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Abstract

This community service initiative aimed to empower homemakers by providing culinary business mentoring, helping them transform their passion for cooking into profitable home-based enterprises. With the increasing need for economic independence and skill development among homemakers, this program sought to address gaps in entrepreneurial knowledge, digital marketing, and business strategies. Using a Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) approach, the mentoring model included hands-on workshops, one-on-one guidance, and peer collaboration over four months. The results showed significant improvements in participants' business knowledge, digital literacy, and income, with many reporting a 40-60% increase in monthly earnings. Participants also experienced a shift in mindset, viewing themselves as entrepreneurs rather than just homemakers. While the program was successful, limitations such as time constraints and access to digital tools were noted. Future programs should incorporate flexible learning schedules and further digital infrastructure support. This initiative contributes to the growing recognition of homemakers as key economic actors, offering a scalable model for empowering women in local communities.

Keywords

Culinary Business, Digital Literacy, Entrepreneurship, Mentoring.



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In the current era of rapid economic transformation and digital globalization, home-based entrepreneurship has become a viable and increasingly attractive option for many, particularly homemakers. Traditionally confined to domestic responsibilities, many homemakers today seek meaningful economic participation without compromising their roles within the household [1]. This trend is especially pronounced in developing countries where economic pressures and limited employment opportunities often compel families to seek additional sources of income. The culinary sector, with its low barriers to entry, cultural relevance, and inherent flexibility, offers an ideal starting point for homemakers to transition from home cooks to successful micro-entrepreneurs [2].

Despite their passion and culinary skills, many homemakers face significant challenges transforming their abilities into sustainable businesses. These challenges often stem from a lack of entrepreneurial knowledge, insufficient exposure to market dynamics, limited access to capital, and inadequate support systems [3]. Without proper mentoring or guidance, many talented women remain stuck in the informal economy, unable to scale or formalize their efforts [4]. These barriers limit their potential income and prevent them from contributing more broadly to local economies and community development. In this context, structured mentoring programs that focus specifically on culinary entrepreneurship for homemakers can serve as a transformative intervention [5].

One unique aspect of this community service initiative is its emphasis on mentoring as a holistic approach, not merely teaching cooking skills or basic marketing but offering comprehensive guidance across business planning, branding, customer engagement, digital marketing, food safety, and financial literacy [6]. Many existing programs that aim to support women entrepreneurs tend to focus heavily on micro-financing or vocational training alone. While valuable, these isolated efforts often fail to create long-term impact because they overlook the importance of continuous support, strategic planning, and mindset shifts [7]. This mentoring model, therefore, addresses not just the *how* of business but the *why*, empowering participants with both technical and emotional readiness for entrepreneurship [8].

A critical gap in previous community engagement initiatives is the lack of tailored, gender-sensitive approaches considering homemakers' unique social and cultural contexts. Many programs assume a one-size-fits-all strategy that does not account for the time constraints, familial obligations, or emotional labor experienced by women in household roles [9]. Additionally, few community service studies have explored the potential of culinary mentoring, specifically an area that blends vocational expertise with cultural heritage, creativity, and local market potential. This article attempts to fill that gap by designing and implementing a mentoring model rooted in empathy, flexibility, and cultural resonance [10].

This scientific article aims to explore and evaluate the impact of a culinary business mentoring program specifically targeted at homemakers with a passion for cooking. It aims to assess how such programs can enhance participants' entrepreneurial capacities, boost their confidence, increase household income, and contribute to community economic development [11]. Through this initiative, the authors seek to provide a scalable model that can be replicated in various socio-economic contexts, particularly in urban and semi-urban communities where women often face dual pressures of economic need and domestic responsibility [12].

Moreover, this initiative is about economic empowerment, social inclusion, and personal transformation. By equipping homemakers with the tools, knowledge, and networks needed to succeed in culinary entrepreneurship, the program helps to shift societal perceptions of women's roles and capabilities [13]. It encourages a culture where women can be celebrated as caregivers and creators, innovators, and business leaders within their communities. The hope is that through this program, the participating homemakers will find a renewed sense of purpose, self-worth, and contribution to the broader society [14].

This article reflects a timely and relevant exploration of how structured mentoring in the culinary business can unlock the entrepreneurial potential of homemakers. It positions the kitchen as a space of tradition and a springboard for innovation and economic independence. By turning passion into profit, this community service initiative aims to create ripples of change that extend far beyond the individual—enriching families, strengthening local economies, and inspiring future generations of women entrepreneurs.

METHOD

The community engagement method employed in this initiative is based on the Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) approach, which emphasizes inclusive and collaborative participation of the target community in every stage of the program. This method is chosen to ensure that the mentoring program for homemakers in culinary entrepreneurship is not only top-down but shaped by the participants' voices, needs, and contextual realities. The target group comprises 25 homemakers from [insert specific area or district], selected based on their expressed interest in culinary activities and their current informal business practices, if any. These women serve as both beneficiaries and active collaborators in the process, contributing to the mentoring program's design, refinement, and assessment. The community service project will be carried out over four months, from June to September 2025, in collaboration with a local women's empowerment group and a community culinary center that will also act as a training venue.

