

**A COMMUNITY-BASED MODEL FOR STRENGTHENING
SMES THROUGH ENTREPRENEURSHIP TRAINING FOR
AISYIYAH CADRES: A SOCIAL CAPITAL–DRIVEN
COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT APPROACH**

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to develop a community-based model to strengthen Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) through entrepreneurship training for Aisyiyah cadres in the Sukodono Branch, Sidoarjo. The key problems identified include a weak entrepreneurial mindset, limited product innovation, and low business sustainability, with most MSMEs operating at a survival level. Using a community-based empowerment approach, the program was implemented through three stages: needs assessment, participatory training, and systematic evaluation using pre- and post-tests. The results indicate a significant improvement in participants' capacity across all performance indicators, with all outcomes categorized as "high." The most substantial increase was observed in understanding legal aspects (PIRT and halal certification) at 66%, followed by product innovation and marketing at 59%, and entrepreneurial mindset transformation at 57%. Beyond individual capacity building, the program also strengthened social capital by enhancing trust, collaboration, and support networks among community members. In conclusion, the community-based MSME empowerment model is more effective and sustainable than individual approaches, as it leverages organizational networks to promote women's economic empowerment and business development.

Keywords: Aisyiyah, Community-Based Empowerment, Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Social Capital.

INTRODUCTION

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) play a highly strategic role in the local economy, particularly in creating jobs, increasing household income, and supporting family economic resilience (Andika A Kawulur et al., 2025; Parluhutan Sinaga & Sitorus, 2023; Supriyadi et al., 2023). Within the context of a community-based economy, women-led SMEs, specifically those run by Aisyiyah cadres from the Sukodono branch in Sidoarjo, also fulfil a strong social function, as they contribute not only to family income but also to children's well-being and household economic stability (Shafwatullah & Arquisola, 2024). Nevertheless, the majority of SMEs run by women remain at the microscale and are survival-based, operating solely to meet daily needs without long-term development planning. This situation indicates that women-led SMEs still require strengthening not only economically but also in entrepreneurial capacity (Annisaturrahmi, 2023; Masyitoh et al., 2025).

One of the main challenges faced by women SME operators, particularly Aisyiyah cadres in the Sukodono branch of Sidoarjo, is the still-weak entrepreneurial mindset. Many business owners still view their business as a side activity, rather than as an opportunity that can be developed professionally and sustainably (Riantoputra & Muis, 2020). This mindset leads business owners to be less willing to take risks, lack a growth orientation, and have no long-term vision for their business. Furthermore,

some SME entrepreneurs still traditionally run their businesses without clear business planning, a specific target market, or a business development strategy. This situation indicates that strengthening SMEs is not sufficient through technical training alone, but must begin with a shift in entrepreneurial mindset (Lestari Kadiyono & Yuliafitri, 2023).

Apart from business mindset issues, limited product innovation is also a significant obstacle to the development of women-led SMEs. Many business owners still produce generic products with low levels of differentiation, making it difficult to compete in an increasingly competitive market (Khoru Pujianto et al., 2025). Limited innovation is evident not only in products but also in packaging, branding, and product presentation to consumers. On the other hand, some SME operators also still face limitations in accessing broader markets, particularly digital markets. A lack of understanding of marketing strategies, social media use, and customer management means the products produced cannot yet reach consumers effectively. This indicates that the strengthening of SMEs must encompass both product innovation and improved market access (Karamoy et al., 2024).

Another equally important issue is the low sustainability of businesses run by female SME operators who are members of the Aisyiyah branch in Sukodono, Sidoarjo. Many businesses fail midway because they lack clear business planning, are unable to adapt to market changes, and lack the support of a strong business network

(Aprilian et al., 2025). Individual businesses tend to be more vulnerable to failure compared to those supported by a community or social network. Therefore, strengthening SMEs is not sufficient through financial assistance alone, but must be achieved through a sustainable approach to enhancing entrepreneurial capacity, particularly through training that fosters a business mindset, encourages product innovation, expands market access, and enhances long-term business sustainability (Herlita, 2025; Luthfia et al., 2025; Sulaeman et al., 2024).

