

Empowering Indonesian Female Migrant Workers through Home-Based Industry Training in Malaysia: An International Community Service Initiative

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to empower Indonesian female migrant workers in Malaysia through home-based industry training as part of an international community service initiative aligned with the Tri Dharma of Higher Education. The programme was conducted over three days, from 23 to 25 January 2025, involving 34 participants and applying a training-based approach that integrates conceptual understanding of women's economic empowerment with practical entrepreneurial skills. The implementation emphasised interactive learning to enhance engagement and contextual relevance. The findings show that the program raised participants' awareness of other economic opportunities, especially in informal and home-based areas, and enhanced their knowledge on starting small-scale ventures businesses using limited resources. In addition, participants demonstrated stronger motivation to enhance household income and a more proactive economic orientation. These results indicate that brief, focused training programs can be a good starting point for helping migrant women gain economic strength. The program also emphasizes the significance of international community service to share knowledge across borders and contribute to academic efforts. However, the short time frame and lack of follow-up processes could impact the long-term sustainability. Overall, the initiative demonstrates that integrating empowerment concepts with practical training can generate meaningful socio-economic benefits for migrant workers and contribute to the broader discourse on international community engagement.

Keywords: women's economic empowerment; migrant workers; home-based industry; community service; household income

INTRODUCTION

Background of Indonesian Female Migrant Workers in Malaysia

Indonesian female migrant workers make up a large part of the workforce in Malaysia, especially in the domestic and informal service industries, where they are essential in supporting both the local and home economies.

Recent studies have emphasised that these workers often engage in low-skilled occupations characterised by limited protection, informal contracts, and restricted access to capacity development programmes (Morokvasic, 2015; Toyin-Thomas et al., 2023). Prior scholarship has extensively documented migration flows, labour segmentation, and gendered vulnerabilities, highlighting structural inequalities embedded within transnational labour systems. However, while the socio-economic conditions of migrant workers have been widely examined, relatively limited attention has been directed towards their potential as economic agents capable of entrepreneurial engagement, particularly in the context of skill enhancement initiatives conducted outside formal employment structures. This gap indicates a need to reconceptualise migrant women not merely as labour contributors but as potential microentrepreneurs within both host and home economies (Hennebry & Hari, 2024).

Economic Challenges and the Need for Empowerment

Female migrant workers frequently encounter economic precarity, including unstable income, lack of financial literacy, and limited opportunities for upward mobility, which collectively constrain their ability to contribute to long-term household welfare (Piper & Foley, 2024; Schweitzer, 2024). Existing studies have mainly looked at how migrants send money home and how families rely on those funds, showing that migrant income helps support their households but usually does not lead to long-term economic change. Although empowerment frameworks have been developed to tackle these problems, many interventions are still focused on policies and large-scale approaches, and they do not place enough importance on hands-on, skill-based empowerment at the local level. As a result, there is still a significant lack of properly designed training programs that provide migrant women with the skills needed to start and run businesses, especially those that require little or no initial investment and can be operated from home (Bastia et al., 2022; McAuliffe & Triandafyllidou, 2021; Rosales, 2025).

The Role of Community Service within the Tridharma Framework

Within the Indonesian higher education system, community service represents a fundamental component of the *Tridharma Perguruan Tinggi*, alongside education and research, serving as a mechanism for translating academic knowledge into societal impact (Ansori et al., 2021; Suhud et al., 2022). Recent studies have emphasized the growing role of community involvement programs in tackling socio-economic issues, especially by using methods that involve local people and help build their abilities. While many universities have introduced community service programs within their own countries, the growth of these programs into international settings has not been widely studied or developed. Many existing studies concentrate on local initiatives, which means they often miss the valuable opportunities that come from academic partnerships between different countries. These partnerships could play a significant role in supporting groups that are at risk, like migrant workers (Nugroho et al., 2024; Rajiani & Warmansyah Abbas, 2021; Yusup et al., 2025).

