



Mentoring Practices and Their Influence on Productivity and Operability in Bacolor SMEs: Basis for Strategic Plan

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Abstract— This study investigated the mentoring practices of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Villa de Bacolor, Pampanga, and assessed their impact on organizational productivity, operability, and employee attributes. Mentoring was recognized as a strategic tool for enhancing SME resilience and competitiveness; however, limited studies had explored its structured impact within this region. Using a descriptive-correlational design as outlined by Creswell (2019), data were collected from 678 respondents (315 mentors and 363 mentees) drawn from a population of 8,158 individuals. This approach facilitated an analysis of mentoring practices and their relationship with SME productivity outcomes. Findings revealed that mentoring practices, particularly structured modules, mentor expertise, and consistent mentoring frequency, significantly enhanced strategic planning, market efficiency, operational processes, and financial productivity. Weighted mean scores demonstrated high satisfaction with mentoring across these dimensions. However, challenges were noted in areas such as adaptability to rapidly changing market conditions and sustaining the long-term benefits of mentoring programs. These challenges underscored the need for more dynamic mentoring strategies and ongoing support mechanisms to address evolving SME needs. The study highlighted the importance of structured, expert-led, and relationship-focused mentoring for SMEs, recommending tailored modules, regular mentor training, and continuous evaluation to address existing gaps. A strategic mentoring framework was proposed to sustain productivity gains and promote SME growth. Overall, mentoring was affirmed as a critical factor in enhancing productivity, adaptability, and competitiveness, positioning it as an essential component for SME development and economic contributions in Bacolor, Pampanga.

Keywords – Mentoring practices; Operational Efficiency; SME productivity; strategic planning

I. INTRODUCTION

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) are essential to economic growth—they create jobs, drive innovation, and support community development, especially in local areas like Villa de Bacolor, Pampanga. These businesses play a big role in shaping the local economy by offering diverse products and services that meet the community's needs. However, SMEs also face unique challenges. They often have limited resources, lack formal organizational

structures, and are more vulnerable to market ups and downs. To help tackle these challenges, mentoring has emerged as a valuable strategy. With the right guidance, mentorship can help SMEs build resilience, stay competitive, and achieve sustainable growth. Structured mentoring not only boosts employee skills but also encourages knowledge-sharing and improves overall productivity. Despite the promise of mentoring, there's still a lack of research on its specific impact on SME performance, particularly in places like Bacolor.

This study aims to address that gap by examining how mentoring affects SMEs in Bacolor. It focuses on key organizational outcomes like productivity, adaptability, and employee development. Using a descriptive-correlational approach (following Creswell's 2019 model), the study looks into different aspects of mentoring—methods, frequency of sessions, mentor-mentee relationships, and the qualifications of mentors. It then explores how these mentoring practices impact crucial productivity factors such as strategic planning, decision-making, operational efficiency, and financial performance. The goal is to provide insights that can help SMEs in Bacolor strengthen their mentoring programs to improve performance, resilience, and adaptability. Understanding the link between mentoring and productivity could also guide local government and institutions in crafting support programs tailored to the specific needs of Bacolor's SMEs. In the end, the study aims to offer a strategic plan that enhances mentoring practices, empowering these businesses to grow sustainably and strengthen the local economy.

Small and Medium Enterprises play a crucial role in the economic development of many countries, including the Philippines (Darwis, 2020). Recognizing the importance of SMEs, the Philippine government has implemented various programs and policies to support their growth and sustainability. However, SMEs in the country continue to face numerous challenges that hinder their progress. (Pilar et al., 2019)

Mentoring has been recognized as an essential tool for the development and growth of small and medium enterprises (Sullivan, 2000). Experienced entrepreneurs can share their knowledge, skills, and insights with aspiring or new business owners, helping them navigate the complexities of running a business. Research has shown that mentoring can have a positive impact on the performance and productivity of small and medium enterprises. (Hamburg, 2014) Entrepreneurial learning and mentoring is crucial for the survival and growth of small to medium-sized enterprises. Mentoring is a special form of active supporting of entrepreneurship competence, helping young people with special needs to believe in themselves and boost their confidence. The mentoring approach helps young people giving them practical entrepreneurial support and SMEs to

improve the transfer and use of strategic knowledge. (Sullivan, 2000) (Hamburg, 2014)

Enacted in 1991 by the Philippine Congress, the Magna Carta is a significant piece of legislation designed to foster the growth and development of small and medium enterprises (SMEs). It aims to create a favorable business environment for SMEs and improve their access to financing options (Department of Trade and Industry). This legislation reflects the government's commitment to empowering SMEs as essential contributors to economic growth and job creation in the country. The researcher's interest in studying mentoring practices and their effects on small and medium enterprises in Bacolor, Pampanga stemmed from a personal experience working with a small business owner who faced significant challenges in growing their enterprise. Through this experience, the researcher witnessed firsthand the importance of mentorship and the positive impact it can have on the productivity and sustainability of small and medium enterprises.

This research aims to:

1. The research sought to outline the profile of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Bacolor in terms of their ownership form, organizational structure, number of workers, products or services provided, market coverage, and the nature of support they get from the government and other institutions.
2. It also attempted to study the mentoring practices within these SMEs, with a focus on the methods employed, the mentoring frequency, the quality of the mentor-mentee relationship, the expertise of the mentors, the ability to diagnose problems, and the general effectiveness of the mentoring process.
3. The study sought to determine the productivity of SMEs in Bacolor according to their planning and decision-making, market and operational effectiveness, and financial performance. It also sought to determine the challenges encountered in adopting mentoring practices, namely adaptability and long-term sustainability.
4. The study sought to find out whether a meaningful correlation exists between mentoring practices and SME productivity and if there is a significant disparity between

the mentoring experience or perceptions between mentees and mentors.

5. The study hoped to suggest a strategic plan for the improvement of mentoring practices and hence, enhance SME performance in Bacolor.

Literature Review

Mentoring is essential for improving productivity and effectiveness in small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Strategies such as reverse mentoring, where graduate students mentor experienced professionals, encourage innovation and collaboration (Schwartz et al., 2022). Integrated mentoring models involving multiple stakeholders address diverse needs in the creative economy, such as marketing and entrepreneurship (Rosyadi et al., 2019). In agricultural SMEs, mentoring has successfully developed professional skills and enhanced performance (Fatty et al., 2023). Digital mentoring and flexible approaches further assist novice entrepreneurs in navigating business challenges (Irianto, 2022; Maz & Gazioğlu, 2023). Overall, mentoring improves productivity, job satisfaction, and employee retention, although it may not significantly impact students' entrepreneurial interests compared to traditional education (Shah et al., 2016; Cahyani & Cahya, 2021).

The frequency and quality of mentoring interactions are critical for interns' professional **Research Paradigm**

development, boosting motivation and job satisfaction (Melki et al., 2018). Successful mentoring relationships depend on mutual benefits and contributions from both mentors and mentees (Manthiram & Edwards, 2021). Effective mentors possess strong communication skills and diverse backgrounds, helping individuals identify strengths and manage weaknesses (Marzano & Zorzi, 2020; Shinn-Cunningham, 2019). Additionally, effective mentoring relationships are characterized by specific attributes that influence commitment and persistence among diverse groups (Pfund et al., 2016).

