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Intention–Behavior Gap in Post-Return Entrepreneurship of Indonesian Migrant Workers in Japan: A Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) Approach

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Abstract

Background: The increasing migration of Indonesian workers to Japan through two main schemes, namely the Technical Intern Training Program (TITP) and the Specified Skilled Worker Program (SSWP), indicates economic potential for Indonesian Migrant Workers (*PMI*) after returning to their home country.
Objective: This study uses the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) to investigate how entrepreneurial attitude, entrepreneurial subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control affect entrepreneurial intention, as well as how entrepreneurial intention affects entrepreneurial behavior.
Methods: The research employed a quantitative approach using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) on 307 Indonesian migrant workers who had returned from Japan to Indonesia using purposive sampling.
Results: The results show that entrepreneurial attitude is the most important factor determining entrepreneurial intention, followed by perceived behavioral control and entrepreneurial subjective norm. The key link between psychological factors and actual entrepreneurial behavior is entrepreneurial intention, implying that returning migrant workers' transition from attitude development to actual behavior occurs gradually.
Conclusion: This study contributes theoretically to understanding the psychological dynamics of post-return entrepreneurship and provides a foundation for developing migrant worker reintegration policies through strengthening entrepreneurial capacity, improving access to financing, and supporting business ecosystems.

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INTRODUCTION

Globally, the phenomenon of labor migration has significantly increased in recent years. The number of foreign migrants almost doubled from 153.9 million in 1990 to 304 million in 2024, according to a United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs report (Desa, 2025). This illustrates how migration is a component of global dynamics that impacts society, culture,

and the economy in both nations of origin and countries of destination.

Asia has become the region with the highest labor mobility, with developing countries such as Indonesia, the Philippines, and Vietnam being significant contributors to migration flows toward advanced industrial countries in East Asia, especially Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan. This process reflects cross-country economic integration but also reveals structural gaps between labor-sending and labor-receiving countries. This gap is reflected in the differences in job availability and welfare levels between the country of origin and the migration destination country (Budianto, 2023; Naeli, 2025).

Throughout the last two decades, Indonesia has been considered one of the largest labor-sending countries in the Asian context. The trend of Indonesian labor migration has continued to grow throughout the modern era, driven by factors such as limited domestic job availability and wage differentials, both domestically and internationally. Japan has emerged as one of the most preferred destinations through its Technical Intern Training Program (TITP) and Specified Skilled Worker Program (SSWP), which provide lucrative job opportunities, professional training, and an improved protection system (Naeli, 2025; Rizcha & Rustam, 2024).

The paradigm is shifting from viewing Pekerja Migran Indonesia (PMI) as simple remittance senders to recognizing them as productive economic agents. It has been reported that PMI trained in Japan tend to have greater confidence in starting a business upon returning to Indonesia (Naeli, 2025; Rizcha & Rustam, 2024). This shift may enhance welfare and benefit the Indonesian economy with appropriate policies and sufficient training (Salombe et al., 2025).

PMI are not only laborers but also travelers bearing international experience, skills, and work culture that can be utilized in their home country (Imron, 2024; Naeli, 2025; Rolasta & Hoesin, 2022; Sumiati, 2022). A particularly intriguing phenomenon involves PMI who return after the expiration of their contract periods, not only for family reasons but also out of entrepreneurial ambition to improve their economic standing (Imron, 2024; Naeli, 2025). They possess savings, social networks, and knowledge of business opportunities that can enable them to establish businesses in their hometowns. Nevertheless, many PMI harbor entrepreneurial aspirations and possess the capability to pursue them, yet are unable to actualize their intentions Puput & Sintesa (2024) because of a variety of factors.

The Japan PMI context presents a unique combination of push and pull factors that distinguishes this study from research on general migrant entrepreneurship. Pull factors include the presence of technical skills acquisition mechanisms (TITP/SSWP certification systems) recognized by Japanese industry (for example, manufacturing, agriculture, construction, and care services), more attractive wage conditions compared to Indonesia, and professional training environments characteristic of Japan's disciplined workplace culture. Push factors include work contracts of limited duration (3–5 years), family and social reasons for return, and accumulated savings and social capital, which together form conditions conducive to entrepreneurship. The structured, formalized nature of skills acquisition, set against the backdrop of informal skill development environments in most other migration destinations, may therefore endow Japan PMI with greater perceived behavioral control relative to returnees from other destination countries. This hypothesis provides a unique contextual justification for applying the TPB framework to this population and explains why an empirical investigation of the Japan PMI context deserves dedicated attention apart from general models of migrant entrepreneurship.

Preliminary research on 201 PMI in Japan reveals extremely high entrepreneurial intent. In the "Plans and Expectations (if intending to return home)" section of the questionnaire, 187 respondents (93.03 percent) indicated they would opt to start their own business, whereas only 14 respondents (6.97 percent) stated they would prefer seeking employment in Indonesia.

Yet, this strong intention has not fully translated into actual entrepreneurial behavior. Out of 201 respondents, a clear majority—109 (54.23 percent)—stated they had established a business either before or during their time working in Japan. The remaining 92 respondents (45.77 percent) had never started a business. Therefore, of the 187 respondents who intended to open a business, 78 (41.71 percent) had not yet realized their entrepreneurial intentions, representing the gap between intention and actual entrepreneurial behavior.

As shown in Table 1, the three main obstacles identified by PMI in doing business in Indonesia are: (i) limited capital to start a business (58.71 percent); (ii) intense market

competition (43.28 percent); and (iii) complex bureaucracy and licensing procedures (39.80 percent). In contrast, barriers to employment in Indonesia are primarily limited job opportunities (77.11 percent) and insufficient wages (60.70 percent). These results further support the notion that entrepreneurship is a rational option for returning PMI, despite being beset by structural and individual barriers to its realization.

