

Impact Assessment on the Business Performance of the 2017 Graduates of the Kapatid Mentor ME (KMME) Program of the Department of Trade and Industry in Digos City

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Abstract: The Kapatid Mentor ME (KMME) Program of the Philippine Government was designed with the goal to help Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) scale up their business by weekly coaching and mentoring. It is claimed that it is a successful program because of the success stories of the graduates. However, there is still no published articles or researches that show the impact of the program to the graduates in Digos City. Thus, this study was conducted. The main objective of the study was to assess the impact of the KMME in the overall performance on the registered business(s) of the 2017 graduates in Digos City. A qualitative evaluation research design was employed and a series of key informant interviews were conducted with the five participants chosen for the study. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis and revealed that the program has a positive impact on both the personal improvement of the participants, and business performance has scaled up.

Keywords: Business Performance, Entrepreneurship, Evaluation, Mentorship, Training

I. Introduction

No one can claim success of any project unless a systematic and well-thought evaluation is conducted. No one either can suggest improvements unless the downside of the project is determined (San Jose [1], 2019). Program's success is determined by specificity of constructs applied (Dvir, Lipovetsky, Shenhar, & Tishler [2], 1998); commitment of participants and competencies of service providers (Chan, Ho, & Tam [3], 2001); organization's support (Alias, Zawawi, Yusof, & Aris [4], 2014; Belout & Gauvreau [5], 2004; Mir & Pinnington [6], 2014); participants' involvement (Takim & Akintoye [7], 2002); and on efficient use of resources and on the effectiveness and satisfaction of the respondents (Ogunlana [8], 2010).

Zaineab [9] (2011) observed that contemporary organizations lack the mechanism of training evaluation because they are not interested to pay for an honest to goodness evaluation and don't want to hear feedbacks from the participants. On the other hand, Tozman [10] (2012) pointed out that institution feared that evaluation is not accurate as they want it to be. However, San Jose and Mortos [11] (2018) believed in the pro-active role of training evaluation because its results may be basis for program development, improvement and innovation.

One of the missions of President Rodrigo Roa Duterte for his present administration is the prosperity for all that no one should be left behind. In order to achieve the inclusive growth aspired by Filipinos, the President ordered that micro and small entrepreneurs need to be equipped with entrepreneurship education, training and other means of mentorship to propel their businesses to success and development (Concepcion [12], 2019). The President believes that mentorship can provide mentees opportunities to learn from the experiences of the mentors (Beck [13], 1989); helps explore valuable skills, aspirations, and hand-on activities (Knouse & Fontenot [14], 2008); and develops the talents of both mentee and mentor (Spence & Hyams-Ssekasi [15], 2015).

On October 07, 2016, the Department of Trade and Industry in partnership with the Philippine Center for Entrepreneurship (PCE) conceptualized the "Kapatid Angat Lahat" Program. The components of the "Kapatid Angat

Lahat” is the Mentor ME, Adopt a Shared Service Facilities (SSF) and Inclusive Business (IB) (Perez [16], 2016).The Kapatid Mentor – Micro Entrepreneur (Mentor ME) Program is aimed to help MSMEs scale up their business by weekly coaching and mentoring, guided by a 10 – modules program, by business owners and practitioners on different functional areas of entrepreneurship. Presidential adviser for entrepreneurship and Go Negosyo founder Joey Concepcion considers the Kapatid Mentor ME (KMME) Program as a successful program of the DTI because of the success stories of the graduates of the KMME. A graduate of the KMME Program from Roxas City, said that the program helped her in organizing her business. Another graduate from Baguio City, said that through the KMME program, she was able to acquire additional knowledge and training necessary for her business (Concepcion [17], 2019).

However, the researchers had not encountered any published articles or reports showing the impact of the KMME Program to the graduates of Digos City. Hence, this study was conducted.

This study aims to evaluate the impact of the Kapatid Mentor ME Program on the business performance of the 2017 graduates of the program in Digos City. Further, the study aimed to determine the impact of the KMME program on the personal level of the graduates - their post – program progress and to know whether or not their business(s) had scaled up after attending the KMME Program. The results of this study can be used for evaluation purposes of the Department of Trade and Industry’s implementation of the KMME Program in Digos City.

II. Objectives of the Study and Research Questions

The general objective of this research study was to assess the impact of the Mentor ME Program in the overall business performance on the registered business(s) of the 2017 graduates in Digos City.

2.1 Research Questions

The key informant interview was guided by the following research questions:

- 2.1.1 What is the impact of the Mentor ME Program on the personal improvement of the 2017 graduates?
- 2.1.2 What is the impact of the Mentor ME Program on the overall business performance of the business(s) of the 2017 graduates?

III. Review of Related Literature

In this part of the research paper, we presented existing literatures that will support the findings found in this study. We focused on micro, small and medium – sized enterprises and how entrepreneurial education and mentorship help in its survival and growth. Further, we also presented in this section the current design and the modules of the topics discussed during the Kapatid Mentor ME program.

3.1 Micro, Small and Medium – Sized Enterprises

Micro, Small and Medium – Sized Enterprises (MSMEs) are considered as the engine of growth in the present knowledge – based economies. They also play a crucial role in the economic sustainability of Asian developing countries (Roldan[18], 2015). Moreover, Hampel – Milagrosa[19] (2014) opined that in developing countries, the micro and small enterprises (MSEs) comprise the largest part of the industrial fabric. This industry offers millions of people around the globe the chance to be employed and to earn their own livelihoods.

Legaspi[20] (2012) mentioned that the Micro, Small and Medium – sized Enterprises (MSMEs) are considered as the backbone of the Philippine Economy. The important roles of MSMEs in the country are creation of wealth, dispersion of new industries to the countryside and stimulation of gainful employment. Moreover, they also contribute to the equitable distribution of income and poverty alleviation. Sullivan[21] (2000) stressed the importance of learning to the survival and growth of small to medium – sized enterprises.

3.2 Entrepreneurial Education and Mentorship

Proper entrepreneurship education, training and other means of mentorship is vital to achieve the inclusive growth that President Duterte longs for the Philippine economy. Mentorship play an important role because it paves the way of having a companion and a guide in embarking on the challenging journey of entrepreneurship (Concepcion[22], 2019).

In the same vein, St – Jean and Audet[23] (2009) showed that mentoring offers a lot of benefits to the participants of a mentoring session. These benefits can be viewed from two learning standpoints. The first is from a cognitive learning standpoint. In this standpoint, the benefits of mentoring include an increased in management knowledge and skills, improved vision for the participants' business venture and identifying of new opportunities in the market. The other learning standpoint is the affective learning. In this standpoint, the benefits of mentoring to the participants include a greater sense of self – efficacy, validation of one's entrepreneurial self – image and a lowered sense of solitude. All benefits combined, these could positively influence entrepreneur resilience.

3.3 Project KAPATID

This project is an initiative of the Department of Trade and Industry and the Philippine Center for Entrepreneurship (PCE) to help the country's micro and small enterprises (MSEs) through three key components (1) the Mentor ME (micro entrepreneurs) program, a coaching and mentoring approach where large corporations teach MSEs on different aspects of business operations; (2) the Adopt – an – SSF (Shared Service Facility) program, which aims to help micro entrepreneurs by providing them access to SSFs in their community; and (3) the Inclusive Business (IB) model where MSEs are linked into large companies' value chains.

3.4 Mentor ME Seminars

The Mentor ME program aims to help micro and small entrepreneurs scale up their enterprises; to spur economic activity and generate employment opportunities; and to mainstream OTOPrepreneurs who are ready for business expansion.

The Mentor ME Program features ten (10) modules that shall subject the mentees to various business concepts and develop the acumen needed in scaling up and sustaining their enterprise. These modules are:

3.4.1 Entrepreneurial Mind – Setting & Values Formation

This module will be focusing on the entrepreneur himself, discussing the mindset and values for success. It will also reveal how the entrepreneur achieve his/her goal and how to deal with challenges and opportunities. Further, it will also discuss the process and requirement of formalizing the enterprise and the etiquettes to do business in a legal way.

3.4.2 Marketing Mindset (Situation Analysis, Business as a Solution & Matching with the Market)

In this module, the mentees will be taught how to plan out the marketing direction of their enterprises, how to identify the specific markets they can target, how to design strategies for their products and services to match the demands of the market and how to appreciate the size, significance and sustainability of their market.

3.4.3 Market – Driven Product Development and Innovation

In this module, the mentees are taught how to clearly define their unique value propositions for their identified target markets. Further, the mentees will be educated on the value of innovation in today's increasingly competitive marketplace.

3.4.4 Business Model Canvass

In this module, the mentor will introduce the Business Model Canvass as a visual tool for the mentees to comprehensively map out their business models and to draw different business strategies therefrom.

3.4.5 Operations Management

This module capacitates the mentees with the necessary knowledge of operations management and enables them to determine high – value activities that they should engage in so as to achieve superior customer satisfaction and increased returns for their enterprises. Further, this equips the mentees with information and insights on planning, scheduling and implementing activities in the areas of procurement, production, storage and quality management.