Mentoring can significantly enhance organizational efficiency by integrating economically inactive groups into the labor market (Horváth-Csikós & Imola, 2021) and can improve human capital quality across various industries (Azarova & Opara, 2021). While challenges exist, particularly for young entrepreneurs requiring structured support, mentoring remains a valuable tool for promoting economic stability (Malyshevskaja, 2023). Mentoring in business education can transform graduates' careers, with successful programs depending on stakeholder support and clear guidelines (Kanke, 2023; Hieker & Rushby, 2020). In summary, mentoring fosters employee engagement and supports sustainability initiatives, underscoring its critical role in SME development (Hashmi, 2018; Andrianto et al., 2023).

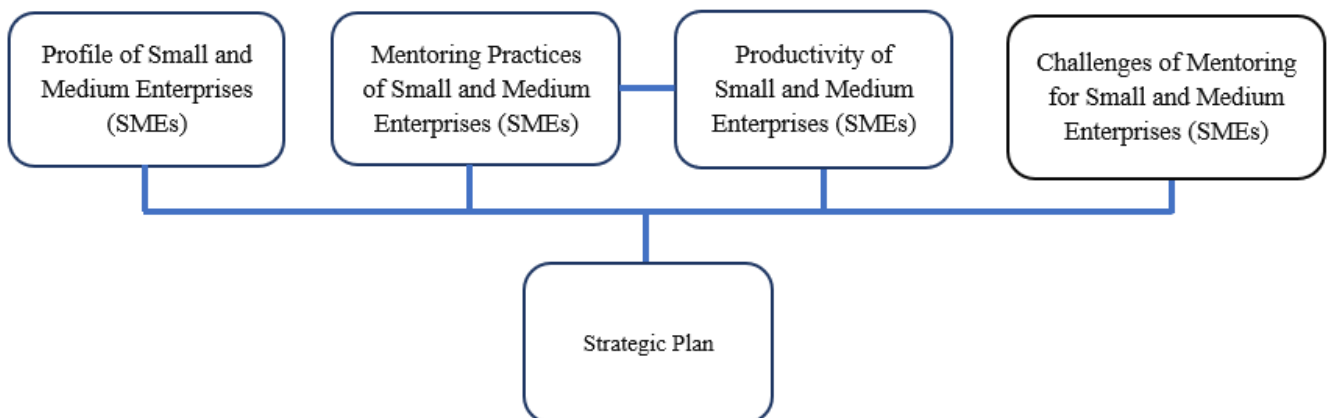


Fig.1. Research Paradigm

II. METHODOLOGY

This research utilized a **quantitative approach with a descriptive-correlational design** to examine the mentoring practices in small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Bacolor, Pampanga. The methodology was selected to capture both descriptive data on current mentoring strategies and relational data that analyzed the connection between these practices and outcomes such as productivity, operability, and employee development. The study did not involve experimental manipulation, allowing for the natural dynamics of mentoring to be observed and analyzed.

2.1. Sampling Procedure

A simple random sampling technique was employed to ensure that each registered SME owner, manager, and employee listed in the Business Permit and Licensing Office of Bacolor had an equal chance of being selected. This method minimized selection bias and allowed for a representative sample of both mentors (owners/managers) and mentees (employees). The total sample size was calculated using the Raosoft sample size calculator, ensuring statistical adequacy and reliability. The criteria for inclusion required that mentors be officially registered SME owners or managers, and mentees be current employees in the same enterprises.

2.2. Respondents

The respondents were composed of **two key groups**:

- **Mentors:** Owners or managers of licensed SMEs responsible for leading, managing, and mentoring within the business.
- **Mentees:** Employees who are part of the operational workforce and directly experience the mentoring practices.

A total of **678 respondents** participated in the study, broken down as follows:

- **Mentors:** 315 out of a total population of 1,724
- **Mentees:** 363 out of a total population of 6,434

This stratification allowed for a balanced perspective on both sides of the mentoring dynamic within Bacolor’s SMEs.

2.2.1 Research Site

The study was conducted in Villa de Bacolor, a municipality in Pampanga known for its historical

significance and thriving local economy. Bacolor serves as a strategic hub in Central Luzon with a robust network of small and medium-sized enterprises. Its geographic position—bordered by several key towns and traversed by the Olongapo-Gapan National Road—makes it an ideal location for studying business practices in regional contexts.

Bacolor’s central location, access to nearby urban centers (e.g., San Fernando, Angeles City), and active SME sector provided a fertile ground for examining the role of mentoring in enhancing productivity and operational efficiency. Furthermore, the town’s challenges, such as limited access to resources and evolving market conditions, made it a relevant context for understanding the effectiveness and sustainability of mentoring within entrepreneurial settings.

Table 1 Number of frequencies in each sample

Respondents	Total number of Population	Total number of samples
Mentor	1724	315
Mentee	6434	363
Total	8158	678

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Profile of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Bacolor, Pampanga

3.1.1 Form of Ownership

Table 6 presents the profile of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Bacolor, Pampanga, focusing on their form of ownership.

Table 6. :Form of Ownership

Profile	Mentor	
	Frequency	Percentage
Sole Proprietorship	173	54.9
Partnership	115	36.5
Corporation:	17	5.4
Cooperative:	1	.3
Franchise:	9	2.9
Total	315	100.0

Results of Table 6 indicated that of the 315 SMEs questioned in Bacolor, Pampanga, the majority

were sole proprietorships that comprised 54.9% (173 SMEs). The partnerships comprised 36.5% (115), while the corporations only consisted of 5.4% (17). Franchises accounted for 2.9% (9), and the cooperatives were the least that comprised 0.3% (1). This means that the majority of SMEs in Bacolor are owned and controlled individually, with comparatively few utilizing more formal or complex forms of ownership. The prevalence of sole proprietorships indicates a preference for simpler business forms with lower entry barriers, but also indicates constrained access to resources, which could be overcome by targeted mentoring. The information also underscores the importance of mentorship approaches that are aligned with the ownership structure, particularly in assisting sole proprietors and partnerships to improve business performance and sustainability. Mentorship plays a vital role in supporting physicians' growth both personally and professionally. It enhances career advancement and research outcomes for mentees, while mentors often experience greater job satisfaction and reduced burnout as a result of their involvement (Harper et al., 2024).

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) played a vital role in fostering economic growth both in India and worldwide. They made substantial contributions to GDP, exports, and job creation, aiding in reducing regional disparities (Varshney, Dwivedi, & Acharya, 2024).

3.1.2. Structure

Table 7 presents the profile of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Bacolor, Pampanga, focusing on their organizational structure.

