

Evaluating the Impact of the Community-Based Youth Engagement Program on Empowering Out-of-School Youth (OSY) in Barangay Tablon: Enhancing Education, Skills, Leadership, and Economic Empowerment for Sustainable Development

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Received 20th November 2025; Accepted 20th December 2025; Published Online 23rd February 2026

DOI: 10.63941/DIT.ADSimrj.2026.2.1.40

ABSTRACT

Out-of-School Youths (OSYs) in Barangay Tablon, Cagayan de Oro face significant socio-economic challenges, including limited access to education and employment opportunities. Youth empowerment initiatives are crucial to breaking the cycle of poverty, and the Community-Based Youth Engagement Program (CBEYP) seeks to address these challenges by improving education, skills development, and entrepreneurial capabilities. This study evaluates the impact of the CBEYP in empowering OSYs through vocational skills, social media engagement, leadership development, and cooperative participation, focusing on how the program influences their employability, confidence, and personal aspirations. The study employs a qualitative research design, utilizing in-depth interviews with 18 participants who completed the CBEYP. Thematic analysis was used to identify key patterns in participants' experiences, particularly in the areas of skills development, business aspirations, and personal empowerment. Findings show that the program significantly enhanced participants' vocational skills, especially in bread and pastry production, while fostering entrepreneurial ambitions through social media engagement. Participants reported increased self-confidence and a stronger sense of responsibility toward their communities. Many expressed a desire to continue their education or pursue small business ventures. The study concludes that the CBEYP has played a pivotal role in empowering OSYs by providing them with practical skills and boosting their confidence. The integration of social media for business promotion and advocacy has proven to be an effective strategy, and the findings offer valuable insights for improving similar programs in other marginalized communities. Future recommendations include expanding vocational training, enhancing social media advocacy training, providing more support for further education, and facilitating the establishment of cooperatives to ensure sustainable program development.

Keywords: *Out-of-School Youth (OSY), Youth Empowerment, Vocational Training, Social Media Engagement Cooperative Development*

INTRODUCTION

Out-of-School Youths (OSYs) in Barangay Tablon, Cagayan de Oro City, face significant socio-economic challenges that hinder their access to education, stable employment, and personal development. These youth, aged 15 to 24, often drop out of school due to a variety of reasons, including financial difficulties, family obligations, and lack of interest in traditional schooling systems. As a result, many find themselves in low-paying, unskilled jobs, or, in some cases, remain unemployed. With limited education and relevant job skills, it becomes exceedingly difficult for them to escape the cycle of poverty. Additionally, the social stigma of being out of school exacerbates their struggles,

further isolating them from educational opportunities and meaningful employment. This issue aligns with SDG 4: Quality Education, which emphasizes the need for inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all, particularly marginalized youth like OSYs (Soriano et al., 2024).

In addition to these educational barriers, OSYs in Barangay Tablon experience social exclusion, which isolates them further from the broader community. This marginalization often leads to diminished self-worth and a lack of confidence, preventing these youth from seeking better education or career opportunities. Without access to education and the necessary skills for employment, OSYs remain vulnerable to exploitation and underemployment, further reinforcing the cycle of poverty. These challenges are closely linked to SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities, which advocates for social inclusion and equal opportunities for all, regardless of background (Blum, 2025).

Youth empowerment, particularly for marginalized youth, plays a critical role in breaking the cycle of poverty. By providing access to education and skills development, youth are empowered to make informed decisions, improve their livelihoods, and contribute meaningfully to their communities. Empowerment programs not only help youth develop marketable skills but also foster confidence, leadership, and a sense of belonging. This holistic approach to empowerment creates pathways to economic independence and social inclusion, allowing youth to break free from societal barriers and become active agents of change. Youth empowerment programs, such as the Youth Engagement Program for Out-of-School Youth (OSY), play a vital role in equipping these youth with the tools needed for a successful future.