Table 1. Summary of Preliminary Research on Indonesian Migrant Workers in Japan

Indicator	Item	Number	Percentage
If you had to choose between opening your own business and working in Indonesia, which would you choose	Opening own business	187	93.03
	Seeking employment in Indonesia	14	6.97
Have you ever started your own business in Indonesia (whether small or large scale), including before/while in Japan	Yes	109	54.23
	No	92	45.77
In your opinion, what are the difficulties and obstacles in starting a business in Indonesia today (can choose more than 1)	Complicated Bureaucracy/Licensing	80	39.80
	Lack of business capital	118	58.71
	Increasingly tough competition	87	43.28
	Unpredictable consumer/market demand	63	31.34
	Inadequate skills	51	25.37
	Place of residence not supportive of business climate	45	22.39
	No target market	1	0.50
In your opinion, what are the difficulties and obstacles to working in Indonesia today (can choose more than 1)	Limited job opportunities	155	77.11
	Inadequate salary	122	60.70
	Intense job competition	78	38.81
	Mismatch of skills	52	25.87
	Lack of connections and information	59	29.35
	Unpromising career path	68	33.83
	Location mismatch	15	7.46

Source: Preliminary research data, Japan PMI survey results (2025)

This finding is consistent with the research of Panigoro (2022), which states that post-migrant workers in Indonesia have a relatively high entrepreneurial intention but the realization as a form of entrepreneurial behavior among them still tends to be very limited. That research corroborates the fact that among PMI, entrepreneurial intention has not been actualized optimally due to bottlenecks pertaining to opportunity recognition and differential levels of entrepreneurial self-efficacy. Not only does entrepreneurial intention serve as a prerequisite for the expected formation of entrepreneurial behavior, but individual confidence in one's abilities and the perception of objective circumstances surrounding business opportunities and the domestic business environment also play a vital role.

This research therefore examines the effect of entrepreneurial attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control on entrepreneurial intention and behavior using the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) among Indonesian Migrant Workers repatriated from Japan. The choice for TPB was because it allows for a systematic investigation of psychobehavioral and economic

variables influencing the intention–behavior transition process. This research aims to combine theories based on empirical evidence derived from prior exploratory studies and literature with the anticipation of developing a comprehensive understanding of what drives PMI entrepreneurial behavior, hence building capacity for formulating better post-migration reintegration and sustainable economic empowerment policies.

Regarding the degree to which the three TPB constructs influence entrepreneurial intention and behavior, different prior research has produced conflicting findings. It has been demonstrated that psychological elements such as self-efficacy, family social support, and perception of control over domestic business prospects have a major impact on entrepreneurial intention in the PMI context (Panigoro & Satrya, 2022; Rauf et al., 2022). However, there is currently a dearth of research that explicitly tracks how these intentions translate into actual entrepreneurial behavior, especially in PMI returning to Indonesia after working in Japan.

This study's primary innovation is found in two key areas based on this research gap. First, this study investigates the TPB framework with respect to both the formation of entrepreneurial intention and entrepreneurial behavior, with the latter serving as an actual dependent variable representing observable entrepreneurial outcomes. Second, the TPB model is applied in this study to the particular situation of PMI returning from Japan, which is still somewhat infrequently covered in the literature on international entrepreneurship.

Therefore, by examining the impact of psychological aspects on the development of PMI entrepreneurial intention and entrepreneurial behavior, this study seeks to elucidate the relationship between intention and entrepreneurial activity. Furthermore, using the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) definition and classification for entrepreneurial behavior, this study investigates the mediating role of entrepreneurial intention in explaining the relationship between entrepreneurial attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control on entrepreneurial behavior (Bosma et al., 2021). Using Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) approach, this study examines and tests the positive and significant influence of psychological and social factors on the entrepreneurial intentions and behavior of Indonesian Migrant Workers (PMI) working in or returning from Japan.

This study focuses on Indonesian Migrant Workers (PMI) who have worked or are now employed in Japan and are likely to return to Indonesia with an interest in or potential for entrepreneurship. Based on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) framework, which includes the variables entrepreneurial attitude, entrepreneurial subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control, the research's scope is limited to the examination of psychological and social factors influencing entrepreneurial intention and behavior.

This study focuses on the setting of developing entrepreneurial intention and behavior rather than covering other facets of PMI reintegration in general, such as social adaptation, formal labor absorption, or social protection. Additionally, the object of analysis is limited to PMI who have met productive age criteria and have at least one year of work experience in Japan, while the research location conceptually covers Indonesian territory as the return area for PMI. This research also considers the existence of financing access such as KUR Purna PMI as a policy context but does not analyze the technical operational aspects of banking in depth, treating it instead as an economic background relevant to PMI entrepreneurial behavior.

METHOD

In order to evaluate causal links between factors in the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) on entrepreneurial intention and entrepreneurial behavior of Indonesian migrant workers in Japan, this study used an explanatory quantitative approach. Because it emphasizes assessing relationships between variables using numerical data examined statistically, the quantitative method is employed (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

Because the goal of this study is to explain cause-and-effect links between constructs in a theoretical model, the explanatory design was selected. The research approach is deductive, beginning with an established theory, specifically Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior (1991), and testing it with field-based empirical data.

In order to collect data, a Google Forms online questionnaire was used to reach a large number of respondents with little assistance from the researcher. This allowed respondents to

independently and impartially provide their responses. Subchapter 3.5 Data Collection Techniques provides more details on the data collection method. The Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) approach, which is detailed in Section 3.8 Data Analysis Methods, was used to analyze the associations between variables using SmartPLS software. Expert review was used to establish content validity; outer loadings were used to establish construct validity (all > 0.70, threshold per Hair (2021); Average Variance Extracted (AVE) was used to establish convergent validity (all > 0.50); and the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) was used to establish discriminant validity (all < 0.90 threshold). Reliability was verified by Composite Reliability ρc (all > 0.87) and Cronbach's alpha (all > 0.77).

Based on the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) definition, which categorizes entrepreneurial behavior according to the nascent and new business activity stages, entrepreneurial behavior (EB) was operationalized in this study as a multidimensional construct capturing actual engagement in entrepreneurial activities (Bosma et al., 2021).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Measurement Model (Outer Model)

Figure 1 depicts the preliminary estimation results of the outer and structural models using SmartPLS in the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) framework, which includes the constructs Entrepreneurial Attitude (EA), Subjective Norms (SN), Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC), Entrepreneurial Intention (EI), and Entrepreneurial Behavior (EB).

