

Research Article

Mapping Community Innovation Dynamics in Strengthening Entrepreneurial Mindsets and Economic Self Reliance Across Local Development Initiatives

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Abstract: Community innovation plays a vital role in fostering sustainable development and economic self reliance within local communities. This study explores the dynamics of community driven innovation, focusing on how it contributes to the development of entrepreneurial mindsets and the empowerment of local populations. The research examines the key factors influencing innovation in community contexts, including collaborative learning, social networks, and localized innovation practices. These elements are critical in enhancing entrepreneurial capabilities, providing access to resources, and fostering economic resilience. The study highlights the importance of integrating entrepreneurial mindset development into local development programs to enhance the sustainability and adaptability of community driven initiatives. It also compares the community innovation model with traditional linear development models, emphasizing the added value of innovation driven, dynamic approaches to addressing complex socio economic challenges. The findings suggest that community driven innovation leads to long term self reliance and economic empowerment, as it nurtures a culture of entrepreneurship that adapts to local needs and conditions. The study calls for the adoption of holistic, innovation oriented strategies in community development, which consider not only economic growth but also social inclusion and environmental sustainability. Additionally, the paper recommends further research on the intersection of innovation, entrepreneurship, and economic self reliance, focusing on how local innovation initiatives can be scaled and integrated into broader development policies.

Keywords: Collaborative Learning; Economic Self-Reliance; Entrepreneurial Mindset; Social Networks; Community Innovation.

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1. Introduction

Community innovation refers to the intentional, bottom up disruption and transformation of local structures and systems, aimed at improving the quality of life within communities. This process is led by local actors who collaborate to generate solutions tailored to their specific needs and values. Community innovation can manifest in various forms, including technological, social, and organizational innovations, and often arises from grassroots initiatives designed to address local challenges such as aging populations, unemployment, and inequality [1], [2]. These innovations help strengthen local economies, enhance social cohesion, and promote sustainability, making them critical drivers of community development.

The economic impact of community innovation is substantial. By fostering new business opportunities, community innovation stimulates local economic growth and revitalizes existing enterprises. This process contributes to the establishment of new businesses and enhances the entrepreneurial ecosystem within the community [3]. Furthermore, community innovation plays a crucial role in social cohesion by promoting solidarity, collective agency,

and resilience among community members. This collaborative approach fosters trust and cooperation, which are vital for building a cohesive and resilient community [1].

Another key benefit of community innovation is its contribution to sustainability. Many local innovation initiatives focus on addressing environmental challenges and promoting the efficient use of resources, thus contributing to long term ecological well being and resilience against climate change [4]. Through these initiatives, communities can create sustainable development models that not only improve the quality of life but also protect natural resources for future generations. This emphasis on sustainability is increasingly important in a world facing environmental degradation and climate related crises [2], [4].

A significant factor that influences the success of community innovation is the development of an entrepreneurial mindset. This cognitive pattern enables individuals to recognize opportunities, navigate uncertainty, and mobilize resources effectively, which are essential skills for driving innovation within the community [5]. An entrepreneurial mindset is crucial for fostering local innovation, as it allows individuals to identify and seize opportunities for creative problem solving and sustainable development [1]. By cultivating these skills, communities are better equipped to address local challenges and achieve long term self reliance.

The benefits of an entrepreneurial mindset extend beyond economic development. Individuals with an entrepreneurial mindset are resilient and adaptable, essential qualities for sustaining community initiatives in dynamic and uncertain environments [6]. This resilience enables entrepreneurs to navigate challenges and adapt their strategies as needed, ensuring the sustainability of community driven initiatives. Additionally, entrepreneurs are often adept at building and leveraging social networks, which is crucial for fostering collaboration and ensuring that community initiatives are inclusive and responsive to local needs [6], [7].

Educational approaches that foster entrepreneurial mindsets are essential for driving innovation in communities. Programs that incorporate experiential learning, such as real life projects and challenge based learning, are particularly effective in developing these skills [8], [9]. By providing opportunities for individuals to engage with real world problems, these educational approaches help develop practical solutions and encourage a culture of innovation within the community. Integrating interdisciplinary collaboration into entrepreneurship education further broadens its impact, fostering a culture of creative problem solving and innovation that can support community development and empowerment [8].

