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## Interrelationship of community and community-based enterprises: A case of cooperatives in Hue, Viet Nam

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### ABSTRACT

Communities play a significant role in stimulating entrepreneurship and contributing substantially to promoting, connecting, and cooperating in developing entrepreneurship and local development. However, the connection between communities and entrepreneurship remains a multifaceted topic that is not easily defined or fully understood. While certain studies have acknowledged how communities can encourage entrepreneurial activity by leveraging various aspects of their structure and culture, a thorough and comprehensive examination of the community's overall role and impact on entrepreneurship is still lacking. This article presents the roles and relationships between communities and community-based enterprises (CBE). Using qualitative interviews, the study investigates community-based enterprise managers' perceptions of the community role in CBE development. The results show that there is a significant difference in the perception of the community's role in the CBE and the local development of the interviewees. Additionally, the coordination and contributions of the community to CBE are also different. Despite the differences, it is important to note that communities all have a role to play in entrepreneurship and local development. This study emphasizes the importance of community development research to foster and encourage future CBE. This knowledge can inform strategies for community and CBE development.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the interplay between entrepreneurship and community has garnered increasing scholarly attention. Nevertheless, the majority of current research tends to emphasize the development of entrepreneurial initiatives, the formulation of entrepreneurial ideas, and the connection between entrepreneurship and local socioeconomic advancement. In contrast, the direct relationship between community and entrepreneurship remains an underexplored yet significant theme (Lyons et al., 2012). This connection is inherently complex, requiring a

nuanced understanding of the characteristics and needs of both entities to foster a mutually beneficial partnership (Hassan et al., 2021). As Martinez et al. (2011) have pointed out, entrepreneurship research has yet to fully incorporate the role of the community in which such activities occur. Similarly, Coase and Wang (2011), along with Peredo and Chrisman (2006), have identified the community-entrepreneurship nexus as a promising direction for future research.

Several studies have addressed this relationship explicitly. Lyons et al. (2012), for instance, classified community - entrepreneurship

relationships as mutualistic, commensalistic, or parasitic. They also identified key community factors influencing entrepreneurship, such as cultural values, social capital, and the emergence of CB entrepreneurial practices. Fortunato and Alter (2011) further highlighted how both individual perceptions and access to entrepreneurial opportunities are shaped by community dynamics. Other research, such as that by Hui et al. (2014) and Giudici et al. (2012), has explored how communities can contribute to entrepreneurial finance, particularly through mechanisms like crowdfunding. Despite these contributions, the literature still lacks a comprehensive evaluation of the community's multifaceted role in entrepreneurship.

Beyond their supportive functions, communities may also exert adverse effects on entrepreneurship (Pierre et al., 2014). For instance, a lack of entrepreneurial motivation within a community may hinder the sustainability of entrepreneurial endeavors, ultimately impeding both entrepreneurial growth and broader community development (CD) (Lyons et al., 2012). Consequently, the nature and influence of community structures must be carefully considered in any robust analysis of the entrepreneurial process (Hindle & Moroz, 2010).

Although numerous studies recognize the importance of communities in fostering entrepreneurship and highlight entrepreneurship's contributions to local development (LD), their analyses often remain general and fragmented. While prior research has examined specific community aspects that support entrepreneurship, there is still a need for an integrative study that assesses the community's holistic role—especially within the context of community-based (CB) entrepreneurship.

To address this gap, the present study employs a qualitative methodology to investigate CB entrepreneurship in the context of Central Viet Nam, with a specific focus on Hue City. Hue was selected for several reasons: it is known for its distinctive cultural and communal identity within Viet Nam; it has actively promoted community-oriented development initiatives; and it hosts a growing number of CBE projects. Additionally, the researcher's familiarity with this setting enables more effective data collection and contextual analysis.

Ultimately, this paper seeks to explore and deepen

the understanding of the relationship between community dynamics and CB entrepreneurship. Using Hue as a case study, the research aims to provide clearer insights into the features, interactions, and development trajectories of these intertwined elements.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Community

Regarding the definition of community, Sproule (1996) argued that a community is a group of people. They often live in the same geographical area. In addition, they identify themselves as belonging to the same group (Sproule, 1996). More specifically, Sproule (1996) assessed that community members are often related by blood or marriage or may belong to the same religious, political, class, or caste group. Each community has its own unique culture that is formed during the development of that community. These are customs, conventions, religious beliefs, etc.

Furthermore, these are saved from generation to generation. Communities can be categorized into different groups depending on their characteristics and criteria. However, they all have the same goals for their development, including entrepreneurship activities.

### 2.2. Community-based entrepreneurship

CB entrepreneurship represents a distinct and evolving area within entrepreneurial research, separate from the broader notion of community entrepreneurship. It emphasizes the necessity of involving community members in the development and operation of enterprises (Hassan et al., 2021). Various definitions of CB entrepreneurship have emerged, shaped by differing research aims and contexts (Hassan et al., 2021). According to Varady et al. (2015), conceptualizations of CB entrepreneurship often stem from observations related to local culture, government and regional policies, social networks, infrastructure, and the extent of social interactions—all of which significantly influence entrepreneurial behavior.

Peredo and Chrisman (2006) conceptualized CB entrepreneurship as a socially oriented business model aimed at achieving both economic and social objectives for the community. In this view, enterprises are not only operated for the immediate benefit of individuals or groups but are also designed with long-term sustainability in mind. Here, the community is perceived as both the

entrepreneur and the enterprise itself, actively pursuing collective interests through embedded social structures (Peredo and Chrisman, 2006).

