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Learning To Return: Integrating Energizing Organizational Learning And Hardipreneurship For The Entrepreneurial Reintegration Of Returning Migrant Workers

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Abstract

Many returning migrant workers invest their savings in small businesses, yet a large share of these ventures stagnate or close within a few years. Existing explanations emphasize financial capital, skills acquired abroad, and institutional support, but pay less attention to how returnees learn to run a business after return and how they persist when the business is under pressure. This conceptual paper addresses that gap by integrating two constructs developed by Indonesian management scholars: the Energizing Organizational Learning Process (EOLP), an interactive learning mode built on goal oriented learning, updating oriented interaction, and intra-team learning exchange, and Hardipreneurship, a construct of entrepreneurial hardiness developed for migrant reintegration. Using a theory synthesis approach, the paper proposes the Learning-to-Return framework and six propositions. The framework argues that energizing learning in returnee communities builds hardipreneurship, which in turn sustains returnee enterprises, and that this relationship is shaped by community leadership and the quality of institutional support. The paper outlines implications for reintegration programs and a qualitative research agenda.

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Keywords: return migration, migrant reintegration, hardipreneurship, energizing organizational learning process, entrepreneurial learning, conceptual framework

INTRODUCTION

Labor migration is a major livelihood strategy for many households in Indonesia. Every year, hundreds of thousands of Indonesian migrant workers go to work in countries such as Malaysia, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Saudi Arabia, and South Korea, and many of them eventually return to their home villages. Return is not the end of the migration story but the beginning of a new phase that is often more difficult than expected. Returnees must find a new source of income, rebuild social and professional networks, and meet family needs that have grown during their absence (Yuniarto, 2018). For many of them, starting a small business with savings from abroad appears to be the most realistic option.

International evidence shows that return migrants are more likely to become entrepreneurs than non-migrants, partly because they bring savings, skills, and new ideas (Wahba & Zenou, 2012). A recent review in *World Development* confirms that returnees with overseas savings are more likely to start businesses and that return migration can improve the survival of micro-enterprises, but also notes that weak institutions, poor infrastructure, and difficult labor-market reintegration can prevent returnees from realizing their potential (Wahba, 2026). In Indonesia, qualitative studies have documented how returnees draw on knowledge gained before and during migration to start businesses in their villages, and how they struggle with finding suitable work, rebuilding networks, and meeting family financial needs (Yuniarto, 2018). Studies of returnee groups in Karawang and Lombok show that social capital, leadership, and group communication play an important role in sustaining collective enterprises (Mardhotillah & Sofhani, 2024; Muksin et al., 2026).

Despite this growing body of work, two questions remain underexplored. The first is *how returnees learn to run a business after return*. Migration may give returnees capital and work discipline, but the skills required to manage a small business in the home village, such as planning, bookkeeping, pricing, and marketing, are often different from the skills used abroad. Entrepreneurial learning research shows that entrepreneurs learn mainly by doing, by reflecting on critical events, and by interacting with others (Cope, 2005; Politis, 2005). Yet reintegration programs often rely on short, one-off training sessions that treat returnees as individual learners. The second question is *how returnees persist when the business is under pressure*. Small

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businesses in rural areas face frequent shocks, from price changes to competition and disruptions in demand. Research on entrepreneurial resilience shows that the capacity to persist in difficult conditions is a key driver of entrepreneurial intention and survival (Bullough et al., 2014). For returnees, this capacity is also shaped by the experience of migration itself, including hardship, separation from family, and the pressure to show that migration was worthwhile.

This paper addresses these questions by integrating two constructs that have recently been developed by Indonesian management scholars. The first is the Energizing Organizational Learning Process (EOLP), an interactive learning mode that initiates a learning process oriented to organizational goals, involving members who interact actively, build voluntariness, and exchange knowledge positively (Yulianeu, 2022). EOLP was developed from a synthesis of human capital theory and interaction theory and has been validated in embroidery MSMEs and community-based ecotourism teams (Yulianeu, 2022; Yulianeu et al., 2021; Yusuf & Yulianeu, 2023). The second is Hardipreneurship, a construct developed and validated for migrant reintegration that captures the entrepreneurial hardiness of returnees in disruptive times (Bagis et al., 2025, 2026b). Although both constructs address the performance and survival of small businesses, they have so far been developed separately. EOLP explains how learning is energized in a group, while Hardipreneurship explains why some returnees persist where others give up.

