

The Emergence of Sociopreneurship among Youth: A Phenomenological Study

Aryan Agus Pratama^{1*}, Aris Baharuddin¹, Fatimah Akbal¹,
Leonardo Davidsi Sipayung¹, Zohaib Hassan Sain²

¹Universitas Negeri Makassar, Makassar, Indonesia

²Superior University, Punjab, Pakistan

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Abstract

The development of social entrepreneurship among the younger generation reveals new dynamics in integrating social and economic activities to ensure the sustainability of social impact. However, most studies still focus on structural aspects and outcomes, and thus have not yet adequately explained how social entrepreneurship emerges from individual social experiences. This study aims to investigate how social entrepreneurship emerges among the younger generation as a transformation from social practices toward economic integration. The method used is a phenomenological qualitative approach. Data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews with three key informants, and documentation. Data analysis was conducted inductively through data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion drawing, aided by coding techniques. The research findings indicate that the formation of sociopreneurship is influenced by three main dynamics: social initiation, resource mobilization, and the formalization of practices. This process emphasizes that engagement in social activities serves as the foundation for developing an action orientation, which subsequently evolves into more structured practices. The integration of economic dimensions emerges as a response to the need to sustain these activities, rather than as an initial goal. This study contributes by affirming that sociopreneurship is an emergent process rooted in social experience, broadening the perspective from a structural approach toward a process-oriented one. The implications of this study encourage strengthening social practice-based approaches to develop more contextual and sustainable sociopreneurship.

Keywords: Phenomenology; Social Practice; Sociopreneurship; Sustainability; Youth.

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*Corresponding author. Tel: +6282236255425, E-mail: aryan.aguspratama@unm.ac.id
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I. Introduction

The development of entrepreneurship within the global economic landscape indicates a fundamental paradigm shift. This shift is characterized by a change in orientation from a focus on maximizing economic profit toward the integration of economic and social values (Austin et al., 2006). This transformation not only reflects changes in business practices but also redefines the role of entrepreneurship in society as an agent of broader value creation. Entrepreneurship is no longer understood merely as an economic activity but as a dynamic process that involves the utilization of opportunities, innovation, and responses to the complexities of social dynamics (Al Issa, 2023; Kummitha et al., 2025). This shift places entrepreneurship in a strategic position to address various social issues that cannot be fully resolved by market mechanisms or government intervention.

In this context, sociopreneurship emerges as a concrete manifestation of the evolution of entrepreneurship, integrating economic and social objectives. Sociopreneurship prioritizes creating social value while leveraging market mechanisms to ensure organizational sustainability (Dixit et al., 2025). Unlike conventional entrepreneurship, which focuses on capital accumulation, sociopreneurship views profit as a means to expand social impact (Nabiyeva & MacNeil, 2025). This reflects the hybrid nature of organizations that simultaneously combine business logic and social mission.

In Indonesia, the growth of social entrepreneurship is increasingly popular among the younger generation (Santika, 2023), in line with rising awareness of social issues such as poverty, unequal access to education, and environmental degradation (Huda et al., 2021; Pratono et al., 2019). Social entrepreneurship has emerged as a response to community needs through a community-based (bottom-up) approach, fostering an inclusive economy and advancing sustainable development goals (Pujiastuti et al., 2025). These practices are reflected in various social activities rooted in local needs, such as waste bank management, the empowerment of SMEs and the creative industries, strengthening access to education, the development of the agriculture and fisheries sectors, and the development of tourism villages based on local wisdom. These activities are not only oriented toward solving social problems but also gradually evolve by integrating economic value as an effort to ensure the sustainability of the impacts generated.

Young people occupy a strategic position as the primary drivers of social entrepreneurship, supported by their adaptability, creativity, and responsiveness to social dynamics, as well as their broad access to information and technology. These characteristics enable the development of innovative community-based initiatives to address social issues sustainably. Studies show that youth social entrepreneurship makes a significant contribution to social innovation, the creation of economic value, and community-based social change (Alzate et al., 2024; Austin et al., 2006). Furthermore, engagement in sociopreneurship strengthens individual capacities, including entrepreneurial skills, resilience, and the ability to build social networks that support business sustainability (Hapsari et al., 2025; Mahyuni & Surtiari, 2026). This indicates that sociopreneurship not only creates social impact but also strengthens individual and collective capacities, while simultaneously providing a strategic space for the younger generation to develop social innovation and build sustainable social leadership.

