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Student Self-Efficacy and Readiness in Higher Education: Their Impact On Student Participation In National Academic Innovation Programs (MBKM)

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ABSTRACT

Background/purpose. The Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) program is a higher education policy designed to foster student autonomy through experiential learning across campuses and industry settings. However, student participation in this program remains suboptimal, potentially influenced by internal factors such as self-efficacy and learning readiness. This study aims to examine the influence of self-efficacy and student readiness on the interest in participating in the MBKM program at Ma'soem University.

Materials/methods. This research employed a quantitative approach using a survey method involving 318 active undergraduate students. The research instrument was a five-point Likert scale questionnaire, which had undergone validity and reliability testing using SPSS. Data were collected both in person and via Google Forms, following a prior explanation of the study's purpose and instructions for completion. Data analysis was conducted using multiple linear regression with the assistance of JASP software, preceded by classical assumption testing as prerequisites.

Results. The results indicate that self-efficacy and student readiness jointly have a significant influence on students' interest in participating in the MBKM program, with a coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.517, equivalent to 51.7%. The resulting regression equation is $\hat{Y} = 4.436 + 0.487X_1 + 0.475X_2$, demonstrating a positive contribution of both variables to student interest.

Conclusion. Self-efficacy and learning readiness significantly affect students' interest in participating in the MBKM program. These findings highlight the importance for higher education administrators to strengthen the development of students' personal and academic capacities to promote active participation in the MBKM policy

1. INTRODUCTION

The lack of skills and competencies required to face challenges in the workforce (Oksari et al., 2022) has prompted the Indonesian government to take strategic steps through the issuance of various regulations and reforms in the national education system (Anggraini et al., 2022). One such initiative is the launch of the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) program, which offers learning opportunities not only within the classroom but also beyond the

campus environment (Aan et al., 2021). This program aims to produce graduates who are not only proficient in science and technology and possess strong character (Puspitasari & Nugroho, 2021), but also demonstrate critical thinking, independence, and creativity (Suhartono, 2021; Susilowati, 2022). Furthermore, MBKM is designed to equip students with industry-relevant skills and competencies aligned with the demands of the labor market (Arifin & Muslim, 2020), enabling them to compete globally (Thahir, Widiawati, et al., 2023). A core focus of this policy is to provide students with opportunities to gain direct experiential learning outside the campus (Baharuddin, 2021; Ramadhan & Megawati, 2023), while also allowing them to choose learning pathways aligned with their interests and talents (Ningrum et al., 2021).

The success of student capacity development largely depends on the extent to which this policy is able to influence student interest (Renninger & Hidi, 2002). In this regard, the MBKM policy was designed to cultivate student interest in learning beyond their major discipline through eight types of experiential learning activities (Rochana et al., 2021; Suryaman, 2020). Students with high levels of interest in the program tend to show higher levels of participation and engagement (Rochana et al., 2021). Such active involvement is critical in shaping positive learning habits and fostering a mindset that supports lifelong learning and personal development (Kuh, 2009). In the long term, these outcomes are expected to significantly enhance learning quality and graduate outcomes.

Interest is a psychological state characterized by an effective response and focused attention on a particular subject, along with a relatively stable tendency to repeatedly engage with specific objects, events, or ideas (Renninger, 2000; Ainley, 2019). Individual interest, in particular, refers to a person's long-term inclination to consistently remain engaged with a specific field or topic over time (Tan et al., 2019).

Several surveys suggest that student interest in the MBKM program across various university programs in Indonesia is relatively encouraging (Komarudin & Aziz, 2022; Suwandi et al., 2023; Suyoto et al., 2022). However, a different situation is observed at Ma'soem University. According to data from the university's MBKM coordinator, student participation is very low—only five out of 1,539 students participated in the MBKM program, representing merely 0.32% of the total student population, which is a concerning figure. Existing studies emphasize the importance of fostering student interest to encourage active engagement in the MBKM program (Rochana et al., 2021). Student interest plays a pivotal role in shaping motivation, attitudes, and behaviors that are reflected in their academic engagement (Kahu et al., 2017). Consequently, the level of student interest is strongly linked to the development of a learning culture in higher education (Thahir, Julius, et al., 2023).

