

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL SUPPORT IN ADDRESSING EMPLOYMENT AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP CHALLENGES: STRATEGIES FOR BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE LOCAL ECONOMIC ECOSYSTEM IN MANDALIKA

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Submit: 12 February 2025, Revised: 18 February 2025, Accepted: 21 February 2025
DOI : <https://doi.org/10.22487/agroland.v11i2.2453>

ABSTRACT

Mandalika, recognized as one of Indonesia's super-priority tourism attractions, offers substantial prospects for local economic advancement. Nonetheless, obstacles in employment and entrepreneurship endure due to skill discrepancies, restricted access to resources, and inadequate social support systems. This study assess: (i) ascertain the function of social support in mitigating employment and entrepreneurial obstacles and (ii) investigate solutions for creating a sustainable local economic ecosystem. Data were obtained utilizing a mixed-method approach, encompassing surveys, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis. The results demonstrate that social support is essential in alleviating employment obstacles, especially in enhancing access to training, mentorship, and financial resources. The study underscores a deficiency in stakeholder integration, as local governments, business organizations, and university institutions exhibit insufficient coordination in promoting sustainable entrepreneurship. The study delineates primary obstacles, such as the lack of organized business models, insufficient marketing acumen, and poor financial oversight inside micro and small firms. The report offers a multi-stakeholder entrepreneurship strategy that focuses on accessibility, capacity building, and ongoing mentorship to address these concerns. These initiatives, along with enhanced policy frameworks and digital adaption, are crucial for promoting economic resilience. The findings highlight the necessity for a holistic support framework that amalgamates community involvement, regulatory modifications, and sustainable business methodologies to guarantee equitable economic advancement in Mandalika. Future study should concentrate on assessing the enduring effects of social support systems on improving economic sustainability and resilience.

Keywords: Social support, Entrepreneurship development, Employment challenges, Sustainable economic ecosystem, Mandalika special economic zone.

INTRODUCTION

Mandalika is recognized as one of Indonesia's super-priority tourist destinations, showcasing a blend of natural beauty and cultural richness. This area is strategically positioned to enhance sustainable tourism, particularly in the wake of challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The following sections outline key aspects of Mandalika's tourism potential.

Mandalika boasts stunning beaches and marine environments, making it ideal for water sports and eco-tourism. The region's natural beauty is complemented by cultural sites, enhancing its appeal to diverse tourist demographics (Wibowo & Hariadi, 2022). Tourism in Mandalika is expected to generate significant employment opportunities and revenue, contributing to local economic development (Kinseng et al., 2018).

However, the benefits are not uniformly distributed, raising concerns about equitable resource allocation among local communities (Cushnahan, 2001). The area faces challenges related to resource over-exploitation and environmental degradation, necessitating a focus on sustainable practices (Cushnahan, 2001). Recommendations include integrating digitalization and local wisdom into tourism strategies to foster resilience and sustainability (Wibowo & Hariadi, 2022).

The Mandalika region plays a pivotal role in both local and national economic development, primarily through its Special Economic Zone (SEZ) aimed at fostering a sustainable tourism ecosystem. This strategic initiative not only enhances regional competitiveness but also aligns with broader national economic policies.

The Mandalika SEZ is designed to create a self-sustaining tourism industry, which is crucial for local job creation and economic diversification (Pratama et al., 2024). The region's focus on digitization and technology adaptation in the hospitality sector enhances operational efficiency and marketing agility,

attracting more visitors and investments (Pratama et al., 2024).

The development of Mandalika reflects the shift towards regional economic strategies, emphasizing the importance of tailored policies that address local needs and leverage unique regional assets (Faggian et al., 2013). By fostering innovation and entrepreneurship, Mandalika can stimulate economic growth, contributing to the overall competitiveness of the national economy (Kraus et al., 2021). Effective local policies, such as those implemented in Mandalika, can serve as models for other regions, demonstrating how localized strategies can complement national economic objectives (Viesti, 2002).