Research on social entrepreneurship still tends to frame this phenomenon from structural and outcome-oriented perspectives, such as business models, social impact, and factors contributing to business success. This approach generally stems from the assumptions of conventional entrepreneurship, which views business formation as a rational, planned, and linear process, starting from opportunity identification through to implementation (Nteere, 2021). Within this framework, sociopreneurship is often understood as the result of deliberate business design rather than as a process that evolves dynamically within a social context.

On the other hand, a number of studies are beginning to show that the process of sociopreneurship formation does not entirely follow the linear pattern assumed in conventional entrepreneurship, but is instead influenced by individual experiences, social interactions, and a community context that evolves gradually (Miao et al., 2022; Stirzaker et al., 2021). Furthermore, studies on social innovation also emphasize that the creation of social value is emergent and collaborative, involving various actors and not always stemming from structured planning (Marcotte, 2014; Voorberg et al., 2015). These findings suggest that sociopreneurship is better understood as a contextual, experience-based process rather than merely the result of rational business planning. Nevertheless, existing studies remain limited in explaining how sociopreneurship emerges through individuals' lived experiences, particularly among young people. Previous studies have predominantly emphasized structural, organizational, and outcome-oriented dimensions, while the experiential and processual dimensions of how social engagement gradually develops

into sustainable socio-economic activities remain underexplored. As a result, understanding of socio-preneurship is still largely dominated by perspectives that view entrepreneurial activities as rational and planned processes.

This study seeks to address this gap by examining sociopreneurship as an emergent and experience-based process rather than merely as a rationally planned entrepreneurial activity from the outset. Unlike previous studies that have primarily focused on organizational forms, business models, or social impact, this study explores how sociopreneurship emerges and gradually develops among young people through social experiences and practices, eventually evolving into sustainability-oriented socio-economic activities. By employing a phenomenological approach, this study contributes to expanding the understanding of sociopreneurship from a processual and lived-experience perspective.

II. Method

This study employs a qualitative, phenomenological design to gain an in-depth understanding of individuals' experiences in the process of sociopreneurship formation. The phenomenological approach was chosen because it allows researchers to explore individuals' subjective meanings and lived experiences within specific social contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2017). This approach is relevant for uncovering how individuals interpret the transformation of social activities into activities that integrate economic value. The research was conducted in Makassar, South Sulawesi, which features dynamic community-based social activities and active youth participation in various social initiatives.

Data collection methods included observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observation was conducted in a participatory manner by monitoring social media posts, particularly volunteer activities and community initiatives. From August through December 2025, the researcher was directly involved in six social activities focused on environmental, socio-cultural, educational access, creative industry, and tourism issues. The researchers' involvement spanned all stages of the activities, from registration and preparation through implementation to evaluation. This participatory observation aimed to understand the social context, interactions, and dynamics underpinning the emergence of sociopreneurial activities.

In-depth interviews were conducted with three informants who were founders and co-founders of social communities that had developed their activities toward social entrepreneurship practices. Informants were selected using a snowball sampling technique, which enabled the researcher to identify participants through recommendations and social connections from previous informants. The selection of informants was based on their direct involvement in initiating, organizing, and sustaining social activities that gradually evolved into activities integrating both social and economic values.

The data collection process was conducted gradually, beginning with the researcher's initial involvement in various social activities alongside the communities. The initial stage involved participatory observation and informal communication to build relationships and gain an understanding of the informants' social contexts. Subsequently, exploratory interviews were conducted to examine the informants' early experiences in social activities, followed by repeated in-depth interviews to obtain clarification, confirmation, and deeper reflections regarding the development of sociopreneurship. The interviews were conducted flexibly and did not always take place in formal settings; rather, they evolved through repeated social interactions in accordance with the dynamics of the established relationships. This approach reflects the practice of "ngayo" (Pratama et al., 2025), which emphasizes social closeness, collective engagement, and fluid relationships within community activities. The interview process continued until January 2026, and data collection concluded once data saturation was achieved, that is, when no significant new information emerged from the interviews (Guest et al., 2006).

Documentation was used as supporting data through the collection of digital archives, including social media posts, activity reports, and published materials related to the observed social activities. This documentary data served to reinforce the findings from observations and interviews and to aid understanding of how the activities developed from the initial stages through to the integration of economic value.

Data analysis employs the interactive analysis model by Miles et al. (2013), which comprises three main stages: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Analysis was conducted iteratively from the beginning of data collection through the final stage of the research to identify patterns, themes, and meanings related to the process of sociopreneurship formation. To enhance data credibility, this study employed source and method triangulation by comparing the results of

observations, interviews, and documentation.

