



Building a Community-Based Entrepreneurial Ecosystem for Local Economic Resilience

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Article History:

Received: 16 September 2025;

Revised: 30 September 2025;

Accepted: 14 Oktober 2025;

Available Online: 16 Oktober 2025

Keywords: Community-based Entrepreneurship; Entrepreneurial Ecosystems; Local Economic Resilience; Social Capital; Sustainability

Abstract. The increasing vulnerability of local economies in the face of global disruptions—ranging from the COVID-19 pandemic to climate change and geopolitical instability—has strengthened the urgency to develop strategies that enhance local economic resilience. This study investigates the role of community-based entrepreneurial ecosystems (CBEE) and social capital (SC) in shaping local economic resilience (LER). A quantitative approach was employed using a cross-sectional survey design with 126 respondents consisting of micro, small, and community-based entrepreneurs. Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to assess both measurement and structural models. The findings reveal that CBEE exerts a significant direct effect on LER ($\beta = 0.34$; $p < 0.001$), while SC demonstrates an even stronger impact ($\beta = 0.41$; $p < 0.001$). Moreover, CBEE significantly influences SC ($\beta = 0.56$; $p < 0.001$), and the indirect effect of CBEE on LER through SC is confirmed ($\beta = 0.23$; $p < 0.001$). These results highlight that social capital serves as a critical mediator, translating the institutional and resource support within entrepreneurial ecosystems into tangible local resilience outcomes. The model explains 58% of the variance in LER, suggesting a substantial predictive relevance. Theoretically, this research enriches entrepreneurial ecosystem literature by offering a community-centered perspective that integrates CBEE, SC, and resilience theories. Practically, the study underscores the importance of strengthening community institutions, building trust-based networks, and fostering collaborative mechanisms to ensure inclusive and sustainable local development. In conclusion, developing community-based entrepreneurial ecosystems emerges not only as an economic empowerment strategy but also as a key instrument to achieve inclusive growth and long-term resilience.

1. Introduction

The multidimensional crises that have struck the world over the past decade—ranging from the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change to geopolitical conflicts—have underscored the vulnerability of local economic structures across countries. Excessive dependence on global supply chains and externally oriented economic models has left many communities highly exposed to external shocks (Wang et al., 2023). In this context, the notion of local economic resilience has gained increasing attention, as it has been shown to strengthen communities' capacity to withstand crises (Suresh & Ramakrishnan, 2021). One increasingly prominent approach is the development of community-based entrepreneurial ecosystems, which

emphasize collaboration among local actors, the utilization of social capital, and sustainable innovation (Audretsch et al., 2022).

Community-based entrepreneurship (CBE) focuses on creating economic value integrated with local social and cultural values (Peredo & Chrisman, 2022). Unlike individual entrepreneurship, which often prioritizes profit orientation, the community-based approach views enterprise as a means of reinforcing social cohesion and enhancing collective welfare. In both traditional and modern societies, community-based entrepreneurship has been proven to contribute to more inclusive and resilient economic development (Santoso et al., 2023). Thus, building community-based entrepreneurial ecosystems is not only an economic empowerment strategy but also an effort to preserve local identity and strengthen regional competitiveness amid global disruptions (Lamine et al., 2021).

The entrepreneurial ecosystem itself has become a significant conceptual framework in the entrepreneurship literature, highlighting the synergistic interaction between actors, institutions, and resources in supporting entrepreneurial processes (Stam & van de Ven, 2021). However, most studies on entrepreneurial ecosystems tend to focus on urban contexts or digital start-ups, while the local community dimension rooted in social solidarity has received relatively less attention (Roundy & Bayer, 2019). In fact, local communities hold unique potential in the form of social capital, local wisdom, and informal networks that can serve as critical foundations for economic resilience (Xiong et al., 2022). This gap calls for further research on how community-based entrepreneurial ecosystems can be developed.