Pierre et al. (2014) approached CB entrepreneurship as a grassroots, locality-specific phenomenon encompassing for-profit and non-profit entities, individual entrepreneurs, and local businesses. These actors collaborate to address community challenges and foster sustainable development by co-creating economic and social value. Key characteristics of CB entrepreneurship include its emphasis on place-based development, sustainability, communal goals, social networking, collective action, and proactive local actors (Pierre et al., 2014).

Hertel (2018) further expanded the conceptual scope by framing CB entrepreneurship as a dynamic process. This process involves recognizing and cultivating opportunities in collaboration with others, ultimately producing goods and services that offer economic, social, and environmental benefits to the community. Hertel's definition highlights three critical aspects: (1) CB entrepreneurship is inherently processual; (2) opportunities must be co-developed, collectively evaluated, and aligned with community needs; and (3) the resulting ventures should support sustainable development at both local and societal levels.

### **2.3. Interdependence between community and entrepreneurship**

In recent decades, a significant shift in community economic development strategy has been the growing recognition of entrepreneurship as a key driver of local vitality and resilience (Gruidl & Markley, 2014). This strategic transformation is largely influenced by global economic trends, particularly the relocation of manufacturing jobs to international markets due to globalization. As a result, communities have increasingly embraced entrepreneurship as a mechanism for job creation and sustainable economic growth. This change underscores the socio-cultural nature of entrepreneurship and highlights the crucial role of the surrounding environment in shaping the success or failure of entrepreneurial ventures (Păunescu & Matyus, 2020; Păunescu & Molnar, 2020).

The entrepreneurial environment plays a pivotal role in enabling or constraining enterprise development. Shane (2003) posits that neither environmental conditions nor individual attributes alone can fully explain the entrepreneurial phenomenon; rather, it is

the interaction between the two that offers a comprehensive understanding. This integrative perspective has been widely supported in the literature (Fortunato & Alter, 2015), where scholars have identified a variety of influencing factors such as culture, public policies, social networks, physical infrastructure, and levels of social interaction as determinants of entrepreneurial behavior.

Moreover, Anderson and Giberson (2003) emphasized the interplay between entrepreneurial processes and the specific geographical context in which they occur. Entrepreneurial behavior, intentions, and outcomes are all context-dependent and shaped by temporal, cultural, and structural variables (Ambad & Damit, 2016; Maresch et al., 2016). Therefore, the role of the community is central to all forms of entrepreneurship (Hindle & Moroz, 2010; Lyons et al., 2012). Numerous studies have affirmed that entrepreneurship is inherently linked to CD, as both share overlapping goals and mutual interests (Anderson, 1999; Peredo, 2001; Lyons et al., 2012). Even when other actors (e.g., individuals, groups, or organizations) are involved, the community context remains influential in shaping business activities and outcomes (Hindle & Moroz, 2010).

Nonetheless, the relationship between community and entrepreneurship is complex and not easily defined (Jim Moran Institute for Global Entrepreneurship - JMIGE, 2021). A successful partnership between the two must be mutually beneficial, which necessitates a clear understanding of each partner's needs and capacities (Lyons et al., 2012). Recent studies emphasize that both communities and individual entrepreneurs contribute to shaping vision and accessing opportunities (Fortunato & Alter, 2011). Historically, research in entrepreneurship has oscillated between focusing on the individual entrepreneur and emphasizing external structural forces (Naushad et al., 2018). However, Fortunato and Alter (2015) argue that collaboration between individuals and communities fosters innovation, creativity, and shared growth, benefiting both parties.

Communities play an active role in facilitating entrepreneurship by creating culturally supportive relationships, promoting information-sharing, and building collaborative ecosystems (Fortunato & Alter, 2011). These ecosystems not only provide functional support—such as access to finance, land, and policy resources—but also foster relational

support, which includes trust, cooperation, and social capital (Wilkinson, 1991). In this way, communities enhance the environment for entrepreneurial activity and business formation.

Lyons et al. (2012) conceptualized the relationship between community and entrepreneurship using ecological terms, categorizing them as mutualistic, commensalistic, or parasitic. These classifications underscore the variability and interdependence of the relationship. Ultimately, it is evident that community and entrepreneurship are deeply interconnected, with each shaping and influencing the other in dynamic and meaningful ways.

### 3. METHOD

Qualitative research methods are particularly well-suited to research problems that demand deep insight and contextual understanding, especially when addressing exploratory or explanatory phenomena. This approach is valuable for uncovering the underlying dimensions of a problem and for generating ideas or hypotheses that may later be tested through quantitative research. As noted by Hakim (2003), qualitative methods aim to provide rich, contextualized descriptions from the participants' perspectives, emphasizing the interpretation of actions and meanings within their social settings. In this framework, the development and refinement of theoretical concepts occur concurrently with data collection.

A key strength of qualitative methods lies in their capacity to explore phenomena as they unfold within natural environments, offering a depth of understanding that is often inaccessible through structured, numerical analysis (Silverman, 2001). Recognized as a robust alternative to quantitative approaches, qualitative research has gained widespread acceptance across disciplines such as education, sociology, anthropology, tourism, and consumer behavior (Riley & Love, 2000).

Unlike quantitative approaches, which aim to generate numerical outcomes, statistical measurements, or test hypotheses, qualitative methods focus on interpreting meanings and patterns of behavior (Goodson & Phillimore, 2004). These methods can significantly enhance the value of socioeconomic research, particularly when used alongside or as a preliminary step to quantitative techniques. In the context of entrepreneurship research, qualitative approaches offer considerable potential for investigating the human, cultural, and social dimensions that shape entrepreneurial

activity.