III. Results and Discussion

This study demonstrates that sociopreneurship does not always emerge from a rationally designed entrepreneurial process but rather evolves from social practices in real-life contexts. Within this framework, sociopreneurship is understood as a process of transforming social activities that gradually leads to sustainable practices. This approach positions social practices as the starting point, in which individual involvement in community-based activities provides the space in which the orientation of action is formed. In line with the dynamics observed, social activities are no longer seen as temporary endeavors but are beginning to be adjusted to ensure their sustainability.

Based on the coding analysis, this study reveals that sociopreneurship practices develop through three main dynamics: social initiation, resource mobilization, and the formalization of practices.

1. Social Initiation

In this study, social initiation is defined as an individual's involvement in social activities driven by concern and resulting in a commitment to a specific social issue. This suggests that young people's initial involvement in social activities is not always driven by strong or specific motivations. Most involvement actually stems from simple reasons, such as an invitation from a friend, a desire to try something new, or exposure to information through social media. However, what is significant is not the initial motive, but rather the transformation that occurs after the individual becomes directly involved in social practices.

"I was initially involved as a volunteer in various social activities. At one point, I gathered with friends who shared similar experiences. Through casual conversations and shared stories, the idea of organizing a collective initiative suddenly emerged. That was where everything gradually began to develop." (Informant 1, 2026).

The experience of interacting with the community and confronting social realities firsthand serves as a turning point, transforming how individuals perceive their activities. Activities that were initially viewed as mere volunteer work evolve into a more personal and reflective experience. At this stage, individuals begin to feel an emotional connection to the issues at hand, marked by increased engagement and a desire to continue contributing. This indicates a shift from mere participation toward a deeper sense of attachment. This attachment is not only emotional but also cognitive, as individuals begin to interpret the social experiences they face and develop an understanding of the problems and potential solutions.

"After every activity, we always held evaluation sessions, and we gradually realized that there were many aspects that still needed improvement. We came to understand that creating change was not enough to simply discuss—it also had to be put into action." (Informant 3, 2026).

The bonds that were formed did not emerge instantly but developed through repeated and reflective experiences (Simić, 2024). As their involvement intensified, individuals gradually realized that their activities had not yet been fully capable of addressing the complexity of the social problems they encountered. This awareness gave rise to reflective questions regarding the effectiveness and sustainability of their activities, which indirectly shaped a more strategic orientation toward action (Kimmitt & Muñoz, 2018). In this context, social engagement not only generated experiences but also shaped individuals' ways of thinking and directions of action.

This finding confirms that social initiation is not merely initial engagement but a meaning-making arena that determines the direction of subsequent activity development. Engagement that was initially situational evolves into a more stable commitment, which then encourages individuals to take a more active role in the activities being carried out. The attachment formed during this phase subsequently becomes the foundation for the emergence of an individual's capacity to drive activities more actively, which is further reflected in the process of resource mobilization.

2. Resource mobilization

Resource mobilization in this study is defined as individuals' ability to activate and utilize social networks and collective support to sustain and develop social activities. The findings indicate that resource mobilization did not emerge as a planned activity, but rather as a response to limitations that gradually became apparent as social involvement intensified. The bonds formed during the previous phase encouraged individuals not only to participate, but also to begin considering how these activities could be sustained over time. At this stage, there was a shift from mere participation toward efforts to maintain the continuity of the activities. Limited access to resources and adequate support also became a common challenge faced by young people in developing social initiatives and innovation, despite their significant potential as agents of social change (Alzate et al., 2024).

"Friends who joined the activities would usually share our activities on social media, and gradually more people became interested in joining as volunteers. As more people became involved, there were also more things that needed to be managed. However, since most of us had similar experiences as volunteers, we were able to understand each other and take initiative naturally. Some sought support from their workplaces, while others contacted communities or fellow volunteers who could help provide funding or activity equipment." (Informant 1, 2026).

In practice, individuals begin to face realities not previously felt during the initiation phase, such as time constraints, inconsistent participation, and the need for more structured coordination. These conditions drive the emergence of improvisational actions, where individuals utilize available resources such as personal relationships, community networks, and digital platforms to ensure the continuity of the activity. Here, resources are not understood as something owned, but rather as something that can be accessed and activated through social relationships.

The findings indicate that the sustainability of activities depends heavily on the ability to build and maintain relationships, rather than on financial capital. This positions social relationships as both a primary resource and a medium for driving participation and support. This perspective aligns with the bricolage approach, which emphasizes individuals' ability to creatively utilize available resources under conditions of scarcity (Baker & Nelson, 2005). However, these findings expand on this understanding by demonstrating that bricolage practices in this context are not merely individual but also relational, as they depend heavily on the quality of social interactions and existing networks.