This issue underscores the need to enhance student interest in participating in the MBKM program. The researcher suspects that the low level of student interest is influenced by low

levels of self-efficacy and readiness to engage in the program. High levels of self-efficacy and readiness among students are expected to positively influence their interest in participating. Previous studies have shown that self-efficacy positively affects individual interest (Andini & Pratama, 2023; Khairat et al., 2022; Kurniawan et al., 2016; Marlina et al., 2023; Rahmawati & Rahmi, 2023). Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their ability to perform tasks effectively and efficiently (Kurniawan et al., 2016). Other research also indicates that readiness significantly influences interest (Sari & Trisnawati, 2021). A high level of readiness supports optimal learning processes, enabling students to be more engaged and absorb knowledge more effectively.

To address this issue, it is crucial to examine the extent to which self-efficacy and student readiness influence interest in participating in the MBKM program at Ma'soem University. This research is particularly important given that the low level of student interest may hinder the success of a national educational policy, thereby limiting the achievement of intended student competencies. Furthermore, existing analyses have shown that student interest significantly correlates with various academic outcomes such as learning performance (Assem et al., 2023; Hanaysha et al., 2023; Issah et al., 2023; Putri Rahayu, 2023). A strong interest in learning is associated with persistence, sincerity, and resilience (Shofwan et al., 2021; Sibarani, 2024).

Although prior studies have linked self-efficacy and readiness to student engagement in self-directed and online learning, few have specifically examined their influence on student interest in the context of the MBKM program in Indonesia, particularly at Ma'soem University. Additionally, the interaction between these two psychological variables in predicting student interest remains underexplored in both local and international literature. Student self-efficacy and readiness may play a key role in stimulating interest and encouraging full participation in the MBKM program. Although prior studies have linked self-efficacy and readiness to student engagement in self-directed and online learning, few have specifically examined their influence on student interest in the context of the MBKM program in Indonesia, particularly at Ma'soem University. Additionally, the interaction between these two psychological variables in predicting student interest remains underexplored in both local and international literature. Student self-efficacy and readiness may play a key role in stimulating interest and encouraging full participation in the MBKM program. This study aims to fill that gap by offering empirical insights from the Indonesian context and contributing to a deeper understanding of the internal dynamics influencing student engagement with contemporary higher education policies.

Despite the increasing global emphasis on experiential learning and student-centered reforms, limited empirical evidence exists regarding the psychological antecedents, particularly self-efficacy and readiness, that shape student interest in higher education

engagement. Previous international research has shown that self-efficacy fosters academic engagement, motivation, and persistence (Schunk & Dibenedetto, 2019; Usher & Pajares, 2008), while readiness plays a decisive role in adapting to innovative and technology-enhanced learning environments (Ayasrah, 2020; Getty et al., 2021; Hung et al., 2010). However, their combined influence on student interest within policy-driven frameworks such as MBKM remains underexplored. The novelty of this research lies in integrating self-efficacy and readiness as joint predictors of student interest in a national higher education reform, thereby extending current theories of student engagement. Theoretically, the study contributes to the international literature by providing cross-cultural perspectives on psychological factors influencing student participation, while practically, it offers insights for higher education policymakers and institutions worldwide to design interventions that enhance student preparedness and confidence in embracing transformative learning models. This study aims to fill that gap by offering empirical insights from the Indonesian context and contributing to a deeper understanding of the internal dynamics influencing student engagement with contemporary higher education policies.

The primary research question in this study is: To what extent do self-efficacy and student readiness affect student interest in participating in the MBKM program? The hypothesis proposed is that self-efficacy and student readiness simultaneously have a significant influence on student interest.

2. METHODS

2.1. Research Design

This study employs a quantitative research approach using a correlational method. The objective is to examine the influence of self-efficacy and student readiness on their interest in participating in the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) program at Ma'soem University. This research can be categorized as a causal-comparative quantitative study, as it seeks to determine the causal relationship between the variables under investigation—namely, self-efficacy, student readiness, and interest in joining the MBKM program.

