

Strengthening Village Cooperatives and MSMEs through the Thematic Entrepreneurship Seminar in Baji Pamai

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to apply academic entrepreneurship research to practice by implementing a participatory thematic seminar that empowers Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprise (MSME) actors and strengthens economic institutions in Baji Pamai Village, Indonesia. The community service activity employed a participatory andragogical approach, including interactive presentations, focused group discussions, participatory potential mapping, and field observations. It was integrated into the Thematic Student Community Service Program (KKN-T) of Institut Teknologi dan Bisnis Nobel Indonesia, facilitating a Triple Helix collaboration between academia, village government, and the community. The intervention significantly raised participants' awareness and motivation for entrepreneurial development. Key outcomes included the co-creation of concrete, actionable ideas for professionalizing the Village-Owned Enterprise (BUMDes) and local cooperatives, with strategic focus areas such as product diversification based on local commodities (e.g., chili, ginger, forest honey), digital branding, and enhanced collaborative governance. The seminar validated the effectiveness of a 'working *with* the community' approach over a top-down model. The success underscores the critical role of thematic KKN as a mechanism for direct knowledge transfer and grassroots empowerment. However, it also highlights the necessity of sustained post-seminar mentoring. This ongoing support is not just beneficial but essential for ensuring the implementation of co-created ideas and should be a key consideration in future initiatives.

Keywords: Community Empowerment, MSMEs, Entrepreneurship Seminar, Thematic KKN, Triple Helix, BUMDes, Rural Development.

I. Introduction

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) form the backbone of the Indonesian economy, accounting for 61.07% of the national GDP and employing 97.16% of the workforce (Wilfarda et al., 2021). Despite their pivotal role and proven resilience, especially during economic crises, a significant majority (99.62%) are micro-enterprises that face profound structural challenges. These include limited access to capital and markets, low managerial and entrepreneurial skills, and weak institutional frameworks—a

phenomenon often described as the 'missing middle,' a term that refers to the lack of medium-sized enterprises that could bridge the gap between small businesses and large corporations, hindering their growth and formalization (Firman et al., 2022; Erza, 2021). Law Number 6 of 2014 concerning Villages is a solution for village development in Indonesia, enabling villages to act as key actors or subjects in the development process, transforming underdeveloped villages into developing and independent ones. To become independent, villages require the development of innovative programs, which can be created by village governments.

National policy also underscores MSME development as a strategic priority. Presidential Regulation No. 2 of 2022 concerning the National Entrepreneurship Development for 2021–2024—guided by the targets of the National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN) 2020–2024—and Presidential Regulation No. 142 of 2018 on the National Master Plan for Creative Economy Development 2018–2025 place MSMEs and creative industries at the center of inclusive and sustainable growth. Thus, strengthening institutional frameworks such as Village-Owned Enterprises (BUMDes) and cooperatives becomes critical for rural economic transformation. Baji Pamai Village, Maros Regency, South Sulawesi, exemplifies this paradox of potential versus performance. The village is endowed with rich agricultural commodities (rice, chili, tomato, ginger), livestock products (free-range chicken), non-timber forest products (forest honey), and significant natural and cultural tourism potential. However, in 2020, it was classified as a "developing village" with a Village Development Index (IDM) of 0.6789, indicating substantial room for economic optimization. The primary impediments are not a lack of resources, but rather a deficit in entrepreneurial understanding, managerial capabilities, and the institutional capacity of key local entities, such as Village-Owned Enterprises (BUMDes) and cooperatives. This community service initiative addresses this gap by translating academic research on entrepreneurship into actionable community training. Conducted as part of the Thematic Student Community Service (KKN-T) program, it serves a dual purpose: fulfilling the higher education mandate of community service and acting as a practical application of the Triple Helix model, which synergizes academia, government, and business/community actors for sustainable development (Etzkowitz & Leydesdorff, 1995). This study demonstrates how a participatory entrepreneurship seminar can function as a catalyst for awareness, motivation, and institutional ideation at the grassroots level.

II. Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

2.1. The Strategic Role and Challenges of MSMEs

MSMEs are indispensable to Indonesia's socio-economic fabric, driving job creation, poverty reduction, and local economic development. Their ability to operate with self-capital and limited external dependency makes them remarkably resilient (Adlan, 2021). However, their dominance by micro-enterprises creates a "missing middle," where growth is stagnated by systemic barriers, such as inadequate access to technology, formal financing, and managerial expertise (Firman et al., 2022). Therefore, targeted capacity-building interventions are not merely supportive but are strategic economic necessities to unlock their full potential.

