

# Empowering Microentrepreneurs Through Localized Financial Literacy: Evidence From The Sugpat Kasilasa Program In Conflict-Affected Sulu, Philippines

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## ABSTRACT

*This study evaluates the impact of Sugpat Kasilasa: Accounting, Bookkeeping & Counting (ABC)—a localized financial literacy and bookkeeping training program for microentrepreneurs in Barangay Bus-Bus, Jolo, Sulu. Anchored on the Resource-Based View (RBV) and Empowerment Theory, the program was developed to strengthen the financial capability and business resilience of sari-sari store owners and informal traders in a conflict-affected region of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). Using a pre-post intervention design with 70 purposively selected participants, the study assessed knowledge gains, skill application, and participant satisfaction. Findings revealed a statistically significant improvement in financial literacy and bookkeeping practices across all key areas ( $p < 0.001$ ), with post-training mean scores showing marked increases in understanding of financial terms, income tracking, and budgeting. Qualitative feedback emphasized empowerment, confidence building, and demand for follow-up training in inventory, pricing, and customer service. Evaluation metrics rated the program as “very effective” in clarity, delivery, and relevance.*

*The results underscore the value of culturally contextualized, community-based financial training in economically and politically marginalized regions. This research contributes to the limited literature on grassroots entrepreneurship education in the Global South, highlighting practical pathways for inclusive livelihood development and economic resilience.*

**Keywords:** Financial literacy, Microentrepreneurship, Community-based training, Bookkeeping, education, Sari-sari stores, Informal economy, Empowerment theory, Resource-based view, Conflict-affected communities, Sulu Philippines

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## INTRODUCTION

### Background of the Study

Empowering grassroots entrepreneurs through capacity-building programs is a recognized strategy in community development. The rationale behind this extension initiative is rooted in the belief that financial education can lead to improved business practices, increased income, and greater self-reliance. Without proper knowledge of accounting, recordkeeping, and financial reporting, sari-sari store owners are vulnerable to losses, inefficient operations, and even business closure.

The program sought to bridge the gap between academic knowledge and practical community needs by directly applying the expertise of faculty members in a local, real-world context. By delivering accessible, culturally sensitive, and contextualized training, the project aimed to make financial concepts understandable and usable for non-specialists in a grassroots setting.

Microenterprises such as sari-sari stores play a vital role in the Philippine economy, especially in rural and low-income communities. These stores are not only sources of income for many families but also provide essential goods and services to neighborhoods with limited access to formal retail outlets. Despite their importance, many sari-sari store owners operate informally, lacking access to basic financial management knowledge and tools, which often leads to poor business sustainability and growth.

The municipality of Jolo in Sulu, a part of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), is home to many informal entrepreneurs. Barangay Bus-Bus, in particular, has a high concentration of small-scale livelihood activities, including sari-sari stores. However, these entrepreneurs often face challenges such as inadequate financial skills, poor recordkeeping practices, and limited understanding of business management.

In response to these needs, Sulu State College’s School of Business Administration launched a literacy capability-building initiative through its extension services. The program, titled “Sugpat Kasilasa: Accounting, Bookkeeping & Counting (ABC) for Entrepreneurship and Sari-Sari Store Livelihood in Barangay Bus-Bus,” aimed to empower local entrepreneurs with essential financial literacy skills to help sustain and grow their businesses.

The proliferation of micro and small enterprises in the Philippines, particularly sari-sari stores, has underscored the need for entrepreneurial literacy among grassroots communities. Sari-sari stores are pivotal in driving local economies, yet many lack fundamental knowledge of accounting and bookkeeping. To address this, the School of Business Administration at Sulu State College initiated the "Sugpat Kasilasa: Accounting, Bookkeeping & Counting (ABC) for Entrepreneurship & Sari-Sari Store Livelihood" community extension program. Conducted in Barangay Bus-Bus, Jolo, Sulu, this initiative aimed to empower local entrepreneurs by equipping them with essential financial skills.

