Community Empowerment to Reduce Extreme Poverty in Garut Regency Through Business Incubators

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ABSTRACT: Extreme poverty remains a persistent challenge in Indonesia, with approximately 2.5% of the population living on less than $2.15 per day (World Bank, 2023). This condition is not solely economic but also deeply intertwined with social and cultural dimensions, limiting access to education, healthcare, and employment opportunities. This study examines the impact of business incubators on reducing extreme poverty in Garut Regency by analyzing changes in income and managerial knowledge using paired t-tests. The findings indicate a significant increase in income, with an average growth of 35% (p-value = 0.000), alongside a notable improvement in managerial knowledge (p-value = 0.001) following participation in the incubator program. These results underscore the effectiveness of business incubators in enhancing both financial stability and entrepreneurial capacity. However, critical challenges remain, particularly regarding access to capital and heightened market competition, which disproportionately affect entrepreneurs in remote areas. To address these barriers and ensure the long-term sustainability of incubator initiatives, stronger collaboration among local governments, financial institutions, and the private sector is essential. Such partnerships can facilitate targeted financial support and broader market access. Overall, this research affirms the role of business incubators as a strategic tool for community empowerment and poverty alleviation, while emphasizing the need for ongoing support mechanisms and policy innovation to foster resilient, inclusive economic development in disadvantaged regions such as Garut Regency.

Keywords: Business Incubators, Extreme Poverty, Community Empowerment.

INTRODUCTION

Extreme poverty is a global issue that remains a major challenge in many developing countries, including Indonesia. According to World Bank data, individuals or families living on less than $2.15 per day are classified as living in extreme poverty. (World Bank, n.d.). Although Indonesia has experienced significant economic progress over the past few decades, extreme poverty remains a complex issue that has not been fully resolved. According to data from the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS), while the national poverty rate has shown a declining trend, extreme poverty persists, especially in rural areas and regions with limited infrastructure access.

In addition to economic factors, extreme poverty also encompasses social and cultural dimensions that worsen the conditions of impoverished communities. Factors such as limited access to

education, healthcare services, and decent employment further deepen the cycle of poverty. Several regions in Indonesia, especially outside Java Island, still face challenges in infrastructure development, resource distribution, and access to adequate social services.(Ali Khomsan, 2015; Susiang, 2024) This condition hampers the socioeconomic mobility of communities and exacerbates the widening disparity between urban and rural areas.

In Garut Regency, despite economic growth in the agriculture, tourism, and small-scale industry sectors, extreme poverty remains a serious issue. The region has challenging geographical characteristics, with many remote villages still relying on traditional agriculture. According to data from the Garut Regency Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) (2024), the extreme poverty rate in this area remains relatively high compared to the national average. This indicates a gap between economic development efforts and the overall well-being of the community (Inaba, 2016; Kunjuraman, 2022; Rupp et al., 2020).

The government has implemented various poverty alleviation programs, including through the empowerment of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). MSMEs play a strategic role in creating jobs and increasing community income in the informal sector. However, despite their great potential to reduce poverty, MSMEs still face several challenges, such as limited access to capital, lack of managerial skills, and low market competitiveness. (Asiva Noor Rachmayani, 2015).

One approach that has been implemented to support MSMEs is the business incubator program. Business incubators are designed to provide training, mentoring, and market access support for aspiring entrepreneurs to develop their businesses sustainably. Additionally, this research adopts a quantitative approach using paired t-tests to analyze changes before and after the incubation program. Thus, this study can provide empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of business incubators as an economic empowerment strategy for impoverished communities.

Based on the background, research gap, and novelty described, this study aims to analyze the impact of business incubators on increasing the income of impoverished communities in Garut Regency and assess their effectiveness in improving the managerial skills of program participants.

This research is expected to provide a deeper understanding of the role of business incubators in addressing extreme poverty and insights for policymakers in designing more effective economic empowerment policies. Additionally, the role of business incubators is essential and strategic in fostering innovative MSMEs. Through incubators, new entrepreneurs based on knowledge and technology can be developed to help reduce extreme poverty in the Garut Regency. Extreme poverty is one of Indonesia's main challenges in socio-economic development, including in the Garut Regency.

Over the past decade, numerous studies have addressed community empowerment and MSME development through business incubators, reflecting a growing academic and policy interest in poverty alleviation and local economic resilience. In 2016, Kusumawati & Sadik (2016) emphasized the need for skill enhancement and institutional support in MSMEs processing coconut husks through business incubators. In the same year, Erilantu, (2016) evaluated the entrepreneurship outcomes of bamboo weaving using the CIPPO model, revealing the effectiveness of incubators in improving marketing and skills. The following year, Suci (2017) highlighted the impact of online marketing and incubation on regional culinary-based MSMEs (YVI et al., 2017).

