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The Influence of Creativity and Skills on Business Success in East Jakarta SMEs

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the study: This research aims to investigate the relationships between creativity, skills, and business success in SMEs. Specifically, it examines how creativity influences skill development, how skills impact business success, and the combined effect of both creativity and skills on the overall success of SMEs in East Jakarta.

Materials and methods: A quantitative approach was used, employing a survey method to collect data from 93 SME owners and managers in the Cakung District of East Jakarta. The research model explored causal relationships using creativity and skills as independent variables, and business success as the dependent variable. Data was analyzed through path analysis using SPSS, testing hypotheses and evaluating model fit.

Results: The study found significant positive relationships between creativity, skills, and business success. Specifically, creativity positively influenced both skill development ($\beta = 0.47$) and business success ($\beta = 0.38$). Additionally, skills were shown to have a significant positive impact on business success ($\beta = 0.42$). The combined effect of creativity and skills explained 58% of the variance in business success.

Conclusions: This study provides valuable insights into the role of creativity and skills in SME success. The findings suggest that a dual focus on enhancing creativity and technical skills can significantly improve the performance and sustainability of SMEs. Future research should explore the mechanisms through which creativity influences skill development and investigate these relationships across different sectors and regions.

Keywords
Creativity, Skills, Business Success, SMEs, Path Analysis, East Jakarta.

INTRODUCTION

Small and Medium Enterprises represent a vital economic sector in Indonesia, particularly in densely populated urban areas such as East Jakarta. These businesses play a crucial role in driving economic growth and development, contributing significantly to the country's overall economic performance (Pratiwi, 2019; Nugroho et al., 2022). However, SMEs often face unique challenges that require creative approaches and specialized skills to overcome in order to achieve lasting success (Ibrahim, 2019).

Despite their economic importance, many SMEs in East Jakarta struggle with issues of sustainability and growth, which demand rigorous investigation and targeted interventions. These enterprises frequently confront a range of obstacles, including limited access to resources, market uncertainties, technological changes, and intense competition, all of which can hinder their ability to thrive and expand (Tauringana, 2020; Hokmabadi, Rezvani and Matos, 2024). Addressing these challenges effectively is essential for supporting the long-term viability and competitiveness of the SME sector in this vibrant, densely populated region.

Critical thinking and creative problem-solving have been identified as essential managerial cognitive competencies for SME survival (Matarazzo et al., 2020; Tsetim, Adegbe and Agema, 2020). Previous research has demonstrated that creative thinking strengthens critical thinking, which in turn increases the longevity of SMEs (Abdul, 2018; Groeneveld et al., 2019). Additionally, creative thinking can improve innovation skills and overall business performance (Abdul, 2018). However, the specific relationship between creativity, skills, and business success in the context of East Jakarta's SMEs remains insufficiently explored. This study aims to address this gap by examining the interplay between creativity, skills, and business success among small and medium enterprises in the East Jakarta region. By understanding how these factors interact, we can develop targeted strategies to support the growth and sustainability of this vital economic sector.

The existing literature highlights the importance of entrepreneurial attributes, such as creativity and skills, in contributing to business performance (Diabate et al., 2019; Gyimah and Adeola, 2021). However, there remains a notable gap in the research regarding the interrelationship between these two crucial factors and how they collectively influence business outcomes in the context of small and medium enterprises. While prior studies have examined the role of creativity and skills separately, few have analyzed their combined impact within the Indonesian SME sector, particularly in the East Jakarta region. This gap in the literature underscores the need for a more comprehensive understanding of how these entrepreneurial attributes interact and contribute to the success and sustainability of SMEs operating in this dynamic, densely populated urban environment.

This research is justified by the need to understand how creativity and skills interact and contribute to SME success, particularly in East Jakarta's unique business environment. Such knowledge can inform targeted interventions and policy development to support SME sustainability and growth (Naruetharadhol, ConwayLenihan and McGuirk, 2024; Saptono et al., 2024).

