

Intergenerational Community Learning Management for Sustaining Traditional Food MSMEs in Indonesia

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Abstract

Background – Traditional food MSMEs preserve local heritage and sustain community livelihoods, yet many family-based enterprises struggle to survive across generations because of weak succession and ineffective intergenerational knowledge transfer.

Research Urgency – Prior studies examine knowledge transfer, succession, and business sustainability separately.

Research Objectives – This study develops an integrated Intergenerational Community Learning Management (ICLM) Model linking these processes within a community education framework.

Research Method – A qualitative single-case study was conducted in the Kecimpring traditional snack enterprise community in Pagerwangi Village, West Bandung Regency, Indonesia. Data from in depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation with five purposively selected participants were analysed through iterative coding, data condensation, thematic matrices, and thematic analysis.

Research Findings – Business sustainability is supported by environmental scanning, capacity building, tacit and explicit knowledge transfer, mentoring, and succession learning, enacted through four stages: observation, apprenticeship, guided practice, and independent production. Knowledge transfer is bidirectional senior artisans transmit craft expertise while successors contribute digital-marketing knowledge. The ICLM Model integrates inputs, processes, outputs, and outcomes to sustain intergenerational continuity.

Research Conclusion – Intergenerational sustainability is sustained through a community learning ecosystem characterized by mentoring, reciprocal knowledge transfer, and a graduated four-stage succession trajectory.

Research Novelty/Contribution – The study introduces the ICLM Model, extending nonformal education literature by uniting community learning, knowledge transfer, succession, and business sustainability in a single framework.

Keywords: intergenerational community learning management; business sustainability; knowledge transfer; succession; traditional food MSMEs.

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INTRODUCTION

Intergenerational community learning management has emerged as a critical yet undertheorized mechanism for sustaining traditional food Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), particularly in developing countries where family-based enterprises function simultaneously as economic units and repositories of local cultural knowledge. In Indonesia, MSMEs account for approximately 99% of all business units, contribute around 61% of national Gross Domestic Product, and absorb nearly 97% of the workforce, underscoring their strategic role in economic resilience and community welfare (International Monetary Fund, 2024). Traditional food enterprises also carry culinary knowledge and heritage that can be vulnerable when continuity is disrupted (Djalal et al., 2022). Yet the capacity of traditional food MSMEs to sustain these contributions across generations depends fundamentally on how effectively intergenerational learning and succession knowledge are organized and managed within community enterprise settings (Pipatanantakurn & Ractham, 2022; Luong et al., 2024; Aminullah et al., 2024).

Despite their importance, traditional MSMEs face mounting sustainability challenges. Globalization, urbanization, technological change, and shifting career aspirations have reduced younger generations' interest in continuing family businesses. Family-business succession remains a persistent continuity challenge across contexts (Baltazar et al., 2023; Reif et al., 2025; Siaba & Rivera, 2024). Sustainable succession therefore requires deliberate planning, successor preparation, and supportive family or institutional conditions (Prazeres et al., 2024; Lévesque & Subramanian, 2022; Bloemen-Bekx et al., 2021). In Indonesia, the fragility of traditional food MSMEs is compounded by limited access to formal business education and weak institutional support for succession (Hardiyanto et al., 2022; Pribadi & Agustian, 2021; Luong et al., 2024), threatening both business continuity and the preservation of local entrepreneurial knowledge.

Knowledge transfer is the process through which knowledge is shared, acquired, and applied among individuals and groups. Recent family-business research distinguishes tacit knowledge—experience-based, intuitive, and difficult to articulate—from explicit knowledge that can be codified and communicated, and shows that succession depends on interaction between these forms (Pipatanantakurn & Ractham, 2022; Ge & Campopiano, 2022). Founder-successor interaction, communication patterns, emotional conditions, and digital transformation can shape how knowledge is exchanged and retained (Bell & Pham, 2021; Caicedo Leiton & Larraza Kintana, 2023; Romano & D'Allura, 2025; Varshney & Dixit, 2025). In traditional food MSMEs, much production, quality-control, and entrepreneurial knowledge remains tacit and is therefore vulnerable to loss when succession fails (Ge & Campopiano, 2022; Igoa-Iraola & Díez, 2024). A systematic review found that organizations routinely underestimate the structural complexity of tacit-knowledge transfer during generational change, especially where formal knowledge-management procedures are absent (Igoa-Iraola & Díez, 2024), a condition characteristic of many community-based MSMEs in the Global South.

