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THE IMPACT OF RETORT TECHNOLOGY TRAINING ON SKILL ENHANCEMENT, INCOME DIVERSIFICATION, AND TALENT DEVELOPMENT AMONG COMMUNITY ENTREPRENEURS

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ABSTRACT

The adoption of technology-driven training has become increasingly important in strengthening community-based entrepreneurship and addressing socio-economic challenges among low-income groups. The Retort Technology Training Program, implemented by the Lifelong Learning Unit of Nibong Tebal Community College, is designed to enhance technical competencies and income-generating capabilities among B40 community entrepreneurs. This study aims to evaluate participants' satisfaction and examine the effectiveness of the program in improving technical skills, promoting income diversification, and supporting talent development. A quantitative survey design was employed, involving 47 participants from the local community in Simpang Ampat, Seberang Perai Selatan. Data were collected using structured online questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques, including frequency, percentage, and mean scores via IBM SPSS Statistics version 26. The findings indicate a very high level of participant satisfaction (mean = 4.38) and program effectiveness (mean = 4.48). The results further demonstrate measurable improvements in skill acquisition, income generation, and entrepreneurial capabilities. This study contributes to the literature on Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and community development by providing empirical evidence on the effectiveness of retort technology training as a catalyst for sustainable socio-economic empowerment among community entrepreneurs.

Keywords: Skill Enhancement, Income Diversification, Talent Development, Community Entrepreneurship, Retort Technology

1. INTRODUCTION

The Department of Polytechnic and Community College Education (JPPKK) is an agency under the Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia responsible for planning, coordinating, and implementing technical and vocational education and training through polytechnics and community colleges throughout the country. One of JPPKK's main roles is to empower the community through the implementation of the Community Talent Enrichment Program, which focuses on improving skills and the socioeconomic status of the community.

Community development through skills enhancement programs has become increasingly important in improving the socio-economic status of local populations. In Malaysia, community-based training programs such as the Retort Technology Course are designed to equip participants with technical and entrepreneurial skills, particularly in the food processing industry.

Retort technology is a modern food processing method that utilizes high temperature and pressure to sterilize food products, ensuring safety and extended shelf life without the use of preservatives. This technology is particularly relevant for small-scale entrepreneurs and community members who aim to commercialize traditional food products. The implementation of such programs by Community Colleges aims to empower participants by enhancing their knowledge, skills, and ability to generate income. Therefore, this study focuses on evaluating the effectiveness of the Retort Technology Course conducted among the Community in Seberang Perai Selatan.

Community Colleges have played a role as a Lifelong Learning hub since their establishment in 2001 by offering short courses to the local community regardless of background. This program aims to enhance skills and improve the standard of living of the community.

However, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has caused many in the community, especially the B40 group, to lose their jobs and sources of income. The uncertain economic situation has also affected their financial stability. Therefore, the need for skills training programs has increased to help the community generate new income.

Although various programs have been implemented, the level of proficiency in modern technology skills such as retort technology is still low among the community. Constraints such as lack of exposure, insufficient training, motivation, and access to financial resources are factors that hinder involvement in entrepreneurship. Hence, the Retort Technology Course is offered. Despite the increasing implementation of technology-based training programs in community development, there remains a gap in understanding the role of talent development and structured guidance in enhancing entrepreneurial capabilities among participants. While many programs focus primarily on technical skill acquisition, insufficient attention is given to how participants develop entrepreneurial thinking, innovation capacity, and strategic decision-making skills.

Furthermore, the lack of continuous mentoring and guidance after training programs has been identified as a critical limitation, potentially reducing the sustainability of participants' business growth (Lim et al., 2023). Without proper guidance, participants may face challenges in applying newly acquired skills, adapting to market demands, and sustaining competitive advantages. Therefore, this study seeks to address this gap by analyzing how talent development and guidance contribute to strengthening entrepreneurial capabilities among participants of the Retort Technology Training Program.

This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of the Retort Technology Training Program in enhancing participants' technical skills, as well as to examine its impact on income diversification among community entrepreneurs. In addition, the study analyzes the role of talent development and continuous guidance in supporting participants' entrepreneurial capabilities. Through these objectives, this research seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of how technical training programs contribute not only to skill acquisition but also to economic empowerment and entrepreneurial growth within the community. Furthermore, this study contributes to the academic literature in the field of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and community development, while also offering insights for policy improvement in community training programs and practical implementation for institutions such as community colleges and organizations involved in retort technology and entrepreneurship development.