The purpose of this paper is to develop a conceptual framework that links these two constructs in the context of returnee entrepreneurship. The central argument is that hardipreneurship is not only a personal trait that returnees bring home, but also a capacity that can be built through energizing collective learning in returnee communities. The paper makes three contributions. First, it extends EOLP from established organizations to loosely organized returnee communities. Second, it offers a learning-based explanation of how hardipreneurship develops. Third, it provides propositions and a qualitative research agenda that can guide future studies and the design of reintegration programs.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Return Migration and Entrepreneurial Reintegration

Return migration has been interpreted through several theoretical lenses. Neoclassical economics views return as the result of failed migration, while the new economics of labor migration views it as the planned outcome of a successful strategy to accumulate savings. Structural approaches emphasize the influence of the home context, and transnational and social

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network approaches emphasize the links that returnees maintain with destination countries (Cassarino, 2004). Cassarino (2004) argues that the ability of returnees to contribute to their home communities depends on their *preparedness*, namely the willingness and readiness to return, and on the resources they mobilize, including tangible resources such as savings and intangible resources such as contacts, relationships, skills, and knowledge.

Entrepreneurship is one of the main channels through which returnees use these resources. Wahba and Zenou (2012) show that return migrants are more likely to become entrepreneurs than non-migrants because they accumulate human and financial capital abroad, even though they may lose part of their social capital at home. More recent evidence confirms that returnees can boost innovation and trade by transferring knowledge through their networks, but also shows that the gains depend on the quality of overseas work, the match between skills and the home labor market, and local institutions (Wahba, 2026). The debate between *brain gain* and *brain waste* suggests that the resources returnees bring home do not automatically translate into successful enterprises.

In Indonesia, many returnees worked abroad in domestic, plantation, construction, or manufacturing jobs, where the skills acquired are not always directly relevant to running a business at home. Yuniarto (2018) found that returnees in Malang combine savings, earnings, and social remittances with new skills to reinvent themselves, but face obstacles in local employment, networks, and family obligations. Mardhotillah and Sofhani (2024) showed that a community-based enterprise formed by migrant workers' families in Karawang grew through social capital and leadership, sustained by public and private institutional support. Muksin et al. (2026) found that mediated group communication, for example through WhatsApp groups, helps returnees in Lombok organize livelihoods and sustain collective enterprises, partly substituting for weak state support. Community service programs have also experimented with hybrid mentoring for Indonesian migrant workers, combining online and on-site support to strengthen financial and entrepreneurial capacity (Zuhaena et al., 2025). These studies point to the importance of collective processes, but they do not yet explain how collective learning translates into the personal capacity to persist in business.

2.2 Hardiness and Hardipreneurship

The concept of hardiness was introduced by Kobasa (1979) to explain why some people remain healthy under high levels of stress while others become ill. Hardy individuals are

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characterized by three attitudes: *commitment*, the tendency to involve oneself in what one is doing rather than withdraw; *control*, the belief that one can influence the course of events; and *challenge*, the view that change is a normal part of life and an opportunity to grow rather than a threat. Maddi (2006) later described hardiness as the courage to grow from stresses, emphasizing that hardy attitudes motivate people to turn stressful circumstances into opportunities through problem solving, social support, and self-care. Importantly, Maddi (2006) argued that hardiness can be learned and trained, not only inherited.