Intergenerational learning refers to reciprocal processes in which people of different ages exchange experiences, values, skills, and knowledge (Madhavanprabhakaran et al., 2022; Mansouri & Moufdi, 2026). Within family enterprises, it enables younger generations to acquire entrepreneurial competence while contributing innovation and market adaptation (Pipatanantakurn & Ractham, 2022; Mansouri & Moufdi, 2026). Recent family-business research similarly emphasizes learning through participation, shared practice, reciprocal communication, and cross-generational interaction (McAdam et al., 2024; Romano & D'Allura, 2025). Evidence from family SMEs shows that effective succession is not a single event but a staged, multimodal learning process requiring systematic management (Pipatanantakurn & Ractham, 2022; Luong et al., 2024).

From a Community Education perspective, succession and knowledge transfer are community learning processes embedded in participation, interaction, and social context (Abedini et al., 2021; Hayat et al., 2024). Community Learning Management offers a framework for organizing learning activities that build individual and collective capacity (Hayat et al., 2024; Lutfiansyah et al., 2026). In Indonesia, Community Learning Centers (PKBM) provide important institutional infrastructure for locally relevant nonformal learning,

collaboration, needs assessment, and community capability development (Hayat et al., 2026; Purnomo et al., 2024; Nurfitriani et al., 2024; Irvansyah et al., 2026).

Although adult learning (Abedini et al., 2021), entrepreneurship and family-business succession (Hardiyanto et al., 2022; Baltazar et al., 2023; Reif et al., 2025), and intergenerational learning (Madhavanprabhakaran et al., 2022; Mansouri & Moufdi, 2026) have each been studied extensively, they are rarely integrated. Recent reviews of family-business succession and knowledge transfer identify trust, organizational culture, technology, planning, and environmental factors as influential while highlighting the need for more structural and multi-level succession mechanisms (Luong et al., 2024; Siaba & Rivera, 2024; Prazeres et al., 2024). Community entrepreneurship research likewise emphasizes capacity building and locally embedded enterprise development (Hadiyanti et al., 2024; Ambarini et al., 2025). This gap is precisely what the present study addresses. Specifically, the study asks how intergenerational community learning is organized within a traditional food MSME community, and how it can be modelled to support business sustainability.

Accordingly, this study develops an Intergenerational Community Learning Management (ICLM) Model that facilitates knowledge transfer and business sustainability in traditional food MSMEs, using the Kecimpring enterprise community in Pagerwangi Village, West Bandung Regency, as a paradigmatic case. Its novelty lies in bridging knowledge-management theory, intergenerational learning, and community-based entrepreneurship in one framework, offering theoretical advancement and practical guidance for MSMEs, PKBM institutions, and community development programs. The framing is consistent with recent nonformal-education work emphasizing program evaluation, mentoring, community empowerment, and adaptive digital and entrepreneurial competencies (Akhadi & Shofwan, 2024; Hidayat et al., 2026; Ansori et al., 2026).

METHODS

Research Design and Epistemological Positioning

This study used a qualitative case-study design grounded in a constructivist epistemology. Qualitative case study is appropriate for examining socially constructed meanings in context and for developing context-sensitive theoretical propositions (Priya, 2021). The constructivist orientation treats knowledge as socially constructed through interaction and reflective interpretation, making it well suited to the tacit, relational dimensions of intergenerational community learning (Priya, 2021). A single-case design was chosen deliberately to allow detailed, contextually embedded analysis of the Kecimpring community; although this limits cross-case comparability, it enables the interpretive depth required for model development (Priya, 2021).

