Fostering Collaborative Growth: Strategic Communication and Capacity Building in PEKKA Women's Entrepreneurial Projects

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A R T I C L E I N F O

A B S T R A C T

Strategic communication and focused capacity-building initiatives are essential for collaborative progress in underrepresented areas. This research investigates the function of strategic communication in promoting cooperation and augmenting the entrepreneurial capabilities of women heads of households (PEKKA) in Samarinda, Indonesia, using the MomPreneurs program. The project tackles critical obstacles, such as restricted access to technology, insufficient digital literacy, and ineffective marketing techniques. The program employs a participative method to include technical support, digital marketing training, and mentorship for the development of entrepreneurial abilities. Study indicates that strategic communication methods, including storytelling and peer networking, significantly improve information dissemination and collaborative problem-solving among participants. Capacity-building initiatives, including practical training and digital marketing seminars, led to a 20-35% enhancement in productivity and income among participant groups. Moreover, promoting cooperation via group-oriented business endeavors reinforced community links and elevated individual drive. This study emphasizes the significant effect of integrating strategic communication with focused skill development to empower underprivileged women. The results enhance the discussion on social entrepreneurship and community empowerment by illustrating how communication-focused projects may stimulate sustained economic development. The study highlights the need for scalable solutions that include communication tactics and capacity-building to tackle structural inequities in emerging countries.

INTRODUCTION

The achievement of economic autonomy for underrepresented groups, in particular women who are the primary breadwinners in their homes (PEKKA), continues to be a significant obstacle in emerging countries. Women who fall into this group often confront structural obstacles, such as restricted involvement in official economic institutions, limited access to resources, and insufficient skill sets (World Bank, 2024). These difficulties are compounded by societal norms, which perpetuate economic dependence and undervalue women's contributions (Esiefarienrhe et al., 2022). The MomPreneurs program, based in Samarinda, Indonesia, serves as robust model for addressing these challenges by integrating strategic communication with capacity-building initiatives. On the other hand, many existing programs fall short of adopting a comprehensive approach that emphasizes sustainable entrepreneurial development through collaboration and effective communication (Bhatt & Ahmad, 2017).

A significant amount of research on community development emphasizes the role of group-based activities in the process of generating permanent results. According to Putnam (2015), collaborative spaces not only make it possible to pool resources, but they also encourage members to use their creativity and remain resilient. Furthermore, Tiago & Veríssimo (2014) underscore that both theoretical and practical frameworks highlight that collective action is more successful when it is supported by strategic communication. This communication helps to align the aims of stakeholders and strengthens their capacity to solve difficulties collectively (Awan & Awan, 2023; Esiefarienrhe et al., 2022; Mariën & Prodnik, 2014). Nonetheless, there remains a notable scarcity of research exploring how communication strategies can specifically bolster the entrepreneurial capabilities of women within PEKKA communities, highlighting a significant gap in the existing literature.

The MomPrenerus program fosters women's entrepreneurial development through a diverse range of activities, including digital marketing workshops, peer mentorship, and technical training. Preliminary findings suggest that the program's emphasis on strategic communication enhances participants' capacity to share expertise, collaborate on problem-solving, and build confidence in their entrepreneurial potential. For instance, women have been able to exchange market insights and tactics via the use of group talks and peer mentorship sessions, which has led to the creation of novel ways to product development and marketing (Juwita et al., 2024). Even if these gains have been achieved, there are still obstacles that need to be addressed, such as variable degrees of digital literacy and uneven group dynamics. This indicates that focused interventions are required in order to guarantee fair participation and results (Baskaran et al., 2019; Buvinić & Furst-Nichols, 2016).

This study seeks to explore the effectiveness of strategic communication and capacity-building initiatives in fostering collaborative development among PEKKA women entrepreneurs. By analyzing the outcomes of the MomPreneurs program, the research aims to identify best practices and develop a scalable model for empowering women entrepreneurs in similar contexts. Anticipated benefits include enhanced entrepreneurial capacity, strengthened community

networks, and the establishment of sustainable strategies to support disadvantaged women (Johnson et al., 2018).

What sets this study apart is its emphasis on communication as a fundamental mechanism driving cooperation and progress in entrepreneurial initiatives. Unlike traditional approaches that treat communication as a supplementary element, this research positions it as a core component of capacity-building efforts (Esiefarienrhe et al., 2022; Hendriks, 2019). By illustrating how strategic communication can bolster economic resilience and foster social cohesion, the findings contribute meaningfully to broader discussions on social entrepreneurship and sustainable development.