A wide range of training programmes for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) have been implemented by the government, universities, and social organisations in recent years. These training programmes generally aim to enhance business owners' capabilities in business management, marketing, and product development (Hairudinor et al., 2024; Noor et al., 2024). However, the majority of training remains short-term and is delivered as one- or two-day events without follow-up mentoring. This training model tends to provide only theoretical knowledge but fails to ensure that participants apply the material to their business operations. Consequently, the changes resulting from the training are often only temporary and do not have a significant impact on the development of participants' businesses (Soniawan, 2023).

Furthermore, the majority of SME training programmes are not community-based. Training is typically conducted by gathering participants from diverse business backgrounds, regardless of their social connections. This situation leaves participants lacking sufficient social support once the training concludes.

However, in the context of SME empowerment, the existence of a community plays a vital role in fostering an environment of mutual support, shared experiences, and motivation to develop their businesses. Without a strong community foundation, training tends to be a short-term activity and fails to build the collective strength required to sustainably strengthen SMEs (Jannah et al., 2025; Mukti Diapepin et al., 2024).

Another common issue is the lack of programme sustainability after training concludes. Many training programmes stop at the stage of delivering content without any monitoring, evaluation, or ongoing support for participants (Ikhwan et al., 2024). Consequently, SME operators often revert to their old business patterns because they lack guidance and support after the training ends. This situation indicates that a training approach focused solely on enhancing individual knowledge has not been able to create sustainable SME strengthening. Therefore, a training approach is needed that is not merely short-term, but also community-based and has clear sustainability mechanisms.

Women's communities have immense potential to drive community-based economies, particularly through micro-enterprise empowerment. Women's organisations such as Aisyiyah serve not only as platforms for social and religious activities but also as spaces for social interaction and the development of strong, sustainable networks. Community members know one another well, share emotional bonds, and maintain a high level of mutual trust. This strong social network is a crucial asset in SME development because entrepreneurs do not operate in isolation but within a mutually supportive

environment. From the perspective of Social Capital Theory, social networks, trust, and community norms are factors that can strengthen the sustainable success of small businesses (Br. Purba et al., 2025; Widia & Octafia, 2023).

In addition to its strong social network, the Aisyiyah community has active female cadres who play a strategic role in society. Aisyiyah cadres do not merely act as organisational members but also as agents of change involved in various social, educational, and community empowerment activities. The cadres' regular and structured activities demonstrate that this community has great potential to serve as a driving force in SME strengthening programmes (Eko Waluyo et al., 2022; Wijayanti et al., 2022). Active cadres are more receptive to training programmes, better able to disseminate information to other members, and more capable of ensuring programme sustainability due to their sense of responsibility towards their community.

These conditions make women's communities, such as Aisyiyah, highly suitable as a foundation for community-based SME strengthening programmes. With a strong social network and active cadres, entrepreneurship training not only impacts individual participants but can also spread to other community members. Furthermore, organised communities facilitate business collaborations, joint promotion, and social support, thereby enhancing business sustainability (Suharto et al., 2025). Therefore, utilising women's communities as a foundation for economic empowerment is not only practically relevant but also has a strong theoretical basis within the fields of Community Development and Entrepreneurship.

Most community service articles on strengthening SMEs still focus on technical training, such as digital marketing, basic financial record-keeping, or standard operating procedure (SOP) training for product manufacturing. Although such training is important, the approaches used generally remain individual-oriented and have not yet addressed collective community empowerment (Chakim et al., 2025). Consequently, many community service programmes yield only short-term improvements in technical knowledge and have not created sustainable change. Therefore, an approach to community service is required that not only focuses on improving individual skills but also builds a community-based entrepreneurship training model that utilises organisational networks as the primary factor in programme success.

The key innovation highlighted in this article is the use of a women's community-based approach to strengthen SMEs. In this approach, training is not only provided to individuals as business operators but also to community cadres who play a strategic role within their social environment. Aisyiyah cadres do not merely serve as training participants but also as agents of social change, capable of encouraging other community members to develop businesses collectively. This approach ensures that the training has a broader impact, as the knowledge and skills acquired do not remain confined to individual participants but can be disseminated to other community members over time. Furthermore, this article offers a novel approach by integrating entrepreneurship with community social capital. The community engagement approach employed focuses not only on

developing business skills but also on utilising social networks, trust, and community norms to support the programme's success. The integration of Entrepreneurship, Community Development, and Social Capital Theory makes this article not only practical but also offers a stronger academic contribution than community engagement articles that merely report on training activities.

