

# Digital Training and Development Assistance for Indonesian Migrant Workers in Hong Kong: A Blended Learning Model

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## Abstrak

*Pekerja Migran Indonesia (PMI) di Hong Kong memiliki potensi untuk mengembangkan bisnis digital dan menggunakannya untuk mendiversifikasi pendapatan dan mempersiapkan masa depan. Namun, hambatan bagi mereka membuka peluang dalam ekonomi digital kesenjangan dalam pengetahuan dan keterampilan digital dasar. Proyek layanan masyarakat ini ditujukan untuk meningkatkan kemampuan PMI di Hong Kong untuk mengolah dan mengembangkan bisnis digital melalui kombinasi pelatihan dan pendampingan. Kegiatan-kegiatan tersebut dilakukan dalam format hibrida selama tiga bulan, yang terdiri dari: (1) pekerjaan persiapan daring, (2) pelatihan dan pendampingan luring di Hong Kong, dan (3) evaluasi dan pendampingan daring. Dua puluh lima PMI terlibat dalam program ini yang mencakup bisnis digital, e-commerce, pemasaran digital, dan keuangan digital untuk tingkat dasar. Proyek ini meningkatkan minat dalam mengembangkan bisnis digital dari 32% menjadi 88% dari peserta. Untuk 16 peserta (64%) mereka berhasil menyelesaikan dan menjalankan konsep bisnis digital dengan 8 peserta telah melakukan kegiatan bisnis daring (32%) telah memulai kegiatan bisnis daring. Dengan peningkatan peserta digital. Keterampilan literasi menunjukkan skor rata-rata meningkat dari 2,3 menjadi 4,1 (1-5). Penggunaan model hibrida pelatihan bisnis digital telah terbukti berhasil khususnya bagi PMI di Hong Kong. Model ini berpotensi untuk memberdayakan ekonomi digital pekerja migran secara signifikan dan dapat menjadi contoh untuk diterapkan di negara-negara penerima manfaat lainnya.*

**Kata kunci**— Pekerja migran Indonesia, bisnis digital, pembelajaran hibrida, pemberdayaan ekonomi, Hong Kong

## Abstract

*Indonesian Migrant Workers (PMI) in Hong Kong have potentials to grow a digital business and use them to diversify their income and prepare for the future. However, barriers to them opening opportunities in the digital economy the gaps in basic digital knowledge and skills. This community service project is aimed at enhancing the ability of PMI in Hong Kong to cultivate and grow digital businesses through a combination of training and mentoring. The activities were conducted in a hybrid format for a duration of three months, consisting of: (1) preparatory work online, (2) offline training and mentoring in Hong Kong, and (3) online evaluation and mentoring. Twenty five PMIs were involved in this program which included digital business, e-commerce, digital marketing, and digital finance to primary level. This project raised interest in developing digital businesses from 32% to 88% of the participants. For 16 participants (64%) they successfully completed and conducted the digital business concept with 8 participants having undertaken online business activities (32%) having started online business activities. With the improvement of the participants digital. literacy skills the average score increased from 2.3 to 4.1 (1- 5). The use of the hybrid model of digital business training has been particularly successful with PMIs in Hong Kong. It has the potential to greatly empower the digital economy of migrant workers and could serve as a template to be put in place in other host countries.*

**Keywords**— Indonesian migrant workers, digital business, hybrid learning, economic empowerment, Hong Kong

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesian Migrant Workers (PMI) are crucial to the economy as they contributed a whopping 8.6 billion dollars in remittance in 2022 (Bank Indonesia, 2023). Hong Kong has around 150,000 Indonesian workers of which the majority are migrant domestic workers (Consulate General of the Republic of Indonesia Hong Kong, 2023). With the digital transformation, PMIs have the opportunity to develop digital businesses as an additional source of income and in preparation for the end of employment contracts. The world over has been transformed by technology, and other new tools such as digital marketing and e-commerce have contributed greatly to this change (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2014). As labelled by Chen et al. (2020), digital technology has the capacity to improve productivity at a micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) by as much as 35%. However, the lack of a framework to digitise and lack other operational business skills has been noted as the principal reason for low adoption of digital economy activities by PMIs (Rahman & Sari, 2021).