2.2. Thematic KKN as an Agent of Empowerment

Thematic Community Service (KKN-T) is an intracurricular program that integrates the Tri Dharma of higher education: education, research, and community service. It moves beyond traditional KKN by focusing on specific, research-based themes—in this case, entrepreneurial empowerment. KKN-T acts as a crucial 'last-mile delivery' mechanism, a term that refers to the final stage of a process where the product or service is delivered to the end user, in this case, rural MSMEs. It bridges the gap between theoretical research and practical application, thereby directly addressing the human capital and technological deficits faced by rural MSMEs (Sulistiyani, 2017).

2.3. The Triple Helix Model in Rural Development

The Triple Helix model of innovation posits that the interaction between universities, industry, and government is essential for fostering innovation and economic development in a knowledge-based society (Etzkowitz & Leydesdorff, 1995). In the context of village development:

- a. Academia (ITB Nobel Indonesia) provides knowledge, research findings, and facilitation skills.
- b. The government (Village officials, BUMDes) provides the regulatory framework, institutional support, and local legitimacy.
- c. Business and community actors (MSMEs, cooperatives, youth) provide local context, active participation, and the impetus for implementation.
- d. This collaborative framework ensures that interventions are not just synergistic and contextually relevant, but also powerful. It moves beyond isolated projects to create a holistic ecosystem for innovation, demonstrating the power of collaboration in fostering sustainable development. The Triple Helix model is not just a theoretical concept but a practical tool for creating impactful change.

The triple helix concept serves as a framework that brings together academia, business, and government in fostering the creative economy ecosystem. The synergy among these three actors enables the achievement of common goals through close collaboration, mutual support, and a symbiotic relationship. The integration of academia, industry, and government, grounded in the pillars of the creative economy, becomes a key factor in building a strong and sustainable creative economy. Thus, the triple helix can be understood as the interaction of three leading actors working in synergy to create space, policies, and innovation.

2.4. Andragogy in Entrepreneurial Training

Effective adult learning (andragogy) is premised on the principles of self-direction, experience, problem-centeredness, and intrinsic motivation (Knowles, 1977). Unlike pedagogical methods, andragogy treats learners as active participants in their own learning. Applying these principles through interactive presentations and participatory discussions is particularly effective in entrepreneurship training, as it fosters the proactive, problem-solving mindset essential for business success (Mukharomah et al., 2023).

2.5. Sustainable and Resilient Entrepreneurship

Rural entrepreneurship today must integrate sustainability and resilience to remain viable and sustainable. Sustainable entrepreneurship emphasizes eco-friendly practices and social responsibility, ensuring long-term use of local resources (UNCTAD, 2023). Meanwhile, resilience focuses on the ability of MSMEs to adapt to crises such as pandemics, climate change, and market volatility through diversification, digital adoption, and collaborative networks (OECD, 2023). Together, these perspectives enable rural enterprises to survive and to thrive in increasingly uncertain environments, while aligning with global sustainable development goals.

III. Research Method

3.1. Setting and Participants

The entrepreneurship seminar was held at the Baji Pamai Village Office. Participants represented a multi-stakeholder group, essential for a Triple Helix approach:

- a. Government Helix: The Village Head, Village Secretary.
- b. Business/Community Helix: Director of BUMDes, Chairperson of the Cooperative, representatives of the Contact Farmers and Fishermen (KTNA), local youth, and MSME actors.
- c. Academic Helix: KKN-T students and faculty facilitators from ITB Nobel Indonesia. This diverse participation ensured that discussions were grounded in local reality while being informed by academic insight.

A total of 30 participants attended for one day, taking part in the speaker's presentation, a Q&A session, and a mini discussion.

3.2. Design and Procedures

The program was designed around principles of participatory andragogy:

- a. Interactive Presentations: Sessions covered village potential, BUMDes/cooperative management, and entrepreneurship based on local resources.
- b. Focus Group Discussions: Participants were divided into groups to identify specific local potentials and collaboratively develop business ideas and institutional strengthening plans.
- c. Participatory Observation: KKN-T students conducted field visits to local MSMEs to gather contextual data, linking theoretical discussions to on-the-ground realities.
- d. Co-creation Workshop: The culmination was a facilitated session where stakeholders drafted concrete proposals for BUMDes and cooperative initiatives.