In line with these objectives, this study is guided by several research questions that explore the extent to which participants' skill levels improve after attending the Retort Technology Course. It also investigates how far the course contributes to increasing and diversifying participants' sources of income, as well as the extent to which talent development

and guidance support their entrepreneurial capabilities. These questions are essential in determining the overall effectiveness and sustainability of the training program in fostering both technical competence and economic resilience.

The importance of this study lies in its potential to serve as a reference for the Department of Polytechnic and Community College Education (JPPKK) and community college institutions in evaluating the effectiveness of community development programs. The findings are expected to assist in improving training modules and enhancing the overall impact of such programs on the community. Moreover, this study provides valuable insights for participants by highlighting the importance of technological skills in improving their standard of living, particularly in the context of evolving industrial and entrepreneurial demands.

Despite its contributions, this study has certain limitations that need to be acknowledged. The research is confined to 47 participants of the Retort Technology Course in the South Seberang Perai district, which restricts the generalizability of the findings to broader populations. Additionally, the study relies solely on questionnaire methods, which depend on respondents' perceptions and may not fully capture actual behavioral or performance changes. These limitations suggest the need for future studies to incorporate larger samples and mixed-method approaches for more comprehensive analysis.

This literature review examines the effectiveness of talent reinforcement programs through retort technology courses, focusing on three key dimensions: skill enhancement, income diversification, and talent development with guidance. These dimensions are crucial in strengthening community capabilities, particularly within the framework of TVET. Retort technology has been widely recognized as a significant innovation in the food processing industry, utilizing high temperature and pressure to ensure food safety while extending shelf life without preservatives. Previous studies have shown that this technology not only maintains nutritional quality but also reduces food waste and enhances product marketability. In the current economic landscape, it enables small-scale entrepreneurs to expand beyond local markets into national and international supply chains.

Furthermore, talent enhancement programs implemented through community colleges play a vital role in developing both technical and entrepreneurial competencies. Structured training programs have been shown to significantly improve participants' skills and income-generating abilities, while hands-on training approaches enhance confidence, problem-solving skills, and practical understanding. Skill enhancement is closely linked to productivity and economic improvement, as individuals with higher technical skills tend to demonstrate greater efficiency and the ability to generate sustainable income. At the same time, income diversification has become an essential strategy for economic resilience, with studies indicating that individuals equipped with technological skills are more likely to engage in multiple income-generating activities, thereby reducing financial vulnerability.

In addition, technology adoption in small businesses supports income growth by improving operational efficiency and enabling access to wider markets. Within the context of retort technology, entrepreneurs are able to produce ready-to-eat food products with extended shelf life, facilitating entry into supermarkets and export markets. Empirical findings have shown significant improvements in sales performance and market expansion among users of this technology. However, beyond technical competence, continuous exposure and guidance are critical factors in ensuring program success. Mentorship has been proven to enhance participants' ability to apply knowledge, innovate, and sustain business growth, whereas the absence of structured follow-up and mentoring can limit the long-term impact of training programs.

Overall, the literature indicates that integrating skill enhancement, talent development, and income generation produces a more sustainable and impactful outcome compared to isolated approaches. Nevertheless, there remains a lack of empirical research focusing on the application of retort technology within rural Malaysian communities, particularly in integrating these three dimensions. Therefore, this study seeks to address this gap by examining how retort technology training contributes to community development in South Seberang Perai.

2. METHODOLOGY

The questionnaire method offers several advantages over other approaches in collecting both qualitative and quantitative data, as highlighted by Sulaiman Ngah (1996). Accordingly, this chapter presents a comprehensive explanation of the research methodology employed in this study, including the research design, population and sampling, research instruments, procedures, data collection methods, and data analysis techniques.

This study adopts a quantitative research design, utilizing a questionnaire as the primary research instrument. The questionnaire was developed based on the objectives of the study and distributed to respondents through an online platform. The focus of the study is on individuals from the local community who participated in short courses organized by the Lifelong Learning Unit of Nibong Tebal Community College. Quantitative data were collected through survey questions designed to gather respondents' feedback on the issues under investigation. To facilitate systematic data analysis, the questionnaire was structured into several sections aligned with the study constructs, including demographic information, skill levels, income generation, exposure to retort technology, and entrepreneurship.

