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Young Ecopreneur Awareness Model: The Role of Personal Character, Digital Skills, and Higher Education

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ABSTRACT: The urgency of this research lies in preparing young ecopreneurs as agents of change for sustainable development. Amid the upcoming demographic bonus, student involvement in a sustainable economy and eco-innovation is key to a resilient future. The aim of this research is to identify the young ecopreneur awareness model, as well as to evaluate the role of personal character, digital skills, and higher education in shaping these intentions. This mixed-methods research follows these stages: literature review, qualitative and quantitative data collection, analysis, integration, interpretation, presentation, and conclusion. The research results show that the role of personal character and digital skills have a positive and significant influence, but higher education have a positive and insignificant influence in young ecopreneur awareness. The findings of this research have both practical and theoretical implications. Practically, they offer actionable insights for policymakers, educators, and industry leaders to foster a green entrepreneurial ecosystem, ensuring the regeneration of young entrepreneurial talents and the development of green skills. Theoretically, this study enhances the understanding of key factors shaping students' awareness and intentions to become ecopreneurs.

Keywords: Digital Skills, Ecopreneurship Intention, Green Entrepreneurship, Higher Education, Personal Character

INTRODUCTION

One of the next generations who is expected to be able to contribute to the entrepreneurial sector is students. Therefore, insight and literacy regarding the concept of entrepreneurship with environmental insight is still very much needed for students (Gunawan & Fraser, 2016a; Gürsoy, 2021; van Laar et al., 2017). Students, as future change agents, have the potential to become entrepreneurs who create business innovations in resource management and sustainable economic development (PERPRES No. 2 Tahun 2022, n.d.). According to Presidential Decree (Perpres) No. 2 of 2022, a prospective entrepreneur is anyone who has an entrepreneurial spirit and has a business idea

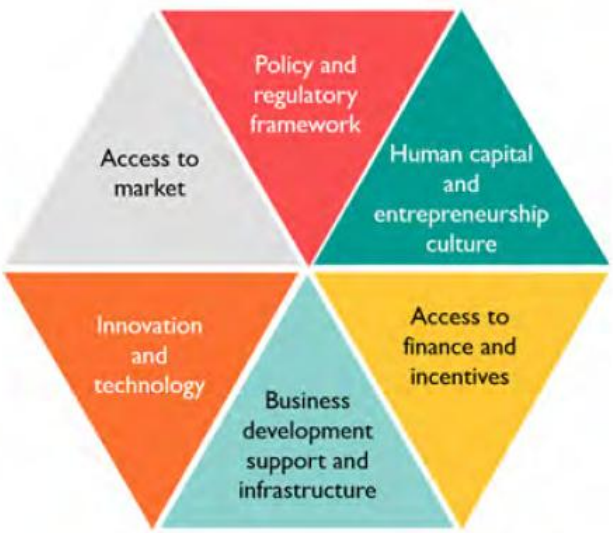
and/or has a business start-up. So, in the context of this research, students as young talents are potential entrepreneurs who have great potential and need to be formed.

Young talents have an important contribution to make in green entrepreneurship. Based on the latest survey, 84% of young talents are interested in doing green business, 58% start a business to improve the environment, and 56% produce green clothing, low carbon products and waste reduction systems (IsDB, 2022a). Seeing these conditions, there needs to be a role from various stakeholders to strengthen students' intentions so that they can choose ecopreneurship as a form of entrepreneurship.

The role of stakeholders such as the government, private sector, banking, universities and various business associations is very necessary to encourage students' intentions to engage in green entrepreneurship (IsDB, 2022b). Other literature also states that a significant role is needed from non-government institutions including educational institutions in developing young talent entrepreneurship (Gunawan & Fraser, 2016b). The mechanisms generally chosen by non-governmental institutions in developing an entrepreneurial ecosystem are seen from the dimensions: organizing and mentoring; advocacy; and facilitating business development (Alwi et al., 2024; Ghina, 2014; Kiyasseh et al., 2023).

Directing the form of entrepreneurship carried out by students to be in line with the principles of sustainable development requires an understanding of the factors that influence their intentions in choosing a form of entrepreneurship, especially green entrepreneurship (Ghina, 2014). For this reason, the various stakeholders need to have insight into how to build a student ecopreneurship awareness model so that they can support, prepare and create relevant policies so that ecopreneurship can grow and become increasingly popular with the younger generation (Gunawan & Fraser, 2016b). In Figure 1 below are six ecosystem domains that can foster entrepreneurial intentions among young talents (Çetin, 2021; Isenberg, 2011).