The project aligns with the institution's thrust in community extension, targeting competency-building among marginalized groups. It serves not only as a training program but also as a research initiative evaluating the real-world impact of financial education. This chapter presents the statement of the problem, background, rationale, objectives, and significance of the study, outlining the conceptual framework that guided its implementation.

This study aims to assess the effectiveness of the "Sugpat Kasilasa: Accounting, Bookkeeping & Counting (ABC) for Entrepreneurship and Sari-Sari Store Livelihood" training program in empowering local micro-entrepreneurs through financial literacy and bookkeeping education. To achieve this, the study seeks to answer the following: First, the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of age, sex, educational level, and business experience; Second, the level of financial literacy and bookkeeping practices of sari-sari store owners in Barangay Bus-Bus prior to the training; Third, the key components and instructional strategies employed in the training program; Fourth, the extent has the training program improved the participants' knowledge, skills, and confidence in accounting and bookkeeping; Fifth, the challenges were encountered by both the implementers and participants during the conduct of the training?; Sixth, the recommendations can be proposed to enhance future capability-building programs for micro-entrepreneurs in similar communities

This study was undertaken with the following specific objectives: To assess the financial literacy and recordkeeping practices of sari-sari store owners in Barangay Bus-Bus prior to the training. To implement a targeted training program that introduces basic concepts in accounting, bookkeeping, and financial management relevant to microenterprise operations. To evaluate the effectiveness of the training in terms of knowledge gained, skills applied, and confidence developed in managing small business finances. To propose recommendations for continuous support and follow-up training initiatives based on participant feedback and post-training outcomes.

This study is anchored on two key theoretical underpinnings: the Resource-Based View (RBV) of the firm and Empowerment Theory. These theories offer a comprehensive lens through which the purpose and outcomes of the Sugpat Kasilasa training program can be understood.

### **1. Resource-Based View (RBV) Theory**

The Resource-Based View, as proposed by Wernerfelt (1984) and further developed by Barney (1991), posits that an organization or enterprise gains competitive advantage through the possession and strategic use of valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable resources. In the context of microenterprises such as sari-sari stores, human capital—particularly in the form of financial knowledge, bookkeeping skills, and decision-making capabilities—is a crucial internal resource.

The Sugpat Kasilasa training program serves as a mechanism for developing these internal resources among local entrepreneurs. By equipping participants with practical accounting and financial tools, the program enhances their ability to manage and sustain their businesses, thus improving their competitiveness and resilience in the informal economy.

### **2. Empowerment Theory**

Empowerment Theory, as articulated by Zimmerman (2000), emphasizes the process through which individuals and communities gain control over their lives, resources, and environment. It involves developing self-efficacy, critical awareness, and participatory skills.