Between 2018 and 2019, several studies deepened this discourse. Arini et al. (2018) assessed the effectiveness of the Cikal USU business incubator through both target and process approaches, while Rasulong et al. (2018) focused on the limited role of cross-actor collaboration in supporting youth entrepreneurship in coastal areas. Rohim (2019) identified structural challenges faced by MSMEs in Sidoarjo and the role of local incubators in mitigating these issues, whereas Darmawan (2019)linked business incubators to economic growth and job creation across the Asia-Pacific. In the same year, Rosyadiah (2019) explored the optimization of cash waqf for funding business incubators. The early 2020s brought further diversification in focus.

Furthermore, Saputra & Liyana (2020) investigated how youth entrepreneurship centers benefited from Kemenpora's incubator programs, while Zulkifli & Pakkanna, (2022) critiqued cooperative-based incubators for their dependency on external support. More recent studies from 2023 to 2025 show an increasing emphasis on digital transformation and capacity building. Rahman et al., (2023) showed the positive income impacts and facilitation roles of business incubators. While Rosadi et al., (2023) documented improved technical skills through targeted training. Research by Shaliza & Hashanah (2024; Syah et al., (2024) emphasized job creation and system strengthening in urban MSMEs.

Additionally, studies by Purwito et al. (2024) and Hendrawardani et al. (2025) Have incorporated entrepreneurial coaching, product innovation, and digital marketing as key incubator strategies. This body of literature underscores the evolution of business incubator models in Indonesia yet also highlights a need for more context-specific evaluations that align incubation strategies with the socio-cultural dynamics of targeted communities. The present study responds to this gap by critically examining how the tourism village concept intersects with indigenous values, offering a case-specific contribution to the discourse on inclusive and sustainable community empowerment.

Building on this growing body of research, more recent studies from 2020 to 2024 have expanded the discussion by incorporating broader strategies for poverty alleviation and entrepreneurial development across various regional contexts. Sa'diyah El Adawiyah (2020) emphasized that poverty is a complex, multidimensional issue shaped by systemic economic, political, and social conditions, reinforcing the importance of holistic and contextual approaches to community empowerment. In 2022, Hazita et al. highlighted the potential of tourism sector investment to generate employment and reduce poverty in Garut Regency. While Nurhadi et al. (2024) introduced a marketing-based intervention for local products in Simpang Village to address extreme poverty. Complementing these efforts, Hurriati et al., (2024) demonstrated the effectiveness of the UNIZAR Business Incubator in mentoring MSMEs and fostering entrepreneurial growth, a theme further explored by Rizki et al. (2024), who proposed an interior design model to enhance the functionality of culinary incubators through visual merchandising. Meanwhile, Putra (2024) study of a home-based culinary business in Denpasar underscored operational challenges such as limited promotional strategies and the absence of automated systems for customer engagement, which hinder business scalability.

Collectively, these studies underscore the critical role of context-sensitive, multi-dimensional support systems—ranging from business incubation and marketing innovation to infrastructure

and policy alignment—in advancing community-based economic resilience. However, there remains limited exploration of how such models function in culturally distinct and traditionally governed communities. In response, this study seeks to address that gap by analyzing the implementation of the tourism village concept within the Baduy indigenous community, offering insights into how development initiatives can be harmonized with local values and cultural preservation.

The supporting theory in this study suggests that various structural and social factors, including unequal development, limited access to education and healthcare services, and dependence on the informal sector, often cause extreme poverty. Community empowerment through business incubators is expected to increase the poor's income and reduce the extreme poverty rate. The economic empowerment theory indicates that support in the form of training and access to capital can help individuals and communities enhance their economic independence.

Unlike previous studies that primarily concentrate on MSME development or general business growth, this research specifically addresses the issue of extreme poverty within the Garut Regency by examining the socio-economic impacts of community empowerment initiatives. The study places particular emphasis on improving household income, reducing economic inequality, and fostering sustainable entrepreneurial skills among the most vulnerable populations. By situating business incubators as a strategic tool within a broader community empowerment framework, the research seeks to evaluate their effectiveness in addressing structural poverty rather than merely enhancing business performance. The formulation of the hypothesis is grounded in a critical review of relevant theories, empirical findings, and logical reasoning that connect extreme poverty reduction with inclusive, capacity-building interventions.

