



Exploring the Business Environment: Field Study at “Rumah Bimbel Bu Lily”

Adelia Ramadhani, Sultan Baa, Siti Nurhalisa, Nurqalbi, M Ikram

Program Studi Magister Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, Fakultas Bahasa dan Sastra, Universitas Negeri Makassar
adeliaramadhani664@gmail.com, sultanbaa@unm.ac.id, sitinurhalisa990@gmail.com, qalbi1410@gmail.com,
ikrammuh47@gmail.com

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi lingkungan bisnis, strategi operasional, tantangan, dan pembelajaran kewirausahaan dari “Rumah Bimbel Bu Lily,” sebuah lembaga bimbingan belajar berbasis komunitas di Makassar, Indonesia. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain penelitian deskriptif kualitatif; data dikumpulkan melalui observasi lapangan, wawancara semi-terstruktur dengan pendiri usaha, dan dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pertumbuhan lembaga bimbingan belajar ini hingga memiliki tiga cabang, yaitu Tello Baru, Batua, dan Ujung Bori, didorong oleh beberapa keunggulan layanan utama. Lembaga ini menunjukkan sejumlah keunggulan, antara lain memberikan keringanan biaya bagi siswa dari keluarga berpenghasilan rendah dan keluarga orang tua tunggal, mengelompokkan siswa berdasarkan tingkat kemampuan, serta melaporkan perkembangan belajar siswa secara transparan melalui video WhatsApp yang dikirimkan kepada orang tua. Untuk mengatasi keterbatasan ruang kelas seiring jumlah siswa yang terus bertambah hingga 198 siswa aktif, lembaga ini menerapkan jadwal shift yang fleksibel, serta rutin mengadakan kompetisi akademik setiap semester di ruang publik, seperti pusat perbelanjaan, untuk meningkatkan rasa percaya diri siswa sekaligus memperkenalkan merek lembaga kepada masyarakat luas. Usaha ini, dengan 14–16 tutor dan pendapatan kotor bulanan sekitar Rp18.000.000, membuktikan bahwa bisnis pendidikan berskala kecil dapat layak secara finansial sekaligus mengusung tujuan kemanusiaan. Penelitian ini menegaskan pentingnya kepercayaan pelanggan, fleksibilitas, dan daya tanggap sosial bagi lembaga pendidikan nonformal di tengah persaingan pasar lokal.

Kata kunci: Kewirausahaan Pendidikan, Lembaga Bimbingan Belajar, Pendidikan Nonformal, Strategi Bisnis, Inovasi Layanan, Keberlanjutan Bisnis

Abstract

This study explored the business environment, operational strategies, challenges, and entrepreneurial lessons from “Rumah Bimbel Bu Lily,” a community-based tutoring center in Makassar, Indonesia. This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design; data were collected through field observations, semi-structured interviews with the business founder, and documentation. The findings revealed that the tutoring center's growth into three local branches, namely Tello Baru, Batua, and Ujung Bori, was driven by several key service strengths. The institution demonstrates several key strengths, including providing tuition assistance for students from low-income families and single-parent households, grouping students by ability level, and transparently reporting student progress via WhatsApp videos sent to parents. To manage its limited classroom space as the number of students continues to grow to 198 active students, the institution uses a flexible shift schedule, and it schedules academic competitions every semester in public spaces, such as shopping malls, to boost students' self-confidence while raising public awareness of the institution's brand. This enterprise, with 14–16 tutors and a monthly gross revenue of around Rp18,000,000, demonstrates that small-scale educational businesses may be financially viable while pursuing a humanitarian goal. The study emphasizes the significance of customer trust, flexibility, and social responsiveness for nonformal education firms in a competitive local market.

