

# Empowering Youth for Impact: The Role of Education and Training in Boosting Social Entrepreneurship in Sabah

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## Abstract

This paper explores how education and training programmed can enhance youth social entrepreneurship in Sabah, Malaysia. Social entrepreneurship is a big solution to social and economic problems especially to marginalized B40 communities. Nevertheless, there are limited resource and education as well for youths in Sabah. The purpose of this research is to demonstrate how government support can augment efforts to teach young people skills and build networks in entrepreneurship training. The study therefore examines how education affects the success of youth social enterprises using the Resource-Based View (RBV) theory. Entrepreneurial skills and access to networks are the main factors studied while government support is used as a moderating factor. The study focusses on the success of youth social enterprises. The data will be gathered through survey study of Sabah youths aged between 18 to 35 who have attended entrepreneurial education programs. Respondents will be selected using a purposive sampling method, while the data will be analyzed using tools such as SPSS and SmartPLS. This way the study hopes to find that having better skills and networks yields higher performing social enterprises, in which government support is expected to help realize their effectiveness. Meanwhile, it also seeks to highlight where training programs would be better, and recommend ways in which educators, policymakers and stakeholders can do so. The results will be of practical value to young entrepreneurs, as well as offer practical suggestions to training programmed, and social and economic development in Sabah.

**Keywords:** youth social entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial skills development, access to entrepreneurial networks, government support, resource-based view (RBV)

## 1. Introduction

Social entrepreneurship is becoming increasingly important in areas such as Sabah in Malaysia as a method to solve social problems and promote economic development. Therefore, education plays a very important role when it comes to training of youth with needed mentalities, skills and required resources to make good use of resources to deal with these challenges. Social entrepreneurship knowledge is integrated into youth developments programs and formal education systems to develop the skills of creating innovative and sustainable business (Ramasamy et al., 2024). This beyond giving children the skills needed

to become entrepreneurs develop a sense of responsibility to society by supporting them as they work to overcome obstacles to effecting meaningful change (Godwin & Crocker-Billingsley, 2024).

In Sabah, youth entrepreneurship of the marginalized B40 communities is confronted with many obstacles such as lack of education, training and resources. Overcoming these barriers will require a multi-faceted approach involving corporate social responsibility (CSR), entrepreneurial leadership and education. These efforts enable the B40 youth to set up self-sustaining social enterprises (Rahman & Raman, 2024). However, social entrepreneurship has the potential to boost personal well-being, catalyse social change, and give power to the marginalized if it can harness social capital and offer affordable, top quality, something to the underserved communities (Koley, 2024). Moreover, it provides innovative solutions for many pressing concerns including poverty and environmental sustainability through social oriented strategies (Hayadin et al., 2024).

Considering the resource-based view (RBV) theory, education and training is important in its role and the contribution it makes in enhancing the youth development through social entrepreneurship. This perspective focusses on the resources and capabilities needed for entrepreneurial success. Educational programs teach young social entrepreneurs the skills, knowledge and networks they need to set up successful social enterprises. For instance, using AI driven business innovation with local knowledge can create a competitive advantage for Sabah by using local resources and expertise for sustainable growth based on RBV theory (Eunora, 2024).

Moreover, entrepreneurial education and training programs improve participants ability to build networks and take advantage of opportunities. Empirically, digital literacy becomes the important component for youth to enhance their competencies through entrepreneurship education (Chandra & Hendayana, 2024). Such education would foster creativity, resilience, and problem - solving resilience that would enable today' s youth to meet the challenges of today' s economy (Park, 2024). In addition, when they receive entrepreneurial training, business performance shows an improvement, as evidenced in higher sales, an expanding customer base as well as improved operational efficiency (Baliga et al., 2024).

However, there has been no clear understanding on how education or training interventions particularly influence youth social enterprises in Sabah. The effective driving of social change requires empowering youth through social entrepreneurship education (Ramasamy et al., 2024). Yet further research is needed to better understand the impact of these interventions on youth led social enterprises.

Social entrepreneurship initiatives need government support to feed the test of time. Government external support, however, can enhance outcomes significantly when it is parallel to entrepreneurial achievements and educational interventions. Potentials of social entrepreneurship on solving youth unemployment are recognized (Halid et al., 2023). In this way, education and training are important to empower youth social entrepreneurs in Sabah, but external support, particularly by the government is also required.

### *1.1 Research Questions*

1. Does entrepreneurial skills development influence the performance of youth social enterprise in Sabah?
2. Does access to entrepreneurial networks affects the performance of youth social enterprise in Sabah?
3. Does government support and policies strengthen the relationship between entrepreneurial skills development, access to entrepreneurial network, with the performance of youth social enterprise in Sabah?