3.4.6 Supply and Value Chain

This module will help the mentees to understand the value of being a part of a business chain and the importance of having a solid understanding with both suppliers and customers. It will also discuss how additional product or service will impact the value of their products to customers.

3.4.7 Human Resource and Organization Management

This module will discuss the recruitment process and the basics of managing employees while growing the enterprise. Mentees will learn the importance of maintaining morale, motivation and prerequisites associated in retaining talents.

3.4.8 Entrepreneurial Accounting and Financial Management

The mentees will be taught the basic terminologies and bookkeeping method, which are used to determine if they are earning or losing money; basics of preparing financial statements and different techniques in improving cash cycle.

3.4.9 Taxation

This module introduces the general principles of taxation and statutory provisions on income and business taxation including pertinent revenue regulation. Further, it discusses the basic tax laws and what tax category they fall under, the provision and its impact on their businesses.

3.4.10 Business Law (Obligations and Contracts)

This module fortifies the mentees with basic knowledge of prevailing laws on obligations and contracts as contained in the Civil Code of the Philippines. It empowers the mentees with the awareness of their rights in the undertaking of agreements and contracts as well as a good grasp of legal predicaments that can arise from their transactions and dealings in the course of their business operations.

IV. Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

4.1 Theoretical Framework

Mentoring is increasingly seen as a critical skill for modern business. It builds on a team concept that represents a win-win situation for the organization as a whole, for the mentor, and for the mentee. It focuses on work - related needs of the company while building the skills of individual employees (Beck, Denver & Schornack[24], 2011).

Further, theories show that mentoring help workers expand their understanding of the company. One of the mostly used mentoring style is the Short - Term, Training - Based Mentoring. Some companies organize in - house training sessions or have their employees attend industry - specific training seminars to help them learn about new technologies, improved practices or up-and-coming business strategies. This type of mentoring is effective at helping mentees learn a new skill or practice (Tucker[25], 2017).

4.2 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework used in this study is the Input - Process - Output structural framework. According to Yu (2000), the input - process - output framework is described as a structural framework wherein it shows how different inputs, intermediate and output variables form causal relationships in a system, as shown in Fig. 1 below.

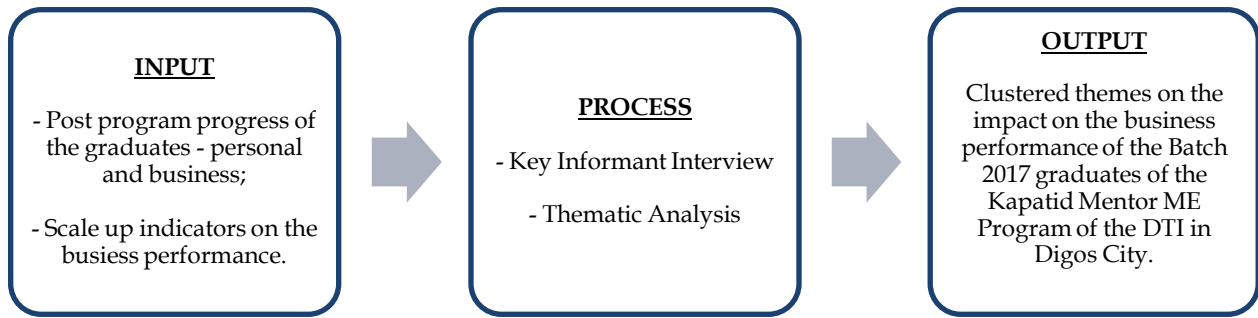


Figure 1. Input – Process – Output Structural Framework

V. Method

5.1 Research Design

Qualitative method specifically evaluation approach was used in this study. Qualitative method's main focus is to recognize the importance of human experiences (Jackson, Drummond & Camara[26], 2007; San Jose, Bahket, & Ali Alsalhi[27], 2017) ; obtains personal and relevant encounter of the participants to the phenomenon or issue (San Jose & Mortos[28], 2017); describes personal confessions, opinions, narratives, and reflections (Brinkman, 2014); deals with the processes not on statistical requirement (Mays & Pope[29], 1995); and requires another study to verify the viability of the participants views (San Jose & Mortos[30], 2017). Further, evaluation research design is considered a rigorous systematic process which involves collecting data about organizations, processes, programs, services, and/or resources. It is used for evaluative purposes, and as an assessment process that employs special techniques to evaluate social programs. The goal of evaluation research is to enhance knowledge and decision making that will lead to practical applications (Powell[31], 2006).

5.2 Participants of the Study

The participants of this study were the graduates of Batch 2017 of the Mentor ME Program hosted by the Department of Trade and Industry Davao del Sur Office in the province of Davao del Sur. The date of the graduation of batch 2017 was last October 04, 2017. There were 23 graduates in batch 2017. Out of the 23 graduates, five (5) participants were selected for this study.

5.3 Sampling Technique

In choosing the participants of the study, the purposive sampling was used. Tongco[32] (2007) characterized purposive sampling technique as having deliberate choice of informant due to the qualities they possesses. Moreover, Bernard[33] (2002); Lewis and Sheppard[34] (2006) averred that in purposive sampling researchers set out to find people who can and are willing to provide the information by virtue of knowledge or experience. It allows the researchers to collect the necessary data from the participants who have first – hand on the event. In this study, we purposively selected eight participants from the list of graduates of Batch 2017. The list was acquired from the Department of Trade and Industry – Davao del Sur Provincial Office, Aurora Street, Digos City, Davao del Sur.

5.4 Data Sources

The data obtained in this study were taken from the documents and records given by the staff and employees of the Department of Trade and Industry – Davao del Sur Office; from the participants through the key informant interviews; and from readings of the related literature of the study acquired from different online journal articles. The data were

gathered in the whole month of October 2019 in Davao del Sur. All the data acquired from the participants were recorded and transcribed by the researchers. The interview lasted for approximately forty – five (45) minutes.

5.5 Collection of Data

The data were gathered using the semi - structured key informant interview questions. Key informant interviews are considered qualitative in – depth interviews with people who give necessary information, ideas, and insight on a particular subject (Kumar[35], 1989). The key informant interview was used because the identified participants had the first – hand experience and knowledge of the Mentor ME Program and were active participants during the program.

Before the conduct of key informant interview, research interview guide questions were formulated and were submitted to the research adviser for checking and validation. The guide questions were patterned after the official monitoring template acquired from the office of DTI Region XI, Davao del Sur. The guide questions were divided into two parts. The first part was intended to assess the impact of the Mentor ME Program on the personal improvement of the 2017 graduates. The second part was focused on assessing the impact of the Mentor ME Program on their registered business(s). After checking, necessary modifications were made. After which, the approval of the research adviser to start they key informant interview was sought.

After securing the approval of the research adviser to start the key informant interview, the identified participants for the study were communicated through call and text messages. The contact numbers of the participants were acquired from the Department of Trade and Industry – Davao del Sur Office. The participants were informed about the intention, purpose and significance of the study. The participants were assured that their identity and the information obtained from them would be treated with utmost confidentiality and were used solely for the purpose of the study. The face – to – face interview was scheduled by the participants. Before the formal conduct of the interview, the participants’ approval to audio record the proceedings for proper documentation was also obtained.

5.6 Analysis and Interpretation of Data

In analyzing and interpreting of information gathered, we used the thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is considered as most common method used in qualitative method due to its accessibility and flexibility (Braun & Clarke[36], 2012). It is also considered as the method for identifying and analyzing patterns of meaning in a given data set (Joffe[37], 2012; Braun & Clarke[38], 2006). The thematic analysis also shows which themes are important in the description of the phenomenon under study (Joffe & Yardley[39], 2004; Joffe[40], 2012).

In analyzing the recorded transcription, the Colaizzi’s[41] (1978) distinctive seven step process was followed in analyzing the data. These seven steps are summarized in the Table 1 below:

Table 1. Steps in Colaizzi’s Descriptive Phenomological Method

Steps	Description
1. Familiarization	The researcher(s) should read the transcript several times to familiarize him or herself of the participant’s accounts on the phenomena under study.
2. Identifying significant statements	Identify all the statements or phrases that have direct relevance to the phenomenon under study.
3. Formulating meanings	Out from the identified statements or phrases, formulate meanings relevant to the phenomenon under study.
4. Clustering themes	Out from the formulated meanings, the researcher(s) should group together the identified meanings into themes that are common across all the accounts of the participants.
5. Developing an exhaustive description	Write a full and inclusive description the phenomenon, incorporating all the themes produced in Step 4.
6. Producing the fundamental structure	Condense the full and inclusive description, from Step 5, down to a short and dense statement that covers those aspects essential to the structure of the phenomenon.
7. Seeking verification of the fundamental structure	The researcher(s) should go back to the participants to ask them for verification on the statements and meanings produced by the researcher(s) and to ask whether these meanings captured the participant’s experience.

However, small innovation from Colaizzi's (1978) seven steps, as suggested by Tudy & Tudy[42] (2016), from the techniques used by Andersen & Spencer (2002), one table was made only with four columns which contain significant statements, participant's code, formulated meanings, and themes (Tudy[43], 2017).