Entrepreneurship is a domain in which stress and uncertainty are constant. Research on entrepreneurial resilience shows that resilience and self-efficacy increase entrepreneurial intention even in dangerous and uncertain environments (Bullough et al., 2014). Building on this tradition, Bagis et al. (2025) conceptualized Hardipreneurship as an entrepreneurial approach grounded in mental resilience, integrating hardiness theory from positive psychology with entrepreneurship theory, and Bagis et al. (2026b) developed and validated it as a construct for migrant reintegration in disruptive times. The construct captures the entrepreneurial hardiness of returnees: the mental toughness to start, maintain, and adapt a business despite pressures in the market and in their personal lives. In its initial conceptualization, hardipreneurship combines a hardiness core with entrepreneurial capabilities, namely innovation and creativity, the use of digital technology, socio-economic networks, adaptation to global disruptions, and readiness to become a hardipreneur (Bagis et al., 2025). Bagis et al. (2026a) further linked hardipreneurship and Islamic spiritual well-being to the sustainability of women's entrepreneurship in Muslim MSMEs, suggesting that the construct is relevant beyond the migrant context. This paper focuses on the hardiness core of hardipreneurship, because it is the part of the construct most directly shaped by learning and social interaction. Following Kobasa (1979), this core is understood through three attitudes applied to the business domain: commitment to the business, a sense of control over business outcomes, and the view of business difficulties as challenges to be learned from. The entrepreneurial capabilities are treated as resources that hardy returnees are more likely to mobilize, and are referred to where relevant.

What remains less clear is how hardipreneurship develops after return. If hardiness can be learned (Maddi, 2006), then the social context in which returnees learn to run their business should matter. This is where the Energizing Organizational Learning Process becomes relevant.

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2.3 The Energizing Organizational Learning Process

Yulianeu (2022) introduced EOLP to resolve inconsistent findings on whether transformational leadership improves organizational performance. The construct rests on two theoretical pillars. From human capital theory, it takes the premise that people's knowledge and skills are a form of capital that grows when organizations invest in learning (Becker, 1964). From interaction theory, it takes the premise that what group members do together, how often they interact, and how they feel about one another are mutually reinforcing (Homans, 1950). Combining the two, EOLP treats learning as a social and emotionally charged process rather than a purely cognitive one. Its emphasis on energy echoes Collins' (1993) argument that successful interactions leave participants with emotional energy that draws them into further participation.

Yulianeu (2022) specifies three practices. In the goal oriented learning process, leaders invite members to pool their knowledge when judging whether a work plan has succeeded or failed, and to work with others toward shared goals. In updating oriented interaction, contact among members becomes a source of energy: members leave interactions more enthusiastic and carry new ideas into their working relationships. In intra-team learning exchange, members come to share knowledge with one another willingly and constructively. Among 205 embroidery MSMEs in Tasikmalaya, EOLP mediated the effect of transformational leadership on organizational performance (Yulianeu, 2022; Yusuf & Yulianeu, 2022). The model was replicated on community-based ecotourism teams (Yulianeu et al., 2021) and discussed as a role model for MSME performance (Falah et al., 2023). In community service programs, the three practices have been translated into goal-setting sessions, inter-MSME learning forums, and peer-learning pairs in an MSME cluster (Yulianeu et al., 2026).

EOLP is particularly relevant for returnees for two reasons. First, its emphasis on interaction and emotional energy fits the situation of returnees, who often experience isolation, loss of status, and doubt after return. Second, its emphasis on goal orientation and knowledge exchange fits the need of returnees to learn practical business skills quickly from others who face similar conditions. However, EOLP has so far been studied in organizations with relatively clear boundaries and leaders. Returnee communities are looser, often organized around villages, cooperatives, religious groups, or online groups. Applying EOLP to these communities therefore requires conceptual adaptation.

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CONCEPTUAL APPROACH

This paper is a conceptual paper. Following Jaakkola (2020), it adopts a *theory synthesis* approach, which aims to achieve conceptual integration across multiple theories or literature streams in order to offer a new or enhanced view of a phenomenon. The phenomenon of interest is the entrepreneurial reintegration of returning migrant workers. The two focal constructs, EOLP and Hardipreneurship, serve as the main theoretical lenses, while research on return migration, hardiness, and entrepreneurial learning provides the context and supporting arguments.

