

Empowerment and Socio-economic Impact of Livelihood Trainings: A Case of a Private Educational Institution in Southern Luzon, Philippines

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Abstract

This study explored the perceived impact of the livelihood training program on employment and entrepreneurship among participants of San Pablo Colleges' DREAMS Program. This study aimed to understand the extent to which the program has contributed to creating employment and entrepreneurial opportunities for individuals within the community. Through a mixed-methods approach, including surveys and qualitative interviews, data was collected from a diverse group of participants. The findings revealed a mixed response regarding the program's impact on employment and entrepreneurship. Out of the 30 respondents, 10 reported that the livelihood training program helped them create employment and entrepreneurial opportunities, while 20 respondents did not experience significant impact in these areas. The program's overall mean score of 3.03 on a scale of 1 to 5 suggests a moderate impact on participants' employment and entrepreneurial activities. Several factors contributed to the varied outcomes. Individual context played a crucial role, with participants' pre-existing skills, interests, and market conditions influencing their ability to translate the training into viable ventures. For those who experienced positive outcomes, the program facilitated the establishment of income-generating businesses, such as selling various products and providing services like manicure, pedicure, and hair cutting. Implementing the recommended strategies can maximize the program's positive impact and foster sustainable livelihoods among participants, contributing to community empowerment and economic growth.

Keywords

Impact assessment, livelihood training, community extension, San Pablo Colleges

Introduction

Livelihood trainings play a crucial role in empowering individuals and communities by equipping them with the necessary skills and knowledge to improve their economic opportunities and enhance their overall well-being. In recent years, the concept of community extension has gained significant attention as educational institutions seek to extend their impact beyond their campus

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boundaries and engage with local communities. One such initiative is DREAMS, the community extension arm of San Pablo Colleges, which aims to uplift the lives of residents in an adopted community, DI Calihan, San Pablo City, through various programs, including livelihood trainings.

This study focused on the impact assessment of livelihood trainings facilitated by DREAMS in DI Calihan. By evaluating the effectiveness and outcomes of these trainings, we can gain insights into the extent to which they contribute to improving the livelihoods and overall socio-economic conditions of the community members. Understanding the impact of these interventions is crucial for program evaluation, enhancement, and replication in similar contexts. The livelihood trainings offered by DREAMS aim to address the specific needs and aspirations of the DI Calihan community. These trainings cover a range of areas, such as food processing, empanada making, entrepreneurship, vocational skills like haircutting, manicure and pedicure, and financial literacy, among others. Through these initiatives, DREAMS strives to build capacity, foster self-reliance, and promote sustainable development within the community.

Assessing the impact of these livelihood trainings involves examining various dimensions. First, it is important to evaluate the knowledge and skills acquired by the participants, as well as their application in real-life situations. Additionally, assessing the changes in income levels, employment opportunities, and entrepreneurial activities among the participants provides insights into the economic outcomes of the trainings. Moreover, considering the social and psychological aspects, such as self-confidence, empowerment, and social cohesion, will allow for a comprehensive understanding of the overall impact on the participants' well-being.

Methodology

This study adopted a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. Surveys and structured interviews were conducted to gather quantitative data on participants' knowledge gain, income changes, and employment status. Focus group discussions were conducted to derive qualitative insights into the participants' perceptions, experiences, and the broader social impacts of the livelihood trainings. In order to conduct a comprehensive impact assessment of the livelihood trainings facilitated by DREAMS in DI Calihan, San Pablo City, a mixed-methods approach was employed. The quantitative data collected through surveys and structured interviews were analyzed using statistical methods. This analysis involved descriptive statistics to summarize the participants' knowledge gain, income changes, and employment status. Qualitative data from FGDs and in-depth interviews will be analyzed thematically to identify recurring patterns, themes, and narratives that emerge from the participants' experiences. The findings from quantitative and qualitative data were triangulated to provide a comprehensive assessment of the impact of the livelihood trainings. This involved integrating the insights gained from both data sources to develop a more holistic understanding of the outcomes and effects of the trainings.