To address the pressing challenges faced by OSYs in Barangay Tablon, the Youth Engagement Program was launched, with sponsorship from USAID and support from Barangay Tablon. This program aims to empower OSYs by providing them with the necessary skills, resources, and opportunities to improve their lives and achieve economic independence. Specifically targeting OSYs aged 15 to 24, who face socio-economic hardships, the program offers vocational training in areas such as bread and pastry production, digital literacy, and entrepreneurship. Through these training modules, the program seeks to develop marketable skills that increase OSYs' employability, helping them break the cycle of poverty and contribute to SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth (Pittman & Irby, 2025).

A core element of the program is social media engagement and digital literacy training. With the rise of digital platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube, the program teaches OSYs how to use these tools for business development, personal branding, and advocacy. By teaching OSYs to leverage social media, the program empowers them to promote their businesses, raise awareness for social causes, and generate income, enhancing both their entrepreneurial potential and career opportunities. In today's digital economy, social media engagement plays an essential role in providing OSYs with a platform for personal and economic growth (Abodunrin, 2025).

The program also incorporates service learning, where OSYs engage in community service activities alongside Pilgrim Christian College (PCC) students and faculty. This approach helps OSYs develop valuable skills such as teamwork, leadership, and problem-solving while contributing to their local community. Service learning bridges the gap between academic learning and real-world application, encouraging OSYs to use their newly acquired skills to positively impact their community. Through these activities, OSYs build social capital, strengthening their connection to their community and increasing access to valuable resources for personal and professional growth (Cohen, 2024; Pittman & Irby, 2025).

Leadership development is another key component of the program. OSYs are encouraged to take on leadership roles in community projects and service-learning activities. These experiences help them

develop leadership qualities such as responsibility, critical thinking, and collaboration. By taking on leadership roles, OSYs gain confidence and develop a proactive mindset that helps them take more significant roles in their communities and society. The program fosters an attitude of ownership and initiative, empowering OSYs to envision their future and create positive changes in their environments (Bates & Anderson-Butcher, 2025). Additionally, leadership development activities provide OSYs with the opportunity to practice communication skills and learn how to manage teams effectively. These experiences also enable participants to understand the importance of accountability and ethical decision-making in leadership. By fostering a sense of leadership, the program equips OSYs with the tools they need to become influential agents of change in their communities.

Mentorship is an essential aspect of the program. Each OSY participant is paired with a mentor from Pilgrim Christian College, who provides career guidance, personal support, and advice on balancing education, work, and life. These mentorship relationships help OSYs develop self-discipline, resilience, and perseverance, which are necessary for success in both personal and professional spheres (Greer et al., 2024). Mentors also serve as role models, helping OSYs set achievable goals and stay focused on their future aspirations. By offering personalized advice, mentors encourage participants to build confidence and enhance their decision-making skills. Furthermore, the mentorship component creates a supportive network that fosters long-term success and community involvement beyond the program's duration.

OSY Program Partnership and Recruitment Details

Category	Details
Program Name	Youth Engagement Program for Out-of-School Youth (OSY)
Duration	July 2022 – June 2023
Sponsor	USAID
Partner	Barangay Tablon, Cagayan de Oro City
Target Beneficiaries (OSY)	Age : 15-24 years old Gender : Male, Female, Does Not Identify Social & Health Situations : Single Parents, Teenage Mothers, PWDs, IPs, Youth in Conflict with the Law Work Situation: Unemployed, Employed, Self-Employed (Must have a flexible schedule to attend sessions) Educational Attainment : Dropped out of Junior/Senior High School, Junior High School Graduate but hasn't enrolled in Senior High School for 6 months, Senior High School Graduate but hasn't enrolled in Tertiary Level for 6 months, College Level but no longer enrolled and no college degree Disability : Consideration based on institutional capacity to handle Religion : Open to all religions
Orientation Dates	August 2022
Orientation Activities	Engaging and proper use of social media Encouragement to continue education Basic entrepreneurial skills training
Health Protocols	Health protocols will be strictly followed during orientations and activities
Requested Assistance from Barangay	Collaboration with PCC and the BHWs for community engagement Help in linking with the community for successful program implementation