Figure 1. Six Domains of the Young Talent Entrepreneurship Ecosystem



Another problem, it turns out that the majority of young talent entrepreneurs are dominated by middle and high school education levels at 75% and college graduates at around 11%, so that players in the MSME sector in Indonesia are still categorized as having relatively low education and need to improve the quality of their human resources (IsDB, 2022b). Various efforts are needed from various parties so that green entrepreneurship is increasingly attractive to young talents. Apart from that, there is an anomaly that green entrepreneurship has not become an attraction for the majority of highly educated young talents because there is still a lack of institutional support, financing, and the level of consumer awareness of environmentally friendly products is still minimal (Gunawan & Fraser, 2016b; Ha et al., 2021; Meirun et al., 2020). These conditions cause the regeneration of MSME entrepreneurs, especially MSMEs in the green economy sector, to be relatively slow (Gunawan & Fraser, 2016b). Various previous research findings that examined higher education had a positive and significant impact on ecopreneurship intentions, namely (Gunawan & Fraser, 2016b), (Gunawan & Fraser, 2016b), (Gunawan & Fraser, 2016b), on the other hand (Gunawan & Fraser, 2016b) found that it was not significant.

Then, based on other literature, there is a psychological perspective that opposes the opinion that places economic motivation (profit) as the only factor that drives a person's intention to carry out entrepreneurial activities. A person's intention to do business must be looked deep into the individual, namely what prompted him to make the entrepreneurial decision (Obschonka & Stuetzer, 2017a). One determining factor is personal character. Where personal character is an approach to individual characteristics (personal traits) that can be used to identify an entrepreneur, and is measured by dimensions: personal values; level of tendency to take risks (risk taking); and the need for achievement (Cunningham & Lischeron, n.d.). An entrepreneur generally has values, attitudes and needs that are different from other people. Previous research that found personal character had a positive and significant effect on students' ecopreneurship intentions, namely (Agustina & Fauzia, 2021), (Agustina & Fauzia, 2021), (Agustina & Fauzia, 2021), (Agustina & Fauzia, 2021), (Agustina & Fauzia, 2021), (Agustina & Fauzia, 2021), (Agustina & Fauzia, 2021), (Agustina & Fauzia, 2021) while research by (Agustina & Fauzia, 2021) found that there was no significance.

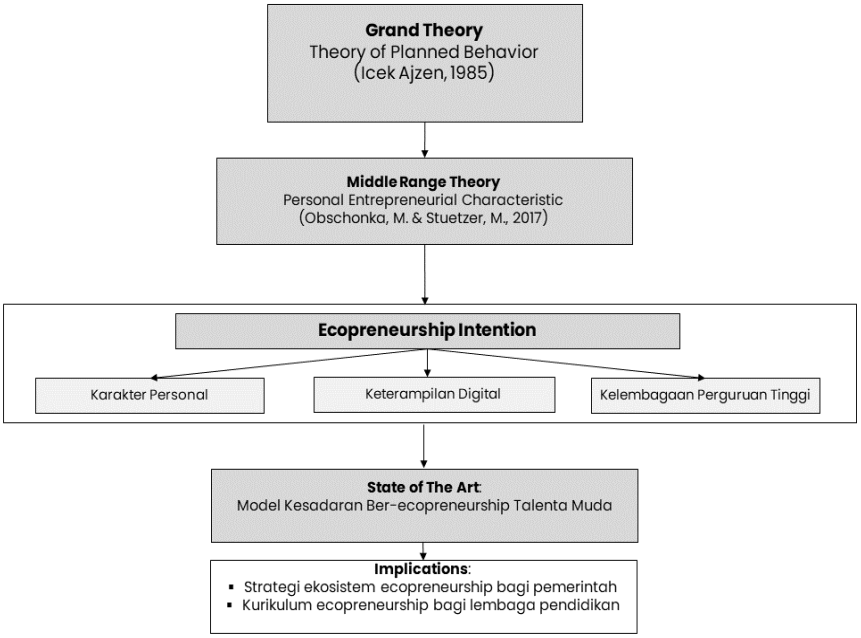
Apart from that, technology adoption among MSMEs is still not optimal (Aldy Purnomo et al., 2021), so that many MSME failures are still found in implementing digital technology. One way to increase the competitiveness of MSMEs is through digital skills to improve performance both in quantity and quality (S. Hakim et al., 2022). Apart from increasing the efficiency and quantity of products produced, digital skills are also important in increasing the added value of the products produced (Muafi et al., 2023). The problem is, the majority of MSME players still find weaknesses in digital skills to support their business processes (Aldy Purnomo et al., 2021b). To measure digital skills, this research uses the dimensions: information management; collaboration; collaboration; communication and sharing; creation of content and knowledge; ethics and responsibility; evaluation and problem solving; and technical operations (Ferrari, 2013). Previous research that found digital skills had a positive and significant effect on ecopreneurship intentions, namely (Ferrari, 2013; Rahmawati et al., 2023; Tabavar et al., 2021).

