



# Impact of Dark Kitchens on Local Community Wellbeing

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## **Abstract**

The emergence of dark kitchens has disrupted the hospitality industry, impacting community quality of life in urban areas in social, health, legal, and environmental ways. This study aims to contribute to an improved understanding of the relationship between community quality of life and four of its important antecedents: gentrification, local biopolitics, dark kitchen disposal, and dark kitchen integrity. The concept of ‘lobbying’, supporting laws or regulations that benefit an organisation or industry (Williams & Horodnic, 2017), was used as a moderator to explain the strength of these relationships. Two theoretical perspectives were applied: Social Capital Theory and Community Engagement Theory. Data were collected from a quantitative survey using a purpose-built questionnaire. This was administered during June 2023 to adult participants across the U.S. using the online platform, Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk). The primary focus was on the perceptions of residents with some knowledge of dark kitchens. The results indicated that each of the four antecedents were positively linked with more favourable perceptions of local quality of life, even after controlling for the effect of lobbying. The results suggest that dark kitchens may become a relevant actor in the meal provision market across large urban areas, and likely to add value to the living conditions of urban communities. This study may have important implications for the monitoring and integration of dark kitchens within large cities, especially in terms of striking a balance between fostering innovation and ensuring public safety and fairness in dark kitchens’ value chain.

**Keywords:** biopolitics, gentrification, integrity, lobbying, quality-of-life