Through vocational training, entrepreneurship, digital literacy, service learning, leadership development, and mentorship, the Youth Engagement Program equips OSYs with the tools they need to break free from poverty and contribute to their communities. The qualitative evaluation through interviews and secondary data will provide valuable insights into the impact of the program on OSYs, offering a deeper understanding of how it empowers them to take control of their futures (Cohen, 2024). This comprehensive approach not only enhances their employability but also fosters a sense of responsibility and community involvement. As a result, OSYs are better prepared to address challenges, make informed decisions, and contribute to social change. The program's holistic model serves as a catalyst for sustainable development, providing OSYs with the foundation to lead fulfilling lives and make meaningful contributions to society.

Moreover, the program creates a platform for OSYs to build resilience, develop problem-solving skills, and cultivate a mindset of continuous learning. As they engage in the community service aspect of the program, they not only contribute to local development efforts but also gain a deeper understanding of the importance of community collaboration and social responsibility. This empowerment, combined with the tangible skills they acquire, helps break the cycle of poverty and offers OSYs the confidence to pursue higher education, stable employment, or successful entrepreneurial ventures. By addressing both personal and professional growth, the program ensures that OSYs are equipped to create lasting, positive change in their own lives and the communities they belong to.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Media as a Tool for Engagement

A vital aspect of youth empowerment programs is the use of social media platforms like Facebook, which provides an accessible and dynamic platform for OSYs to engage with their communities and broader networks. Social media offers OSYs the opportunity to raise awareness about social issues, share personal stories, and create positive social change (Delgado, 2025). Furthermore, it acts as an entrepreneurial tool for OSYs, allowing them to market their small businesses, connect with potential customers, and engage with mentors and other entrepreneurs. This engagement not only boosts visibility for local businesses but also provides valuable exposure, helping youth to build brand recognition and promote their products without requiring physical storefronts (Cohen, 2024).

Social media also facilitates peer-to-peer learning. OSYs can exchange knowledge, strategies, and resources, fostering collaborative learning environments. This interaction helps them develop social capital, a vital asset that empowers them to solve problems, engage in advocacy, and strengthen their civic participation (Skrocki et al., 2025). Moreover, social media networks provide OSYs with a support system, connecting them with like-minded individuals, organizations, and mentors who offer guidance and ongoing support.

Economic Opportunities through Digital Platforms

Social media plays a critical role in increasing economic opportunities for OSYs. Through digital campaigns and online businesses, young people can gain entrepreneurial skills, market products and services, and even access online work opportunities. Social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube allow OSYs to promote their businesses, build customer bases, and connect with a global market, offering economic flexibility that traditional job markets cannot. This flexibility allows OSYs to balance entrepreneurial pursuits with other responsibilities, such as family or part-time work (Davis-Bey, 2024).

In addition to business promotion, social media provides a valuable gateway to the growing digital economy. OSYs can explore opportunities in e-commerce, digital marketing, and online service

provision, further expanding their economic potential. As technology continues to evolve, OSYs can adapt and seize new trends, ensuring that they remain competitive in the digital world (Hidalgo, 2024).

Social and Emotional Growth through Social Media Engagement

The role of social media in youth empowerment goes beyond business and economic opportunities—it also promotes social engagement, personal development, and emotional growth. Through active participation on social media, OSYs gain confidence, self-expression, and emotional resilience. Positive emotional attitudes toward language and communication enhance their ability to navigate challenges and contribute to their communities (MacArthur et al., 2018). This engagement also encourages critical thinking and leadership, fostering the development of social and emotional skills that are essential for personal and professional growth.