Keywords: Educational Entrepreneurship, Tutoring Center, Non-Formal Education, Business Strategy, Service Innovation, Business Sustainability

1. Introduction

The contemporary business environment evolves rapidly and dynamically, driven by globalization, and the advancement of digital technology has changed consumer behavior. In this competitive environment, companies no longer compete solely on price and product quality, but also on their ability to innovate, deliver unique customer experiences, and adapt properly to market changes. Innovation is defined as the ability to create solutions that

address operational challenges and capitalize on market opportunities (Hasibuan et al., 2022). Innovation plays a special role among the factors influencing the competitiveness of enterprises and business processes. Regardless of the size of the activity of the conducted, effective management of innovation processes is the main element of a company's competitiveness. Competitive advantage is determined by the susceptibility to the implementation of product and technological changes, as well as changes in the management system or in communication with the potential user of the product (Skrzypek-Ahmed, 2025). Innovation is important for understanding consumer needs, creating compelling products and services, boosting efficiency and profitability, and building a sustainable competitive advantage (Miradji et al., 2024).

The importance of innovation has become increasingly evident in the non-formal education sector, especially in tutoring services and supplementary English language instruction. Tutoring is a form of structured support that assists students in addressing academic difficulties and achieving learning outcomes commensurate with their abilities and needs (Simanjuntak et al., 2022). Following the COVID-19 pandemic, many elementary and secondary school students experienced disruptions in their learning processes, resulting in gaps in basic literacy and numeracy skills. This situation has increased the need for tutoring institutions that are easily accessible, high-quality, and affordable. However, tutoring service providers have increased rapidly, intensifying market competition and compelling institutions to differentiate themselves through teaching methods, pricing structures, facilities, and service quality.

Although the literature on educational entrepreneurship is growing, empirical research examining how small-scale, community-based tutoring businesses are able to overcome resource constraints while maintaining service quality and social impact remains limited. Most existing research focuses on large-scale, franchised tutoring institutions with substantial capital resources. To address this gap, this study focused on "*Rumah Bimbel Bu Lily*," a community-based tutoring institution in Makassar that has successfully expanded its operations to three branches by integrating an interactive learning approach, flexible operational management, and a socially inclusive cost model.

Therefore, this article aims to analyze the business environment, innovation strategies, operational adaptations, and entrepreneurial lessons learned from a field study at *Rumah Bimbel Bu Lily*. The findings of this study provide practical insights for educational entrepreneurs seeking to build resilient, customer-trusted, and sustainable tutoring businesses amid local market competition.

2. Research Method

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design (Villamin et al., 2025) to gain an in-depth understanding of the business environment, operational strategies, and entrepreneurial dynamics at "*Rumah Bimbel Bu Lily*." Qualitative methodology is considered an appropriate approach for exploring real-world organizational conditions, human experiences, and managerial decision-making processes within their respective contexts (Hall & Liebenberg, 2024).

2.1. Research Setting and Participants

The field study was conducted in 2026 at several operational locations of *Rumah Bimbel Bu Lily* in Makassar, South Sulawesi, Indonesia, with observations specifically focused on the Ujung Bori branch in Antang, Manggala District. The primary informant in this study was the founder and business owner, Mrs. Lily, S.Pd. Additional data were obtained through interactions with active tutors, observations of student learning activities, and observations of the institution's administrative processes.

2.2. Data Collection Methods

Data were collected using three complementary qualitative instruments (Hall & Liebenberg, 2024). First, a systematic non-participant field observation was carried out using an observation sheet to evaluate the physical condition of the classroom, interactions during the learning process, the use of learning media, the room layout, and the comfort of the available facilities. Second, in-depth, face-to-face semi-structured interviews were conducted with the business founder, with interview guidelines covering the business's history, organizational structure, operational workflow, curriculum design, pricing model, promotional activities, financial estimates, and problem-solving strategies. Third, documentation was collected in the form of physical and digital documents,

including administrative records, organizational structure, promotional materials available on social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook, student progress monitoring forms, cost structures, and photographs of competitions held in public spaces.