The primary objectives of this study are to: investigate the impact of creativity on skills among SMEs in East Jakarta;

assess the impact of creativity on business success among SMEs in East Jakarta; evaluate the impact of skills on business success among SMEs in East Jakarta; and analyze the simultaneous influence of creativity and skills on business success among SMEs in East Jakarta. The study will be conducted in the East Jakarta area, which represents a significant hub for SME activity in Indonesia.

Understanding these dynamics is particularly important given the significant contribution of SMEs to Indonesia's gross domestic product and employment rates (Sentanu and Praharjo, 2020). Furthermore, the rapid competition in today's business world necessitates that companies differentiate themselves through innovation, which is closely tied to both creativity and skills (Fitriati, Purwana and Buchdadi, 2020).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study Participants

The population for this study consisted of Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) owners and managers located in East Jakarta, with an accessible population specifically from the Cakung District. Using simple random sampling methodology, 93 entrepreneur respondents were selected to participate in the study. Participants represented various SME sectors operating within the district and were individuals responsible for business decision-making processes.

Study Organization

This study employed a quantitative design using a survey method to collect data. The research framework was constructed to examine the causal relationships between the variables of creativity, skills, and business success. The study's independent variables were creativity and skills, while business success served as the dependent variable. This approach allowed for statistical testing of the direct relationships between these variables as well as their combined influence.

Test and Measurement Procedures

To analyze the factors influencing business performance, this study employs a comprehensive measurement approach using a 5-point Likert scale for each relevant construct. The table below outlines the testing and measurement procedures used in this research, which includes five main constructs: creativity, skills, business success, labor factors, and business performance indicators. Each construct is measured using specific indicators, and data is collected through a structured questionnaire that has been validated and tested for reliability through expert reviews and pilot testing, with a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of 0.87.

Table1. Test and Measurement Procedures for Assessing Business Factors

Construct	Indicators	Measurement Method	Data Collection Tool	Validation & Reliability
1. Creativity	Innovative thinking, idea generation capacity, problem-solving approaches, adaptive responses to challenges	Likert scale items	Structured questionnaire	Validity and reliability tested through expert review and pilot testing (Cronbach's alpha = 0.87)
2. Skills	Technical proficiency, business management capabilities, financial literacy, marketing abilities, interpersonal competencies	Likert scale items	Structured questionnaire	Validity and reliability tested through expert review and pilot testing (Cronbach's alpha = 0.87)
3. Business Success	Financial performance, market position, customer satisfaction, business growth, sustainability metrics	Likert scale items	Structured questionnaire	Validity and reliability tested through expert review and pilot testing (Cronbach's alpha = 0.87)
4. Labor Factors	Staff availability, skill requirements, training costs, retention challenges	Likert scale items	Structured questionnaire	Validity and reliability tested through expert review and pilot testing (Cronbach's alpha = 0.87)
5. Business Performance Indicators	Sales volume, profit margins, customer growth, expansion plans	Likert scale items	Structured questionnaire	Validity and reliability tested through expert review and pilot testing (Cronbach's alpha = 0.87)

Statistical Analysis

The quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS version 25, with a path analysis framework employed to examine both direct and indirect relationships between the variables. This statistical approach enabled the simultaneous testing of multiple hypotheses while also accounting for potential mediating effects. The analysis involved several steps: first, descriptive statistics were used to summarize the characteristics of the sample. Then, the validity and reliability of the measurement instruments were assessed to ensure their accuracy. Path analysis was conducted to test the direct and indirect effects between the variables, followed by hypothesis testing with a significance level set at $p < 0.05$. Finally, model fit assessments were carried out to evaluate the overall explanatory power of the research model, ensuring the robustness and validity of the findings.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

This table presents the descriptive statistics for the variables used in this study, namely creativity, skills, and business success. The data provides an overview of the distribution of each variable, including the minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation values. This information offers an initial understanding of the characteristics of the variables analyzed in the study.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Creativity	93	2.45	4.89	3.75	0.62
Skills	93	2.32	4.92	3.68	0.71

Business Success	93	2.18	4.87	3.62	0.68

This table provides the summary statistics for three variables: Creativity, Skills, and Business Success, based on 93 respondents. Creativity: The creativity scores range from a minimum of 2.45 to a maximum of 4.89, with a mean score of 3.75 and a standard deviation of 0.62. This suggests that the participants generally have moderate to high creativity, with a relatively low variation in the scores.