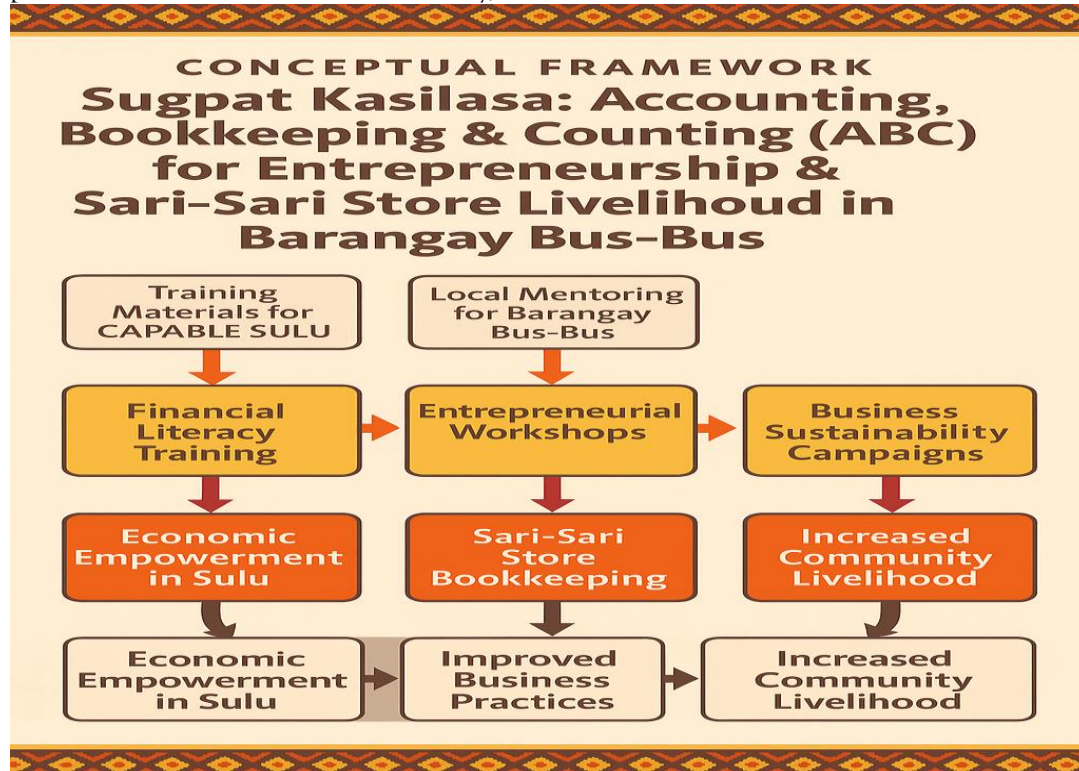
Through the Sugpat Kasilasa extension program, sari-sari store owners are empowered to take charge of their financial practices, make informed decisions, and actively participate in managing their economic ventures. The training promotes not only cognitive development but also social empowerment, encouraging collaboration, shared learning, and local leadership.

The theory supports the idea that true empowerment begins with education—in this case, literacy in accounting, bookkeeping, and basic business practices—which enables marginalized groups to improve their socio-economic conditions and advocate for themselves in the local marketplace.

This study is guided by the Resource-Based View (RBV) and Empowerment Theory frameworks.

According to RBV, an enterprise's internal resources—such as financial literacy and managerial skills—are critical in sustaining competitive advantage. The training program serves as an intervention to strengthen these internal capabilities.

Empowerment Theory, on the other hand, underlines the importance of enabling individuals to gain control over their economic and social environments. The program empowers participants not just by providing information, but by nurturing confidence, decision-making capacity, and financial discipline. The conceptual framework thus connects the training inputs (knowledge, skills, and tools) to expected outputs (competency in accounting and bookkeeping) and long-term outcomes (improved business performance and livelihood sustainability).



This research holds significance for multiple stakeholders:

- For local entrepreneurs, it provides a rare opportunity to improve their business operations through practical and relevant training.
- For academic institutions, it demonstrates how extension services can meaningfully contribute to community empowerment and sustainable development.
- For policy-makers and local government units, the study offers insights into how localized financial education can be scaled up to improve economic resilience in marginalized communities.
- For researchers and educators, it contributes to the limited literature on grassroots entrepreneurship development in conflict-affected and underdeveloped regions such as Sulu.

This study focuses on evaluating the effectiveness of the Sugpat Kasilasa training program implemented by the Sulu State College - School of Business Administration as part of its community extension services. Specifically, it aims to assess the improvement in financial literacy, bookkeeping skills, and business confidence among sari-sari store owners and micro-entrepreneurs in Barangay Bus-Bus, Jolo, Sulu.

**The study covers:**

- The pre- and post-training knowledge and skills of participants in basic accounting and financial management.
- The demographic profile of participants and how it relates to their learning outcomes.
- The participants' feedback on the content, delivery, and overall effectiveness of the training.
- The impact of the training on participants' ability to apply learned skills in real-world microenterprise settings.

The data collection involved the use of a structured survey questionnaire, which includes both self-assessment items and training evaluation metrics. Statistical tools such as descriptive statistics, paired t-tests, and correlation analysis were used to analyze the data.

