 2021) Decision-making is “the process of selecting and determining among various possibilities in uncertain situations.” Decision-making occurs when an individual is faced with a situation that requires them to: a) make predictions about the future; b) choose one option from two or more alternatives; or c) make estimates regarding the frequency of events based on available evidence. Decision-making in entrepreneurship refers to the process of selecting and determining actions to start or continue a business based on rational thinking and personal conviction. Starting a business is an individual’s decision to initiate and develop an enterprise by considering opportunities, risks, and long-term goals (Rakib et al., 2020). This decision reflects the courage to take action, determination in facing uncertainty, and a vision to achieve economic independence. In addition to improving quality of life, the decision to start a business also helps create employment opportunities and promotes innovation in society.

## **METODE**

This research uses a quantitative approach with the type of study aimed at analyzing the influence of digital literacy and relationship-building abilities on students' entrepreneurial decisions through entrepreneurial motivation as a mediating variable. The study was conducted on active students of the Entrepreneurship Study Program, Faculty of Economics and Business, Makassar State University, classes 2019–2024, with a population of 427 students and a research sample of 207 respondents determined using the Slovin formula with a proportional random sampling technique. The data used consist of quantitative data obtained from primary data through the distribution of Likert-scale questionnaires as well as secondary data obtained from books, journals, and other supporting documents. Data collection was carried out through questionnaires and documentation, while the data analysis technique used the Partial Least Square-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) method with the help of the SmartPLS application to test validity, reliability, relationships between variables as well as mediating effects

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Result

#### Measurement model

Based on the number of indicators used to measure each variable in this study, the following model was developed using SmartPLS software:

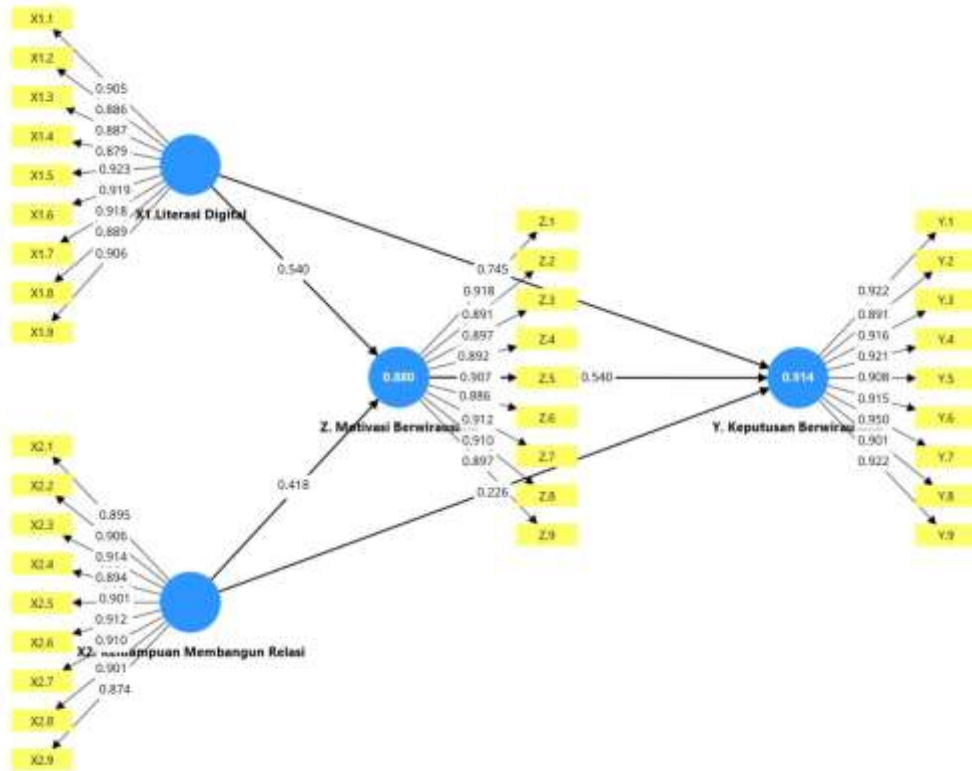


Figure 1. PLS Model

#### Validity Test

Validity testing indicates how well an indicator represents and accurately measures the construct being studied. This test aims to examine whether the construct meets the validity criteria. An indicator is considered valid if its correlation value is greater than 0.7. In this study, the instrument's validity was tested using two methods: convergent validity and discriminant validity

#### Reability Test

Reliability testing is used to examine how well a questionnaire demonstrates a structured pattern that provides stable responses. A measurement instrument is considered reliable if respondents' answers to each item show stability and consistency over time. Composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha are the two ways that PLS model reliability

is evaluated. Composite dependability, or Cronbach's alpha, is generally seen to be dependable if it's more than 0.70.