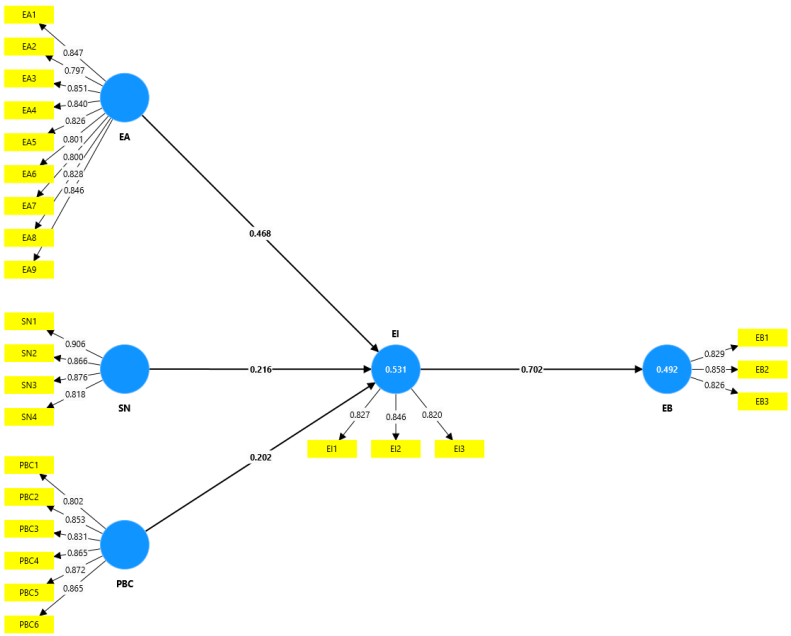

Figure 1. Initial estimation of outer model and structural model using SmartPLS

Every indicator in the measurement model has outer loading values greater than 0.70, satisfying the indicator reliability criteria. This demonstrates how closely each item reflects its latent construct.

EA had the biggest impact on EI (β = 0.468) in the structural model, followed by SN (β = 0.216) and PBC (β = 0.202). Additionally, EI has a significant impact on EB (β = 0.702), demonstrating the significance of intention in motivating entrepreneurial action.

EA, SN, and PBC account for 53.1% of the variance in entrepreneurial intention, according to the R-square value of 0.531 for EI. In the meantime, entrepreneurial intention explains 49.2% of entrepreneurial behavior, according to the R-square for EB of 0.492. These values are suitable for social research and show that the model has moderate explanatory power.

Indicator Reliability

The outer loading evaluation findings in Table 2 reveal that all indicators for each

construct exceed the specified minimum level (≥0.70). Thus, all indicators meet the indicator reliability criteria and are worthy of inclusion in the measurement model (Hair Jr et al., 2021).

Table 2. Outer Loadings of Indicators Passing Reliability Test

Outer Loadings	EA	EB	EI	PBC	SN
EA1	0.847				
EA2	0.797				
EA3	0.851				
EA4	0.840				
EA5	0.826				
EA6	0.801				
EA7	0.800				
EA8	0.828				
EA9	0.846				
EB1		0.829			
EB2		0.858			
EB3		0.826			
EI1			0.827		
EI2			0.846		
EI3			0.820		
PBC1				0.802	
PBC2				0.853	
PBC3				0.831	
PBC4				0.865	
PBC5				0.872	
PBC6				0.865	
SN1					0.906
SN2					0.866
SN3					0.876
SN4					0.818

Source: Processed by Researcher, 2026

For the Entrepreneurial Attitude (EA) construct, outer loading values range from 0.797–0.851. These values indicate that EA indicators have good ability to reflect respondents' entrepreneurial attitudes. The Entrepreneurial Behavior (EB) construct also shows strong loadings (0.826–0.858), indicating that entrepreneurial behavior can be measured consistently through the items used.

Furthermore, the Entrepreneurial Intention (EI) construct has outer loading values between 0.820–0.846, indicating that these indicators reliably represent entrepreneurial intention. For the Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC) construct, loading values range from 0.802–0.872, indicating that respondents' perception of behavioral control over entrepreneurial activities is well measured.

Of all the constructs, the Subjective Norms (SN) construct has the highest outer loading values, ranging from 0.818 to 0.906. This suggests that the indicators used strongly reflect the impact of social norms on entrepreneurial intention.

Overall, these findings demonstrate that each indicator significantly contributes to the explanation of its latent construct, with the percentage of explained variance above 50%. As a result, the measurement model satisfies the indicator reliability requirements and can proceed to the assessment of convergent validity and internal consistency reliability.

Internal Consistency Reliability

Internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, rho_A, and composite reliability (rho_c) values. According to the recommendations of Hair (2021), acceptable

reliability values are generally above 0.70, with values above 0.90 indicating very high consistency levels.

Table 3. Internal Consistency Reliability

Variable	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)
EA	0.942	0.948	0.951
EB	0.788	0.790	0.876
EI	0.776	0.777	0.870
PBC	0.922	0.929	0.939
SN	0.889	0.892	0.924

Source: Processed by Researcher, 2026

Table 3 indicates that all of the study's constructs have reliability scores higher than the suggested cutoff. Strong internal consistency is demonstrated by the Entrepreneurial Attitude (EA) construct's Cronbach's alpha score of 0.942 and composite reliability (rho_c) of 0.951. This suggests that there is a strong correlation among the indicators in the EA construct when measuring the same concept.

With composite reliability ratings of 0.939 and 0.924, respectively, the Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC) and Subjective Norms (SN) constructs likewise exhibit good reliability. These values attest to the strong measurement consistency of both constructs.

In the meantime, reliability values for the Entrepreneurial Behavior (EB) and Entrepreneurial Intention (EI) constructs fall between 0.77 and 0.87. These values are still above the minimum requirement of 0.70, albeit lower than those of the other constructs.

Overall, these results show that all constructs have met the internal consistency reliability criteria. Thus, the research instrument is considered capable of measuring each construct consistently and can proceed to the stage of testing convergent and discriminant validity.

Convergent Validity

Convergent validity of a model is determined by the Average Variance Extracted (AVE). According to Hair (2021), a minimum AVE of 0.50 indicates that a construct can explain more variance than the individual indicators.

Table 4. AVE

Variable	Average variance extracted (AVE)
EA	0.683
EB	0.702
EI	0.691
PBC	0.720
SN	0.752

(Source: Processed by Researcher, 2026)

All constructs had AVE values above the recommended threshold, according to the test results. With an AVE value of 0.683, the Entrepreneurial Attitude (EA) construct was able to account for most of the variance in its indicators. Both Entrepreneurial Behavior (EB) and Entrepreneurial Intention (EI) have comparable values (0.702 and 0.691, respectively), suggesting that their indicators accurately reflect their respective constructs.