**DELIMITATION**

**The study is delimited to the following:**

- It only includes participants from Barangay Bus-Bus who were selected through purposive sampling, specifically targeting sari-sari store owners and informal micro-entrepreneurs.
- The sample size is limited to those who attended and completed the Sugpat Kasilasa training program. Other barangays and participants from other types of businesses were not included.
- The training program focused solely on basic financial literacy, accounting, and bookkeeping concepts, excluding advanced business topics such as marketing, taxation, or digital entrepreneurship.
- The effectiveness of the training is measured using self-reported survey responses and pre/post-assessment tools rather than through longitudinal business performance data.
- The training materials and facilitation were conducted in a localized and non-formal setting, tailored to the cultural and linguistic context of the community.

Given these limitations, the results of the study may not be generalizable to all microentrepreneurs in Sulu or other regions, but they provide valuable insights into the potential of localized, community-based financial literacy programs.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

This study employed a descriptive and quantitative research design to evaluate the effectiveness of the Sugpat Kasilasa training program in improving the financial literacy and bookkeeping skills of sari-sari store owners in Barangay Bus-Bus. The design was appropriate for assessing the changes in knowledge, skills, and attitudes before and after the intervention, and for analyzing relationships between participant profiles and outcomes.

### **Research Locale**

The study was conducted in Barangay Bus-Bus, located in Jolo, Sulu, a community characterized by active small-scale entrepreneurship and limited access to formal training programs. The barangay served as both the beneficiary and pilot area for the community extension service.

### **Research Respondents**

The participants were 70 sari-sari store owners and micro-entrepreneurs from Barangay Bus-Bus. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select individuals who were already engaged in retail or informal businesses and expressed willingness to participate in the training.

### **Sampling Design**

This study utilized a purposive sampling technique to identify and select participants who are directly involved in sari-sari store operations and microenterprises within Barangay Bus-Bus, Jolo, Sulu. Purposive sampling was deemed appropriate because the training program specifically targeted individuals who manage or own small-scale livelihood businesses and who are in need of basic financial literacy and bookkeeping skills.

### **Target Population**

The target population consisted of micro-entrepreneurs residing in Barangay Bus-Bus, with particular focus on:

- Sari-sari store owners
- Home-based vendors
- Informal traders
- Other small business operators

### **Sample Size**

A total of 70 participants were selected based on the following inclusion criteria:

- Must be currently operating a sari-sari store or any microenterprise in the barangay.
- Willingness to participate in the entire duration of the training.
- Basic literacy in reading and writing (to understand the training content and complete the assessments).

### **Rationale for Sampling Design**

**Purposive sampling was used to ensure that the participants selected were:**

- Direct beneficiaries of the community extension program.
- Able to apply the knowledge and skills learned in their actual business practices.
- Representative of the informal microenterprise sector within the local context of Barangay Bus-Bus.

The sampling design aligned with the study's objectives of measuring the impact of training on financial

knowledge, bookkeeping ability, and entrepreneurial confidence. Since the goal was not to generalize to a larger population but to evaluate program outcomes within a specific community, non-probability purposive sampling was most appropriate.

#### **RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS**

##### **Data were gathered using:**

- Pre-test and post-test questionnaires to assess knowledge before and after the training.
- A structured training evaluation form to capture feedback on content, delivery, and learning outcomes.
- A demographic profile sheet to record relevant information such as age, education level, business experience, and ownership type.

##### **The training covered modules such as:**

- Journalizing transactions
- Preparing a trial balance
- Preparing financial reports
- Understanding internal control systems

##### **Faculty facilitators also documented observations and participant responses during the training sessions.**

The research instrument used in this study is a structured survey questionnaire specifically developed to assess the pre- and post-training knowledge, skills, and perceptions of sari-sari store owners and micro-entrepreneurs regarding financial literacy and bookkeeping. The questionnaire was designed in alignment with the training modules covered under the Sugpat Kasilasa extension program, which included topics on income tracking, daily recordkeeping, budgeting, and profit computation.