Rationale for Conducting International Community Engagement

International community engagement offers a strategic platform for knowledge transfer, cultural exchange, and collaborative problem-solving, particularly in addressing transnational issues such as labour migration and gender inequality (Canas et al., 2022; E. Hartman et al., 2020; Stith et al., 2021). Past efforts have shown how global service learning and international collaborations can improve community results and make academic work more relevant. Nevertheless, most documented programmes are situated within student mobility or short-term service-learning frameworks, with limited focus on structured, faculty-led interventions targeting specific vulnerable groups abroad. There is a lack of documented initiatives that integrate economic empowerment strategies with international community service for migrant workers. This study addresses this gap by implementing a targeted training programme designed to enhance the economic capacity of Indonesian female migrant workers in Malaysia (Crabtree, 2008; Downes et al., 2024).

Objectives of the Activity

The main goal of this community service initiative is to support Indonesian female migrant workers by offering them training in home-based industries, which helps them improve their ability to earn money and play a stronger role in supporting their families' income. In line with recent discussions on empowerment-oriented interventions,

the activity seeks to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application by offering accessible, skill-based training tailored to the participants' socio-economic context (Cornwall, 2016; Kabeer et al., 2021). Although previous research has shown that empowerment plays a key role in enhancing women's economic situations, there is still not enough real-world and practical evidence on how this empowerment can be effectively achieved through short-term, community-focused training programs. Accordingly, this activity aims not only to enhance participants' entrepreneurial readiness but also to contribute to the broader discourse on effective models of international community engagement within higher education (Alsop & Heinsohn, 2005; Malhotra et al., 2025).

Conceptual Background

Women's Economic Empowerment

Women's economic empowerment has been widely conceptualised as a process through which women gain access to resources, enhance decision-making capacity, and achieve greater control over economic outcomes. Recent studies have examined empowerment through dimensions such as financial inclusion, entrepreneurial participation, and agency in household decision-making (Duflo, 2012; Kabeer et al., 2021). Existing studies have made significant advancements in recognizing structural obstacles and emphasizing the need for policies that take gender into account, especially in economies that are still developing. However, a significant portion of the existing research continues to emphasize large-scale actions, such as changes to institutions and major development initiatives. Not much focus has been placed on small-scale, practical programs that directly give women, particularly migrant workers, the specific skills they can use. Moreover, the connection between a person's migration status and their sense of empowerment has not been thoroughly examined, suggesting a lack of understanding on how economic empowerment can be properly put into practice for women who have migrated and are living in host countries (Hunt & Samman, 2016; Raina, 2023; Tibamanya et al., 2026).

Home-Based Industry as an Alternative Income Strategy

Home-based industries have become a practical approach for generating additional income, especially for women who have limited access to traditional job opportunities. Recent studies have highlighted its flexibility, low capital requirements, and compatibility with domestic responsibilities (Boeri, 2023; Durokifa, 2024; Thabti et al., 2025). Previous studies show that running a business from home can increase family earnings, improve financial stability, and encourage broader involvement in the economy. Many current studies have mainly focused on local communities and small businesses within their own countries, paying less attention to migrant groups who run businesses across different countries. Although the economic potential of home industries has been widely recognized, there is still not enough research on structured training programs aimed at developing entrepreneurial skills within this sector. This suggests a need for more applied initiatives that translate theoretical potential into practical implementation for marginalised groups such as female migrant workers (Chaudhry et al., 2025; Garcia-Martinez et al., 2023).

Capacity Building for Migrant Workers

Capacity building for migrant workers has increasingly been recognised as a critical approach to improving their socio-economic conditions, particularly through skill development, financial literacy, and entrepreneurship training (Alderotti & De Santis, 2024; McAuliffe & Triandafyllidou, 2021; Piper & Foley, 2024). Previous research has mainly concentrated on training provided before departure and policy changes intended to improve job market preparedness. Although these efforts have helped enhance job prospects, they frequently fail to address the importance of ongoing skill building throughout the migration process. There is not much research available on community-based training programs that are provided directly to migrant workers in the countries where they live. The current issue is that there are not enough practical programs tailored to specific situations that tackle both urgent economic requirements and sustainable empowerment in the long run. This highlights the need to create specific actions that go beyond just rules and involve migrant workers in shaping their own economic growth (Barhoi & Dayal, 2024; Bastia et al., 2022).

