

From Deficit-Based Support to Inclusive Entrepreneurship: An Asset-Based Community Development Analysis of Student Entrepreneurs in Higher Education

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Abstract

Entrepreneurship development in higher education institutions has traditionally focused on financial assistance, standardized training modules, and key performance indicator (KPI) achievement. While these initiatives provide important support for student entrepreneurs, they often overlook the existing assets, capabilities, and community resources already possessed by students. Drawing upon the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) framework, this study examines the entrepreneurial assets available among student entrepreneurs participating in the BSN i-TEKAD program at Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM). A qualitative research design employing document analysis was adopted. Data were collected from 21 Canva assignments prepared by student entrepreneurs and analyzed using deductive thematic analysis based on five ABCD components: human capital, social capital, physical capital, cultural capital, and economic capital. The findings revealed that participants possessed diverse entrepreneurial assets, including product development skills, customer communication abilities, social support networks, digital technologies, entrepreneurial values, and basic financial resources. Human capital emerged through entrepreneurial competencies and prior business experience, while social capital was reflected in support from family, peers, customers, suppliers, and campus communities. Participants also demonstrated access to operational resources, positive entrepreneurial values, and basic economic resources that supported their business activities. The study highlights that student entrepreneurs should not be viewed solely as recipients of assistance but as individuals and communities possessing valuable assets that can be mobilized for sustainable entrepreneurship development. The findings suggest that entrepreneurship programs should move beyond deficit-based approaches and adopt asset-based strategies that strengthen existing capacities, promote empowerment, and foster collaborative entrepreneurial ecosystems. The study contributes to the growing literature on asset-based entrepreneurship development and offers practical implications for designing more sustainable and community-centered entrepreneurship initiatives in higher education institutions.

Keywords

Asset-Based Community Development, student entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial community, higher education, entrepreneurship development, community assets.