Qualitative data are typically collected through unstructured or semi-structured techniques. Common methods include participant observation, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions—each designed to capture participants' experiences, perspectives, and social interactions in a flexible and nuanced manner.

#### 3.1. Description of research questions

This study applied a qualitative approach to explore and examine the perception of the relationship between community and entrepreneurship. In which the community plays an essential role in stimulating and promoting the development of CBE. In addition, the study examines the influence of communities on the participation and cooperation of stakeholders in community and CBE. As the literature review has shown, there is a significant interrelationship between community and the ability of CBE to operate. This study was inspired by the need to provide a deeper understanding of the relationship between the role of the community and the production and business behavior of CBE in Viet Nam. Therefore, the research questions (RQs) are the following:

RQ1: How does the community affect CBE?

RQ2: What are the community's role and support for CBE?

RQ3: How can the community's role be strengthened in developing CBE?

#### 3.2. Data collection

##### 3.2.1. Sampling method

This study employed a purposive sampling strategy, a widely accepted method in qualitative research, to recruit interview participants. This approach enables researchers to intentionally select individuals, groups, or institutions that are most likely to provide relevant insights into the phenomena being examined (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). As Silverman (2011) notes, purposive sampling requires researchers to establish specific selection criteria to identify participants possessing the characteristics most suitable for the study. In this research, participants were chosen based on their professional experience and geographical location to ensure a diverse and contextually rich data set. The targeted participants included founders, CBE entrepreneurs, and community managers. Each potential participant was given a two-week window to review

the interview invitation and provide a response.

Contact information for potential participants was obtained through publicly accessible sources such as organizational websites. Invitations were extended via both email and telephone, a strategy that not only enhanced participant recruitment but also fostered rapport between the researcher and interviewees, thus laying the groundwork for productive interviews (Kitchin & Tate, 2013).

Regarding sample size, there is no universally fixed number in qualitative research (Kitchin & Tate, 2000). Determining an appropriate number of participants depends on ensuring that the data collected from semi-structured interviews are sufficiently rich, valid, and potentially transferable (Bui, 2009). Several factors influence sample size in qualitative studies, including the depth of analysis, the variability among cases, and the demographic similarity of participants (Kitchin & Tate, 2000). Stake (2000) emphasized that the required sample size varies across research projects, depending on the study's scope and complexity. In the present study, due to limitations in time and financial resources, 12 experts and relevant stakeholders were selected and interviewed. The final number of interviews was determined by the researcher's available resources—such as access to professional networks, time constraints, and budget—as well as participant availability (Saldana & Omasta, 2018).

### 3.2.2. Sampling process

For the study, we first looked for enterprises that matched our desired profile, including enterprises currently in business, enterprises characterized by CBE, and enterprises with headquarters in central Viet Nam, especially in rural areas. These are the characteristics where the community is most clearly expressed. The selected type of CBE is cooperative. It is a typical type of CBE in Viet Nam now.

The interviews were conducted during the initial phase of the study, from February to April 2023, in Thua Thien Hue province, Viet Nam. Individual interviews took place at locations convenient for the participants, primarily within their local communities in the province. Each interview lasted between 20 and 60 minutes, with an average duration of approximately 30 minutes. All interviews were audio-recorded with the informed consent of the participants, and the researcher also took detailed notes throughout the discussions.

The interviews began with questions related to the participants' personal backgrounds, professional

experiences, and geographical location—factors considered essential for establishing rapport and contributing to a successful interview (Bowling, 2002). These introductory questions were designed to foster mutual understanding and create a relaxed, conversational atmosphere.

The main body of the interviews explored key themes relevant to the research, such as community involvement and entrepreneurship. The interview guide was flexible, allowing the researcher to adapt the sequence of questions according to the flow of each conversation. All interviews were conducted in Vietnamese to ensure clear communication and cultural alignment, as using the participants' native language was deemed crucial for effective engagement and data quality (Gillham, 2005). Furthermore, the interview questions were formulated to be straightforward, specific, and concise, often supplemented with examples to clarify abstract concepts.

Following each interview, participants were provided with a Vietnamese transcript or summary of the notes for review before the data analysis phase. This member-checking process allowed participants to offer additional insights, clarify their statements, or request the removal of specific content, depending on their preferences.

### 3.3. Qualitative data analysis

While data collection plays a vital role in the success of any research project, data analysis is often regarded as the most critical phase (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Nonetheless, this stage also presents considerable challenges for researchers. It involves organizing the raw data, eliminating irrelevant information, and identifying content that is both meaningful and aligned with the research objectives. Once organized, the data are systematically coded into themes and subsequently interpreted and presented in a coherent and accessible format (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

According to Jennings (2005), findings derived from semi-structured and in-depth interviews can be conveyed through rich, detailed (or "thick") descriptions that offer deep insights into the research context. To analyze the data collected from the semi-structured interviews, this study employed both content analysis and thematic analysis. The use of MAXQDA software facilitated the systematic organization, coding, and management of qualitative data.

Content analysis was applied to identify recurring

patterns and significant features across the interview transcripts (Myers, 2013). Thematic analysis, on the other hand, enabled the research team to categorize the data into deeper, more abstract themes, going beyond surface-level codes to uncover underlying meanings and relationships (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016).

## 4. RESEARCH RESULTS

### 4.1. Description of the samples

Understanding the characteristics of the respondents would help explore the link between the perceptions of cooperatives (community-based enterprises) and their responses to the role and contributions of the community for CBE. The survey was conducted through interviews with 12 cooperative managers.