Table 7. : Structure

Profile	Mentor	
	Frequency	Percentage
Functional Structure	295	93.7
Divisional Structure.	14	4.4
Matrix Structure.	-	-
Flat Structure.	-	-
Team-Based Structure.	6	1.9
Network Structure.	-	-
Total	315	100.0

The findings from Table 7 indicated that 93.7% (295 out of 315) of Bacolor SMEs employed a functional structure, which was the most preferred organizational form. A mere 4.4% (14 SMEs) employed a divisional structure, while 1.9% (6 SMEs) employed a team-based structure. No SMEs were reported to employ matrix, flat, or network structures. This means that the majority of Bacolor's SMEs are organized around distinct business functions like marketing, finance, or production, which enhances operational effectiveness but constrains flexibility and cross-functional coordination. The limited application of other structures implies that there is a potential necessity for mentorship that would assist SMEs in probing and embracing more flexible organizational frameworks as they expand or diversify. Entrepreneurial mentoring has a strong positive effect on the performance of SMEs in Nigeria, with key forms of support—psychosocial, career-related, and role modeling—playing a significant role in enhancing outcomes (Brimah, Rabi, Bamidele, & Sheu, 2020). The study found that SMEs generally preserved stable organizational structures, showing little variation in terms of centralization, standardization, and formalization. This indicated a gradual pace in adapting to external changes (Mierzejewska, 2014).

3.1.3. Number of Employees

Table 8 presents the profile of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Bacolor, Pampanga, focusing on the number of employees.

Table 8: Number of Employees

Profile	Mentor	
	Frequency	Percentage
Micro Enterprises. (1 to 9 employees)	43	13.7
Small Enterprises. (10 to 99 employees)	184	58.4
Medium Enterprises. (100-199 employees)	88	27.9
Large SMEs. (200 or more employees)	-	-
Total	315	100.0

The findings from Table 8 indicated that most SMEs in Bacolor were small enterprises, with 58.4% (184 out of 315) having 10 to 99 employees. Medium enterprises with 100 to 199 employees comprised 27.9% (88), while micro enterprises with less than 10 employees comprised 13.7% (43). There were no large SMEs (200 or more employees). This distribution explains that the majority of businesses worked on a small to medium size, with few but manageable operation capacity. Data indicate the need for growth-mindset mentoring to facilitate workforce development and operations efficiency, particularly among small and medium enterprises. Coaching and mentoring are effective tools for cultivating a growth mindset and enhancing well-being among younger

employees, while also helping to bridge diversity gaps and support their learning and professional growth (Ibrahim & Lim, 2024). Targeted mentoring in core skills and access to assets is vital to enable micro enterprises to grow. Integrating agent banking savings with business and financial literacy programs leads to notable increases in profits for women entrepreneurs in Indonesia, with the training and mentoring approach proving particularly cost-effective (Buvinić, Johnson, Perova, & Witoelar, 2020).

3.1.4. Products or Services

Table 9 presents the profile of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Bacolor, Pampanga, focusing on their products or services.

Table 9: Products or Services

Profile	Mentor	
	Frequency	Percentage
Manufactured Goods:	52	16.5
Retail Services	218	69.2
Professional Services	10	3.2
Food and Beverage	33	10.5
Technology and IT Services	-	-
Health and Wellness Services	-	-
Creative and Cultural Products	2	.6
Total	315	100.0

The results from Table 9 showed that 69.2% (218 out of 315) of SMEs in Bacolor operated in retail services, making it the dominant sector. This was followed by manufacturing at 16.5% (52), food and beverage at 10.5% (33), professional services at 3.2% (10), and creative and cultural products at just 0.6% (2). There were no SMEs engaged in technology and IT services or health and wellness services. This indicates a highly concentrated SME landscape focused on retail and consumer-facing businesses, with limited presence in high-growth or specialized sectors. The retail industry is undergoing significant disruption due to the rise of omnichannel shopping,

rapid technological advancements, and increased vertical integration, all of which are driving major changes in how consumers behave and interact with retailers (Kahn & Verhoef, 2019). The data suggests a strong need for mentorship programs that support retail efficiency and encourage diversification into underrepresented industries like tech, wellness, and professional services.

3.1.5. Geographical Scope of the Market

Table 10 presents the profile of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Bacolor, Pampanga, focusing on the geographical scope of their market.

Table 10: Geographical Scope of the Market

Profile	Mentor	
	Frequency	Percentage
Local Market	285	90.5
Regional Market	28	8.9
National Market	1	.3
International Market	1	.3
Total	315	100.0

The results from Table 10 showed that 90.5% (285 out of 315) of SMEs in Bacolor operated mainly within the local market. Only 8.9% (28) reached regional markets, while just 0.3% (1 SME each) had national or international market presence. This indicates that the vast majority of SMEs were locally focused, with very limited expansion beyond Bacolor. The data highlights a need for mentorship that helps SMEs explore broader market opportunities through improved marketing, logistics, and digital tools. Expanding to regional, national, or international markets remains a major area for growth.

Leveraging local resources was essential for boosting product authenticity and promoting sustainability. This strategy resonated with the cultural values of rural consumers, making it a highly effective approach for SMEs operating in rural regions (Haris, 2024).

3.1.6. Assistance Provided by the Government and Other Institutions

Table 11 presents the profile of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Bacolor, Pampanga, focusing on the assistance provided by the government and other institutions.

Table 11: Assistance Provided by the Government and Other Institutions

Profile	Mentor	
	Frequency	Percentage
Financial Assistance	285	90.5
Technical Assistance.	6	1.9
Advisory Services.	5	1.6
Market Access Support.	15	4.8
Regulatory Support	-	-
Infrastructure Support.	-	-
Research and Development (R&D).	1	.3
Networking Opportunities.	3	1.0
Total	315	100.0

The results from Table 11 showed that 90.5% (285 out of 315) of SMEs in Bacolor received financial assistance, making it the most common form of support. Other types of assistance were significantly less common: market access support was reported by 4.8% of SMEs, technical assistance by 1.9%, advisory services by 1.6%, and networking opportunities by

1.0%. Regulatory and infrastructure support were completely absent, while only 0.3% received research and development (R&D) support. This indicates a heavy reliance on financial aid, with minimal access to other essential support services needed for long-term growth. The findings highlight the need for more diversified and comprehensive assistance, including

technical guidance, market development, and innovation support, to strengthen SME resilience and competitiveness in Bacolor.

The effectiveness of these policies depended on financial sector development, the focus of financial institutions, and alignment with SME needs (Bozintan & Badulescu, 2023).

3.2. Mentoring Practices of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)

The table presents the mentoring practices of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), focusing on approaches, frequency of provision, mentor-mentee relationship, mentor expertise, diagnosing problems, and overall effectiveness.

3.2.1 approaches;

Table 12 presents the mentoring practices of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), focusing on mentoring approaches.