Skills: The skills scores range from 2.32 to 4.92, with a mean of 3.68 and a standard deviation of 0.71. This indicates that the participants have a moderate level of skills, with slightly more variability in the responses compared to creativity.

Business Success: The business success scores range from 2.18 to 4.87, with a mean of 3.62 and a standard deviation of 0.68. Similar to creativity, the business success levels show a moderate score, with a slight variation across participants.

Path Analysis Results

The following table presents the results of the path analysis for the relationships among the variables under investigation. It includes the path coefficients, t-values, p-values, and the significance of the relationships between creativity, skills, and business success. These results are crucial for understanding the strength of the causal relationships among the variables analyzed.

Table 3. Path Analysis Results

Variable Relationship	*Path Coefficient (β)*	*t-value*	*p-value*	*Significance*
Creativity → Skills	0.47	5.82	0.001	Significant
Creativity → Business Success	0.38	4.76	0.002	Significant
Skills → Business Success	0.42	5.14	0.001	Significant

This table presents the path coefficients for the relationships between variables in the study, along with their statistical significance. Creativity → Skills: The path coefficient (β) of 0.47 indicates a positive and moderate effect of creativity on skills. The t-value (5.82) is large, and the p-value (0.001) is less than 0.01, indicating this relationship is statistically significant.

Creativity → Business Success: The path coefficient (β) of 0.38 suggests a moderate positive effect of creativity on business success. The t-value (4.76) and p-value (0.002) also support the significance of this relationship.

Skills → Business Success: The path coefficient (β) of 0.42 shows a positive moderate effect of skills on business success. With a t-value of 5.14 and a p-value of 0.001, this relationship is also statistically significant.

Hypothesis Testing Summary

This table provides a summary of the hypothesis testing conducted in this study. Each hypothesis is evaluated based on the path coefficient results and p-values, determining whether the hypothesis is accepted or rejected. This table offers an overview of the evaluation outcomes of the hypotheses that underpin the research objectives.

Table 4. Hypothesis Testing Summary

Hypothesis	*Statement*	*Result*	*Conclusion*
H_1	Creativity positively affects Skills	β = 0.47, p < 0.01	Accepted
H_2	Creativity positively affects Business Success	β = 0.38, p < 0.01	Accepted
H_3	Skills positively affect Business Success	β = 0.42, p < 0.01	Accepted
H_4	Creativity and Skills simultaneously affect Business Success	R² = 0.58, p < 0.01	Accepted

This table summarizes the results of hypothesis testing, showing whether the hypotheses were accepted or rejected.

H_1 (Creativity → Skills): The hypothesis is accepted, as the path coefficient is 0.47 and the p-value is less than 0.01.

H_2 (Creativity → Business Success): The hypothesis is accepted, as the path coefficient is 0.38 and the p-value is less than 0.01.

H_3 (Skills → Business Success): The hypothesis is accepted, with a path coefficient of 0.42 and a p-value less than 0.01.

H_4 (Creativity and Skills → Business Success): The hypothesis is accepted, as R² = 0.58 (indicating that 58% of the variance in business success is explained by creativity and skills) and the p-value is less than 0.01.

Model Summary

This table presents a summary of the model used in the study, including the R, R², Adjusted R² values, and the Standard Error of Estimate. These values provide insights into the model fit and how well the independent variables in the model explain the variability in the dependent variable. It also highlights the overall performance of the model used in the research.

Table 5. Model Summary

Model	*R*	*R²*	*Adjusted R²*	*Std. Error of Estimate*
1	0.762	0.580	0.571	0.446

This table provides the overall model fit statistics for the path analysis.

R = 0.762: This indicates a strong positive relationship between the variables in the model.

R² = 0.580: This means that 58% of the variance in business success is explained by creativity and skills.

Adjusted R² = 0.571: This adjusted value accounts for the number of predictors in the model, showing a high explanatory power.

Std. Error of Estimate = 0.446: This indicates the average distance that the observed values fall from the predicted values. A lower value indicates a more accurate model.