**Table 1. Description of the samples**

	Criteria	Number	Percentage (%)
1 Gender	Male	10	83.33
	Female	2	16.67
2 Age	> 50 years old	6	50.00
	30-50 years old	5	41.67
	< 30 years old	1	8.33
3 Work experience	≥ 10 years	11	91.67
	< 10 years	1	8.33
4 Job	Director	7	58.33
	Vice-director	5	41.67
5 Education level	University	5	41.67
	High school	7	58.33

Among the twelve participants interviewed in this study, ten were male (83.33%), and only two were female (16.67%). This gender imbalance can be attributed to the male-dominated nature of leadership positions within cooperatives. While women do participate in cooperative activities and may serve in managerial roles, these positions are typically held by men. Indeed, an examination of publicly available contact lists of cooperative managers revealed that the majority were male. Furthermore, the use of semi-structured interviews presented certain challenges in accessing and securing interviews with female participants, further contributing to the gender disparity in the sample.

Table 1 presents the age distribution of the interviewees. Half of the participants were aged over 50 (50%), while 41.67% were between 30 and 50 years old, and only 8.33% were under 30. This distribution reflects the tendency for older, more experienced individuals to occupy managerial roles within cooperatives.

In terms of professional experience, the majority of interviewees had more than ten years of working experience in cooperative settings (91.67%), with only one participant having fewer than ten years of experience. Additionally, most participants had spent the bulk of their careers working within local cooperatives in Thua Thien Hue province. Only a few had short-term work experiences in other

provinces or cities. This suggests that the participants possessed deep knowledge and contextual understanding of local cooperative dynamics and CD.

Regarding current positions, Table 1 also shows the distribution of job roles held by participants. The roles were concentrated among vice-directors (41.67%) and directors (58.33%) of cooperatives, aligning well with the research objective to gather insights from individuals actively engaged in and responsible for cooperative governance and CB entrepreneurship.

Therefore, the management positions in cooperatives also have high educational requirements. However, many people still have a high school degree because they have worked for many years and have experience in cooperatives in the local area. Furthermore, 41.67% of respondents have a university degree, mainly young people. Besides, 58.33% of the respondents only graduated from high school. In the upcoming orientation, the cooperatives are planning to appoint people with university degrees to management positions of the cooperatives.

As for other related work, in addition to managing cooperative activities, cooperative managers are also involved in various activities. For example, the cooperative manager is also a Thua Thien Hue Cooperative Alliance member. A significant

number of participants in this study came from the private sector, particularly those involved in tourism-related services. These include accommodation providers, catering services, tour operators, transportation services, souvenir and retail businesses, and event management agencies. Many of these individuals hold managerial roles within cooperatives and are simultaneously responsible for core business functions such as sales and communication. In addition to these commercial responsibilities, they are also engaged in the day-to-day administrative and operational management of their cooperatives. This dual involvement highlights the multifaceted nature of their roles and provides valuable insight into the intersection of entrepreneurship, tourism, and cooperative management within the local context.

#### 4.2. Awareness of community-based

This section presents and discusses cooperative managers' perceptions of CB concepts. Interviewees were asked to explain CB without guidance on the term's meaning. Opinions on perceptions received from interviewees towards the concept of CB are pretty diverse. Besides, there are significant differences in opinion and level of awareness. Two participants (11%) could not give a definite answer and admitted that they did not understand the term CB. Some comments on the concept of CB are ambiguous. Among them, three people cannot make any definite comments about the concept of CB. These ideas reflect that the definition of CB entrepreneurship is varied and largely ambiguous (Purusottama et al., 2018). It depends on the local context (Pierre, 2017). One cooperative manager commented: *"The concept of CB is vague, and I do not know too much about this concept."*

In addition, most of the interviewees were quite attached to the concept's community. Nine people (75% of respondents) describe developing CB cooperatives as a strategy to achieve long-term business success. Other cooperative managers commented: *"Use and coordinate with community resources and other resources to contribute to the development of cooperatives."* and *"We plan to engage with the community in our activities."*

All interviewees confirmed that CB is a priority for their organization's activities and that their organization has made many efforts to promote local and cooperative development. These opinions reflect the role of CBE. However, the interviewees' statements spoke to a different concept and role of CB, especially the concept of CB entrepreneurship.

It is consistent with Hertel's (2018) comment. He believes that CB entrepreneurship is the process of recognizing, creating (developing, collecting, and evaluating), and exploiting opportunities to jointly create future goods and services, bringing economic, social, and ecological benefits to local communities, the society in which they participate (Hertel, 2018).

In general, participants shared a common understanding of the term CB. However, the diversity in stakeholders' perceptions regarding sustainable tourism development is not surprising, given the inherent complexity and multidimensional nature of the concept (Hassan et al., 2021). All interviewees acknowledged that CB plays a vital role in the development of cooperatives. One participant remarked: *"I think everyone in this industry has some degree of community awareness and wants to take advantage of the community's resources and support. However, many factors in the economic and social environment lead to different stakeholders having different opinions about the concept and how to achieve it."* This statement reflects a broader recognition among stakeholders that while the importance of community involvement is widely accepted, interpretations and approaches to implementing CB principles vary depending on individual perspectives and contextual factors.

#### 4.3. Community and community-based enterprises

In Viet Nam, the collective economy is an essential economic component, with the core being cooperatives. The Vietnamese Communist Party and government have always encouraged its development. In addition, the collective economy is suitable for the socialist-oriented market economy while promoting the role of each member in the private sector and enhancing the strength of cooperatives and the community. From there, it improves economic competitiveness in globalization and international economic integration.