All and all, the purpose of this research was to fill in the gaps that were previously there by incorporating strategic communication and capacity-building activities into social entrepreneurship frameworks. The purpose of this action is to empower women who are members of the PEKKA, to increase the growth of joint efforts, and to contribute to the establishment of community-based economic models that are sustainable. The acquired knowledge will result in the formulation of suggestions that may be put into practice by policymakers, practitioners, and academics who are working for the advancement of gender equality and community empowerment (Elam et al., 2019).

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Strategic communication is increasingly recognized as a transformative tool in the realms of community empowerment and social entrepreneurship. Feyisa & Tamene (2019) emphasize its critical role in cultivating cooperation, facilitating resource mobilization, and fostering trust among members of disadvantaged groups. In a similar vein, Bandura's social learning theory proposes that communication creates conditions that favor knowledge sharing and peer learning, which in turn makes it easier for individuals to acquire new skills and alter their behaviors (Bandura, 1977). Although numerous empowerment projects prioritize technical training or financial assistance, they often overlook the transformative potential of communication in fostering collaborative development (Mariën & Prodnik, 2014). Despite prior insights emphasizing this aspect, the persistent gap underscores the necessity of adopting integrative approaches that position communication as a central element in capacity-building initiatives.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted using a qualitative case study approach. As noted by Harrison et al. (2017), the case study technique is especially well-suited for the investigation of the complex social phenomena that occur inside real-life situations. The research was conducted over an eight-month period, from March to October 2024, involving three entrepreneurial groups within the PEKKA community: Herbal Products Group, Amplang Producers Group, and Cassava Chips Group. Each group comprises five women who are heads of households, actively participating in PEKKA programs with a focus on entrepreneurial initiatives and representing diverse geographical areas. These groups were

selected for their active involvement in social entrepreneurship programs and their effective use of communication strategies to drive community empowerment.

Interviews with participants in more detail, focus group discussions (FGDs), and participation observation were all used in the data gathering process. The semi-structured methodology that was designed based on prior research (Bandura, 2023) served as a guide for the interviews and focus group discussions that were conducted in order to collect information on the participants' experiences, communication habits, and ideas about empowerment. Data collected via observation were gathered during community workshops, with the purpose of showing the dynamics of communication and relationships. To guarantee that the data collected and managed were accurate and reliable, digital instruments such as voice recorders and transcription software were used for the gathering and administration of the data. This approach aligns with recommendations by Creswell & Poth (2016a), who emphasize the importance of triangulation and systematic data management in qualitative research.

The results of the data analysis were analyzed using a thematic approach, and the six-phase framework (Braun et al., 2023) was used to find patterns and insights. Coding of the data and the formation of themes were both carried out with the assistance of the NVivo 14 program to guarantee systematic analysis. For the purpose of enhancing validity, triangulation was used by cross-verifying data obtained from interviews, focus group discussions, and observations, as suggested by Rossman & Rallis (2016). Member-checking with participants served to guarantee the validity of the results, while peer debriefing with researchers who were already experienced with PEKKA programs served to give extra validation, consistent with Bernard et al. (2016).

The use of this rigorous approach not only assures that the study can be reproduced, but it also provides a thorough knowledge of the interaction between communication and social entrepreneurship in the context of community empowerment. Strategic communication, as highlighted by Khan (2024), acts as a transformative tool in fostering collaboration and empowering marginalized groups. Additionally, the integration of digital tools for communication, as noted by Tiago & Veríssimo (2014), amplifies the scope and impact of social entrepreneurship programs by connecting participants to broader markets and resources. The study builds on these foundational theories while addressing existing gaps, particularly in how communication dynamics influence entrepreneurial outcomes in resource-constrained settings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Communication Strategies for Fostering Collaboration in PEKKA Communities

The findings revealed that communication plays a pivotal role in fostering collaboration among PEKKA women entrepreneurs, acting as a catalyst for collective empowerment and sustainable growth. Key strategic communication tools, such as peer mentoring, group discussions, and storytelling, emerged as integral elements in building trust and aligning shared goals within the community. These findings align with Bandura's (1977) social learning theory,

which underscores the role of observational learning and reinforcement in driving behavioral change. In addition to facilitating the exchange of knowledge, these instruments also cultivated emotional support among participants, which was crucial for overcoming obstacles during their entrepreneurial endeavors (Putnam, 2015).