Table 1. Realbility Test

<b>Variable</b>	<b><i>Cronbach's Alpha</i></b>	<b><i>Rho_a</i></b>	<b><i>Composite Reliability</i></b>	<b>Description</b>
Digitall Literacy (X1)	0,971	0,972	0,975	Relialbel
Ability to Build Relationships (X2)	0,971	0,972	0,975	Relialbel
Entrepreneurial Decision (Y)	0,976	0,976	0,979	Relialbel
Entrepreneurial Motivation (Z)	0,971	0,976	0,975	Relialbel

### Path Coefficient Test

The importance of the interactions between constructs may be better understood with the use of path coefficients. An evaluation of the path coefficient test is conducted using a t-test result more than 1.96 or a p-value less than 0.05. This study uses mediating variables, which means that researchers need to understand the indirect relationships between variables. This is examined using bootstrapping with indirect effects, where the t-statistic value  $> 1.96$  and the p-value  $< 0.05$  are used to observe the influence of the indirect effects

Table 2. Results of Path Coefficient and Indirect Effect Tests

<b>Variable</b>	<b><i>Original Sample (O)</i></b>	<b><i>Sampl e Mean (M)</i></b>	<b><i>Standard Deviation (STDEV)</i></b>	<b><i>T statistics (O/STDEV)</i></b>	<b><i>P Value s</i></b>
Digital Literacy → Entrepreneurial Decision	0,745	0,740	0,079	9,450	0,000
Ability to Build Relationships → Entrepreneurial Decision	0,226	0,231	0.080	2,840	0,005

Digital Literacy → Entrepreneurial Motivation	0,540	0,533	0,108	4,985	0,000
Ability to Build Relationships → Entrepreneurial Motivation	0,418	0,424	0,110	3,782	0,000
Entrepreneurial Motivation → Entrepreneurial Decision	0,540	0,521	0,122	4,435	0,000
Digital Literacy → Entrepreneurial Decision	0,372	0,358	0,108	3,457	0,001
Ability to Build Relationships → Entrepreneurial Motivation → Entrepreneurial Decision	0,151	0,146	0,063	2,390	0,000

Based on Table 2, it can be seen that each variable has a positive effect on the direction of the relationship being tested, indicating that the structural paths in the model are valid and supported by the data.

### **R-Square Value**

To find out how much an independent variable affects the dependent variable, statisticians utilise its coefficient of determination. The R<sup>2</sup> value can be used to determine whether the influence is significant. These values are categorized into three groups: a strong model if R<sup>2</sup> > 0,75 a moderate model if R<sup>2</sup> 0,50 and a weak model if R<sup>2</sup> 0,25.

Table 3. R-Square Results

Variable	R-square	R-square adjusted
Entrepreneurial Decision (Y)	0,914	0,914
Entrepreneurial Motivation (Z)	0,880	0,879
<b>Average</b>	<b>0,897</b>	<b>0,897</b>

### Nilai Q Square

The  $Q^2$  value is used to assess how well a model can predict. If the predictive relevance  $Q^2 > 0$ , it indicates that the exogenous latent variables can be used to explain and predict the endogenous variables. Conversely, if the  $Q^2$  value  $< 0$ , it indicates that the model does not have good predictive relevance.

Table 4. Q-Square Value Results

Indicator	$Q^2$ Predict	RMSE	MAE
Entrepreneurial Motivation (Z)	0,877	0,361	<b>0,204</b>
Entrepreneurial Decision (Y)	0,913	0,303	<b>0,164</b>

### Hypothesis Test

Testing hypotheses is the next stage of data analysis. The structural model's path coefficients show the degree of importance of the inter-variable interactions. To test hypotheses, the bootstrapping method is used. In SmartPLS, the final step in model testing is the evaluation of hypotheses based on the bootstrapping estimation results. According to (Preacher & Hayes, 2008) The results of the bootstrapping test are used to analyze the relationships between constructs. The relationships can be observed by examining the specific indirect effects between the independent and dependent constructs through a mediating construct. Researchers use the specific indirect effect values along with the t-statistic to assess the strength of these relationships. If the t-statistic  $> 1.96$ , the relationship is considered significant. To determine the level of significance, the p-value is used. If the p-value  $< 0.05$ , the indicator is considered significant.