Currently, cooperatives in Viet Nam operate under the Law on Cooperatives 2012 and the Government's decrees and circulars of the ministries (Vietnamese Congress, 2012). The collective economic sector and cooperatives have positively changed quality and quantity within this legal framework. From there, it overcomes long-term weakness, takes advantage, and exploits the space, potential, and development space, gradually

affirming the position and role of one of the fundamental economic sectors in the economy. However, the growth rate in the collective economic sector is still low compared to other economic sectors, and the contribution rate to GDP still needs to meet the requirements (Vietnam Cooperative Alliance, 2022). This is because most collective economic organizations and cooperatives are small in scale and have unequal development between regions and agricultural and non-agricultural sectors (Vietnam Cooperative Alliance, 2022). Thus, the role and contribution of the local community will be one of the factors that contribute to promoting the activities and efficiency of cooperatives.

#### 4.3.1. Relationship between the community and community-based enterprises

Through the interview process, the study found that all respondents shared the perception that the community and cooperatives have a relationship with each other. They assert that the relationships between the community and CB entrepreneurship are inherent, close, and enduring. In addition, they also affirm that the community has a positive influence on CBE. In addition, there are also negative impacts on the community. However, when they share broader views that the sustainability of this relationship is relatively sound, the stability of this relationship could be more robust in some communities. Numerous factors and characteristics shape the relationship between communities and CBE. This finding aligns with previous research, which emphasizes the interdependence between entrepreneurship and the community. Several scholars have highlighted that entrepreneurship is closely tied to the community, relying on community support and engagement to pursue shared goals and mutual benefits (Lyons et al., 2012). Furthermore, various dimensions of the community—such as its social structure, cultural values, and available resources—can influence the entrepreneurial mindset, decision-making, and overall entrepreneurial processes (Hindle & Moroz, 2010). Accordingly, the relationship between entrepreneurship and the community is not only reciprocal but also foundational to the success of CBE initiatives (Darwish & Van Dyk, 2018; JMIGE, 2021).

One manager of a cooperative in rural areas said, *"The cooperative's activities are closely linked with the activities of the local community. Moreover, this close relationship has existed for a long time."*

A manager of another cooperative also assessed that

*"In fact, the cooperative's production and business activities play an important role in promoting the development of the local community."*

A cooperative manager also assessed that *"although our activities are linked with the local community, the extent of this association is limited."*

Furthermore, all participants emphasized that the development of cooperative businesses is a key priority within their organizational agendas, and they have undertaken considerable efforts to support and promote such development. Despite some variations in their understanding of the term CB, there was a shared consensus that the community plays a vital role in the growth and success of cooperatives. This finding aligns with the conclusions of Peredo (2014) and Galappaththi et al. (2017), who argue that community reliance and institutional participation are critical components for the effectiveness and sustainability of development initiatives.

One respondent working in an agricultural cooperative commented: *"I think everyone in this industry has some degree of community awareness and wants to promote cooperative development. However, many macro and micro-environment factors give stakeholders different opinions on the concept and how to achieve that."*

One cooperative manager commented: *"The development of cooperatives in Viet Nam follows a well-planned development strategy with the participation of many stakeholders."*

Notably, the participants emphasized the community's participation in the cooperative's activities. Specifically, Hassan et al. (2021) have determined that CB entrepreneurship includes collaborative relationships and activities combining resources to co-create value that benefits stakeholders. When assessing the factors of the community that affect cooperatives, the interview results show that many factors affect the cooperative's business activities.

One manager commented, *"Individuals and people in the community all have a certain influence on the operation of our cooperative":*

Another respondent commented, *"Community managers, as well as local authorities, naturally have a role to play in the activities of the cooperative":*

This is consistent with Pierre (2017), who identifies CB entrepreneurship as a locally-based



phenomenon, including non-profit organizations, local businesses, and personal and local. Consequently, CB entrepreneurship is influenced by many community factors. However, the fact that community members act judiciously and collectively in creating and running a business does not mean everyone participates (Peredo, 2014).

One cooperative manager in a rural area commented: *“Currently, there are many people and objects in the community who are not interested in developing cooperatives. They have many other interests.”*

One cooperative manager in an urban area commented, *“The members of the cooperative mainly carry out the cooperative's activities. Others are less interested and less involved in our cooperative's activities.”*

In addition, several interviewees noted that one of the main barriers preventing effective collaboration between cooperatives and local communities in development efforts is an overly cautious approach to business management. This cautiousness is manifested in the cooperatives' slow response to shifts in consumer demand and competitive market dynamics, as well as their general aversion to risk-taking. One cooperative manager said: *“Even though the cooperatives are trying to develop, the community's contribution is increasingly limited and diminished. Therefore, the operation of the cooperative is increasingly difficult due to the lack of human and other resources to maintain the activities.”*

Several studies highlight the need to enhance stakeholder awareness regarding the importance of cooperation. A strategic approach often recommended is the adoption of a "co-opetition" model—simultaneously cooperating and competing—which allows businesses to compete while ensuring mutual benefits for all partners involved. Hertel (2018) emphasized that CB entrepreneurship involves the process of recognizing, developing, collecting, evaluating, and ultimately exploiting opportunities to collaboratively create goods and services. This approach aims to generate not only economic benefits but also social and ecological value for the local community and the broader society in which these actors operate.

A cooperative manager commented that there are communities that should be aware of the need to promote cooperative and collective economic

development and take concrete actions to ensure this development. However, these organizations need to be better linked and coordinated and are relatively small.