Another innovation worth highlighting is the focus on value-based entrepreneurship for MSMEs, which is highly relevant to the characteristics of faith-based women's organisations such as Aisyiyah. The training provided is geared not only towards increasing business profits but also towards strengthening values such as women's economic independence, community cooperation, and business sustainability that benefit families and society. This approach ensures that the community service programme focuses not only on economic aspects, but also on the sustainable strengthening of social values and women's empowerment.

OBJECTIVES

General Purpose

The general objective of this article is to develop a model to strengthen community-based Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) by providing entrepreneurship training to Aisyiyah cadres as part of community service activities (Eko Waluyo et al., 2022). Conceptually, this community service activity aims not only to provide entrepreneurship training to participants but also to build a community-based and sustainable approach to MSME empowerment (Syafei et al., 2025). By

targeting Aisyiyah cadres as the primary focus of the activities, this community service programme is expected to produce a training model that not only impacts individual participants but can also be extended to other community members through existing social networks. Therefore, the general objective of this article is to develop a community-based SME-strengthening model that can serve as an alternative approach to community economic empowerment programmes, particularly for female SME operators.

Special Purpose

The specific objectives of this article are to analyse in greater depth the impact of community-based entrepreneurship training on several key aspects of SME strengthening. More specifically, the specific objectives of this study include:

1. Analysing the improvement in the entrepreneurial mindset of Aisyiyah cadres following the training.
2. Analysing the improvement in business skills, including product innovation, marketing, and basic business management.
3. Analysing the strengthening of the community's social networks that support the sustainability of participants' businesses. Furthermore, this article aims to identify how women's communities can support the sustainability of training programmes and create a broader impact on the development of community-based SMEs. Thus, these specific objectives are expected to provide both academic and practical contributions toward the development of a more effective and sustainable SME empowerment model.

PLAN OF ACTION

Strategy Plan

The strategic plan for this initiative began with a needs assessment conducted through focus group discussions, interviews, and direct observation to understand the real challenges faced by female MSME entrepreneurs at the Aisyiyah Sukodono Branch. Based on these findings, the author designed a structured entrepreneurship training programme that covered topics such as mindset development, product innovation, business legalities (PIRT and Halal certification), and marketing strategies tailored to the participants' characteristics. Additionally, evaluation tools in the form of pre-tests and post-tests were prepared, alongside interactive, participatory learning methods, to ensure the material is absorbed effectively and to create a sustainable impact for the community.



Figure 1. Focus group discussion

Implementation

This activity was implemented systematically through a Community-Based Empowerment approach, actively involving cadres of the Aisyiyah Sukodono Branch at every stage. The stages began

with an opening session and a presentation of the programme's objectives, followed by entrepreneurship training that covered mindset development, product innovation, legal aspects (PIRT and Halal certification), and basic marketing strategies. The learning process was carried out in a participatory manner through interactive lectures, group discussions to share experiences, and practical simulations such as exercises in applying for business permits and determining product advantages. Throughout the activity, participants engaged in interactions and simulations, with simple guidance from the community service team to ensure the material could be directly implemented in their respective micro-enterprises.

The training methodology in this community service activity was designed using a participatory learning approach that emphasises active participant involvement throughout the training process (Ikhwan et al., 2024; Mukti Diapepin et al., 2024). The methods used were not merely lectures but interactive sessions that provided participants with opportunities to ask questions, share business experiences, and discuss the challenges they faced. Furthermore, the training included group discussions to enable participants to share experiences and propose solutions to the business challenges they encountered, ensuring that participants not only gained knowledge from the trainers but also learned from fellow business owners facing similar circumstances. This training also includes simple simulations directly related to the participants' businesses, such as business idea development, applying for PIRT licences, obtaining halal certification, devising simple marketing strategies, and identifying product advantages, ensuring

participants not only understand the material theoretically but can also apply it directly. Furthermore, the outreach team guides the training, particularly for participants who struggle to understand the material or relate it to their business circumstances. Through a combination of interactive lectures, group discussions, simulations, and guidance, it is hoped that participants' understanding will improve significantly and that their confidence in developing their businesses will be boosted following the training.