Table 12: Approaches

INDICATORS	Mentor		Mentee	
	Mean	VD	Mean	VD
1. SME establishes formal mentoring programs to support and develop new employees. On-the-job training plays a crucial role in our mentoring approach, focusing on skill development.	3.90	Highly Evident	3.83	Highly Evident
2. SMEs also actively promote peer mentoring, where experienced employees guide and support their less experienced colleagues.	3.38	Highly Evident	3.37	Highly Evident
3. Mentors frequently conduct informal coaching sessions to help mentees overcome specific challenges they encounter.	3.76	Highly Evident	3.75	Highly Evident
4. Additionally, our mentoring practices are customized to cater to the individual needs of each mentee.	3.56	Highly Evident	3.39	Highly Evident
5. SME establishes formal mentoring programs to support and develop new employees. On-the-job training plays a crucial role in our mentoring approach, focusing on skill development.	3.84	Highly Evident	3.75	Highly Evident
Weighted Mean	3.69	Highly Evident	3.62	Highly Evident

Legend: 1- Barely Evident [1.00-1.74];2- Somewhat Evident [1.75-2.49];3- Evident [2.50-3.24],4- Highly Evident [3.25-4.00]

The results showed that the highest-rated mentoring practice among SMEs in Bacolor was the implementation of formal mentoring programs focused on skill development, with weighted means of 3.90 from mentors and 3.83 from mentees, both classified as "Highly Evident." Another formal mentoring approach followed closely with means of 3.84 and 3.75. Informal coaching sessions also received strong ratings (3.76 and 3.75), indicating their value in addressing immediate challenges. Customized mentoring had slightly lower means of 3.56 (mentors) and 3.39 (mentees), suggesting room for improvement

in tailoring mentorship to individual needs. Peer mentoring was the lowest-rated, with means of 3.38 and 3.37, showing it was viewed as less central. Overall, the average weighted means of 3.69 for mentors and 3.62 for mentees confirmed that mentoring practices were generally effective and well-implemented across SMEs, though some areas, such as personalization and peer mentoring, could be further strengthened. Peer mentoring can be particularly advantageous for first-generation college students, helping to boost their retention rates, maintain comparable academic performance, and

enhance leadership abilities and self-confidence (Connolly, 2017).

Mentoring was best understood as a relational system in which the mentor actively fostered the mentee's growth and advancement. This tailored training approach was particularly valuable

for enterprises, especially in contexts of innovative development (Doroshkevych & Kit, 2024).

3.2.2. frequency of provision;

Table 13 presents the mentoring practices of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), focusing on the frequency of provision.

Table 13: Frequency of Provision

INDICATORS	Mentor		Mentee	
	Mean	VD	Mean	VD
1. SME offers regular weekly mentoring sessions to support ongoing development.	3.84	Highly Evident	3.72	Highly Evident
2. Mentors in our organization conduct daily check-ins with their mentees to ensure consistent progress.	3.48	Highly Evident	3.43	Highly Evident
3. Formal mentoring meetings are held at least once a month, providing structured guidance.	3.77	Highly Evident	3.66	Highly Evident
4. In addition to scheduled sessions, our mentoring program allows for flexible, as-needed interactions.	3.65	Highly Evident	3.43	Highly Evident
5. The frequency of these mentoring sessions is designed to foster continuous learning and development within our SME.	3.85	Highly Evident	3.71	Highly Evident
Weighted Mean	3.72	Highly Evident	3.59	Highly Evident

Legend: 1- Barely Evident [1.00-1.74];2- Somewhat Evident [1.75-2.49];3- Evident [2.50-3.24],4- Highly Evident [3.25-4.00]

The results from Table 13 showed that the frequency of mentoring sessions in SMEs in Bacolor was consistently rated as "Highly Evident" by both mentors and mentees. The highest-rated item was the general importance of regular mentoring, with weighted means of 3.85 (mentors) and 3.71 (mentees). Weekly sessions followed closely (3.84 and 3.72), indicating strong implementation of consistent mentoring. Monthly formal meetings also received high ratings (3.77 and 3.66), while daily check-ins (3.48 and 3.43) and flexible, as-needed interactions (3.65 and 3.43) were valued but slightly less emphasized. The overall weighted means of 3.72 for mentors and 3.59 for mentees confirmed that mentoring in SMEs was frequent and structured, contributing to ongoing

professional development and improved organizational performance. Mentoring has a beneficial effect on the performance of small and medium enterprises, resulting in increased productivity, greater job satisfaction, and improved employee retention (Shah, Othman, & Mansor, 2016).

The research indicated that well-structured mentoring programs contributed significantly to business success by elevating employee value and overall operational efficiency (Hussain et al., 2016).

3.2.3. Mentor-mentee relationship;

Table 14 presents the mentoring practices of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), focusing on the mentor-mentee relationship.

Table 14: Mentor-Mentee Relationship

INDICATORS	Mentor		Mentee	
	Mean	VD	Mean	VD
1. In SME, there is a strong foundation of trust between mentors and mentees.	3.85	Highly Evident	3.78	Highly Evident
2. Open and effective communication is consistently upheld in these relationships, ensuring clarity and understanding.	3.47	Highly Evident	3.40	Highly Evident
3. Mentors and mentees mutually respect each other's ideas and perspectives, fostering a positive environment.	3.76	Highly Evident	3.71	Highly Evident
4. Both parties demonstrate a high level of commitment to the mentoring process and their shared objectives.	3.64	Highly Evident	3.41	Highly Evident
5. These mentor-mentee relationships play a vital role in supporting the personal and professional growth of our mentees.	3.82	Highly Evident	3.68	Highly Evident
Weighted Mean	3.71	Highly Evident	3.60	Highly Evident

Legend: 1- Barely Evident [1.00-1.74];2- Somewhat Evident [1.75-2.49];3- Evident [2.50-3.24],4- Highly Evident [3.25-4.00]

The results from Table 14 showed that mentor-mentee relationships in SMEs in Bacolor were strong and positively perceived. The highest-rated factor was trust, with weighted means of 3.85 from mentors and 3.78 from mentees, followed by support for personal and professional growth (3.82 and 3.68) and mutual respect (3.76 and 3.71). Commitment to the mentoring process scored 3.64 for mentors and 3.41 for mentees, while effective communication received the lowest but still "Highly Evident" ratings of 3.47 and 3.40. The overall means of 3.71 for mentors and 3.60 for mentees confirmed that mentor-mentee relationships were strong, marked by trust, respect, and shared goals – key factors that made mentoring a

valuable development tool in Bacolor’s SME sector. Trust, empathy, and open communication are essential elements that strengthen the quality of mentor-student relationships in work-based learning environments (Mohabuth, 2015). This strategic alignment played a vital role in minimizing employee turnover and enhancing overall organizational effectiveness (Kandukuri, 2023).

3.2.4. Mentor expertise

Table 15 presents the mentoring practices of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), focusing on mentor expertise.

Table 15: Mentor Expertise

INDICATORS	Mentor		Mentee	
	Mean	VD	Mean	VD
1. Mentors in our SME bring extensive knowledge and experience specific to our industry.	3.91	Highly Evident	3.77	Highly Evident
2. They have a proven track record of significant accomplishments in their respective fields.	3.43	Highly Evident	3.39	Highly Evident

3.	The qualifications and expertise of our mentors are well-suited to meet the developmental needs of their mentees.	3.80	Highly Evident	3.76	Highly Evident
4.	To remain current with industry trends, our mentors consistently update their skills and knowledge.	3.62	Highly Evident	3.36	Highly Evident
5.	The expertise of our mentors plays a crucial role in driving the growth and success of our SME.	3.81	Highly Evident	3.74	Highly Evident
Weighted Mean		3.71	Highly Evident	3.60	Highly Evident

Legend: 1- Barely Evident [1.00-1.74];2- Somewhat Evident [1.75-2.49];3- Evident [2.50-3.24],4- Highly Evident [3.25-4.00]

The results from Table 15 showed that mentor expertise in SMEs in Bacolor was consistently rated as "Highly Evident" by both mentors and mentees. The highest-rated item was industry-specific knowledge, with weighted means of 3.91 for mentors and 3.77 for mentees, confirming that mentors were well-versed in their fields. Mentor expertise as a driver of SME growth scored 3.81 and 3.74, while the alignment of mentor qualifications with mentee needs scored 3.80 and 3.76. Updating skills to keep up with industry trends received slightly lower ratings (3.62 and 3.36), indicating room for improvement in ongoing professional development. The lowest-rated item was the recognition of mentors' track records (3.43 and 3.39). Overall, the average scores of 3.71 for mentors and 3.60 for mentees confirmed that mentor expertise was a strong asset within SMEs, supporting both individual development and business growth.