Research Site and Participants

The study was conducted in the Kecimpring traditional snack enterprise community in Pagerwangi Village, Lembang District, West Bandung Regency. The site was selected purposively as a paradigmatic case of a multi-generational traditional food enterprise with sustained intergenerational learning practices, consistent with the logic of context-rich qualitative case-study selection (Priya, 2021). Participants were selected through purposive, maximal variation sampling to capture distinct roles across the succession chain.

Table 1. Participant Roles in the Kecimpring Enterprise Community

Participant	Role
P1	Community Manager
P2	Senior Artisan and Mentor
P3	Successor Generation
P4	Successor Generation
P5	Trader / Business Partner

Five participants were sufficient because the single-case design prioritizes analytic depth over breadth: the five span the full range of relevant roles (manager, transmitter, two recipients, and external partner), and thematic saturation was reached when no new conceptual categories emerged across successive interviews (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022). Each participant took part in one to two in depth interviews of 60-90 minutes, complemented by three months of participant observation and documentary analysis of production records and enterprise history.

Data Collection

Data were collected through a triangulated approach combining in depth semi structured interviews, participant observation, and documentation, complemented by a supporting literature review that contextualized the field findings. Triangulation was used to strengthen credibility by comparing evidence across sources (Ahmed, 2024). Interview guides were refined iteratively, observation spanned three months of embedded fieldwork and documentary analysis provided historical context for succession. The supporting literature review drew on peer reviewed sources indexed in Scopus, Web of Science, and DOAJ (2021-2026) to interpret the field data, not to generate independent review findings.

Data Analysis

Data were analysed through iterative data condensation, coding, thematic matrices cross-validated across sources, and conclusion drawing and verification. Reflexive thematic analysis provided a complementary layer for systematic pattern identification and theme development (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Byrne, 2022; Naeem et al., 2023).

Trustworthiness and Ethics

Trustworthiness was addressed through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was enhanced through triangulation, prolonged three-month engagement, member checking, and negative-case analysis; transferability through thick description; dependability through a documented audit trail; and confirmability through a reflexive journal and peer debriefing (Ahmed, 2024). Ethical principles were observed throughout: written informed consent was obtained, confidentiality protected through pseudonymization (P1–P5), recordings stored securely, and findings reported so as to preclude individual identification.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Community Learning Ecosystem in Traditional Food MSMEs

The Kecimpring enterprise operates as a learning setting rather than as a workplace with training attached to it. Across the interview and observation record, no participant described a moment at which instruction began. Younger members enter the production space as children, initially accompanying parents, and acquire the work by being present in it. Tasks are allocated by what a person can currently manage, and the allocation shifts as capability grows, so participation itself functions as the curriculum. Observation of production sessions confirmed this pattern: explanation occurred, but almost always alongside the action it referred to, and rarely as a separate episode. Senior artisans described teaching in the same terms, treating involvement in production as the condition under which learning happens rather than as its outcome. This pattern is consistent with contemporary research on learning through participation in communities of practice and on informal learning embedded in everyday community work (Abedini et al., 2021; McAdam et al., 2024; Susilo et al., 2026).

Access to that participation, however, is not evenly distributed. Both interviews and observation indicated that entry into core production roles is patterned by gender and by birth order, with daughters and eldest children typically taking on production responsibility earlier, while male and younger members more

often move into distribution and sales. Participants did not present this as a restriction; it was described as the ordinary way work is divided in the family. The pattern is nonetheless a structural differentiation of learning access, and it qualifies the assumption that community-embedded learning is open by default.

Knowledge Transfer Process: Tacit and Explicit Dimensions

Knowledge transferred from senior artisans to successors is overwhelmingly tacit. Three domains recurred consistently across the data. The first is sensory quality judgment: recognising by smell, texture, and appearance when fermentation has reached the right point. The second is production rhythm: internalising the pace and sequencing of drying, frying, and packaging so that stages do not fall out of step. The third is a set of craft dispositions, including standards of care and an attachment to the product as heritage rather than merely as output. None of these appeared in any written procedure held by the enterprise. Documentary analysis confirmed that written records cover quantities, schedules, and sales, but not method.