The population of this study consists of participants involved in the Community Talent Enhancement Program who attended the Retort Technology Course organized by Nibong Tebal Community College. A total of 60 participants were selected as respondents, representing members of the local community in Seberang Perai Selatan. These participants comprised homemakers, small-scale entrepreneurs, and individuals interested in enhancing their competencies in food processing and food entrepreneurship. In selecting the respondents, purposive sampling was employed, whereby only individuals who had attended the Retort Technology Course were chosen, as they directly correspond to the objectives of the study.

The research instrument used in this study was a structured questionnaire developed based on the framework provided by the Community College Department (JPPKK). The questionnaire consisted of closed-ended questions to ensure ease of response and to facilitate data analysis through standardized coding procedures. It was designed to collect information on respondents' profiles and to evaluate the effectiveness of the training program in terms of skill enhancement, income generation, and exposure to retort technology and entrepreneurship. Respondents were required to indicate their perceptions using a five-point Likert scale, which enables a consistent and measurable assessment of their responses.

Table 1. Likert Scale

Scale	Statement
1	Strongly Disagree
2	Disagree

Scale	Statement
3	Neutral
4	Agree
5	Strongly Agree

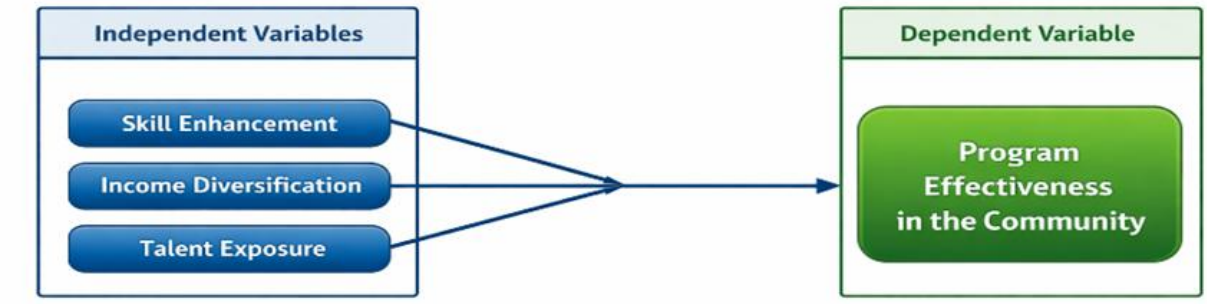
Data for this study were collected using online questionnaires distributed to respondents. The data collection process was carried out systematically to ensure the consistency and reliability of the information obtained. Respondents were given a period of three months after completing the training program to complete and submit the questionnaire, allowing sufficient time for them to reflect on the impact of the training on their skills, income, and entrepreneurial activities.

The data obtained from the questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods. This approach was employed to summarize and present the data in a form that is clear and easily interpretable, including the use of frequency distributions, percentages, and mean scores. The interpretation of mean scores was based on a predefined scale adapted from Tschannen-Moran (2004). Statistical analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics version 26 to ensure accuracy, consistency, and systematic computation of the data. The findings are presented in the form of tables and graphs to facilitate clearer interpretation and support the discussion of results.

Table 2. Interpretation of Mean Scores

Mean Scores	Interpretation
1.00 – 1.89	Very low
1.90 – 2.69	Low
2.70 – 3.49	Moderae
3.50 – 4.29	High
4.30 – 5.00	Very High

Based on the literature review, the conceptual framework comprises independent variables such as skill enhancement, income diversification, and talent exposure through mentorship. The dependent variable is the effectiveness of the program in the community.



Picture 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study

The conceptual framework of this study delineates the direct influence of three independent variables: Skill Enhancement, Income Diversification, and Talent Exposure on the dependent variable, Program Effectiveness in the Community. These constructs are grounded in the premise that community empowerment initiatives achieve sustainable outcomes when

participants acquire relevant technical skills, diversify their income sources, and gain exposure to entrepreneurial talent development (Chen et al., 2022; Sulaiman Ngah, 1996). Skill enhancement fosters individual competency and productivity, while income diversification strengthens economic resilience by reducing dependency on a single source of livelihood. Talent exposure, meanwhile, cultivates creativity and innovation, enabling participants to adapt to evolving market demands. Overall, the literature indicates that technical training significantly improves skills. Enhanced skills, in turn, create economic opportunities, which, when combined with talent exposure and mentorship, determine long-term success. However, the effectiveness of such programs depends on the integration of these three elements within a comprehensive ecosystem.