The development of employment and entrepreneurship in the Mandalika area faces significant challenges, primarily stemming from limited access to education, training, and business opportunities. These barriers hinder the local population's ability to fully engage with the economic potential of the Mandalika Special Economic Zone (SEZ).

High dropout rates are prevalent, particularly among low-income families, due to economic constraints and social pressures such as early marriage (Kurnia et al., 2024). The lack of educational infrastructure and resources limits the community's ability to acquire necessary skills for employment and entrepreneurship (Sayuti et al., 2023). Although tourism development has led to an increase in schools and training programs, the availability and quality of these programs remain inadequate (Yuli et al., 2023).

Many local residents still lack the entrepreneurial mindset and skills needed to start and sustain businesses, which is crucial for economic empowerment. The community's economic situation is underwhelming, with many residents living in poverty despite the tourism boom (Sayuti et al., 2023). There is a need for a comprehensive community empowerment model that includes government,

academia, and business collaboration to enhance economic opportunities (Sayuti et al., 2023).

High unemployment in Mandalika, despite its significant economic potential, can be attributed to several interrelated factors. These include structural issues in the labor market, inadequate skills development, and regional economic policies that fail to address local needs.

High unemployment rates are often linked to a mismatch between the skills of the workforce and the demands of the job market. Many educated individuals remain unemployed due to a lack of relevant job opportunities (Behera, 2015). Youth unemployment is particularly pronounced, with many young people facing barriers to entry in the job market, exacerbated by economic fluctuations and wage structures (Manning & Junankar, 1998).

The lack of effective skills development programs contributes to the high unemployment rates. Many individuals are engaged in informal sectors, which do not provide stable employment or adequate income (Alisjahbana & Manning, 2006). Policies aimed at enhancing skill acquisition and vocational training are essential for improving employability in Mandalika (Behera, 2015). Economic policies often overlook the unique characteristics of regional economies, leading to ineffective job creation strategies. Tailored local policies are necessary to stimulate growth and employment in Mandalika (Faggian et al., 2013). The focus on national rather than regional competitiveness can hinder local economic development, resulting in persistent unemployment despite available economic opportunities (Faggian et al., 2013).

The lack of collaboration among relevant parties and the absence of supportive ecosystems significantly hinders the sustainability of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs). Effective social support and collaborative frameworks are essential for fostering innovation and economic growth within these enterprises. The following sections outline the critical aspects of this issue.

MSMEs often struggle to engage with government-sponsored institutions (GSIs), which can enhance their social and economic outputs through collaboration (Andrade-Rojas et al., 2022). There is a notable gap in professional legal support for small-scale sustainable economy initiatives, which affects MSMEs' ability to navigate regulatory challenges (Morgan et al., 2016).

The entrepreneurial ecosystem model promotes cooperation over competition, facilitating knowledge exchange and resource sharing among MSMEs (Nahara, 2024). Continuous learning and collaboration among MSMEs are vital for developing sustainable management practices, which can lead to improved organizational outcomes (Stewart & Gapp, 2018).

The concept of social support plays a crucial role in economic development by fostering community cohesion, enhancing quality of life, and providing a safety net for vulnerable populations. Social support encompasses various forms, including financial aid, healthcare services, and community engagement, which collectively contribute to the resilience and empowerment of communities.

Social support is integral to achieving social cohesion, which is essential for economic stability and growth (Marian et al., 2022). Higher perceived social support correlates with increased community integration and life satisfaction, promoting a stable social environment (Marian et al., 2022). Social support programs significantly improve the quality of life in underserved communities by addressing health, economic, and educational disparities (Alqahtani, 2024). Tailored interventions that consider local contexts enhance the effectiveness of these programs, fostering long-term sustainable development (Alqahtani, 2024).

This study is designed to (i) ascertain the function of social support in mitigating employment and entrepreneurship problems in Mandalika;

(ii) investigate viable techniques for establishing an ecosystem that fosters local economic sustainability. This study's significance lies in its potential to enhance professional understanding of the relationship between social support and economic progress. Practical advantages can offer direction to the government, commercial entities, and local communities in establishing an inclusive and sustainable economic framework.