Traditional community development models have often focused on generating short term economic outcomes, such as immediate job creation and economic growth. These models typically rely on attracting new businesses from outside the region a strategy known as "hunting and gathering." While this approach can yield quick results, it often fails to foster sustainable wealth creation or long term economic stability [10]. The focus on immediate economic gains overlooks the importance of cultivating an entrepreneurial mindset within the community, which is essential for fostering long term economic self reliance and innovation [11].

The neglect of entrepreneurial mindset formation within traditional community development models can hinder the long term success of local economies. While efforts to start new ventures are often encouraged, the development of existing enterprises is frequently overlooked. This focus on short term economic objectives can prevent the community from developing an entrepreneurial culture, one that is necessary for adapting to changing economic conditions and fostering sustained innovation and growth [12]. As a result, communities may struggle to build the entrepreneurial spirit needed to sustain long term prosperity and resilience [10].

The primary objective of this research is to map the dynamics of community innovation and understand their role in fostering entrepreneurial mindsets and economic self reliance. By examining how community driven innovation can support the development of entrepreneurial ecosystems, the research aims to identify strategies that can enhance both immediate economic outcomes and long term entrepreneurial capacity. Community driven innovation, often characterized by local actors collaborating to create solutions for local challenges, plays a significant role in strengthening entrepreneurial mindsets and fostering sustainable economic development [3], [4]. This process of grassroots innovation has been shown to not only address immediate economic issues but also contribute to the development of a long term entrepreneurial culture that promotes economic self reliance [1], [2].

In doing so, this research seeks to contribute to the development of community driven economic models that are both innovative and sustainable. Such models leverage local resources and strengths to create sustainable business ecosystems, which are essential for fostering entrepreneurial capacity in the long term [5], [13]. By mapping these dynamics, the research aims to offer actionable insights for policymakers and community leaders, helping them design interventions that promote entrepreneurial innovation, foster resilience, and ultimately support economic self reliance [8], [14].

Key areas of focus in this research include: (1) Community Innovation Dynamics, which explores how local knowledge and grassroots innovations contribute to both community development and entrepreneurial activities [10], [11]; (2) The Role of Entrepreneurial Ecosystems, which investigates the interplay between various stakeholders such as government, academia, and local entrepreneurs in creating supportive environments for entrepreneurship [12]; and (3) Sustainable Economic Self Reliance, which looks at how models that integrate short term economic activities with long term strategies for fostering entrepreneurial mindsets can support the development of self sustaining economic systems [15].

The expected outcomes of this research include an enhanced understanding of community innovation and its role in driving local entrepreneurship. This understanding can provide important policy implications, offering recommendations for policymakers on how to support and nurture entrepreneurial ecosystems through targeted interventions and support mechanisms [10], [11]. Moreover, the research aims to develop a holistic model for sustainable development, combining immediate economic activities with strategies for fostering long term entrepreneurial mindsets and economic resilience [16].

2. Literature Review

Review of Existing Studies on Community Innovation, Economic Self Reliance, and Entrepreneurial Mindsets

Community innovation has a significant role in fostering economic self reliance and promoting entrepreneurial activities. Studies emphasize the strong interrelationship between community driven initiatives and entrepreneurship, which contribute to local and national development [17]. Entrepreneurial communities serve as a bridge between macroeconomic development and micro level entrepreneurial actions, illustrating the importance of grassroots driven economic growth [18]. These communities are instrumental in fostering innovation by utilizing local resources and networks, which in turn can lead to sustainable economic development [19]. Community based innovations help create new business opportunities, provide solutions to local challenges, and empower individuals to contribute to economic self reliance, thus addressing broader societal needs.

The development of an entrepreneurial mindset is a crucial factor in community innovation and economic self reliance. Entrepreneurial education and mentorship have been identified as key drivers of entrepreneurial thinking, which enables individuals to identify opportunities, engage in strategic problem solving, and build self efficacy [20]. Experiential learning and mentorship programs are essential to fostering an entrepreneurial identity, especially in technical and vocational education and training (TVET) settings, where practical knowledge can enhance students' innovation capabilities and entrepreneurial intentions [21]. Such educational practices align with theories like Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) and the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), both of which emphasize the importance of self belief and perceived feasibility in entrepreneurial success [22].

Exploration of the Relationship Between Innovation and Entrepreneurship in Community Contexts

The relationship between innovation and entrepreneurship in community settings is inherently synergistic. Innovation often leads to new business opportunities, and when coupled with entrepreneurial activity, it enhances the capacity of communities to manage and commercialize these innovations effectively [23]. Entrepreneurs are central to the innovation process, as they navigate the challenges of bringing new ideas to market and ensure that innovations align with community needs. The concept of Communities of Innovation (CoInv) underscores the importance of entrepreneurial engagement in managing innovation activities that drive both economic growth and operational sustainability [18]. This interplay

between entrepreneurship and innovation creates a robust environment for long term development, particularly in communities where local actors actively drive change.