Based on the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1985), ecopreneurship intentions can be formed based on individual behavior and intentions through various attitudes, norms and controls that are

deliberately created. This research also explores the factors that shape entrepreneurial intentions in line with the opinion of Obschonka and Stuetzer (Faisal & Naushad, 2020; Obschonka & Stuetzer, 2017b), who state that to be able to understand entrepreneurship, starting from how the entrepreneurial process is formed, studying how it succeeds or fails, providing entrepreneurial education, and fostering an entrepreneurial culture, we must understand business actors or more precisely the characteristics (traits) of these individuals. Apart from that, some previous literature confirms several factors that shape entrepreneurial intentions, but there is no holistic literature on green entrepreneurship, especially in the context of prospective entrepreneurs in accordance with Presidential Decree (Perpres) No. 2 of 2022 concerning National Entrepreneurship Development for 2021-2024 (PERPRES No. 2 Tahun 2022, n.d.).

State of the art of this research is to contribute to filling the gap in understanding the factors that shape an individual's intention to become an ecopreneur, especially in the context of young talents as prospective entrepreneurs and inappropriate strategies for increasing entrepreneurial intentions, especially green entrepreneurship in Indonesia.

Figure 2. Research Conceptual Framework and State of the Art



Source: Researcher (2024)

This research focuses on exploring the urgency of factors that are hypothesized to shape green entrepreneurial intentions, including personal character (Obschonka & Stuetzer, 2017b), digital skills (Marvel et al., 2016), and higher education institutions (Arthur, 2019). So the urgency of this research is to look at the entrepreneurial awareness model so that it can prepare young talents to face the demographic bonus era. The formulation of the problem in this research is as follows: what is the role of personal character in forming ecopreneurship intentions for students? What is the role of digital skills in forming ecopreneurship intentions for students? What is the role of higher education institutions in forming ecopreneurship intentions for students?

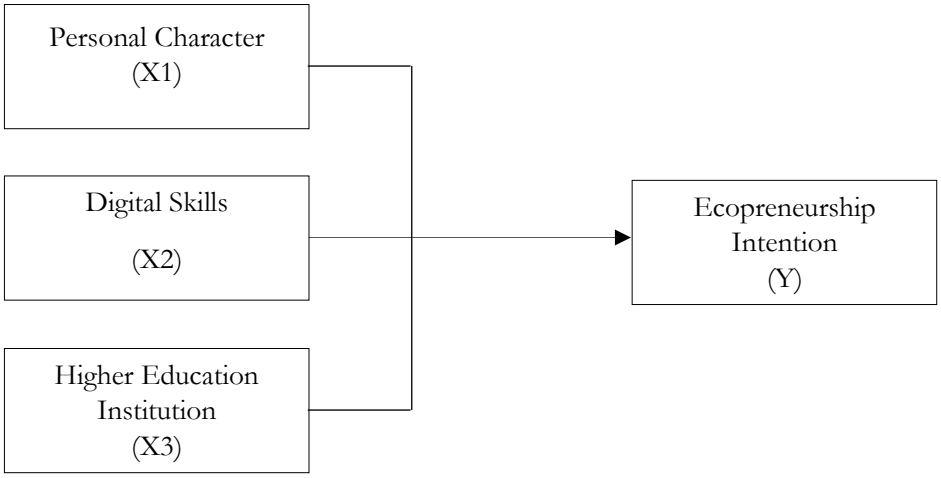


Figure 3. Conceptual Framework

Hypothesis:
H1: Personal character plays a role in shaping the ecopreneurship intentions of young talents
H2: Digital skills play a role in shaping the ecopreneurship intentions of young talents
H3: Higher education institutions play a role in shaping the ecopreneurship intentions of young talents

METHOD

This study employs a mixed-methods approach that integrates qualitative and quantitative analysis. This approach aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the role of personal character, digital skills, and higher education institutions in shaping young talents' ecopreneurial intention. The research is conducted in North Sumatra Province, with young talents (university students) from various higher education institutions as the sample units of analysis.