Data collection was qualitative, relying on direct observation, analysis of discussion outputs, and feedback from participants. The methodology was informed by the author's prior experience in facilitating similar training for MSMEs under the South Sulawesi Integrated Business Service Center (PLUT) and community empowerment implemented by the campus.

IV. Results and Discussion

4.1. Local Economic Potentials and Identified Challenges

The seminar systematically mapped the village's economic assets, as summarized in Table 1. While the potential for high-value-added is clear, participants identified key challenges: a lack of business and management knowledge, underdeveloped processing and branding capabilities, and the nascent state of BUMDes and cooperatives, which limits collective action.

Table 1. Economic Potential of Baji Pamai Village

Type of Potential	Commodities/Description	Value-Added Potential
Agriculture	Rice, Chili, Tomato, Ginger	High if managed properly
Livestock	Free-range Chicken	High if managed properly
Forest Product	Forest Honey	High if managed properly
Tourism	Nature & Culture	Alternative local wisdom-based economy

4.2. Seminar Dynamics and Co-Created Strategies

The high attendance and energetic engagement demonstrated a strong readiness to learn among participants. The collaborative process yielded several consensus-based strategies:

- a. Professionalization of BUMDes: Improving governance and financial management systems.
- b. Product Diversification: Developing processed products from agricultural yields (e.g., chili powder, ginger syrup, packaged honey).
- c. Digital Marketing & Branding: Creating a unified local brand and leveraging online marketplaces.
- d. Enhanced Collaboration: Building formal linkages between farmers, cooperatives (for aggregation), and youth (for digital marketing skills).
- e. This co-creation process ensured that the strategies were not imposed but owned by the community, significantly increasing their likelihood of adoption and long-term sustainability.

4.3. Impact on Awareness and Motivation

The most immediate outcome was a qualitative shift in mindset. Participants evolved from passive recipients of development programs to active agents of change. This was evidenced by the spontaneous generation of concrete ideas for institutional strengthening, such as formalizing the cooperative and developing new business units under BUMDes focused on tourism and processed foods. This aligns with the first stage of empowerment—awareness and behavior formation—as outlined by Sulistiyani (2017), and validates the participatory andragogical approach.

4.4. Integration of Research and Practice: A Triple Helix in Action

The seminar operationalized the Triple Helix model. The university provided the methodology and facilitation; the village government provided the platform and legitimacy; and the community provided the content and commitment to implementation. This synergy is crucial for transitioning from one-off events to sustainable economic development. The activity served as a practical case study of how academic institutions can function as engines of grassroots innovation through programs like KKN-T.

V. Conclusion

This community service initiative effectively demonstrates that a participatory, andragogically designed entrepreneurship seminar can enhance awareness, motivation, and collaborative action among local stakeholders. It successfully applied the Triple Helix framework, aligning the strengths of academia, government, and community to drive bottom-up economic development. The thematic *KKN* model proved to be a dynamic mechanism for translating academic research into real-world solutions, bridging the gap between theory and practice while empowering rural participants. Theoretically, this study enriches the discourse on community empowerment by exemplifying how participatory andragogy and the Triple Helix approach can be integrated to foster entrepreneurial intent and strengthen village economic institutions. Managerially, it highlights the importance of investing in human capital, institutional capacity, and MSME development as strategic priorities for rural transformation. Moreover, it offers a replicable model that universities and local governments can adapt to similar contexts. To ensure sustainability, several follow-up actions are essential: (1) implement structured mentoring for business plan development, financial literacy using tools such as *SIAPIK*, and digital marketing execution; (2) support the formalization and professional management of BUMDes and cooperatives; (3) institutionalize Triple Helix partnerships between ITB Nobel Indonesia, Maros Regency, and private actors for market access and funding; and (4) conduct longitudinal research to evaluate long-term impacts. The author expresses deep gratitude to the Head of Baji Pamai Village, all local officials, the LPPM ITB Nobel Indonesia, and KKN-T students for their support and collaboration in realizing this community empowerment initiative.

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