#### 4.3.2. *The role and support of the community for community-based enterprises*

Research has been conducted to assess the community's role and support in the cooperative's business activities. Interviewees were asked their opinions about the role of local communities in the cooperative's business. Most of the answers said that the local community had a positive role in the cooperatives' business activities. In addition, some people think that the community's role is essential.

One cooperative manager said, *“Local communities have many contributions and support for our cooperative activities.”*

Another cooperative manager said, *“The community's participation is valuable to the cooperative's activities.”*

Communities play a vital role in fostering entrepreneurship by establishing culturally embedded networks that facilitate the sharing of information about opportunities, encourage collaboration for the benefit of the community or region, and help build an ecosystem conducive to business development (Julien, 2007; Fortunato & Alter, 2011). Moreover, these supportive ecosystems extend beyond merely functional aspects—such as access to financial capital through banks, local taxation policies, and land use regulations—to include relational dimensions, such as trust-based networks and social capital (Wilkinson, 1991). Communities also contribute to the production and marketing of goods and services, reinforcing their role in enabling entrepreneurial success (Peredo, 2014). As such, communities create an enabling environment that nurtures both entrepreneurship and entrepreneurs (Galappaththi et al., 2017).

Many respondents said their cooperatives actively cooperate with the community, which is very important for their activities. More specifically, interviews show that the role of the community is very diverse for cooperatives. Communities have carried out various activities to support cooperatives. The roles of the community for the cooperative identified by the interviewers were:

*“During the peak business season, the cooperative also hires local people to help harvest in the right*

*season and at the right time and avoid flooding and damage to agricultural products."*

*"Local community people regularly buy goods and use our cooperative's agricultural services."*

*"Cooperatives always ask people in the community to support propaganda and promote their products and services. From there, contributing to helping products and services reach more people."*

*"Knowledge about production and business is valuable, especially for the elderly. The cooperative always consults with the forerunners to grasp and better understand this knowledge to apply it in practice."*

*"When the cooperative faces difficulties, the people's financial and cash support is an important source of support for us. The support of the members' families is especially appreciated. From there, the new cooperative can continue to maintain and develop through difficult times."*

*"Supporting relationships in production and business is essential for cooperatives. The fact that the cooperative can take advantage of the relationships of the local people and promote these relationships is important for its survival and development."*

The findings related to community support activities align with prior research emphasizing the community's role as a catalyst for entrepreneurial initiatives (Korsching & Allen, 2004). Communities contribute significantly to the entrepreneurial ecosystem by offering essential services and adopting various supportive measures and subsidies to assist startups (Darwish & Van Dyk, 2018; Prijon, 2012). A high level of community support is positively correlated with an increase in the number of emerging entrepreneurs (Gruidl & Markley, 2014). Furthermore, communities act as sources of inspiration by serving as role models for younger generations and by providing goods, services, financial contributions (Collins et al., 2016), as well as valuable experience and knowledge (Galappaththi et al., 2017).

In addition to material and institutional support, entrepreneurs benefit from mutual support systems, requiring collaboration with others from diverse economic and social fields (Fortunato & Alter, 2011). The level of trust among community members is particularly critical, as higher trust increases the likelihood of entrepreneurial success (JMIGE, 2021). Moreover, communities facilitate

entrepreneurial networking and collaboration through social and professional linkages (Manyara & Jones, 2007). Hence, CBE rely heavily on community engagement and support, which are foundational to their effective development. In essence, active community participation is a prerequisite for the long-term success and sustainability of CBE (Galappaththi et al., 2017). However, communities face many challenges supporting cooperatives (Lyons et al., 2012). Through interviews, research has determined that these challenges are diverse and significantly impact community performance in cooperative business. The challenges presented by the interviewers were:

*"Besides, labor and materials costs are increasing. This has a big impact on these activities."*

*"Although many people are willing to support cooperatives, cooperatives always need funds to pay wages and labor for people. Since then, the cost of implementation is quite high compared to the income level of the cooperative."*

*"Although financial support from families and individual contributions are available, these are small and highly personal."*

*"The community's infrastructure is lacking and unresponsive. Despite the state's investment in infrastructure, especially in rural areas, this level of investment is still small. Besides, they [the state] mainly invest in certain projects such as schools, hospitals, etc., but the investment level for other items is still small. As a result, the infrastructure is still not keeping up with the needs of the people and the cooperatives."*

*"Policies and regulations lack enforcement, overlap, and are unclear. Many policies and regulations are impractical and difficult to apply locally. Therefore, the state needs to have more specific policies to ensure the development of cooperatives."*

*"Currently, the level of knowledge and experience in production and business of people in the communities is still limited. People in the community mainly follow their grandparents' experiences but have not updated much with modern knowledge. Therefore, every time we need the support of the community and the people, there are training programs that support and update knowledge for the people."*

*"Human resources in the community are still lacking, especially those of working-age and young*

people. The reason is that young people have gone to find jobs in other places with higher incomes, such as in big cities and industrial zones. So when we need people to work, it is difficult to find people who meet our needs.”

*“The current skilled workforce is still weak. Many people do not want or do not intend to stick with cooperative activities. The reason is that it feels difficult, and the income is not high compared to other jobs.”*

Therefore, it is essential to examine the nature and role of communities as influential factors in the entrepreneurial process (Hindle & Moroz, 2010). A cooperative manager commented that the cooperative should be well aware of the role and contributions of the cooperative community. Additionally, the cooperative always values these roles and the contributions of local communities to its cooperatives.