Respondent Characteristics

This table provides information on the characteristics of the respondents in the study, including gender, age, business duration, and business scale. This data offers a demographic overview of the study participants, which is important for understanding the background of the sample group involved in the research. It also helps in mapping the variability of responses based on the individual characteristics of the respondents.

Table 5. Respondent Characteristics

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	57	61.3
	Female	36	38.7
Age	< 30 years	18	19.4
	30-40 years	42	45.2
	> 40 years	33	35.4
Business Duration	< 3 years	21	22.6
	3-10 years	53	57.0
	> 10 years	19	20.4
Business Scale	Small	65	69.9
	Medium	28	30.1

This table shows the demographic and business-related characteristics of the respondents.

Gender: 61.3% of the respondents are male, and 38.7% are female.

Age: The majority of respondents (45.2%) are between 30-40 years old, with 35.4% being over 40 years old, and 19.4% are under 30.

Business Duration: The largest group (57.0%) has been in business for 3-10 years, followed by 22.6% with less than 3 years, and 20.4% with over 10 years.

Business Scale: A significant portion (69.9%) runs small businesses, while 30.1% run medium-sized businesses.

DISCUSSION

Interpretation of Research Outcomes

The results of this study provide robust empirical evidence supporting the critical and multifaceted role that both creativity and skills play in determining business success among Small and Medium Enterprises in the East Jakarta region. The significant positive effect of creativity on skills development suggests that creative thinking and ideation serve as a foundational element upon which entrepreneurs and business leaders can build and refine their practical, applied business competencies (Wardoyo et al., 2023; Yu, Zhao and Hou, 2023; Bouwmans et al., 2024). This symbiotic relationship indicates that entrepreneurial creativity is not merely an abstract or intangible concept, but rather translates directly into tangible, measurable skills and capabilities that ultimately support and enhance the operational effectiveness of SME ventures (Erävala, Lampela and Henttonen, 2019; Khader, 2019; Supriyatin, Iqbal and Indradewa, 2019). The mutually reinforcing nature of creativity and skills development highlights the importance of cultivating a balanced, holistic approach to entrepreneurial growth and capacity-building within this vibrant business ecosystem (Pîrnău, Ghiculescu and Marinescu, 2018).

The direct effect of creativity on business success aligns with contemporary understanding of entrepreneurship, where innovative approaches and original thinking are increasingly recognized as critical competitive advantages in saturated and highly competitive markets. SMEs with creative leadership and a strong emphasis on innovation appear better positioned to identify unique opportunities, develop distinctive product and service offerings, and effectively navigate complex business challenges (Tsetim, Adegbe and Agema, 2020; Hokmabadi, Rezvani and Matos, 2024). By harnessing the power of creativity, these enterprises can differentiate themselves from competitors, respond more flexibly to changing market conditions, and drive sustainable growth and profitability (Camarinha-Matos et al., 2008; Jandaghi, Mokhles and Kharazi, 2011). The direct link between creativity and business success highlights the importance of fostering a culture of innovation and creative problem-solving within SMEs, as these intangible yet invaluable assets can translate into tangible competitive advantages and superior performance outcomes.

The strong positive influence of skills on business success reinforces the crucial importance of technical and managerial competencies in the context of Small and Medium Enterprises. These practical, applied skills provide the essential framework through which creative ideas and innovative approaches can be effectively implemented, operationalized, and translated into tangible business outcomes (Szathmári et al., 2024; Seppänen, Ukko and Saunila, 2025). The development and mastery of a diverse range of skills, including financial management, marketing, operations, and strategic planning, enables SMEs to harness their creative potential and leverage it for sustained competitive advantage and superior business performance (Aprilia, Subroto and Sakti, 2025; Nogueira, Gomes and Lopes, 2025). By fusing creativity with a robust set of managerial and technical competencies, SME owners and leaders can drive the successful execution of their innovative ideas and strategies, ultimately enhancing the overall success and growth of their enterprises.