Participants consistently emphasized the importance of structured peer mentoring sessions. For example, in one mentoring group, seasoned entrepreneurs imparted their knowledge on market analysis and branding, which motivated their less experienced peers to implement comparable strategies. This aligns with study highlighting the role of mentorship in enhancing entrepreneurial skills and boosting participants' confidence (Outsios & Farooqi, 2017). Participants' entrepreneurial successes and failures were recounted during storytelling sessions which were a potent motivational tool. Participants were motivated to explore novel solutions after hearing about their peers' success in surmounting comparable challenges. One participant stated that she was motivated to enhance her online marketing strategy after learning about another member's success in procuring volume orders through social media, emphasizing the potential of storytelling to drive innovation (Crespo et al., 2023).

Additionally, collaboration was significantly promoted through consistent group discussions. These discussions, which were facilitated by moderators, established a secure environment for participants to express their thoughts, resolve disputes, and devise solutions to common obstacles. This findings aligns with recent research on group dynamics, which demonstrates that facilitated discussions enhance creativity and collective problem solving (Sohrab et al., 2015). For instance, during a session that concentrated on product innovation, participants worked together to create innovative packaging designs that improved the marketability of their products. These interactions not only enhanced their entrepreneurial abilities but also bolstered their sense of collective agency and community. Subsequent examination demonstrated that communication strategies were particularly effective in bridging generational disparities within the community. Despite the initial challenges faced by senior participants with digital tools, younger members frequently assumed mentorship roles, assisting their colleagues in the adoption of new technologies. This dynamic promoted intergenerational learning and mutual respect, thereby strengthening the organizations' unity (Tiago & Veríssimo, 2014).
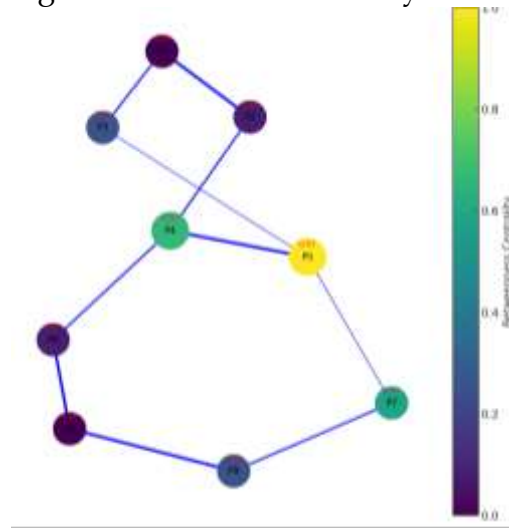
Figure 1. Network Centrality Metric

Figure 1 provides a comprehensive depiction of the communication dynamics within the community, highlighting the roles of key participants in facilitating collaboration. In this graph, the edges signify the intensity of interactions between individuals or groups, while the vertices represent these entities. The importance of specific nodes is further elucidated through centrality metrics, including degree, betweenness, and closeness centrality, offering valuable insights into their influence within the network. For example, nodes with a higher degree of centrality function as centers, enabling pervasive collaboration and directly connecting many others. Those with a higher betweenness centrality function as bridges, facilitating cohesive communication and connecting various subgroups (Schoch & Brandes, 2016). In the meantime, nodes with a higher closeness centrality are strategically positioned to rapidly disseminate information, making them essential for efficient collaboration.

In the context of PEKKA communities, these insights can inform communication strategies that are designed to promote collaboration. Facilitators can improve group connectivity and information flow by identifying individuals with high centrality. For example, participants with high betweenness centrality can facilitate discussions between disconnected subgroups, thereby promoting inclusivity and collective problem-solving (Burt, 2018). In the same vein, the dissemination of critical updates and resources can be expedited by utilizing the reach of those with high closeness centrality, thereby reinforcing communal ties and operational efficiency. This method guarantees that communication strategies are rooted in the actual dynamics of the community, thereby enabling members to work collaboratively and effectively to achieve PEKKA's objectives.

Enhancing Entrepreneurial Capacity Through Capacity Building

Capacity-building workshops proved to be transformative for the participants of the PEKKA program, particularly in their ability to apply newly acquired skills in digital marketing, product development, and financial management. These workshops, designed to address specific entrepreneurial challenges, equipped participants with practical tools and strategies to enhance

their businesses. For example, participants learned how to utilize social media platforms such as Instagram and WhatsApp Business for product promotion and customer engagement. As a result, many participants reported significant improvements in their ability to attract new customers and increase sales.