5.7 Role of the Researchers

As researchers, before the conduct of the study, the permission of our subject adviser to proceed was sought. After getting the necessary permission, the office of the Department of Trade and Industry was visited and asked for the necessary data related to the 2017 graduates of the Kapatid Mentor ME Program. Roles as researchers included the roles of an interviewer, transcriber, translator, analysts and writer. During the key informant interview, the role of an interviewer was played, wherein making the informant as comfortable with us as much as possible for them to be able to become more open into sharing confidential data in connection to their business performance. The importance of the study was also explained to make them share to the interviewers their experience and learnings they gained from the Kapatid Mentor ME Program. The whole interview was audio recorded through the mobile phone of the researchers with the permission of the informants. Then, the audio recorded experiences, learnings and data were transcribed and were analyzed using the thematic analysis wherein patterns and themes were identified. As a writer, textual and structural presentation out of the identified patterns and themes were made.

5.8 Trustworthiness

Qualitative researches are being criticized in the past because the results are said to be subjective, anecdotal, subject to researcher bias and lack generalizability by producing large quantities of detailed information about a single, unique phenomenon or setting (Cope[44], 2014; Koch & Harrington[45], 1998). The validity and reliability of the results of qualitative researches are seen in its trustworthiness (Tudy[46], 2017). Guba[47] (1981) enumerated four criteria to measure trustworthiness – credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability (Tudy[48], 2017).

5.8.1 Credibility

Among the four criterion enumerated by Guba[49](1981), credibility of the study or the confidence in the data and findings presented is considered as the most important criterion (Connelly[50], 2016; Polit & Beck[51], 2014). Lincoln and Guba[52] (1985) pointed out that credibility is obtained when there is a long-term encounter with the participants under investigation. Shenton[53] (2004) added that by dealing with the participants, the researchers can 'demonstrate the true picture' of the issue under investigation. To ensure the credibility of the data presented, they should be the accurate translations from the responses of the informants (Tudy[54], 2017; Graneheim & Lundman[55], 2004).

In collecting the data necessary for this study, the list of the graduates last 2017 from the Kapatid Mentor ME Program was acquired. The employees from Department of Trade and Industry recommended some graduates who they believe are comfortable enough to share their personal experiences and some business information to us. They were contacted via mobile phone calls or personal message via Facebook, and explained to them the purpose for contacting them and informed them that their personal information from Department of Trade and Industry were given by the latter for the purpose of this study. The interview were scheduled based on the most convenient time of the informant. The questions in the interview were validated by the research adviser. With the permission of the informant, the interview was audio recorded. Later on, the audio record of their responses were transcribed. To ensure the validity and accuracy of the responses, transcript of their responses and formulated meanings, another meeting with the informant for them to read and evaluate the transcript and interpretations made was scheduled. After their evaluation, the informant was asked to sign the participant's verification form to attest to the truthfulness and accuracy of the data. By signing the participant's verification form, they categorically declared that the transcript and formulated meanings were the same information that they had provided during the audio recorded key informant interview.

5.8.2 Transferability

Transferability refers to the degree to which the findings can be applied to other contexts and settings or with other groups (Krefting[56], 1991). Lincoln and Guba[57] (1985), Cobb and Forbes[58] (2002) and Creswell, Hanson, Clark Plano and Morales[59] (2007) averred that transferability is gained when researchers 'provide sufficient description as to

whether the findings may be applicable or transferable to another. It is believed that the procedures and results of this study are applicable to other studies for two good reasons: first, evaluative study is a common method used in understanding the outputs of the program. Thus, the procedures followed by this study may be applied by other researchers in conducting evaluative study. Second, there are many other aspects of small and medium enterprises that need to be explored; thus, results of this study may give beneficial knowledge to the future researchers

5.8.3 Dependability

Dependability is gained by observing rigorous procedures in the conduct of research (Trochim[60], 2006) and peer checking (Gunawan[61], 2015). It is obtained when researchers provide thorough literatures relevant to the topic under investigation (Catoto & San Jose[62], 2016). This research was dependable because it considered the strict procedures in the conduct of qualitative research from the formulation of the problem until the preparation of the references. Moreover, peer checking was also conducted to confirm the veracity of the information and procedures followed.

5.8.4 Confirmability

Confirmability involves the veracity of results of the investigation (Shenton[63], 2004; Trochim[64], 2006); presents the ability of the researchers to triangulate the gathered information (Drisko[65], 1997); shows reliability and objectivity (Simon & Goes[66], 2016); establishes that information exist to support interpretations (Brott[66], 2015); and provides deep discussions of the findings (Bush and Amechi[67], 2019). In this study, confirmability is established by consulting an expert qualitative researcher to conduct audit trail, congruence of methods and procedures, and verification of gathered information against the results. Further, the transcribed information and recordings were kept by the researchers for further verification of interested individuals.

5.9 Ethical Consideration

The protection of the privacy and rights of the informants in any kind of research is imperative (Orb, Eisenhauer & Wynaden[68], 2001). According to Richards and Schwartz[69] (2002), in order to achieve the goals of qualitative research without violating the rights of the informants, the following areas should be given serious considerations: anonymity, confidentiality, and informed consent.

5.9.1 Anonymity

Anonymity is observed when the details such as names, places, company names and other details that reveal identities of persons or organizations being studied are taken out (Tudy[70], 2017). In this study, the real names of the participants were changed into random names to prevent any revelation of identities. All throughout this study, the names presented here are not the real names of the informants. During the key informant interview, the informants identified some of their major customers, in order to protect the identity of these customers, we did not identify their names and company names in the analysis of data.

5.9.2 Confidentiality

Qualitative researchers find it challenging to maintain confidentiality while trying to present rich and detailed accounts shared by the informants' from their own personal experiences (Kaiser[71], 2009). However, Tudy and Tudy[72] (2016) said that confidentiality should be sustained to the highest extent. In addressing this, all the data gathered from the informants, including their names, organizations, business' names, customers and other personal and business information, were handled and treated with utmost confidentiality.

5.9.3 Informed Consent

Richards and Schwartz[73] (2002) pointed out that an informed consent is a prerequisite for all researches that involve identifiable subjects. According to Tudy and Tudy[74] (2016), an informed consent should contain the following: purpose of the study, duration of the conduct of the whole study, methodology, possible benefits and risks, and statement of the 16 participant's voluntary involvement and their rights to withdraw their participation from the study.

The informed consent, when the informant affixed their signature, served as a form of agreement between them and the researchers and this also helped ensure the confidentiality of the data gathered in the study [75] (Tudy, 2017).

Before the start of the key informant interview, the informed consent form was shown to the informant first. Time was given to read the same and the terms specified were discussed and when they have already fully understood their participation in the study, they affixed their signature in the space provided.

VI. Results

The results of the analysis of the data gathered last October – November 2019 through a key – informant interview are presented in this section into three subsections – discussion on the impact of the Mentor ME Program on the personal improvement and on the business performance of the 2017 participants; and the discussion of the scale – up indicators that would measure the overall performance of the business.

6.1 Impact on Personal Improvement

The impact of the Mentor ME Program on the personal improvement of the 2017 graduates is their improved business skills and social and family responsibility. In the analysis of the responses of the informants, the following themes are formulated:

6.1.1 Improved knowledge of the business

When the informants were asked how the program did affect them as a businessman, their common answer was the program helped them identify the lapses in their business. Juan considered Mentor ME as a big help to him and his business because during the program they were taught ways how to manage business that they did not know yet (Juan, T2, P1, L13-16). Dindo said,

“Akoa lang, daghan kaayog nag-negosyo nga blindfolded bitaw, kulang ug know – how pag-abot sa negosyo. Even though kabalo sila mobuhat ug product pero other aspects sa negosyo, wala sila kabalo. Pero gitudlo siya during the program (Dindo, T5, P1, L20-23).” Mentor ME really is important especially to those businessmen who are blindfolded. Even though they know how to make products yet they do not have any idea how to do business, Mentor ME serves as a bridge to connect that gap.

6.1.2 Improved knowledge on product development and innovation

During the Mentor ME, the program taught them the importance of product development and innovation that would cater their current target market. They were also encouraged by the program to innovate other products that would cater other customers to make their market penetration bigger. Roxy emphasized, “Kinahanglan jud diay mag-innovate gud, kay maingganyo napud ang mga tao ba (Roxy, T1, P3, L78-79)”. I realized that innovated products is more attractive to the customers.

6.1.3 Improved vision for the business

The program taught the informants to make a business model canvass that will serve as their guide to the future of the business. Ronron shared,

“DTI encouraged me to prepare our current business na maabot ang time na mahimo ng corporation among business together with my siblings (Ronron, T4, P2, L38-40)”. Ronron was even encouraged to prepare a business plan that will prepare their business into shifting to a corporation form of business organization in the future.

6.1.4 Improved marketing skills

After the program, they were able to formulate different marketing strategies on how to improve their current product offering and how they can cater other customers. Ronron proposed to his siblings,

“Another, magchange napud mi ug packaging. From plastic to wax paper, nya dapat naay name sa among business. Para maknown jud pud mi (Ronron, T4, P2 L49-50)”. I also proposed that our business should improve our packaging. From plastic cellophane to wax paper. And the name of our business should appear in our packaging.