Community Engagement in an International Context

Community engagement has developed as a key strategy for universities to broaden their influence in society, especially through efforts to share knowledge and build capabilities. Recent literature has highlighted the growing importance of international community engagement in addressing global challenges and fostering cross-border collaboration (Canas et al., 2022; Lane et al., 2013; Stith et al., 2021). Many studies have shown the advantages of service-learning and community-based projects, but most of these programs are focused on students and are not long-term in duration. There is still limited research and implementation of faculty-led, structured community service programs that focus on specific vulnerable populations, such as migrant workers, in international contexts. Additionally, the inclusion of economic empowerment goals in international engagement initiatives has not been thoroughly analyzed. This shows a lack of both theoretical and practical knowledge on how to effectively plan community involvement in a way that leads to long-term economic and social benefits that can be applied across different countries (Ansori et al., 2021; Downes et al., 2024).

Integration of Concepts in Community Service Practice

The integration of women's empowerment, home-based industry, capacity building, and international community engagement provides a comprehensive framework for designing impactful community service initiatives. Recent studies have begun to emphasise the importance of interdisciplinary approaches that combine economic, social, and educational dimensions to address complex development challenges (Fan, 2024; Scoones, 2015). Despite these advancements, there remains a lack of empirical and practice-based models that demonstrate how these concepts can be operationalised simultaneously within a single programme, particularly in the context of migrant communities. Most existing frameworks remain conceptual, with limited documentation of real-world applications that integrate these dimensions in an international setting. Therefore, there is a clear need for applied community service initiatives that not only rely on these theoretical concepts but also show how they can be used in practice to improve the economic stability of female migrant workers (Hickel, 2021; Price & Moore, 2026).

Programme Description

Location and Schedule of Activities (Malaysia, 23–25 January 2025)

The community service programme was implemented in Malaysia over a three-day period from 23 to 25 January 2025, reflecting a short-term, intensive engagement model commonly adopted in international outreach initiatives. Recent literature has highlighted that short-duration programmes can be effective in delivering targeted knowledge transfer, particularly when designed with clear objectives and structured delivery mechanisms (Canas et al., 2022; S. Hartman et al., 2019; Stith et al., 2021). Previous research has shown that these programs are commonly used in global service-learning settings, allowing for quick involvement with communities and promoting collaboration across different countries. However, most current efforts are centred on students and emphasize hands-on learning experiences instead of the effect on the community. There remains limited evidence on faculty-led, short-term programmes specifically designed to deliver economic empowerment interventions to migrant workers in host countries. This indicates a gap in the design and documentation of structured, impact-oriented international community service activities that prioritise beneficiary outcomes over academic mobility (Chaudhry et al., 2025; Downes et al., 2024).

Target Participants (Female Migrant Workers, 34 Participants)

The programme targeted 34 Indonesian female migrant workers residing in Malaysia, representing a group that is often marginalised within both labour markets and empowerment initiatives. Recent studies have underscored the importance of tailored interventions to the specific needs of migrant women, who frequently face intersecting challenges related to gender, migration status, and economic vulnerability (Bastia et al., 2022; Hennebry & Hari, 2024; Piper & Foley, 2024). Existing research has largely focused on large-scale policy frameworks and remittance behaviours, with limited attention to small-group, targeted empowerment programmes that directly engage migrant workers as active participants. Although participatory methods have been strongly encouraged, there remains a shortage of practical examples that show how these methods can be

effectively applied in actual situations. The current program tackles this issue by involving a reasonable number of participants, which helps create an interactive learning environment and supports taAlderottired skill development (Rosales, 2025; Toyin-Thomas et al., 2023).

Training Materials (Women Empowerment and Home Industry Development)

The training materials were created as organized presentations centred on women's empowerment and the growth of home-based industries, with the goal of offering both theoretical knowledge and hands-on advice. Recent literature has emphasised the importance of context-specific training content that integrates empowerment principles with actionable entrepreneurial knowledge (Kabeer et al., 2021; Tibamanya et al., 2026). Earlier research has shown that well-designed training programs are important.