Results and Discussion

Overall livelihood training evaluation

Table 1 presents the results of the overall evaluation of the livelihood training program conducted by SPC DREAMS. The data is based on the mean scores obtained from a 5-point Likert scale, with 5 being the highest score (strongly agree) and 1 being the lowest score (strongly disagree). The overall mean score of 4.66, verbally interpreted as "very effective," indicates the participants' positive perception of the program. The respondents rated various aspects of the livelihood training program, and the results indicate high levels of effectiveness. The majority of participants agreed that the training was well-organized and structured (mean score of 4.75) and that the trainers effectively communicated the training content (mean score of 4.80). This suggests that the program was well-prepared and delivered in a clear and engaging manner, allowing participants to comprehend the training content effectively.

Table 1. Overall Evaluation of the Livelihood Training Program of SPC DREAMS

Indicators	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
The livelihood training program was well-organized and structured.	4.75	SA
The trainers effectively communicated the training content.	4.80	SA
The training sessions were interactive and engaging.	4.81	SA
The training materials and resources provided were helpful and relevant.	4.90	SA
The training sessions equipped me with new knowledge and skills.	4.84	SA
I feel confident in applying the knowledge and skills gained from the training in real-life situations.	4.22	SA
The training helped improve my understanding of entrepreneurship and financial literacy	4.56	SA
The training sessions positively influenced my attitude towards starting my own business.	4.32	SA
The training enhanced my understanding of market opportunities and customer needs.	4.49	SA
Overall, I am satisfied with the livelihood training program.	4.72	SA
Overall	4.66	Very Effective

The participants also expressed satisfaction with the interactivity and engagement of the training sessions (mean score of 4.81). The trainers' ability to keep the sessions interactive likely contributed to a positive learning environment, fostering active participation and knowledge retention among the participants. The provision of helpful and relevant training materials and resources was highly appreciated by the participants (mean score of 4.90). This indicates that the training materials were thoughtfully designed and contributed significantly to the participants' learning experience.

The livelihood training program was successful in equipping participants with new knowledge and skills, as indicated by a high mean score of 4.84. Participants felt that they gained valuable insights and practical skills during the program, which they could apply in real-life situations. While the majority of participants reported feeling confident in applying the knowledge and skills gained from the training (mean score of 4.22), this aspect received a relatively lower rating compared to other factors. This suggests that there might be some room for improvement in boosting participants' confidence in utilizing their newly acquired skills in real-life business situations.

The livelihood training program positively influenced participants' understanding of entrepreneurship and financial literacy (mean score of 4.56). This outcome suggests that the program effectively conveyed essential concepts related to entrepreneurship, fostering a better grasp of financial matters and business management. The training program also had a positive impact on participants' attitude towards starting their own business (mean score of 4.32) and their understanding of market opportunities and customer needs (mean score of 4.49). This suggests that the program not only provided practical skills but also inspired and motivated participants to explore entrepreneurial ventures and identify potential market niches. The respondents expressed high satisfaction with the livelihood training program overall (mean score of 4.72). This indicates that the program met or exceeded the participants' expectations, leaving them content with the learning experience and the insights gained.

Economic impact of the livelihood trainings

The perceived economic impact of the livelihood training program is a crucial aspect to consider in assessing the effectiveness of the program. Based on the findings, the participants' average monthly income prior to joining the program was predominantly in the "Less than ₱10,000" category, with 23 respondents falling into this income range. Meanwhile, 7 participants reported earning between ₱10,000 to ₱20,000 per month.

The results indicate that a significant proportion of participants had relatively low-income levels before participating in the livelihood training program. This suggests that the program catered to individuals from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, who might have sought opportunities to enhance their livelihood prospects. Upon completion of the livelihood training, 20 participants claimed that there was no change in their income, while 5 participants reported an increase in their earnings. The 10 individuals who experienced an increase in income stated that their income grew by 10-20%. While the percentage increase might seem modest, it can still be considered significant, particularly for individuals with previously low incomes.