6.1.5 Personal and family responsibility

The informants were once also an employee who used to depend on their salary for their daily personal and family consumption. But after the program, they decided to focus on business and left their employers. Roxy said,

“Oo dako jud ang natabang gud, unsa, gud na. 24 years in service gud ko nanarbaho pero kwan ra gud sya, bisan asa ko wala jud ko’y pili na trabaho bisan asa ko ibutang, basta maka kwarta, gamay ra man akong kuan mao to sige kog kuan paningkamot aron maka survive, magskwela sila, naka decide ko, basin unsa ra man gud akong pangkwarta, unya kining kakanin, gamay ra man gud ug kapital, basig gamay sya’g ginansya, pero kanunay pero okay sya pero karun, three years pagud 19 ko nagnegosyo pero nakadecision ko na magfocus na sa negosyo kay dako jud kaayo kalahian (Roxy, T1, P2, L53-58)”. It is a big help for us. I’ve been employed for 24 years yet, I kept on having sideline business because I was earning little from my salary. But now, my business is still only just three years old but I decided to focus on business because the difference on my savings in the business is really bigger than employment.

6.2 Impact on the business performance

The impact of the Mentor ME Program on the personal improvement of the 2017 graduates is their improved business performance. In the analysis of the responses of the informants, the following themes related to their business are formulated:

6.2.1 Improved production and operation

After the program, the informants became bold:

6.2.1.1 To invest on equipment

“Oo, makita jud ang savings. Unya makapalit nakag mga gamit, magdunga’g kada tuig, magdungag mga gamit or equipment para sa negosyo (Petra, T3, P3, L82- 83)”. We can now see our savings from our business. And we used those savings to invest in our business through buying of equipment to be used in our production.

6.2.1.2 To invest on the improvement of their production area

“Yes. Nag-apply mi ug loan para ma - improve among production area (Dindo, T5, P3, L103)”. We applied loans from financial institutions used to improve our production area.

6.2.1.3 To invest on the automation of their production and operations system

“Upgraded lang among production system (Dindo, T5, P4, L116)”. Our number of employees did not change but we have upgraded our production and operations system. Further, the informants realized the importance of having an established supplier for that purpose, after the program, Ronron shared,

“Importante man gud diay ang supplier (Ronron, T4, P1, L25)”. Now, Supplier, for me, is very important in one’s business.

6.2.2 Improved control and monitoring of business

Before the program, most of the informants failed to practice proper financial accounting and reporting. After, they are now practicing proper financial accounting and reporting and are now able to know how their business performed for a specific period. Petra emphasized,

“Pag-abot sa Mentor ME didto na namu nakita ang mga lapses namo nga wla namo gikuha para sa suga. Wala mi nagkwenta ana, para sa tubig, walay, kwenta; para sa gasolina wala,; pero pag sa Mentor ME na, didto na namo, gikuha para sa suga, kuryente, tubig, gasolina, para deliver, then ang among sweldo so, kabalo nami, kung naka-ginansya jud ba mi o wala (Petra, T3, P2, L39-42)”. During the Mentor ME Program, we were able to identify our lapses in our business. For example, computing for the net income, if there was any. After the Mentor ME Program, we started computing for our net income/loss for that period.

6.2.3 Improved employee involvement and welfare

The informants saw the importance of training their employees. Due to limited budget, the informant or one of the employees attend trainings related to food handling and everything learned from the trainings will be reechoed to the remaining employees who were not able to participate in the training. Ronron shared,

“Sa among employees, wala pa jud. Pero gusto jud nako sila i-undergo ug mga training, especially, sa proper handlings of food na trainings. Pero akong wife, siya man ang hands – on jud diha sa among negosyo, naga-attend siya. Nya, iyahang gina-tudluan ra among mga empleyado (Ronron, T4, P5, L167)”. My wife is the one who undergoes trainings and seminars related to food handling. After the training, she teaches everything that she have learned to our employees.

6.3 Scale – up indicators

To know whether or not their business(s) had scaled up after attending the KMME Program, the Department of Trade and Industry provided these indicators that would measure the overall performance of the business. The informants were asked first if they can provide specific amounts in pesos or figures. However, since they consider their financial data very sensitive, they preferred to specify whether or not the status of the indicator have increased or decreased.

6.3.1 Increased sales

All of the informants shared that their sales have increased after the Kapatid Mentor ME Program. They said that during the program, they just didn't improve their business skills but also they gained connections that helped them in promoting their business and their products (Ronron, T4, P5, L146-148).

6.3.2 Increased asset size

All of the informants declared that the asset size of their business also increased due to the improvement of their production and operations and investment on acquiring of equipment.

6.3.3 Increased number of major customers

All of the five informants declared that their major customers increased. Since, the Department of Trade and Industry helped the participants promote their business, their products became known. And as mentioned above, they have gained connections from the other participants during the Mentor ME program, the number of major customers have also increased. One informant said that some of her customers buy the products for the purpose of bringing it back with them to Singapore and Canada (Petra, T3, P4, L111).

6.3.4 Increased number of employees

All of the five informants shared that the number of their employees had increased due to the increase of volume of production, especially during peak seasons, like Christmas and the likes (Petra, T3, P4, L115).

6.3.5 Increased number of product lines

Four out of the five informants said that the number of their product lines also increased because of their innovated products.

6.3.6 Usage of digital platforms

Four out of the five informants said that they have also started using digital platforms, like Facebook, as an outlet for selling their products.

VII. Tables of Analyzed Data

7.1 Significant Statements and Formulated Meanings

Table 2 below shows the significant statements said by the participants during the key informant interview and their formulated meanings.

Table 2. Significant Statements and Formulated Meanings

Significant Statement	Code	Formulated Meaning
Para matudloan ko unsaon pag-operate ug insakto sa business	Roxy, T1, Page 1, Line 21	To learn how to manage well the business.
Oo, nagchange jud, unsa man to sauna, nga diri, wala pa man ko, wala pa jud, karon kay naa na.	Roxy, T1, Page 2, Line 31	Yes, it changes a lot, me from nothing now to something.
Ah, oo, nidako sya.	Roxy, T1, Page 2, Line 45	Yes, we gain a lot.
Oo, kay naa mi mga trabaho.	Roxy, T1, Page 2, Line 47	It gives us a job.
"...dako jud ang natabang gud.."	Roxy, T1, Page 2, Line 53	'...it's a big help for us.."
oo dako jud ang natabang gud, unsa, gud na. 24 years in service gud ko nanarbaho pero kwan ra gud sya, bisan asa ko wala jud ko'y pili na trabaho bisan asa ko ibutang, basta maka kwarta, gamay ra man akong kuan mao to sige kog kuan paningkamot aron maka survive, magskwela sila, naka decide ko, basin unsa ra man gud akong pangkwarta, unya kining kakanin, gamay ra man gud ug kapital, basig gamay sya'g ginansya, pero kanunay pero okay sya pero karun, three years pagud ko nagnegosyo pero nakadecision ko na magfocus na sa negosyo kay dako jud kaayo kalahian	Roxy, T1, Page 2, Lines 53 - 59	It is a big help for us. I've been employed for 24 years yet, I kept on having sideline business because I was earning little from my salary. But now, my business is still only just three years old but I decided to focus on business because the difference on my savings in the business is really bigger than employment.
"kinahanglan man jud mag-innovate gud, kay mainganyo napud ang mga tao ba.."	Roxy, T1, Page 3, Lines 78-79	"it needs to innovate, it makes more attractive to customers.."
Naa sa sales, expenses, pero gitudlo bayan a sa amoa. May baya nay importante jud.	Roxy, T1, Page 3, Line 87-88	Recording of sales and expenses, it was taught to us, because it is really important.
Sa palengke, Davao, naga hatod na sila diri. Dili nako, mag-adto-adto sila na mohatud diri.	Roxy, T1, Page 4, Line 103	In the Market, Davao city. It is them who will deliver it here.
Lahi ra jud nang passion nimu imung ginabuhat, kay manigkamot man ka. Kay kung passion man nimu malipayon man ka.	Roxy, T1, Page 4, Line 117-118	When you do your passion it ignites the desire to do your best because it makes you happy.
Ang DTI ra bay apud ang ga kuan,	Juan, T2, Page 1, Line 12-13	The DTI, encourages us to join for

