

Fostering Youth Entrepreneurship Through Community Engagement: A Case Study in Palawan, Philippines

[1]Nur Hidayah, [1]Ika Maryani, [1]Dwi Sulisworo*

Affiliations:
[1] Universitas Ahmad Dahlan, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
*Correspondence: dwi.sulisworo@uad.ac.id

ABSTRACT

Entrepreneurship plays a crucial role in sustainable economic development, particularly in equipping young people with the skills needed to foster economic independence and contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This study examines the impact of a community engagement initiative aimed at increasing youth awareness of entrepreneurship through structured training sessions. The training involved 50 student participants and covered fundamental entrepreneurial concepts, business strategies, and innovation. Methods employed included presentation sessions, case studies, interactive discussions, and business simulations. The effectiveness of the program was assessed through Q&A sessions, revealing a significant increase in participants' understanding and interest in entrepreneurship. The findings highlight the importance of fostering entrepreneurial skills in youth as a means of addressing global economic challenges and promoting sustainable development. Expanding similar initiatives can further encourage young entrepreneurs to drive economic resilience and innovation.

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Introduction

Entrepreneurship is a key factor in sustainable economic development, acting as a catalyst for innovation, job creation, and economic resilience. For young people, developing entrepreneurial skills not only enhances economic independence but also significantly contributes to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 4 (Quality Education), Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), and Goal 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure). In today's era of rapid technological advancements and economic uncertainties, fostering entrepreneurship among youth is more urgent than ever. The increasing competition in the job market, along with the challenges posed by automation and globalization, calls for young people to be more innovative, adaptable, and proactive in shaping their futures. Encouraging entrepreneurship at an early stage can equip them with the necessary tools to create job opportunities, drive economic resilience, and support sustainable development.

Youth entrepreneurship is particularly crucial in tackling the global youth unemployment crisis. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), over 73 million young people were unemployed worldwide in 2022, underscoring the need for innovative solutions to integrate them into the labor market [1]. Entrepreneurship provides a pathway for young individuals to secure their own livelihoods while generating employment for others, thereby contributing to broader economic growth [2]. Moreover, young entrepreneurs often introduce fresh perspectives and disruptive ideas, which are essential for addressing complex global challenges such as climate change, inequality, and technological disruption [3].

Education systems play a vital role in nurturing entrepreneurial mindsets [4]. Integrating entrepreneurship education into school curricula can equip young people with skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and financial literacy, which are essential for entrepreneurial success [5]. Studies indicate that students exposed to entrepreneurship education are more likely to start their own businesses and demonstrate higher levels of innovation [6]. Additionally, mentorship programs and access to entrepreneurial networks can provide young individuals with the guidance and resources necessary to transform their ideas into viable businesses [7].

The role of technology in youth entrepreneurship is significant. Digital tools and platforms have lowered barriers to entry, allowing young entrepreneurs to access global markets, secure funding, and collaborate with peers across borders [8]. For example, crowdfunding platforms and digital payment systems have democratized access to capital, especially for young innovators in developing countries [9]. Furthermore, the rise of social media has enabled young entrepreneurs to market their products and services more effectively, reaching a wider audience at a lower cost [10].

Despite these opportunities, young entrepreneurs face substantial challenges, including limited access to funding, lack of experience, and regulatory barriers. Governments and private sector stakeholders must collaborate to create an enabling environment for youth entrepreneurship. This includes providing financial incentives, simplifying business registration processes, and offering targeted support programs for young innovators [11]. Initiatives such as startup incubators and accelerators have proven effective in nurturing young talent and helping them scale their ventures [12].

This article discusses the results of a community engagement initiative aimed at raising entrepreneurial awareness among youth through entrepreneurship training.

Material and Methods

This collaborative activity was conducted by Universitas Ahmad Dahlan (UAD) and Western Philippines University (WPU) on February 25, 2025, at the Main Campus of WPU. The initiative took the form of an entrepreneurship training program, which involved 50 students as participants from several faculties in WPU. The training was carefully designed to provide a comprehensive introduction to entrepreneurship, covering essential topics such as business strategies, innovation in the business world, and the foundational principles of starting and managing a successful venture.

The methods used included presentation sessions, which introduced entrepreneurship concepts and their relevance to the SDGs; case studies that analyzed the success and challenges faced by young entrepreneurs; interactive discussions through Q&A sessions to explore participants' understanding of opportunities and challenges in entrepreneurship; and business simulations where participants engaged in practical exercises to design a simple business model. See Fig. 1 for the activity phases.

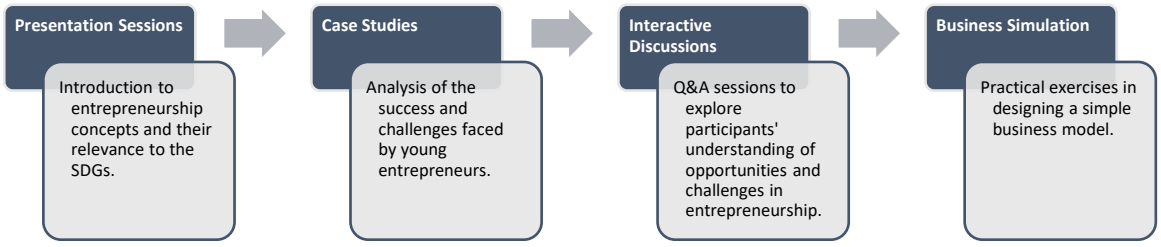


Fig. 1. The Community Engagement Phases

The study is limited by its short-term evaluation period and the lack of a control group. Recognizing these limitations is crucial to ensure transparency and rigor in the research process.