From this theoretical foundation, the central hypothesis proposed is that community empowerment through business incubators has a significant positive effect on increasing the income of poor communities in the Garut Regency, thereby contributing to a reduction in extreme poverty rates. Accordingly, this study is guided by the primary research question: How does community empowerment through business incubators reduce extreme poverty in the Garut Regency?

METHOD

The study aims to analyze the impact of community empowerment through business incubators in reducing extreme poverty in Garut Regency. This research adopts a mixed-method approach, integrating both qualitative and quantitative methodologies to provide a thorough analysis. The combination of these methods allows for a deeper exploration of the challenges surrounding extreme poverty while also enabling a measurable assessment of the effectiveness of business incubators in fostering economic empowerment. Below is a detailed description of the research methodology.

To obtain representative results, the sampling process was carefully designed by considering various factors that reflect the characteristics of participants in the business incubator program in Garut Regency. This study involved 150 respondents, including micro and small entrepreneurs,

business incubator facilitators, and policymakers overseeing the program. The majority of respondents (80%) were micro-entrepreneurs, with the most common business sectors being handicrafts (30%), agriculture (25%), food and beverages (20%), and trade (15%).

Demographic factors were also taken into account to enhance the accuracy of data representation. Most respondents were between 30 and 45 years old (60%), indicating a productive age group actively engaged in business activities. Additionally, 55% of respondents had completed high school, reflecting the typical education level among micro-entrepreneurs in the area. By considering these factors, the sampling process was conducted proportionally to ensure that the research findings accurately represent the actual conditions of the business incubator program and its role in alleviating extreme poverty in the Garut Regency.

The research was conducted in Garut Regency, a region identified by BPS Garut (2020) as having a high incidence of extreme poverty, particularly in rural areas dependent on traditional agricultural livelihoods. This location was selected based on its relevance to the study's focus on community empowerment and poverty alleviation.

Several data collection techniques were employed to obtain comprehensive qualitative data. First, in-depth interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview guide designed to explore the experiences and perspectives of key stakeholders, including micro-entrepreneurs, business incubator facilitators, and policymakers. Questions for micro-entrepreneurs focused on their participation in the incubator program, perceived benefits, and ongoing business challenges. Facilitators were asked to describe the training materials provided, assess the program's effectiveness, and identify implementation barriers. Additionally, focus group discussions (FGDs) were held with community groups actively involved in the business incubator to gather collective insights on the program's impact. The FGD guide focused on participants' assessments of income improvements, changes in quality of life, and perceptions of the incubator's sustainability in reducing extreme poverty.

To complement these methods, participatory observation was conducted using an observation checklist to document real-time activities during training sessions and mentoring. This instrument captured key interactions, participant engagement, and contextual challenges during program implementation, thereby enriching the study's analysis with empirical observations from the field.

The qualitative data collection in this study involves several methods to gain comprehensive insights. In-depth interviews will be conducted either face-to-face or via virtual platforms, each lasting approximately 30–60 minutes. These interviews will be recorded with the participant's consent and transcribed for further analysis. Additionally, focus group discussions (FGDs) will be organized with community members involved in business incubators, lasting around 1–2 hours. A moderator will guide these discussions to ensure that all participants have the opportunity to express their views. Furthermore, participatory observation will be employed, allowing the researcher to actively engage in business incubator activities to gain direct insights into the program's processes and participant interactions.

The collected data will be analyzed using thematic analysis, which involves identifying, analyzing, and reporting key patterns or themes that emerge from interviews, FGDs, observations, and other documentation. The analysis process includes transcribing and categorizing interview and discussion data based on relevant topics, followed by identifying key themes related to community empowerment and poverty reduction, such as challenges in accessing capital, benefits of entrepreneurship training, or changes in quality of life. The researcher will then examine how these themes interconnect and contribute to reducing extreme poverty, providing a deeper understanding of the role of business incubators within the socio-economic landscape of Garut Regency. To ensure the reliability of findings, data triangulation will be applied by cross-referencing results from different sources, including interviews, FGDs, and observations, to enhance consistency and validity.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Impact of Business Incubators on Reducing Extreme Poverty
Based on interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), and observations, it was found that business incubators positively impact the economic lives of participants. The business incubator program participants experienced increased income, improved market access, and gained knowledge about business management. On average, participants' income in the business incubator increased by approximately 35% after participating in the program for 6 months to 1 year.