so syempre madungagan ang imung skills and knowledge, unsaon nimu papadagan sa imung negosyo.		new ways of handling business plus new skills and knowledge.
Dako jud ug tabang ang Mentor ME, kay syempre, nay mga paagi namu, nga may mga pagi sa negosyo nga ilahang gitudlo na wala sa amo-ang actual nga gina implement.	Juan, T2, Page 1, Line 13-16	Mentor ME is a big help to us, especially on ways of how to manage business that we didn't know yet.
Pero ang impact sa negosyo, syempre kuan na gud. Ang MME saakong kabahin, naa na sya o wala, depende man gud na sa isa ka tao kung maningkamot ka, manigkamo jud ka. Molambo jud ka. Molambo jud imung business	Juan, T2, Page 2, Line 26-28	There is an impact to the business. However, even if there is MME or none, if you are determined and hardworking still you will gain with your business.
Aw, syempre, pero lage mao ni akong ingon nga depende ra jud sa usa ka tao studihan jud nang negosyo kay kung ang negosyo sudlan nimu labi nang ni bubo kag dako na capital.	Juan, T2, Page 3, Line 55-57	I can really recommend, but as what I have said that it really depend on the person, if you will study the nature of it cause it will require capital.
Ah, Oh. Naga record keeing nami, gikan pagsugod nagrecord keeping na mi ana. Mao bitaw kabalo mi ang hinay, kay naa jud na sa record keeping. Kon wala mi naghimo ana, pagabot sa time na kinahanglan na namu, same sa anang pag-apply namu sa DOST, kinahanglan man sila'g record. Kinahanglan jud na.	Juan, T2, Page 4, Line 80-83	From the start of our business we keep track our records. That is why we knew when is the least in sales. When time comes it is already ready, like DOST they needed the financial records.
Pero ingon nila nadala daw sa Singapore ug Canada, murag pampasalubong ba.	Petra, T3, Page 4, Line 111	Some of my customers say that they buy flavored empanada to be brought back to Singapore and Canada.
Pero naa mi on call if daghan ang orders, labi na during Christmas Season. Magpatabang njud mi. (Number of employees)	Petra, T3, Page 4, Line 115	We don't have employees because I and my husband do the production of orders. But during Christmas season, or bulk orders, we have on call employees.
Karun, mas nindot among quality because we have already established our suppliers.	Ronron, T4, Page 1, Lines 21-22	Now, I can say that the quality of our products is better because we already have an established supplier.
Importante man gud ang supplier.	Ronron, T4, Page 1, Line 25	Supplier, for me, is very important in one's business.
DTI encouraged me to prepare our current business na maabot ang time na mahimo ng corporation among business together with my	Ronron, T4, Page 2, Lines 38-40	During the Mentor ME Program, DTI encouraged me to make a business plan that will convert our current sole proprietorship business

siblings.		into a corporation.
One of proposals sa akong mama is to have a drive - thru, grabe naman kaayo ang order, dili njud maapas. So, mura mig mag-branch out mi nga mahimo siya as drive - thru.	Ronron, T4, Page 2, Lines 26-27	After the Mentor ME, since the volume of our production increased drastically, I proposed that we will branch out with a drive - thru concept.
Another, magchange napud mi ug packaging. From plastic to wax paper, nya dapat naay name sa among business. Para maknown jud pud mi.	Ronron, T4, Page 2, Line 49-50	I also proposed that our business should improve our packaging. From plastic cellophane to wax paper. And the name of our business should appear in our packaging.
So, akoang gibuhat, ga-focus ko ug additional line of products, add - on products jud.	Ronron, T4, Page 2, Lines 52-53	Since, our business now is still owned by my parents, I focused on innovating additional line of products.
Nagfocus ko ug cater sa second class and first class of customers. Isa na sa akong nakita na dapat ma-hit sad namo.	Ronron, T4, Page 2, Lines 56-57	My innovated products focused on the second class and first class of customers.
Mao ng gina-promote jud nako ang PWD entrepreneurship. Mao ng ginapatraining jud nako na sila, mga livelihood trainings. Diha man gud, ginatudluan sila ug skills sa pagbuhat products. Nya, ang business skills, ang Mentor ME program will come in. The entrepreneurial mind setting and everything related sa negosyo is very important.	Ronron, T4, Page 2, Lines 66-69	Mentor ME Program will teach you business skills and other skills related to business.
After sa Mentor ME program, ang akong nakita jud nga dapat usbon sa among negosyo. xxx Ang akoa jud nakita na angay jud i-improve kay ang among production area.	Ronron, T4, Page 3, Lines 89-91	After the Mentor ME program, the problem that I identified with our business is our current production area.
Mao na nag among area, maglisod jud mi ug han-ay. At least, kabalo ko if aha ang padulngan sa among negosyo.	Ronron, T4, Page 3, Lines 95-96	I admit that our current production area is really hard to improve, but at least, after the program, I am able to identify and pinpoint the current issues present in our business.
KMME taught me how to run, how to manage and how to improve your business properly.	Ronron, T4, Page 3, Lines 96-96	KMME taught me how to run, how to manage and how to improve your business properly.
I discovered many equipment xxx na nindot kaayo paliton na appropriate kaayo para sa among negosyo.	Ronron, T4, Page 4, Lines 104-105	After the program, I discovered many available equipment in the market that can be used in our business that will help us improve our production.
In the future, maybe. Willing jud pud mi moinvest for equipment.	Ronron, T4, Page 4, Lines 109-110.	In the future, together with my siblings, we are really willing to invest in equipment.
Para makabalo gani ka kung unsa jud ang Pros and Cons sa negosyo.	Ronron, T4, Page 4, Lines 113-116	I really recommend other entrepreneurs and would be

Kasagaran man gud sa Filipinos, we love to play “Bahala na si Lord”. xxx Business is science man gud, so dapat atoa jud syang tun-an.		entrepreneurs to enroll in the Mentor ME program, because business is science. Therefore, we really have to learn it.
I believe, ang importance, magdepende man gud na kung unsa nga klase imung negosyo. Pero para sa akoo, kaning #1 Entrepreneurial Mind Setting & Values Formation, #2 Marketing Mindset, kaning Supply and Value Chain and Human Resource Management.	Ronron, T4, Page 4, Lines 119 – 121	For me, the most important topic during the Mentor ME is the Entrepreneurial Mind Setting & Values Formation, followed by the Marketing Mindset, Supply and Value Chain and lastly the Human Resource Management.
Package naman ang Mentor ME Program, pero para sa akoo, dapat i-apil sad ang Social Media Marketing. Open naman gud kaayo ta karun. So, dapat, i-apil jud na.	Ronron, T4, Page 5, Lines 139-140	The DTI should consider the topic on Social Media Marketing because we are already living in an open world.
Stable man among sales. Ang positive jud impact sa KMME na program, kay na - promote jud kaayo among business. Mas daghan ang nakaila ug mas daghan ang nitrust sa among putohan.	Ronron, T4, Page 5, Lines 146-148	I can say that our sales are stable. The positive impact of KMME on our business is the promotion of our business. Because of the connections I have gained during the training, I was able to promote our product very well.
Dili jud kaayo ko makaingon na ni-increase among asset size kay man gud miy klaro financial recording. Mao sad akong nakita na dapat sad namong i-improve.	Ronron, T4, Page 5, Lines 150-151	I cannot really say that our asset size increased because we currently are not practicing proper financial recording. I see it as another aspect of our business that we have to improve on.
Naa mi karun credit agreement with our supplier sa among glutinous rice.	Ronron, T4, Page 5, Line 154	We don't have current loan applications but we have credit agreement with our supplier.
Yes. Kato akong mga add-ons ug akong innovated products.	Ronron, T4, Page 5, Line 156	We have new line of products. The innovated products I based from our current product offering.
Oo. Ni-increase jud among major customers. xxx is one of our regular customers	Ronron T4, Page 5, Line 160	We have increased our regular customers because our business became well - known because of the connections I was able to establish during the Mentor ME Program.
Oo. Ni - increase sad. (Number of employees)	Ronron, T4, Page 5, Line 165	Our number of employees also increased.
Sa among employees, wala pa jud. Pero gusto jud nako sila i-undergo ug mga training, especially, sa proper handlings of food na trainings. Pero akong wife, siya man ang hands - on jud diha sa among negosyo, naga-attend siya. Nya, iyahang gina-tudluan ra among mga empleyado.	Ronron, T4, Page 5, Line 167	My wife is the one who undergoes trainings and seminars related to food handling. After the training, she teaches everything that she have learned to our employees.
Oo. Facebook ug naa sad mi among	Ronron, T4, Page 6, Line 176	Yes, we have facebook page and we