Setting

The participants in this community service programme were members of Aisyiyah who either operated micro-enterprises or had an interest in starting one. A total of 35 participants took part in the programme and completed both the pre-test and post-test assessments.

The participants had diverse backgrounds in terms of age, type of business, and entrepreneurial experience. Some were engaged in small-scale businesses such as home-based food production, simple handicrafts, and other household-based enterprises, while others were at an early stage of entrepreneurship with limited business experience.

In terms of entrepreneurial experience, the participants ranged from beginners to more experienced entrepreneurs who had been operating their businesses for several years but still faced challenges in business development. This diversity reflects the heterogeneous profile of female MSME entrepreneurs within the Aisyiyah branch in Sukodono, Sidoarjo, and confirms that the programme was designed to align with their actual needs and conditions.



Figure 2. Entrepreneur seminar

Target

The target population for this initiative is the Aisyiyah Sukodono Branch in Sidoarjo, comprising women who are micro-entrepreneurs and members interested in starting a business. Participants have diverse characteristics, including age, business types such as home-based food businesses and simple handicrafts, and varying levels of experience, from beginners to those who have been running a business for several years. This population was selected due to their presence within an organised and active community, thereby possessing strategic potential as agents of change in strengthening a social capital-based economy.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The community service activities were carried out in a structured manner through several stages: the opening ceremony, entrepreneurship training, and basic mentoring for participants. At the outset of the activities, an opening ceremony was held, followed by a presentation of the programme's objectives and an explanation of the training's benefits for participants. This stage aimed to build participants'

understanding and readiness prior to undertaking the training. Thereafter, the activities continued with entrepreneurship training covering several key topics, including strengthening an entrepreneurial mindset, business idea development, product innovation, PIRT licence processing, halal certification, and simple marketing strategies. The entire series of activities was carried out systematically and tailored to the characteristics of the participants, the majority of whom were micro-entrepreneurs requiring a training approach that was simple yet practical.

Table 1. Key Performance Indicators

| Indicator | Pretest | Post Test | Difference | Percentage % | Category |
|-----------------------|---------|-----------|------------|--------------|----------|
| Mindset | 2.76 | 4.32 | 1.56 | 57 | Height |
| Skills | 2.68 | 3.72 | 1.04 | 39 | Height |
| Business Ideas | 2.52 | 3.64 | 1.12 | 44 | High |
| Innovation | 2.72 | 4.32 | 1.6 | 59 | High |
| PIRT | 2 | 3.32 | 1.32 | 66 | High |
| Halal | 2 | 3.32 | 1.32 | 66 | High |
| Marketing | 2.72 | 4.32 | 1.6 | 59 | High |

Source: Author's data analysis 2026

The data demonstrate the significant effectiveness of the capacity-building programme for MSME operators across all indicators, ranging from Mindset to Marketing. All indicators achieved a high category in the post-test assessment, reflecting substantial improvements in participants' knowledge, skills, and entrepreneurial readiness. The PIRT and Halal indicators recorded the highest percentage increase (66%), indicating a remarkable enhancement in understanding of business legality and certification requirements despite their relatively low

initial baseline scores. Furthermore, the highest post-test scores were observed in the Mindset, Innovation, and Marketing dimensions (4.32), suggesting that participants developed stronger entrepreneurial attitudes, greater innovation capabilities, and improved marketing competencies to support business growth.

Throughout the programme, participants demonstrated a high level of enthusiasm and actively engaged in all training sessions. This was reflected in their active participation in discussions, willingness to share business experiences, and involvement in the simulation activities provided. Furthermore, the Aisiyiah cadres from the Sukodono branch in Sidoarjo played a notably active role in supporting the programme's implementation, both in coordinating participants and in encouraging them to take the training seriously. The active involvement of participants and Aisiyiah cadres demonstrates that the community service activity was not merely a formal exercise but also created a participatory learning environment that effectively supported the achievement of the training objectives.