The development of the framework followed three steps. First, the core definitions and dimensions of the two constructs were identified from the original sources (Bagis et al., 2025, 2026b; Yulianeu, 2022). Second, research on return migration and reintegration was reviewed to identify the problems that returnees face in learning and persisting in business, with attention to studies from Indonesia. Third, the mechanisms that link the EOLP practices to the dimensions of hardipreneurship were developed through theoretical reasoning and formulated as propositions. Following Whetten (1989), the framework specifies *what* factors are involved, *how* they are related, *why* these relationships are expected, and *under which conditions* they are likely to hold. The paper does not report empirical data; instead, it offers propositions that can be examined in future qualitative and quantitative studies. The building blocks of the framework are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Building blocks of the Learning-to-Return framework

Construct	Core meaning in this paper	Theoretical roots
Energizing Organizational Learning Process (EOLP)	An interactive learning mode that initiates goal-oriented learning, involving members who interact actively, build voluntariness, and exchange knowledge positively	Human capital theory and interaction theory (Yulianeu, 2022; Yusuf & Yulianeu, 2023)
Hardipreneurship	Entrepreneurial hardiness of returnees: the mental toughness to commit to, take control of, and see challenge in running a business in	Hardiness theory and entrepreneurship research (Bagis et al., 2025, 2026b; Kobasa, 1979; Maddi, 2006)

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	disruptive times; this paper focuses on this hardiness core	
Returnee enterprise sustainability	The ability of a returnee's business to survive, adapt, and provide a stable livelihood after the initial investment	Return migration and entrepreneurship research (Cassarino, 2004; Wahba, 2026)
Community leadership	Leaders of returnee groups, cooperatives, or villages who initiate and energize collective learning	Transformational leadership in EOLP (Yulianeu, 2022)
Institutional support	Training, finance, mentoring, and market access provided by government, universities, and private actors	Reintegration studies (Mardhotillah & Sofhani, 2024; Muksin et al., 2026)

THE LEARNING-TO-RETURN FRAMEWORK AND PROPOSITIONS

The Learning-to-Return framework proposes that the three EOLP practices, when they take place in returnee communities, build the three attitudes of hardipreneurship; that hardipreneurship sustains returnee enterprises; and that these relationships are shaped by community leadership and institutional support. The framework is depicted in Figure 1, and each relationship is explained below.

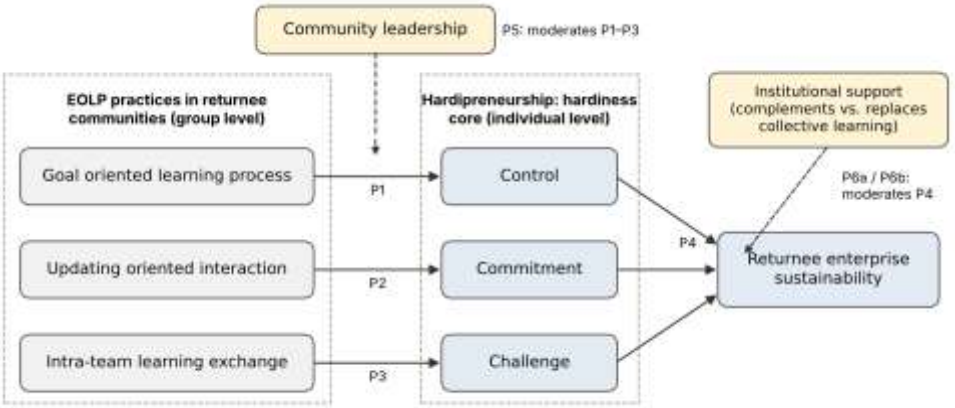


Figure 1. The Learning-to-Return framework

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Because the framework links constructs at different levels, its level of analysis needs to be made explicit. EOLP was conceptualized and measured as a process of an organization or group, whereas hardipreneurship is an attribute of the individual returnee. The framework is therefore cross-level. Propositions 1 to 3 describe a top-down effect, in which the learning climate of a returnee community shapes the attitudes of its individual members, and Proposition 4 links these individual attitudes to the sustainability of each member's enterprise. Community leadership (Proposition 5) operates at the level of the group, while institutional support (Proposition 6) may vary both between communities and between individual returnees. Empirical examinations of the framework should respect this nesting, for example through multilevel models in which returnees are nested in communities, or through case studies that compare communities as well as individuals within them (Kozlowski & Klein, 2000).