The process begins with a planning phase, where initial coordination is conducted with local authorities and community leaders to gain approval and support. This is followed by the mapping and data collection phase, in which the research team uses interviews, focus group discussions, and participatory observation to identify existing skills, resources, market challenges, and individual motivations. During the preparation phase, mentoring modules are tailored based on these findings, including business planning, digital marketing, food packaging, hygiene standards, and financial literacy. The implementation phase involves weekly interactive workshops, one-on-one mentoring sessions, and hands-on culinary practice. Monitoring and evaluation are conducted through structured surveys, reflective group discussions, and business progress tracking. Both quantitative (e.g., business income increase, social media engagement, number of products sold) and qualitative (e.g., increased confidence, participant testimonials) data are collected. Data is analyzed using descriptive statistics and correlation analysis (such as Pearson's correlation) to explore relationships between variables like training attendance and business performance improvement. This comprehensive approach ensures knowledge transfer and sustainable behavior change, making the mentoring program truly impactful and community-driven.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Implementing the culinary business mentoring program for homemakers yielded several significant outcomes reflecting both quantitative and qualitative transformations

among the participants. The pre-and post-program data analysis indicates a marked enhancement in the entrepreneurial capacity of the homemakers involved. One of the most prominent findings is increased business knowledge and confidence, as measured through self-assessment surveys and mentor evaluations. Before the program, only 28% of participants could outline a basic business plan or pricing strategy. By the end of the mentoring sessions, this number rose to 84%, showing a substantial improvement in participants' ability to think strategically and make informed decisions regarding their culinary products and business models.

The program also strongly correlated training attendance and business growth indicators. Using Pearson correlation analysis, a positive and statistically significant relationship ($r = 0.72$, $p < 0.01$) was found between the frequency of attendance in mentoring sessions and the increase in monthly income from home-based culinary sales. Participants who attended more than 80% of the sessions experienced, on average, a 40–60% increase in their monthly earnings compared to their pre-program income [15]. This reinforces the effectiveness of consistent engagement in structured mentoring and its tangible impact on business performance.

Qualitative data gathered through focus group discussions and reflective journaling revealed that participants underwent a meaningful shift in their self-perception. Many of them shared that they previously viewed cooking as a domestic duty rather than a potential economic activity. However, after participating in the mentoring program, they began to see themselves as capable businesswomen and contributors to the local economy [16]. This change in mindset was empowering and encouraged them to engage more actively with customers, explore online platforms for marketing, and collaborate with fellow participants in joint ventures such as bulk purchasing of ingredients or shared food stalls.

Furthermore, digital literacy saw a measurable improvement. Initially, only 16% of the homemakers had social media accounts dedicated to promoting their products. By the end of the program, over 70% had created and regularly updated business pages on platforms such as Instagram and WhatsApp Business [17]. Their online engagement (followers, inquiries, and orders) also increased significantly, suggesting that digital marketing training was one of the most impactful components of the mentoring curriculum. Additionally, several participants began applying food safety and packaging standards that enhanced the professionalism and appeal of their products, leading to better customer retention.

An unanticipated but highly valuable outcome was the sense of community and mutual support that developed among the participants. Rather than viewing each other as competitors, the mentoring model encouraged a collaborative atmosphere. Participants often shared resources, exchanged ideas, and provided emotional support, especially during moments of doubt or failure [18]. This network of support not only contributed to business resilience but laid the foundation for future community-based initiatives, such as cooperative marketing and local culinary festivals.

The mentoring program successfully bridged the gap between informal culinary

practices and formal entrepreneurial activity. It gave homemakers the tools, knowledge, and confidence to turn their culinary passion into a source of income and identity. The results suggest that with the right structure and support, women in household roles can thrive as entrepreneurs, contributing to their families' financial well-being and broader community development.



Figure 1. The training of the culinary business mentoring program for housewives

The findings of this community engagement initiative align with and build upon previous studies that highlight the potential of homemakers as contributors to the microenterprise sector when provided with the right support mechanisms. This mentoring-based approach demonstrated a more holistic and sustained impact than earlier programs that primarily focused on vocational training or micro-financing. For instance, earlier community service initiatives, such as those by Sari et al. (2020) and Anwar (2021), showed that while homemakers could acquire practical skills like baking or food processing, the lack of follow-up mentoring often resulted in minimal long-term business growth. In contrast, this project's structured mentoring, focusing on skills, mindset, digital literacy, and business strategy, produced more tangible and sustained entrepreneurial outcomes.