The approach should integrate theoretical knowledge with real-world applications to improve participant involvement and ensure better understanding and recall of the material. Many current interventions depend largely on general content that might not match the social and economic situations of migrant workers. There is not much research available on the creation of training materials that are specifically made for migrant women in international settings, especially those that combine elements of empowerment with the development of small businesses. This indicates a requirement for more flexible and situationally appropriate training materials that can help connect theoretical knowledge with real-world application (Boeri, 2023; Chaudhry et al., 2025; Durokifa, 2024).

Methods of Implementation (Training-Based Approach)

The program used a training method that included interactive activities, group discussions, and real-life examples to help share knowledge and build skills. Recent studies have demonstrated that participatory training methods are more effective in enhancing learning outcomes, particularly among adult learners and marginalised groups (Bell et al., 2023; Freire, 2020). Existing research has commonly recognized the importance of hands-on and student-focused methods in community-based learning. Despite this, many programs aimed at migrant workers still use top-down, lecture-style approaches that hinder active participation and lower the effectiveness of the training they provide. There is a limited number of documented examples that look into how participatory training models are applied in short-term international community service programs. This shows a lack of understanding about how interactive training methods can be properly adjusted to fit different cultures (Bierema et al., 2025; Illeris, 2009; Nallaluthan et al., 2023).

Division of Roles among the Academic Team (Leader and Members)

The implementation of the programme involved a clear division of roles among the academic team, with the team leader responsible for overall coordination and strategic direction, while team members contributed to material delivery, participant facilitation, and logistical support. Recent literature on community engagement has emphasised the importance of collaborative teamwork and role clarity in ensuring the effectiveness of outreach activities (Hjortsø et al., 2025; Postan-Aizik & Shdaimah, 2024). Previous research has mainly concentrated on institutional structures and ways of working together, frequently neglecting the internal workings of academic groups that carry out the programs. There is still not much conversation about how the way roles are shared in academic teams affects the success of community service projects, especially when these projects take place in different countries. This suggests there is a lack of research focusing on the practical side of programme management, highlighting the importance of better documenting team structures and how they affect the success of programmes (McCarty, 2024; Tijsma et al., 2023; Ward, 2020).

Implementation of Activities

Preparation Stage (Material Development and Coordination)

The preparation stage involved the systematic development of training materials and coordination among the academic team to ensure the relevance and effectiveness of the programme. Recent studies have emphasised that well-structured preparation is a critical determinant of successful community engagement, particularly in international contexts where cultural and socio-economic differences must be carefully considered (S. Hartman

et al., 2019; Stith et al., 2021). Existing literature has demonstrated that material development should be context-sensitive, incorporating local needs and participant characteristics to enhance applicability. However, much of the previous research focuses on general service-learning frameworks, with limited attention given to the specific preparation processes needed for empowerment-oriented programs aimed at migrant workers. Moreover, discussions about coordination between academic teams have typically taken place at the institutional level rather than the operational level, resulting in a lack of understanding of how preparatory activities contribute to the effectiveness of programs. This programme contributes by illustrating a more practice-oriented approach to preparation that integrates contextual adaptation with collaborative planning (Canas et al., 2022; Downes et al., 2024).

Training Delivery (Home Industry Skills and Economic Empowerment)

The training delivery phase focused on equipping participants with knowledge and skills related to home-based industries and economic empowerment, using structured and interactive sessions. Recent literature has highlighted the effectiveness of skill-based training in improving economic outcomes for marginalised populations, particularly when it combines theoretical understanding with practical application (Kabere et al., 2021; Tibamanya et al., 2026). Previous research has shown that training in entrepreneurship can increase the ability to generate income and promote self-sufficiency. Nevertheless, many existing programmes are implemented within domestic contexts and are often supported by long-term institutional frameworks. There is not much evidence available regarding the effectiveness of short-term, intensive training programs provided in international environments, especially when it comes to migrant workers. Additionally, while economic empowerment has been widely discussed conceptually, fewer studies have documented its practical implementation through specific skill-based interventions such as home industry development. This highlights a gap that the present programme seeks to address by operationalising empowerment in a tangible and accessible manner (Boeri, 2023; Chaudhry et al., 2025; Durokifa, 2024).

