

Integrated Business Mentoring: Efforts to Improve Sustainable Business, in Mlokorejo Village, Jember, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

The small business mentoring program in Mlokorejo village, Jember aims to increase the capacity and competitiveness of small businesses so that they can grow sustainably and contribute to local economic development. The program aims to provide managerial and technical skills training, introduction of new technologies, and market access support. The program is carried out through three main stages: planning, implementation, and evaluation. In the planning stage, the specific needs of small businesses are identified through surveys and discussions with stakeholders. The implementation stage includes training, mentoring, and market access support. Evaluation was carried out using qualitative analysis methods through interviews, focus group discussions, and field observations. The results showed significant improvements in the managerial and technical skills of participants, adoption of new technologies that increase production efficiency, and wider market access that contributed to increased sales. However, challenges remain in terms of access to financing and product development that require further attention. The program has succeeded in increasing the capacity of small businesses through the training and support provided. Adoption of new technologies and expanded market access have had a positive impact on productivity and sales.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of integrated business assistance in efforts to improve sustainable business is increasingly gaining attention in various industrial sectors (Blinova et al., 2022; Sulistyan et al., 2022). With increasing global competition and consumer demands for environmentally friendly and (Alamsyah et al., 2020) ethical products, many companies are beginning to realize the importance of a holistic approach in managing their business (Di Vaio et al., 2020). Integrated business assistance involves collaboration between various parties, including the government (Chen et al., 2021), private sector, academics, and local communities (Sopannah et al., 2023), to create an ecosystem that supports sustainable business growth (Muttaqien & Sulistyan, 2022). This phenomenon is characterized by various initiatives such as managerial and technical skills training, access to green technology, and support in meeting international sustainability standards (Giuffrida & Mangiaracina, 2020). Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) benefit greatly from this program, as they often face constraints in terms of resources and access to markets (Yatminiwati et al., 2021). In addition, this assistance also helps companies identify and manage environmental and social risks that can affect their operations (Settembre-Blundo et al., 2021). Thus, integrated business assistance not only increases the competitiveness of companies in the

global market but also encourages the creation of more responsible and sustainable businesses (Topleva & Prokopov, 2020; Sulistyana et al., 2023). This phenomenon shows a paradigm shift in the business world, where sustainability is no longer just an option, but a strategic need for long-term sustainability (Ogreaan & Herciu, 2020).

In the village of Mlokorejo, Jember, Indonesia, small businesses still need ongoing mentoring to achieve long-term success and sustainability. Many SMEs in the area face challenges in accessing resources, technology, and wider markets. Integrated business mentoring is essential to help them overcome these barriers. Mentoring programs that include training in managerial and technical skills, and access to green technology can help improve business productivity and efficiency. In addition, mentoring also provides insight into how to meet international sustainability standards, which are increasingly important in global competition. In Mlokorejo, collaboration between government, academia, and the private sector can create an ecosystem that supports the growth of local businesses. In this way, small businesses in this village can not only improve their competitiveness but also contribute to more inclusive and sustainable economic development. This phenomenon reflects the importance of a holistic approach in empowering small businesses to achieve broader sustainability goals.

If the need for sustainable assistance for small businesses in Mlokorejo village, Jember is not immediately addressed, then various negative impacts can occur. According to Surya et al. (2021), without access to adequate training and resources, many small businesses may experience stagnation or even decline in productivity and innovation. The inability to compete in an increasingly competitive market can result in decreased income and job losses, which in turn increase poverty levels in the village (Desta, 2021). In addition, without guidance in implementing sustainable business practices, small businesses can face serious environmental problems, such as land degradation and pollution, which can damage local ecosystems (Qi et al., 2020). Lack of understanding and ability to meet international sustainability standards can also hinder access to global markets, limiting export opportunities and further growth. In the long term, this condition can hinder inclusive and sustainable economic development in Mlokorejo, widening the economic gap between this village and other more developed areas. Therefore, sustainable business assistance is key to ensuring the sustainability and progress of small businesses in Mlokorejo village.

