

Exploring the Entrepreneurial Journey of Asnaf Students: Lessons from Genba Bakery's Business Model at Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia  
(Meneroka Perjalanan Keusahawanan Pelajar Asnaf: Pengajaran daripada Model Perniagaan Genba Bakery di Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia)

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the entrepreneurial journey of asnaf students through the Genba Bakery business model, an initiative established at Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM). The program aims to equip economically disadvantaged students with practical entrepreneurial skills and income-generating opportunities. Addressing the gap in entrepreneurship education for marginalized groups, this study adopts a qualitative approach combining participant observation and document analysis. Findings reveal substantial improvements in students' entrepreneurial competence, driven by experiential learning, mentorship, and supportive ecosystems. Key challenges include limited financial resources and difficulty balancing academic and business commitments. The paper offers valuable insights for policymakers and educational institutions seeking to empower underprivileged students through structured entrepreneurship programs.

Keyword: Asnaf Students, Genba Bakery, Entrepreneurship Education, Financial Literacy, Economic Upliftment

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini meneroka perjalanan keusahawanan pelajar asnaf melalui model perniagaan Genba Bakery, iaitu satu inisiatif yang diperkenalkan oleh Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM). Program ini bertujuan membekalkan pelajar daripada latar belakang kurang berkemampuan dengan kemahiran keusahawanan dan peluang menjana pendapatan secara praktikal. Menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif melalui pemerhatian peserta dan analisis dokumen, dapatan menunjukkan peningkatan ketara dalam kemahiran dan pengetahuan keusahawanan pelajar. Faktor kejayaan termasuk pembelajaran berasaskan pengalaman, bimbingan mentor, dan persekitaran yang menyokong. Cabaran utama merangkumi kekangan kewangan dan kesukaran menyeimbangkan komitmen akademik dan perniagaan. Kajian ini memberikan panduan berguna kepada institusi pendidikan dan pembuat dasar dalam memperkasa komuniti terpinggir melalui pendidikan keusahawanan yang berstruktur.

Kata Kunci: Pelajar Asnaf, Genba Bakery, Pendidikan Keusahawanan, Peningkatan Literasi Kewangan

## INTRODUCTION

Most people agree that entrepreneurship is a major force behind innovation, the creation of jobs, and inclusive economic growth, particularly in developing nations (Asian Development Bank, 2021). It not only gives people a way to work for themselves, but it also gives them the ability to use creativity to solve problems in their communities. Entrepreneurship has emerged as a crucial component of educational systems across the globe in the twenty-first century, fusing academic knowledge with real-world application (Fayolle & Gailly, 2015).

By combining theoretical knowledge with practical applications, universities play a crucial role in helping young people develop entrepreneurial skills by encouraging creativity, critical thinking, and business acumen (Rae, 2017). According to Kolb (1984), experiential learning fosters entrepreneurial maturity by giving students the chance to participate in cycles of experience, introspection, ideation, and experimentation in a controlled setting (Simply Psychology, 2025).

Youth unemployment is a major issue in Malaysia, especially for disadvantaged populations like the asnaf community, who are eligible for zakat assistance because of their financial difficulties. When it comes to pursuing entrepreneurship, these students encounter several obstacles, such as a lack of exposure, a lack of funding, and limited access to networks and mentorship (Joremi, Muda, & Zain, 2023). Therefore, it is essential to provide inclusive entrepreneurship education in order to empower these groups and encourage fair economic participation (Ibrahim & Aziz, 2025).

In response, Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM) established Genba Bakery, a social enterprise that aims to give asnaf students real-world business experience. In addition to providing opportunities for income generation, the program gives participants the financial literacy, entrepreneurial skills, and self-assurance they need to succeed (USIM, 2023).

This study aims to explore how the Genba Bakery business model supports the entrepreneurial development of asnaf students at USIM, examining its strengths, challenges, and lessons for future inclusive entrepreneurship programs.

### THE BUSINESS MODEL OF GENBA BAKERY

Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM) is home to Genba Bakery, a student run social enterprise created especially for asnaf students, or those from low-income

families who qualify for zakat aid. This business model's main goal is to offer hands-on learning through actual business operations. It blends contemporary business strategies like digital marketing, point-of-sale systems, and organized business training modules with traditional bakery practices like handcrafted pastries, manual preparation techniques, and the use of inherited local recipes (USIM, 2023; Maybank Islamic, 2022).