A key success story emerged from the Herbal Products Group, which recorded a 35% increase in sales after implementing innovative packaging designs and digital marketing strategies. Similarly, the Amplang Producers Group and Cassava Chips Group experienced a 25% and 20% increase in sales, respectively. These gains highlight the effectiveness of capacity-building efforts in addressing core business challenges, including marketing visibility and product appeal. Participants emphasized that understanding how to align product presentation with market expectations was a pivotal learning outcome of the program, consistent with (Crespo et al., 2023), who highlighted the role of storytelling and market alignment in enhancing consumer engagement.

Table 1. Summary of the pre- and post-program sales data

Cluster	Pre-Program Sales (Monthly)	Post-Program Sales (Monthly)	Percentage Increase
Herbal Products Group	Rp 1,000,000	Rp 1,350,000	35%
Amplang Producers Group	Rp 2,000,000	Rp 2,500,000	25%
Cassava Chips Group	Rp 2,500,000	Rp 3,000,000	20%

The significance of targeted capacity-building initiatives in the empowerment of marginalized women entrepreneurs is emphasized by these findings. Participants were equipped with the necessary confidence and knowledge to investigate new market opportunities and diversify their business strategies because of skill-building initiatives. For instance, the implementation of digital marketing strategies enabled participants to broaden their consumer base beyond their locales, thereby reaching regional and national audiences. This aligns with observations by Kim (2016), who noted that digital literacy significantly enhances the economic resilience of marginalized groups by expanding their market reach.

Nevertheless, the results also demonstrated discrepancies in the digital literacy levels of the participants. The adoption of new digital tools was a challenge for older participants, particularly those with limited exposure to technology. This finding mirrors insights by Gitlow (2014), who emphasized the importance of tailored training programs for older adults to overcome technology adoption barriers. Addressing these disparities requires more

personalized strategies to ensure inclusivity. Supplementary assistance, such as step-by-step training modules and one-on-one mentoring, could help bridge these gaps, ensuring all participants benefit equitably from capacity-building initiatives.

The effectiveness of capacity-building seminars is not only validated by these results, but they also offer a strategy for the expansion of such interventions. Advanced modules on digital literacy and personalized mentoring could be incorporated into future initiatives to further improve the entrepreneurial capabilities of participants. By leveraging the successes of the PEKKA program and addressing extant gaps it is possible to adapt similar models to other marginalized communities to promote sustainable economic growth. Empowering women entrepreneurs by providing them with the requisite skills to thrive in competitive markets aligns with the global push for gender equality and economic inclusion (Fröhlich et al., 2023). The integration of strategic communication, targeted support, and practical training establishes the groundwork for community resilience and economic independence that will endure.

The Role of Digital Tools in Scaling Entrepreneurship

Capacity-building workshops proved transformative for the participants of the PEKKA program, particularly in their ability to apply newly acquired skills in digital marketing, product development, and financial management. These workshops, designed to address specific entrepreneurial challenges, equipped participants with practical tools and strategies to enhance their businesses. For example, participants learned how to utilize social media platforms such as Instagram and WhatsApp Business for product promotion and customer engagement, aligning with findings by Tiago & Veríssimo (2014), which highlight the democratizing power of digital platforms for small entrepreneurs. As a result, many participants reported significant improvements in their ability to attract new customers and increase sales, reflecting the broader impact of digital literacy on economic empowerment (Fröhlich et al., 2023).

The confidence of participants in the use of digital tools for business promotion was heightened. The most significant accomplishments were the establishment of e-commerce profiles, the creation of visually appealing product catalogs, and the implementation of targeted marketing strategies, including seasonal campaigns and discounts. Similar findings have been highlighted in research by Mariën & Prodnik (2014), which underscores the critical role of targeted marketing in enhancing the competitive advantage of small-scale enterprises. Most participants reported an increase in consumer inquiries and orders within a few months of implementing these tools, indicating that these digital marketing efforts had a measurable impact.

However, the study also revealed a digital literacy disparity among participants, particularly senior members, even though digital tools presented numerous opportunities. This aligns with findings from Kabango & Asa (2015), which note that digital divides can hinder equitable adoption of technology in marginalized communities. Most of these participants encountered difficulty in

navigating social media platforms and were unfamiliar with the fundamental functions of e-commerce. Mentorship roles were frequently assumed by younger participants, who assisted their peers in completing tasks such as managing consumer interactions and creating online profiles. Nevertheless, the extent to which all participants could fully leverage these tools was restricted by disparities in digital proficiency, despite this support.