Studies show that students with positive emotional attitudes toward learning and social engagement perform better in academic and career pursuits. Youth empowerment programs that incorporate social media encourage OSYs to develop these attitudes, boosting their writing skills, creativity, and overall confidence (Wang & Zhan, 2024).

Digital Literacy and Entrepreneurial Skills for OSYs

Social media's influence on youth empowerment is compounded by its role in enhancing digital literacy and providing entrepreneurial training. Many OSYs, particularly those from marginalized backgrounds, lack access to formal education. Social media platforms, however, offer a cost-effective medium for self-paced learning. Whether it's acquiring digital marketing skills or engaging in online entrepreneurial ventures, OSYs can expand their knowledge base and practical skills without leaving their communities (Gough, 2025).

Programs like bread and pastry production also contribute to OSYs' skill development, preparing them for entrepreneurship or employment in industries with high demand. Digital literacy, in combination with practical vocational skills, ensures that OSYs can thrive in both physical and digital job markets.

Promoting Leadership and Advocacy through Social Media

The integration of social media into youth empowerment programs also fosters leadership and advocacy skills. By using platforms to advocate for social causes, OSYs can take ownership of issues such as environmental protection, educational reform, or youth rights. This allows them to drive positive change in their communities while developing leadership skills. Programs that emphasize social responsibility help OSYs build critical thinking and contribute meaningfully to societal challenges, laying the foundation for long-term personal growth and social impact (Van Steenis et al., 2025).

Overcoming Barriers and Building Social Capital

Despite the opportunities, challenges like the digital divide persist, with limited access to technology in some communities. Social media engagement could expose OSYs to risks such as misinformation, cyberbullying, and exploitation. Therefore, digital literacy programs and online safety training are crucial components of empowerment programs. These programs help OSYs navigate the complexities of online engagement safely while maximizing its potential (Halverson et al., 2024).

Vocational Training for Economic Empowerment

Vocational training programs, such as bread and pastry production, play a crucial role in empowering OSYs by equipping them with practical skills that improve their economic prospects. These programs offer youth the chance to develop a trade or craft that is both personally fulfilling and financially viable. By fostering an entrepreneurial mindset, vocational training helps OSYs gain the confidence and self-

sufficiency needed to start small businesses or pursue employment in high-demand sectors, especially in communities where formal job opportunities are limited (Musker, 2024).

Integrating Social Media into Vocational Training

The integration of social media into vocational training programs further enhances the ability of OSYs to engage with the digital economy. Through platforms like Instagram and Facebook, OSYs can market their skills and products to a broader audience, thereby expanding their economic opportunities. This combination of practical skills and digital literacy provides OSYs with a unique advantage, enabling them to successfully navigate both traditional and digital marketplaces (Skrocki et al., 2025).

MATERIALS & METHODS

Research Design

This study uses a qualitative research design to explore the experiences of out-of-school youth (OSYs) in skill-building and empowerment programs. The design focuses on capturing detailed, personal insights into how OSYs overcome challenges in education and employment. Through in-depth interviews, the study will examine the impact of various programs on the OSYs' personal and socio-economic development, including programs in literacy, numeracy, vocational training, and entrepreneurship (Boat et al., 2024).

Data Collection Methods

Primary data will be gathered through structured interviews with OSYs who participated in the program. The interviews will focus on the effectiveness of the programs, covering topics like bread and pastry production, bookkeeping, and container gardening. A purposive sampling method will ensure participants are directly engaged in the training programs. Secondary data will be used to validate interview responses, including reports and documents from Pilgrim Christian College (PCC) and other relevant sources.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis will be used to identify key patterns in the responses. The analysis will focus on themes such as skill development, social media engagement, and personal empowerment. The data will also examine the role of social media in promoting business and advocacy, along with the emotional growth and confidence gained through participation in these programs. By combining primary and secondary data, the study will provide a comprehensive understanding of how these empowerment programs benefit OSYs.