The right solution to overcome the challenges faced by small businesses in Mlokorejo village, Jember is through sustainable and integrated mentoring. This mentoring must involve various parties, including government, academics, the private sector, and local communities, to create an ecosystem that supports the growth of small businesses. Mentoring programs can include managerial and technical skills training, providing access to the latest technology and innovation, and assistance in accessing wider markets. In addition, mentoring must also focus on the implementation of sustainable business practices that meet international standards, so that small businesses can increase their competitiveness in the global market. With sustainable support, small businesses in Mlokorejo will be able to overcome the obstacles they have faced so far, increase productivity, and expand market reach. This will not only increase the income and welfare of the local community, but also encourage inclusive and sustainable economic development. Appropriate and sustainable mentoring is key to ensuring the long-term success of small businesses in Mlokorejo village.

The main objective of small business mentoring in Mlokorejo village, Jember is to increase the capacity and competitiveness of small businesses so that they can grow sustainably and contribute to local economic development. The benefits of this mentoring are very diverse and significant. With mentoring, small businesses will gain access to the training and resources needed to improve their managerial and technical skills. In addition, they will be better able to adopt new technologies and innovations that can improve efficiency and productivity. Mentoring also helps small businesses understand and meet international sustainability standards, which are essential for opening up access to global markets. Thus, small businesses can expand their market reach, increase income, and create new jobs. Overall, sustainable business mentoring in Mlokorejo will strengthen the local economy, reduce economic disparities, and improve community welfare. These objectives and benefits demonstrate the importance of mentoring as a key strategy to promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth.

2. METHODS

The method of mentoring small businesses in Mlokorejo village, Jember is carried out through three main stages (Sulistyan, 2020) namely planning, implementation, and evaluation. The first stage, planning, involves identifying the specific needs of small businesses in Mlokorejo. This includes a situational analysis, such as identifying existing constraints and opportunities, and formulating a comprehensive and measurable mentoring plan. Planning also involves collaboration with various stakeholders, such as government, academics, and the private sector, to ensure that all aspects of small business needs are met. The second stage, implementation, is the implementation of the mentoring plan that has been prepared. This includes managerial and technical skills training, introduction of new technologies, and support in accessing markets. Implementation also involves direct guidance and regular monitoring to ensure that small businesses can apply the knowledge and skills gained in their daily operations. The third stage, evaluation, aims to assess the effectiveness and impact of the mentoring program. Evaluation is carried out by measuring the performance of small businesses before and after mentoring, as well as obtaining feedback from participants. The evaluation results are used to identify areas of improvement and adjust mentoring strategies in the future. With this method, mentoring can be carried out sustainably and adaptively, according to the needs of small businesses in Mlokorejo.

The evaluation results of small business mentoring in Mlokorejo village, Jember were analyzed using qualitative methods. This analysis involved collecting and interpreting data obtained from interviews, focus group discussions, and field observations. Qualitative data allows for an in-depth understanding of the experiences, perceptions, and challenges faced by small businesses during the mentoring process. Through thematic analysis, key patterns and themes emerging from the data can be identified, providing insight into successful aspects and areas for improvement. The qualitative approach also allows for capturing nuances and complexities that may be missed in quantitative analysis. The results of this analysis are then used to develop more precise and relevant recommendations for future mentoring programs, ensuring that the support provided truly fits the specific needs and conditions of small businesses in Mlokorejo..

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Results

In the planning stage of small business assistance in Mlokorejo village, Jember, specific needs were identified through surveys and in-depth discussions with local stakeholders. This process aims to understand the challenges and opportunities faced by small businesses. Based on the results of the needs analysis, a comprehensive assistance plan was prepared, which includes managerial and technical skills training to improve the operational and managerial capabilities of small businesses. In addition, this plan also includes the introduction of new technologies that can improve production efficiency, as well as support for market access to expand reach and increase sales potential. With a planned and data-based approach, it is hoped that this assistance program can provide a significant positive impact on the growth and sustainability of small businesses in Mlokorejo village.

In the implementation stage of small business mentoring in Mlokorejo village, Jember, various key activities were implemented to achieve the set goals. Managerial and technical skills training was carried out by inviting experts to provide materials and direct practice to participants, improving their abilities in business management and production techniques. In addition, individual mentoring was carried out to provide specific support according to the needs of each small business, helping them overcome the specific challenges they face. Market access support was also implemented through organizing product exhibitions and establishing business networks, which allowed small businesses to introduce their products to a wider market and establish relationships with potential business partners. During the implementation, the

mentoring team actively monitored progress and provided the necessary feedback to ensure that small businesses could apply the knowledge and skills they had acquired effectively.