Results and Impact

The success of this initiative was meticulously evaluated using a structured Q&A (Question and Answer) method to measure the participants' increased awareness and understanding of entrepreneurship. This evaluation approach was designed to capture both qualitative and quantitative insights into how the program influenced the students' perceptions, knowledge, and attitudes toward entrepreneurship. The Q&A sessions were conducted in a controlled environment, allowing participants to reflect on their learning experiences and articulate their thoughts on the role of entrepreneurship in addressing economic and social challenges. Fig. 2 shows that the resource person shared the entrepreneurship idea.

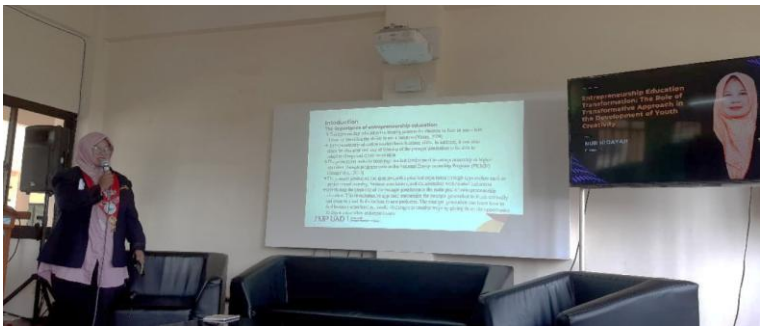


Fig. 2. The resource person shared the topics

The evaluation results revealed a significant increase in students' understanding and awareness of the importance of entrepreneurship in creating economic opportunities and fostering sustainable development. Participants demonstrated a deeper comprehension of key entrepreneurial concepts, such as innovation, risk management, and market analysis, as well as the broader impact of entrepreneurship on societal progress. Many students highlighted how the initiative helped them recognize entrepreneurship as a viable pathway to not only achieve personal financial independence but also contribute to their communities by addressing local challenges through innovative solutions.



Fig. 3. The situation during the training attended by the lecturers

Moreover, the majority of participants expressed a growing interest in further developing their entrepreneurial skills and applying the concepts they learned in real-life scenarios. This enthusiasm was evident in their responses, with many students sharing aspirations to start their own businesses or collaborate on entrepreneurial projects in the future. The initiative also inspired a sense of confidence among participants, as they reported feeling more equipped to navigate the complexities of the business world and leverage opportunities in an increasingly competitive and dynamic global economy.



Fig. 4. The participants were in front of the example of the community project

In addition to the measurable increase in awareness, the evaluation highlighted the program's success in fostering a mindset of creativity, resilience, and problem-solving among the students. These qualities are essential for entrepreneurial success and align closely with the broader goals of sustainable development, particularly in promoting decent work, economic growth, and innovation. The positive feedback from participants underscores the effectiveness of the initiative in not only imparting knowledge but also inspiring action and long-term engagement with entrepreneurial activities.

Overall, the evaluation findings demonstrate that the initiative achieved its objectives of enhancing awareness and understanding of entrepreneurship among participants. The results also suggest that similar programs have the potential to play a transformative role in equipping young people with the skills and mindset needed to drive economic and social progress. By continuing to support and expand such initiatives, stakeholders can empower the next generation of entrepreneurs to tackle global challenges and contribute to a more sustainable and inclusive future.

Community engagement through entrepreneurship training has proven effective in increasing youth awareness of the importance of entrepreneurship as a means of achieving the

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This improved understanding is expected to encourage the emergence of young, innovative entrepreneurs who contribute to sustainable economic development. Therefore, similar training programs must be continuously developed and expanded to reach more young people and create a broader impact. It is recommended that such programs incorporate mentorship, digital entrepreneurship modules, and partnerships with local industries to enhance relevance and effectiveness [13],[14]. In addition, integrating entrepreneurship education into formal curricula at secondary and tertiary levels can institutionalize entrepreneurial mindsets among youth [15]. Continuous evaluation and adaptation based on local economic and cultural contexts are also essential to ensure these initiatives remain impactful and inclusive [16].

Conclusion

Community engagement through entrepreneurship training has proven effective in increasing youth awareness of the importance of entrepreneurship as a means of achieving the SDGs. This improved understanding is expected to encourage the emergence of young, innovative entrepreneurs who contribute to sustainable economic development. Therefore, similar training programs must be continuously developed and expanded to reach more young people and create a broader impact.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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Authors



Nur Hidayah, M.Pd, is a Lecturer (Lektor) at Universitas Ahmad Dahlan (UAD), currently serving in the field of education. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Economic Education (Accounting) from Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta (UMS), which she completed in 2001. She earned her Master's degree in Vocational and Technology Education from Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta (UNY) in 2011. She is currently pursuing her Doctoral degree in Education at Universitas Ahmad Dahlan (UAD. (email: nur.hidayah@pgsd.uad.ac.id).



Dr. Ika Maryani, M. Pd. is an Associate Professor at the Department of Doctoral Program in Education, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Ahmad Dahlan (UAD), Yogyakarta, Indonesia. In 2022, she obtained her doctoral degree in educational studies focusing on science education. Her research interests lie in teacher education, science education, higher education, and learning innovation. Her works have been published in books, articles, and proceedings at the national and international level. (email: ika.maryani@pgsd.uad.ac.id).



Prof. Dr. Dwi Sulisworo is a Professor in Educational Technology and currently a faculty member in the Doctoral Program in Education at Universitas Ahmad Dahlan (UAD), Yogyakarta, Indonesia. His research interests focus on learning strategies through the integration of information and communication technology (ICT) to enhance educational outcomes. (email: dwi.sulisworo@uad.ac.id).