The cultural context plays a pivotal role in the success of both innovation and entrepreneurship. Cultural values, norms, and social structures can either facilitate or hinder entrepreneurial and innovative activities [16]. In environments where entrepreneurial activities are encouraged, there is often greater success in innovation commercialization and adoption. Conversely, in areas where entrepreneurship is less valued, the potential for innovation may be underutilized [19]. This suggests that fostering a supportive cultural environment is essential for leveraging the full potential of both innovation and entrepreneurship in community contexts. Ultimately, this relationship contributes to economic growth by enabling the development of disruptive technologies, new business models, and social initiatives that can address pressing local and global challenges [24].

Critique of Linear Development Models and the Need for a Dynamic, Innovation Oriented Approach

The linear model of innovation, often characterized by a unidirectional path from research to marketable innovations, has long been a fundamental framework for understanding innovation processes. However, this model has increasingly been criticized for its oversimplification of the innovation landscape. It fails to account for the complexity and multifaceted nature of the innovation process, particularly in addressing socio economic challenges within local communities [25]. The linear model assumes a straightforward sequence of stages, from basic research through to commercialization, but in practice, innovation is often nonlinear and iterative, involving feedback loops and cross fertilization between different stages [26]. As a result, innovation policies based on this model have struggled to deliver desired outcomes, such as addressing inequality or stimulating sustainable economic growth [18].

To overcome these limitations, there is a growing call for a dynamic, innovation oriented approach that integrates social and economic dimensions. A more holistic framework would incorporate the complexity of community driven innovation, considering local contexts and resources while fostering inclusive innovation processes [27]. This approach would emphasize the importance of community based solutions, recognizing that innovation is not only about technological development but also about addressing societal needs, such as poverty, unemployment, and social inclusion [28]. In contrast to the rigid, industrial focused linear model, the dynamic approach proposes adaptive planning and strategies tailored to the unique challenges of different regions, enabling more responsive and context sensitive solutions [29].

Identification of Gaps in Literature

One significant gap in the literature is the integration of entrepreneurial mindset development into local development programs. While entrepreneurial education has been recognized as crucial for fostering innovation and strategic problem solving, many local development initiatives fail to fully incorporate these principles [30]. Studies have shown that integrating entrepreneurial education into community programs can significantly enhance participants' capacity to innovate and solve complex problems. However, such integration is often isolated, and the focus on entrepreneurship within community development remains underdeveloped [31]. For example, while some community development programs, such as the Rural Community Development Program, incorporate entrepreneurship practices with measurable success, these efforts are often not systematically integrated into formal education curricula, limiting their broader impact [26].

Furthermore, the existing literature also lacks sufficient exploration of how entrepreneurial mindset development can be embedded across various community sectors. Although some studies emphasize the role of education in fostering entrepreneurial intentions and innovative thinking, much of the existing research remains fragmented and fails to propose concrete models for integrating entrepreneurial mindsets into long term local development strategies [32]. There is a need for interdisciplinary approaches that combine entrepreneurship education with local development initiatives, creating synergies between formal education systems and community based projects [29]. This integration would foster a culture of innovation that is not confined to business sectors alone but extends to a broader range of community driven initiatives, contributing to sustainable economic and social development.

3. Proposed Method

This study employs a qualitative research design to examine community innovation dynamics and their role in fostering entrepreneurial mindsets and economic self reliance. Using innovation mapping techniques, the study visualizes the flow of innovation within communities, identifying key actors, resources, and networks that support entrepreneurial activities. Data will be collected through case studies of selected community development programs, chosen based on their focus on innovation, entrepreneurial practices, and community empowerment. These programs will be evaluated for their integration of local resources, impact on economic outcomes, and emphasis on collaborative efforts involving local actors and external partners. The analytical framework combines elements of the Theory of Planned Behavior and Social Cognitive Theory to assess how entrepreneurial mindsets are developed through innovation processes and their impact on economic outcomes, such as job creation and income generation. This approach will also consider the broader social and cultural context, recognizing that community dynamics, such as local power structures and social networks, significantly influence both innovation and entrepreneurship. By examining these factors, the study aims to provide valuable insights into how community driven innovation contributes to sustainable economic development and the formation of entrepreneurial behaviors.