4.1 Goal Oriented Learning and the Sense of Control

Many returnees start a business with a general idea, such as opening a shop, raising livestock, or producing food, but without clear targets or a plan to learn what the business requires. When problems arise, they may feel that events are beyond their control, which can lead to frustration and premature exit. Goal oriented learning addresses this problem by linking learning to concrete business goals and by encouraging members to discuss why a plan succeeded or failed (Yulianeu, 2022). When returnees set specific learning goals, for example learning to record daily cash flow or to calculate the cost of a product, the business becomes a set of manageable tasks rather than an uncertain whole. Discussing successes and failures with others also helps returnees identify the factors they can influence. This process strengthens the belief that business outcomes are at least partly within one's control, which is the core of the control dimension of hardiness (Kobasa, 1979; Maddi, 2006).

Proposition 1. Goal oriented learning among returnees is positively associated with hardipreneurship, particularly its control dimension.

4.2 Updating Oriented Interaction and Commitment

After return, many migrants experience a loss of the social role they had abroad and feel pressure to show that migration was worthwhile. These conditions can weaken their commitment to the business, especially when early results are disappointing. Updating oriented interaction refers to interaction that energizes members, so that they feel enthusiastic and bring

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new ideas into their relations with others (Yulianeu, 2022). In returnee communities, such interaction can take the form of regular meetings, cooperative gatherings, religious study groups, or online groups in which members share news, ideas, and encouragement. Muksin et al. (2026) found that emotional exchanges such as humor and encouragement in returnee groups were tied to organizational routines and persistence. From the perspective of interaction theory, such exchanges generate emotional energy that motivates further participation (Collins, 1993; Homans, 1950). When returnees feel energized and connected to others who are building businesses, they are more likely to involve themselves fully in their own business rather than withdraw, which reflects the commitment dimension of hardiness.

Proposition 2. Updating oriented interaction among returnees is positively associated with hardipreneurship, particularly its commitment dimension.

4.3 Intra-Team Learning Exchange and the Challenge Orientation

Returnees often face similar problems, such as finding reliable suppliers, setting prices, or dealing with customers who buy on credit. When each returnee faces these problems alone, failures may be interpreted as personal shortcomings or as signs that the business is hopeless. Intra-team learning exchange refers to the voluntary and positive exchange of knowledge among members (Yulianeu, 2022). When returnees share their experiences, including failures, they learn that problems are common and solvable. Entrepreneurial learning research shows that critical events and failures are important sources of learning when entrepreneurs reflect on them (Cope, 2005; Politis, 2005). Sharing such events in a group can transform them from threats into lessons. This reframing is the essence of the challenge dimension of hardiness, in which change and difficulty are seen as opportunities to grow (Kobasa, 1979; Maddi, 2006).

Proposition 3. Intra-team learning exchange among returnees is positively associated with hardipreneurship, particularly its challenge dimension.

4.4 Hardipreneurship and Enterprise Sustainability

Hardy returnees are expected to persist longer, adapt their business when conditions change, and avoid closing the business at the first sign of difficulty. Hardiness has been associated with better performance and well-being under stress (Maddi, 2006), and resilience has been shown to support entrepreneurial intention in difficult environments (Bullough et al., 2014). Bagis et al. (2026b) developed and validated hardipreneurship specifically to explain how returnees

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maintain their businesses in disruptive times. If EOLP practices build hardipreneurship, as argued in Propositions 1 to 3, then hardipreneurship is a mechanism through which collective learning contributes to the sustainability of returnee enterprises. This argument is consistent with the original EOLP model, in which EOLP functions as a mediating mechanism between leadership and performance (Yulianeu, 2022).

> **Proposition 4.** Hardipreneurship is positively associated with the sustainability of returnee enterprises and mediates the effect of the EOLP practices on enterprise sustainability.