The AVE values for Subjective Norms (SN) and Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC) were comparatively higher, at 0.752 and 0.720, respectively. This suggests that there is a substantial correlation between the indicators in these two categories and their latent constructs.

The measurement model satisfies convergent validity, as the AVE values obtained across all variables have surpassed the minimum threshold. Once this requirement is met, the analysis can proceed to discriminant validity testing to confirm that each construct is distinct from the others.

Discriminant Validity

EI (measured by EI1–EI3) captures a motivational state representing the degree to which an individual is consciously planning and intending to become an entrepreneur — a cognitive-affective construct (Ajzen, 1991). EB (measured by EB1–EB3) captures the actual frequency and status of business activities — an observable behavioral construct (Bosma et al., 2021). These two constructs are theoretically distinct: intention is a state of mind that precedes and predicts behavior (but does not constitute it), while behavior is a realized action.

The high HTMT value in this specific population reflects an empirical reality specific to Japan returnees: those with high entrepreneurial intention in this group are more likely to have already taken action due to their accumulated skills, savings, and confidence — creating a stronger empirical correlation between intention and behavior than would be expected in general population samples. Who argues that high perceived feasibility beliefs close the intention-behavior gap in populations. The $HTMT^2$ value of 0.794 indicates overlapping variance between EI and EB; however, the AVE for each construct (EI = 0.691; EB = 0.702) is greater than its $HTMT^2$ share, demonstrating that constructs explain more unique variance than shared variance, providing evidence of discriminant validity. The resulting HTMT value therefore reflects authentic construct closeness within this high-feasibility cohort rather than redundancy in measurement.

The correlations between constructs as part of discriminant validity are provided in Table 5. The objective of discriminant validity is to confirm that each model construct measures a different concept, indicating no overlap in measurement between latent variables.

Table 5. HTMT

Variable	EA	EB	EI	PBC	SN
EA					
EB	0.576				
EI	0.762	0.891			
PBC	0.521	0.833	0.625		
SN	0.476	0.520	0.627	0.534	

Source: Processed by Researcher, 2026

The correlation values between constructs in this model range from moderate to high. Entrepreneurial Intention (EI) and Entrepreneurial Behavior (EB) had the strongest correlation, at 0.891. Conceptually, this reasonably strong association is consistent with the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) framework, which views entrepreneurial intention as a direct predictor of actual behavior. Thus, the strength of this relationship remains theoretically permissible.

Correlations between other constructs, such as EA–EI (0.762), PBC–EB (0.833), and relationships of SN with other constructs in the range of 0.476–0.627, show logical connections but still reflect differences between constructs. This indicates that each variable has a distinct conceptual domain.

In addition to looking at correlations between constructs, discriminant validity evaluation also considers the Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) value. The criterion used is that if the HTMT value is < 0.90, then the research instrument is declared to meet discriminant validity. Referring to this threshold, the relationship values between constructs in this model are still within an acceptable range, thus indicating that the instrument can distinguish the measured constructs.

Overall, the test results show that discriminant validity has been met. Thus, each construct in the model can be declared sufficiently distinct from one another and is suitable for use in the next stage of structural analysis.

Structural Model (Inner Model)

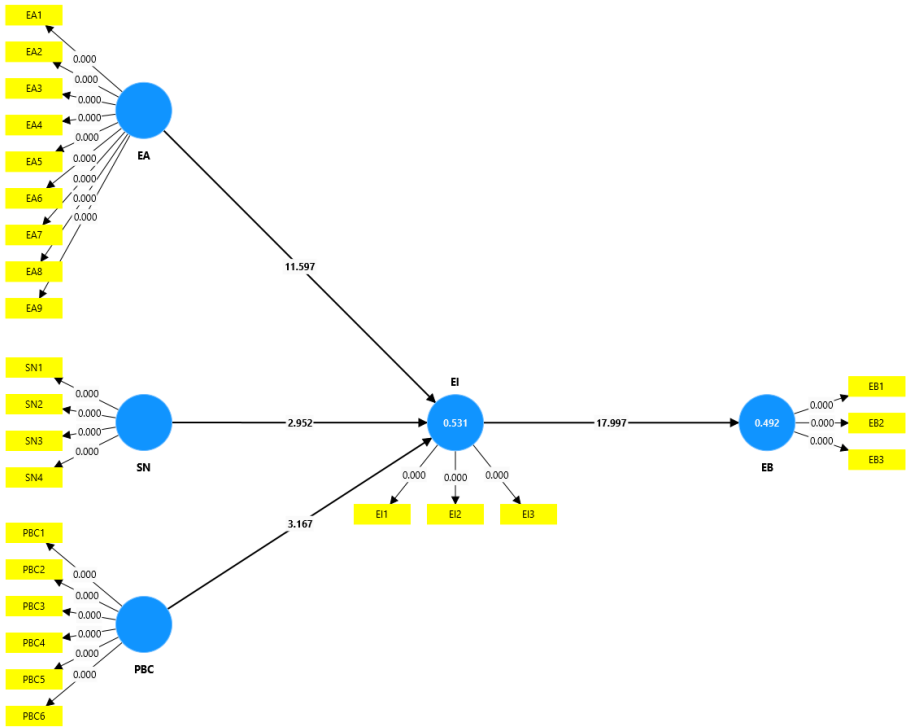

Figure 2. Research Diagram After Measurement Model Testing
Source: SmartPLS, Processed by Researcher, 2026

The research model that has undergone a number of tests in accordance with the procedures described in the preceding sub-chapters is shown in Figure 2. The researcher will then test the inner model following the sequence suggested by Hair (2021), which includes model comparison, explanatory power, predictive power, significance and relevance of structural model relationships, and analysis of structural model collinearity.

Collinearity in the Structural Model (Inner Model)

Collinearity testing on the structural model was conducted using inner VIF values. The criterion used is a VIF value < 5, which indicates no symptoms of multicollinearity in the model (Hair Jr et al., 2021).