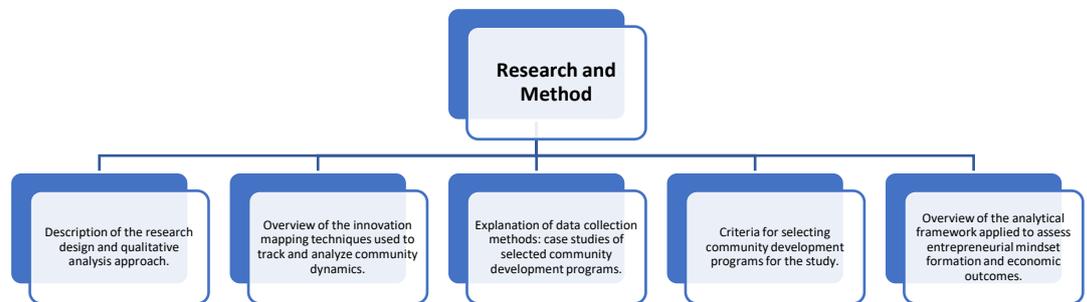


Figure 1. Research Methodology Flowchart Structure.

Description of the research design and qualitative analysis approach

This study adopts a qualitative research design to explore the dynamics of community innovation, focusing on how these dynamics contribute to the formation of entrepreneurial mindsets and economic self reliance within local development programs. The qualitative approach allows for an in depth understanding of the complex processes involved in community driven innovation, as well as the subjective experiences of participants in these initiatives. By using qualitative methods, the research can capture the nuanced relationships between innovation, entrepreneurship, and local socio economic contexts, providing a rich analysis of how entrepreneurial behaviors are shaped by community driven innovation efforts.

Overview of the innovation mapping techniques used to track and analyze community dynamics

To track and analyze community dynamics, the study employs innovation mapping techniques. Innovation mapping is a tool that visualizes the flow of innovation activities within communities, identifying key actors, resources, and networks involved in these processes. This method provides a clear understanding of how innovation evolves in a community setting, from idea generation to implementation, and highlights the collaborative efforts necessary for fostering innovation. Through this technique, the study is able to observe how different elements of the community such as local resources, networks, and leadership interact to support entrepreneurial activities and drive economic self reliance.

Explanation of data collection methods

The data collection for this study involves case studies of selected community development programs. Case studies are chosen because they allow for a detailed examination of real world examples, capturing the context, processes, and outcomes of community driven innovation. This method is particularly effective in understanding the specific challenges and successes faced by communities in fostering innovation and entrepreneurship. By selecting

diverse community development programs, the study can compare different approaches and outcomes, providing a comprehensive view of how community dynamics impact entrepreneurial mindset development and economic outcomes.

Criteria for selecting community development programs for the study

The criteria for selecting community development programs include their focus on fostering innovation and entrepreneurship, the extent to which local resources and networks are leveraged, and their impact on economic self reliance and community empowerment. Programs that integrate entrepreneurship education or practices into their activities are prioritized, as they are likely to provide more insights into how entrepreneurial mindsets are developed within communities. Additionally, programs that involve collaboration between local actors, educational institutions, and external partners are considered, as they are expected to offer valuable perspectives on cross sectoral innovation and community development.

Overview of the analytical framework applied to assess entrepreneurial mindset formation and economic outcomes

The analytical framework applied to assess the formation of entrepreneurial mindsets and economic outcomes draws upon established theories of innovation and entrepreneurship. The framework combines elements of the Theory of Planned Behavior, which examines the factors influencing entrepreneurial intentions, and Social Cognitive Theory, which focuses on self efficacy and learning through social interactions. This framework enables the study to analyze how entrepreneurial mindsets develop in response to innovation processes and how these mindsets contribute to economic outcomes such as job creation, income generation, and increased self reliance. The framework also considers the broader social and cultural context, recognizing that community dynamics, including local power structures and social networks, play a crucial role in shaping both innovation and entrepreneurial behaviors.

4. Results and Discussion

The study highlights that community driven innovation is significantly enhanced through collaborative learning and strong social networks. Collaborative learning fosters entrepreneurial skills by encouraging shared knowledge and collective problem solving, while social networks provide essential resources, information, and support for successful entrepreneurial ventures. These dynamics create a collaborative environment that strengthens innovation and entrepreneurship within communities, contributing to long term economic self reliance. However, the study also identifies challenges, particularly the lack of systematic integration of entrepreneurial education into broader community development programs. This gap hinders the full potential of entrepreneurship in driving sustainable community growth, suggesting the need for a more cohesive approach that connects education and local development initiatives.