The study follows a research design that combines literature and field research, structured into the following stages: Stage 1: Literature Review. A comprehensive review of existing literature is conducted to gather knowledge on young talents' entrepreneurial intentions, the role of personal character, digital skills, and the institutional support of universities. Stage 2: Qualitative Data Collection. This stage involves the following methods: (a) Interviews: In-depth interviews are conducted with ecopreneurs and research respondents to explore ecopreneurial intentions based on personal character, digital skills, and higher education institutions. (b) Focus Group Discussions (FGD): Group discussions are held with experts and ecopreneurs to gain diverse perspectives on young talents' awareness and ecopreneurial intentions. Stage 3: Quantitative Data Collection using the following methods: (a) Survey: Distributing a survey to young talent respondents (students) to collect data related to entrepreneurial intentions based on the role of personal character, digital skills, and higher education institutions; (b) Field Data Processing: Data that has been collected must be processed first before it can be analyzed further. Stage 4: Data Analysis through: (a) Qualitative Analysis: Qualitative data will be analyzed using a case study approach to gain an in-depth understanding of the ecopreneurship intentions of young talents through interviews and

group discussions; (b) Quantitative Analysis: Survey data will be analyzed statistically using statistical software to identify predictive relationships between the variables studied. And Stage 5: Data Integration and Interpretation to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the role of personal character, digital skills, and higher education institutions in shaping young talent's entrepreneurial intentions. Then the findings are interpreted in the context of the theoretical framework and current literature to provide theoretical and practical implications.

The respondents of this research are young talents, in this case students from universities throughout North Sumatra who were determined using purposive sampling and convenience sampling methods (A. Hakim, 2021). In this case, if the population is unknown, then the amount of research data (sample) is determined by 5-10 times the number of indicators or manifest variables (Hair et al., 2014). This research plan was estimated using 48 observation indicator items, so the number of research samples determined was 48 x 5 = 240 samples. Meanwhile, the time dimension of the research is a cross-sectional study from April 2024 to November 2024. Data processing and analysis in this research uses the SEM method with Partial Least Squares Modeling (PLS-SEM). This is because in research using PLS-SEM, all data is assumed to be normally distributed and is used in complex models (A. Hakim, 2021). Testing using PLS-SEM consists of testing the outer model using three types of testing, namely Construct Reliability, Average Variance Extracted (AVE) Test, and Discriminant Validity, while the inner model testing process can be carried out using three types of testing, namely Path Value, R-Square, and Hypothesis Testing. Test the research hypothesis to develop a predictive relationship model that can predict the factors that shape young talent's ecopreneurship intentions.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Evaluation of the Measurement Model (Outer Model)

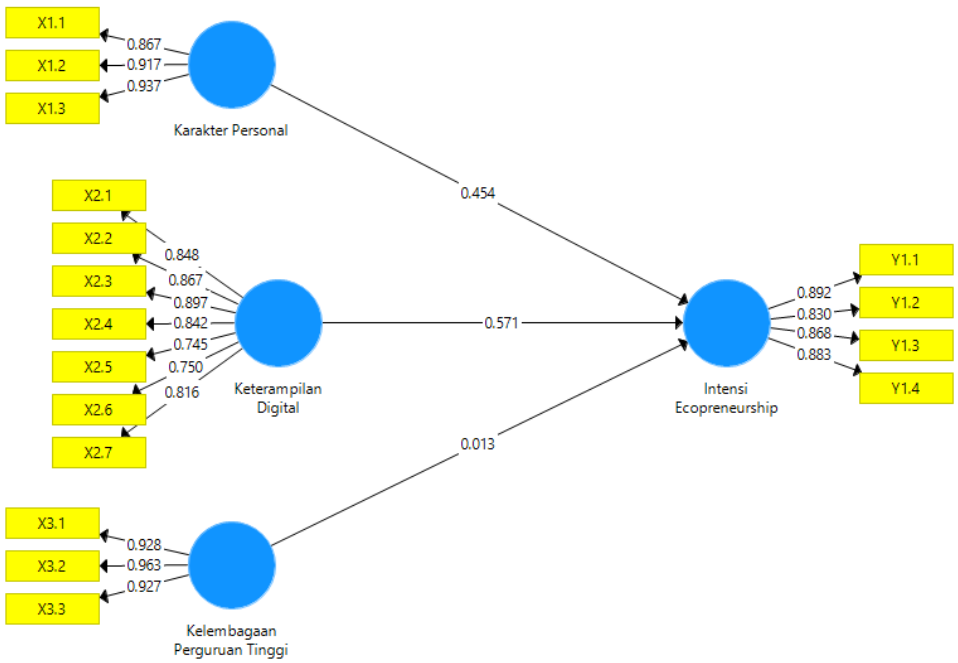
Testing the measurement model (outer model) in this research aims to assess variable indicators that reflect a construct or latent variable that cannot be measured directly. Analysis of the research indicators was carried out empirically, namely by testing the validity and reliability which reflect the parameters of the latent variables which were built based on theory and empirical studies. There are three criteria for assessing the measurement model (outer model), namely convergent validity, discriminant validity, and composite reliability. Convergent validity measures the validity of indicators as construct measures based on the magnitude of the loading factor of each indicator on the latent variable. Loading factors above 0.70 are highly recommended, however loading factor values of 0.50 - 0.60 are still tolerable (A. Hakim, 2021). The loading factor value can be seen based on the analysis results in Table 1 and Figure 1.