This discovery underscores the significance of customized training programs to accommodate individuals with variable levels of digital literacy. For instance, hand-on seminars, ongoing technical support, and step-by-step tutorials could assist in bridging these divides. Moreover, frameworks like those proposed by Van Dijk (2020), which emphasize tailored digital inclusion strategies, could guide the design of these interventions. Additionally, the introduction of digital platforms that are user-friendly for beginners or simplified tools could facilitate the adoption of digital solutions by senior participants. Such adoptions have been proven effective in enhancing adoption rates among digitally underserved group (Gallardo & Whitacre, 2024).

To better understand the digital adoption patterns, data on tool usage was analyzed. Table 2 provides an overview of the platforms utilized by participants and their reported impact on business outcomes:

Table 2. Digital Adoption Patterns

| Digital Tool	Participants Using the Tool (%)	Reported Impact
Instagram	80%	Increased product visibility and inquiries
Facebook	60%	Enhanced customer engagement
WhatsApp Business	100%	Streamlined communication and transactions
Shopee	40%	Expanded reach to national markets

Digital tools are a potent enabler for the expansion of social entrepreneurship in marginalized communities. The integration of these tools into the PEKKA program has shown significant potential to improve market access, consumer engagement, and economic outcomes for participants, even though challenges persist, particularly in digital literacy. It will be essential to address digital disparities through customized interventions to guarantee sustainable and equitable growth.

Emerging Framework: Strategic Communication as a Driver of Social Entrepreneurship

The results of this study provide critical insights into the transformative potential of strategic communication in fostering social entrepreneurship,

particularly among marginalized groups such as women leaders of households. The proposed framework is a comprehensive model that is designed to empower women in marginalized communities by integrating three essential components: strategic communication, capacity development, and digital tools. This framework emphasizes the significance of participatory approaches that promote collaboration, improve entrepreneurial skills, and utilize technology to increase the impact of social entrepreneurship programs.

Figure 2. Proposed Framework
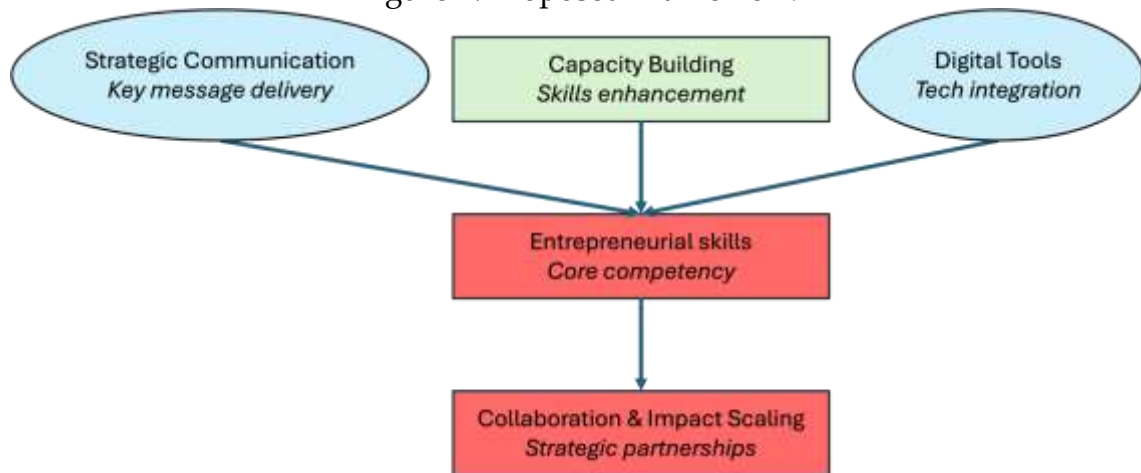
This framework positions communication as a central driver of success, in contrast to conventional models that regard it as a supplementary element. Strategic communication is not only a method of disseminating information, but also a tool for fostering trust, aligning objectives, and enabling knowledge sharing among participants. Research conducted by Palla (2023) and Bandura (1977) corroborate this viewpoint, emphasizing that environments that are conducive to learning and collaboration are fostered by effective communication. For instance, the participants in this study were able to exchange strategies and experiences through peer mentoring and storytelling, which bolstered their entrepreneurial confidence and collective problem-solving abilities. Similarly, Gerbaudo & Treré (2015) emphasize the transformative role of storytelling in enhancing trust and solidarity within social groups.