"If it was only once or twice, we could still rely on our personal funds. However, as the activities continued, we felt that depending solely on our own pockets was no longer sufficient. At the same time, the community was very supportive. Sometimes, whenever we held activities, they would even provide us with food. They were happy with our presence, which made us feel that they genuinely supported what we were doing." (Informant 2, 2026).

On the other hand, the process of resource mobilization also revealed more complex dynamics. As individuals began to take on roles in organizing activities, a growing sense of responsibility emerged that was not always balanced by adequate capacity or support. Activities that were initially voluntary gradually demanded greater commitment in terms of both time and energy. Furthermore, fluctuating participation, dependence on informal relationships, and the absence of formal structures often caused activities to rely heavily on the initiative of certain individuals. This situation created tension between the desire to sustain the activities and the limitations in managing them sustainably. These conditions reflect the dynamics of hybrid organizing, in which organizations must continuously negotiate social orientation and operational needs simultaneously to sustain their activities (Battilana & Lee, 2014).

In this context, resource mobilization cannot be understood merely as a technical activity, but as a process of developing the capacity for agency that evolves through experience. Individuals learn how to mobilize others, build trust, and manage constraints through repeated practice. Thus, resource mobilization represents a phase in which social ties develop into a more directed capacity for action in sustaining activities. Awareness of the limitations of managing activities informally at this stage then gives rise to the need for a more stable and structured form of management. This marks the transition to the next phase, namely the formalization of practices.

3. Formalization of Practices

In this study, the formalization of practices is understood as the establishment of patterns, structures, and mechanisms within social activities, enabling them to be carried out in a more organized and sustainable manner. The findings indicate that the formalization of practices emerges from the dynamics encountered in the preceding phase. As resource mobilization intensifies, social activities face limitations that can no longer be addressed solely through informal relationships and voluntary participation. At this point, a need arises to maintain consistency, define roles, and ensure that activities can continue.

"In fact, our main focus was simply on ensuring that the social activities could continue and provide meaningful benefits to the community." (Informant 1, 2026).

The changes that occur during this phase do not always take the form of formal organizations, but rather involve the stabilization of practices. Activities that were previously spontaneous begin to exhibit recurring patterns, such as scheduled events, role division, and clearer coordination mechanisms. Individuals begin to realize that without established patterns and structures, the activities they have built are difficult to sustain. Furthermore, the formalization process also reflects a shift in how individuals perceive the activities they undertake. Social activities are no longer viewed as temporary, voluntary endeavors but as practices that hold value and require sustained maintenance. At this stage, there is a growing awareness that sustainability is not only about the continuation of the activities but also about the ability to maintain and expand the social impact generated. This perspective aligns with research on social entrepreneurship, which positions sustainability as a key element in preserving the social value created (Bacq & Lumpkin, 2021).

Along with this, economic dimensions began to be integrated into sustainability mechanisms. However, unlike the profit-oriented logic of conventional entrepreneurship, this integration emerged as a response to the need to maintain the stability of activities. The economy is present in adaptive and contextual forms, such as fund management, contribution schemes, or the development of activities that support operations. These findings indicate that economic value is not the primary goal but rather serves as an instrument to maintain the sustainability of social practices. This reinforces the view that, in the context of sociopreneurship, social and economic logic are not dichotomous but are intertwined in practice (Bacq et al., 2022).

The formalization process also reveals a distinctive tension. While increased structuring and the introduction of economic mechanisms are necessary to ensure sustainability, they also raise concerns about a shift in the social values that underpin these activities. Individuals find themselves in a position where they must balance the need for organization with efforts to maintain a social orientation. This tension indicates that the formalization process does not proceed linearly but through continuous negotiation among various interests and values. This dynamic can be understood as part of the process of forming hybrid organizations, where social and economic logics are integrated simultaneously (Battilana & Lee, 2014). However, unlike perspectives that view hybridity as a planned organizational design, these findings suggest that hybridity emerges gradually through the stabilization of practices. Economic integration is not the starting point but develops as a consequence of the need to sustain social activities in practice (Saebi et al., 2019).

Thus, the formalization of practices becomes a key phase that bridges social activities with sociopreneurship practices. In this phase, social activities are not only structured into patterns and frameworks but also begin to integrate economic mechanisms as part of a sustainability strategy. This underscores that sociopreneurship does not emerge from business planning from the outset but rather from a social process that gradually evolves into an organized and sustainable practice.