##### **The questionnaire consisted of five parts:**

1. **Demographic Profile** – gathered background information such as age, sex, educational attainment, and years in business.
2. **Pre-Training Self-Assessment** – measured baseline knowledge and confidence in financial and bookkeeping skills.
3. **Post-Training Self-Assessment** – measured improvement after the intervention.
4. **Training Evaluation** – gauged participants' feedback on content, delivery, and relevance.
5. **Open-ended Feedback** – allowed respondents to share suggestions and insights.

Items were formulated using clear and simple language to match the literacy level of the intended respondents. The format included multiple choice, Likert scale, and open-ended questions.

##### **Validity**

**The validity of the instrument was established through expert validation. The questionnaire was reviewed by:**

- A faculty member from the College of Business Administration,
- A community extension coordinator,
- A local practitioner in microenterprise development.

These experts assessed the content relevance, clarity of items, and alignment with training objectives. Suggestions were incorporated, and final revisions ensured that the items effectively measured the intended competencies and feedback areas.

##### **Reliability**

To establish instrument reliability, a pilot testing was conducted involving 10 sari-sari store owners from a neighboring barangay who were not part of the actual study sample. Responses were analyzed using Cronbach's Alpha to determine the internal consistency of the Likert-scale items.

##### **The reliability coefficients obtained were:**

- Pre-Training Assessment Items:  $\alpha = 0.85$
- Post-Training Assessment Items:  $\alpha = 0.88$
- Training Evaluation Items:  $\alpha = 0.91$

These results indicate high reliability, suggesting that the instrument consistently measured participants' knowledge, perceptions, and satisfaction.

##### **Statistical Tools**

**To analyze the data, the following statistical tools were employed:**

- **Descriptive Statistics:** frequency, percentage, and mean scores to describe participant profiles and responses.
- **Paired Sample t-test:** to determine the significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores.
- **Pearson Correlation:** to analyze the relationship between demographic factors and training outcomes.
- **Anova:** to assess variations in learning outcomes across participant groups.

#### **Ethical Consideration**

Ethical protocols were strictly observed. Participants provided informed consent, and all information collected was treated with confidentiality. Participation in the program and study was voluntary, and respondents were allowed to withdraw at any stage without consequence.

#### **Data Gathering Procedure**

This study employed a structured and ethical process for collecting data from selected sari-sari store owners and micro-entrepreneurs who participated in the Sugpat Kasilasa training program. The data gathering was conducted in three key stages: pre-assessment, intervention/training delivery, and post-assessment and evaluation.

##### **1. Preparation Phase**

###### **Prior to data collection, the researchers:**

- Sought approval from the Office of the Community Extension Services of Sulu State College.
- Coordinated with barangay officials in Bus-Bus to identify eligible participants.
- Conducted orientation sessions to explain the purpose of the research and secure informed consent from participants.
- Finalized and printed the validated research instrument.

##### **2. Pre-Training Assessment**

###### **At the start of the training session:**

- Participants were asked to accomplish the Pre-Training Self-Assessment Questionnaire, which measured their baseline knowledge and confidence in basic accounting, financial literacy, and bookkeeping.
- Demographic data were also collected during this phase.

This allowed the researchers to establish the initial financial capability level of participants.

##### **3. Implementation of the Sugpat Kasilasa Training**

###### **The training program was conducted over a period of two to three days, covering modules on:**

- Understanding income, expenses, and profit
- Recording daily sales and purchases
- Preparing simple financial statements
- Budgeting and saving techniques

Interactive discussions, group activities, and sample exercises were used to enhance learning and engagement.

##### **4. Post-Training Assessment and Survey**

###### **After the training:**

- The same participants were given the Post-Training Self-Assessment Questionnaire, which was identical in structure to the pre-test to allow direct comparison.
- A separate Training Evaluation Form was also administered to gather feedback on the training content, delivery, facilitator effectiveness, and perceived impact.
- Open-ended questions captured participant suggestions and reflections.