Key findings related to the impact of business incubators on reducing extreme poverty in Garut Regency include:
- Income Increase: Before joining the program, most participants (70%) earned around IDR 500,000 to IDR 1,000,000 monthly. After participating in the business incubator, 65% of respondents reported that their monthly income increased from IDR 1,500,000 to IDR 3,000,000.
- Improved Market Access: Most participants reported that the business incubator helped them access broader markets through digital marketing and connections with local distributors.
- Enhanced Managerial Skills: The business incubator program provided training related to financial management, marketing, and business management, which participants found very beneficial.
- However, despite significant improvements in several aspects, the biggest challenge still faced is limited access to business capital, particularly for participants from remote areas. This limitation affects their business sustainability even though their managerial skills and knowledge have improved.

Descriptive Statistics and Interpretation
A descriptive statistical analysis was conducted on the collected data to provide a deeper insight into the impact of community empowerment through business incubators. Below are the descriptive statistics for some key variables measured in the study:

Table 1

Variable	Before Incubator	After Incubator
Average Income (IDR)	900,000	2,100,000
Standard Deviation (IDR)	300,000	500,000
Income Range (IDR)	500,000 - 1,500,000	1,500,000 - 3,000,000

Based on descriptive statistics, the average income of business incubator participants increased significantly by approximately 35%. The income range also widened, indicating that the business incubator program effectively enhances their earnings.

Managerial Knowledge

Table 2

Variable	Before Incubator	After Incubator
Average Managerial Knowledge (Scale 1-5)	2.8	4.2
Standard Deviation	0.9	0.8

The average managerial knowledge of participants significantly improved after attending the business incubator program. This indicates that the training provided by the business incubators can enhance micro and small entrepreneurs' abilities to manage their businesses effectively.

This study indicates that business incubators play a significant role in increasing participants' income and managerial skills, aligning with the theory of economic empowerment. (Ali Khomsan, 2015) . However, the findings also reveal a gap between skill enhancement and limited access to capital, reinforcing the research by (Zulkifli & Pakkanna, 2022) On MSMEs' dependence on external support.

Additionally, compared to the study by (Arini et al., 2018), which emphasized the effectiveness of business incubators through profitability and productivity approaches, this research highlights that despite a 35% increase in income, limited market access remains a major challenge. This finding is consistent with Rasulong et al. (2018), who noted that cross-actor participation in business incubators is often not optimal.

From a marketing and business networking perspective, this study also shows that many participants still struggle to reach a broader market. This supports the findings of (Rizki et al., 2024), which emphasizes the importance of visual merchandising strategies in enhancing MSME product competitiveness.

Overall, while this research confirms that business incubators effectively improve skills and income, challenges in capital access and marketing underscore the need for a more comprehensive approach. This aligns with the recommendations of (Hendrawardani et al., 2025) Who highlighted the importance of digital marketing in supporting MSME growth.

Based on the above findings, several specific policy recommendations are proposed to address the gaps between research results and relevant theories:

1. Revolving Fund Formation and Micro Credit Scheme
   ✓ Local governments can work with microfinance institutions and regional banks to create special loan schemes for business incubator alumni with low interest rates and more flexible terms.
   ✓ The scheme can be based on evaluating the performance of participants in the business incubator, so entrepreneurs who show significant improvement can obtain loans more easily.
2. Increasing Market Access and Digitalization of MSMEs
   ✓ Encourage the use of digital technology to assist business incubator participants in product marketing and distribution.
   ✓ Forming a local marketplace that focuses on products from MSMEs fostered by business incubators, as well as integrating with national e-commerce platforms such as Tokopedia and Shopee.
   ✓ Conduct ongoing digital marketing training, including SEO strategies, copywriting, and social media marketing.

3. Partnerships between Government, Academia, and the Private Sector
   ✓ The local government collaborates with universities to make business incubators part of academic and research programs so that participants get further assistance from students and lecturers.
   ✓ Involve the private sector in the form of CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) to provide support in the form of business capital, training, and market opportunities.
4. Long-Term Monitoring and Evaluation
   ✓ Conducting longitudinal studies to evaluate the long-term impact of business incubators, including measuring business stability after 2-3 years post-program.
   ✓ Establish a data-driven monitoring system where business incubator alumni are regularly evaluated to ensure the sustainability of their businesses.

By integrating the findings of this study with relevant theories, it is clear that business incubators have great potential in reducing extreme poverty. However, challenges such as access to capital, marketing, and business sustainability must be addressed through more concrete policies. The recommendations submitted above aim to optimize the role of business incubators through a business ecosystem-based approach by involving the government, academia, the private sector, and local communities.