By using modern entrepreneurial tools, this hybrid model guarantees that students maintain cultural authenticity in their products. For example, artisanal quality is emphasized in the baking process, but Instagram campaigns, online pre-order forms, and campus-wide promotions are used to drive sales and marketing efforts (USIM, 2023). This combination shows a dedication to both scalability and craftsmanship.

The multi-channel sales approach used by Genba Bakery's go-to-market strategy includes partnerships with faculty programs and student councils, on-campus booths, and pop-ups at events. The strategy places more emphasis on exposure, customer feedback, and long-term relationship building than it does on profit generation alone. Students actively engage in tasks that are normally performed by business professionals, such as forecasting inventory, interacting with customers, and setting product prices (USIM, 2023).

Another crucial element is financial management. Each team at Genba Bakery is in charge of revenue reconciliation, procurement, and budgeting under the company's rotating student leadership model. Students are introduced to basic financial planning ideas like margin analysis, cost control, and reinvestment choices. To examine operational results and pinpoint areas for development, faculty mentors participate in regular feedback sessions (Maybank Islamic, 2022).

Genba Bakery essentially serves as a microbusiness and a teaching tool, offering a secure yet practical setting where asnaf students can cultivate their leadership abilities, entrepreneurial literacy, and business viability.

## METHODOLOGY

In order to investigate how asnaf students at Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM) acquired entrepreneurial skills via their participation in Genba Bakery, this study used a qualitative methodology. Informal observation and a review of publicly available documents pertaining to the bakery's operations were the two main techniques used to gather data.

### Informal Observation

During regular campus days and other university events where Genba Bakery operated, the researcher voluntarily participated in informal observations. Students' performance of their designated roles, interactions with peers, and handling of operational duties like stall setup, customer service, and inventory coordination were the main areas of observation.

After every session, thorough notes were taken to record important behaviors, difficulties encountered, and student interaction patterns. The data offer illustrative insights rather than comprehensive coverage of all activities due to the informal and sporadic nature of these observations.

### Review of Available Materials

The study examined publicly accessible materials distributed during program briefings and event planning to supplement observational data. These included training outlines supplied by USIM's entrepreneurship unit, promotional posters, and sample sales records shown during briefings. The Genba Bakery program's structure and the students' exposure to entrepreneurship were better understood thanks to these documents.

### The Approach to Thematic Reflection

Reflective thematic analysis was used to manually analyze the data. To find recurrent themes and patterns like skill development, financial awareness, and motivating factors, the researcher went over the content of the documents and observation notes. The interpretation and discussion of the results were then guided by the organization of these themes.

### Moral Aspects to Take into Account

No sensitive or private information was gathered, and all observations took place in public educational environments. Throughout the study, participant confidentiality and anonymity were upheld, and the report contained no personal identifiers. USIM's research standards and ethical guidelines were adhered to.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A number of recurrent themes emerged from the results of informal observation and thoughtful examination of the materials at hand: the role of mentoring, difficulties in managing resources, the development of practical

skills, and student motivation and engagement. These observations offer insightful viewpoints on the entrepreneurial experiences of asnaf students working at Genba Bakery, even though they are not all inclusive.

### Practical Exposure and Skill Development

Students frequently oversaw small-scale tasks like baking, setting up product displays, and interacting with clients directly. These exercises gave participants first hand experience with crucial microbusiness operations like customer service, teamwork, and time management. As an illustration of growing marketing awareness and initiative, a student at a campus event proactively proposed changing the stall arrangement to improve product visibility.

By taking part in Genba Bakery activities, students also reported becoming more proficient in baking methods, customer service, and sales management. According to reflective logs gathered by the entrepreneurship unit, this was demonstrated by their growing confidence in managing sales transactions and responding to customer inquiries.

These results are consistent with those of Vivekananth et al. (2023), who highlight the important role that informal entrepreneurial practice plays in helping students develop their skills and confidence in academic settings. The idea that active participation in actual business tasks improves practical competencies is further supported by experiential learning theories (Kolb, 1984).