#### 4.3.3. Stakeholder collaboration in strengthening the role of the community in community-based enterprises

The researcher asked the interviewees to describe the relationship between the cooperative's production, business activities, and other objects in the local community. From the collected results, the responses indicated that many stakeholders influence the activities of local communities and cooperatives. The diversity of feedback shows us the multifaceted and complex nature of local and cooperative activities. Many factors influence these activities. The respondents appreciated the cooperation between stakeholders, such as cooperatives, authorities, and people. Many researchers point out partnerships with diverse stakeholders are widely recognized as crucial to development (Lemmetynen & Go, 2005). According to Parwez (2017), the basic principles of CB entrepreneurship are a team approach, mutual trust, and motivation to solve problems. Gurau and Dana (2018) also consider CB entrepreneurship as an expression of local entrepreneurship based on environmental management, social responsibility, collective action, and traditional mutualistic values.

Government agencies are strong actors that play a significant role in the community and are cooperative (Wanniarachchi et al., 2020). Vietnamese cooperatives are controlled by a multilevel, inter-sectoral, top-down management system in Viet Nam. The Ministry of Planning and Investment, directly under the Vietnamese

Government, is the central unit tasked with managing all cooperative activities throughout the country (Vietnamese Government, 2013).

The Vietnam Cooperative Alliance plays a pivotal role in the governance structure of cooperatives by engaging in policy formulation, strategic development, advocacy, and oversight (Vietnamese Government, 2013). Despite efforts from the central government to foster collaboration among public institutions, the complex, overlapping nature of the collective and cooperative economic sectors continues to present numerous administrative challenges. This issue echoes the conclusions of Peredo (2014), who argued that inconsistencies in authority and contrasting perspectives among agencies at various administrative tiers can significantly obstruct the progress and effectiveness of CB entrepreneurial initiatives. Peredo further emphasized the need for a unified and coherent governance model tailored to the needs of CBE.

Because cooperative development intersects multiple sectors, many provincial authorities have established interdepartmental steering committees to coordinate related activities. These committees often include leaders from key departments such as Planning and Investment, Finance, and Agriculture and Rural Development. The primary goal is to create a more integrated framework that enables provincial units to work together more effectively.

Nevertheless, several respondents in this study highlighted persistent weaknesses in the management system that continue to hinder stakeholder collaboration. Specifically, three participants (accounting for 25% of the total) noted that although a vertically integrated system exists from national to local levels, it remains ineffective in practice. The involvement of too many state agencies often results in unclear jurisdiction and fragmented accountability. As one cooperative leader observed:

One cooperative manager commented: *“The current organizational structure for managing cooperatives still contains flaws that obstruct effective cooperation. One of the main barriers to cooperative development is the lack of synergy between national and local government agencies.”*

Several participants noted that interdepartmental cooperation at the provincial level remains weak, largely because each department functions within its own sectoral boundaries and often lacks adequate understanding of the cooperative model and its

socio-economic significance. While these departments are part of local government and are involved in initiatives that support cooperatives, they frequently overlook the multidisciplinary nature of cooperative development and its potential for contributing to broader community outcomes. Many public agencies tend to prioritize their specific mandates and show limited interest in collaborative efforts, particularly in areas like tourism development or CB initiatives that require a more holistic approach.

This situation underscores the urgent need to streamline and restructure the administrative framework responsible for cooperative governance. According to some interviewees, clearly delineating the roles and responsibilities of various departments and local entities—especially those directly connected to CD—would help eliminate overlaps, reduce inter-agency conflict, and enhance coordination.

Although a long-term strategic vision for cooperative development exists and is broadly aligned with community advancement, several respondents emphasized the absence of detailed short-term action plans. They suggested that a comprehensive roadmap, with clearly defined tasks and responsibilities assigned to specific stakeholders, is essential. Such an approach would enable relevant actors to mobilize their expertise and resources effectively, fostering a transparent and goal-oriented collaboration focused on priority areas such as infrastructure, cultural heritage, and environmental sustainability.

The interviews revealed a range of structural and institutional barriers that continue to impede the formation of effective cooperative partnerships among stakeholders. Some participants emphasized that cooperation has improved in recent years, especially since Resolution No. 20-NQ/TW's adoption of continuing innovation, development, and improving collective economic efficiency in the new period. The manager of a local cooperative argues that, in recent times, stakeholders have been eager to cooperate with others and learn more from each other. North and Smallbone (2006) emphasized that local government levels or units must develop necessary policies to develop the area's entrepreneurial capacity through CB or personal business. It contributes to the promotion of CB entrepreneurship.

A significant challenge to fostering stakeholder collaboration in cooperative development lies in the

limited availability of financial resources. Victurine (2000) emphasized that even modest investments can substantially impact the success of CBE, providing essential support for their sustainability and growth. However, under rigid and bureaucratic fiscal management systems, many government agencies encounter considerable difficulties in allocating adequate funds for cooperative initiatives. Consequently, several local authorities have had to pursue alternative funding sources.

As one cooperative manager observed, *“Municipal governments frequently seek financial assistance from both domestic and international donors to sustain cooperative development. Without such support, we would be forced to rely on loans, which impose significant financial strain on our operations.”*

Given the limited fiscal capacity of the government, it becomes necessary to prioritize funding allocation, which may result in inconsistent or insufficient support for many cooperatives. Önder et al. (2017) highlighted the challenge cities face in balancing economic, environmental, and socio-cultural goals, often having to make trade-offs due to resource constraints. Moreover, rural communities typically face additional limitations, including inadequate access to capital, weak mentorship systems, insufficient infrastructure, and a lack of institutional support for nurturing CB entrepreneurship.