RESEARCH METHODS

Data Acquisition

The data utilised in this study were acquired through various data collection methodologies, including:

- a. Questionnaire administered to gather data using an online survey accessible at the link: <https://forms.gle/SG7aAxL3bZGxrmu68>
- b. Comprehensive interviews executed in collaboration with many stakeholders, encompassing local governments, commercial entities, and community organisations. This interview is to gather information regarding current social support and the obstacles encountered in establishing an employment and entrepreneurship ecosystem.
- c. Focus Group Discussion (FGD) convened representatives from many sectors, including the private sector, educational institutions, and non-governmental organisations. This focus group discussion seeks to ascertain the requirements and anticipations of business stakeholders, as well as techniques that might be employed to enhance social support.
- d. An examination of documents was performed on reports, policies, and associated programs implemented in both regions. This document offers a summary of the program's implementation and the outcomes attained.

Data Analysis

The collected data were subjected to thematic analysis to discern the primary

themes associated with social support and the job and entrepreneurial ecosystem. This examination encompasses:

- a. Identification of Existing circumstance to outlines the social support circumstances in the Mandalika Area, encompassing implemented programs and initiatives.
- b. Gap Analysis was conducted to evaluate the disparity between current conditions in Mandalika and the optimal conditions delineated for the Mandalika Area. This investigation seeks to identify deficiencies and provide enhancements.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Gap Analysis: Current and Desirable Conditions

A gap analysis was performed to compare the current conditions with the desired conditions in order to foster a sustainable employment and entrepreneurship environment in the Mandalika region. This analysis seeks to identify current deficiencies and propose ideas for essential enhancements.

Legality of Business

MSMEs in Mandalika has a Business Identification Number (*Nomor Induk Berusaha*, NIB), while several MSMEs, such MSMEs Tenun Rebuk Indah and Kampung Nelayan, remain without an NIB. Halal certification is restricted, with only two MSMEs possessing it: Rasa Saling Sayang and Kopi Sasak Mandalika as data show in Figure 1.

In Indonesia, the NIB is an identifier assigned to entrepreneurs, whether individuals or company entities, who are registered under the business licensing system. This NIB also serves as a means to acquire business permits and related documentation necessary for conducting business activities legally. In Mandalika, the majority of MSMEs possess NIB as part of the legal formalities required for conducting business, aligning with the government's objective to digitize

the business licensing system (Ministry of Trade of the Republic of Indonesia, 2022). Nevertheless, numerous MSMEs, such as MSMEs Tenun Rebuk Indah and Kampung Nelayan, remain without NIB. This may result from insufficient comprehension or technical challenges in administering company permissions. Possessing an NIB offers numerous advantages, such as facilitating access to funding and enhancing confidence among

consumers and business partners (NTB Provincial Government, 2021).

Type and Duration of Business

The predominant sector for MSMEs is food & beverage, succeeded by crafts, hydroponics, and screen printing. The duration of businesses ranges from under one year to over five years, with the majority situated in the early or mid-development phases. The graph below illustrates the categories and durations of business activities.

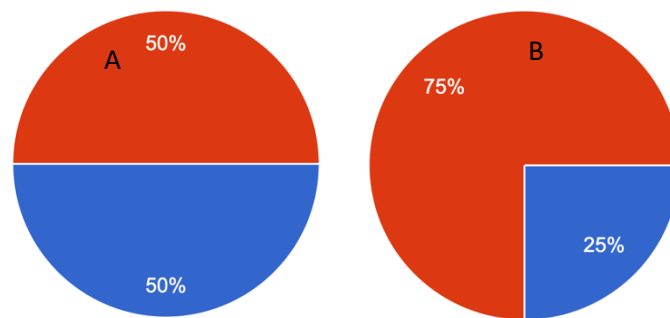


Figure 1. A). Ownership of Business Identification Number and B). Ownership of halal certification. Note: blue area: have; red area: do not have.