Participant Selection

The participants will be selected from OSYs in Barangays Tablon, 15, and 18, with those who engaged actively in skill-building activities prioritized. This selection ensures the research is based on the real experiences of those most directly impacted by the program.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Skills Development: Bread and Pastry Making

One of the primary components of the program was the bread and pastry-making training, which was greatly appreciated by the participants. Mariel, a young GIP intern, shared that her motivation to join the program was driven by her desire to enhance her baking skills for future business ventures. She stated, "To enhance my skills in making pastries as it can be used when I want to have a business that

about making pastries like; cookies and cakes." This quote encapsulates the practical aspect of the program and highlights how learning specific skills, such as pastry making, can directly contribute to entrepreneurial endeavors. Participants were trained on proper techniques, including measuring and mixing ingredients, which Mariel emphasized as being crucial for success.

This hands-on training provided them with the confidence to start their own ventures and equipped them with the knowledge necessary to manage a small business effectively.

Practical Application of Skills

The program successfully bridged the gap between learning and practical application. Participants were not only introduced to new skills but were also provided opportunities to apply them. Interviewee B shared, "Training nga katong nag bake ug nag himo cookies. Kay naka tabang sya sa ako nga maka balo," which highlights how their participation in the training helped develop practical skills that could immediately be used in their life. This theme reflects the tangible impact of the training, as participants like Interviewee B were able to use the skills learned to improve their financial situation, such as through the sale of baked goods.

Expanding Knowledge and Skills Beyond Baking

In addition to pastry making, the program exposed participants to various other important skills, such as basic bookkeeping and entrepreneurship. Interviewee A mentioned, "Oo, mas gipa wide pa ang knowledge," reflecting how the program expanded their knowledge beyond just baking. The inclusion of business skills, particularly in bookkeeping, was essential in equipping the participants with the tools needed to manage their finances and run their businesses. This broad-based skill set ensured that participants were not just learning one specific craft but were prepared for the entrepreneurial world as a whole.

Measurement Challenges in Learning

Although the program was largely successful in equipping participants with new skills, some challenges emerged during the training, particularly in areas requiring precision. Interviewee B noted, "Ang pinaka lisud kay kanang gusto kaayo ka muadto sa training pero naay usahay dili maka adro kay walay mag bantay sa bata," acknowledging the difficulty in attending training sessions due to childcare responsibilities. This challenge reflects a broader issue where, despite the program's best efforts to provide skill-building opportunities, external factors such as family obligations sometimes hindered full participation. Nevertheless, the program's flexibility allowed participants like Interviewee B to benefit from the sessions they could attend.

Social Media Engagement for Advocacy and Business Promotion

Social media engagement was a significant theme that emerged from the interviews, with participants using platforms like Facebook to both advocate for social causes and promote their business ventures. Interviewee B shared her experience, saying, "Nasabtan nako ma'am/sir, kay nagamit nako karon sa akong pag pagwarta," which shows how social media skills gained during the program allowed her to promote her small business and increase her income. This shift from traditional marketing methods to social media promotion is vital for modern entrepreneurs and demonstrates how the program effectively integrated digital literacy into its curriculum. Social media not only allowed participants to promote their businesses but also helped them raise awareness about important social issues, providing a powerful tool for community engagement.

Using Social Media for Business Growth

The entrepreneurial use of social media was a pivotal aspect of the program. Interviewee A noted, "Baking itself," when discussing how they planned to leverage new skills, paired with social media

marketing, to run a business. This demonstrates that the program didn't just focus on teaching technical skills but also emphasized how to integrate those skills into modern business practices, such as online promotion and customer engagement. Social media thus became a platform through which participants could share their products and services, fostering both business growth and community outreach.