Table 6. Collinearity Structural Model

Variable	VIF
EA -> EI	1.414
EI -> EB	1.000
PBC -> EI	1.505
SN -> EI	1.422

(Source: Processed by Researcher, 2026)

The test results reveal that all paths have VIF values ranging from 1.000 to 1.505. These values are well below the acceptable threshold. Thus, it may be argued that this research model does not exhibit issues of multicollinearity, allowing the relationships between constructs in the structural model to be reliably evaluated.

Significance and Relevance in Structural Model (f^2)

The effect size of each exogenous construct on the endogenous construct was evaluated using f-squared (f^2) values. Hair (2021) classify f^2 values as small (0.02–0.14), medium (0.15–0.34), or large (≥0.35).

Table 7. F-Square

Variable	f-square
EA -> EI	0.330
EI -> EB	0.969
PBC -> EI	0.058
SN -> EI	0.070

Source: Processed by Researcher, 2026

1. Entrepreneurial Attitude (EA) → Entrepreneurial Intention (EI): The f-square value of 0.330 falls in the medium category. This shows that entrepreneurial attitude has a fairly substantial contribution in explaining the variance of entrepreneurial intention, making attitude an important determinant in the formation of entrepreneurial intention.
2. Entrepreneurial Intention (EI) → Entrepreneurial Behavior (EB): The f-square value of 0.969 falls into the large category. This finding indicates that entrepreneurial intention provides a very dominant contribution to the emergence of actual entrepreneurial behavior, thus reinforcing the central role of intention as a predictor of behavior within the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) framework.
3. Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC) → Entrepreneurial Intention (EI): The f-square value of 0.058 falls in the small category. This demonstrates that perceived behavioral control continues to influence entrepreneurial intention, but its contribution is limited in explaining the variance in entrepreneurial intention.
4. Subjective Norm (SN) → Entrepreneurial Intention (EI): The f-square value of 0.070 falls into the small category. This shows that subjective norms, or social influence, contribute to the establishment of entrepreneurial intention, but not to the same extent as entrepreneurial attitude.

Model Explanatory Power (R-Square)

The model's ability to explain variance in endogenous constructs is one of the criteria assessed through R-square evaluation. R-square values ranging from 0.25 to 0.49 indicate weak explanatory power. Values in the 0.50 to 0.74 range suggest moderate explanatory power. R-square values greater than 0.75 indicate strong explanatory power.

Table 8. R-Square Effect

Variable	R-square	R-square adjusted
EB	0.492	0.490
EI	0.531	0.526

(Source: Processed by Researcher, 2026)

The R-squared value related to entrepreneurial intention (EI) on entrepreneurial behavior (EB) is 0.492. This value falls within the range of 0.25–0.49; therefore, the model is considered weak. This value also shows that entrepreneurial intention (EI) can contribute to entrepreneurial behavior (EB) by 49.2%, while the remainder is influenced by other factors outside the research model.

The R-squared value for the model of entrepreneurial attitude (EA), subjective norm (SN), and perceived behavioral control (PBC) on entrepreneurial intention (EI) is 0.531. This value falls between 0.50 and 0.74, indicating that the model is moderate. This result also demonstrates that entrepreneurial attitude (EA), subjective norm (SN), and perceived behavioral control (PBC) can influence entrepreneurial intention (EI) by 53.1%, with the remainder influenced by factors outside the research model.

Hypothesis Testing

The SmartPLS application version 4.1.1.2, with the bootstrapping approach, was used in this study's hypothesis testing to assess the level of significance for direct, indirect, and total effects. Because the BCa method can deal with bias, skewness, and non-normal distribution, it was

chosen as the primary analytic tool. Table 9 displays the results of the hypothesis testing using the bootstrapping approach chosen by the researcher.

Table 9. Hypothesis Testing

Variable	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P values
EA -> EI	0.468	0.465	0.040	11.597	0.000
SN -> EI	0.216	0.223	0.073	2.952	0.002
PBC -> EI	0.202	0.197	0.064	3.167	0.001
EI -> EB	0.702	0.700	0.039	17.997	0.000
EA -> EI -> EB	0.328	0.326	0.036	9.237	0.000
SN -> EI -> EB	0.151	0.155	0.048	3.140	0.001
PBC -> EI -> EB	0.141	0.139	0.049	2.903	0.002

Source: Processed by Researcher, 2026

Based on the hypothesis test results above, 7 hypotheses are accepted. The following is an explanation of each of these test hypotheses.

Table 10. Explanation of each of test hypotheses

No	Hypothesis	Coefficients	P Values	Conclusion
H1	Entrepreneurial mentality has a good and significant effect on the entrepreneurial intention of PMI Japan returning to Indonesia.	0.468	0.000	Hypothesis accepted, because it has a positive coefficient value and p value < 0.05
H2	Entrepreneurial subjective norm has a beneficial impact on the entrepreneurial intention of PMI Japan returning to Indonesia.	0.216	0.002	Hypothesis accepted, because it has a positive coefficient value and p value < 0.05
H3	Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC) has a beneficial impact on the entrepreneurial intention of PMI returning to Indonesia.	0.202	0.001	Hypothesis accepted, because it has a positive coefficient value and p value < 0.05
H4	Entrepreneurial intention has a positive effect on entrepreneurial behavior of PMI Japan returning to Indonesia	0.702	0.000	Hypothesis accepted, because it has a positive coefficient value and p value < 0.05
H5	Entrepreneurial intention mediates the relationship between Entrepreneurial Attitude and Entrepreneurial Behavior	0.328	0.000	Hypothesis accepted, because it has a positive coefficient value and p value < 0.05
H6	Entrepreneurial Intention influences the link between the Entrepreneurial Subjective Norm and the Entrepreneurial Behavior.	0.151	0.001	Hypothesis accepted, because it has a positive coefficient value and p value < 0.05
H7	Entrepreneurial Intention modulates the link between Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC) and entrepreneurial behavior.	0.141	0.002	Hypothesis accepted, because it has a positive coefficient value and p value < 0.05

Discussion

Entrepreneurial Attitude (EA) positively influences Entrepreneurial Intention (EI)

According to the test results, H1 has been supported. Entrepreneurial attitude (EA) and entrepreneurial intention (EI) have a strong and positive relationship. An increase in entrepreneurial attitude is followed by an increase in entrepreneurial intention, according to the path coefficient value (original sample/O) of 0.468. The T-statistic value of 11.597 is much greater than the critical limit of 1.96, and the p-value is 0.000 (<0.05), indicating a statistically significant influence. As a result, it is confirmed that Japanese PMI's entrepreneurial intention to return to Indonesia is influenced positively by their entrepreneurial attitude. Significantly, this finding implies that an individual's propensity to engage in entrepreneurial activities grows stronger the more positively they perceive entrepreneurial activities.