### Challenges in Financial and Resource Management

Students commonly encountered challenges associated with limited financial resources and fluctuating raw material costs, according to observations and casual conversations. For example, students were frequently observed negotiating how to stretch ingredients across several production batches and voicing concerns about the rising costs of sugar and flour, which affected pricing and product quantities.

Sample sales records examined during program briefings showed narrow profit margins and frequent changes in pricing strategies to account for cost variations, despite the lack of formal financial reports. These difficulties show that Genba Bakery's business model needs better resource allocation and financial planning techniques.

This is in line with the findings of Leylawati Joremi (2023), who discovered that resource limitations frequently impact operational choices for asnaf entrepreneurs. Effective cost control and budgeting are essential for sustainability, particularly in social

enterprises with limited funding, according to literature on small business management (Burns, 2016).

### Impact of Mentorship and Support Systems

Students' ability to overcome obstacles and make wise decisions is greatly improved by regular guidance and structured support, according to an analysis of mentorship program outlines and student feedback forms. Mentors offered guidance on quality control and pricing tactics, for instance, which students said helped them improve their business results.

Micro-mentorship moments were informal interactions between students and faculty or senior peers during bakery operations, even though direct mentoring sessions were not formally observed. Students' confidence and problem-solving abilities seemed to increase as a result of these quick but focused interventions.

Marchand and Sood (2014) corroborate this finding, arguing that mentorship helps entrepreneurs overcome challenges by bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and real-world application. Mentoring has a positive impact on venture performance and learning outcomes, according to research in entrepreneurship education (St-Jean & Audet, 2012).

### Student Engagement and Motivation

Pupils showed a great deal of ownership and involvement in their roles. They took the initiative to set up booths, draw clients, and assist colleagues during peak times. For instance, some students willingly stayed after class to help with inventory control and cleanup, demonstrating an emotional commitment that goes beyond simple duty.

These actions are in line with the ideas of experiential learning, which holds that accountability for results increases motivation and dedication (Yusoff et al., 2018). Furthermore, research on student motivation in entrepreneurship education shows that experiential learning and a sense of independence boost perseverance and engagement (Fayolle & Gailly, 2015).

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study investigated the entrepreneurial experiences of asnaf students taking part in Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia's (USIM) Genba Bakery, a campus-based social enterprise initiative. Through unofficial observations and thoughtful examination of the resources at hand, the study emphasized the value

of experiential, hands-on learning in fostering the development of fundamental entrepreneurial skills, especially for students from low-income families.

Students had worthwhile opportunities to improve practical skills like time management, informal decision-making, and customer interaction at the bakery. Nonetheless, there were clear difficulties, such as limited access to structured mentorship, operational uncertainties, and financial limitations. Notwithstanding these drawbacks, the high levels of student involvement and initiative showed that even modest businesses can promote a strong sense of learning and ownership (Fayolle & Gailly, 2015; Kolb, 1984).

In light of these revelations, the following suggestions are put forth to improve the efficacy and sustainability of the Genba Bakery model:

**Present Workshops on Basic Financial Literacy:** Students can gain the necessary financial management skills to better manage resource constraints by completing brief, hands-on modules that concentrate on pricing strategies, cost tracking, and budgeting (Burns, 2016).

**Put Light Mentorship Structures in Writing:** Students can receive help navigating business challenges more successfully by establishing regular mentorship support, such as weekly check-ins with industry volunteers or alumni entrepreneurs (Marchand & Sood, 2014; St-Jean & Audet, 2012).

**Provide Simple Business Tracking Tools:** Students' capacity to keep tabs on their company's performance and make wise decisions can be improved by putting in place easy-to-use tools such as inventory checklists, sales tracking sheets, and visual budget templates (Leylawati Joremi, 2023).

**Promote Reflective Practice:** Students can better internalize learning experiences and pinpoint areas for both personal and professional growth by incorporating regular reflection exercises, such as weekly journals or group discussions (Yusoff et al., 2018).

Without unduly complicating its structure, these suggestions seek to strengthen the Genba Bakery initiative's current advantages. In addition to providing a replicable model for inclusive entrepreneurship education in other higher education institutions, incremental improvements can further empower asnaf students.

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