Table 1. *Outer Loading*

Laten Variables	Indicator		*Outer Loading*	Results
Personal Character	Personal Values	(X1.1)	0,867	Valid
	Risk Taking	(X1.2)	0,917	Valid
	Need for Achievement	(X1.3)	0,937	Valid
Digital Skills	Information Management	(X2.1)	0,848	Valid
	Collaboration	(X2.2)	0,867	Valid
	Communication and Sharing	(X2.3)	0,897	Valid
	Creation of Content and Knowledge	(X2.4)	0,842	Valid
	Ethics and Responsibility	(X2.5)	0,745	Valid
	Evaluation and Problem Solving	(X2.6)	0,750	Valid
	Technical Operations	(X2.7)	0,816	Valid
Higher Education Institution	Organizing and Mentoring	(X3.1)	0,928	Valid
	Advocacy	(X3.2)	0,963	Valid
	Facilitate	(X3.3)	0,927	Valid
Ecopreneurship Intention	Culture	(Y1.1)	0,892	Valid
	Mindset	(Y1.2)	0,830	Valid
	Good HR Information System	(Y1.3)	0,868	Valid
	Support	(Y1.4)	0,883	Valid

Source: Primary Data (2024)

Figure 4. Results of PLS Alogarithm Analysis with SmartPLS



Source: Primary Data (2024)

The computational results of the measurement model in Figure 4 and Table 1 show three indicators measuring personal character variables, seven indicators measuring digital skills, three indicators measuring higher education institutions, and four indicators measuring ecopreneurship intentions. Overall, it is valid to be used to reflect the measurement of each latent variable, or has met convergent validity. This is proven by the loading factor value of each indicator on the four latent variables as a whole having a value of > 0.7. The indicator that best reflects the latent variable of personal character is need for achievement with a loading factor value of 0.937. The indicator that best reflects the digital skills latent variable is communication and sharing with a loading factor value of 0.897. Meanwhile, the indicator that best reflects the latent variable of higher education institutions is advocacy with a loading factor value of 0.963, and the indicator that best reflects the latent variable of ecopreneurship intentions is culture with a loading factor value of 0.892.

In evaluating latent variable measurements, apart from convergent validity, there are two other criteria, namely discriminant validity and composite reliability.

Table 2. ***Construct Reliability and Validity***

Laten Variables	*Cronbach's Alpha*	rho_A	*Composite Reliability*	*Average Variance Extracted* (*AVE*)	Results
Ecopreneurship Intention	0,891	0,892	0,925	0,754	Valid & Reliable
Personal Character	0,893	0,911	0,933	0,823	Valid & Reliable
Higher Education Institution	0,934	0,941	0,958	0,883	Valid & Reliable
Digital Skills	0,922	0,931	0,937	0,681	Valid & Reliable

Source: Primary Data (2024)