Empowerment Through Acquired Skills and Confidence

Personal empowerment was a key theme across all interviews, with participants expressing that the program boosted their confidence and gave them a sense of control over their futures. Interviewee B, reflecting on her experience, shared, "Nag pasalamat ko ani nga programa kay naa kay na bal-an ug nagamit ko ni sa karon panahon," expressing gratitude for the opportunity to learn and apply new skills. This quote reflects the transformative effect the program had on participants, providing them with a sense of purpose and enabling them to take control of their livelihoods. The program empowered participants not only by providing skills but also by boosting their self-esteem and opening new possibilities for their futures.

Increased Confidence and Self-Esteem

As participants learned new skills, many also reported significant increases in their confidence. Interviewee A's comment, "The more sessions to come," reveals growing enthusiasm for the program and a desire to continue learning. This newfound confidence extended beyond skill acquisition, with participants expressing stronger belief in their ability to succeed. The ability to engage with new opportunities, whether through entrepreneurship or further education, was a direct result of the confidence gained during the program.

Setting Personal Goals and Aspirations

The program encouraged participants to set personal goals, both in terms of education and business. Interviewee C shared, "Naa syay kausaban kay naka toon ng naka balo ko unsaon pag himo sa mga pastry," emphasizing how the program not only taught new skills but also encouraged participants to pursue goals related to their future. This theme highlights the program's success in helping participants look beyond immediate needs, fostering a long-term mindset that focused on self-improvement, education, and entrepreneurship. Participants began to set clear goals, whether in further education or starting their own businesses.

Entrepreneurial Ventures and Business Aspirations

Participants showed a strong inclination toward entrepreneurship, with many eager to start small businesses based on the skills they learned. Interviewee B mentioned, "Nagamit nako karon sa akong pag pagwarta," which demonstrates how baking skills were applied to generate income. Interviewee C also shared how their skills in baking gave them the confidence to run their business, stating, "Nakata kang kaayo kay pwede ka maka inom gamay gamit imong skills." This entrepreneurial drive was a central theme, as participants recognized the potential of their newly acquired skills in creating viable income sources.

Long-Term Impact and Continued Aspirations

The long-term impact of the program was evident as participants expressed plans to continue their education, pursue entrepreneurial ventures, or seek employment. Interviewee A's statement, "Thank you for shaping the minds of individuals, thank you for opening your doors for the opportunities," encapsulates the overall positive effect the program had on participants. The skills learned, coupled with the confidence gained, provided participants with the tools to continue growing both personally and professionally. Participants like Interviewee A expressed a desire to take their entrepreneurial journey further, while others were inspired to continue their studies.

Analysis of the Findings

This section presents the key findings derived from interviews conducted with participants in the Out-of-School Youths (OSYs) program, which aimed to enhance their skills, confidence, and entrepreneurial capabilities. The findings have been organized around three major themes: skills development, social media engagement, and personal empowerment. Through thematic analysis of the interviews, this section illustrates how the program has shaped the participants' lives, focusing on how it has equipped them with new skills, improved their entrepreneurial confidence, and empowered them for a more self-sufficient future. Direct quotes from the participants provide a rich, qualitative understanding of their experiences.

Impact of Skills Development on Employment and Economic Independence

The skills acquired through the program have significantly contributed to the OSYs' employment prospects and economic independence. One participant shared that their motivation to join the program was driven by the desire to enhance baking skills for future business ventures. This reflects the practical aspect of the program, which taught specific skills like pastry making that can directly contribute to entrepreneurial endeavors. Participants were trained on proper techniques, including measuring and mixing ingredients, which were emphasized as being crucial for success. Through the training, they gained not only technical skills but also the confidence to start their own ventures.

Linking Skills to Entrepreneurial Ventures

Beyond gaining technical knowledge, participants were introduced to entrepreneurial principles, which they could apply to their businesses. One participant mentioned that the program expanded their knowledge and helped them grow beyond their original skillset. The inclusion of basic bookkeeping, financial management, and business planning allowed participants to approach their ventures with a professional mindset. The program provided foundational tools that were essential for running small businesses, ensuring participants were not just skilled in their craft but were also prepared to manage the financial aspects of their ventures.