Figure 1. Implementation of Mentoring and Integration
Source: Results of Community Service (2024)

In the evaluation phase of small business mentoring in Mlokorejo village, Jember, an in-depth analysis of the effectiveness and impact of the program was conducted using qualitative methods. Data were collected through interviews, focus group discussions, and field observations to gain a comprehensive understanding of participants' experiences and program outcomes. Thematic analysis was applied to identify key patterns and themes emerging from the data, providing insight into successes and challenges. Key findings indicated improvements in managerial and technical skills, adoption of new technologies, and better market access by small businesses. However, several areas for improvement were also identified, such as the need for further support in product development and access to financing. The results of this evaluation were used to formulate recommendations for future program improvements, ensuring that mentoring can be more effective in meeting the needs of small businesses and supporting sustainable growth in Mlokorejo village.



Figure 2. Evaluation Implementation
Source: Results of Community Service (2024)

3.2. Discussion

The managerial and technical skills training program implemented during the mentoring in Mlokorejo village showed significant results. Participants experienced increased abilities in business management, strategic planning, and efficient production techniques. This training not only provided theoretical knowledge but also direct practice, which was very useful in daily application. However, although many participants felt that this training improved their skills, some felt that there needed to be more in-depth training sessions for certain aspects that were still considered complex.

The introduction of new technologies to small businesses has proven to be one of the most successful aspects of the mentoring program. Small businesses in Mlokorejo have begun to adopt technologies that improve production efficiency and product quality. These technologies include inventory management software and modern production tools that help reduce time and costs. However, there are still some challenges related to maintaining and using the technology that require additional training and more ongoing technical support.

Support for market access through product exhibitions and the establishment of business networks has had a clear positive impact. Small businesses in Mlokorejo village have been able to introduce their products to a wider audience and establish relationships with new business partners. This has contributed to increased sales and market expansion. However, some participants identified the need for more digital marketing activities and a stronger branding strategy to maximize the potential of the existing market.

While the program's results have generally been positive, some challenges remain. One is access to financing, which remains a barrier for many small businesses. Without access to adequate capital, some small businesses struggle to implement improvements and investments needed for further growth. In addition, sustainable product development is also an area that needs more attention, as many small businesses still struggle to innovate and adapt their products to market demand.

Based on the evaluation results, several recommendations for further mentoring programs include increasing support in terms of access to financing and product development. The program needs to include additional components such as facilitating access to microcredit or venture capital and support for product research and development. In addition, expanding digital marketing and branding training can help small businesses better utilize market opportunities. The implementation of these recommendations is expected to increase the effectiveness of mentoring and provide a greater impact on the sustainability of small businesses in Mlokorejo village.



Figure 3. Implementation of Community Service Activities
Source: Results of Community Service (2024)

4. CONCLUSION

The small business mentoring program in Mlokorejo village, Jember, has successfully improved the managerial and technical skills of participants, introduced new technologies, and expanded market access for small businesses. The training provided has shown positive impacts, with participants experiencing improved skills in business management and production techniques. The introduction of new technologies has also improved operational efficiency, while support for market access has expanded reach and increased product sales. However, there are several challenges, including limited access to financing and the need for further product development.

Some limitations of the program include the limited scope of training that may not fully meet the specific needs of each small business. In addition, the technical support provided does not fully cover the maintenance and use of the new technologies adopted. Access to financing remains a major constraint, and digital marketing activities and branding strategies have not received adequate attention. The evaluation also relies on qualitative data, which may not fully reflect quantitative results.

To improve the effectiveness of future mentoring programs, it is recommended to expand the scope of training by including additional modules that are tailored to the specific needs of small businesses. In addition, there is a need to improve ongoing technical support for the maintenance of adopted technologies. Providing access to various financing options, such as microcredit or venture capital, can help small businesses overcome financial constraints. In addition, further training in digital marketing and branding needs to be integrated to help small businesses maximize market opportunities. By implementing these suggestions, it is hoped that the mentoring program can have a greater impact and support the sustainability and growth of small businesses more effectively.

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