Table 5. Hypothesis Test Results

<b>Hypothesis</b>	<b>Connection</b>	<b>Originall Salmple</b>	<b>T- Staltistic</b>	<b>P- Vallues</b>	<b>Results</b>
H1	Digital Literacy (X1) → Entrepreneurial Decision (Y)	0,745	9,450	0,000	<b>Accepted</b>
H2	Ability to Build Relationships (X2) → Entrepreneurial Decision (Y)	0,226	2,840	0,005	<b>Accepted</b>
H3	Digital Literacy (X1) → Entrepreneurial Motivation (Z)	0,540	4,985	0,000	<b>Accepted</b>
H4	Ability to Build Relationships (X2) → Entrepreneurial Motivation (Z)	0,418	3,782	0,000	<b>Accepted</b>
H5	Entrepreneurial Motivation (Z) → Entrepreneurial Decision (Y)	0,540	4,435	0,000	<b>Accepted</b>
H6	Digital Literacy (X1) → Entrepreneurial Motivation (Z) → Entrepreneurial Decision (Y)	0,372	3,457	0,001	<b>Accepted</b>
H7	Ability to Build Relationships (X2)	0,151	2,390	0,000	<b>Accepted</b>

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→ Entrepreneurial  
Motivation (Z) →  
Entrepreneurial  
Decision (Y)

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## **Discussion**

### 1. The Digital literacy has an impact on entrepreneurial decisions

Business decision-making is positively affected by digital literacy. Research conducted at Universitas Negeri Makassar's Entrepreneurship Programme found that students' digital literacy significantly improved their ability to make business decisions. H1 is acceptable since the t-statistic value of 9.450 is larger than the t-table value of 1.96 and the p-value is  $0.000 < 0.05$ . These results imply that students' capacity to create successful company strategies grows in tandem with their proficiency in gaining access to, comprehending, and making use of digital technologies.

Digital literacy assists in identifying business opportunities, understanding consumer behavior, and managing marketing and business operations online. These skills help reduce business uncertainty and risk by utilizing relevant data and information. According to Ralkib et al., (2024) Digital literacy enables individuals to access information effectively, expand their marketing networks, and enhance their role in the digital economy. Research by (Saputra, 2025) indicated that entrepreneurs' decision-making is positively and significantly influenced by digital literacy, especially when it comes to using digital technology for marketing and company administration. The results of this study are in line with those findings.

### 2. The ability to build relationships affects entrepreneurial decisions.

Students' entrepreneurial decision-making is positively and significantly influenced by their ability to develop relationships. I accept H2 since the t-statistic value of 4.985 is more than the t-table value of 1.96 and the p-value is less than 0.05. According to these results, students who are good at creating and keeping connections have greater self-confidence and are better prepared to make the tough choices needed to launch their own companies.

Consistent with previous research, this study found that college students' social skills significantly increased their entrepreneurial behaviour, especially in terms of their

confidence and preparedness to launch a company. Furthermore, Rupinal et al., (2024) emphasize that networking is a key factor in business success, as it facilitates access to resources, market opportunities, and sustainable support. The consistent findings from this study reinforce the conclusion that relationship-building skills are a crucial determinant in students' decisions to become entrepreneurs.

### 3. Digital literacy has an effect on entrepreneurial motivation.

Students' desire to participate in entrepreneurial activities is positively and significantly affected by literacy. The fact that a p-value of  $0.005 < 0.05$  and a t-statistic value of  $2.840 > t\text{-table } 1.96$  provide credence to the acceptance of H3. Students gain self-assurance and competence when they utilise digital tools to better understand and take advantage of business prospects, especially in the areas of operational efficiency, digital marketing, and information access. This indicates that the drive to achieve success encourages individuals to choose entrepreneurship as a means of self-actualization. These findings are consistent with the results of research by Ralkib et al., (2024) In conclusion, digital literacy does not function solely in technical aspects, but also has psychological implications that contribute to enhancing students' motivation to initiate entrepreneurial activities.

### 4. Relationship-building skills have an effect on entrepreneurial motivation.

The results of the study demonstrate that relationship-building skills have a positive and significant impact on students' entrepreneurial motivation, as evidenced by a t-statistic of  $3.782 > t\text{-table } 1.96$  and a p-value of  $0.000 < 0.05$ , indicating that H4 is accepted. These findings suggest that the more effectively students establish, maintain, and leverage social and professional relationships, the greater their motivation to engage in entrepreneurial activities. High-quality relationships expand access to information, support, and business opportunities, which ultimately enhances self-confidence and readiness to navigate business dynamics.