A number of scholars have documented the lack of formal business and digital skills as disproportionately affecting the ability of migrant workers to overcome barriers to business innovation and development (Martinez & Wong, 2019). Notwithstanding, the rise of new communication technologies, and the development of e-commerce, have made it possible for migrant workers to undertake cross-border entrepreneurial activities (Kim & Lee, 2022).

Research by Anderson & Kumar (2020) has documented the efficacy of flexible hybrid learning as a strategy to empower migrant workers. This model of learning allows learners to receive all necessary instructional content at their own pace and within the confines of their work obligations while obtaining the requisite practical skills through focused training. As part of the needs analysis conducted through a preliminary survey with 100 migrant workers in Hong Kong, 78% of the respondents said they were willing to pursue a digital business, but 85% said they lack the proper skills to do so. This demonstrates there is a great disparity between interests and skills that needs to be filled with targeted training.

This community service project aims to address these needs with targeted training and mentoring appropriate to the situation and needs of migrant workers in Hong Kong. This is expected to be a reproducible framework to empower migrant workers

in other host countries.

## 2. METHOD

This community service activity employs a hybrid learning approach encompassing three key components: (1) preparatory work online, (2) offline instruction and mentoring, and (3) online mentoring together with assessment. This approach was selected due to the time and schedule constraints faced by migrant workers from Indonesia to Hong Kong employed in domestic servitude. The activity was implemented over a 3-month period (March–May 2025) with the offline instructional component taking place at the Consulate General of the Republic of Indonesia in Hong Kong. The online component is conducted on the Zoom platform with the support of WhatsApp groups for uninterrupted communication.

The program participants consist of 25 purposively selected Indonesian migrant workers in Hong Kong based on the following criteria: (1) students possess a smartphone and/or laptop with the capability to access the Internet, (2) students can converse in the Indonesian language, (3) students are prepared to undertake and complete the entire program sequence, and (4) students have the desire and motivation to foster a digital business. Participant characteristic: 25–45 years old (34 years on average), have been working in Hong Kong for 3–15 years (8 years on average), and 80% have attained a secondary/high school level education.

Everyone will be getting training materials which will be oriented towards the goals of the digital entrepreneurship framework from Giones & Brem (2017) as modified to the situation of the Indonesia migrant workers in Hong Kong. This includes Module 1 (Introduction to Digital Business and E-commerce) which covers the digital economy, and the e-commerce platforms Shopee, Tokopedia, and Instagram Business, as well as some basic concepts of the digital economy. Module 2 (Digital Marketing and Social Media) covers social media content strategy, Facebook and Instagram Marketing, and WhatsApp Business for customer service. Module 3 (Digital Financial Management) covers mobile banking and e-wallets, simple digital bookkeeping, and online cash flow management. Module 4 (Business Practice and Case Study) covers product/service development and customer relationship management, and the analysis of success cases about Indonesian migrant workers in Hong Kong.

For two weeks, the preparation phase was conducted online and included activities such as the program orientation and communication group

formation, digital literacy and business interest pre-assessments, and basic materials and instructional video distribution. The Training and Mentoring phase was conducted offline for one full day and included activities such as interactive workshops of all modules, hands-on practice of digital platforms conduct, preparation of rudimentary business plans, and the formation of mentoring groups. The Mentoring and Evaluation phase was online for 10 weeks and included activities such as video call weekly consultations, business plan implementation monitoring, peer learning and sharing, and post-program evaluation and testing.

To assess the alignment of the program with its anticipated outcomes, the evaluator administers a mixed-method evaluation. Quantitative instruments entail the digital literacy pre-post site business plan implementation and the business development interest questionnaire, as well as the digital business registration tracker. The Qualitative Instrument consists of FGD, in-depth participant interviews, and participatory observation. Quantitative data were analysed using a paired t-test and the pre-and post-test scores were compared. Qualitative data were analysed using thematic analysis.

### 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

#### *Improvement in digital literacy*

All participants showed the ability and confidence in implementing aspects of e-commerce platform use ( $\Delta = 2.1$ ) and digital marketing ( $\Delta = 1.9$ ) during post-assessments as they all scored above average. There was a notable increase in the average score of digital literacy from 2.3 during the pre-test (low category) to 4.1 in the post-test (good category). Statistically the difference was very high ( $p < 0.001$ ). Zhao et al. (2021) in their research found that the development of targeted and organized training strategies can enhance digital literacy within a remarkably short time. This hybrid training approach proves to be efficient as participants were able to use the skills they learned with the facilitators right after the sessions.