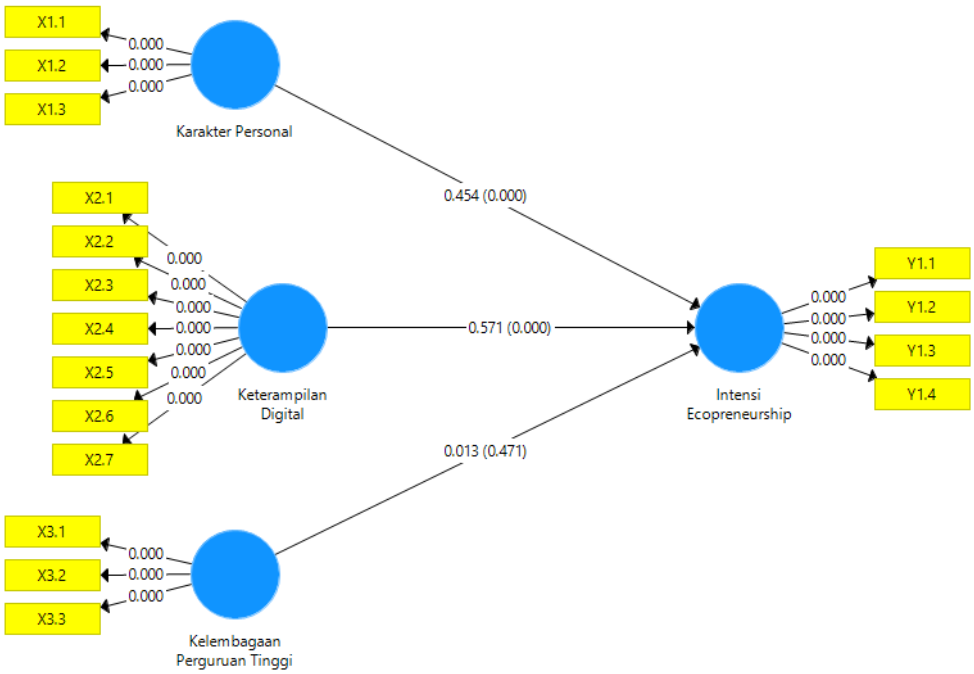
Based on the results of the analysis in Table 2, it can be explained that all Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values are > 0.5 for the three latent variables, namely ecopreneurship intentions, personal character, higher education institutions, and digital skills. Thus, it can be interpreted that the indicators that make up the latent variable are declared valid or can measure what they should measure. Meanwhile, the Composite Reliability, Cronbach's Alpha, and rho_A values for each latent variable are > 0.7. This means that the four latent variables are reliable to use.

Evaluation of the Structural Model (Inner Model)

The structural model (inner model) is evaluated based on the relationship coefficient values between latent variables. Testing of model coefficients was carried out by looking at the estimated coefficient values and the critical point value of t statistics which was significant at α 5%. Hypothesis testing is carried out to determine the truth of the hypothesis that has been proposed

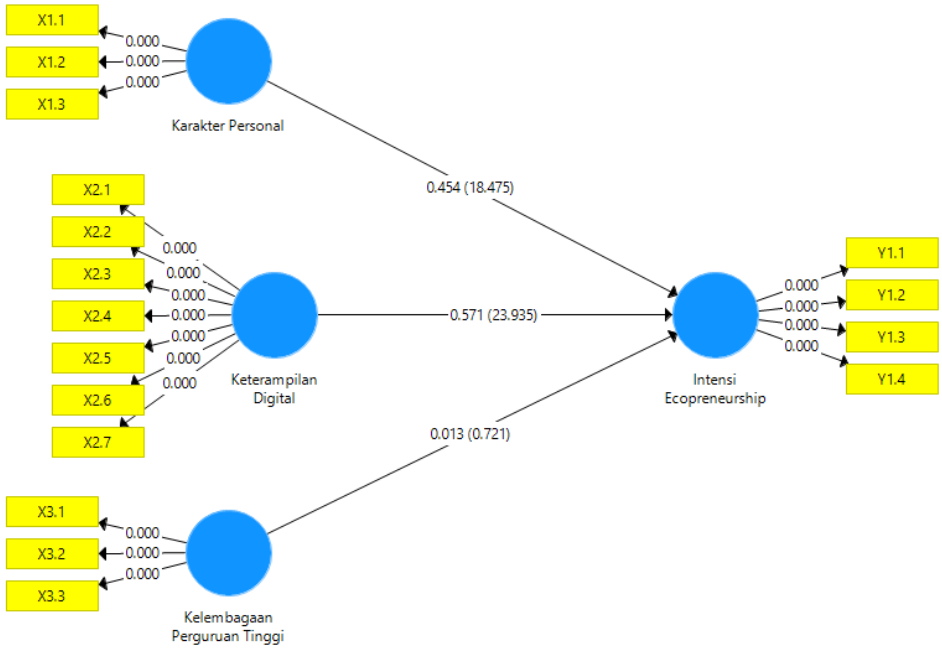
using the criteria that have been determined by statistical provisions. The analysis results obtained using PLS are shown in Figure 5 and Figure 6.