One of the main outcomes of this community service activity is the improvement in participants' entrepreneurial mindset following the training (Mursita et al., 2024; Zulaika et al., 2025). Prior to the training, the majority of participants still viewed business as a supplementary activity undertaken solely to help meet family needs. Business was not yet seen as an economic activity that could be developed in a planned and sustainable manner. However, after attending the training, participants began to understand that the businesses they ran had the

potential to be developed more seriously if managed properly. Participants also began to realise the importance of having business objectives, simple planning, and a long-term desire to develop their businesses. This shift in mindset demonstrates that the training not only provided knowledge but also fostered a change in participants' entrepreneurial mindset.

In addition to a shift in how they view their businesses, participants also began to demonstrate the courage to think more creatively and innovatively in developing the businesses they run. Participants began to understand that business success is not determined solely by the products sold, but also by the entrepreneur's ability to identify market opportunities, innovate products, and develop appropriate marketing strategies. Some participants have begun proposing ideas to develop product variations, improve packaging, and reach a wider consumer base. This demonstrates that the training not only enhances participants' theoretical understanding but also fosters changes in their attitudes and self-confidence as they develop their businesses more sustainably.

An improvement in the entrepreneurial mindset is already emerging; this community service initiative also demonstrates improved business skills among participants following the entrepreneurship training. Before the training took place, the majority of participants were still running their businesses in a rudimentary manner, without paying attention to product differentiation and added value that could enhance competitiveness. However, after attending the training, participants began to understand the importance of distinguishing their products from similar

products, whether through product variation, the quality of materials used, or the way the products are presented to consumers. Furthermore, participants began to understand the importance of product packaging in enhancing consumer appeal, particularly for homemade food products that had previously been packaged in a very basic manner. This improved understanding indicates that the training provided not only focused on theoretical aspects of entrepreneurship but also effectively enhanced participants' practical skills in developing their businesses.



Figure 3. Fruit juice packaging before and after the training.

In addition to product differentiation through attractive packaging, the acquisition of PIRT licences and halal certification, and improvements in participants' business skills, there is also a growing understanding among participants of simple marketing strategies applicable to micro-scale businesses. Some participants began to understand the importance of PIRT licences, which serve as a guarantee of product safety and legality in the eyes of consumers; the importance of halal certification as legal and moral proof that the product meets Islamic sharia standards, from raw materials to the production process; identifying target consumers; determining appropriate promotional methods; and utilising social media as an easy and cost-effective marketing tool. Indeed, some participants began promoting

their products independently on social media following the training.

This indicates that the training not only enhanced participants' theoretical knowledge but also encouraged them to apply the acquired skills directly to their business activities (Mursita et al., 2024; Zulaika et al., 2025). Consequently, the improvement in participants' business skills indicates that the community service activities have a tangible impact on the development of women-led SMEs within the community.

One key finding in this community service initiative is the strengthening of community social networks (social capital) among participants following the entrepreneurship training. The training not only enhances individual capabilities but also strengthens social bonds among community members (M. Masrukhan, 2025). Throughout the programme, participants not only received training materials but also actively engaged in discussions and shared business experiences. Through this process, participants began to learn about the businesses run by other members, understand the challenges faced by fellow business owners, and started to build more intensive communication. This situation demonstrates that community-based training has a broader impact compared to training that focuses solely on individuals, as it fosters social interactions that support collective business development.

Furthermore, the strengthening of social networks is evident in the emergence of simple collaborations among participants following the training. Some participants began promoting each other's products, sharing information on raw materials, and offering mutual encouragement to develop

their businesses. From a Social Capital perspective, this indicates that the community has significant potential to support SME sustainability, particularly through trust, social networks, and cooperation among members (Widia & Octafia, 2023). Consequently, the results of this community service initiative demonstrate that community-based entrepreneurship training not only enhances individual capacity but also strengthens the community's social capital, a crucial factor in the sustainability of women-led SMEs.