3. RESULTS

The findings of the survey are presented in this chapter. To achieve the study's objectives, the data were analyzed descriptively, focusing on frequency, percentage, and mean scores for each component of the instrument. The results are clearly explained and presented in tables and figures for ease of understanding. Data were organized according to the predetermined research objectives. The survey results represent quantitative data derived from respondents' answers to multiple-choice questions on a Likert scale.

Respondents' demographic information was obtained from the online questionnaires. As shown in Table 3, most respondents were female (47 respondents, 91.49%), while only five respondents (8.51%) were male. All respondents were participants of the Community Talent Enhancement Program residing in Seberang Perai Selatan, Penang.

Table 3. Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Female	42	91.49
Male	5	8.51
Total	**47**	**100.00**

Table 4. Distribution of Respondents by Ages

Ages	Frequency	Percentage (%)
18-25 years	8	17.03
26-35 years	17	36.17
36-45 years	13	27.65
46-60 years	9	19.15
61 years and above	0	0.0
Total	47	100.0

Table 5. Taburan Responden Mengikut Bangsa

Race	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Melayu	37	78.72

Cina	0	0
India	10	21.28
Total	**47**	**100.0**

Table 6 presents the distribution of respondents according to employment status. The majority of respondents (40 individuals, 85.10%) reported being employed, primarily in online and offline business activities. In contrast, 7 respondents (14.90%) identified as unemployed or housewife.

Table 6. Distribution of Respondents by Employment Status

Employment Status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Working	40	85.10
Not Working / Housewife	7	14.90
Total	**47**	**100.0**

Table 7 illustrates the income distribution among employed respondents. The largest group (16 respondents, 34.0%) reported earning between RM1,001 and RM2,000 per month, followed closely by 15 respondents (31.9%) earning between RM1 and RM1,000. A smaller proportion earned between RM2,001 and RM3,000 (10.6%), while only two respondents reported incomes above RM3,000 (4.2%). Notably, 6 respondents (12.8%) reported having no source of income.

Table 7. Distribution of Respondents by Income

Income	Frequency	Percentage (%)
RM1 – RM 1000	15	31.9
RM1001 – RM2000	16	34.0
RM2001 – RM3000	5	10.6
RM3001 – RM4000	1	2.1
RM4001 – RM5000	1	2.1
No Income	6	12.8
Total	**47**	**100.0**

Table 8 summarizes respondents' satisfaction levels with the implementation of the Retort Technology Course organized by Nibong Tebal Community College. The overall mean score across six items was 4.38, which falls within the *Very High* category based on the interpretation scale (see Table 2). The highest mean score (4.42) was recorded for items related to the suitability of the training venue and adequacy of time and duration. The lowest mean score (4.33) was observed for items assessing whether the course content was well-organized and met its objectives.These findings indicate that respondents' perceptions of the program were overwhelmingly positive, suggesting that the course was well-received and effectively met participants' expectations.

Table 8. Frequency, Percentage, and Mean Scores of Participants' Satisfaction with the Retort Technology Course

Item	Question	Strong Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Min
		1	2	3	4	5	
1.	Delivery of content achieves objectives	0	0	7	10	30	4.28
		0.0	0.0	14.9%	21.3%	63.8%	
2.	Presentation method is engaging	0	0	2	10	35	4.22
		0.0	0.0	4.2%	21.3%	74.5%	
3.	Course content is organized	0	0	5	30	12	4.10
		0.0	0.0	10.7%	63.8%	25.5%	
4.	Course venue is suitable	0	0	9	11	27	4.30
		0.0	0.0	19.1%	23.4%	57.5%	
5.	Delivery is clear and understandable	0	0	6	13	28	3.95
		0.0	0.0	12.8%	27.7%	59.6%	
6.	Course time and duration are sufficient	0	0	8	13	26	4.18
		0.0	0.0	17.0%	27.7%	55.3%	
	Mean Average						4.17

The results highlight that most of respondents are economically active, with most engaged in small-scale business activities. Income levels, however, remain modest, with over 65% earning below RM2,000 monthly. This underscores the importance of skill development and entrepreneurship training in enhancing income generation. The very high satisfaction scores further validate the relevance and effectiveness of the Retort Technology Course, suggesting that such programs can play a pivotal role in strengthening community-based economic resilience.