### *1.2 Research Objective*

1. To investigate the influence of entrepreneurial skills development on the performance of youth social enterprises in Sabah.
2. To investigate how access to entrepreneurial networks influences the performance of youth social enterprises in Sabah.
3. To investigate the moderating effect of government support and policies on the relationship between entrepreneurial skills development, access to entrepreneurial networks with the performance of youth social enterprises in Sabah.

### *1.3 Significance of the Study*

In line with Di Giusto Valle et al. (2024), Park (2024), Kumar (2024), and Seth and Pareek (2023), the study posits participants who feel that they acquire more entrepreneurial skills from their training program are more likely to succeed with their social enterprises. Metrics to measure this success are social impact, financial performance and business growth. Managing and growing social enterprises requires organizational as well as financial assets, among which are entrepreneurial skills ranging from leadership and innovation to problem solving and project management. It is expected that training programs aimed at these skills will increase the outcomes of young social entrepreneurs.

The findings will reveal the beneficial effects of entrepreneurial networks on youth social enterprises' success. In general, programs to train people to bring their ideas to market, by utilizing mentors, peers, investors, and other industry stakeholders, should allow participants to gain support, collaboration, and access to critical resources, which will increase enterprise performance (McQuillin & Lyons, 2021; Bhatta, 2020). Social capital in the form of networks offer critical resources of information, advice, capital and partners as a requisite to the existence and growth of social enterprises. It is likely that the study will reveal that government policies and support strengthen and facilitate the relationship between education, training and exposure to entrepreneurial networks in improving the performance of youth led social enterprises. It is predicted that government initiatives like grants, tax exemptions, and accessibility to resource, will add potency to education and training programs (Halid et al., 2023; Nguyen et al., 2023).

Government support addressing funding constraints and resource shortages can reinforce the

impact of training on the success of social enterprises. It is anticipated that the research will indicate where certain gaps or where certain improvements in entrepreneurial education and training programs exist. These may include making training more practical and vocational, creating a greater chance for networking, or offering richer education in financial literacy and management. The purpose of the study is to provide these insights for educators, policymakers, and program developers for future refinement and enhancement of training initiatives, so they work more effectively and are more relevant.

## **2. Method: Adapted Research Framework**

### *2.1 Underpinning Theory: Resource-Based View (RBV)*

The strategic management framework known as the Resource Based View (RBV) tries to explore how an organisation can utilise its internal resources to attain and retain competitive advantage (Amaya et al., 2022). The RBV perspective has relevance in the context of social entrepreneurship to evaluate whether education and training programmes for youths in Sabah disburse critical resources like skills, networks and capital to ensure a positive firm performance. This framework prescribes that the unique and valuable resources, that the individual or organisation has access to, can be the basis for differentiation and long term success (Ferreira et al., 2021). These resources are critical to the development of entrepreneurial initiatives among youths in Sabah, that have solutions to social challenges and contribute to sustainable development.

RBV can be further developed with the aid of the VRIO framework to evaluate the position in the reflection and determine whether the resources can be deemed valuable, rare, inimitable, and organized to produce a lasting competitive advantage (Barney, 1991). When talking about youth social entrepreneurship (SE), local cultural knowledge and the use of indigenous resources, as well as community-based innovation, are important entrepreneurial resources that are especially valuable when looking at the regional socio-economic issues (Rifqiansyah, 2025; Onwuegbuzie et al., 2024). These resources are unique because they are deeply connected to a specific social and cultural environment, like in Sabah, and cannot be easily copied by others since they are gained through experiences and practices within the community, making them hard for outsiders to replicate. With the support of structured programs of education, training, and mentorship, these capabilities are then organized and can be strategically used; it will help enhance the performance of the enterprises (Sarkar & Jena, 2024; Hamburg, 2014).

The fact that RBV has a broader application in other fields like supply chain, marketing, and health care also defines its flexibility when applied to social entrepreneurship (Costa et al., 2024; Uyanik, 2023; Kosiol et al., 2023). Focusing on education and training, along with using local knowledge, technologies, and social connections, aligns with the RBV's emphasis on using special resources that can't be replaced. As such, RBV will play two key roles when used in a place-based approach, not only giving a robust lens through which the performance of youth SE can be considered but also emphasizing the value of the design of programs that develop context- and situation-specific capabilities to foster long-term change.