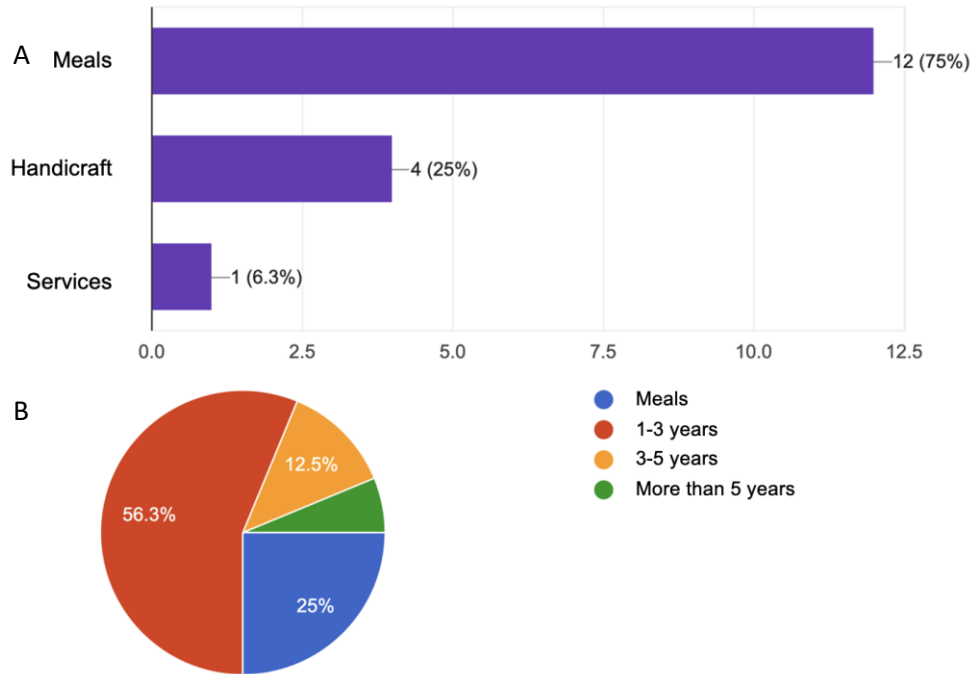


Figure 2. Type (A) and Duration (B) of Business

The prosperity of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) is affected by several factors, including the

nature and duration of commercial activities. The kind of a firm can influence the availability of resources, the social

context, and financial stability, all of which impact the welfare of business proprietors and executives. The duration of a business's operation can influence its financial stability and mental health, as nascent enterprises frequently encounter greater financial difficulties than their established counterparts. These elements collectively influence the subjective well-being of MSME proprietors and administrators.

Small enterprises frequently encounter resource limitations, which can impact the well-being of management. A robust social environment and good interactions with employees and customers can improve well-being in small business settings (Ahmadi et al., 2023). The caliber of the local business environment, including market access and finance availability, profoundly influences the growth and prosperity of micro and small firms. Enhanced company environments can result in superior growth outcomes and improved well-being (Fu & Krauss, 2023).

Early-stage entrepreneurs frequently encounter financial uncertainty, which can adversely affect their well-being. Nonetheless, startup founders may sustain a commendable level of well-being despite financial difficulties, potentially owing to the exhilaration and drive linked to new enterprises (Lukeš & Zouhar, 2024). A modest negative correlation exists between firm size and emotional well-being, with time strain as a primary determinant. Established enterprises may encounter increased time constraints, adversely impacting emotional well-being (Connolly et al., 2021).

Capacity and income

The number of employees in Independent Workers varies, with most having 6-10 people. Average turnover before mentoring ranged from less than 1 million to more than 10 million per month. Mentoring has increased turnover, with some MSMEs reporting an increase of more than 50%.