Results

The study revealed several key findings related to the dynamics of community innovation and the development of entrepreneurial mindsets. First, the role of collaborative learning emerged as a crucial factor in enhancing entrepreneurial capabilities. In community driven innovation programs, participants engaged in collaborative learning activities, which helped them share knowledge, learn from each other, and solve problems collectively. This process contributed significantly to the development of entrepreneurial skills, such as opportunity recognition, resource mobilization, and risk taking. Collaborative learning not only enhanced the individuals' entrepreneurial capabilities but also fostered a sense of ownership and empowerment within the community, strengthening the overall innovation process.

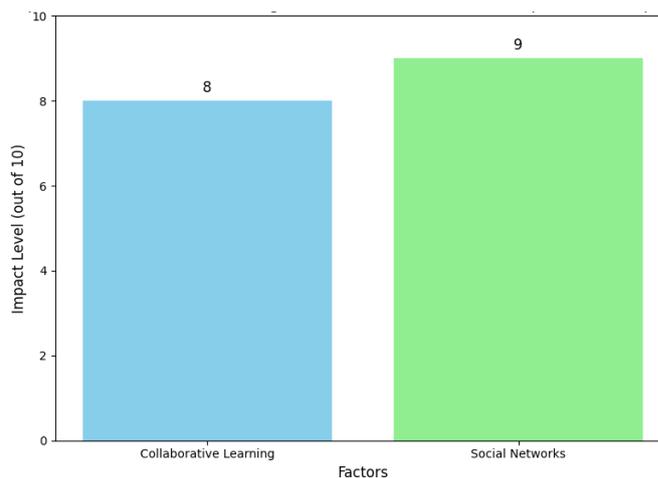


Figure 2. Impact of Collaborative Learning and Social Networks on Entrepreneurial Capabilities.

Here is a bar chart illustrating the impact of Collaborative Learning and Social Networks on enhancing entrepreneurial capabilities. The data shows that social networks have a slightly higher impact (9/10) compared to collaborative learning (8/10), reflecting the strong role that networks play in fostering innovation and entrepreneurship within community driven programs. This supports the findings discussed in the results section, where the importance of both factors in enhancing entrepreneurial skills was emphasized.

Secondly, the importance of social networks was evident in fostering both innovation and entrepreneurship within the community. The study found that strong social networks, built through collaboration and shared goals, provided access to resources, knowledge, and support necessary for successful entrepreneurial ventures. These networks facilitated the exchange of ideas, information, and technical expertise, helping community members navigate challenges and seize entrepreneurial opportunities. The presence of robust social networks also encouraged collaboration among local businesses, educational institutions, and government entities, creating a fertile ground for innovation to thrive.

Discussion

These findings suggest that community driven innovation processes are deeply influenced by the dynamics of collaborative learning and social networks. The integration of collaborative learning within community development programs not only enhances the entrepreneurial mindset of individuals but also fosters a collective sense of responsibility for innovation and progress. This aligns with the broader understanding that entrepreneurship is not only an individual pursuit but also a communal effort, where shared knowledge and collective problem solving are key to driving sustainable change and innovation. As such, fostering a collaborative environment within community development initiatives can have far reaching effects on entrepreneurial development and the economic outcomes of the community.

The role of social networks also highlights the importance of creating interconnected, supportive environments for innovation. Strong networks enable the flow of ideas, resources, and information, which are essential for the successful implementation and scaling of innovations. This finding reinforces the idea that entrepreneurship does not occur in isolation but rather thrives in ecosystems where individuals and organizations collaborate to address common challenges. By nurturing social networks, communities can create an entrepreneurial ecosystem that supports continuous innovation, fosters new business ventures, and contributes to long term economic self reliance.

However, the study also identified several challenges faced by local development programs in integrating entrepreneurial thinking and practices. One key challenge was the lack of systematic integration of entrepreneurial education into broader community development initiatives. Although many programs incorporate elements of entrepreneurship, they often remain isolated or disconnected from other aspects of community development, limiting their overall impact. Additionally, there is often a lack of coordination between formal educational systems and community based programs, which prevents the full potential of entrepreneurial education from being realized. Addressing these gaps requires a more

integrated approach that links entrepreneurial education with local development strategies to create a cohesive and sustainable innovation ecosystem.