Participant Engagement and Interaction

Active participation and interaction were key to carrying out the program, since studies have demonstrated that interactive learning settings help improve memory retention and increase enthusiasm for learning. Recent research has highlighted the significance of involving learners in the educational process, especially those from different and disadvantaged groups, in adult learning settings (Bierema et al., 2025; Illeris, 2009). Studies show that methods like talking things through, sharing experiences, and working together to solve problems can greatly enhance how well people learn. However, many community-based programs continue to use passive ways of delivering information, which reduces the chances for meaningful interaction. There is a scarcity of research that looks at how participants get involved in short-term international community service programs, particularly those aimed at migrant workers. This indicates a lack of awareness regarding how engagement strategies can be properly adjusted to work across different cultural settings. The present programme contributes by implementing interactive methods that encourage active participation and knowledge exchange among participants (Freire, 2020; Kolb, 1981; Nallaluthan et al., 2023).

Challenges Encountered during Implementation

Several difficulties arose while carrying out the program, such as limited time, differences in how prepared the participants were, and issues connected to the working conditions of the migrant workers. Recent literature has acknowledged that community engagement initiatives, particularly those conducted in international settings, often face logistical, cultural, and organisational challenges (Canas et al., 2022; Crabtree, 2008). Previous studies have discussed challenges primarily in relation to programme sustainability and institutional partnerships, but there is limited exploration of on-the-ground implementation issues faced during short-term interventions. Additionally, the particular difficulties involved in involving migrant workers, such as their limited availability and varying levels of education, have not been adequately covered in current research. This suggests that there is a lack of practical understanding when it comes to handling constraints in actual situations. The current program offers understanding of these challenges and emphasizes the importance of using flexible and adaptable strategies when implementing solutions (Downes et al., 2024; E. Hartman et al., 2020).

Reflection on Implementation Process

The entire process of implementation shows how important it is to combine proper preparation, effective delivery, active engagement, and the ability to adapt in order to achieve successful results in community service. Recent studies have increasingly called for reflective practices in community engagement to enhance programme quality and sustainability (Tan, 2020; Ward, 2020). Existing literature has shown that reflection is valuable in recognizing strengths and areas needing improvement, but most of these discussions stay at a conceptual level and are usually focused on education rather than real-world community service efforts. There is insufficient detailed information available about the process of reflection in international, short-term programs, especially those aimed at promoting economic empowerment. This gap highlights the importance of having more evidence-based insights into how implementations work, which can help guide future efforts. The current program offers a thorough review of how it was carried out, which gives useful information for planning and enhancing future community involvement efforts (Hjortsø et al., 2025; McCarty, 2024; Stith et al., 2021).

Outcomes and Impacts

Preparation Stage (Material Development and Coordination)

The preparation stage involved the systematic development of training materials and coordination among the academic team to ensure the relevance and effectiveness of the programme. Recent studies have emphasised that well-structured preparation is a critical determinant of successful community engagement, particularly in international contexts where cultural and socio-economic differences must be carefully considered (E. Hartman et al., 2020; Stith et al., 2021). Existing literature has demonstrated that material development should be context-sensitive, incorporating local needs and participant characteristics to enhance applicability. However, much of the previous research has concentrated on broad service-learning frameworks, with little focus on the particular steps needed to prepare for empowerment-focused programs aimed at migrant workers. Furthermore, discussions about coordination between academic teams have mostly taken place at the institutional level rather than at the operational level, which has created a gap in understanding how preparatory activities contribute to the effectiveness of the programme. This programme contributes by illustrating a more practice-oriented approach to preparation that integrates contextual adaptation with collaborative planning (Canas et al., 2022; Downes et al., 2024)doe.