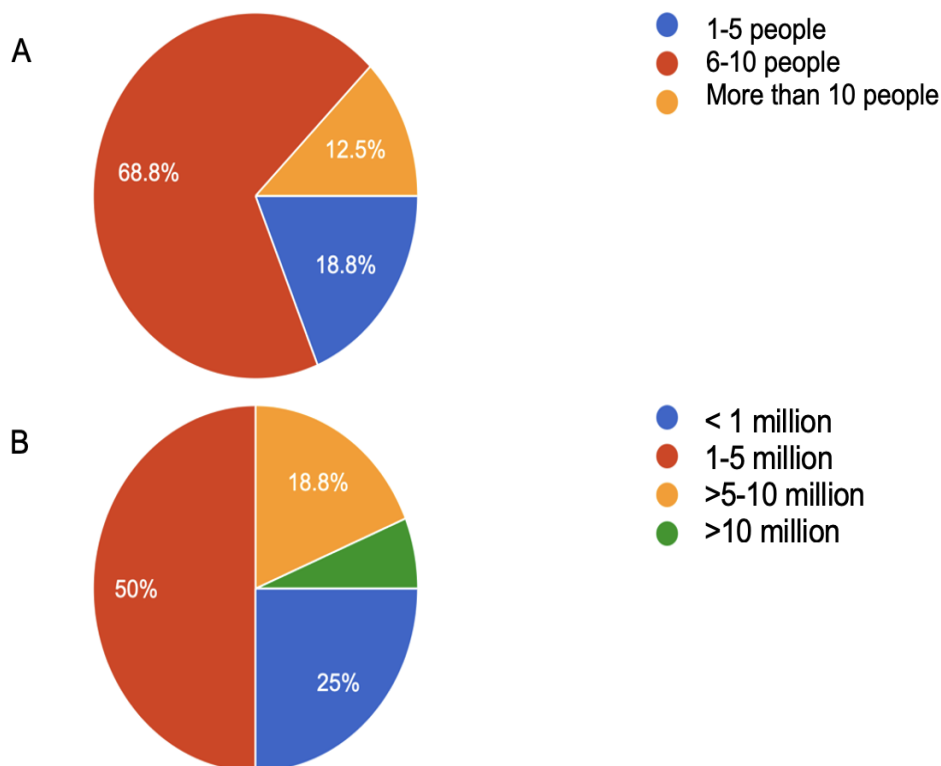


Figure 3. A). Average number of independent workers employees; B) Average monthly turnover of independent workers

Employment and Entrepreneurship Ecosystem in the Mandalika Region: Upstream and Downstream Dynamics

Following the results of the field tour, the Experts and Mentors commenced efforts to further the growth of self-employed workforce. The lecture elucidated that MSMEs, akin to the majority of MSMEs, encounters the following issues.

Lack of a coherent business model

In this setting, the majority of self-employed workforce lack a definite and organised business plan. This complicates their ability to ascertain the trajectory of business development and formulate strategic judgements. Absence of a coherent business model hampers self-employed workforce's ability to pinpoint the appropriate market niche, formulate a robust value proposition, and optimise existing resources.

Challenges in refining products/services.

Self-employed workforce frequently has difficulties in enhancing the quality of its products or services. This impediment may arise from insufficient technical expertise, restricted access to high-quality raw materials, or inadequate consumer feedback. Consequently, the manufactured items or services are unable to compete in the broader market.

Inadequate marketing approach

Numerous self-employed workforce have been unable to formulate and execute effective marketing strategies. The primary impediments include deficiencies in marketing knowledge, improper use of promotional media, and a limited comprehension of consumer behaviour. This leads to diminished brand awareness and reduced sales of products or services.

Inadequate financial reporting

Inadequate financial management is a prevalent issue within self-employed workforce. A significant number lack a systematic financial recording mechanism, hindering the monitoring of cash flow,

assessment of profit and loss, and informed financial decision-making. Inaccurate financial reporting hinder self-employed workforce's ability to secure external financing.