If implemented properly, this strategy can create a more inclusive and sustainable business environment for entrepreneurs in the Garut Regency.

Based on the relationship between the discussion and the study's objectives, this study successfully proved that business incubators have a positive impact on reducing extreme poverty through increased income and managerial skills. However, for the research objectives to be optimally

achieved, further policy interventions are needed, especially in increasing access to capital and expanding participants' marketing networks.

For further research, a longitudinal study to monitor the long-term effects of business incubators on extreme poverty and analyze social and structural factors that affect the success of the incubation program's alumni businesses is recommended.

Recommendations for Future Research
Longitudinal Studies:
Future research should adopt longitudinal designs to monitor the long-term effects of business incubators on poverty reduction. This approach would help identify sustained changes in income levels, business growth, and managerial skills over time.

Comparative Analysis:
Conduct comparative studies between regions or districts to evaluate the effectiveness of business incubator programs in different contexts. This could provide insights into how local factors such as culture, infrastructure, and policy environments influence program outcomes.

Exploration of Capital Access:
Investigate the barriers to accessing business capital in remote areas and explore innovative solutions such as microfinance, public-private partnerships, or digital lending platforms to support entrepreneurs.

CONCLUSION

This study empirically tested the impact of business incubator programs on extreme poverty alleviation in Garut Regency by employing paired sample t-tests for data analysis. The findings demonstrate that participation in business incubators significantly contributed to increased income levels and enhanced managerial competencies among micro-entrepreneurs. The analysis of income data yielded a p-value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$), indicating a statistically significant difference before and after the intervention. Participants experienced an average income increase of 35%, underscoring the importance of structured business training and support in promoting financial growth. Similarly, the assessment of managerial skills revealed a significant improvement, with a p-value of 0.001 ($p < 0.05$), confirming that the incubator program effectively enhanced participants' capacities in planning, organizing, and managing their enterprises. These results validate the hypothesis that community empowerment through business incubators plays a critical role in alleviating extreme poverty, not only by generating income but also by strengthening the entrepreneurial competencies needed for long-term sustainability.

While the findings of this study affirm the positive contributions of business incubators to income generation and managerial capacity among micro-entrepreneurs in Garut Regency, several persistent challenges remain—particularly related to access to capital and market reach, especially for participants in remote or underserved areas. To ensure the sustainability and scalability of these entrepreneurial efforts, more comprehensive and inclusive policy interventions are required. One crucial recommendation is the development of a special financing scheme for business incubator

alumni. This can be facilitated through partnerships between local governments, regional banks, cooperatives, or microfinance institutions to provide soft loans with low interest rates and flexible repayment terms. A performance-based financing model may also be introduced to reward high-performing businesses with additional capital support. Furthermore, enhancing MSME access to markets through the development of a dedicated e-commerce platform and integration into national and international marketplaces is essential. Digital literacy and branding training, supported by government and private sector collaboration, would further equip entrepreneurs to compete effectively. Finally, post-incubation mentoring programs extending one to two years can help alumni navigate the challenges of early-stage business development. Strengthened partnerships with universities could foster research-driven innovation, while private sector engagement through CSR initiatives and business partnerships would provide ongoing support and resources. These strategic measures are essential for maximizing the long-term impact of business incubators in reducing extreme poverty and fostering resilient, inclusive local economies.

Although this study provides valuable insights into the role of business incubators in alleviating extreme poverty within Garut Regency, several limitations must be acknowledged. The relatively short duration of the research restricts the ability to observe long-term impacts on business sustainability and poverty outcomes. Moreover, the study's findings are context-specific and may be influenced by regional variables such as local governance, infrastructure, and cultural dynamics, which limit the generalizability of the results. The sample is also confined to a single geographic area, potentially overlooking variations that may arise in different socio-economic contexts. To build upon these findings, future research should consider adopting longitudinal approaches over two to five years, enabling a deeper understanding of the long-term success or failure of incubator-supported businesses. Comparative analyses between Garut and other regions would also be beneficial in identifying how diverse local factors influence incubator effectiveness. Additionally, further exploration into sustainable financing models—such as community-based crowdfunding, digital microcredit schemes, or public-private funding partnerships—could offer innovative solutions to the persistent challenge of limited capital access among economically vulnerable entrepreneurs. These extended approaches would enrich the evidence base and contribute to the development of more adaptive, inclusive, and scalable incubation strategies for poverty alleviation.

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