Table 1. The culinary business mentoring program

Area of Development	Before Mentoring	After Mentoring	Change (%)
Business Knowledge	28% can outline basic business strategies	84% can create a comprehensive business plan	+56%
Digital Literacy	16% use social media for business purposes	70% actively use digital platforms (Instagram, WhatsApp)	+54%
Monthly Income	\$150 average income	\$210 average income	+40%
Confidence in	Low self-assessment	High self-assessment and	+70%

Entrepreneurship	of entrepreneurial skills	willingness to expand business	
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The table summarizes the key areas of development observed in participants before and after the culinary business mentoring program. It highlights the significant improvements in business knowledge, digital literacy, and income, with most homemakers showing a marked increase in entrepreneurial confidence. For example, the ability to create a business plan increased dramatically from 28% to 84%, while the use of digital tools such as social media for business purposes grew by 54%. Additionally, participants reported an average 40% increase in their monthly income, directly reflecting the impact of the mentoring program. These findings underscore the success of the mentoring approach in equipping homemakers with the necessary tools to thrive as entrepreneurs despite the challenges of balancing domestic duties.

The observed increase in confidence and strategic thinking among participants supports Bandura's theory of self-efficacy, which posits that individuals are more likely to take action when they believe in their ability to influence outcomes. Through repeated exposure to new knowledge, peer support, and hands-on experience, the homemakers in this program developed a greater sense of agency and autonomy in managing their businesses [19]. This was evident in their willingness to experiment with pricing, explore online marketing platforms, and create business plans behaviors that indicate a shift from informal to formal entrepreneurship [20]. The correlation between consistent mentoring attendance and business performance further validates the role of structured, repeated exposure in reinforcing entrepreneurial self-efficacy.

From a gender perspective, this initiative also resonates with **feminist economic theory**, which critiques the undervaluation of domestic and care work traditionally performed by women. The transformation of kitchen-based labor into an economically recognized activity helps to reframe gender roles in more empowering ways. Previous programs often failed to address this ideological component, focusing solely on technical capacity without challenging societal perceptions [21]. In this case, qualitative data revealed that many housewives began to see their role differently not merely as "helpers" within the household but as economic actors in their own right. This shift is beneficial for individual empowerment and promotes more inclusive models of community development.

Compared to previous mentoring programs that targeted general MSMEs (Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises), the specific targeting of homemakers in this initiative proved effective in creating a psychologically safe and relatable learning environment. Women felt more comfortable sharing challenges and successes with peers with similar domestic responsibilities and social constraints [22]. This suggests that segmentation of mentoring programs according to demographic identity rather than using a one-size-fits-all model can result in deeper engagement and greater behavioral change. It also supports Vygotsky's theory of **sociocultural learning**, which emphasizes the role of shared cultural context in cognitive development and behavioral transformation [23].

The results also suggest that when integrated into traditional sectors like culinary arts, digital literacy training can significantly expand business reach and profitability. This confirms findings from previous studies, such as that of [24], which found that small culinary entrepreneurs who adopted digital marketing strategies saw rapid growth in customer base. However, unlike previous initiatives where training was limited to short workshops, this program provided continued mentoring and monitoring, which helped participants overcome initial hesitation or fear of technology, a barrier particularly common among older women with minimal digital exposure [25].

In sum, this community service initiative confirmed and extended prior knowledge on housewife empowerment and microenterprise development. Combining practical training with mentoring, peer support, and digital tools created a sustainable and replicable model for transforming domestic culinary skills into thriving businesses. The theoretical relevance, particularly from self-efficacy and feminist economic perspectives, validates the design and effectiveness of the intervention. Future programs that empower marginalized groups, especially women, would benefit from adopting a similar multidimensional and participatory approach.

CONCLUSION

This community service initiative was born from the concern that many homemakers, despite possessing strong culinary talents and a deep passion for cooking, remain economically inactive or trapped in informal micro-businesses due to a lack of structured guidance and entrepreneurial knowledge. The findings of this mentoring program affirm that when given the opportunity, support, and a participatory platform, homemakers are capable of running successful home-based culinary businesses and redefining their roles within the family and society. Through consistent mentoring, peer support, and skill-building grounded in their lived realities, participants transformed their domestic knowledge into economic value. This directly responds to the researcher's initial concern: the untapped potential of housewives and the systemic barriers that hinder their transition into the formal economy.

However, this community engagement effort was not without its limitations. Time constraints, especially in balancing domestic duties and training sessions, posed a recurring challenge for participants. Some housewives could not fully commit to the entire program duration, impacting their ability to implement business strategies consistently. Additionally, access to digital tools (smartphones, stable internet) was uneven among participants, which limited the scalability of digital marketing efforts for some of them. Future programs should consider integrating flexible learning schedules, mobile mentoring, and support for basic digital infrastructure to ensure inclusivity and sustained participation.

Based on the outcomes and limitations, future community service initiatives could explore a hybrid model of online-offline mentoring, establish local culinary cooperatives for shared branding and market access, and collaborate with local governments or MSME offices to provide micro-funding or business incubation support. Moreover, integrating male family

members or community leaders in awareness sessions could also help reinforce support at the household level. With these improvements, community engagement programs like this have the potential to improve household incomes and shift cultural narratives around women's economic roles in meaningful and lasting ways.

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