Insufficient access to capital

Self-employed workforce frequently have challenges in securing supplementary financing to advance their enterprises. This may result from insufficient knowledge of funding options, stringent loan criteria, or an absence of acceptable collateral. Insufficient funding hinders MSME's ability to augment manufacturing capacity, broaden market reach, or pursue innovation.

Suboptimal utilisation of MSME technology

The adoption of digital technologies inside MSMEs remains rather minimal. A significant number have not leveraged technology to enhance operational efficiency, broaden market reach, or augment consumer engagement. The deficiency of digital competencies and access to technology are significant impediments in this context.

Work plans and potential collaborations with related Multistakeholders Entrepreneurship Initiatives

To address the challenges encountered by self-employed workforce in the Mandalika region, potential solutions encompass enhancing accessibility, augmenting capacity, and providing continuous mentorship. These three methods are anticipated to facilitate the establishment of entrepreneurial initiatives involving several partners, referred to as Multistakeholder Entrepreneurship Initiatives. This is an elucidation of each solution:

Facilitation of Access

This approach seeks to broaden MSMEs 's access to essential resources for corporate development. This include access to financial resources, technology, and markets.

- a. Facilitate ties between MSMEs and financial institutions, both

- governmental and private, to get financing with more flexible terms.
- b. Facilitate technology access through training and technical help to implement digital innovations that enhance operational efficiency and broaden market reach.
 - c. Facilitate market access for MSMEs by promoting their products via exhibits, e-commerce platforms, and expanded distribution networks.

Development of Capacity

Capacity building is to enhance the technical and managerial competencies of MSMEs to improve their company management efficacy.

- a. Technical training aimed at enhancing product quality and innovation, along with strategies to refine products/services to align more effectively with market demands.
- b. Managerial training focused on skill enhancement in business planning, financial management, and successful marketing techniques.
- c. Fostering entrepreneurship development by promoting an adaptive and inventive entrepreneurial mentality via seminars and mentorship initiatives.

Ongoing Mentorship

Ongoing mentorship guarantees that MSMEs obtain steady assistance and direction in their entrepreneurial progression.

- a. Mentoring: Offering guidance from seasoned professionals and business leaders to deliver direction and pragmatic counsel.
- b. Business Consulting: Delivering ongoing consulting services to assist MSMEs in addressing their particular difficulties.
- c. Monitoring and assessment: Performing consistent monitoring and assessment to analyse business advancement and modify development strategies accordingly.

Multistakeholder Entrepreneurial Initiatives

Ultimately, these solutions are anticipated to establish Multistakeholder

Entrepreneurship Initiatives, which are entrepreneurial endeavours involving diverse entities, including government, private sector, educational institutions, and local communities. This program seeks to establish an ecosystem that fosters the sustainable development of self-employed workforce enterprises. This collaboration aims to establish a robust synergy, wherein each side contributes their skills and resources to expedite the growth of the local economy in the Mandalika region.

The following is a stakeholder analysis curve (Figure 4) illustrates the level of interest and influence of various stakeholders in the development of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Mandalika. This approach is in line with the pentahelix model, which emphasizes collaboration between government, community, private sector, media, and academics in the development of the tourism and creative economy sectors.

Social support is essential for developing sustainable employment and entrepreneurship ecosystems by promoting inclusivity, mitigating disparities, and strengthening the resilience of entrepreneurial endeavors. The incorporation of social support into these ecosystems can foster equal possibilities and sustainable development, especially in the realms of digital and social entrepreneurship. This assistance can take different forms, including policy measures, community networks, and stakeholder engagement, which together enhance a more resilient and inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystem. The subsequent sections examine these elements comprehensively.

Social support is crucial for establishing a resilient entrepreneurial environment, since it mitigates economic disparities and fosters decent employment, both of which are important for sustained digital entrepreneurship (Alzamel, 2024). In social entrepreneurship, support networks are essential for addressing difficulties including resource constraint and inadequate networks. Ecosystem

thinking facilitates the identification and utilization of various forms of support, including fuel, hardware, and DNA, to

augment social impact (Gonzalez & Dentchev, 2021).