Business mentoring, the adoption of innovative business models, and the use of social media all play a significant role in enhancing the entrepreneurial performance of SMEs in Bogor (Hakim, Lesmana, & Supriandi, 2024).

Training mentors offered greater advantages than depending only on their experience. Specifically, trained mentors were able to build stronger relational skills, creating a trusting atmosphere and adopting a mentoring style that effectively supported the mentee's learning and independence (St-Jean & Mitrano-Méda, 2016).

3.2.5. Diagnosing Problems; and

Table 16 presents the mentoring practices of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), focusing on diagnosing problems.

Table 16: Diagnosing Problems

INDICATORS	Mentor		Mentee	
	Mean	VD	Mean	VD
1. The mentoring process efficiently identifies critical challenges faced by both the mentee and the business.	3.90	Highly Evident	3.73	Highly Evident
2. During mentoring sessions, there is a comprehensive analysis of business operations to identify areas needing improvement.	3.42	Highly Evident	3.41	Highly Evident
3. Mentors exhibit strong expertise in assessing employee performance and offering constructive feedback.	3.77	Highly Evident	3.68	Highly Evident
4. Financial challenges within the business are effectively diagnosed through mentoring discussions.	3.57	Highly Evident	3.39	Highly Evident

5. The mentoring relationship also plays a key role in recognizing and addressing market-related obstacles impacting the SME.	3.83	Highly Evident	3.75	Highly Evident
Weighted Mean	3.70	Highly Evident	3.59	Highly Evident

Legend: 1- Barely Evident [1.00-1.74];2- Somewhat Evident [1.75-2.49];3- Evident [2.50-3.24],4- Highly Evident [3.25-4.00]

The results from Table 16 showed that mentoring was highly effective in diagnosing problems within SMEs in Bacolor. The highest-rated indicator was the identification of critical business and personal challenges, with weighted means of 3.90 for mentors and 3.73 for mentees. Recognition of market-related obstacles followed closely (3.83 and 3.75), showing mentors’ strong role in guiding mentees through external business issues. Assessment of employee performance scored 3.77 (mentors) and 3.68 (mentees), indicating effective support in personnel management. Financial challenge identification received slightly lower scores (3.57 and 3.39), suggesting a need for stronger financial mentoring. The lowest-rated item was the analysis of business operations (3.42 and 3.41), highlighting an area for improvement in operational diagnostics. Overall, with means of 3.70 for mentors and 3.59 for mentees,

mentoring was seen as a valuable tool for problem-solving and decision-making in SMEs. Mentoring has a favorable effect on the performance of small and medium enterprises, contributing to increased productivity, improved employee satisfaction, and greater staff retention (Shah, Othman, & Mansor, 2016).

A notable observation was the widespread absence of formal marketing and business plans among these firms, even though they recognized customer needs (Orlova, Ivanov, & Sundukova, 2024; Mazzarol, 2014).

3.2.6. Overall Effectiveness

Table 17 presents the mentoring practices of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), focusing on overall effectiveness.

Table 17: Overall Effectiveness

INDICATORS	Mentor		Mentee	
	Mean	VD	Mean	VD
1. Mentoring practices have greatly contributed to the overall growth of the business.	3.88	Highly Evident	3.78	Highly Evident
2. The mentoring process has led to noticeable improvements in decision-making skills.	3.46	Highly Evident	3.37	Highly Evident
3. Employee satisfaction has risen significantly due to the implementation of mentoring practices in our SME.	3.78	Highly Evident	3.73	Highly Evident
4. The mentoring relationship has facilitated substantial professional development for mentees.	3.62	Highly Evident	3.42	Highly Evident
5. These practices have also positively impacted the SME’s ability to overcome challenges and adapt to market changes.	3.82	Highly Evident	3.74	Highly Evident
Weighted Mean	3.71	Highly Evident	3.61	Highly Evident

Legend: 1- Barely Evident [1.00-1.74];2- Somewhat Evident [1.75-2.49];3- Evident [2.50-3.24],4- Highly Evident [3.25-4.00]

The results from Table 17 showed that mentoring practices in SMEs in Bacolor were highly effective, with overall weighted means of 3.71 for mentors and 3.61 for mentees. The highest-rated impact was on business growth, scoring 3.88 (mentors) and 3.78 (mentees), followed by the ability to adapt to market changes (3.82 and 3.74) and improved employee satisfaction (3.78 and 3.73). Professional development received slightly lower ratings (3.62 and 3.42), while decision-making skills had the lowest but still "Highly Evident" scores (3.46 and 3.37). These results confirmed that mentoring significantly contributed to business success, adaptability, and employee development, though improvements could be made in aligning mentoring with professional growth and decision-making needs. Mentoring serves as an important approach for facilitating personal adaptation and growth within

organizations. While it offers both benefits and limitations, its effectiveness can be assessed using structured evaluation methods (Kanaev, 2023).

These programs served as a vital resource for both individual development and business growth (Shah, Othman, & Mansor, 2016).

3.3. Productivity of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)

The table presents the productivity of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), focusing on planning and decision-making, market efficiency, operational efficiency, and financial productivity.

3.3.1. Planning and Decision-Making

Table 18 presents the productivity of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), focusing on planning and decision-making.

Table 18: Planning and Decision-Making

INDICATORS	Mentor		Mentee	
	Mean	VD	Mean	VD
1. The mentoring process has strengthened the SME's ability to create clear and effective strategic plans.	3.94	High Productivity	3.81	High Productivity
2. Mentoring practices have made decision-making within the SME more informed and data-driven.	3.48	High Productivity	3.51	High Productivity
3. The mentoring relationship has improved the SME's capacity to set and achieve realistic business goals.	3.75	High Productivity	3.72	High Productivity
4. Project planning and execution have become more efficient thanks to insights gained through mentoring.	3.70	High Productivity	3.54	High Productivity
5. The SME's ability to adapt its strategies in response to market challenges has significantly improved with mentoring guidance.	3.84	High Productivity	3.76	High Productivity
Weighted Mean	3.74	High Productivity	3.67	High Productivity

Legend: 1- Low Productivity [1.00-1.74];2- Moderately Low Productivity [1.75-2.49];3- Moderately High Productivity [2.50-3.24],4- High Productivity [3.25-4.00]

The results from Table 18 showed that mentoring had a strong positive impact on the planning and decision-making productivity of SMEs

in Bacolor. The highest-rated item was the enhancement of strategic planning, with weighted means of 3.94 for mentors and 3.81 for mentees.