2.3. Data Analysis

Data analysis followed an interactive analysis model (Miles et al., 2014) that included data reduction, data presentation, and the drawing and verification of conclusions. The collected data were categorized into several themes: business origins, operational strategies, financial structure, marketing techniques, operational challenges, and entrepreneurial learning. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing interview results with observation notes and documentation (Donkoh & Mensah, 2023; Morgan, 2024) to ensure the reliability and credibility of the data (Ahmed, 2024).

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Profile and Historical Development of “Rumah Bimbel Bu Lily”

“Rumah Bimbel Bu Lily” is a nonformal educational institution based in Makassar, founded and owned by Mrs. Lily, S.Pd. The business originated from the founder's experience providing private tutoring services in Timika, Papua. Recognizing the significant learning gaps and academic difficulties faced by elementary school students during online distance learning amid the COVID-19 pandemic, which has been shown to cause substantial learning loss in primary schools due to school closures (Engzell et al., 2021; Yektyastuti et al., 2023), the founder re-established the tutoring center in Makassar in 2024 to provide structured, in-person academic support. As the owner explained in an interview:

“Awalnya saya membuka les privat di Timika. Setelah pindah ke Makassar pada masa pandemi COVID-19, saya melihat banyak anak sekolah dasar mengalami kesulitan membaca, menulis, dan berhitung karena pembelajaran daring. Dari keresahan itulah saya tergerak untuk membuka kembali bimbingan belajar secara tatap muka pada tahun 2024.” (Extract 1, Mrs. Lily)

This business operates under the legal umbrella of the Alvia Tunnisa Education Foundation and has experienced rapid growth, a pattern consistent with the resilience and expansion of tutoring business agencies during the pandemic through improved product variety and face-to-face services (Nurlaili & Budiyanto, 2021). By 2026, the institution had successfully expanded its operations to three branch locations across Makassar: the main branch on Jl. PLTU Housing Complex, Block C, No. 20, Tello Baru, Panakkukang; a second branch on Jl. Swadaya No. 31, Batua, Manggala; and a third branch on Jl. Ujung Bori Lama, Lane 1, Antang, Manggala.



Picture 1. Branch Structure and Services at Rumah Bimbel Bu Lily

The educational services offered cover various levels, including Calistung (basic reading, writing, and arithmetic skills for kindergarten and elementary school students), which has been shown to be effective in developing children's early literacy skills (Aditya & Wulandari, 2022), as well as mathematics and English, which represent

the most in-demand subjects in private supplementary tutoring (Bray, 2013; Putri et al., 2023). In addition, the institution provides a special program for adults preparing for maritime academy entrance exams, reflecting the role of private tutoring in supporting academic transitions and entrance exam preparation (Hajar & Karakus, 2023).

3.2. Operational Strategies and Pedagogical Innovations

To differentiate its services, *Rumah Bimbel Bu Lily* implements several pedagogical and managerial innovations. First, the center groups students based on ability rather than grade level, which aligns with the Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) approach that emphasizes grouping based on actual ability levels to ensure more accessible and relevant material (Banerjee et al., 2017). As observed during field research:

“Siswa yang hadir tidak dikelompokkan berdasarkan tingkatan kelas sekolahnya, melainkan dikelompokkan berdasarkan sejauh mana tingkat kemampuan dan pemahaman materi yang mereka miliki saat awal masuk.” (Extract 2, Mrs. Lily)

Second, classrooms are equipped with air conditioning, projectors, flashcards, and interactive games to maintain engagement. The use of diverse activities and educational media such as games and flashcards can help cultivate student engagement (Putri et al., 2023), and active learning through interactive engagement significantly increases student performance compared to traditional methods (Freeman et al., 2014). Third, the center builds customer trust through direct progress reporting via videos sent through WhatsApp. Communication between teachers and parents using WhatsApp has been shown to increase parental involvement and academic performance (Wuong et al., 2022). The owner emphasizes the importance of this transparency:

“Setiap kali proses belajar berlangsung, tutor akan merekam video pendek aktivitas anak. Video tersebut kami kirimkan langsung ke WhatsApp orang tua murid. Hal ini kami lakukan agar orang tua dapat melihat sendiri secara nyata perkembangan belajar anak mereka, sehingga timbul rasa percaya kepada lembaga kami.” (Extract 3, Mrs. Lily)

3.3. Financial Structure and Social Inclusivity

This institution demonstrates that micro-scale educational enterprises are able to balance financial sustainability with social responsibility (dos Santos & de Barros, 2014; Ramirez Lozano et al., 2023). By employing approximately 14–16 qualified tutors ranging from high school graduates to master's degree holders, the institution serves about 198 active students and generates an estimated monthly gross revenue of approximately Rp18,000,000. The fee structure is designed transparently to remain affordable for lower- to middle-income families, addressing the persistent problem of affordable education at the primary level in Indonesia (Rahmaningtyas et al., 2023). The registration fee is a one-time administrative fee of Rp150,000; the standard monthly fee for one subject (Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic; Math; or English) is Rp100,000, while two subjects cost Rp200,000 per month; the special program for adults is priced at Rp600,000 per month; and a social subsidy scheme provides a fee reduction of up to Rp50,000 per month for underprivileged students, orphans, or students from single-parent families. Regarding this social subsidy scheme, the owner stated:

“Kami memberikan potongan biaya atau subsidi hingga Rp50.000 per bulan bagi anak-anak dari keluarga kurang mampu atau anak yatim/piatu. Prinsip kami adalah pendidikan harus bisa dijangkau oleh semua kalangan, tidak hanya mereka yang berekonomi mampu.” (Extract 4, Mrs. Lily)

Table 1. Cost Structure of *Rumah Bimbel Bu Lily*

Types of Costs	Description	Nominal
Registration Fee	One-time administrative fee, paid at the beginning	Rp150.000
Monthly Fee – 1 Subject	Calistung / Math / English	Rp100.000 / month
Monthly Fee – 2 Subjects	Combination of two subjects	Rp200.000 / month
Special Program for Adults	Preparation for maritime academy entrance exams	Rp600.000 / month
Social Subsidies	Tuition discounts for low-income students, orphans, or students from single-parent families	Discounts of up to Rp50.000 / month

3.4. Operational Challenges and Adaptive Management

The rapid growth of the tutoring service faces various operational challenges, particularly limited classroom capacity as the number of students continues to increase. To manage this limited space without incurring significant operational costs, management has introduced a flexible shift scheduling system. According to Yuan (2025), incorporating flexible capacity into service operations helps organizations mitigate resource shortages and reduce operational costs without requiring additional physical infrastructure:

“Kendalanya ruang belajar kadang tidak mencukupi kalau semua murid datang bersamaan. Solusinya, kami atur jadwal les secara fleksibel dari pagi, siang, sore, hingga malam hari yang disesuaikan dengan jam sekolah murid di tiga cabang.” (Extract 5, Mrs. Lily)



Picture 2. The atmosphere of learning activities in the classrooms at *Rumah Bimbel Bu Lily*

To maintain visibility amid increasingly fierce competition, the organization also holds competitions every six months at shopping malls or in public spaces. This strategy is consistent with Suryana (2022), who found that event marketing conducted in public and high-traffic locations can significantly strengthen brand awareness and expand a business's customer base, a view further supported by Rachmadhian and Chaerudin (2021), who noted that well-designed events create memorable experiences for participants and function as an effective, low-cost promotional channel for small and medium enterprises. As documented during the research:

“Setiap 6 bulan sekali kami mengadakan tes kompetensi dan lomba yang diselenggarakan di area publik seperti Panakkukang Mall. Selain untuk melatih keberanian dan rasa percaya diri siswa, kegiatan di mal ini juga menjadi sarana promosi langsung yang sangat efektif bagi masyarakat luas.” (Extract 6, Mrs. Lily)



Picture 3. Semester-long academic competitions held in public spaces (Panakkukang Mall)

In addition to collaboration with elementary schools and word-of-mouth referrals among students' parents, active social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook are used for marketing. This is in line with Bandawaty et al. (2024), who demonstrated that TikTok-based promotional strategies help small enterprises build audience engagement and generate positive electronic word of mouth. Furthermore, according to Stribbell and Duangekanong (2022), positive word of mouth in the form of parental recommendations and referrals remains one of the most effective mechanisms for recruiting new students in education-based services, a finding reinforced by Harahap et al. (2018), who showed that word of mouth significantly influences prospective students' decisions to enroll.