Transfer does not run in one direction only. Younger members reported introducing social media and messaging platforms into the enterprise's promotion and order handling, and the sales records examined during fieldwork show an increase in orders in the period following that introduction, although the records do not permit that increase to be attributed to any single cause. Senior participants described learning these tools from the younger generation, and treated market and consumer knowledge as something the successors hold and they do not. The relationship is therefore better described as a reciprocal exchange than as inheritance, consistent with recent evidence on reverse mentoring and bidirectional intergenerational knowledge sharing (Madhavanprabhakaran et al., 2022; Mansouri & Moufdi, 2026). The digital dimension is also consistent with community-education research showing that digital media, digital literacy, and e-commerce can widen learning and market participation when they are linked to practical community needs (Darmawan et al., 2025; Nugroho et al., 2024; Santoso et al., 2024; Solfema et al., 2025). Table 2 summarises the knowledge types identified across the three data sources.

Table 2. Thematic Summary of Knowledge Types in the Kecimpring Enterprise Community

Knowledge Dimension	Tacit Knowledge (Senior to Successor)	Explicit Knowledge (Bidirectional)
Production Craft	Fermentation timing, frying temperature, texture judgment, quality sensing	Production scheduling, packaging standards, quantity records
Business Management	Entrepreneurial values, relational customer management, negotiation intuition	Bookkeeping, product pricing, supply chain documentation
Digital Marketing (Reverse)	Brand identity awareness, market intuition, consumer relations	Instagram/WhatsApp Business, digital promotion, online order management
Cultural Identity	Craft pride, food heritage, communal work ethics	Cultural storytelling, community documentation, culinary heritage awareness

Source: Developed from field data (interviews, observation, documentation), 2024.

A four-stage succession trajectory

Succession learning follows a graduated trajectory that participants did not name as such but consistently described in the same sequence. In the first stage the newcomer observes, handling nothing directly. In the second the newcomer assists with simple, low-risk tasks under continuous supervision. In the third the newcomer carries out full production steps while a senior artisan remains available and intervenes when necessary. In the fourth the successor produces independently and, in time, supervises others. Observation across the three months of fieldwork found members at each of these stages simultaneously, which allowed the sequence to be checked across individuals rather than reconstructed from memory alone.

There is no examination and no certificate. Readiness is judged by senior artisans and by the wider community on the basis of how a person works, how consistently the product meets standard, and how they respond when something goes wrong. Assessment is therefore relational and collective: the community, not an individual mentor or an external institution, legitimates the move to the next stage. The sequence resembles the staged succession processes documented elsewhere (Baltazar et al., 2023; Pipatanantakurn & Ractham, 2022; Reif et al., 2025), but the mechanism that governs progression is distinctively communal.

The Intergenerational Community Learning Management Model

The three themes describe a learning arrangement that can be represented as a management process. Figure 1 sets out the Intergenerational Community Learning Management (ICLM) model derived from this case. Community resources form the input: craft knowledge in tacit and explicit form, the senior and successor generations, and the social capital and trust that make transfer possible. These are worked on through five interrelated processes: environmental scanning, capacity building, intergenerational knowledge transfer, mentoring, and succession learning. The outputs are competent successors and retained craft standards; the outcomes are business continuity, community empowerment, and the preservation of culinary heritage. The four-stage trajectory is the mechanism through which the process operates, and the reciprocal flow of tacit craft expertise and digital or market knowledge runs across it. Outcomes feed back into the input, since successors who reach independence become the next generation's resource. The management emphasis is compatible with recent nonformal-education research on CIPP evaluation, mentoring, and learning-needs assessment (Akhadi & Shofwan, 2024; Hidayat et al., 2026; Purnomo et al., 2024).

The components of the model are grounded in the case in different degrees. Knowledge transfer, mentoring, and succession learning were directly observable and were evidenced in all three data sources. Capacity building was evidenced in interviews and observation. Environmental scanning was described by the manager and the trading partner rather than observed directly, and is therefore the least strongly supported component. It is retained because the enterprise's product and packaging adjustments over the study period are consistent with it, but it warrants specific attention in any subsequent test of the model.