Mentoring also improved adaptability to market challenges (3.84 and 3.76) and helped SMEs set and achieve realistic goals (3.75 and 3.72). Project planning and execution scored slightly lower (3.70 and 3.54), while the lowest-rated item was mentoring’s role in fostering data-driven decision-making (3.48 and 3.51). Overall, the means of 3.74 for mentors and 3.67 for mentees confirmed that mentoring significantly boosted productivity in planning and decision-making, though more focus on operational execution and data use could enhance results further. Coaching and mentoring have the potential to motivate employees, enhance productivity, and drive success, yet many organizations still do not have formal

programs in place to fully capitalize on these benefits (Clutterbuck, 2022).

Mentoring was best understood as a relational system in which the mentor actively supported the mentee’s growth and advancement, a framework especially advantageous for enterprises focused on innovation and development (Doroshkevych & Kit, 2024).

3.3.2. Market Efficiency

Table 19 presents the productivity of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), focusing on market efficiency.

Table 19: Market Efficiency

INDICATORS	Mentor		Mentee	
	Mean	VD	Mean	VD
1. The mentoring program has greatly enhanced the SME’s ability to identify and target its ideal customer base.	3.91	High Productivity	3.79	High Productivity
2. Following participation in the mentoring program, the SME has seen a noticeable increase in customer acquisition rates.	3.45	High Productivity	3.52	High Productivity
3. Mentoring practices have improved market penetration strategies, leading to a larger market share for the SME.	3.77	High Productivity	3.70	High Productivity
4. The guidance received through mentoring has directly boosted the SME’s competitiveness within its sector.	3.63	High Productivity	3.55	High Productivity
5. As a result of the mentoring program, the SME has experienced a measurable increase in customer satisfaction levels.	3.81	High Productivity	3.75	High Productivity
Weighted Mean	3.71	High Productivity	3.66	High Productivity

Legend: 1- Low Productivity [1.00-1.74];2- Moderately Low Productivity [1.75-2.49];3- Moderately High Productivity [2.50-3.24],4- High Productivity [3.25-4.00]

The results from Table 19 showed that mentoring significantly improved market efficiency among SMEs in Bacolor. The highest-rated outcome was improved customer targeting, with weighted means of 3.91 for mentors and 3.79 for mentees. Customer satisfaction followed closely (3.81 and 3.75), indicating that mentoring positively influenced service quality and client relationships. Market

penetration and increased market share scored 3.77 for mentors and 3.70 for mentees, showing mentoring's role in helping SMEs expand. Competitiveness in the sector received slightly lower ratings (3.63 and 3.55), while customer acquisition rates were the lowest but still productive (3.45 and 3.52). Overall, the average ratings of 3.71 for mentors and 3.66 for mentees confirmed that mentoring played

a key role in improving how SMEs engaged with the market and built their customer base. A collaborative mentoring approach that includes multiple stakeholders can effectively assist SMEs in the creative economy by supporting key areas such as marketing, legal compliance, social media, financial management, and entrepreneurial growth (Rosyadi, Kusuma, Fitrah, Haryanto, & Adawiyah, 2020).

Business mentoring played a pivotal role in enhancing performance by offering essential tools and guidance to entrepreneurs, which were critical for fostering growth and ensuring success (Hasya & Sukiman, 2024).

3.3.3. Operational Efficiency

Table 20 presents the productivity of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), focusing on operational efficiency.

Table 20: Operational Efficiency

INDICATORS	Mentor		Mentee	
	Mean	VD	Mean	VD
1. The mentoring program has brought about significant improvements in the SME’s internal processes and workflows.	3.92	High Productivity	3.79	High Productivity
2. As a result of mentoring, the SME has optimized resource allocation, leading to reduced operational costs.	3.44	High Productivity	3.53	High Productivity
3. Mentoring practices have helped enhance employees' time management skills, boosting overall productivity.	3.76	High Productivity	3.75	High Productivity
4. Following the mentoring program, the SME has seen noticeable improvements in production or service delivery times.	3.69	High Productivity	3.55	High Productivity
5. The guidance provided through mentoring has directly contributed to the implementation of more efficient operational systems within the SME.	3.85	High Productivity	3.75	High Productivity
Weighted Mean	3.73	High Productivity	3.67	High Productivity

Legend: 1- Low Productivity [1.00-1.74];2- Moderately Low Productivity [1.75-2.49];3- Moderately High Productivity [2.50-3.24],4- High Productivity [3.25-4.00]

The results from Table 20 showed that mentoring significantly improved operational efficiency in SMEs in Bacolor. The highest-rated impact was on internal processes and workflows, with weighted means of 3.92 for mentors and 3.79 for mentees. Mentoring also helped implement efficient operational systems (3.85 and 3.75) and improved employee time management (3.76 and 3.75). Improvements in production or service delivery times scored slightly lower (3.69 and 3.55), while the lowest-rated indicator was resource allocation and cost

reduction (3.44 and 3.53). Despite this, all indicators were rated as “High Productivity.” The overall weighted means of 3.73 for mentors and 3.67 for mentees confirmed that mentoring effectively enhanced operational efficiency, particularly through streamlined processes and better use of time and systems.

Mentoring contributed positively to improving both individual and organizational effectiveness and efficiency (Dugguh & Galadanchi, 2014).

3.3.4. Financial Productivity

Table 21 presents the productivity of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), focusing on financial productivity.

Table 21: Financial Productivity

INDICATORS	Mentor		Mentee	
	Mean	VD	Mean	VD
1. The mentoring program has significantly enhanced the SME's overall profitability.	3.88	High Productivity	3.75	High Productivity
2. As a result of the mentoring practices, the SME has experienced notable revenue growth.	3.44	High Productivity	3.51	High Productivity
3. The guidance provided through mentoring has led to more effective cost control measures within the SME.	3.77	High Productivity	3.74	High Productivity
4. The mentoring program has contributed to improved cash flow management practices.	3.69	High Productivity	3.54	High Productivity
5. Following the mentoring intervention, the SME has achieved greater financial stability and long-term sustainability.	3.84	High Productivity	3.77	High Productivity
Weighted Mean	3.72	High Productivity	3.66	High Productivity

Legend: 1- Low Productivity [1.00-1.74]; 2- Moderately Low Productivity [1.75-2.49]; 3- Moderately High Productivity [2.50-3.24]; 4- High Productivity [3.25-4.00]

The results from Table 21 showed that mentoring had a strong positive impact on the financial productivity of SMEs in Bacolor. The highest-rated effect was increased profitability, with weighted means of 3.88 for mentors and 3.75 for mentees. Financial stability and long-term sustainability followed closely (3.84 and 3.77), along with improved cost control (3.77 and 3.74). Cash flow management received slightly lower scores (3.69 and 3.54), and revenue growth was the lowest-rated but still marked as "High Productivity" (3.44 and 3.51). The overall weighted means of 3.72 for mentors and 3.66 for mentees confirmed that mentoring significantly enhanced financial performance, especially in profitability, stability, and cost efficiency, though more targeted guidance on driving revenue

could strengthen results further. Competency-based mentoring has a positive effect on micro entrepreneurs and MSME sector development by enhancing financial outcomes, management capabilities, marketing strategies, and overall business competitiveness (Suwandi, 2024).

Research showed that business training significantly enhanced profits and sales for women-owned microenterprises in Ethiopia, whereas mentoring yielded less pronounced effects on profits and the adoption of business practices (Bakhtiar, Bastian, & Goldstein, 2021).