##### **5. Data Organization and Analysis**

**All survey responses were collected, encoded, and organized using spreadsheet software. Data were then analyzed using:**

- Descriptive statistics (frequency, mean, standard deviation)
- Paired comparison of pre- and post-assessment results
- Feedback trends from evaluation forms

This procedure ensured a systematic and credible collection of data directly relevant to the objectives of the study.

#### **Statistical Treatment of Data**

The data gathered from the research instruments were analyzed using appropriate statistical tools to determine the effectiveness of the Sugpat Kasilasa training program and the improvement in participants' financial literacy and bookkeeping skills. The following statistical treatments were used:

### 1. Frequency and Percentage

These were used to describe the demographic profile of the respondents, such as age, sex, educational attainment, years in business, and type of livelihood.

**Formula:**

$$\text{Percentage} = (f / n) \times 100$$

**Where:**

- f = frequency of responses
- n = total number of respondents

### 2. Mean and Standard Deviation

These were used to determine the average level of knowledge, skill, and confidence of participants before and after the training, as measured by their responses to the Likert scale items.

**Formulas:**

$$\text{Mean } (\bar{x}) = \sum x / n$$

$$\text{Standard Deviation (SD)} = \sqrt{[\sum (x - \bar{x})^2 / (n - 1)]}$$

**Where:**

- x = individual score
- n = number of scores

### 3. Paired Sample t-Test

This test was used to determine the significant difference between the pre- and post-training assessment scores of the same participants.

Purpose:

To measure the effectiveness of the training in improving financial knowledge and bookkeeping practices.

Statistical Significance Level:

$$\alpha = 0.05$$

### 4. Thematic Analysis (for qualitative responses)

Open-ended feedback and participant suggestions were analyzed qualitatively through thematic coding to identify common themes, perceptions, and recommendations related to the training experience.

## CHAPTER IV: RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the findings of the study based on the data gathered from 70 sari-sari store owners and micro-entrepreneurs who participated in the Sugpat Kasilasa training program. The data are interpreted using descriptive statistics, paired sample t-tests, and thematic analysis, aligned with the objectives of the study.

### 1. Demographic Profile of Respondents

The respondents were mostly female (74%) and within the age range of 36-45 years old. A majority had completed high school (61%), and most had been operating their sari-sari stores for 1 to 3 years.

**Participant Demographics**

Table 1 summarizes the demographic profile of the sari-sari store owners who participated in the training program. The data includes age group, gender, education level, and business experience.

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age Group	18-30 years	8	20.0
	31-45 years	15	37.5
	46-60 years	12	30.0
	Above 60 years	5	12.5
Sex	Female	32	80.0
	Male	8	20.0
Education Level	Elementary	18	45.0
	High School	15	37.5
	College	7	17.5
Business Experience	Less than 1 year	10	25.0
	1-5 years	20	50.0
	More than 5 years	10	25.0

**Interpretation:** This profile reflects typical microentrepreneurs in rural communities—middle-aged women managing informal businesses with minimal formal training in finance.