Table 9 presents the findings on the effectiveness of the program organized by Nibong Tebal Community College in fostering community entrepreneurs in Seberang Perai Selatan. The overall mean score across six items was **4.48**, which falls within the *Very High* category according to the interpretation scale (see Table 2). All items recorded mean scores above 4.30, indicating consistently strong positive perceptions.

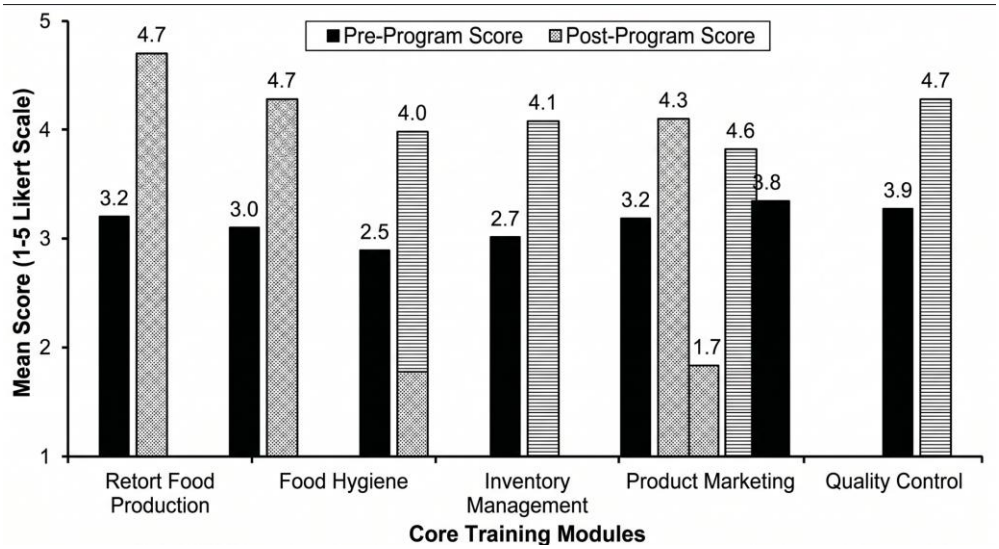
These results suggest that the program was highly effective in enhancing participants' knowledge, skills, creativity, career prospects, and entrepreneurial exposure. Respondents reported significant benefits, including improved confidence in developing innovative ideas, better career advancement opportunities, and greater awareness of viable business ventures.

Table 9. The Effectiveness of The Program Organized by Nibong Tebal Community College

Item	Question	Strong Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean

1.	Does this course help participants increase knowledge in the field of the course	0 0.0	0 0.0	6 10%	22 36.7%	32 53.3%	4.43
2.	Does this course help improve skills in the field of the course	0 0.0	0 0.0	6 10%	20 33.3%	34 56.7%	4.47
3.	Confident in developing creative ideas through the knowledge learned and able to produce quality products	0 0.0	0 0.0	6 10%	21 35%	33 55%	4.45
4.	Helps improve career and standard of living	0 0.0	0 0.0	6 10%	17 28.3%	37 61.7%	4.52
5.	Gain exposure to types of businesses that are well received and help start a business	0 0.0	0 0.0	7 11.7%	16 26.7%	37 61.7%	4.50
6.	Skills enhancement helps expand the business and improve communication between entrepreneurs and customers.	0 0.0	0 0.0	7 11.7%	16 26.7%	37 61.7%	4.50
						Mean Average	**4.48**

The data reveal significant improvements in participants' self-reported skill levels after completing the program. Skills assessed included Retort Food Production, Food Hygiene, Inventory Management, Product Marketing, and Quality Control. Mean scores for each category increased substantially post-program, demonstrating the program's success in equipping participants with practical competencies.



Picture 2. Comparison of Skill Levels Before and After the Program

The analysis of talent development and guidance was conducted using descriptive statistics, particularly mean scores, to evaluate participants' perceptions before and after the program. The results indicate a consistent increase in mean values across all related indicators, including technical guidance, entrepreneurial guidance, innovation skills, and soft skills.

The increase in mean scores suggests that participants experienced significant improvement in their ability to apply knowledge, generate innovative ideas, and manage business operations more effectively. These findings indicate that the integration of talent development and structured guidance within the training program plays a crucial role in enhancing entrepreneurial capabilities.