3.4. Challenges of Mentoring for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)

Table 22 presents the challenges of mentoring for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), focusing on adaptability and sustainability.

Table 22 presents the challenges of mentoring for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), focusing on adaptability.

3.4.1. Adaptability

Table 22: Adaptability

INDICATORS	Mentor		Mentee	
	Mean	VD	Mean	VD
1. The SME has encountered significant challenges in integrating new knowledge and skills gained through mentoring into its daily operations.	3.24	Minor Challenges	3.64	Minimal Challenges
2. Employees of the SME have displayed resistance to adopting changes suggested during the mentoring process.	3.05	Minor Challenges	3.36	Minimal Challenges
3. The SME has found it difficult to adapt its strategies in response to market dynamics, despite the guidance provided through mentoring.	3.57	Minimal Challenges	3.55	Minimal Challenges
4. The mentoring program has not effectively addressed the SME's challenges in adapting to evolving business needs.	3.54	Minimal Challenges	3.62	Minimal Challenges
5. The SME has struggled to maintain long-term changes that were supposed to result from mentoring practices.	3.10	Minor Challenges	3.64	Minimal Challenges
Weighted Mean	3.30	Minimal Challenges	3.56	Minimal Challenges

Legend: 1- Severe Challenges [1.00-1.74]; 2- Moderate Challenges [1.75-2.49]; 3- Minor Challenges [2.50-3.24]; 4- Minimal Challenges [3.25-4.00]

The results from Table 22 showed that SMEs in Bacolor faced minimal to minor challenges in adapting to mentoring-driven changes. The main issue was adapting strategies to market dynamics, with weighted means of 3.57 for mentors and 3.55 for mentees. Other minor challenges included addressing evolving business needs (3.54 and 3.62), sustaining long-term changes (3.10 and 3.64), and overcoming resistance to change (3.05 and 3.36). The integration of new knowledge into daily operations was also noted as a difficulty, with means of 3.24 for mentors and 3.64 for mentees. Overall, the weighted means of 3.30 for mentors and 3.56 for mentees indicated minimal challenges, though the findings suggest a need for

more focused support to reinforce changes and ensure lasting application of mentoring outcomes. Collaborative mentorship, which emphasizes an equal partnership, can aid school leaders by encouraging critical thinking and facilitating the shared development of knowledge (Lopez, 2016).

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) encountered numerous global challenges, including competitive global markets, financial crises, advancements in ICT, shifting consumer demands, trade dumping, international terrorism, and religious conflicts. These pressures necessitated the development of strategic approaches to ensure

survival and success in the competitive landscape (Gamage et al., 2020).

3.4.2. Sustainability

Table 23 presents the challenges of mentoring for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), focusing on sustainability.

Table 23: Sustainability

INDICATORS	Mentor		Mentee	
	Mean	VD	Mean	VD
1. The SME has struggled to maintain long-term improvements in business processes initiated through mentoring, facing numerous challenges.	3.08	Minor Challenges	3.48	Minimal Challenges
2. Limited financial and human resources have severely impeded the SME's ability to sustain the positive outcomes achieved from the mentoring program.	3.24	Minor Challenges	3.52	Minimal Challenges
3. The inconsistency and inadequacy of mentoring support over time have prevented the SME from continuing to benefit from mentoring practices.	3.09	Minor Challenges	3.29	Minimal Challenges
4. The SME has not received sufficient follow-up support after the initial mentoring period, hindering its ability to effectively implement and maintain learned strategies.	3.38	Minimal Challenges	3.20	Minor Challenges
5. External economic pressures and market changes have made it increasingly challenging for the SME to sustain the financial stability and growth that mentoring practices were supposed to facilitate.	2.87	Minor Challenges	3.64	Minimal Challenges
Weighted Mean	3.13	Minor Challenges	3.43	Minimal Challenges

Legend: 1- Severe Challenges [1.00-1.74];2- Moderate Challenges [1.75-2.49];3- Minor Challenges [2.50-3.24],4- Minimal Challenges [3.25-4.00]

The results from Table 23 showed that SMEs in Bacolor faced minor to minimal challenges in sustaining the benefits of mentoring. The main issue was insufficient follow-up support after the initial mentoring phase, with weighted means of 3.38 for mentors and 3.20 for mentees. Limited financial and human resources (3.24 and 3.52) and inconsistent mentoring over time (3.09 and 3.29) were also noted as barriers. Difficulty maintaining long-term improvements in business processes scored 3.08 for mentors and 3.48 for mentees, while external economic pressures received the lowest mentor rating

at 2.87, but a higher 3.64 from mentees. Overall, with means of 3.13 for mentors and 3.43 for mentees, the findings indicated that while mentoring had lasting value, better follow-up, stable resources, and support for navigating market changes were needed to ensure sustainability. Mentoring helps mentees develop both support systems and resilience, empowering them personally and professionally to create meaningful change in their lives (Brewer, 2016).

Mentoring programs showed a statistically significant impact on youth outcomes; however, the effects were modest, suggesting a need for enhanced

quality and rigor in mentoring practices to achieve more substantial benefits (Raposa et al., 2019).

3.5. Significant Relationship Between Mentoring Practices and Their Impact on SME Productivity

Table 24 presents the significant relationship between mentoring practices and their impact on SME productivity.

Table 24: Relationship Between Mentoring Practices and Their Impact on SME Productivity

	Planning and Decision-Making			Market Efficiency			Operational Efficiency			Financial Productivity		
	r value	Sig. Value	Interpretation	r value	Sig. Value	Interpretation	r value	Sig. Value	Interpretation	r value	Sig. Value	Interpretation
Approaches;	.639**	.000	Significant	.608**	.000	Significant	.650**	.000	Significant	.627**	.000	Significant
Frequency Of Provision;	.656**	.000	Significant	.597**	.000	Significant	.639**	.000	Significant	.648**	.000	Significant
Mentor-Mentee Relationship;	.681**	.000	Significant	.617**	.000	Significant	.689**	.000	Significant	.661**	.000	Significant
Mentor Expertise, And	.695**	.000	Significant	.650**	.000	Significant	.665**	.000	Significant	.658**	.000	Significant
Diagnosing Problems	.699**	.000	Significant	.674**	.000	Significant	.677**	.000	Significant	.696**	.000	Significant
Overall Effectiveness	.703**	.000	Significant	.661**	.000	Significant	.692**	.000	Significant	.685**	.000	Significant

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

The results from Table 24 showed a strong and statistically significant relationship between mentoring practices and SME productivity in Bacolor ($p < 0.01$ across all variables). Mentoring approaches were significantly linked to planning and decision-making ($r = 0.639$), market efficiency ($r = 0.608$), operational efficiency ($r = 0.650$), and financial productivity ($r = 0.627$). Frequency of mentoring also showed strong correlations, particularly with planning and decision-making ($r = 0.656$) and financial productivity ($r = 0.648$). Mentor-mentee relationships and mentor expertise had the highest

impact, with r-values reaching 0.681 and 0.695 for planning, and 0.661 and 0.658 for financial productivity, respectively. The overall effectiveness of mentoring showed the strongest correlations— $r = 0.703$ for planning and $r = 0.692$ for operational efficiency—confirming that well-executed mentoring significantly boosts productivity. These findings reinforced the need for structured, consistent, and expert-led mentoring to drive SME performance.