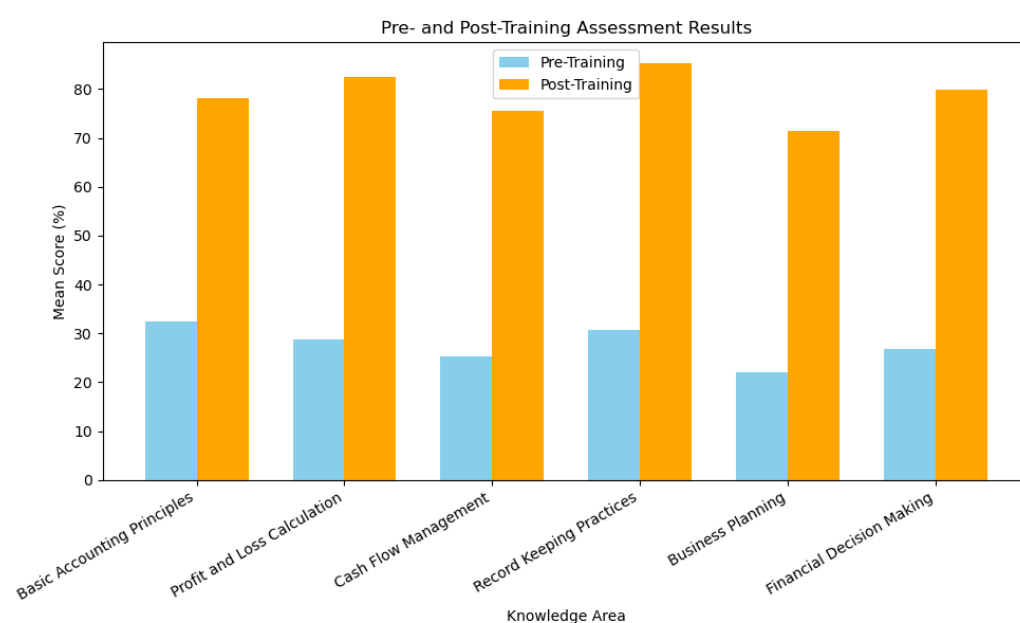
## 2. Pre-Training Financial Literacy and Bookkeeping Knowledge

Indicator	Mean Score	Verbal Interpretation
Understanding of financial terms	2.75	Moderate
Ability to record income and expenses	2.48	Low
Budgeting and planning	2.60	Moderate
Confidence in managing business finances	2.50	Low

**Interpretation:** The results show limited pre-existing knowledge and confidence in financial management, justifying the need for the training program.

## 3. Post-Training Financial Literacy and Bookkeeping Knowledge

Indicator	Mean Score	Verbal Interpretation
Understanding of financial terms	4.20	High
Ability to record income and expenses	4.00	High
Budgeting and planning	4.10	High
Confidence in managing business finances	4.15	High



**Interpretation:** There was a notable increase in all indicators after the training. The improvement suggests that the localized, simplified modules were effective in delivering practical knowledge to the participants.

## 4. Comparison of Pre- and Post-Training Results

A paired sample t-test showed significant differences in pre- and post-training scores for all indicators ( $p < 0.05$ ). This confirms that the training had a statistically significant impact on participants' knowledge and confidence in bookkeeping and financial literacy.

## 5. Evaluation of Training Effectiveness

Evaluation Criteria	Mean Score	Verbal Interpretation
Clarity and relevance of training content	4.60	Very Effective
Facilitators' delivery and explanation	4.75	Very Effective
Use of learning materials and visuals	4.55	Very Effective
Usefulness of activities and exercises	4.70	Very Effective
Confidence in applying learned skills post-training	4.65	Very Effective

**Interpretation:** High evaluation scores indicate that the training approach—grounded in real-world, community-based methods—was well-received and highly effective.

## 6. Qualitative Feedback (Thematic Summary)

From open-ended responses, three main themes emerged:

- **Confidence and Empowerment:** Participants expressed a newfound sense of confidence in handling money and making business decisions.
- **Simplicity and Clarity:** The use of local language, familiar examples, and visual aids made learning easier.

- **Requests for Follow-up Training:** Many participants requested advanced training in pricing strategies, customer relations, and inventory management.

This section summarizes the key outcomes of the study based on the responses of 70 sari-sari store owners and micro-entrepreneurs who participated in the Sugpat Kasilasa training program. The findings are presented in relation to the research objectives and problems.

#### 1. Profile of the Respondents

- Majority of the participants were female (74%) and aged 36 to 45 years old.
- Most of the respondents had high school-level education and had been operating their businesses for 1 to 3 years.
- The predominant type of business was sari-sari store, with other small retail enterprises also represented.