The framework's efficacy is further enhanced by the integration of digital tools and capacity building. Capacity building equips participants with the skills required to confront entrepreneurial obstacles, including financial management, market analysis, and product development. However, digital tools expand the scope of these endeavors by allowing participants to interact with consumers in novel ways and access a wider range of markets. Tiago & Veríssimo (2014) emphasize the democratizing impact of digital platforms, which enable small entrepreneurs to compete on a larger scale. Recent studies, such as Hendricks & Mwapwele (2024), highlight the potential of e-commerce platforms in connecting rural entrepreneurs to global markets. However, this study demonstrated that disparities in digital literacy continue to be a hindrance, requiring customized interventions to guarantee inclusivity and equitable results.

The framework also addresses critical voids in current models of social entrepreneurship. In low-resource contexts, the complexities of group dynamics and challenges of digital adoption are frequently disregarded by previous approaches. This framework bridges these gaps by incorporating strategic communication, hands-on training, and digital tools, providing a scalable and replicable solution. Moreover, the participatory nature of the framework guarantees that interventions are contextually relevant and customized to the community's distinctive requirements, as recommended by Creswell & Poth (2016b) for community-based research. Recent work by Grundel & Dahlström (2016) on quadruple helix innovation systems further supports the need for context-specific, collaboration approaches in empowering marginalized communities.

The scope of this framework's application exceeds the PEKKA program. Its principles can be applied to comparable initiatives worldwide, particularly in regions where marginalized groups encounter systemic obstacles to economic participation. For example, the integration of this model into rural entrepreneurship programs in sub-Saharan Africa of Southeast Asia could improve their efficacy by promoting collaboration and utilizing technology. As noted by Sachs et al. (2021), frameworks that prioritize inclusivity and local engagement are critical for achieving sustainable development goals (SDGs).

The framework that has been proposed illustrates the transformative influence of strategic communication in the promotion of community empowerment and entrepreneurial growth. This paradigm provides a comprehensive solution to the challenges of scaling social entrepreneurship by addressing the challenges of group dynamics and bridging disparities in digital literacy. To assess the framework's long-term effects and investigates its potential in a variety of contexts, future research should concentrate on longitudinal studies. The integration of findings into this framework is a substantial contribution to the discussion of sustainable development, gender equality, and social innovation.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMEDANTIONS

This research highlights the essential role that strategic communication plays in developing social entrepreneurship, especially in populations that are excluded, such as PEKKA women who are the heads of families. The study reveals how the integration of strategic communication, capacity-building programs, and digital platforms may together nurture entrepreneurial abilities, boost cooperation, and scale impact. This is accomplished by combining these parts. Communication is positioned within the framework that has been suggested not as an additional component but rather as a core driver of success. This framework aims to bridge gaps in digital literacy and group dynamics while simultaneously developing routes for the sustained empowerment of communities. These results provide a substantial contribution to the area of social entrepreneurship by offering a model that can be replicated and used in a variety of different cultural and economic settings where it is relevant.

When it came to providing participants with the key skills necessary for entrepreneurship, the combination of capacity-building seminars and digital technologies proved to be extremely beneficial. The participants reported observable enhancements in their capacity to handle their financial matters, sell their goods, and interact with a wider range of consumers via the use of digital platforms. However, the research also brought to light several issues, one of which being the fact that participants' degrees of digital literacy varied tremendously. To guarantee results that are both inclusive and equitable, it will be essential to address these gaps via the implementation of individualized training programs and continuing mentoring.

This study contributes to the advancement of the existing body of knowledge by providing a comprehensive and scalable framework for the empowerment of underrepresented groups via the adoption of social entrepreneurship. This research sheds insight on the transformational potential of participatory techniques, in contrast to earlier models that often failed to consider the complexities of group dynamics and the significance of communication. The framework offers a solid platform for future programs that seek to create economic resilience and communal cohesion. It does this by placing an emphasis on trust-building, peer mentorship, and digital inclusion.

FURTHER STUDY

In the future, research should concentrate on putting this concept to the test in a variety of sociocultural contexts and analyzing the effects it has over the long run. It is possible that the framework's relevance and effect might be further enhanced by expanding it to include more modern digital tools and investigating whether it is applicable to other excluded populations, such as rural farmers of young entrepreneurs. To build programs that promote gender equality, economic independence, and sustainable development, policymakers and practitioners should seriously consider adopting this paradigm. Social entrepreneurship has the potential to become a strong instrument for tackling structural inequalities and encouraging inclusive development on a global scale if it continues to build on the insights that have been provided.

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