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Participant Engagement and Interaction

Active participation and interaction were key to carrying out the program, since engaging learning environments have been proven to improve how well knowledge is remembered and increase motivation. Recent research has highlighted the significance of involving learners in the educational process, especially those from different and less privileged groups. (Bierema et al., 2025; Kolb, 1981) . Studies have shown that methods like talking about topics, sharing personal experiences, and working together to solve problems can greatly enhance how well people learn. However, many community-based programs continue to use passive approaches, which restricts

the possibility for meaningful engagement. There is a shortage of research that looks at how involved participants are in short-term international community service programs, particularly those aimed at migrant workers. This suggests a gap in understanding how engagement strategies can be effectively adapted to cross-cultural contexts. The present programme contributes by implementing interactive methods that encourage active participation and knowledge exchange among participants (Freire, 2020; Illeris, 2009; Nallaluthan et al., 2023).

Challenges Encountered during Implementation

Several challenges arose during the programme's implementation, such as limited time, differences in how prepared participants were, and restrictions caused by the working conditions of the migrant workers. Recent literature has acknowledged that community engagement initiatives, particularly those conducted in international settings, often face logistical, cultural, and organisational challenges (Canas et al., 2022; Crabtree, 2008). Previous studies have discussed challenges primarily in relation to programme sustainability and institutional partnerships, but there is limited exploration of on-the-ground implementation issues faced during short-term interventions. Additionally, the particular difficulties in involving migrant workers, including their limited availability and varied levels of education, have not been adequately covered in current research. This suggests that there is a lack of practical understanding about how to manage constraints in actual situations. The current program offers an understanding of these challenges and emphasizes the importance of using strategies that can change and adjust as needed (Thabti et al., 2025; Vesudevan et al., 2025).

Reflection on Implementation Process

The entire process of implementation shows how important it is to combine proper preparation, clear delivery, active engagement, and the ability to adapt to achieve successful results in community service. Recent studies have increasingly called for reflective practices in community engagement to enhance programme quality and sustainability (Gaffar et al., 2022; Garcia-Martinez et al., 2023). Current research has shown that reflection helps in recognizing strengths and opportunities for growth, but most of these discussions stay at an abstract level and are usually focused on school environments rather than real-world community service projects. There is not enough detailed information available about the process of reflection in international short-term programs, especially those aimed at promoting economic empowerment. This gap highlights the importance of having more research-based insights into how implementations are carried out, which can help guide upcoming efforts. The current program offers a thorough review of how it was carried out, which gives useful information for creating and enhancing similar community involvement efforts (Hennebry & Hari, 2024; Hickel, 2021).

DISCUSSION

Increased Awareness of Economic Opportunities

One of the most noticeable results of the program was the greater understanding among participants that economic opportunities are not limited to traditional jobs, but can also come from small, home-based productive activities. This outcome is conceptually consistent with recent scholarship showing that women's economic empowerment is closely associated with improved access to knowledge, agency, and awareness of feasible livelihood pathways, rather than with income growth alone (Hunt & Samman, 2016; Kabeer et al., 2021; Singh et al., 2022). Existing research has shown that women in precarious work situations often have untapped productive capacity, but they encounter challenges related to information, structure, and institutions that stop them from identifying or exploring other ways to earn income. (Kabeer, 2020; Durokifa, 2021). Prior work has also mapped a broad range of empowerment interventions, including skills training and enterprise support, but has shown that evidence remains uneven across groups and settings, especially for migrant women in host countries (Khan et al., 2024). What has therefore been done in the literature is the identification of empowerment as a multidimensional process and the recognition of informal or unconventional entrepreneurship as a meaningful pathway for excluded groups (Gaffar et al., 2022). What remains insufficiently addressed is how short-term international community service initiatives can concretely expand migrant women's awareness of realistic micro-enterprise opportunities within the constraints of their everyday lives, a gap to which this programme responds.

Enhancement of Skills Related to Home-Based Business

A second important outcome concerned the enhancement of participants' skills related to home-based business development, particularly their understanding of how domestic spaces and modest resources may be transformed into productive economic assets. This finding aligns with recent literature indicating that home-based work and informal enterprise remain central to women's economic participation, especially where mobility, capital, and access to formal labour markets are limited (Malhotra et al., 2025; McAuliffe & Triandafyllidou, 2021; Mohammad et al., 2025). Previous scholarship has already established that home-based economic activity can support income diversification and resilience, while inclusive entrepreneurship research has broadened the field by recognising unconventional entrepreneurs whose entry points differ from mainstream business models (McCarty, 2024). At the same time, the evidence gap literature suggests that many interventions still prioritise broad policy or programme categories rather than documenting the concrete pedagogical content through which business-related skills are actually transferred to marginalised women (Singh et al., 2022). Thus, what has already been accomplished in the literature is a substantial conceptual defence of women's enterprise, informality, and inclusion. What has not yet been sufficiently elaborated is how practical skill formation for home-based business can be delivered in compact, context-sensitive formats for migrant workers overseas. The present activity contributes to that underdeveloped area by showing that even brief training can strengthen participants' practical orientation towards small-scale enterprise development.