2.2. Population and Sample

The population of this study includes all students of Ma'soem University from the academic years 2020 to 2024, encompassing five faculties and twelve academic programs, with a total of 1,539 students. The sample was selected using proportional stratified random sampling, ensuring each member of the population had an equal opportunity to be included. The sample size was determined using the Slovin formula with a 5% margin of error, resulting in a sample of 318 students.

2.3. Data Collection and Analysis

The primary instrument used in this research is a questionnaire constructed using a five-point Likert scale, consisting of the following response options: Always, Often, Sometimes, Rarely, and Never. Prior to wide-scale distribution, the questionnaire was pilot tested to determine its validity and reliability. The pilot test results, analyzed using SPSS, indicated that all items were both valid and reliable, confirming the questionnaire's appropriateness as a measurement tool.

Data collection was carried out through both offline and online methods. For the offline method, the researcher directly distributed printed questionnaires to respondents, accompanied by a brief explanation of the research purpose and instructions for completion. For the online method, the questionnaire was disseminated using Google Forms, with similar explanations provided at the beginning of the form.

The collected data were analyzed using multiple linear regression analysis with the assistance of the JASP software. The data analysis process involved three main stages: 1) Descriptive analysis to describe general characteristics of the data; 2) Assumption testing, which included normality test, multicollinearity test, autocorrelation test, and heteroscedasticity test; 3) Hypothesis testing, which included correlation analysis, significance testing, determination of the coefficient of determination (R^2), and multiple linear regression analysis to examine the strength and direction of influence among variables.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Hypothesis Testing

The hypothesis testing in this study aims to determine whether self-efficacy (X1) and student readiness (X2) have a significant effect on student interest in participating in the MBKM program (Y) at Universitas Ma'soem. To examine this effect, a multiple linear regression analysis was conducted. The hypothesis testing was performed using a significance level of 0.05, and analyzed with the JASP statistical software. Based on the results of the multiple linear regression analysis, the following outcomes were obtained:

Table 1. Results of Hypothesis Testing

		Coefficients				
Model		Unstandardized	Standard Error	Standardized	t	p
M_0	(Intercept)	92.318	0.496		186.173	< .001
M_1	(Intercept)	4.436	4.802		0.924	0.356
	Self-Efficacy (X1)	0.487	0.058	0.406	8.345	< .001
	Student Readiness (X2)	0.475	0.058	0.4	8.217	< .001

Source: processed research data from 2025

Based on the results presented in the table, Model M produced only an intercept of 92.318 with a p-value of less than 0.001. This indicates that the average level of student interest, regardless of any predictors, is statistically significant. However, since this model does not include any independent variables, its role is merely as a baseline for comparison with the subsequent model. The full regression model (Model M_1), on the other hand, examines the simultaneous influence of two independent variables, self-efficacy (X_1) and student readiness (X_2) on the dependent variable, namely student interest (Y) in participating in the MBKM program.

The results show that the intercept of 4.436 is not statistically significant (p = 0.356), which implies that when both predictors are set to zero, the predicted level of interest is not significantly different from zero. Nonetheless, in real-world social and psychological contexts, this scenario is practically unlikely, as it is rare for students to score zero on both self-efficacy and readiness. The self-efficacy variable (X_1) yielded a regression coefficient of 0.487 with a p-value below 0.001, suggesting a strong and statistically significant positive effect on student interest in the MBKM program. This means that for every one-point increase in self-efficacy, student interest is expected to rise by 0.487 points, assuming other variables remain constant. The standardized beta coefficient of 0.406 further highlights the strength of this relationship.

Similarly, student readiness (X_2) also shows a significant positive impact, with a coefficient of 0.475 ($p < 0.001$). This indicates that each one-point increase in readiness corresponds to a 0.475-point increase in student interest, controlling for self-efficacy. The standardized beta value of 0.400 suggests that its influence is nearly as strong as that of self-efficacy.