In discussing these challenges, one manager noted, *“Many assume that the slow progress of cooperatives and weak stakeholder engagement is due to inefficient institutional mechanisms. But ultimately, these mechanisms are designed and enacted by people. Therefore, before addressing structural issues, we must first transform perceptions and behaviors.”*

Hjalager (2018) argued that sustainable cooperation is built on trust developed over time through long-term alliances. However, trust is fragile—once broken, it is difficult to rebuild, and its absence can derail collaborative efforts. In such contexts, divergent perspectives and ineffective communication frequently hinder coordination among stakeholders. Addressing these challenges requires strategic use of community assets—including financial, human, and intellectual capital—to combat poverty and enhance CB entrepreneurship (Johnstone & Lionais, 2004).

To achieve long-term development outcomes,

Miller and Twining-Ward (2005) stressed the importance of expanding people's awareness, capabilities, and vision. Similarly, Gray (1989) conceptualized cooperation as a dynamic and evolving process through which actors with differing viewpoints work toward common solutions. Stakeholder collaboration, therefore, plays a pivotal role in empowering communities and strengthening their contribution to CB entrepreneurship. As Pinheiro et al. (2020) asserted, CBE are built on interdependence, fostering mutual support among various actors while prioritizing the generation of long-term social value for local communities.

## 5. DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The research results show a significant difference in the interviewees' perception of the community's role in developing CBE. Their level of awareness and understanding of the community varies with the size of the community and geographic location. Additionally, the coordination and contributions of the community to CBE are also different. For large communities with many members and communities located in rural areas, far from urban areas, the role of the community is more clearly shown. However, in contrast, for communities that are small and geographically located near urban areas, the role and influence of the community are less. Larger rural communities are more likely than communities in the rest of the region to actively participate in entrepreneurship. Despite the differences, it is essential to note that communities all have a role in entrepreneurship.

CBE are generally closely linked to communities through human resources, community resources, financial support, etc. In addition, interviewees show that communities are important and necessary for enterprises.

Besides, many interviewees said that the recent development of CBE is relatively sustainable, especially regarding economic and social aspects. CBE are seen to create many positive problems not only for the members of the enterprises but also for the communities and localities where the CBE do their business. However, CBE face many challenges and problems in the development process today. Therefore, CBE should receive more attention to prevent future decline, recession, and the effects of fluctuations in the business environment.

Some respondents again indicated that the community's role in CBE needs to be more

prominent. This happens for many reasons, such as the migration of young, skilled workers or community activities that have yet to attract community members to participate; the community's operating policies still need to be updated and adjusted to reflect the current development trend of enterprises, etc. It leads to a great deal of uncertainty and clarity on the role and contribution of communities to CBE.

In addition, the cooperation between the community and the CBE could be more assertive. Many people wonder if the future development of this relationship will be when many new business forms appear in line with the current integration trend. Therefore, it is necessary to address the lack of cooperation between CBE and the community to make a radical change to change consciousness and act for the better in the coming time.

Despite barriers and challenges that hinder CBE and community partnerships, some participants found that increased cooperation in this area is irreplaceable, especially for disadvantaged and indigenous communities. Many interviewees highlighted critical solutions for realizing and improving community, entrepreneurship, and local collaboration.

Gray (1989) conceptualizes collaboration as an evolving process through which stakeholders with differing perspectives move beyond their individual limitations to jointly identify effective solutions. Therefore, establishing well-defined coordination mechanisms is crucial to strengthening cooperation and empowering communities within the framework of CBE.

There are some limitations to the qualitative research that has been carried out in this paper, which are:

- Time constraints affect interviews. Some interviewees have busy schedules, making it difficult to schedule an interview time. Therefore, there is a limitation in collecting the opinions and evaluations of the interviewees.
- The study was conducted based on individual case interviews with the interviewees. Therefore, it has some limitations in generalizing the problems that have been presented.
- The next limitation is that the study was conducted on entrepreneurs and managers of CBE. Therefore, it lacks other perspectives offered by many stakeholders (For example, local managers,

community members, community policymakers, local developers, etc.).

– Another limitation is the lack of available, accurate, and reliable statistical data on CD and the development of CBE in Viet Nam.

– In addition, qualitative research data can be difficult to analyze. In data analysis process, although efforts have been made to link ideas and compare data using analytical methods and software, shortcomings in the data analysis process cannot be avoided.

This study lays the groundwork for future researchers pursuing similar lines of inquiry. Subsequent studies can further explore community, entrepreneurship, and LD by approaching these themes from diverse perspectives and across various spatial and temporal contexts. Key future research directions include:

– In this study, the role and contribution of local government and community people were mentioned. Therefore, further studies can explore in more detail the role and contribution of these target

groups to the community role in entrepreneurship and LD.

– Combine many research methods and qualitative analysis methods to supplement the research conclusions and results. Therefore, there are comparisons and evaluations of the results of the research from diverse and broader perspectives.

– It is possible to expand the scope of the research topic. This study is limited by finance and time. Therefore, further studies can be carried out with more diverse communities and localities, with a larger number of samples to investigate.

– Further research directions may be in depth to analyze the supportive behaviors of the community towards CBE and LD using specific scales and other analytical methods. Furthermore, the measurement of specific cases of CBE, as well as the change in community support behavior at different stages of development of CBE is an interesting study in the future. From there, we can have accurate and timely assessments of the current policies and supporting community roles to best support CBE.

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