Educational programmes can develop a unique skill set and sense of approach among youth in Sabah, providing them the capacity to create social enterprises which address the regional challenges of poverty and environment degradation in a distinctive fashion. Furthermore, the framework shows the importance of networks and relationships in increasing access to opportunities, which is of particular significance in the context of social entrepreneurship given the fact that transactional collaboration matters also matters in the social entrepreneurial endeavour (Eng et al. 2020). Conceptualising education and training through the RBV perspective, it changes the focus on building capacity and capability that will directly contribute to youth's entrepreneurial success in Sabah. It also ensures that the supplied resources for this organisation are not only enough but also appropriately fit for their purpose: to help foster innovation, resilience, and social impact (Do, et al., 2021). Therefore, RBV serves as a solid theoretical foundation for interpreting and increasing the effectiveness of educational efforts in creating resourceful, positive impact social entrepreneurs in Sabah.

## *2.2 Framework Development*

### *2.2.1 Dependent Variable: The Performance of Youth Social Enterprises*

Key indicators that can evaluate the performance of youth - led social enterprises include social impact, financial performance, sustainability and organisational longevity (Segments 2024, 2024, 2024). Collectively, these indicators constitute a framework that can be used to measure the success and effectiveness of social enterprises in achieving their dual objectives. Social impact is the extent of how the enterprise contributes to the improvement of the economy such as poverty alleviation, access to education or environmental protection (Arejiogbe et al., 2023). Tracking the reach and magnitude of these impacts gives enterprises a way to demonstrate their impact in social transformation. The metrics used to measure the performance of a company to ensure it is sustainable are the financial performance which help to assess the enterprises ability to be economically stable as it pursues other social goals such as generating revenue and reducing costs. In the same way, sustainability is the long term viability of the enterprise, which includes operational resilience, resource efficiency and adaptability to threats (Shah & Sapre, 2022; Carvalho & Bicho, 2023).

As such, the performance indicators, education and training programmes for youth social entrepreneurs can therefore be assessed. This evaluation is facilitated by a metrics framework, which systematically tracks the number and growth of social enterprises, their positive scale and their social transformations (Arena et al., 2014). The framework helps determine the capability of youth to implement social enterprise initiatives effectively, that leads towards the effectiveness of training interventions. For instance, data about the outcomes of training programmes can help draw conclusions on how to change the programmes to fill the needs of lack of entrepreneurial skills, lack of access to resources, and lack of sustainability strategies. Stakeholders can use these indicators to refine educational initiatives to push youth entrepreneurs on a more sustainable success trajectory and able to deliver greater societal impact (Shah & Sapre, 2022; Carvalho & Bicho, 2023).



## 2.2.2 Independent Variables

### 2.2.2.1 Entrepreneurial Skills Development

The process of providing education and training for young people in order to enable development of necessary competencies is termed entrepreneurial skills development (Bardales-Cárdenas et al., 2024). These are the critical foundational skills that empower people to create and manage social enterprises. Creativity allows youth to bring inventive solutions to address prevailing social challenges while leadership skills allow the youth to marshal, lead, and coordinate a team towards shared objectives (Alex, 2024; Kizi, 2023). Project planning helps entrepreneurs to organise resources, set realistic goals and implement their ideas both systematically. Meanwhile, decision making skills are essential for dealing with tricky situations, determining the likelihood of success of those situations and capitalising on market opportunities. Together these capacities are the fundamental pillars of the thriving social entrepreneur as they furnish young entrepreneurs with capacities to deal with societal issues enduringly and in a tactical way (Di Giusto Valle et al., 2024; Park, 2024; Kumar, 2024; Seth & Pareek, 2023).

To develop a generation of capable social entrepreneurs, these skills are crucial and have to be nurtured through tailored education and training programmes (Bardales Cárdenas et al. 2024). The programmes that help develop this competency the most are the ones that have a practical learning experience as a focus done through workshops, simulations, or mentorship opportunities. Specifically, hands on project management training would allow for youth to convert innovative ideas into actionable plans, and the exposure to real world challenges may allow youth to sharpen their decision making capabilities. Other than that, the inclusion of leadership and creativity in curricula of education effectively mobilises resilience and adaptability, which are essential in an ever changing social entrepreneurial environment (Sardi et al., 2024). As crucial as this is, education and training programmes focused on developing these core capabilities also help youth build their portfolio of ‘tools’ to help them launch and manage social enterprises and generally grow as individuals and professionals (Di Giusto Valle et al., 2024; Park, 2024; Kumar, 2024; Seth & Pareek, 2023).

H1: Entrepreneurial skills development affects the performance of youth social enterprise in Sabah.