kaugalingon website sad.		also have our own website.
Oo uie. Kato pa lang daan, aktibo sa imung business profile ug pagbuhat ug business model canvass. Nakita or na-identify jud namo unsa ang among angay buhaton na wala namo naapil sauna ug consider.	Dindo, T5, Page 1, Lines 16-18	Mentor ME really helped me as a businessman. It taught me the importance of making a business model canvass. And Mentor ME also helped in identifying those important aspects in business I was not able to consider before.
Oo. Importante jud ang program. Akoa lang, daghan kaayog nag-negosyo nga blindfolded bitaw, kulang ug know - how pag-abot sa negosyo. Even though kabalo sila mobuhat ug product pero other aspects sa negosyo, wala sila kabalo. Pero gitudlo siya during the program.	Dindo, T5, Page 1, Lines 20-23	Mentor ME really is important especially to those people who even though they know how to make products but do not have any idea how to do business, Mentor ME serves as a bridge to connect that gap.
Asta sad sa legal aspects, mao toy daghan kaayo nga negosyante nga wala nakabalo ana.	Dindo, T5, Page 1, Lines 23-24	Some businessmen, even though their businesses are already big and are already established, yet, they are not really knowledgeable about the laws applicable to the business. In the Mentor ME, business laws are also discussed.
Apil sad sa accounting, daghan kaayo mga negosyante karun nga dili ni ginagamit sa ilang mga negosyo. If wala ang accounting, lisod kaayo iconcontrol ang negosyo.	Dindo, T5, Page 1, Lines 24-25	Many businessmen now do not really practice proper financial accounting on their business. In the program, we were taught about its importance and how to do it. Without financial management and accounting, it will be very hard for the businessman to control the business.
Ai oo. Kay syempre, kanang, mao na ning dagan sa akong negosyo karun, nalearn nako nga whatever you put up nga negosyo, akong gina-huna2 jud kay dili lang kay imung personality, apil sad ang thinking na nga niput-up ko ani nga negosyo kay naa koy family responsibility and social responsibility.	Dindo, T5, Page 1, Lines 27-30	Mentor ME program taught me that I just didn't put up a business for my own advantage. I also have to take into consideration my family and social responsibility.
Nindot unta, nga samtang naghulat sila pagharvest, kabalo sila magvalue adding, create sila ug products from their produce. Para during sa waiting time, ga-earn gihapon sila. So, dapat jud sila tudloan. Dapat jud sila mka-attend ug Mentor ME Program. Pero mao lage, unsaon pag-approach sa DTI sa grassroots	Dindo, T5, Page 2, Lines 47-50	Those businessman, especially, in the grassroots, like our farmers, should enroll in the Mentor ME. Or the DTI should consider including the farmers in the Mentor ME program. They have their products, but they do not know how to business.
Kani tanan, para sa akoa, importante jud. Pero if akoang i-	Dindo, T5, Page 2, Lines 60-62	For me, the topic that the businessman should know first and

ranking, ang dapat pinakauna jud ug pinakaimportante sa tanan kay kaning Entrepreneurial Mind Setting ug Values Formation. Sunod ang Marketing Mindset.		foremost is the Entrepreneurial Mind Setting and Values Formation and Marketing Mindset. You should work first on yourself before you venture out into business.
Sunod, kaning Product Development and Innovation, pero dili ka-kadevelop ug innovate sa imung product if wala kay tarong nga Business Model Canvass. Kay tanan nimung development and innovation, magbase man sa imung canvass. Sa imung canvass, iapil nimu didto imung gusto nga mga development and innovation for your products.	Dindo, T5, Page 2, Lines 65-68	The next topic is product development and innovation.
If naa na kay sakto nga produkto, mofollow na dayon ang importance sa production and operations management and supply and value chain analysis. Last na ang financial management and accounting and business law.	Dindo, T5, Page 3, Lines 69-71	If you already have a product that will cater your target market, the topics on production and operation management; and supply and value chain analysis will later on will follow.
Ang importante jud kay ang Business Model Canvass, kay mao man gud ang mahimong guide nimu sa imong negosyo. If aha ka padulong.	Dindo, T5, Page 3, Lines 72-73	For me, the most important skill that a businessman should know is how to make a business model canvass, because this will serve us your guide on the future of your business.
Para sa akoo, ang kulang diay namo, kay ang application sa financial management and accounting sa among business.	Dindo, T5, Page 3, Lines 76-77	During the Mentor ME Program, I realized that the aspect on our business that we have to improve on is our financial management and accounting.
Para sa akoo, angay guro i-apil ang Value Adding sa products. Pareha sa akong giingon ganina sa situation sa atong farmers. If kabalo lang jud sila magproduce ug money samtang wala pay harvest, dili jud na sila magunitan sa liog sa mga negosyante, if naa silay kwarta, dili man na sila mangutang ba.	Dindo, T5, Page 3, Lines 88-91	The topic on value adding should be included in the topics discussed during the Mentor ME.
Increased jud (Asked whether their sales increased or not)	Dindo, T5, Page 3, Line 99	Our sales increased after the Mentor ME.
Oo. Ni-improve jud. (Asset size)	Dindo, T5, Page 3, Line 101	Yes, also our asset size increased.
Yes. (Did you apply loan from financial institutions, like banks?)	Dindo, T5, Page 3, Line 103	We applied loans from financial institutions used to improve our production area.
Ni-stick mi sa one product, pero grabe ang increased sa among volume of production	Dindo, T5, Page 4, Line 105	We stick on producing one product but the volume of production of our product increased drastically.
Wala mi nag-branch out. Pero, naa mi other outlet sa may Luna	Dindo, T5, Page 4, Lines 107-109	We have other branch, we also have production there.

Extension. Naa pud production didto. Among major customers, sad, grabe ilahang pag-branch out.		
Duha lang na sila kabuok, pero, ilahang distribution, nationwide sad. As I said ganina, sige sila ug branch out nationwide, in different places.	Dindo, T5, Page 4, Lines 111-112	We only have two major customers but our customers' product distribution is nationwide. They keep on branching out to other parts of the country.
Wala, steady lang. (Number of employees) Upgraded lang among production system.	Dindo, T5, Page 4, Line 116	Our number of employees did not change but we have upgraded our production and operations system.
Karun, sa among gibuhat, nakita namo unsa pa nga mga equipment nga angay namo paliton para mas efficient pa among trabaho.	Dindo, T5, Page 4, Lines 127-128	After the upgrade we made, we were able to pinpoint the necessary equipment we still have to invest on.
Amoang goal karun kay mo-increase jud among production area ug pace sa among production. Sige lang, in the future. For improvement jud among production area ug pace sa among production.	Dindo T5, Page 4, Lines 135-137	The goal of our business now is to expand our production area and to improve the pace of our production.
Yes. Puhon. Sa USPD guro. (Application for loan)	Dindo, T5, Page 5, Line 141	We are willing to apply for loans from local financial institution for us to realize our goal to expand.

7.2 Formulated Meanings and Clustered Themes

Table 3 below shows the formulated meanings and the clustered themes identified after the formulated meanings were analyzed and grouped together that depicts similar themes.

Table 3. Formulated Meanings and Clustered Themes

Formulated Meanings	Clustered Themes
In the Mentor ME Program, we learned how to make a business plan.	Improved knowledge of the business
During the Mentor ME Program, we were able to identify our lapses in our business.	
Supplier, for me, is very important in one's business.	
Mentor ME Program will teach you business skills and other skills related to business.	
After the Mentor ME program, the problem that I identified with our business is our current production area.	
I admit that our current production area is really hard to improve, but at least, after the program, I am able to identify and pinpoint the current issues present in our business.	
KMME taught me how to run, how to manage and how to improve your business properly.	
After the program, I discovered many available equipment in the market that can be used in our business that will help us improve our production.	
I really recommend other entrepreneurs and would be entrepreneurs to enroll in the Mentor ME program, because business is science. Therefore, we really have to learn it.	

<p>Mentor ME really helped me as a businessman. It taught me the importance of making a business model canvass. And Mentor ME also helped in identifying those important aspects in business I was not able to consider before.</p>	
<p>Mentor ME really is important especially to those people who even though they know how to make products but do not have any idea how to do business, Mentor ME serves as a bridge to connect that gap.</p>	
<p>Some businessmen, even though their businesses are already big and are already established, yet, they are not really knowledgeable about the laws applicable to the business. In the Mentor ME, business laws are also discussed.</p>	
<p>If you already have a product that will cater your target market, the topics on production and operation management; and supply and value chain analysis will later on will follow.</p>	
<p>For me, the most important skill that a businessman should know is how to make a business model canvass, because this will serve us your guide on the future of your business.</p>	
<p>During the Mentor ME Program, I realized that the aspect on our business that we have to improve on is our financial management and accounting.</p>	
<p>I truly recommend other entrepreneurs or would be entrepreneurs, especially those who are business minded but don't have a background in the study of business, to enroll themselves in the Mentor ME Program, because the program will really help you.</p>	
<p>After the program, I innovated other products other than my flavored empanada, like Spicy Dilis, Chili Sauce and Garlic Sauce.</p>	<p>Improved knowledge on product development and innovation</p>
<p>Since, our business now is still owned by my parents, I focused on innovating additional line of products.</p>	
<p>The topic on value adding should be included in the topics discussed during the Mentor ME.</p>	
<p>During the Mentor ME Program, DTI encouraged me to make a business plan that will convert our current sole proprietorship business into a corporation.</p>	<p>Improved vision for the business</p>
<p>After the Mentor ME, since the volume of our production increased drastically, I proposed that we will branch out with a drive - thru concept.</p>	
<p>In the future, together with my siblings, we are really willing to invest in equipment.</p>	
<p>I cannot really say that our asset size increased because we currently are not practicing proper financial recording. I see it as another aspect of our business that we have to improve on.</p>	
<p>After the upgrade we made, we were able to pinpoint the necessary equipment we still have to invest on.</p>	
<p>The goal of our business now is to expand our production area and to improve the pace of our production.</p>	
<p>We are willing to apply for loans from local financial institution for us to realize our goal to expand.</p>	
<p>I also proposed that our business should improve our packaging. From plastic cellophane to wax paper. And the name of our business should appear in our packaging.</p>	<p>Improved marketing skills</p>
<p>My innovated products focused on the second class and</p>	