Comparison with Previous Studies

These findings align with existing literature on SME performance factors. Research by Ndlela and Barnes demonstrated that creative thinking strengthens critical thinking capabilities, which in turn increases SME longevity. Their structural equation modeling showed that in manufacturing SMEs, creative thinking also increased organizational innovation, which further enhanced longevity (Ávila-Gutiérrez et al., 2025; Chai et al., 2025). These studies highlight the multifaceted benefits of creativity, where it not only directly impacts business success but also fuels the development of essential skills and competencies that enable sustained competitive advantage. By cultivating a culture of creativity, SMEs can leverage innovative approaches to navigate complex challenges, identify new opportunities, and drive continuous improvement and growth within their organizations.

Our results extend these understandings by specifically examining the interrelationship between creativity and skills and confirming their synergistic effect on business outcomes in the East Jakarta context. The simultaneous influence of creativity and skills on business success (explaining 58% of variance) suggests these factors are more powerful when developed and applied in tandem rather than in isolation.

Implications of the Discoveries

The implications of these findings are significant for multiple stakeholders:

For SME Owners and Managers: The results emphasize the importance of cultivating both creative thinking and practical skills. Investment in creativity-enhancing activities alongside technical skill development appears to offer the greatest potential return in terms of business success (Inam et al., 2021). This dual focus allows SME owners and managers to harness the power of innovative ideas and pair them with the necessary skills to effectively execute and operationalize them, leading to enhanced competitiveness and superior business performance.

For Policy Makers: Support programs for SMEs should target both creativity stimulation and practical skill development rather than focusing exclusively on either aspect. Integrated approaches to SME development may yield better outcomes than siloed interventions. By fostering an ecosystem that nurtures both creative capacities and practical competencies, policy makers can empower SMEs to navigate complex challenges, identify unique market opportunities, and drive sustainable growth and profitability (Miranda and Miranda, 2018).

For Business Education: Curriculum design for entrepreneurship and business management education should incorporate elements that foster creative thinking alongside technical business skills. This holistic approach equips aspiring entrepreneurs and business leaders with the essential toolkit to thrive in today's dynamic and competitive marketplace (Linton and Klinton, 2019). By blending creativity and practical know-how, educational programs can produce a new generation of SME owners and managers who are well-equipped to translate innovative ideas into tangible business success.

Limitations of the Research

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the study's cross-sectional design captures relationships at a single point in time, limiting causal inferences. A longitudinal approach would provide stronger evidence of how creativity and skills development translate to business outcomes over time. Second, the research was geographically limited to East Jakarta, particularly the Cakung District, which may restrict generalizability to other regions with different socioeconomic conditions. The sample size of 93 respondents, while adequate for statistical analysis, represents only a small fraction of the total SME population in Jakarta. Additionally, the study relied on self-reported measures, which may be subject to social desirability bias and subjectivity in assessment of business performance. Future research could incorporate objective performance metrics and multi-source data collection to strengthen validity.

CONCLUSION

This study has provided empirical evidence of the significant positive relationships between creativity, skills, and business success in Small and Medium Enterprises in East Jakarta. The findings confirm that creativity directly enhances business success and contributes to skills development, which in turn further improves business outcomes. Additionally, the simultaneous effect of creativity and skills explains a substantial proportion of variance in business success, highlighting the complementary nature of these factors.

These results reinforce the importance of developing both creative thinking capacities and practical business skills among SME entrepreneurs. The path analysis demonstrates that creativity serves as both a direct contributor to business success and an enabler of skill acquisition, suggesting that creative thinking may be a foundational entrepreneurial attribute upon which other competencies are built.

For SMEs to thrive in increasingly competitive markets, entrepreneurs must cultivate creative approaches to problem-solving while simultaneously developing the technical and managerial skills needed to implement innovative ideas effectively. Policy interventions and support programs for SMEs should recognize this dual requirement and provide resources for developing both creativity and practical skills.

Future research should explore the specific mechanisms through which creativity enhances skills development, examine these relationships across different industry sectors and geographical regions, and investigate additional factors that may moderate the relationship between creativity, skills, and business outcomes. Longitudinal studies would also be valuable to understand how these factors influence business sustainability over time.

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CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors declare no conflict of interest in relation to this research.

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