### 2.2.2.2 Access to Entrepreneurial Networks

Providing vital connections to mentors, peers, potential financiers and other key stakeholders in youth friendly sectors, entrepreneurial networks are crucial to the development and continued viability of youth led social enterprises (Löfsten et al, 2022). These networks are a bridge for young entrepreneurs on their way to critical resources, such as access to information, guidance or support. For example, experienced entrepreneurs do provide insights from their experience and assist the young entrepreneurs to navigate through the challenges (Kuratko et al., 2020) but peers present the possibility of working in teams as well as sharing of knowledge. Social Enterprises only can operate and scale with the help of financial and logistical support which is provided by financiers and stakeholders (Setiawan et



al., 2023). Entrepreneurial networks support the ecosystem of ideas where ideas get nurtured into action and impact, through these connexions (Bhatta, 2020; McQuillin & Lyons, 2021).

Training and educational programmes, through their capacity to integrate networking opportunities, can greatly improve their effectiveness (Sardi et al., 2024). These programmes incorporate mechanisms for youth to establish, and maintain these connections by embedding social capital that empowers youth not only with technical skills, but also social capital to thrive. Entrepreneurs can collaborate by pooling resources, sharing knowledge collectively and innovating on a network platform (Zou & Storz, 2023). In addition, they operate as channels to access recommendations and endorsements which would in turn increase the credibility and visibility of social enterprises. Additionally, networks make funding available as they connect youth entrepreneurs to investors and to grant making bodies. Alternatively, these benefits highlight the significance of integrating entrepreneurial networks into training and education platforms because they critically lead in building the capacity of youth in developing and sustaining viable social enterprises, especially in communities where social enterprises are likely to be low, (Bhatta, 2020; McQuillin & Lyons, 2021).

H2: Access to entrepreneurial networks affects the performance of youth social enterprise in Sabah.

### 2.2.3 Moderator: Government Support and Policies

Government supports, policies and incentives facilitate in reducing the barriers to entry and consequently ensure sustainable enterprise development that foster youth social entrepreneurship (Stoica, 2024). Grants, tax incentives, seed funding from government supported incubators are also vital to empower the young entrepreneur to launch and scale his start up. With these resources, youth are able to put their minds to develop solutions on societal challenges without the looming burden of financial constraints (Fahey, 2016). Targeted funding, for example would increase access to entrepreneurial competencies training, infrastructure and technology, making educational programmes more effective.

In addition, supportive policies that simplify registration, facilitate youth-led social enterprise access to mentorship and collaboration with experienced enterprises promote the viability of youth-led social enterprises in competitive environments (Halid et al., 2023; Nguyen et al., 2023). While these government led initiatives could be very effective, bureaucratic inefficiencies and inconsistent policy implementation can massively plug these initiatives (Hanum et al., 2023). Too often agencies fail to coordinate in implementing these programmes or have ineffective regulatory processes that introduce extra complexity. In other situations, grants can be disbursed to youth later than expected or the criteria presents some restrictions for the youth which in turn prompts them not to embark on entrepreneurial ventures (Bedi & Jia, 2024). Governments must make efforts to align policy, minimise administrative burdens and involve stakeholders to ensure that mechanisms of support are in tune with the needs of aspiring social entrepreneurs in overcoming these challenges. With these shortcomings being addressed, government interventions for education and training programmes can improve their outcomes and enable youth to establish effective, and sustainable social enterprises (Halid et al., 2023; Nguyen et al., 2023).

H3: Government support and policies enhance the link between entrepreneurial skills development, access to entrepreneurial network and youth social enterprise performance in Sabah.