The findings reveal that participants demonstrated notable improvement in areas related to talent development and guidance after attending the program. Specifically, participants reported enhanced innovation skills, improved problem-solving abilities, and increased confidence in managing their businesses.

In addition, the provision of structured guidance throughout the training program enabled participants to better understand market demands, improve product development strategies, and adopt more effective business practices. The results suggest that talent development, when supported by continuous guidance, contributes significantly to strengthening entrepreneurial capabilities among community entrepreneurs.

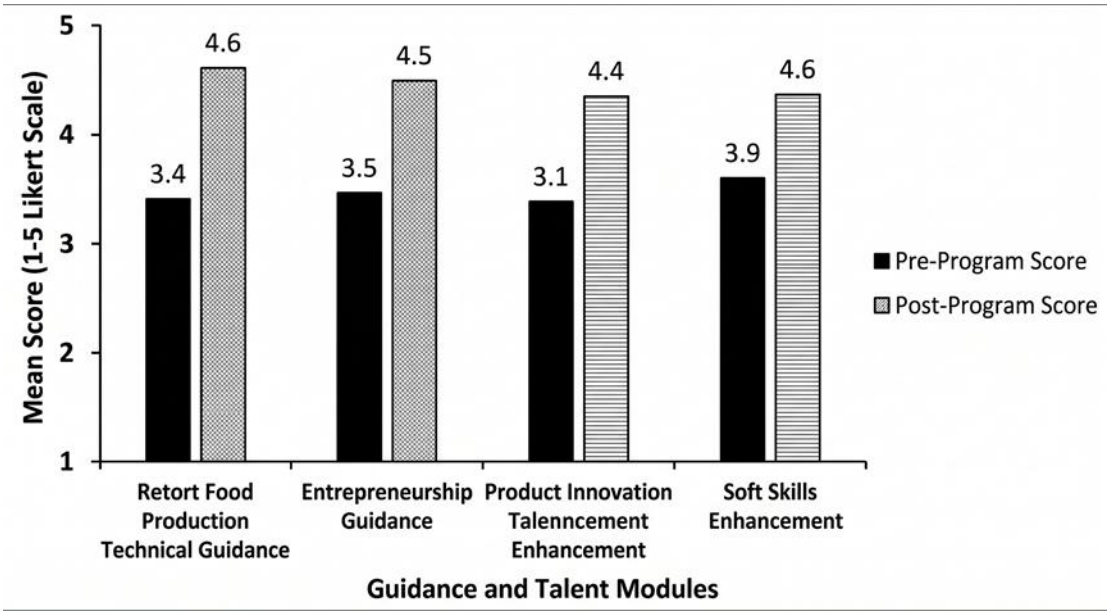


Figure 3. Comparison of Mentorship and Talent Development Before and After the Program

The program also contributed to measurable improvements in participants' income-related outcomes. Categories assessed included Monthly Sales Volume, Net Profit, Number of New Customers, Operational Cost Savings, and Additional Income Streams. Post-program mean scores were higher across all categories, indicating that participants experienced tangible economic benefits as a result of the training.