5. Comparison

The community innovation model presents a stark contrast to traditional development models, primarily in its approach to fostering sustainable growth. Traditional development models often rely on linear, top down processes that focus on predefined economic outcomes, such as increased production or GDP growth. These models tend to prioritize industrial development and economic growth as end goals, without considering the broader social and environmental impacts. In contrast, community innovation models are more dynamic and inclusive, focusing on local resources, networks, and participatory processes to create solutions that are context specific and socially relevant. Community innovation is more adaptable and can address complex socio economic issues such as inequality, unemployment, and environmental sustainability, which traditional models often overlook.

One of the most significant added values of community innovation is the emphasis on developing entrepreneurial mindsets within local communities. Beyond merely achieving economic outcomes, fostering an entrepreneurial mindset empowers individuals and communities to recognize opportunities, solve problems creatively, and take ownership of their development. This mindset contributes to long term resilience by helping individuals navigate uncertain environments and adapt to changing circumstances. While traditional development models focus primarily on measurable economic growth, community innovation integrates education, self efficacy, and social responsibility, encouraging a more holistic approach to development. This entrepreneurial thinking is essential for sustaining innovation and ensuring that communities are not solely dependent on external support.

A dynamic, innovation driven approach offers several benefits over linear, outcome focused models. Innovation driven approaches are flexible and responsive to the unique needs and challenges of local communities. They focus on continuous learning, collaboration, and adaptation, which allow communities to address evolving challenges and generate sustainable solutions. In contrast, linear models often impose fixed structures and goals, limiting the ability of communities to adapt and innovate in real time. A dynamic approach encourages cross sectoral collaboration, social inclusion, and long term sustainability, which are key to fostering economic and social resilience. By focusing on innovation and community driven processes, this approach empowers local actors to lead their development, rather than relying on external interventions.

Examples of communities that have successfully implemented innovation driven approaches highlight the potential for sustainable self reliance and empowerment. In regions where local innovation initiatives have been prioritized, communities have seen improvements in social cohesion, economic self reliance, and environmental sustainability. For instance, community based renewable energy projects in rural areas have not only addressed energy access issues but also stimulated local entrepreneurship and job creation. These projects have empowered communities to take control of their resources, fostering a sense of agency and resilience. Similarly, programs that integrate local knowledge with entrepreneurial practices, such as sustainable tourism in rural regions, have contributed to both economic and environmental sustainability. These examples demonstrate how innovation driven models can lead to lasting positive change, far beyond the economic outputs emphasized by traditional development models.

6. Conclusions

This study highlights the critical role of community driven innovation in fostering entrepreneurial mindsets and promoting economic self reliance within local development initiatives. Key findings indicate that collaborative learning, social networks, and localized innovation practices are essential drivers of entrepreneurship and innovation in community settings. Collaborative learning enhances entrepreneurial capabilities by fostering knowledge sharing and problem solving, while strong social networks provide the resources and support necessary for innovation to thrive. Localized innovation practices, tailored to the specific needs of communities, contribute significantly to strengthening economic self reliance and reducing dependency on external support. These findings underscore the importance of community led innovation processes that are inclusive, adaptive, and context specific.

The study emphasizes the need to integrate entrepreneurial mindset development into local development programs. While many community initiatives focus on economic outputs,

fostering entrepreneurial thinking within these programs can lead to more sustainable and resilient communities. Entrepreneurial mindset development not only enhances innovation capabilities but also empowers individuals to take ownership of their development, adapt to changes, and navigate challenges. For policymakers and development program designers, this means incorporating entrepreneurial education and practices into community development strategies to foster long term empowerment and self sufficiency.

Based on the study's findings, it is recommended that policymakers and community development program designers adopt dynamic, innovation oriented approaches that emphasize collaboration, inclusion, and local empowerment. These approaches should prioritize community driven processes and recognize the importance of local resources and networks in fostering sustainable economic and social development. A shift from linear, outcome focused models to more flexible, adaptive strategies is crucial for addressing the complex challenges faced by communities in today's rapidly changing world.

Finally, further research is needed to explore the intersection of innovation, entrepreneurship, and economic self reliance in community contexts. Future studies could examine how different types of community driven innovation initiatives interact with entrepreneurial education and how these interactions contribute to long term economic and social outcomes. Additionally, research could explore the role of cultural and social factors in shaping innovation and entrepreneurship in various community settings, providing deeper insights into how these processes can be nurtured and scaled.

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