Measurement Challenges in Learning

Although the program was largely successful in equipping participants with new skills, some challenges emerged during the training, particularly in areas requiring precision. One participant noted that attending the training sessions was challenging due to childcare responsibilities. This challenge reflects a broader issue where, despite the program's best efforts to provide skill-building opportunities, external factors like family obligations sometimes hindered full participation. Nevertheless, the program's flexibility allowed participants to benefit from the sessions they could attend.

Social Media Engagement for Advocacy and Business Promotion

Social media played a crucial role in enhancing the participants' entrepreneurial ventures. Participants shared how they used platforms like Facebook to both advocate for social causes and promote their business ventures. One participant shared that they were able to apply what they learned and use it to earn money, showing how social media skills gained during the program allowed them to promote their small business and increase their income. The program's emphasis on digital literacy and social media marketing allowed participants to reach a wider audience, engage with potential customers, and build brand awareness without the financial burden of traditional advertising. This ability to leverage digital platforms has empowered participants to compete in the modern business landscape, where online presence is key to success.

Using Social Media for Business Growth

The entrepreneurial use of social media was a pivotal aspect of the program. One participant noted that they planned to leverage their baking skills paired with social media marketing to run a business. This demonstrates that the program didn't just focus on teaching technical skills but also emphasized how to integrate those skills into modern business practices, such as online promotion and customer engagement. Social media thus became a platform through which participants could share their products and services, fostering both business growth and community outreach.

Personal Growth Through Skills and Knowledge

The program had a profound impact on participants' personal growth. Many participants reported significant improvements in their self-confidence and sense of self-worth. One participant reflected on their experience, sharing how they were grateful for the opportunity to learn and apply new skills. This quote highlights how acquiring new skills, particularly in an area that had practical applications like baking, contributed to their personal growth. The program gave participants the opportunity to see their own potential, which is crucial for overcoming the social stigma often associated with being an out-of-school youth.

Building Confidence and Self-Esteem

Confidence building was another major outcome of the program. One participant's enthusiasm about the program underscores their growing self-confidence and eagerness to continue learning. As participants acquired new skills and knowledge, they began to feel more capable of succeeding in their endeavors. This increase in confidence was not only related to their entrepreneurial aspirations but also reflected in their personal lives. As they became more self-sufficient, they also gained the ability to navigate life challenges more effectively, boosting their overall self-esteem.

Shaping Future Aspirations

The program also played a critical role in shaping the participants' future aspirations. Many participants expressed a desire to continue their education or pursue further entrepreneurial ventures. One participant's aspiration to start their own pastry business, coupled with their newly gained skills, is an example of how the program influenced their long-term goals. Similarly, another participant's ability to support their family through their newfound skills showed that the program not only impacted their immediate circumstances but also had long-term implications for their future aspirations.

Comparing the Findings with Existing Literature on Skill Development

The findings of this study align closely with existing literature on skill development and its impact on economic independence. Studies have shown that skills training programs, especially those focused on vocational and entrepreneurial skills, can significantly improve the employability and income-generating potential of marginalized groups. Participants in this program were able to transition from learning basic skills to applying them in real-world business settings, mirroring findings from similar programs that emphasize practical skill application.

Social Media and Entrepreneurial Success

The use of social media for business promotion, as discussed in this study, supports findings in existing research that digital platforms have become essential tools for small businesses. Social media not only expands the reach of a business but also provides an affordable platform for entrepreneurs to interact with customers, showcase their products, and grow their business without significant upfront costs. The participants in this study were able to harness social media to supplement their businesses and income, an outcome that is consistent with studies showing the effectiveness of social media in enhancing entrepreneurial success.