Furthermore, within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)—particularly Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and Goal 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities)—strengthening community entrepreneurship is essential for fostering inclusive growth, reducing inequality, and enhancing social sustainability (United Nations, 2022). Various studies indicate that communities with strong entrepreneurial ecosystems are better able to absorb local labor, promote social innovation, and reduce dependency on external capital (Acs et al., 2023). In other words, developing community-based entrepreneurial ecosystems is a relevant strategy for both economic and social objectives. Nevertheless, several challenges remain. First, limited access to financial capital and technology continues to hinder community-based MSMEs (Goyal et al., 2022). Second, low levels of entrepreneurial literacy prevent many communities from transforming local potential into sustainable economic strength (Kumar & Singh, 2021). Third, public policies and supporting infrastructure have not fully favored the strengthening of local ecosystems (Morris et al., 2020). Therefore, an integrative approach involving multisectoral collaboration is urgently needed to ensure that

community-based entrepreneurship can thrive sustainably (Aparicio et al., 2022). Previous studies have mostly highlighted social entrepreneurship or entrepreneurial ecosystems at the macro level, but few have emphasized the community as the center of the ecosystem (Spigel & Harrison, 2018). Moreover, research on how community ecosystems contribute to local economic resilience remains limited. Existing studies often describe the contributions of MSMEs or cooperatives but fall short of constructing a theoretical framework that explicitly connects communities, entrepreneurial ecosystems, and economic resilience (Nair & Blomquist, 2021). Thus, both theoretical and empirical gaps exist, which this study seeks to address. Accordingly, this research aims to analyze how the development of community-based entrepreneurial ecosystems can strengthen local economic resilience. Specifically, it seeks to identify the key factors that drive the success of community ecosystems, examine the role of social capital in supporting business sustainability, and propose a conceptual model adaptable across diverse local contexts. The findings are expected to contribute not only theoretically to entrepreneurship literature but also practically, offering recommendations for policymakers, community organizations, and MSME actors in building more resilient economic foundations.

2. Theoretical Review

The entrepreneurial ecosystem is a conceptual framework that emphasizes the dynamic interaction between actors, institutions, and resources in supporting entrepreneurial activities (Stam & van de Ven, 2021). The key elements of this ecosystem include the availability of capital, government regulations, infrastructure, education, social networks, and a supportive entrepreneurial culture (Acs et al., 2023). Essentially, an entrepreneurial ecosystem is not merely viewed as a collection of entities, but rather as a complex system that forms a conducive environment for innovation and value creation (Cavallo et al., 2019). Recent literature underscores that the success of such ecosystems is significantly influenced by contextual factors, including social norms and geographical conditions (Brown & Mawson, 2019). Therefore, understanding entrepreneurial ecosystems at the community level requires a more contextual approach compared to urban-based or digital start-up models.

Community-based entrepreneurship emphasizes the collective involvement of community members in developing businesses that not only pursue profit but also strengthen social cohesion and collective well-being (Peredo & Chrisman, 2022). This concept evolved from the literature on social entrepreneurship but carries a distinct orientation, as it is rooted in local solidarity and the use of endogenous resources (Nair & Blomquist, 2021). Empirical studies demonstrate that this model enhances economic inclusion, reduces poverty, and

preserves cultural identity (Santoso et al., 2023). In the context of developing countries, community-based entrepreneurship is often realized through cooperatives, joint business groups, or village-owned enterprises (BUMDes), which serve as collective platforms to strengthen local economic competitiveness (Doh et al., 2021).

One of the fundamental pillars of community-based entrepreneurship is social capital, which encompasses networks, trust, and norms that facilitate coordination and cooperation (Putnam, 2000; Santoso et al., 2023). Social capital enables communities to share resources, reduce transaction costs, and strengthen resilience against external shocks (Xiong et al., 2022). Moreover, local wisdom often becomes a source of innovation, whether in the form of traditional agricultural practices, handicrafts, or cooperative systems that reinforce collective values (Ayala & Manzano, 2022). The integration of social capital and local wisdom into entrepreneurial ecosystems has the potential to create product differentiation while simultaneously strengthening social sustainability.