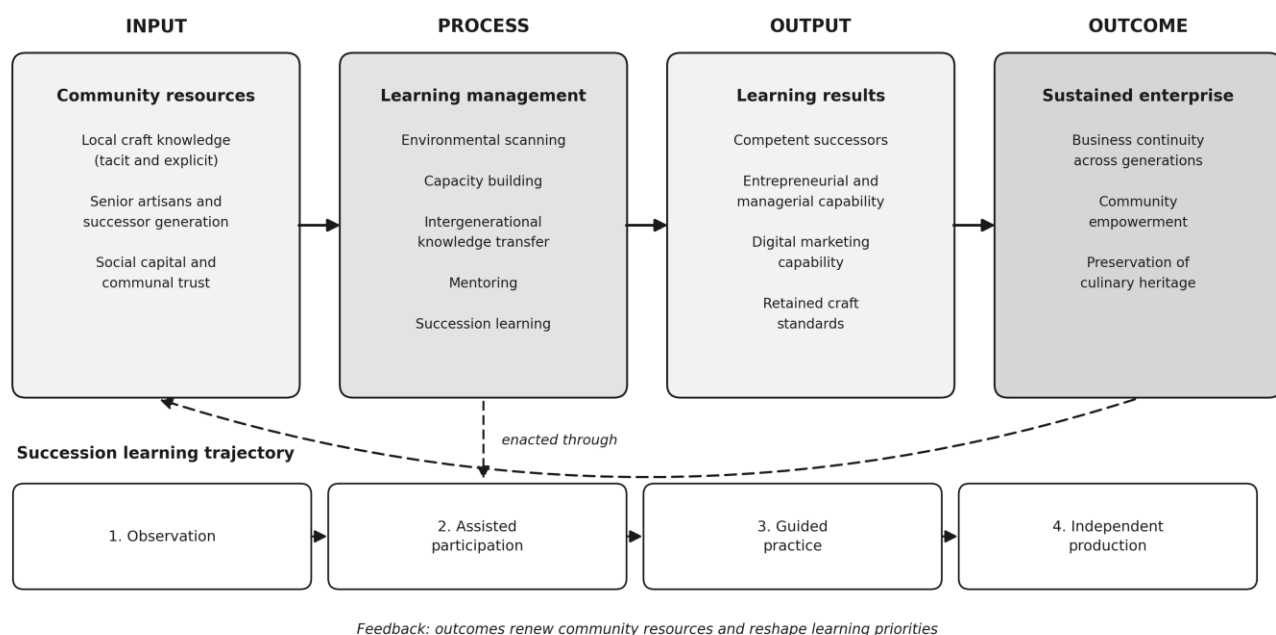


Figure 1. The Intergenerational Community Learning Management (ICLM) model

Community learning ecosystem and the limits of open participation. The Kecimpring enterprise functions as an intergenerational learning ecosystem consistent with contemporary Communities of Practice research emphasizing participation and shared learning (Abedini et al., 2021; McAdam et al., 2024), yet the findings invite a more critical reading. Recent reviews show that engagement in learning communities depends on enabling conditions and may be constrained by leadership, interaction, motivation, and access barriers (Abedini et al., 2021; Constantinides & Eleftheriadou, 2023). In Kecimpring, entry into production is structured by gender and birth order, with male members typically assuming distribution roles. This gendered division, culturally sanctioned and functionally effective, nonetheless represents a structural differentiation of access that idealized accounts of open collaborative learning inadequately capture. The transferability of the ICLM model therefore depends on relational trust and locally embedded reciprocity; recent nonformal-education research similarly highlights contextual participation, community collaboration, dialogic interaction, and locally relevant learning arrangements (Hayat et al., 2024; Hayat et al., 2026; Irvansyah et al., 2026; Lutfiansyah et al., 2026; Susilo et al., 2026).