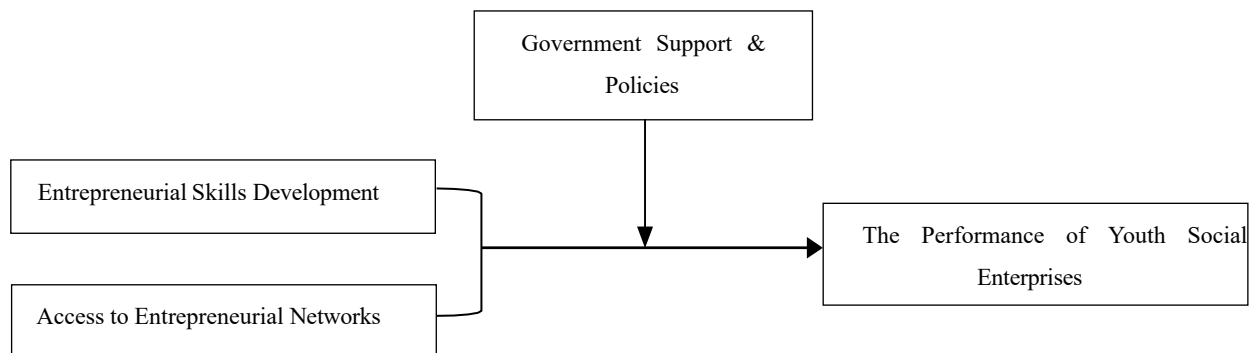


Figure 1. Conceptual framework

### 3. Results

This study is expected to find out if entrepreneurial skills development contributes significantly to the performance of the youth-led social enterprises in Sabah. Training programs that develop leadership, creativity, project planning and decision making are likely to result in concrete gains in social impact, financial sustainability and operating efficiency. It is expected that youth participants who acquire these skills would gain greater confidence and competence to run their enterprises and will consequently perform better. It is consistent with the findings of Di Giusto Valle et al. (2024), Park (2024), Kumar (2024) and Seth and Pareek (2023) that focus on the significance of core entrepreneurial competencies in navigating challenges and fostering innovation. Additionally, the study is intended to identify that access to entrepreneurial networks through mentoring, collaboration, financial support and market access has a positive effect on enterprise performance. The predicted outcomes of these networks are able to empower youth entrepreneurs to leverage critical resources for the growth of their enterprises that corroborates with the findings of Bhatta (2020) and McQuillin and Lyons (2021).

Besides that, the study is also expected to indicate the moderating role of the government support and policies in strengthening relationship between entrepreneurial skills development, access to networks and enterprise performance. Education and networking programmes are expected to be more effective with government initiatives including grants, tax incentives, and access to resources. Yet the study may also show that bureaucratic inefficiencies and inconsistent policy implementation may hinder the advantages mentioned, with supporting findings from Halid et al. (2023), Nguyen et al. (2023). The findings are likely to reinforce the importance of streamlined, strategic government interventions to bear optimal fruit for youth social enterprises. It is hoped that this study will afford actionable insights which may inform the refinement of training programmes, strengthening of networks, and alignment of policy frameworks so that youth entrepreneurs in Sabah can be empowered effectively.

#### 4. Discussion

This study focuses on the importance of entrepreneurial skills development, networking access and government support to improve the youth led social enterprise performance in Sabah. For young entrepreneurs, their endeavor is to empower them to navigate challenges and make their business sustainable, leadership, creativity, project management and decision-making training programs are essential. These skills directly contribute to the tangible outcomes such as improved social impact, financial performance and business growth in accordance with the Resource-Based View (RBV) theory emphasizing on the uniqueness and the value of resources to attain the competitive advantage (Di Giusto Valle et al., 2024; Park, 2024).

Yet the current training programs fail to address gaps such as limited practical exposure and weak financial literacy modules, making necessary curriculum enhancement to make such programs relevant and effective in the youth emergence into the real world. Youth social enterprises have tremendous potential and is significantly boosted by entrepreneurial networks and government support. An important resource that entrepreneurial networks provide include mentorship, financial assistance and collaborative opportunities that allows business innovation and scaling for entrepreneurs (McQuillin & Lyons, 2021; Bhatta, 2020). According to RBV principles (Zou & Storz, 2023), these connections function as a rare and unique resources, which are necessary for sustainable growth.

The targeted government interventions to create a more enabling ecosystem of the youth-led social enterprises in Sabah need to include structural barriers as well as capacity-building requirements. As much as the measures of entrepreneurial education and entrepreneurial networks, including grants, tax breaks, and seed funding, are important moderating factors that make the overall effect more effective, bureaucracy and random implementation of policies usually hinder the promotion of the given measures (Halid et al., 2023; Nguyen et al., 2023). Thus, lean governance and stakeholder involvement are necessary. An important political implication is to have state-funded social business incubators in rural and urban regions in Sabah. Such incubators will be able to supply this social enterprise with the necessary infrastructure, mentorship, and financial resources to improve it (Jimainal et al., 2024; Faisol et al., 2024), which will, in turn, enhance the organizational support component of the VRIO framework.

Moreover, institutions of social entrepreneurship (SE) can foster ingenuity, which represents a critical element in the sphere of complex social problems (Jha, 2024). The idea is to incorporate viable, community-related projects in the curriculum of vocational and technical education institutions to develop contextual skills (Ali & Abdullah, 2024), which are rare, inimitable, and also of value. These policy actions, in combination, seek to institutionalize inclusive entrepreneurship education, improve the strategic mobilization of youth talents, and improve access, resources, and long-term sustainability gaps for SE initiatives in Sabah.

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