Figure 5. Results of PLS Boostrapping Analysis (Path Coefficients and Pvalue) with SmartPLS



Source: Primary Data (2024)

Figure 6. Results of PLS Boostrapping Analysis (Path Coefficients and Tvalue/Tstatistics) with SmartPLS



Testing the influence between variables can be seen from the comparison between the tcount value and the t_{table} value or between p_{value} and α. The error rate (α) used is 5% or 0.05 with a t_{table} of 1.96. The test criteria used are H_0 rejected if the $t_{count} > t_{table}$ or $p_{value} < \alpha$ (0.05). Figure 2 and Figure 3 are the results of PLS bootstrapping analysis of path coefficient testing. The hypothesis to be tested is:

H_1: Personal character has a significant effect on ecopreneurship intentions.
H_2: Digital skills have a significant effect on ecopreneurship intentions.
H_3: Higher education institutions have a significant effect on ecopreneurship intentions.

Table 3. Summary of Analysis Results and Research Hypothesis Testing

Influence Between Variables	Coefficient	t_{count}	P_{value}	Decision
Personal Character -> Ecopreneurship Intention	0,454	18,475	0,000	H_1 Accepted (Positive & Significant)
Digital Skills -> *Ecopreneurship Intention*	0,571	23,935	0,000	H_2 Accepted (Positive & Significant)
Higher Education Institution -> *Ecopreneurship Intention*	0,013	0,721	0,471	H_3 Rejected (Positive & Not Significant)

The Influence of Personal Character on Ecopreneurship Intentions

The analysis results in Table 3 show the estimated coefficient value of 0.454. The coefficient has a positive sign, which means that personal character has a positive influence on ecopreneurship intentions. The obtained value of t_{count} (18.475) > t_{table} (1.96) with a significance value or p_{value} (0.000) < α (0.05). Thus, H_1 which states that personal character has a positive and significant influence on ecopreneurship intentions is accepted, meaning that personal character has a significant role in forming ecopreneurship intentions for students. The better/improved a student's personal character, the better/increased their ecopreneurship intentions.

The results of this research strengthen the findings of other research which states that personal values are an important predictor of entrepreneurial intentions for young talents (Agustina & Fauzia, 2021); (Agustina & Fauzia, 2021); (Agustina & Fauzia, 2021) (Agustina & Fauzia, 2021); (Agustina & Fauzia, 2021); (Agustina & Fauzia, 2021); (Agustina & Fauzia, 2021); (Agustina & Fauzia, 2021). Individuals who value independence and personal achievement tend to have higher intentions to engage in entrepreneurial activities (Agustina & Fauzia, 2021). Success in the business environment requires the courage to take measured risks, not just taking risks without calculation. Young talents (in this case students) need to be equipped with skills in weighing the benefits and costs of a decision objectively and given projects that aim to develop their need for achievement and self-confidence (Agustina & Fauzia, 2021); (Agustina & Fauzia, 2021). Individuals with a high need for achievement naturally have a tendency to accept the risks necessary to achieve success. This need for achievement is related to the formation of an entrepreneurial spirit (Agustina & Fauzia, 2021).

According to interviews with students, people who dare to take risks, especially in businesses that promote the concept of ecopreneurship, are better able to recover from failure. They believe that facing failure is part of the process of learning to run a business. Interview results (R96) *"I failed in my first business, but I learned from it and tried new strategies. My business is now improving."*

The Influence of Digital Skills on Ecopreneurship Intentions

The analysis results in Table 3 show the estimated coefficient value of 0.571. The coefficient has a positive sign, which means digital skills have a positive influence on ecopreneurship intentions. The value obtained was tcount (23.935) > ttable (1.96) with a significance value or pvalue (0.000) < α (0.05). Thus, H_2 which states that digital skills have a positive and significant effect on ecopreneurship intentions is accepted, meaning that digital skills have a significant role in forming ecopreneurship intentions for students. The better/increasing digital skills, the better/increasing ecopreneurship intentions. The results of this research strengthen the findings of other research which states that digital skills can be a means of forming entrepreneurial intentions (Ferrari, 2013). The use of digital technology has been proven to increase entrepreneurial habits (Ferrari, 2013).