Based on the results of the multiple linear regression analysis, the following equation is derived: $\hat{Y} = 4{,}436 + 0{,}487X_1 + 0{,}475X_2$

This equation can be interpreted as follows: the constant value of 4.436 represents the base level of interest when both self-efficacy and readiness scores are zero. An increase of one point in self-efficacy is predicted to raise student interest by 0.487 points, while a one-point increase in readiness will increase interest by 0.475 points, assuming the other variable remains unchanged.

As an illustrative example, if a student has a self-efficacy score of 100 and a readiness score of 100, their predicted interest in the MBKM program would be $\hat{Y} = 4{,}436 + (0{,}487 \times 100) + (0{,}475 \times 100) = 100{,}636$. This means that, according to the model, students with high levels of both self-efficacy and readiness (scoring 100 each) are predicted to demonstrate a very high level of interest in joining the MBKM program.

To further support these findings, an F-test was conducted to evaluate the overall significance and adequacy of the regression model. The summary of the F-test results, indicating whether the model is statistically meaningful as a whole, is presented in the following table:

Table 2. F-Test of the Regression Model: Self-Efficacy (X_1) and Student Readiness (X_2) on Student Interest (Y)

ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
M_1	Regression	12805.221	2	6402.611	168.325	< .001
	Residual	11981.700	315	38.037		
	Total	24786.921	317			

Note. M_1 includes Self Efficacy (X1), Student Readiness (X2)
Note. The intercept model is omitted, as no meaningful information can be shown.
Source: Author's statistical data processing (2025)

Based on the ANOVA table, the analysis yielded an F-statistic of 168.325 with a p-value of less than 0.001. Since the p-value is substantially lower than the significance level of 0.05, it can be concluded that the multiple regression model is statistically significant at the 95% confidence level. This result indicates that the model, which includes Self-Efficacy (X_1) and Student Readiness (X_2) as predictors, significantly explains the variance in Student Interest in participating in the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) program. In other words, both independent variables make a meaningful contribution to the dependent variable when tested simultaneously. With an F value of 168.325 and a p-value < 0.001, the regression equation:$\hat{Y} = 4{,}436 + 0{,}487X_1 + 0{,}475X_2$ can be considered statistically significant as a whole and is therefore appropriate for predicting students' interest in the MBKM program. These findings reinforce the notion that the higher the levels of self-efficacy and readiness among students, the more likely they are to express interest in participating in the Merdeka Belajar program.

Furthermore, the statistical output shows a correlation coefficient (R) of 0.200, with an R-squared value of 0.040. This suggests that approximately 4% of the variance in students' interest can be explained by the combination of self-efficacy and student readiness. A more detailed summary of these results is presented in the following table:

Table 3. The Contribution of Self-Efficacy (X_1) and Student Readiness (X_2) to Student Interest in the MBKM Program (Y)

Model Summary - Student Interests (Y)

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	RMSE
M_0	0	0	0	8.843
M_1	0.719	0.517	0.514	6.167

Note. M_1 includes Self Efficacy (X1), Student Readiness (X2)
Source: Author's statistical data processing (2025)

The table above indicates that two independent variables were employed to predict students' interest. The results reveal a significant improvement in the model's performance. An R value of 0.719 suggests a strong correlation between the model's predictions and the actual values of students' interest. Meanwhile, the coefficient of determination (R^2) is recorded at

0.517, indicating that self-efficacy and student readiness jointly account for 51.7% of the variance in students' interest in participating in the Merdeka Belajar–Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) program. This means that more than half of the variation in students' interest can be explained by these two predictor variables. Consequently, the remaining 48.3% is influenced by other factors outside the scope of this model, such as environmental conditions, family support, perceptions of the MBKM policy, and other external elements not included in the current study.