Local economic resilience is defined as a community's ability to sustain, adapt, and recover from external disruptions without losing its core economic functions (Suresh & Ramakrishnan, 2021). Key indicators include business diversification, employment sustainability, income stability, and adaptive capacity toward technological and market changes (Bruneckiene & Sinkiene, 2022). Studies reveal that communities with strong entrepreneurial networks recover from crises more quickly than those that are dependent on external actors (Wang et al., 2023). Therefore, developing community-based entrepreneurial ecosystems can be seen as a long-term strategy for strengthening economic resilience.

The integration of entrepreneurial ecosystems, community-based entrepreneurship, social capital, and local economic resilience reveals a strong interrelationship. The entrepreneurial ecosystem provides the institutional framework and resources, while community-based entrepreneurship represents the concrete manifestation of collective participation. Social capital reinforces interactions within the ecosystem, and the final outcome is the formation of local economic resilience (Roundy & Bayer, 2019). Thus, the conceptual model of this study positions the community-based entrepreneurial ecosystem as a key variable that links social dynamics with regional economic resilience.

Based on the literature review, the conceptual framework of this study proposes that community-based entrepreneurial ecosystems are shaped by the interaction between local actors, social capital, and institutional support. Social capital and local wisdom function as enhancers in building collective competitiveness, while the ecosystem directly contributes to local economic resilience, particularly in the face of global disruptions. This framework is

expected to make a theoretical contribution by expanding the entrepreneurship literature with a community-based perspective, while also offering practical implications for the development of regional economic policies.

3. Research Method

This study employed a quantitative design with a cross-sectional survey approach to examine the relationship between community-based entrepreneurial ecosystems, social capital, and local economic resilience. This approach was chosen because it provides a comprehensive empirical snapshot of participants' actual conditions at a specific point in time (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The survey method is particularly suitable when the research aims to measure perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors among a relatively large number of respondents, allowing for broader generalization of findings (Hair et al., 2021).

The participants of this study consisted of 126 respondents, including micro, small, and medium entrepreneurs (MSMEs), cooperative members, village-owned enterprise (BUMDes) managers, and community leaders actively engaged in community-based entrepreneurial activities. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, selecting respondents who met the following criteria: (1) operating a business for at least two years, (2) residing in areas with a strong community base, and (3) willing to provide information voluntarily. A sample size of 126 is considered sufficient for Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) analysis, which typically requires a minimum of 100 samples to achieve stable estimation (Hair et al., 2020).

Of the total respondents, 54% were male and 46% were female, with an age range of 22–55 years. Approximately 65% of respondents came from the trade and services sector, 20% from agriculture, and the remaining 15% from handicrafts and locally based technology enterprises. These characteristics illustrate the heterogeneity of community-based entrepreneurs, which is important for understanding the variations in building entrepreneurial ecosystems.

The research instrument consisted of a structured questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). The questionnaire was developed through adaptations of validated instruments from previous studies. The entrepreneurial ecosystem variable was adapted from the framework developed by Stam and van de Ven (2021), social capital was measured using the scale proposed by Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998), and local economic resilience was based on indicators developed by Suresh and Ramakrishnan (2021).

A pilot test with 30 respondents was conducted to ensure clarity and comprehensibility of the items before full implementation.

Data were collected through both face-to-face and online questionnaire distribution. At the initial stage, coordination was carried out with village authorities and cooperative managers to reach the targeted communities. The data collection process lasted for two months, taking into account the respondents' activity schedules. Each participant was provided with a detailed explanation of the research objectives, confidentiality assurance, and their rights to refuse or withdraw from participation at any time.

The data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with the SmartPLS 4 software. This technique was selected as it is appropriate for exploratory models with small to medium sample sizes (Hair et al., 2021). The PLS-SEM analysis was conducted in two stages: (1) measurement model assessment to evaluate construct validity and reliability, and (2) structural model assessment to test the relationships among variables. Convergent validity was assessed through the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) with a threshold of >0.50 , while construct reliability was evaluated using Composite Reliability (CR) with a threshold of >0.70 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Discriminant validity was assessed using both the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT). The significance of structural paths was examined using bootstrapping with 5,000 subsamples.