The results of interviews with students who are also ecopreneurship practitioners show that digital skills enable them to access market information. With the internet and digital media, learning ecopreneurship practices that are currently popular and implementing them in business has become easier. Interview results (R29, R107, R180): *"I can look for information about green business trends and how to run a more sustainable business with digital skills, this really helps me in the process of creating business strategies and ideas."*

The Influence of Higher Education Institutions on Ecopreneurship Intentions

The analysis results in Table 3 show the estimated coefficient value of 0.013. The coefficient has a positive sign, which means that higher education institutions have a positive influence on ecopreneurship intentions. The obtained value of t_{count} (0.721) < t_{table} (1.96) with a significance value or pvalue (0.471) > α (0.05). Thus, H_3 which states that higher education institutions have a positive and significant effect on ecopreneurship intentions is rejected, so it can be said that higher education institutions do not significantly influence the ecopreneurship intentions of young talents.

This is because universities still emphasize theoretical aspects more than practical aspects. As a result, students do not get direct experience in carrying out ecopreneurship, so their intentions to become ecopreneurs do not increase (Ferrari, 2013). The results of interviews with students show that even though ecopreneurship courses have been included in the curriculum, the approach used is still more theoretical than practical. They admitted that they had acquired knowledge about ecopreneurship, but they did not have direct experience to apply it. Interview results (R54, R81, R154) *"On our campus there are green entrepreneurship courses, but the practice is still lacking. We get more theory than actually trying to run an environmentally based business"*.

Students' self-confidence in their ability to undertake entrepreneurial ventures is also influenced. If students feel unsure about their abilities, especially in terms of ecopreneurship, especially in terms of ecopreneurship, their desire to become an entrepreneur remains low. This happens even

though universities have taken action to support young talents in entrepreneurial ventures (Ferrari, 2013). According to interviews conducted with students, many of them did not have the confidence to set up an environmentally based business even though they had been educated about ecopreneurship. This mental unpreparedness shows that without strong mentoring, formal education is not enough to encourage ecopreneurship intentions. Interview results (R7) *"I'm interested in green business ideas, but I don't feel confident enough to run it. There's a lot to learn and I'm afraid of failure."*

External factors such as family support, economic conditions, and society's perception of ecopreneurship also play an important role. Higher education institutions may not be sufficient to overcome these external factors, so their impact on ecopreneurship efforts is small (Ferrari, 2013). The results of interviews with students show that even though universities provide ecopreneurship education, the effect is not significant if there is no external support. Interview results (R63, R119, and R170): *"My parents recommend that I work in a stable company rather than starting my own business, especially in an environment where ecopreneurship is still less popular."*

CONCLUSION

This research investigates how personal character, digital skills, and institutional support from higher education influence the ecopreneurship intentions of young talents. The results show that personal character and digital skills have a positive and significant effect, while institutional support from universities has a positive but not significant effect on the ecopreneurship intentions of young talents. The results show that personal values, risk taking, need for achievement, and digital skills are very important in encouraging young talents to become ecopreneurs. Apart from that, these results also show that institutional factors in higher education alone are not enough to encourage ecopreneurship, but also require external support, such as family support, economic conditions, and community perception. The findings of this research have both practical and theoretical implications.

Theoretically, this study enhances the understanding of key factors shaping students' awareness and intentions to become ecopreneurs. This study advances our knowledge of the elements influencing young talent's intentions to become ecopreneurs. It emphasizes how important people qualities—more especially, values, a willingness to take risks, and a drive for success—as well as digital abilities are in determining ecopreneurial goals. Additionally, the results contest the notion that higher education's institutional support is adequate on its own, showing that although it has a beneficial effect, it is insignificant in the absence of outside reinforcements. Practically, they offer actionable insights for policymakers, educators, and industry leaders to foster a green entrepreneurial ecosystem, ensuring the regeneration of young entrepreneurial talents and the development of green skills.

This research is limited because it was conducted cross-sectionally, so it cannot clearly identify causal relationships. Additionally, this research design only focuses on certain demographic groups, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Future studies should focus on

longitudinal studies to evaluate how ecopreneurship intentions develop over time. This would also allow the sample to be expanded to different industries and regions, and examine additional moderating variables such as environmental awareness, external factors, and access to finance. This effort has the potential to increase our understanding of how various personal and external factors interact to shape the ecopreneurship behavior of young talent. Thus, this research can provide suggestions for educational policies, entrepreneurship training programs, and sustainable business practices.

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