Based on the results of the community service activities, a community-based SME-strengthening model can be formulated, emphasising that the development of micro-enterprises cannot be achieved solely through individual-focused training. This model demonstrates that the success of SME strengthening is significantly influenced by community involvement, which provides a supportive social environment for business development (AlGhifary et al., 2025; Mukhsinuddin & Efendi, 2025; Winda Jubaidah et al., 2025). In this model, entrepreneurship training serves as the initial stage to enhance participants' entrepreneurial mindset and business skills; however, the sustainability of its impact largely depends on the presence of a strong social network within the community. Therefore, the SME empowerment model developed in this initiative integrates entrepreneurship training with the utilisation of social networks, mutual trust among members, and simple forms of collaboration that emerge within the community.

This model also demonstrates that women's communities, such as Aisyiyah, play a strategic role in strengthening

community-based SMEs. Cadres who have undergone training not only act as participants but also serve as agents of economic empowerment, encouraging other community members to develop businesses collectively. With a strong social network in place, the processes of sharing business information, promoting products, and providing mutual social support among members can occur sustainably. Therefore, the community-based SME strengthening model developed in this community service activity not only provides practical contributions through applicable training programmes but also makes an academic contribution to research on Community Development and Entrepreneurship, particularly in the context of community-based women's SME empowerment.



Figure 4. Community-Based SME Strengthening Model

Figure 4 illustrates the strategic flow within the Community-Based SME Strengthening Model, structured hierarchically to achieve business sustainability. This process begins with the utilisation of Community Social Capital as the primary foundation, followed by Entrepreneurship Mindset Training to instil a strong entrepreneurial spirit among business operators. The next stage focuses on Business Skill Development to equip them with robust technical and operational

capabilities, culminating in Collective Empowerment within the community. Here, individuals within the community develop not only personally but also collectively through strengthening group capacity, business cooperation, and mutual support. By integrating all these stages, this model aims to create Sustainable SMEs that not only survive but also develop independently and competitively in the long term.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the community service activities conducted, it can be concluded that community-based entrepreneurship training significantly enhances participants' entrepreneurial capacity across cognitive, affective, and practical skills. This training not only enhances participants' understanding of entrepreneurial concepts but also fosters a more positive entrepreneurial mindset, particularly regarding the courage to develop a business, the ability to identify market opportunities, and a focus on business sustainability. Furthermore, the training has been shown to improve technical business skills, such as product innovation and differentiation, packaging, and an understanding of simple, practical marketing strategies applicable to micro-enterprises. Furthermore, the community-based approach used in the Aisyiyah cadre training demonstrates a comparative advantage over individual approaches, as it not only enhances individual capacity but also strengthens social capital through networks, social support, collective motivation, and the exchange of experiences among members. Thus, strengthening MSMEs through a community-based approach can be viewed as a more effective and sustainable strategy

for supporting the development of micro-enterprises, particularly for female MSME entrepreneurs, who benefit significantly from social support in their business development.

This article makes an academic contribution to the development of a community-based women's entrepreneurship training model as an alternative approach within community service programmes, offering a perspective distinct from most previous studies, which tend to focus on short-term technical training and are individual-oriented. The model developed not only emphasises improving participants' individual skills but also systematically harnesses the strength of the community as the primary determinant of the programme's success, thereby enriching the conceptual contribution to entrepreneurship studies, particularly in the context of women-centred community-based entrepreneurship training. Furthermore, this article also contributes to the development of a new approach to strengthening SMEs through structured social communities by integrating entrepreneurship training, strengthening social networks, building trust among members, and fostering collaboration within the community, which simultaneously broadens the academic relevance not only in the field of entrepreneurship but also within the realms of Community Development and Social Capital Theory. Thus, this article not only provides a practical contribution in the form of a training model applicable to various women's communities but also offers a theoretical contribution toward developing a more comprehensive and sustainable community-based SME empowerment model.

This article has important practical implications for universities, community empowerment institutions, and social organisations in designing community service programmes in the field of SME strengthening, emphasising that community-based entrepreneurship training models are more effective when designed based on participants' real needs and implemented through communities with clear organisational structures, thereby serving as an alternative to individual training approaches that tend to be short-term. This approach enables the creation of a broader and more sustainable impact because, in addition to enhancing knowledge and skills, participants also receive social support from their community; moreover, this model is adaptive and can be applied to various women's communities, social organisations, and SME groups across different regional contexts, both urban and rural, thus serving as a reference for developing participatory, contextual, and sustainable entrepreneurship training programmes for diverse community groups.

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