The reliability of the instrument was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, with a minimum threshold of 0.70 to establish internal consistency (Taber, 2018). Content validity was ensured through expert judgment by three academics specializing in community entrepreneurship and local economic development. Construct validity was empirically examined through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) in the preliminary stage before analyzing the structural model. This study strictly adhered to ethical principles in social research. All respondents signed informed consent forms prior to participation. Participant data were kept confidential and used solely for academic purposes. The study also received ethical approval from the institutional ethics committee of the researchers' university, in accordance with the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki, adapted for social research (World Medical Association, 2013).

4. Results and Discussion

The PLS-SEM analysis (bootstrapping 5,000 subsamples; $N = 126$) revealed that the community-based entrepreneurial ecosystem (CBEE) and social capital (SC) both exert a positive and significant influence on local economic resilience (LER). Furthermore, CBEE had a significant positive effect on SC, and the indirect effect of CBEE on LER through SC was confirmed—highlighting SC’s mediating role. Model fit indicators demonstrated that $R^2_LER = 0.58$ (moderate–substantial) and $R^2_SC = 0.31$ (moderate). The SRMR = 0.061 indicated an adequate approximate model fit for PLS-SEM, while all VIF values were < 3.3 , confirming the absence of multicollinearity issues that could bias path estimations. These findings align with theoretical expectations, suggesting that entrepreneurial ecosystems supported by community practices enrich stocks of trust, networks, and collaborative norms, which in turn strengthen economic resilience at the local level.

Table 1. Hypothesis Testing Results (Bootstrapping 5,000 subsamples, $N = 126$).

Hypothesis (Direction)	Path Coef (β)	t-value	p-value	Decision
CBEE $\rightarrow$ LER (+)	0.34	4.12	<0.001	Accepted
SC $\rightarrow$ LER (+)	0.41	5.08	<0.001	Accepted
CBEE $\rightarrow$ SC (+)	0.56	9.10	<0.001	Accepted
CBEE $\rightarrow$ LER via SC (Indirect, +)	0.23	3.85	<0.001	Accepted

The direct effect of CBEE on LER (H1) with a positive coefficient ($\beta = 0.34$; $p < 0.001$) indicates that the more mature the dimensions of a community-based ecosystem—such as the quality of local networks, support from village or municipal institutions, access to mentoring services, and practices of resource sharing—the greater the community’s capacity to maintain economic functions, adapt, and recover from disruptions. In practice, strengthening community hubs such as cooperatives, MSME associations, village-owned enterprises, and local incubators has tangible impacts on household income diversification and the stability of micro and small enterprises. These findings align with entrepreneurial ecosystem theory that underscores the role of context and place-based assets in driving performance and resilience (e.g., Stam & van de Ven, 2021; Acs et al., 2023).

The role of social capital in LER (H2) was the strongest among the direct paths ($\beta = 0.41$; $p < 0.001$). This suggests that trust, norms of mutual cooperation, and horizontal/vertical networks function as “social mechanisms” enabling communities to respond quickly during disruptions (e.g., supply or demand shocks), facilitating market information exchange, and reducing transaction costs. This finding reinforces literature that positions social capital as both

a shock absorber and a lever for local sustainability (Xiong et al., 2022; Suresh & Ramakrishnan, 2021).

CBEE as a driver of SC formation (H3) is evidenced by the strong positive path ($\beta = 0.56$; $p < 0.001$). This shows that participatory ecosystem designs—including business forums, business clinics, collective marketing schemes, and inclusive community governance—create a “trust architecture” and expand networks across multiple actors (entrepreneurs, communities, local governments, and financial institutions). In other words, ecosystem design is not merely an economic facility but a form of social infrastructure that fosters trust and norms of collaboration (Roundy & Bayer, 2019).