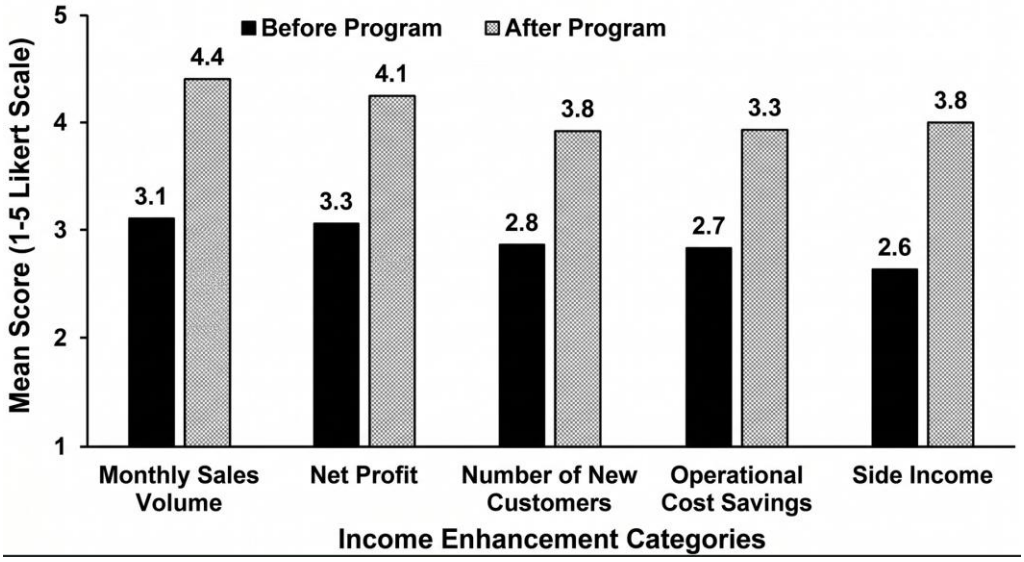


Figure 4. Comparison of Income Levels Before and After the Program

4. DISCUSSION

This study demonstrates that the Retort Technology Course had a significant positive impact on participants, particularly in transforming their entrepreneurial capabilities. Participants reported improvements in innovation, product competitiveness, and marketing strategies, largely driven by the program's emphasis on hands-on, practical learning. This aligns with prior studies (Sulaiman Fuzi & Muhammad Syafiq, 2020; Ibrahim et al., 2023), which highlight that experiential learning enhances understanding and facilitates the application of technical knowledge. As a result, participants experienced increased income, expanded customer bases, and expressed readiness to pursue further advanced training.

The findings indicate that the program effectively achieved its core objectives of enhancing skills, diversifying income, and strengthening talent development. High satisfaction (mean = 4.38) and effectiveness scores (mean = 4.48) confirm the program's success in delivering tangible socio-economic benefits. In terms of skill enhancement, participants significantly improved in areas such as retort processing, food safety, quality control, and marketing, which directly contributed to higher productivity. Regarding income diversification, the adoption of retort technology enabled longer product shelf life, allowing participants to penetrate wider markets, both online and offline.

Talent development and structured guidance emerged as critical success factors. The integration of mentoring improved participants' innovation capacity, decision-making, and business management skills, consistent with findings by Garavan et al. (2021) and Rahim et al. (2023). Exposure to new technologies and continuous guidance further enhanced adaptability and competitiveness. However, the study also highlights that the absence of sustained post-training support may limit long-term impact (Lim et al., 2023), emphasizing the need for continuous mentoring mechanisms.

The study confirms strong interrelationships among skills, income, and talent development, which collectively contribute to sustainable community entrepreneurship (Chen et al., 2022). Theoretically, this research extends existing literature by integrating these variables within the context of retort technology, an underexplored area. Practically, it provides a scalable framework for institutions and agencies such as community colleges and entrepreneurship

bodies to enhance training modules and support ecosystems. From a policy perspective, the findings align with Malaysia's TVET and Lifelong Learning initiatives, particularly in empowering B40 communities.

Several institutional recommendations are proposed, including implementing post-training coaching (3–6 months), establishing retort incubators, and strengthening collaboration with agencies such as MARDI, SME Corp, and FAMA. Future research should adopt longitudinal designs, larger sample sizes, and advanced analytical techniques such as Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to further validate findings. Comparative studies with other food technologies are also recommended.

Despite its contributions, the study is limited by its small sample size (47 respondents), single location focus, and reliance on self-reported data. Nevertheless, it provides valuable preliminary insights into the effectiveness of technology-driven community training programs in fostering sustainable entrepreneurship and economic resilience.

5. CONCLUSION

This study evaluates the effectiveness of the Retort Technology Training Program in enhancing community entrepreneurship through skill development, income diversification, and talent reinforcement. The findings indicate that integrating technical training with structured mentorship significantly improves participants' competencies, business readiness, and market competitiveness. Retort technology plays a critical role in enabling the production of value-added, longer shelf-life food products, thereby expanding market access and supporting income growth.

The study further demonstrates that skill enhancement alone is insufficient without continuous guidance, as mentorship contributes to the development of strategic thinking, adaptability, and entrepreneurial resilience. Despite its positive outcomes, the program faces limitations related to the lack of sustained post-training support, which may affect long-term impact. Overall, this research provides empirical evidence supporting a holistic, technology-driven training model as an effective approach for community empowerment. Future studies should adopt longitudinal designs and advanced analytical methods to further validate the sustainability and broader applicability of such programs.

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