<p>first class of customers.</p> <p>I can say that our sales are stable. The positive impact of KMME on our business is the promotion of our business. Because of the connections I have gained during the training, I was able to promote our product very well.</p>	
<p>The topic on value adding should be included in the topics discussed during the Mentor ME.</p>	<p>Improved personal and family responsibility</p>
<p>After the Mentor ME Program, I imparted my learnings to my children, they are now very business minded.</p>	
<p>According to my husband, after applying what we learned during the Mentor ME, we realized that the income we gained from our business is able to sustain my family with our daily needs.</p>	
<p>Mentor ME program taught me that I just didn't put up a business for my own advantage. I also have to take into consideration my family and social responsibility.</p>	
<p>Those businessman, especially, in the grassroots, like our farmers, should enroll in the Mentor ME. Or the DTI should consider including the farmers in the Mentor ME program. They have their products, but they do not know how to business.</p>	
<p>For me, the topic that the businessman should know first and foremost is the Entrepreneurial Mind Setting and Values Formation and Marketing Mindset. You should work first on yourself before you venture out into business.</p>	<p>Improved production and operation</p>
<p>We can now see our savings from our business. And we used those savings to invest in our business through buying of equipment to be used in our production.</p>	
<p>Now, I can say that the quality of our products is better because we already have an established supplier.</p>	
<p>We have other branch, we also have production there.</p>	
<p>Our number of employees did not change but we have upgraded our production and operations system.</p>	
<p>Now, I can say that the quality of our products is better because we already have an established supplier.</p>	
<p>We don't have current loan applications but we have credit agreement with our supplier.</p>	
<p>We applied loans from financial institutions used to improve our production area.</p>	
<p>We don't have current loan applications but we have credit agreement with our supplier.</p>	<p>Improved control and monitoring of business</p>
<p>After the Mentor ME Program, I've seen major changes in my business.</p>	
<p>Before the program, if we had sales, we didn't compute for our net income. What we did, as long as we have cash on hand, we immediately buy inventory; we even used the sales for our personal and family expenses. We didn't bother computing if during that period we gain or lose.</p>	
<p>After the Mentor ME Program, we started computing for our net income/loss for that period.</p>	
<p>In the Mentor ME Program, we saw the importance of recording, financial statement, and we learned how to manage business properly.</p>	
<p>Many businessmen now do not really practice proper financial accounting on their business. In the program, we were taught about its importance and how to do it. Without financial management and accounting, it will be very hard for the businessman to control the business.</p>	

During the Mentor ME Program, I realized that the aspect on our business that we have to improve on is our financial management and accounting.	
My wife is the one who undergoes trainings and seminars related to food handling. After the training, she teaches everything that she have learned to our employees.	Improved employee involvement and welfare
After the program, I can say that our sales increased by 50%.	Increased sales
Our sales increased after the Mentor ME.	
We stick on producing one product but the volume of production of our product increased drastically.	
We only have two major customers but our customers' product distribution is nationwide. They keep on branching out to other parts of the country.	Increased asset size
Through our savings from our business, we were able to buy additional equipment. So that is why I can say that our asset size increased by 30%.	
Yes, also our asset size increased.	
I already have regular customers after the Mentor ME. I also have stable customers who just contact me for orders for wakes and pasalubongs.	Increased number of major customers
Some of my customers say that they buy flavored empanada to be brought back to Singapore and Canada.	
We have increased our regular customers because our business became well - known because of the connections I was able to establish during the Mentor ME Program.	
We only have two major customers but our customers' product distribution is nationwide. They keep on branching out to other parts of the country.	
We don't have employees because I and my husband do the production of orders. But during Christmas season, or bulk orders, we have on call employees.	Increased number of employees
Our number of employees also increased.	
After the program, I innovated other products other than my flavored empanada, like Spicy Dilis, Chili Sauce and Garlic Sauce.	Increased number of product lines
We have new line of products. The innovated products I based from our current product offering.	
Yes, we have Facebook page and we also have our own website.	Usage of digital platforms

7.3 Clustered Themes and Emerging Themes

After clustering themes from the formulated meanings, emerging themes were identified as shown in Table 4 below.

Table 4. Clustered Themes and Emerging Themes

Clustered Themes	Emerging Themes
Improved knowledge of the business	Business Skills
Improved knowledge on product development and innovation	
Improved vision for the business	
Improved marketing skills	
Improved personal and family responsibility	Business Performance
Improved production and operation	
Improved control and monitoring of business	
Improved employee involvement and welfare	Scale - up Indicators
Increased sales	
Increased asset size	

Increased number of major customers	
Increased number of employees	
Increased number of product lines	
Usage of Digital Platforms	

7.4 Thematic Map

The thematic map of the research process for this study is shown in Table 5 below.

Table 5. Thematic Map

Emerging Themes	Clustered Themes	Formulated Meaning
Business Skills	Improved knowledge of the business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the Mentor ME Program, we learned how to make a business plan. • During the Mentor ME Program, we were able to identify our lapses in our business. • Supplier, for me, is very important in one’s business. • Mentor ME Program will teach you business skills and other skills related to business. • After the Mentor ME program, the problem that I identified with our business is our current production area. • I admit that our current production area is really hard to improve, but at least, after the program, I am able to identify and pinpoint the current issues present in our business. • KMME taught me how to run, how to manage and how to improve your business properly. • After the program, I discovered many available equipment in the market that can be used in our business that will help us improve our production. • I really recommend other entrepreneurs and would be entrepreneurs to enroll in the Mentor ME program, because business is science. Therefore, we really have to learn it. • Mentor ME really helped me as a businessman. It taught me the importance of making a business model canvass. And Mentor ME also helped in identifying those important aspects in business I was not able to consider before. • Mentor ME really is important especially to those people who even though they know how to make products but do not have any idea how to do business, Mentor ME serves as a bridge to connect that gap. • Some businessmen, even though their businesses are already big and are already established, yet, they are not really knowledgeable about the laws applicable to the business. In the Mentor ME, business laws are also discussed. • If you already have a product that will cater your target market, the topics on production and operation management; and supply and value chain analysis will later on will follow. • For me, the most important skill that a businessman should know is how to make a business model canvass,

		<p>because this will serve us your guide on the future of your business.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During the Mentor ME Program, I realized that the aspect on our business that we have to improve on is our financial management and accounting. • I truly recommend other entrepreneurs or would be entrepreneurs, especially those who are business minded but don't have a background in the study of business, to enroll themselves in the Mentor ME Program, because the program will really help you.
	Improved knowledge on product development and innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After the program, I innovated other products other than my flavored empanada, like Spicy Dilis, Chili Sauce and Garlic Sauce • Since, our business now is still owned by my parents, I focused on innovating additional line of products. • The topic on value adding should be included in the topics discussed during the Mentor ME.
	Improved vision for the business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During the Mentor ME Program, DTI encouraged me to make a business plan that will convert our current sole proprietorship business into a corporation. • After the Mentor ME, since the volume of our production increased drastically, I proposed that we will branch out with a drive - thru concept. • In the future, together with my siblings, we are really willing to invest in equipment. • I cannot really say that our asset size increased because we currently are not practicing proper financial recording. I see it as another aspect of our business that we have to improve on. • After the upgrade we made, we were able to pinpoint the necessary equipment we still have to invest on. • The goal of our business now is to expand our production area and to improve the pace of our production.
	Improved marketing skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I also proposed that our business should improve our packaging. From plastic cellophane to wax paper. And the name of our business should appear in our packaging. • My innovated products focused on the second class and first class of customers. • I can say that our sales are stable. The positive impact of KMME on our business is the promotion of our business. Because of the connections I have gained during the training, I was able to promote our product very well. • The topic on value adding should be included in the topics discussed during the Mentor ME.
Personal and family responsibility		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After the Mentor ME Program, I imparted my learnings to my children, they are now very business minded. • According to my husband, after applying what we learned during the Mentor ME, we realized that the income we gained from our business is able to sustain my family with our daily needs.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentor ME program taught me that I just didn't put up a business for my own advantage. I also have to take into consideration my family and social responsibility. • Those businessman, especially, in the grassroots, like our farmers, should enroll in the Mentor ME. Or the DTI should consider including the farmers in the Mentor ME program. They have their products, but they do not know how to business. • For me, the topic that the businessman should know first and foremost is the Entrepreneurial Mind Setting and Values Formation and Marketing Mindset. You should work first on yourself before you venture out into business.
Business Performance	Improved production and operation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We can now see our savings from our business. And we used those savings to invest in our business through buying of equipment to be used in our production. • Now, I can say that the quality of our products is better because we already have an established supplier. • We have other branch, we also have production there. • Our number of employees did not change but we have upgraded our production and operations system. • We applied loans from financial institutions used to improve our production area. • We don't have current loan applications but we have credit agreement with our supplier.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Now, I can say that the quality of our products is better because we already have an established supplier. • We don't have current loan applications but we have credit agreement with our supplier.
	Improved control and monitoring of business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After the Mentor ME Program, I've seen major changes in my business. • Before the program, if we had sales, we didn't compute for our net income. What we did, as long as we have cash on hand, we immediately buy inventory; we even used the sales for our personal and family expenses. We didn't bother computing if during that period we gain or lose. • After the Mentor ME Program, we started computing for our net income/loss for that period. • In the Mentor ME Program, we saw the importance of recording, financial statement, and we learned how to manage business properly. • Many businessmen now do not really practice proper financial accounting on their business. In the program, we were taught about its importance and how to do it. Without financial management and accounting, it will be very hard for the businessman to control the business. • During the Mentor ME Program, I realized that the aspect on our business that we have to improve on is our financial management and accounting.
	Improved employee involvement and welfare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My wife is the one who undergoes trainings and seminars related to food handling. After the training,