4.5 The Role of Community Leadership

In the original EOLP model, the three practices run well when leaders adopt a transformational leadership style, acting as agents of change who raise members' awareness beyond their own interests (Yulianeu, 2022). Leadership has also been shown to shape how members engage in work and change (Sutarmin et al., 2023). In returnee communities, there may be no formal manager, but there are usually informal leaders, such as the head of a returnee cooperative, a successful returnee entrepreneur, a village official, or a religious figure. Mardhotillah and Sofhani (2024) identified leadership as a driver of community participation in a returnee cooperative. Experience from community service programs also suggests that learning forums work best when they are led by business owners themselves rather than by external facilitators (Yulianeu et al., 2026). Community leaders can initiate learning, set an example of persistence, and create a climate in which sharing failures is accepted.

> **Proposition 5.** Community leadership strengthens the positive effect of the EOLP practices on hardipreneurship.

4.6 The Role of Institutional Support

Returnees often receive support from government agencies, universities, non-governmental organizations, or the private sector in the form of training, financing, mentoring, or market access. Such support can help hardy returnees convert their persistence into concrete resources and opportunities (Mardhotillah & Sofhani, 2024; Wahba, 2026). However, support can also have unintended effects. When programs provide resources without encouraging collective learning, returnees may become dependent on external actors and lose the sense of control and agency that hardipreneurship requires. Muksin et al. (2026) observed that community groups

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partly substitute for weak and inconsistent state support, suggesting that the relationship between collective processes and institutional support is complex. This paper therefore proposes that institutional support has a conditional effect, stated as two complementary propositions.

Proposition 6a. Institutional support that complements collective learning, for example by linking finance or market access to participation in learning groups, strengthens the positive effect of hardipreneurship on enterprise sustainability.

Proposition 6b. Institutional support that replaces collective learning weakens the positive effect of hardipreneurship on enterprise sustainability, because it fosters dependency and erodes returnees' sense of control.

The six propositions are summarized in Table 2. Taken together, they describe a process in which returnees learn to return: they learn not only the technical skills of running a business, but also the attitudes that allow them to persist.

Table 2. Summary of propositions

No.	Proposition	Mechanism
P1	Goal oriented learning among returnees is positively associated with hardipreneurship, particularly its control dimension.	Clear learning goals turn vague business plans into manageable tasks
P2	Updating oriented interaction among returnees is positively associated with hardipreneurship, particularly its commitment dimension.	Emotionally energizing interaction renews motivation and belonging
P3	Intra-team learning exchange among returnees is positively associated with hardipreneurship, particularly its challenge dimension.	Shared failure stories reframe setbacks as learnable problems
P4	Hardipreneurship is positively associated with returnee enterprise sustainability and mediates the effect of EOLP on sustainability.	Hardy returnees persist, adapt, and avoid premature exit
P5	Community leadership strengthens the effect of the EOLP practices on hardipreneurship.	Leaders initiate learning and model persistence
P6a–b	P6a: Support that complements collective learning strengthens the effect of hardipreneurship on sustainability. P6b:	Support converts persistence into resources; dependency erodes agency

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	Support that replaces collective learning weakens this effect.	

DISCUSSION

5.1 Theoretical Implications

The framework offers three theoretical implications. First, it extends the scope of EOLP. EOLP was developed and validated in organizations such as embroidery MSMEs and ecotourism teams (Yulianeu, 2022; Yulianeu et al., 2021). The Learning-to-Return framework proposes that the same energizing learning practices can operate in looser communities, such as returnee cooperatives and village groups, where membership is voluntary and leadership is informal. It also proposes a new outcome of EOLP: not only organizational performance, but also the psychological capacity of members to persist.

Second, the framework offers a learning-based explanation of how hardipreneurship develops. Hardiness theory holds that hardiness can be learned (Maddi, 2006), but it does not specify the social processes through which entrepreneurs in a particular context learn it. By linking each EOLP practice to a dimension of hardipreneurship, the framework provides a theoretical account of how commitment, control, and challenge can be built in returnee communities. This complements the work of Bagis et al. (2025, 2026b), who conceptualized and validated the construct, by explaining its antecedents.