3.5. Lessons Learned in Entrepreneurship

Bu Lily's Tutoring Center's actual results align with contemporary entrepreneurship philosophy, which emphasizes agility, social entrepreneurship, and customer-oriented value generation.

First, the center uses available resources instead of depending on initial capital. As Hasibuan et al. (2022) stated, innovation does not always require substantial capital investment. Ms. Lily started her business by leveraging her teaching skills and capital that she built up gradually. This demonstrates that business growth can be achieved by utilizing existing resources while addressing specific social issues in the local community. This is further supported by Hadi and Purwati (2022), who found that social capital and innovation—rather than material capital alone—can significantly influence the business performance of MSMEs, and by Bokhari (2022), who noted that prior experience and gradually accumulated resources can substitute for large initial capital in determining SME survival and performance.

Second, the center builds customer trust through transparency. In service-oriented businesses, transparency can create value that customers perceive. The strategy of reporting on student progress via live video aligns with the findings of Danasari et al. (2024) regarding customer engagement as one of the factors supporting marketing success. This is consistent with Hasibuan and Najmudin (2024), who found that customer engagement mediated by digital marketing significantly enhances marketing performance in small enterprises.

Third, the center adapts properly to the external environment. Asman (2020) and Miradji et al. (2024) pointed out that long-term business resilience is related to an organization's ability to monitor the external environment and alter its operational model. This is corroborated by Saah et al. (2024), who found that SMEs practicing adaptive management demonstrate a greater capacity to navigate uncertainty and sustain growth, while Irmadiani (2024) similarly showed that a business's environmental adaptability contributes directly to its competitive advantage and marketing performance, and Ekasari and Sasono (2024) emphasized that responsiveness to external factors drives successful business transformation among SMEs. This flexibility is demonstrated by Rumah Bimbel Bu Lily through the application of a multi-shift learning system and the holding of community-based competitions in public settings.

4. Conclusion

This field study demonstrates how “*Rumah Bimbel Bu Lily*” has successfully established a viable and continuously growing nonformal education business amid a competitive market environment in Makassar. Through pedagogical innovations such as grouping students by ability and using interactive learning media, directly involving parents via video-based student progress reports, and experience-based marketing through competitions held every six months in public spaces, this institution has expanded to three operational branches, serving nearly 200 students. Crucially, the implementation of a social subsidy model demonstrates that financial sustainability and social responsibility can mutually reinforce one another in educational entrepreneurship. For aspiring entrepreneurs in the field of education, this study shows that building a sustainable tutoring business depends not only on the amount of initial capital but also on the ability to respond deeply to community needs, build customer trust, implement operational flexibility, and continuously innovate services. Beyond its operational and financial achievements, the journey of *Rumah Bimbel Bu Lily* also reflects the founder's personal entrepreneurial qualities. After establishing this business in 2024 drawn by her personal experience as a tutor and her concern for the persistent challenges children face in literacy, numeracy, and English Ms. Lily's perseverance and her unwavering willingness to innovate have been key factors in sustaining and expanding the institution across its three branches. Her ability to address operational challenges whether through flexible scheduling, ongoing promotional activities, or collaborations with elementary schools and other tutoring centers further illustrates that resilience in educational

entrepreneurship stems not only from strategic planning but also from individual commitment. Ultimately, this study confirms that meaningful success in nonformal education is measured not only by financial performance but also by the ability to earn public trust, provide services that truly address local needs, and remain adaptable amid ongoing challenges.

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