DISCUSSION

This study proposed the hypothesis that self-efficacy (X_1) and student readiness (X_2) have a positive and significant influence on students' interest in participating in the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) program (Y). Based on the analysis, the hypothesis is supported. In other words, both independent variables, self-efficacy and readiness, simultaneously exert a statistically significant influence on students' interest in joining the MBKM program at Universitas Ma'soem. The regression analysis revealed a coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.517, indicating that self-efficacy and learning readiness jointly explain 51.7% of the variance in students' interest in MBKM. This finding underscores the crucial role these internal factors play in shaping student engagement toward non-traditional learning models.

Individually, self-efficacy demonstrated a positive and statistically significant influence, with a regression coefficient of 0.487. Likewise, student readiness showed a significant effect, with a coefficient of 0.475. The resulting regression equation from this model is: $\hat{Y} = 4.436 + 0.487X_1 + 0.475X_2$. The model is statistically significant ($F = 168.325$; $p < 0.001$) and free from multicollinearity or violations of classical assumptions. This suggests that higher levels of self-efficacy and learning readiness are associated with greater interest in participating in the MBKM program.

Theoretically, this finding aligns with Bandura's (1997) perspective, which emphasizes self-efficacy—one's belief in their capability—as a key predictor of motivation and learning behavior. In the context of higher education, students who believe in their capabilities are more likely to engage in innovative programs that demand independent learning. International literature further supports this finding. Self-efficacy and learning readiness have been shown to significantly affect student engagement in blended learning and technology-mediated learning environments (Geng et al., 2019). This study is consistent with prior research indicating that self-efficacy positively influences individual interest (Andini & Pratama, 2023; Khairat et al., 2022; Kurniawan et al., 2016; Marlina et al., 2023; Rahmawati & Rahmi, 2023). Self-efficacy affects task choices, effort, persistence, resilience, performance outcomes, and behavioral tendencies—such as how long one endures obstacles. Individuals with high self-efficacy are generally more confident and productive when facing challenges, whereas those with low self-efficacy may perceive tasks as more difficult than they actually are, increasing anxiety and stress and narrowing their problem-solving perspective. Thus, self-efficacy is a

critical determinant of individual success (Ferla et al., 2009; Pajares & Schunk, 2002; Dogan & Durmus, 2021).

Compared to previous studies, this research both confirms and extends earlier findings. While prior studies (Andini & Pratama, 2023; Khairat et al., 2022; Marlina et al., 2023) emphasized the direct role of self-efficacy in shaping individual learning interest, and others highlighted readiness as a significant determinant of student engagement in online and blended contexts (Almulla, 2022; Hung et al., 2010) . The present study demonstrates that both variables jointly account for a substantial proportion of student interest in a large-scale national policy such as MBKM. This suggests that individual psychological factors may exert an even stronger influence in policy-driven reforms compared to more conventional or voluntary learning environments. Interestingly, while prior studies often found readiness to be the dominant predictor of student adaptation in online contexts (Joosten & Cusatis, 2020; Pan & Zheng, 2024), the current results reveal that self-efficacy and readiness exert nearly equal influence, indicating a more balanced interaction between the two constructs in determining interest toward experiential learning models.

The global implications of this finding are noteworthy. Many higher education systems worldwide—such as service-learning in the United States, cooperative education in Canada, and work-integrated learning initiatives in Europe and Australia—share similarities with MBKM in promoting experiential and flexible pathways for students (Jackson, 2014; Patrick et al., 2008). The evidence from this study suggests that the success of such policies cannot solely rely on institutional design or structural opportunities; rather, it also requires strategic efforts to strengthen students' psychological readiness and self-belief in their own capabilities. Thus, insights from the Indonesian context may inform international policymakers on the importance of embedding capacity-building interventions (e.g., mentoring, resilience training, self-directed learning workshops) to maximize student engagement in experiential programs.

Theoretically, this research extends Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy framework and subsequent readiness models (Hung et al., 2010) by situating them within a policy-driven higher education reform. It highlights that self-efficacy and readiness are not only critical in individual or classroom-level learning but also play a decisive role in shaping student interest when institutions introduce system-wide reforms requiring active student participation. This contributes to the literature by broadening the application of self-efficacy and readiness theories beyond traditional academic performance outcomes, underscoring their relevance in large-scale educational transformation and cross-cultural contexts.