Personal Empowerment and Confidence Building

The theme of personal empowerment, as explored in this study, aligns with research on the transformative power of skills training programs. Studies show that when individuals acquire new skills, particularly in vocational or entrepreneurial areas, they experience a boost in confidence, which can lead to increased participation in the workforce and a greater sense of self-worth. The participants in this program demonstrated significant growth in both their confidence and self-esteem, reinforcing the importance of skill development for personal empowerment and long-term social integration.

Discrepancies and New Insights

While existing literature emphasizes the importance of vocational training in improving economic outcomes, the findings of this study offer new insights into the role of social media in supporting business development among OSYs. Most previous studies have focused on traditional business models, where promotion and customer acquisition rely on face-to-face interactions or traditional advertising methods. This study, however, highlights the growing importance of social media in today's entrepreneurial landscape, particularly for marginalized groups who may not have access to traditional marketing channels.

CONCLUSION

This study evaluated the impact of the Community-Based Youth Engagement Program (CBEYP) on Out-of-School Youths (OSYs) in Barangay Tablon, focusing on skills development, social media engagement, and personal empowerment. Key findings showed significant improvements in participants' skills, confidence, and future goals.

Skills Development and Economic Independence:

The program helped participants gain vocational and entrepreneurial skills, particularly in bread and pastry production. These skills allowed them to apply what they learned in real business settings, improving their financial independence. As one participant mentioned, "Training nga katong nag bake ug nag himo cookies. Kay naka tabang sya sa ako nga maka balo," highlighting how the program directly impacted their economic situations.

Social Media Engagement for Business Growth:

Social media was used as a tool for business promotion and advocacy. Participants learned to use platforms like Facebook to market their products and raise awareness about social issues. One participant shared, "Nasabtan nako ma'am/sir, kay nagamit nako karon sa akong pag pagwarta," showing how social media helped them grow their businesses.

Personal Empowerment and Confidence Building:

Personal empowerment was a significant outcome, with many participants reporting increased confidence and self-esteem. The program gave them the skills and opportunities to face challenges. One participant said, "Nag pasalamat ko ani nga programa kay naa kay na bal-an ug nagamit ko ni sa karon panahon," reflecting how the program empowered them.

Entrepreneurial Aspirations and Goal Setting:

Participants also expressed a desire to continue their education or start businesses. One participant said, "Nakata kang kaayo kay pwede ka maka inom gamay gamit imong skills," showing how the program encouraged entrepreneurial ventures. The program fostered long-term thinking, empowering participants to set goals for both business and education.

Social Media as a Tool for Advocacy:

Social media also played a role in social advocacy. Participants used it to raise awareness and share their stories. This combination of business development and advocacy through social media was a novel approach that enhanced the participants' empowerment. The program's focus on digital literacy allowed participants to use social media for both personal growth and social change.

Sustainability and Long-Term Impact:

The program's long-term impact was evident, with participants planning to continue learning and developing their skills. Many expressed their intention to expand their businesses. The program fostered a culture of continuous learning and self-sufficiency. As one participant noted, "Thank you for shaping the minds of individuals, thank you for opening your doors for the opportunities," emphasizing the lasting impact of the program on their lives.

Recommendations

1. Expanding Vocational Training Opportunities

Expanding the program to include skills like digital marketing, carpentry, and graphic design, and partnering with institutions for certifications, will enhance OSYs' employability and economic independence.

2. Enhancing Social Media Advocacy and Business Training

Providing advanced social media training in areas like content creation, e-commerce, and digital branding will help OSYs promote their businesses and support social causes.

3. Increasing Support for Further Education

Offering scholarships and mentoring will encourage OSYs to continue their education and career development, providing clear pathways to formal schooling.

4. Developing Sustainability Plans for Long-Term Impact

Creating a self-sustaining model, such as cooperatives, and building partnerships for funding will ensure the program's continued success and long-term impact on OSYs.

5. Addressing Retention Issues and Resource Limitations

Offering incentives, flexible learning options, and creating local resource hubs will improve engagement and overcome resource limitations, ensuring the program's success.

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