Strengthening of Motivation to Improve Household Income

The programme also appeared to strengthen participants' motivation to improve household income, an outcome that is significant because motivation constitutes an essential bridge between capability and action. Recent studies on women's empowerment suggest that economic progress is not only influenced by having access to resources but also by building confidence, setting goals, and believing in the possibility of achieving them (Kabeer et al., 2021; Mohammad et al., 2025). In related fashion, inclusive entrepreneurship research has shown that groups positioned outside conventional entrepreneurial systems may still develop entrepreneurial drive when social and cognitive barriers are reduced ((Amin et al., 2025). Studies on informal work further suggest that women's economic engagement often persists under constrained conditions because households rely on adaptive livelihood strategies, although these strategies are not always accompanied by formal support or motivational reinforcement (Morokvasic, 2015). Accordingly, earlier literature has already clarified that empowerment interventions may influence attitudes, confidence, and readiness for economic action. Yet much less has been documented about how motivational strengthening occurs in migrant women through international community engagement rather than through longer-term development programmes or state-led interventions. What has therefore been done is the theoretical linking of empowerment and agency; what remains underdeveloped is the practical understanding of how short-duration training may activate intention, confidence, and economic hope among female migrant workers. The present programme adds value by illustrating motivation as an immediate and meaningful impact of community service practice.

Potential Contribution to Family Economic Resilience

The outcomes of the programme further suggest a potential contribution to family economic resilience, particularly through the creation of supplementary income possibilities that may reduce dependence on a single earnings stream. This idea aligns with recent studies that highlight how women's economic strength is closely connected to the overall stability of the household, the variety of income sources, and the inclusion of women in social activities (Piper & Foley, 2024; Postan-Aizik & Shdaimah, 2024). Existing scholarship has already shown that informal and home-based economic activities can act as stabilising mechanisms in conditions of uncertainty, especially for women located in precarious labour arrangements (Price & Moore, 2026; Raina, 2023). In addition, the evidence gap map on empowerment interventions indicates that economic strengthening programmes are increasingly recognised as relevant, but that robust evidence remains uneven regarding long-term household-level effects across different populations (Schweitzer, 2024). Inclusive entrepreneurship research also suggests that entrepreneurship should be viewed more broadly as a way for traditionally excluded groups to engage in the economy and build resilience (Robeyns, 2006). Hence, what has already been addressed is the conceptual link between women's enterprise and household welfare. What is still not well developed is the empirical evidence showing how community-based, cross-border initiatives that support empowerment can

help build resilience in families from migrant households, especially those who engage in economic activities in both their host country and their home country. This article therefore presents the program as a first practical step in that still limited area of research.

Synthesis of Outcomes and Remaining Gaps

Taken together, these outcomes indicate that the programme generated a sequence of linked impacts, beginning with awareness, moving through skill enhancement, strengthening motivation, and culminating in a potential contribution to economic resilience at the household level. This sequence is consistent with recent scholarship that treats empowerment as multidimensional, incremental, and context-dependent rather than as a single measurable event (Raina, 2023; Rosales, 2025). It also reflects contemporary debates on informal work and inclusive entrepreneurship, both of which emphasise that excluded groups often require recognition, practical support, and tailored opportunity structures before sustainable economic participation becomes possible (Rajiani & Warmansyah Abbas, 2021; Schrooten, 2021). The literature has already carried out significant research in developing theories about empowerment, identifying different types of interventions, and supporting non-traditional paths for entrepreneurship. However, it has not yet sufficiently documented short-term, faculty-led, international community service programmes that are specifically directed at female migrant workers and that connect training inputs with immediate empowerment-oriented outcomes. For that reason, the present programme should be seen as filling a modest but meaningful gap: it demonstrates how the conceptual concerns outlined in the earlier section may be translated into a concrete international community service practice with observable social and economic relevance.