The sample mean (M) value of 0.465 (approximately equal to the original coefficient [0.468]) supports the consistency of the bootstrapping results. We can conclude that the EA–EI association is steady and consistent in this instance due to the low standard deviation of 0.040 between samples. This combination of a positive coefficient, high statistical significance, and low error rate enhances the validity of the structural model in accordance with the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) recommendations (Hair Jr et al., 2021).

All EA indicators have high factor loading values, ranging from 0.797 to 0.851, and the highest loading is EA3 (value = 0.851), confirming that entrepreneurial attitude is a well-measured construct. For EI, loading values range from 0.820 to 0.846, with EI2 as the dominant indicator (0.846). A value greater than 0.70 indicates sufficient convergent validity, and the instrument can accurately reflect the underlying latent constructs.

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), which views attitude toward behavior as a fundamental predictor of behavioral intention, is consistent with this outcome both theoretically and empirically (Ajzen, 1991). The Theory of Planned Behavior states that an individual's intention to engage in an action is strengthened when they have a positive opinion of that behavior. Entrepreneurial attitude is a powerful predictor of entrepreneurial intention in various circumstances, according to numerous studies in the field of entrepreneurship (Agung et al., 2021; Bosnjak et al., 2020; Liñán & Chen, 2009). The hypothesis that cultivating a favorable attitude toward entrepreneurship can be an effective strategy for generating entrepreneurial intention is supported by the robustness of these results.

International job experience, exposure to a productive workplace culture, and the acquisition of social and financial capital can all help PMI develop a more positive entrepreneurial attitude in the context of their return from Japan. As this attitude grows, so does the desire to start a business back home. To translate this intention into actual entrepreneurial behavior, PMI reintegration programs must place a strong emphasis on developing an entrepreneurial mindset and attitude through training, mentoring, and business incubation.

Entrepreneurial Subjective Norm (SN) positively influences Entrepreneurial Intention (EI)

According to the test results, H2 has been supported. This reveals that Entrepreneurial Subjective Norm (SN) has a large and positive influence on Entrepreneurial Intention (EI). According to the path coefficient value (original sample/O), every increase in the entrepreneurial subjective norm is accompanied by a 0.216 increase in entrepreneurial intention. The T-statistic value of 2.952 is above the critical limit of 1.96 and has a p-value of 0.002 (<0.05), indicating statistical significance. As a result, it is confirmed that the entrepreneurial subjective norm has a favorable influence on the entrepreneurial intentions of Japanese PMI returning to Indonesia.

The sample mean (M) value of 0.223, which is close to the original coefficient (0.216), shows that the bootstrapping results are relatively consistent. The standard deviation of 0.073 shows variation between samples that is still within reasonable limits, so the relationship between variables can be said to be quite stable. Based on the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) guidelines, the combination of path significance and controlled error rate indicates a reliable structural model (Hair Jr et al., 2021).

The notion that Subjective Norms are statistically significant ($\beta = 0.216$, $p = 0.002$, $f^2 = 0.070$, small effect) but substantively less influential relative to the other constructs in the model should be explored in greater detail in future theoretical investigations of Entrepreneurial

Intention literature.

Two corresponding explanations are proposed: (1) Individualism–Self-Reliance Hypothesis: The relatively longer work experience in Japan—characterized by higher bases on individual work responsibility, stricter personal accountability systems, and the national cultural value of self-reliance (jibun de kangaeru – "think for yourself")—would make Japanese PMI returnees have a more individualistic decision-making orientation than non-migrant counterparts. Hofstede's cultural dimensions framework suggests that prolonged exposure to Japan's work culture (which scores higher on individual performance orientation than Indonesia) may shift PMI's entrepreneurial motivation from socially-driven (norm-responsive) to personally-driven (attitude and self-efficacy based).

This is consistent with the finding that Entrepreneurial Attitude (β = 0.468)—reflecting personal evaluation of entrepreneurship—has more than twice the influence of Subjective Norms on EI. (2) Network Distance Hypothesis: PMI who are still working in Japan or recently returned may have temporarily reduced social embeddedness with their home community, weakening the normative pressure from traditional social networks (family, village community) that typically shape Indonesian entrepreneurial decisions. The preliminary survey distribution channel (online PMI community networks) may also have selected for respondents with stronger digital independence, further reducing social norm dependency.

In the outer model evaluation, all SN indicators have high loading values (0.818–0.906). The indicator with the highest loading is SN1 (0.906), which shows that perception of social support from the closest environment is the strongest representation of the entrepreneurial subjective norm. For the EI variable, loading values range from 0.820 to 0.846, with EI2 (0.846) as the dominant indicator. Values above 0.70 indicate that convergent validity is met, so the instrument can accurately measure the constructs.

The Theory of Planned Behavior, which contends that social pressure people experience to engage in a behavior is reflected in subjective norms, provides an explanation for this observation. According to Liñán (2009), people's inclination to start their own business tends to rise when they perceive that influential people in their lives encourage entrepreneurial endeavors. Additionally, several empirical studies demonstrate the importance of social support from friends, family, and professional networks in influencing entrepreneurial intention (Lingappa et al., 2020; Pham et al., 2023). The consistency of these results indicates that social influences play a significant role in the formation of entrepreneurial intention.

These results indicate that support from family, fellow PMI, and social communities in origin can strengthen the intention to become entrepreneurs after returning to Indonesia. PMI who receives social legitimacy and encouragement from their environment tend to be more confident in choosing the entrepreneurial path. Therefore, PMI empowerment programs can be designed by involving family and community as social support systems so that the norms formed become more conducive to the growth of entrepreneurial intention. This finding affirms that social influence has a strategic role in encouraging the transition of PMI from migrant workers to entrepreneurs in their areas of origin.

Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC) positively influences Entrepreneurial Intention (EI)

The analysis findings indicate that H3 has been supported. Entrepreneurial Intention (EI) is favorably and significantly influenced by Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC). According to the path coefficient (original sample/O) of 0.202, as perceived control over entrepreneurial activities increases, so does entrepreneurial intention. The T-statistic value of 3.167 (>1.96) and p-value of 0.001 (<0.05) confirm the statistical significance of this association. As a result, it is concluded that PBC positively enhances EI in PMIs returning to Indonesia. This finding shows that people's confidence in their ability to manage and execute a business is a critical component in developing entrepreneurial intention.

The sample mean (M) of 0.197 is reasonably close to the original coefficient (0.202), indicating that the estimate is consistent. With a standard deviation of 0.064, indicating relatively low variability between samples, the relationship estimate can be described as stable. Per PLS-SEM evaluation guidelines, the combination of path significance and controlled error rate provides support for a satisfactory structural model (Hair Jr et al., 2021).

All PBC indicators have high loading values (0.802–0.872) in the measurement model. Indicator PBC5 (0.872) reflects most strongly on the PBC construct, followed by PBC4 (0.865), and then PBC6. This validates that self-efficacy in business management and problem-solving are the main components of perceived behavioral control. Regarding the EI variable, loading values range from 0.820 to 0.846, with EI2 (0.846) as the highest indicator. All values have surpassed the threshold of 0.70; therefore, convergent validity is fulfilled, and the instrument is capable of properly representing the latent constructs.

These findings are consistent with the Theory of Planned Behavior framework, which holds that behavioral intention is significantly influenced by perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991). Individuals who believe they can manage a business are more likely to intend to do so than those who do not. The study's findings also corroborate several empirical studies that confirm PBC's critical role in influencing students' and aspiring entrepreneurs' entrepreneurial intention (Doanh & Bernat, 2019; Handiman et al., 2022; Liñán & Chen, 2009). The consistency of this finding shows that, across many circumstances and entrepreneurial intention models, perceived behavioral control is a reliable predictor.

Overseas work experience and technical skills build readiness, increasing self-confidence and perceived control over new business activities. When PMI are confident that they can handle higher risks and run businesses, their entrepreneurial intention tends to be high as well. Therefore, PMI reintegration programs should focus on enhancing the entrepreneurial competence and business preparedness of returnees by investing in financial literacy and improving access to the basic means of establishing a business. This strengthens the perception of behavioral control, thereby reinforcing entrepreneurial intention post-return to Indonesia.

Entrepreneurial Intention (EI) positively influences Entrepreneurial Behavior (EB)

The results of the analysis illustrate that H4 is accepted; Entrepreneurial Intention (EI) positively and significantly affects Entrepreneurial Behavior (EB). The path coefficient (original sample/O) of 0.702 indicates that entrepreneurial intention has a significant positive effect on increasing entrepreneurial behavior. The T-statistic value of 17.997 (>1.96) and a p-value of 0.000 (<0.05) confirm that this relationship is highly statistically significant. Thus, the hypothesis is accepted.

The bootstrapping results similarly demonstrate good agreement. The sample mean coefficient (0.700) is almost identical to the initial coefficient (0.702), while the standard deviation of 0.039 is relatively small. This suggests that the estimated EI–EB link is fairly robust across samples. In accordance with PLS-SEM evaluation guidelines, this reflects a strong and consistent structural model (Hair Jr et al., 2021).

In the measurement model, EB indicators have very high loadings (0.826–0.858). Indicator EB2 (0.858) is the most influential, indicating that direct participation in business activities is the strongest proxy for entrepreneurial behavior. All three EI indicators also reflect strong reliability (0.820–0.846), with EI2 being the main contributor (EI2 = 0.846). Since these values have exceeded 0.70, convergent validity is established.

This is consistent with the Theory of Planned Behavior, which holds that actual behavior is directly predicted by intention (Ajzen, 1991). This implies that a person must have a strong intention before acting. According to earlier studies (Gazi et al., 2024; Liñán & Chen, 2009; Van Gelderen et al., 2015). entrepreneurial intention serves as a crucial link to actual entrepreneurial action.

This result is quite reasonable, as many PMI return with better work experience, skills, networks, and capital. When they already have a strong intention to become entrepreneurs, the chance of starting a business becomes much greater. Therefore, PMI empowerment programs not only need to focus on technical skills but also on strengthening intention and psychological readiness for entrepreneurship. The stronger the intention built, the greater the likelihood that intention turns into real action.

Entrepreneurial Intention (EI) mediates Entrepreneurial Attitude (EA) and Entrepreneurial Behavior (EB)

The test results show a positive and significant influence from the mediation path

Entrepreneurial Attitude (EA) → Entrepreneurial Intention (EI) → Entrepreneurial Behavior (EB). According to the indirect effect coefficient value of 0.328, entrepreneurial attitude influences entrepreneurial behavior by fostering the development of entrepreneurial intention. The mediation effect is statistically significant, with a T-statistic value of 9.237, beyond the critical limit of 1.96, and a p-value of 0.000 (<0.05). As a result, hypothesis H5—which states that the relationship between entrepreneurial attitude and behavior is mediated by entrepreneurial intention—is accepted.

The sample mean (M) value of 0.326, which is very close to the initial coefficient (0.328), shows consistent bootstrapping results. The standard deviation of 0.036 is relatively low, indicating that the estimated mediation effect is relatively stable across samples. Based on PLS-SEM evaluation guidelines, these results reflect a reliable mediation model worthy of interpretation (Hair Jr et al., 2021).

The Theory of Planned Behavior asserts that attitude toward a behavior will shape intention, and this intention becomes the direct antecedent of actual behavior (Ajzen, 1991). This means that a positive attitude toward entrepreneurship does not necessarily directly produce action but needs to develop into intention first before being realized in real behavior.

This result is consistent with earlier research that identifies entrepreneurial intention as a significant mediation mechanism in the continuum of how entrepreneurial behavior forms. Which states that entrepreneurial attitude is a predictor of intention and that intention is one indicator driving entrepreneurial action. Furthermore, Ajzen (2018) also establishes that psychological elements, including attitude and learning, are formed into intentions that influence behavior. This consistency supports that entrepreneurial intention is the primary connection between attitude and behavior.