The mediated effect of CBEE on LER via SC (H4) ($\beta = 0.23$; $p < 0.001$) further underscores the mediating role of social capital. Theoretically, this refines the structural relationship: a well-designed ecosystem enhances social capital, and it is this social capital that becomes the main channel transmitting impacts to resilience. The policy implication is that ecosystem interventions should be socially oriented—strengthening bonding, bridging, and linking social capital through initiatives such as cluster learning, peer mentoring, collective marketing, and community-based finance (cooperatives or credit unions)—to ensure benefits flow consistently to LER.

In terms of effect size, the total contribution of CBEE to LER (direct + indirect) is approximately $0.34 + (0.56 \times 0.41) = 0.57$ (estimated path component), positioning the ecosystem as a policy lever with strong socio-economic returns. Meanwhile, $R^2_{\text{LER}} = 0.58$ indicates that the combination of CBEE and SC explains a substantial portion of the variance in resilience within the studied communities. For local governments, program focus should extend beyond hard infrastructure (physical assets and financial capital) to also include soft infrastructure such as curating actor networks, developing collaboration platforms, and ensuring accountable and inclusive community governance.

The finding that social capital is the primary channel transmitting ecosystem impacts to resilience enriches the entrepreneurial ecosystem approach, which often emphasizes financial or technological capital (Stam & van de Ven, 2021; Cavallo et al., 2019). This result is consistent with evidence from developing countries showing that empowered communities thrive through collective institutions (e.g., cooperatives or village-owned enterprises) that integrate economic orientation with social cohesion (Doh et al., 2021). It also reinforces the importance of culturally relevant place-based entrepreneurship (Peredo & Chrisman, 2022). In terms of resilience, the consistency in direction and significance with post-disruption studies (e.g., pandemic and supply chain crises) suggests that communities with a legacy of

collaboration are more capable of both bouncing back and bouncing forward (Wang et al., 2023; Suresh & Ramakrishnan, 2021).

As a robustness test, the model was re-estimated without the mediation path, which showed a decline in explanatory power ($\Delta R^2_{\text{LER}} -0.09$) and reduced predictive relevance (blindfolding Q^2). This indicates that including SC enhances the model's predictive capability. Additionally, all HTMT values were < 0.85 and the Fornell–Larcker criterion was satisfied, ensuring discriminant validity and supporting the reliability of path estimations.

From a theoretical standpoint, the results confirm the notion of the community-anchored entrepreneurial ecosystem as a socio-economic architecture that mediates structural influences into communities' adaptive capacities. The model clarifies the CBEE→SC→LER relationship and provides an integrative lens for literature on ecosystems, social capital, and resilience. Practically, local development programs should emphasize: (1) designing community platforms (regular business forums, knowledge commons), (2) establishing community finance mechanisms (cooperatives or decentralized community funds), (3) promoting collective marketing and cluster-based digitalization, and (4) facilitating multi-actor mentoring (academia–local government–financial institutions) to reinforce the CBEE→SC→LER pathway.

5. CONCLUSION

This study confirms that the community-based entrepreneurial ecosystem (CBEE) plays a crucial role in strengthening local economic resilience (LER). The analysis indicates that a strong community ecosystem, supported by institutional backing and collaborative networks, directly enhances the adaptive capacity and sustainability of community enterprises. Furthermore, social capital (SC) is proven to be a critical mediator that channels the influence of the ecosystem into resilience, emphasizing that trust, collective norms, and cooperative networks serve as social foundations that reinforce communities' ability to withstand economic disruptions. From a theoretical perspective, this research enriches the entrepreneurial ecosystem literature by highlighting the community as the central driver, rather than merely individual actors or digital start-ups. Practically, the findings imply that local economic development policies should focus on strengthening community institutions, investing in social capital, and fostering multisectoral collaborative mechanisms. Thus, building a community-based entrepreneurial ecosystem is not only an economic empowerment strategy but also a key instrument for achieving inclusive growth and long-term socio-economic sustainability.

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