Third, the framework contributes to return migration research by shifting attention from the resources that returnees bring home to the processes through which they learn to use these resources. Cassarino (2004) emphasized the importance of preparedness and resource mobilization. The Learning-to-Return framework suggests that preparedness can also be built after return through collective learning, and that the mobilization of resources depends on the hardiness of returnees as entrepreneurs.

5.2 Practical Implications

The framework has several implications for the design of reintegration programs. First, programs should move beyond one-off training sessions toward sustained learning communities in which returnees meet regularly, set learning goals, and share experiences. Second, programs should identify and prepare informal community leaders, such as successful returnee

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entrepreneurs, to lead these learning communities, rather than relying only on external trainers. Third, programs should deliberately create space for sharing failures, because the reframing of failure is a key mechanism for building the challenge orientation. Fourth, support such as financing and market access should be designed to complement collective learning, for example by linking access to finance with participation in learning groups, rather than providing resources in a way that creates dependency. Hybrid models that combine online groups and on-site mentoring (Zuhaena et al., 2025) and mediated group communication (Muksin et al., 2026) can help sustain learning communities among returnees who live far apart.

5.3 Research Agenda

The propositions in this paper are meant to be examined empirically. Because the framework concerns processes of learning, emotion, and persistence that are difficult to capture with surveys alone, qualitative research is particularly suitable as a first step. Table 3 outlines several research questions and designs. Phenomenological studies can explore how returnees experience learning after return. Ethnographic and multiple case studies can examine how returnee groups energize learning and who leads it. Longitudinal qualitative studies can follow how hardipreneurship is built, tested, and possibly lost over time. Comparative case studies of reintegration programs can identify when institutional support complements or replaces collective learning. Once the mechanisms are better understood, the propositions can be tested quantitatively using the EOLP instrument (Yulianeu, 2022) and the Hardipreneurship scale (Bagis et al., 2026b).

Table 3. Qualitative research agenda for the Learning-to-Return framework

Research question	Suggested design	Expected contribution
How do returnees experience learning to run a business after return?	Phenomenological study with returnees from different destination countries	Thick description of post-return learning and its emotional dimension
How do returnee groups energize learning, and who leads it?	Ethnographic or multiple case study of returnee cooperatives and village groups	Evidence on the forms and leaders of EOLP in returnee communities

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How is hardipreneurship built, tested, and lost over time?	Longitudinal qualitative study with repeated interviews over 12–24 months	Process understanding of how hardiness develops or erodes
When does institutional support complement or replace collective learning?	Comparative case study of programs with different support designs	Design principles for reintegration programs

5.4 Boundary Conditions and Limitations

The framework has several boundary conditions. It is most relevant for returnees who intend to stay in their home communities and start a business, rather than those who plan to migrate again. It assumes the existence of some form of returnee community, whether formal or informal, offline or online. It also assumes that returnees are willing to share their experiences, which may be limited by competition among similar businesses or by stigma attached to failure. Cultural and religious values may also shape how hardipreneurship is expressed; for example, Bagis et al. (2026a) highlight the role of Islamic spiritual well-being among Muslim women entrepreneurs. Finally, as a conceptual paper, this study does not provide empirical evidence, and the propositions should be treated as theoretically grounded expectations rather than established findings.

CONCLUSION

Returning migrant workers often invest their savings in small businesses, but many of these businesses stagnate or close. This paper argues that the success of returnee enterprises depends not only on capital and skills, but also on how returnees learn to run a business after return and how they develop the capacity to persist. By integrating the Energizing Organizational Learning Process and Hardipreneurship, the paper proposes the Learning-to-Return framework, in which goal oriented learning, updating oriented interaction, and intra-team learning exchange build the control, commitment, and challenge attitudes of hardipreneurship, which in turn sustain returnee enterprises. Community leadership is expected to strengthen this process, while institutional support is expected to help when it complements, rather than replaces, collective

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learning. The framework offers a basis for future qualitative and quantitative research and for the design of reintegration programs that treat returnees not as recipients of aid but as members of learning communities.

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