		she teaches everything that she have learned to our employees.
Scale - up Indicators	Increased sales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After the program, I can say that our sales increased by 50%. • Our sales increased after the Mentor ME. • We stick on producing one product but the volume of production of our product increased drastically. • We only have two major customers but our customers' product distribution is nationwide. They keep on branching out to other parts of the country.
	Increased asset size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through our savings from our business, we were able to buy additional equipment. So that is why I can say that our asset size increased by 30%. • Yes, also our asset size increased.
	Increased number of major customers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I already have regular customers after the Mentor ME. I also have stable customers who just contact me for orders for wakes and pasalubongs. • Some of my customers say that they buy flavored empanada to be brought back to Singapore and Canada. • We have increased our regular customers because our business became well - known because of the connections I was able to establish during the Mentor ME Program. • We only have two major customers but our customers' product distribution is nationwide. They keep on branching out to other parts of the country.
	Increased number of employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We don't have employees because I and my husband do the production of orders. But during Christmas season, or bulk orders, we have on call employees. • Our number of employees also increased.
	Increased number of product lines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After the program, I innovated other products other than my flavored empanada, like Spicy Dilis, Chili Sauce and Garlic Sauce. • We have new line of products. The innovated products I based from our current product offering.
	Usage of digital platforms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, we have Facebook page and we also have our own website.

VIII. Discussion

The results of this study showed that the Kapatid Mentor ME Program have positive impacts on the personal level and the business performance of the 2017 graduates of the program. On the personal level of the 2017 graduates, they were able to improve their business skills and their personal and family responsibility. On the performance of their registered businesses, results also showed that the business performance improved and scaled - up after applying all the skills they have gained from the program.

8.1 Impact on the personal improvement

8.1.1 Improved business skills

Gichira & Nelson[76] (1997) emphasized the importance of training and entrepreneurs must take the initiative to participate in business trainings to improve their small enterprises by improving their managerial skills. This conclusion was also reechoed in a study conducted by Ladzani & Van Vuuren[77] (2002) which concluded the importance of a

comprehensive entrepreneurship-training program for successful small business enterprises. According to Le and Raven[78] (2015), business trainings can improve microenterprise performance and has a number of other positive results, such as increasing motivation, success and perceptions of entrepreneurs. The results of this study show that the participants were able to improve their knowledge on their business. After the Mentor ME program, the participants were able to pinpoint different aspects on their business which they need to improve on and also different applicable business laws that can help protect the rights of the owners and their business. Since, business law is one of the topics discussed during the Mentor ME. Another informant also shared that most businessmen are blindfolded. Even though they know how to make a product, however, they do not know how to do business; and he emphasized the importance of the Mentor ME program and how it acts as a bridge that connects the gap.

Second business skill that the participants commonly have learned is they have develop their knowledge on product development and innovation. They have learned the importance of product development and innovation. Everyday business success depends more on the quality of more humdrum, incremental improvements to existing products and 23 services (Grupp & Maital[79], 2001). After the program, most of the informants tried to innovate their current product offering through improving the quality and packaging. Some also developed new product lines, as additional products they are offering to their customer and to try to penetrate other market.

After the program, the participants were able to have a better vision for the business. They are encouraged to prepare for business plan that will address their vision to shift from sole proprietorship form of business to a corporation type. While, they believe that this shift will happen in the far future, they are currently planning to branch out. During the program, they were asked by the mentors to construct a business model canvass that will serve as their guide to the future of the business. The business model canvass they made during the program is the same canvass they are using now that directs their business decisions - like the acquisition of equipment, branching out, automation of their system, improvement of their production area; for them to realize their vision for their business. Trimi & Berbegal-Mirabent[80] (2012) concluded that the usefulness and predictable power of business models are expected to help entrepreneurs make more informed decisions, thus increasing the chances of success.

Results also showed that the participants were able to improve their marketing skills. Marketing skills are considered to have a positive and significant effect on firm performance, including increases in: survival, employment, sales and profits (Anderson-Macdonalad, Chandy& Zia[81], 2014). They were able to introduce changes in their current marketing strategy - like improving the packaging of their products, making additional a new product line that will cater new customers for them to have a bigger market penetration, and promotional ideas.

8.1.2 Improved personal and family responsibility

After the Mentor ME program, the participants imparted their learnings to their family members - to their wife and children, because they have seen the advantages of doing business instead of seeking for an employment. Ambrose[82] (1983) suggests that early inclusion of potential heirs in the business helps develop their business skills. The results of the study conducted by Gallo[83] (2004) indicate that family businesses are better at carrying out the responsibilities of wealth creation and delivery of goods to the market than the 24 development of individual skills and guaranteeing their long-term continuity. The participants chose to focus on their business because they noticed that they were able to provide more for the needs of their family and were able to have savings from their business aside from the salary they are giving to themselves as a form of compensation for their efforts. One informant of the study also suggested that the DTI should consider including the farmers to become participants of the Mentor ME program because he stressed that they have their products, but these farmers do not know how to do business.

8.2 Impact on the business performance of the graduates' business(s)

Based on the responses of the informants, the following business aspects have been identified that have been affected positively after the application of the learnings gained by the participants during the program:

8.2.1 Improved production and operation

The goal of the one in charged for the business production and operations is to ensure that quality products are produced and delivered as quickly and cost effectively as possible (Bhat & Aswathappa[84], 2010). The results showed

that the participants have applied for loan to be used for acquisition of equipment and upgrade of their production system to address the volume of orders from their customers. They have also established partnerships with their suppliers to ensure the quality of the raw materials being supplied to them, thus affecting positively the quality of their products.

8.2.2 Improved control and monitoring of business

Carsamer[85] (2012) concluded that entrepreneurs of small and medium enterprises are not sold out with the importance of financial management to their enterprise and they have never recorded their business transactions. Further, he suggested that these entrepreneurs should have access to on the job training in marketing, basic enterprise accounting like recording of sales, sending sales to bank and separate bank account for the enterprise from the family budget for them to realize the crucial role of financial management in their business. During the Mentor ME program the participants were taught about the basics of financial management and accounting, and its crucial role in the success of one's enterprise. After the program, they decided to start financial recording and to give themselves salary which will serve as compensation for their efforts spent on their business. They are now motivated to continue their businesses because through preparing financial statements they were able to monitor the growth of their business and they can now see that their business is really gaining income.

8.2.3 Improved employee involvement and welfare

Employees are considered as the blood stream of any business. Hence, top management realized the importance of investing in training and development for the same of improving employee performance (Elnaga & Imran[86], 2013). However, the participants in this study still don't have the financial capacity to send their employees to trainings. In order to address this issue, the participants send their family member - who are directly involved in the business to trainings, and they will just later on reecho whatever they have learned to their employees through conducting an in-house training.

8.3 Scale - up Indicators

Based on the scale - up indicators, it can be inferred that the business of the participants of this study has scaled - up. Although it can be concluded that the Kapatid Mentor ME Program has a positive impact on the personal improvement and business performance of the 2017 Graduates in Digos City, it should be noted that this study was conducted using the qualitative research design which focused only the personal experiences and learnings of the participants in the year 2017. The number of participants can also be caused for the limitation of this study because there were only five available participants who were willing to extend their assistance for the success of this study. Further, the answers to the scale up indicators are only limited to the choices of answer: "increase or decrease", because the participants are not comfortable enough to disclose financial data. The results and findings presented here are not meant to be generalizable for all the participants of the Kapatid Mentor ME Program, but rather it can be used as a bridge to further research.

IX. Conclusion

This evaluative research study assessed the impact of the Kapatid Mentor ME Program on the personal improvement and business performance of the 2017 graduates in Digos City. The results of the study show that the program has a positive impact on both the personal improvement and business performance of the 2017 graduates in Digos City. It can be implied from the results of this study that the Department of Trade and Industry should continue offering this program here in Digos City.

However, the department should also consider the suggestion of one of the participants of the study to include the farmers to be one of the participants of the program, since, they have noted that most of the participants of the program have already an established existing business(s) before attending the program. Thus, after the program, those businessmen became more knowledgeable on how to run their business. Their concern now is that how can the Department of Trade and Industry reach those in the grassroots, who have businesses but they do not have the skills and background on how to do business.

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