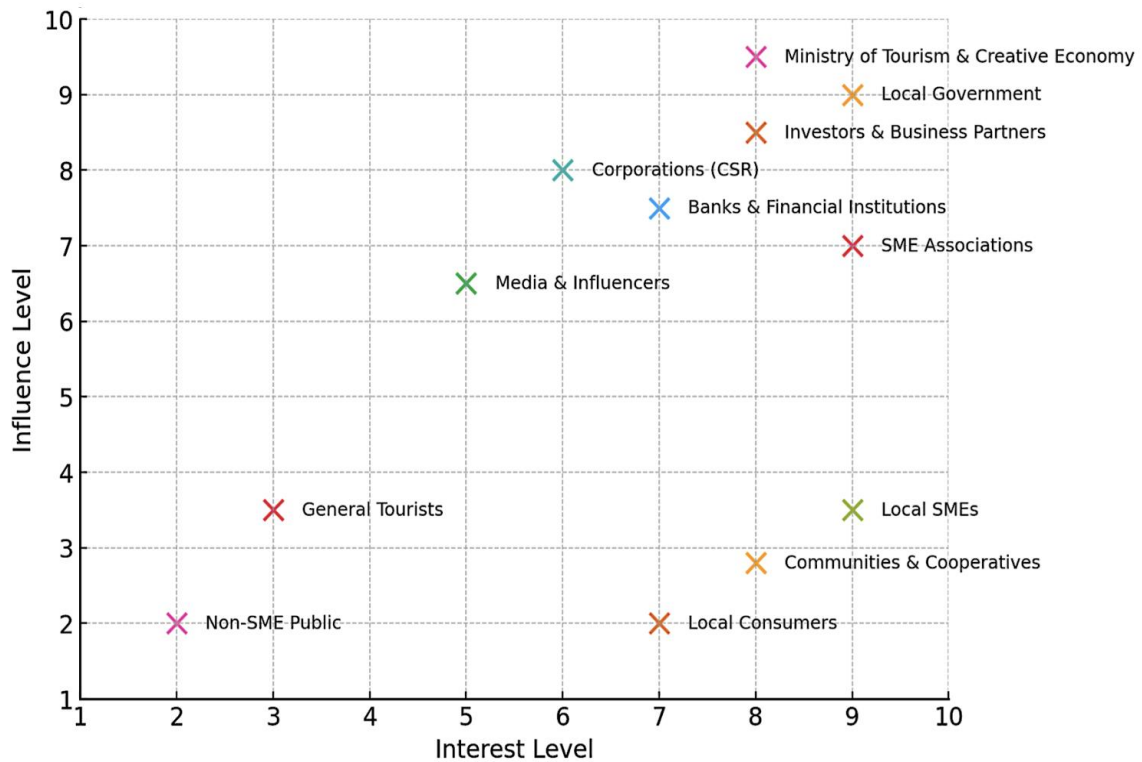


Figure 4. Stakeholders analysis of independent workers development in Mandalika

CONCUSSION

This study emphasizes the vital importance of social support in tackling job and business issues in Mandalika. Notwithstanding its economic promise, challenges such as talent mismatches, inadequate financial assistance, and insufficient stakeholder participation impede sustainable business growth. Enhancing ecosystem integration among government, the business sector, academia, and communities can improve the sustainability of micro and small enterprises. Essential recommendations encompass enhanced financial accessibility, capacity-building initiatives, and sustained mentorship. Digitalization and regulatory assistance are crucial for closing disparities. Future policies must emphasize multi-stakeholder collaboration

to guarantee inclusive and sustainable economic development in Mandalika.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors express their sincere gratitude to the Center for the Expansion of Employment Opportunities in West Bandung (Balai Besar Perluasan Kesempatan Kerja Bandung Barat) Ministry of Manpower of the Republic of Indonesia of for providing financial support for this research. Their contribution has been instrumental in facilitating the study and enabling the successful completion of this work.

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