Other researchers have also asserted that self-efficacy directly contributes to students' persistence in non-traditional online programs (Stephen et al., 2020). Readiness, including cognitive, technical, and affective components, is also a vital prerequisite for successful

adoption of new learning methodologies (Almulla, 2022). Readiness reflects not only academic skills but also emotional preparedness and a positive attitude toward change.

Accordingly, the success of MBKM programs may be strengthened when higher education institutions like Universitas Ma'soem implement interventions that enhance both self-efficacy and readiness. Such interventions may include soft skills training, academic mentoring, or simulations of MBKM activities prior to real-world implementation. Given that 48.3% of the variance in student interest remains unexplained by the model, future research should explore the influence of external factors such as perceptions of program quality, social support, or structural barriers that may also shape students' decisions to participate in MBKM.

Student self-efficacy refers to the belief that one is capable of taking actions, particularly those involving academic and personal challenges. It represents perceived capabilities for learning or performing actions at designated levels, and is considered a key cognitive variable influencing motivation and engagement (Dogan & Durmus, 2021; Ferla et al., 2009; Pajares & Schunk, 2002). Academic self-efficacy, specifically, reflects students' belief in their ability to succeed in academic tasks (Gore Jr., 2006). Students with high self-efficacy exert more mental effort, persist longer, and manage academic challenges more effectively (Chemers et al., 2001; Margolis & McCabe, 2003; Zimmerman, 2000). Conversely, students with low self-efficacy are more likely to avoid academic tasks, experience motivational issues, and exhibit school-related anxiety (Lodewyk & Winne, 2005). Such students often struggle with commitment and are more vulnerable in academic environments. Nonetheless, students with high academic self-efficacy are typically more committed to school and display greater optimism (Chemers et al., 2001). Negative academic experiences can impair students' self-efficacy, making them less likely to undertake academic tasks (Bassi et al., 2007). Academic self-efficacy is also strongly associated with students' psychological resilience.

Learning readiness, meanwhile, serves as a foundational component in establishing meaningful learning experiences in higher education. Students who exhibit higher levels of readiness tend to engage more actively, comprehend content more efficiently, and respond positively to learning processes. Readiness encompasses not only prior knowledge or technical skills but also psychological and motivational aspects that shape how students receive and process information (Almulla, 2022). In other words, readiness is both a mental and physical condition that allows individuals to approach learning as a necessity, rather than a mere obligation.

Recent studies affirm that students who feel emotionally and physically prepared tend to be more confident in confronting the challenges of digital learning and inter-campus projects. Even in blended or self-directed learning contexts, readiness is a critical factor in successful adaptation to new pedagogical approaches (Jugembayeva & Murzagaliyeva, 2022). Literature also links readiness to psychological resilience, particularly in times of intense

academic pressure, such as during the pandemic (Muzer & Husin, 2023). In such contexts, students who are mentally and physically prepared show greater capacity to absorb material and adapt to demanding academic schedules. Therefore, student readiness should be a strategic focus of higher education institutions. Efforts to enhance readiness can be implemented through comprehensive approaches such as stress management training, academic advising, and the provision of supportive physical and psychological learning environments.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the research conducted at Universitas Ma'soem, it can be concluded that self-efficacy and student readiness have a significant influence on students' interest in participating in the Merdeka Belajar-Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) program. The results of the multiple regression analysis indicate that these two independent variables jointly contribute 51.7% to the variance in students' interest, as reflected by the coefficient of determination (R^2 = 0.517). Individually, self-efficacy shows a positive and significant effect with a regression coefficient of 0.487, while student readiness also demonstrates a significant influence with a coefficient of 0.475. These findings offer important implications for higher education administrators to strengthen both the personal and academic capacities of students in order to encourage active participation in MBKM policies. Strategic recommendations include implementing programs that foster self-confidence, providing soft skills training, offering guidance for independent learning readiness, and enhancing institutional support throughout the implementation of MBKM programs.

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