#### *Strengthened Interest in the Development of Digital Businesses*

Interest towards skill development increased dramatically from 32% at the beginning of the training session to 88% at the completion of the training session. This was attributed to their (1) a greater comprehension of the digital business landscape (92% of participants), (2) stronger belief in their technological capabilities (84% of participants), and (3) motivation from inspiring entrepreneurial stories of Indonesian migrant workers in Hong Kong.

Respondents from the interviews elaborated on the potential of 'digital economy' as a stream of 'enlightenment' the program offered. For instance, Mrs. R, 38, underscores, "I never knew that with a cell phone you could open an online store. Now I sell homemade chips on Instagram." Of the 25 participants, 16 (64%) of them managed to apply digital entrepreneurial concepts to digitally enabled businesses: food and beverages (4), i.e. chips, traditional herbal, and cakes; crafts (3), i.e. accessories, knitted bags, and home décor; fashion (3), i.e. hijabs, children's clothing, and accessories; consulting and tutorials (2), simple graphic design (2), and goods storage and delivery (2).

Interestingly, 8 participants (32%) launched businesses with estimated monthly sales of HKD 500-3,000 (around IDR 900.000 – IDR 5.4 million). This indicates the extent in which digital businesses can serve as a supplemental income stream for migrant workers. Analysis of characteristics of participants who successfully implemented the businesses revealed: (1) business program with participation of 100% and full attendance, (2) English as a foreign language proficiency to converse with clients, (3) sponsorship from employers or family residing in Hong Kong.

Despite the positive changes attributed to the program, there are still issues to resolve. Aiming to meet tight deadlines has been difficult for the majority of participants (72%) because their jobs require them to work overtime. This coincides with the findings of Li & Chen (2020) regarding the time scarcity of migrant workers. Regulatory barriers, 28% of participants expressed bewilderment concerning the business policies regarding foreign workers in Hong Kong. While there are few restrictions to starting, managing, or operating an online business, the restrictive policies on foreign workers for online businesses are overly cumbersome. Limited access to capital, 40% of participants who are interested in expanding their operations face barriers to business capital. Unlike local foreign business owners, there is minimal access to micro business loans in Hong Kong's banking system for foreign workers. Market competition, participants deal with high competition from local entrepreneurs and major players, particularly within the Food and Beverage and clothing sectors.

This program comes with clear social and economic benefits. One measure of economic impact is the average income boost of 15-25% reported by participants that successfully open and operate a business. Furthermore, the reduction of reliance on a sole income, the secondary income streams and the establishment of business collaboration networks, also

spurred the development of business networks amongst migrant workers. From a social perspective, this form of activity also assists in fostering self-confidence and self-efficacy, creating social cohesion amongst business owners as well as setting positive examples for fellow migrant workers. From a wider perspective, these activities also illustrates the importance of reintegration into Indonesia with the proper training. Particularly, the indelible and digitalization skills and the prospect of being self-employed post contract, positions the person to significantly enrich Indonesia's digital economy.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The result of the training and support on digital business development and Migrant workers from Indonesia in Hong Kong suggests that the program achieved its secondary outcomes of interest on using digital business tools. The hybrid model is also useful in this context and beyond as it seems the outcomes have also been achieved. Moreover, this program can also serve as a blueprint for other countries that host Indonesian migrant workers to economically empower them.

Success depends on: (1) implementation of participant-centered, adaptable, and constructive education, (2) designed materials that effective, (3) provision of ongoing support, and (4) the development of a nurturant practice environment.

From the implementation of the project, a number of conclusions can be drawn. 1) The provision of technology and resources at the right scale means the government can bring the program to full scale. 2) Universities can designed community service projects that empower digital skills to migrant workers. 3) Partnership with fintech and eCommerce companies to facilitate access for migrant workers from Indonesia. and 4) There is a gap of research on the program's sustainability and ongoing impact which can be labelled as longitudinal in nature.

This program demonstrates that Indonesian migrant workers, with the right support, can go beyond the boundaries of traditional employment and embrace digital entrepreneurship to add value to the global economy. It presents possibilities for rethinking the function and value of migrant workers in the age of digitalisation.

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