The findings reveal several implications regarding the perceived economic impact of the livelihood training program. The program's focus on individuals with low-income levels is aligned with its aim to empower and uplift the economically disadvantaged. By offering relevant training and resources, the program seeks to provide participants with skills and knowledge to improve their livelihood opportunities (Tiwari et.al, 2020). The fact that 10 participants reported an increase in income suggests that the training equipped them with valuable skills and knowledge that enhanced their employability. The newfound competencies might have led to job promotions or better employment prospects, resulting in higher income levels.

For some participants, the livelihood training might have sparked entrepreneurial aspirations. The increase in income for these individuals could be attributed to their successful ventures or the development of small businesses initiated after the training. Entrepreneurship can be a viable pathway to economic growth for individuals with limited access to traditional job opportunities. The findings indicate that a majority of participants did not experience an immediate increase in income. This highlights the need for ongoing support and follow-up interventions to ensure that participants can effectively apply their newly acquired skills and knowledge to enhance their livelihoods (Kibria and Rahman, 2021). Continued mentorship, access to resources, and networking opportunities can further support participants in their economic journey (Singh and Khanam, 2018).

Impact on employment and entrepreneurship

The findings regarding the perceived impact of the livelihood training program on employment and entrepreneurship provide valuable insights into the program's effectiveness in creating opportunities for participants in these areas. According to the survey results, 10 participants stated that the livelihood training program helped them create employment and entrepreneurial opportunities, while 20 respondents reported that it did not. This division of responses highlights the mixed impact of the program on participants' employment and entrepreneurial outcomes. For those who answered positively, the nature of their employment and entrepreneurial activities included selling various products such as longganisa, polvoron, empanada, and other items. Additionally, some participants provided services like manicure, pedicure, and hair cutting. These activities demonstrate the diversity of entrepreneurial ventures initiated by program participants, ranging from small-scale product selling to service-oriented businesses (Sharma and Pal, 2019).

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 representing "No Impact" and 5 indicating "Significant Impact," the mean value of 3.03 suggests that, on average, the livelihood training program had a moderate impact on employment and entrepreneurial activities among participants. The overall mean score of 3.03 indicates a moderate impact of the livelihood training program on participants' employment and entrepreneurial activities. While the impact might not be transformative for everyone, the program has still contributed to creating opportunities for a portion of the participants to engage in income-generating activities. The mixed responses regarding the program's impact on employment and entrepreneurship highlight the importance of individual context. Participants' pre-existing skills, interests, and market conditions can significantly influence their ability to translate the training into viable employment or business opportunities. Individual circumstances play a crucial role in determining the extent to which participants can capitalize on the training provided (Abedi and Asmuni, 2020).

The 10 participants who reported positive outcomes demonstrate that the livelihood training program has been successful in enabling some individuals to establish income-generating ventures. These success stories can serve as inspiration for others and highlight the program's potential to effect positive change. However, for the 20 participants who did not experience significant impact, there may be room for improvement in program design, support, and follow-up to enhance the likelihood of success in the future. The moderate mean score suggests that the livelihood training program has made a tangible difference in the lives of some participants.

Conclusion and Future Directions

The overall positive evaluation of the livelihood training program by the participants is a testament to its effectiveness in imparting knowledge and skills relevant to entrepreneurship and financial literacy. However, the slightly lower score in participants' confidence in applying the learned skills suggests a potential area for improvement. To address this, the program organizers can consider offering follow-up support, mentoring, or practical application exercises to further boost participants' confidence in utilizing their newfound skills.

On one hand, the perceived economic impact of the livelihood training program is multi-faceted, with some participants experiencing increased income levels and others seeing no immediate change. The findings underscore the importance of offering targeted support to individuals with low-income levels and continuously evaluating the long-term impact of the program. By addressing the diverse economic needs of participants and providing ongoing support, the livelihood training program can better fulfill its objective of fostering economic empowerment and improving livelihood opportunities for its beneficiaries. On the other hand, the perceived impact of the livelihood training program on employment and entrepreneurship is varied, with some participants experiencing positive outcomes while others did not. The program's moderate overall impact suggests that it has been successful in creating employment and entrepreneurial opportunities for a portion of the participants. However, addressing individual context, providing ongoing support, and addressing barriers are crucial for enhancing the program's overall effectiveness and maximizing its positive impact on participants' economic prospects.

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