This study demonstrates that sociopreneurship emerges through interconnected dynamics: social initiation, resource mobilization, and the formalization of practices. These dynamics do not represent linear stages; rather, they illustrate a process that develops gradually through individual experiences, interactions, and reflections within social practices. The findings indicate that the formation of sociopreneurship does not begin with the identification of economic opportunities, as commonly emphasized in conventional entrepreneurship approaches, but rather evolves from involvement in socially oriented activities that develop in context. These findings are consistent with Mumtaz et al. (2026), who argue that youth entrepreneurial motivation and orientation are not formed instantly but develop through continuous learning processes, lived experiences, and sustained environmental support. Furthermore, Hidayat and Susanto (2024) explain that social entrepreneurship practices emerge from social and collaborative

activities that gradually create spaces for empowerment, creativity, and social contribution within local communities.

This understanding provides a basis for re-examining the concept of hybrid organizations in social entrepreneurship. Previous literature has largely characterized hybridity as a defining characteristic of social enterprises that simultaneously combine social and economic logics (Doherty et al., 2014). Meanwhile, Battilana and Lee (2014) emphasize that hybrid organizing develops through activities, structures, processes, and meanings that are continuously negotiated in organizational practice. The findings of this study extend these perspectives by demonstrating that hybridity does not emerge as a fully planned organizational design from the outset, but rather evolves gradually through social experiences, collective reflection, and ongoing efforts to sustain social activities. The integration of social and economic dimensions emerges contextually as individuals respond to practical challenges and sustainability needs encountered in everyday social practice. Therefore, hybridity in social entrepreneurship is better understood as an evolutionary and contextual process rather than merely as an organizational characteristic or formal organizational arrangement.

This evolutionary process does not occur without tension; rather, it is characterized by ongoing negotiations between social values and the demands of economic sustainability. The findings of this study show that individuals face dilemmas between maintaining social orientation and adopting economic mechanisms to sustain their activities. Unlike some previous studies that portray the integration of social and economic dimensions as harmonious, these findings reveal that such integration entails ongoing negotiation among values, practices, and operational needs. This tension indicates that social entrepreneurship is not a static practice but one that continuously evolves through adaptation. These findings are in line with Weller and Ran (2020), who explain that social entrepreneurship is inherently a paradoxical phenomenon in which social and business logics coexist despite often being contradictory. In addition, Praharsiwi (2021) demonstrates that hybrid organizations in social entrepreneurship continuously engage in negotiation processes to balance profit-oriented and social missions simultaneously within community development activities.

These dynamics ultimately lead to a more comprehensive understanding of the role of the economic dimension in social entrepreneurship. The findings of this study indicate that economic integration does not function as the primary goal, but rather as a mechanism to ensure the sustainability of activities and social impact. This suggests that a sustainability orientation is the primary driver of the emergence of economic dimensions in social entrepreneurship practices. Therefore, social entrepreneurship among youth is more appropriately understood as a process that evolves from social practice toward economically integrated activities oriented toward sustainability. This perspective reinforces the view that social enterprises are not solely oriented toward profit generation, but toward sustaining social impact through the simultaneous integration of social and economic logics.

IV. Conclusion

This study found that sociopreneurship among the younger generation does not emerge through a deliberately designed entrepreneurial process, but rather develops from sustained social practices. This process is reflected in three main dynamics: social initiation, resource mobilization, and the formalization of practices, which are interrelated in shaping increasingly structured activities. These dynamics indicate that sociopreneurship emerges through experience, interaction, and reflection within social practices, rather than through business intent or rational planning from the outset.

The study's findings also reveal that integrating economic dimensions into sociopreneurship is driven by the need to ensure the sustainability of social activities, rather than serving as a primary objective. The economic dimension emerges as an adaptive mechanism that supports operational sustainability and expands social impact. This reinforces the understanding that sociopreneurship is a process of integrating social and economic practices oriented toward sustainability, in which economic value serves as a means rather than an end.

Furthermore, this study contributes to the development of sociopreneurship research by broadening the perspective from a structural to an experience-based, processual one. These findings challenge conventional assumptions about entrepreneurship that emphasize the roles of intention and planning, and demonstrate that sociopreneurship emerges and takes shape in context within social practices. Additionally, the results of this study also indicate that social initiatives driven by the younger generation have the potential to develop into sustainable sociopreneurship practices if supported by social networks

and the ability to mobilize resources. Therefore, further research is needed to explore a wider range of contexts and examine the roles of environmental, institutional, and technological factors in the formation of sociopreneurship.

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