Knowledge transfer beyond the tacit-explicit dualism. The dominance of tacit transfer is consistent with contemporary applications of the SECI knowledge-creation model in family-firm succession (Pipatanantakurn & Ractham, 2022), but the present case also extends it: socialization and internalization are not matched by systematic externalization and combination. This creates a structural vulnerability when tacit knowledge is not codified and succession integrity depends heavily on interpersonal continuity, echoing recent evidence that family-business knowledge transfer relies strongly on practice, interaction, observation, communication, emotional conditions, and staged succession processes (Bell & Pham, 2021; Ge & Campopiano, 2022; Caicedo Leitón & Larraza Kintana, 2023; Igoa-Iraola & Díez, 2024; Mansouri & Moufdi, 2026; Romano & D’Allura, 2025). Traditional food MSMEs thus face not merely a succession challenge but a knowledge-governance challenge that ICLM systems must explicitly address, for example by creating structured spaces for both top-down and bottom-up or reverse-mentoring knowledge flows and by using digital tools where appropriate (Luong et al., 2024; Madhavanprabhakaran et al., 2022; Varshney & Dixit, 2025).

Intergenerational learning as succession strategy. The four-stage trajectory parallels recent stage-based succession models (Baltazar et al., 2023; Pipatanantakurn & Ractham, 2022; Reif et al., 2025) but is governed by relational judgment and communal trust rather than formal assessment. This informality is both a strength and a vulnerability. It generates high motivational commitment, consistent with recent adult-learning evidence that engagement is strengthened when learning is experience-centred, problem-centred, self-directed, and connected to meaningful outcomes (Abedini et al., 2021). At the same time, trust can become fragile under conflict and succession uncertainty, so structural safeguards remain important (Luong et al., 2024; Prazeres et al., 2024). ICLM interventions should therefore incorporate formalized mentoring agreements, succession competency frameworks, and multi-stakeholder governance as structural safeguards, consistent with recent community-education emphasis on mentoring and organized support (Hidayat et al., 2026).

Theoretical contribution and limitations. The ICLM Model makes four contributions. It recenters learning and community as primary sustainability mechanisms; it extends SECI-informed succession frameworks to informal community enterprises where externalization and combination are underdeveloped (Pipatanantakurn & Ractham, 2022); it responds to recent calls for structural succession mechanisms beyond trust and culture (Luong et al., 2024; Reif et al., 2025); and, by documenting bidirectional knowledge flows, it contributes to contemporary reverse-mentoring scholarship (Madhavanprabhakaran et al., 2022). Limitations must be acknowledged critically. The single-case design restricts analytical generalization, and findings are culturally embedded in the Sundanese context. The model does not yet theorize the role of digital technology in mediating intergenerational transfer, a gap increasingly emphasized in recent research on digital MSME and community-learning ecosystems in Indonesia (Aminullah et al., 2024; Fahimah et al., 2023; Darmawan et al., 2025; Firdaus et al., 2026; Nugroho et al., 2024; Sari et al., 2024; Santoso et al., 2024; Solfema et al., 2025; Ansori et al., 2026), nor fully the affective and identitarian dimensions of transmitting cultural meaning through Kecimpring production.

CONCLUSION

This study examined how Intergenerational Community Learning Management sustains knowledge transfer and business continuity in the Kecimpring traditional food MSME community. Intergenerational sustainability is sustained through a community learning ecosystem characterized by legitimate peripheral participation, mentoring, tacit and explicit knowledge transfer, and a graduated four stage succession trajectory. Knowledge transfer is bidirectional younger members contribute digital and marketing knowledge while receiving craft expertise, forming a co-generational dynamic that enriches adaptive capacity.

The proposed ICLM Model integrates inputs (local knowledge, human resources, social capital), processes (environmental scanning, capacity building, knowledge transfer, mentoring, succession learning), outputs (skilled successors, entrepreneurial competence), and outcomes (business sustainability, community empowerment). Theoretically, it extends Communities of Practice, Knowledge Creation, and family-business succession frameworks within a community education paradigm. Practically, it offers actionable guidance for MSMEs, PKBM institutions, and policymakers. The study is limited by its single, culturally specific case and its underdeveloped treatment of digital mediation. Future research should employ comparative multi-case and longitudinal designs, and examine how digital platforms can be integrated into community-based intergenerational learning management.

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