Conceptually, these results are consistent with *Sociall Calpittal Theory* with (Bakel & Horak, 2024) which emphasizes the role of networks, trust, and work norms as strategic resources in achieving economic and social goals. Furthermore, individuals with high achievement motivation tend to be driven to face challenges, take risks, and take responsibility for the outcomes achieved. Overall, these findings are consistent with Ralkib, (2020) In conclusion, relationship-building skills not only serve as a means to

expand networks but also function as a psychological aspect that strengthens students' entrepreneurial motivation.

5. Entrepreneurial motivation has an effect on entrepreneurial decision-making

The t-statistic of  $4.435 > t\text{-table of } 1.96$  and the p-value of  $0.000 < 0.05$  support the acceptance of H5, which states that entrepreneurial motivation has a positive and substantial impact on students' choices to participate in entrepreneurship.

Based on these results, it seems that students' capacity to establish and manage a firm is positively correlated with their level of entrepreneurial desire. Students with high levels of motivation generally exhibit more defined forward-looking planning, greater courage in facing risks, and persistence in managing business challenges.

These findings are also supported by the studies of (Otero et al., 2026) which emphasize that entrepreneurial motivation plays a significant role in fostering risk-taking courage, perseverance in facing challenges, and consistency in conducting entrepreneurial activities. In sum, the findings show that intrinsic drive is a critical component that affects the sustainability and decision-making of entrepreneurs.

6. Entrepreneurial motivation mediates the effect of digital literacy on entrepreneurial decision-making.

A mediating variable in the association between digital literacy and students' entrepreneurial choices is entrepreneurial motivation, according to the research findings. The fact that a p-value of  $0.001 < 0.05$  and a t-statistic of  $3.457 > t\text{-table } 1.96$  proves that hypothesis H6 is accepted.

These findings suggest that digital literacy not only has a direct impact but also strengthens entrepreneurial decision-making through increased motivation as a psychological mechanism. Digital literacy enhances students' understanding of technology-based business opportunities, reinforces self-efficacy and self-control in running a business, and fosters confidence in the potential for success (Isma et al., 2024). These findings are consistent with previous studies, which indicate that (Ghrbeia & Alzubi, 2024) Psychological variables, such as motivation and self-efficacy, play a strategic role as mediating variables in the relationship between individual competencies and entrepreneurial decision-making. Research indicates that competencies, such as digital literacy, tend to have a more optimal effect on entrepreneurial decision-making when supported by strong internal drive within the individual.

7. Entrepreneurial motivation mediates the effect of relationship-building skills on entrepreneurial decision-making.

Students' entrepreneurial decision-making is mediated by entrepreneurial motivation, according to this study's findings, which show that relationship-building skills have an effect. The results show that hypothesis H7 is accepted, since the t-statistic value of  $2.390 > t\text{-table } 1.96$  and the p-value of  $0.000 < 0.05$  provide support for these conclusions. Based on these findings, it seems that relationship-building abilities influence entrepreneurial decision-making in two ways: first, directly, via entrepreneurial motivation, and second, indirectly, through other mechanisms.

Theoretically, these results are in line with "*Social Capital Theory*" (Bakel & Horak, 2024) which emphasizes that networks, trust, and social norms are forms of capital that enhance the effectiveness of individual actions, and *Theory of Planned Behavior*, (Ajzen, 1991) which "explains that social support strengthens subjective norms and motivation, thereby enhancing the intention to act." These findings are also supported by previous research (Haroon et al., 2024) and (Husain et al., 2024) These findings indicate that social support and networks influence entrepreneurial decision-making through an increase in motivation as a mediating variable. Overall, these results reinforce the conclusion that the development of social relationships should be accompanied by the strengthening of motivation in order to produce more robust and sustainable entrepreneurial decision-making.

## **Conclusions**

Based on the results of the study, digital literacy and the ability to build relationships influence students' entrepreneurial decisions, both directly and through entrepreneurial motivation as a mediating variable. The better the digital skills and relationships that students have, the higher their motivation and readiness in making decisions to engage in entrepreneurship.

Higher education institutions are expected to enhance digital-based entrepreneurship learning and training as well as student relationship development. Students are also expected to be more active in improving digital skills and expanding networks to support business activities. Future research is suggested to add other variables to make the research results broader and deeper.

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