3.6. Significant Differences in Mentoring Practices Between Mentors and Mentees

Table 25: Difference in Mentoring practices between Mentors and Mentees

Profile of Enterprise	t value	Sig. Value	Decision	Interpretation
Approaches	3.218	.001	Reject Ho	Significant
Frequency Of Provision;	6.417	.000	Reject Ho	Significant
Mentor-Mentee Relationship;	5.252	.000	Reject Ho	Significant
Mentor Expertise, And	5.333	.000	Reject Ho	Significant
Diagnosing Problems	5.241	.000	Reject Ho	Significant
Overall Effectiveness	4.875	.000	Reject Ho	Significant

*. Significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

The results showed significant differences in perceptions of mentoring practices between mentors and mentees in SMEs in Bacolor. Mentoring approaches (t = 3.218, p = 0.001), frequency of provision (t = 6.417, p = 0.000), mentor-mentee relationships (t = 5.252, p = 0.000), mentor expertise (t = 5.333, p = 0.000), problem diagnosis (t = 5.241, p = 0.000), and overall effectiveness (t = 4.875, p = 0.000) all showed statistically significant differences. These findings indicate that mentors and mentees experienced or interpreted mentoring differently. To close these gaps, mentoring practices need better alignment, clearer expectations, stronger communication, more tailored training for mentors,

and regular program evaluations that include mentee feedback. Virtual mentoring and coaching can enhance teaching effectiveness and boost student engagement, particularly when paired with thorough pre-session planning, organized observations, and strong communication strategies (Irby, 2015).

3.7. Strategic Plan

This strategic plan addresses key areas identified in the conclusions and is designed to create a robust, adaptive, and sustainable mentoring ecosystem for SMEs in Bacolor, Pampanga, enhancing their long-term growth and competitive advantage.

Table 26: Strategic Plan

Key Areas	Objective	Strategies	Responsible Unit Person	Timelines	Expected Output
Mentoring Program Structure	Enhance structured, comprehensive mentoring for SMEs.	1. Implement formal mentoring modules tailored to SME needs. 2. Establish a system for regular mentoring sessions (weekly and monthly).	SME Mentoring Team, Local Business Development Office	Start Q1, Ongoing	Increased adoption of structured mentoring practices, improved skill-building and knowledge transfer.
Mentor Expertise Development	Improve mentor knowledge and adaptability to changing SME needs.	1. Provide industry-specific training for mentors. 2. Offer regular workshops on emerging business	SME Mentors, Local Chambers of Commerce, External Trainers	Start Q1, Bi-annual	Mentors with up-to-date expertise, aligning with current SME challenges

		trends and skill updates for mentors.			and enhancing mentorship quality.
Customization of Mentoring	Tailor mentoring practices to the unique needs of various SME types.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conduct a needs assessment for each SME type (e.g., sole proprietorship, partnerships). 2. Develop customized mentoring templates and materials. 	SME Mentors	Q1-Q2	Customized mentoring materials and sessions that meet the specific needs of SME types.
Decision-Making and Problem-Solving	Strengthen decision-making and diagnostic skills in SMEs.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Integrate decision-making modules within mentoring programs. 2. Offer mentoring in financial and operational diagnostics specifically. 	Local Business Support Units, Financial Advisors	Q2-Q3	Improved decision-making capabilities and problem-solving skills among SME mentees.
Adaptability to Market Changes	Increase SME adaptability to market dynamics and changes.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide ongoing mentoring in market adaptation and strategy adjustment. 2. Create resources for real-time strategy shifts in SMEs. 	SME Mentors	Ongoing, quarterly check-ins	Enhanced resilience and adaptability among SMEs in response to market fluctuations.
Long-Term Sustainability	Support SMEs in sustaining mentoring benefits and improvements.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Implement a post-mentoring follow-up plan with regular check-ins. 2. Allocate resources for extended mentoring support and resource planning. 	SME Mentoring Team, Local Government Partnerships Unit	Q3, ongoing	Long-term retention of mentoring improvements, sustained productivity, and growth in SMEs.

Resource Allocation	Ensure sufficient resources for mentoring programs.	1. Identify budget allocations for ongoing mentoring programs. 2. Partner with local government for additional financial and technical support.	Local Government, SMEs	Annual, Q4 review	Secured funding and resources for sustainable, effective mentoring initiatives.
Evaluation and Feedback	Continuously assess mentoring impact and make improvements.	1. Develop feedback mechanisms for mentors and mentees to evaluate program effectiveness. 2. Adjust mentoring strategies based on feedback results.	SME Mentors	Bi-annual assessments	Continuous improvement of mentoring programs, aligned with SME feedback and needs

The strategic plan for mentoring SMEs in Bacolor, Pampanga is designed for use by SME owners, managers, mentors, local government units, business organizations, and policy makers. It outlines a structured and sustainable mentoring framework with formal modules, regular sessions, and customized approaches based on SME types. Key actions include industry-specific mentor training, bi-annual workshops, focused modules on decision-making and diagnostics, and quarterly check-ins to support adaptability. The plan also provides for post-mentoring follow-ups, resource allocation through government partnerships, and bi-annual program evaluations. Overall, it serves as a practical guide to improve SME skills, productivity, and long-term growth through coordinated mentoring efforts.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The results showed that SMEs in Bacolor, Pampanga are primarily local, small-scale businesses structured as sole proprietorships, focused on retail, and dependent on financial assistance, with limited access to broader markets, technical support, or innovation. Mentoring practices were highly valued and played a key role in improving organizational growth, employee development, and business adaptability. These practices significantly enhanced

SME productivity in areas such as planning, market efficiency, operations, and financial performance. While challenges in sustaining mentoring benefits were minimal, issues like strategic alignment, resource limitations, and insufficient follow-up support remain. Strong positive correlations confirmed that expert-led, structured mentoring has a major impact on productivity. However, differences between mentor and mentee perceptions pointed to the need for better alignment, communication, and tailored approaches. The strategic plan provided a clear framework for advancing SME growth through structured mentoring, improved mentor training, targeted support, and consistent program evaluation, positioning mentoring as a critical driver of resilience and long-term success.

RECOMMENDATION

To meet the specific needs of SMEs in Bacolor, tailored mentoring programs should be created that align with different business structures such as sole proprietorships and partnerships. These programs must focus on individual development, teamwork, and operational efficiency based on the type and size of the enterprise. Mentor training must also be improved through consistent, industry-specific sessions that keep mentors updated on business

trends, financial management, and market adaptability, with support from external experts. Mentors should use adaptable strategies, including diagnostic tools and industry-focused resources, to address unique challenges faced by various SMEs. To sustain mentoring benefits, local government units must implement structured follow-ups with regular check-ins and allocate resources to support ongoing mentoring. Decision-making and diagnostic skills should be built into the program through modules led by financial advisors to help SMEs independently address business problems. Finally, a continuous assessment system must be established, collecting regular feedback from mentors and mentees to adjust the program as SME needs evolve, ensuring it remains relevant and effective for long-term business growth.

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