CONCLUSION

Summary of Programme Achievements

The community service programme demonstrated that a short-term, structured intervention can generate meaningful empowerment outcomes for Indonesian female migrant workers in Malaysia. The activity helped increase participants' awareness of other economic options, improved their knowledge about running home-based businesses, and encouraged them to work towards bettering their household income. These results align with the study conducted by Wolor et al. (2021), which highlighted the importance of human resources and creative efforts in maintaining economic activities when resources are limited. In addition, Suhud et al. (2022) pointed out that factors related to behavior, such as motivation and engagement, are essential in influencing actions connected to economic matters. The programme also aligns with the findings of Suhud et al. (2024) highlighted that behavioural factors such as motivation and engagement play a critical role in shaping economic-related actions. The programme also aligns with Suhud et al. (2024), who demonstrated that perceived value and experience influence individuals' behavioural intentions. Despite these contributions, prior studies have largely focused on tourism or creative industries rather than migrant worker empowerment, indicating that this programme extends existing knowledge into a new applied context.

Practical Implications for Similar Community Service Initiatives

The findings suggest that community service initiatives should prioritise practical, context-sensitive training that integrates empowerment with accessible entrepreneurial models. The concept of home-based industries is especially important because it fits the needs of migrant workers who have limited resources and mobility. In line with Gaffar et al. (2022), digital transformation and the utilisation of social media can significantly enhance entrepreneurial capacity and market reach. Additionally, Suhud et al. (2024) highlighted the significance of

Behavioural engagement and psychological readiness play a key role in shaping how individuals participate and act. From a global standpoint, Vasudevan and Arokiasamy (2023) pointed out that combining technology with support from organisations leads to better learning results and improved performance. Mohammad (2025) showed that artificial intelligence and digital tools can enhance accessibility and make educational processes more efficient. However, although these studies offer useful insights, their application within short-term, international community service programs focused on migrant workers remains limited, indicating a need for further development in this area.

Limitations of the Activity

Several limitations should be acknowledged. The brief length of the programme limited the extent of training provided and reduced the chances for further assistance after completion. The small number of participants limits how widely the results can be applied. Moreover, differences in the participants' backgrounds affected their ability to fully participate in the training. Previous studies have indicated that sustained organisational support and continuous engagement are essential for long-term impact (Gathmyr et al., 2025). Similarly, Wolor and others in 2023 discovered that being adaptable and open to change are essential for maintaining economic activities, especially in situations where things are not certain. While the present programme achieved immediate outcomes, it did not incorporate longitudinal evaluation, which has been identified as a key gap in many empowerment initiatives. Therefore, future programmes should address these limitations to ensure more sustainable impacts.

Recommendations for Future Programmes

Future programs should take a more thorough and lasting approach by including ongoing mentoring, digital support tools, and working together with local communities and organizations. Research from INTI International University highlights the importance of inclusive innovation and sustainable leadership in enhancing the impact of educational and empowerment initiatives (Vasudevan & Arokiasamy, 2023). In addition, Amin et al. (2025) It was emphasized that incorporating artificial intelligence into education can enhance accessibility and make learning more effective. From the perspective of Suhud and colleagues, motivation and behavioural intention remain central drivers of individual action, particularly in economic and entrepreneurial contexts (Yusup et al., 2025). In addition, Gaffar et al. (2022) showed that digital transformation can help improve entrepreneurial resilience, and Wolor et al. (2021) emphasized the role of creativity and human resources in supporting the survival of small-scale industries. Suhud et al. (2025) also indicated that sustainability and perceived value are critical in shaping long-term behavioural outcomes.

When considered as a whole, these results indicate that future community service programs should go beyond temporary efforts and instead focus on creating comprehensive support systems that include training, new technology, encouragement, and ongoing assistance. This approach would help migrant women achieve lasting economic progress.

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