These results show that having a positive attitude toward entrepreneurship alone is not enough to drive business behavior. This attitude needs to be translated into strong intention first. PMI who already have a positive view of entrepreneurship tend to start planning businesses, seeking opportunities, and preparing resources, which ultimately drives business realization. Therefore, PMI empowerment programs need to be designed not only to build positive attitudes toward entrepreneurship but also to strengthen entrepreneurial intention through business planning training, mentoring, and access to market information. Thus, the process of change from attitude to behavior can take place more effectively.

Entrepreneurial Intention (EI) mediates Entrepreneurial Subjective Norm (SN) and Entrepreneurial Behavior (EB)

The test results indicate that the mediation path Entrepreneurial Subjective Norm (SN) → Entrepreneurial Intention (EI) → Entrepreneurial Behavior (EB) has a favorable and significant impact. The indirect effect value of 0.151 demonstrates that social encouragement from the surrounding environment can promote the emergence of entrepreneurial activity by fostering the formation of entrepreneurial intention. The T-statistic value of 3.140 is above the critical limit of 1.96, and the p-value of 0.001 (<0.05) indicates a substantial mediation effect, supporting hypothesis H6. Practically, social support does not directly turn one into an entrepreneur but rather instills intention, which subsequently translates into action. The bootstrapping results are also quite consistent: the sample mean value (0.155) is close to the initial coefficient (0.151), and the standard deviation of 0.048 is low enough to conclude that this estimated indirect effect is stable, so the mediation model can be deemed reliable (Hair Jr et al., 2021).

The Theory of Planned Behavior suggests that subjective norms have some effect on intention, which in turn drives behavior (Ajzen, 1991). When people perceive that important others support their desire to become entrepreneurs, they develop greater intentions to try, and those intentions get translated into action. This pattern is also supported by previous research showing that social influence often works through intention before becoming real behavior, and that support from family and friends can strengthen entrepreneurial intention (Lingappa et al., 2020; Pham et al., 2023). Thus, the social environment can be understood as an initial driver that fosters both confidence and intention to become entrepreneurs, which ultimately leads to real entrepreneurial behavior, particularly for PMI returning from Japan who are pursuing economic independence in their homeland.

Entrepreneurial Intention (EI) mediates Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC) and Entrepreneurial Behavior (EB)

The test results indicate a positive and significant influence from the mediation path Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC) → Entrepreneurial Intention (EI) → Entrepreneurial Behavior (EB). The indirect effect value of 0.141 indicates that perceived ability and self-efficacy can encourage entrepreneurial behavior by first establishing entrepreneurial intention. Hypothesis H7 is supported based on a p-value of 0.002 (<0.05) and a T-statistic value of 2.903 (>1.96), indicating a significant mediation effect. In other words, a perception of ability does not directly lead PMI to establish a business; rather, it fosters intention, which inspires actual action.

The bootstrapping results also show good consistency, where the sample mean value (0.139) is very close to the initial coefficient (0.141) and the standard deviation of 0.049 is relatively low. This shows that the estimated indirect effect is relatively stable and the mediation model can be relied upon (Hair Jr et al., 2021). When individuals feel they have the ability, resources, and opportunities to become entrepreneurs, they tend to build stronger intentions, and these intentions develop into action (Ajzen, 1991). This finding is also in line with previous research showing that perceived behavioral control strengthens entrepreneurial intention before it turns into real behavior (Doanh & Bernat, 2019; Nguyen, 2020). In this context, experience, skills, and capital can increase self-confidence to venture into entrepreneurship, but still need to be translated into strong intention to truly be realized in business activities after returning to Indonesia.

Overall, these findings indicate that the gap between entrepreneurial intention and behavior in former Japanese PMI cannot be separated from experiential factors. In former PMI who have never been entrepreneurs, intention formation relies more on internal factors such as attitude and self-confidence. After having experience, the decision-making process becomes more contextual by considering social factors. Thus, entrepreneurial experience acts as a boundary condition in the TPB model that shifts the source of influence from personal dominance to a combination of personal and social factors (Ajzen, 1991; Bosnjak et al., 2020). The implication is that PMI empowerment programs need to differentiate between prospective entrepreneurs (non-experienced) and experienced PMI. The first group requires strengthening of mindset and self-efficacy, while the second group benefits more from strengthening networks, communities, and business ecosystem support. These findings contribute to understanding the dynamics of the EI–EB gap while also serving as a basis for formulating more targeted entrepreneurship programs for PMI.

CONCLUSION

Using the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) framework, this study investigated the gap between entrepreneurial intention (EI) and entrepreneurial behavior (EB) among Indonesian migrant workers (PMI) returning from Japan. Empirical data show that entrepreneurial attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control all have a positive and significant influence on the development of entrepreneurial intention. The most important factor determining intention among these three is entrepreneurial attitude, followed by perceived behavioral control and subjective norms. This finding shows that the growth of entrepreneurial intention in PMI is influenced by social support, self-belief, and an individual's perception of business potential.

This study demonstrates that entrepreneurial intention is both a mediating element in the relationship between psychological characteristics and actual behavior and a powerful predictor of entrepreneurial behavior. As a result, there is a gradual psychological process rather than a linear gap between intention and action. Positive attitudes, social support, and a sense of ability do not directly produce business behavior but first form strong intentions before being realized in real action. This finding strengthens the relevance of TPB in explaining the dynamics of transition from migrant worker to entrepreneur in the post-migration context.

Conceptually, this research confirms that high entrepreneurial intention in post-Japan PMI does not automatically guarantee behavior realization without personal readiness and domestic ecosystem support. Hence, economic reintegration policies should focus on developing entrepreneurial attitude, increasing self-efficacy, and improving the business environment.

Identifying program differentiation is also critical to distinguish between inexperienced prospective entrepreneurs and those who are familiar with business practice, so that policy investments can be better directed. Therefore, this study offers a theoretical contribution to TPB development related to labor migration as well as practical implications for sustainable PMI economic empowerment policy.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

Rima Rahayu contributed to the research's idea, data gathering, data analysis, and first paper draft. Yugo Adil Wicaksono contributed to research supervision, technique development, and paper critical review. Samuel Indra Christianto Lumban Tobing helped with the literature review, data validation, and interpretation of the results. Abdul Rohman helped to the editing, proofreading, and final text preparation. All authors have read and approved the final version of the text and agree to accept responsibility for all elements of the work.

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