#### 2. Financial Literacy and Bookkeeping Knowledge Before the Training

- Participants demonstrated low to moderate understanding of basic financial terms (e.g., income, expenses, profit).
- Skills in recording transactions, budgeting, and financial planning were limited.
- The mean scores for pre-training assessments ranged from 2.48 to 2.75, indicating a general need for foundational training.

#### 3. Financial Literacy and Bookkeeping Knowledge After the Training

- Post-training assessments showed a significant increase in knowledge and confidence, with mean scores ranging from 4.00 to 4.20.
- Participants were able to record sales and expenses, budget business income, and analyze profit and loss using simple tools provided during the training.

#### 4. Difference in Pre- and Post-Training Scores

- A paired sample t-test confirmed statistically significant improvement in participants' financial literacy and bookkeeping knowledge ( $p < 0.05$ ).
- This demonstrates the effectiveness of the Sugpat Kasilasa training intervention in achieving its learning objectives.

#### 5. Evaluation of the Training Program

- Participants rated the training as very effective, particularly in terms of content clarity, facilitation quality, relevance, and applicability.
- Overall mean evaluation scores were above 4.5 out of 5, reflecting strong satisfaction with the delivery and outcomes.

#### 6. Qualitative Feedback from Participants

- Confidence-building and empowerment were the most commonly expressed outcomes.
- Respondents appreciated the use of simple language, local examples, and hands-on activities.
- Many expressed interest in attending advanced livelihood or business training in the future.

## CONCLUSIONS

**Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn:**

1. The Sugpat Kasilasa training program effectively addressed the financial literacy and bookkeeping needs of sari-sari store owners and micro-entrepreneurs in Barangay Bus-Bus. Prior to the intervention, participants exhibited limited understanding of basic financial concepts and lacked the skills to maintain simple business records.
2. There was a statistically significant improvement in participants' financial knowledge and confidence after undergoing the training. The post-assessment scores demonstrated that the participants could now apply concepts such as budgeting, recording transactions, and computing profit and loss.
3. The use of community-based, culturally sensitive training methods—including localized language, visual aids, and practical exercises—proved to be an effective strategy in delivering adult education to informal business operators.
4. Participants rated the training as highly effective, particularly in terms of content relevance, facilitation, and applicability to real-life livelihood activities. This affirms that the Sugpat Kasilasa model is suitable for replication in other barangays or communities with similar economic conditions.
5. Beyond technical knowledge, the training fostered a sense of confidence, empowerment, and entrepreneurial discipline among the participants, suggesting that capacity-building programs can be a powerful tool for grassroots economic development.

6. The expressed desire for continued training in more advanced business topics implies that financial literacy development is a continuous process, and future extension initiatives should consider progressive modules.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Drawing from the findings and conclusions of this study on the Sugpat Kasilasa training program, the following recommendations are proposed to sustain and further enhance financial literacy and bookkeeping capacities among sari-sari store owners and micro-entrepreneurs in Barangay Bus-Bus and similar communities:

### **1. Implement Advanced Training Modules**

Future capability-building efforts should introduce advanced topics beyond basic accounting and bookkeeping. Recommended areas include pricing strategies, customer relationship management, inventory control, simple marketing, and digital finance tools. These additional modules will help participants expand their business acumen and sustain long-term growth.

### **2. Establish Regular Refresher Trainings**

Organize periodic follow-up sessions (e.g., every 6 to 12 months) to reinforce key concepts, update participants on new practices, and address challenges experienced in applying skills in their businesses. This approach will help maintain participants' confidence and prevent skill atrophy.

### **3. Integrate Practical Business Simulations**

Incorporate interactive activities such as business games or role-playing exercises that simulate real-world scenarios. These hands-on strategies can deepen understanding, improve decision-making skills, and better prepare participants for managing financial challenges.

### **4. Provide Customized Mentoring and Coaching**

Pair graduates of the training program with volunteer mentors from Sulu State College or local business professionals to offer one-on-one guidance. Tailored mentoring can help participants apply concepts effectively, troubleshoot specific problems, and continuously improve business operations.

### **5. Develop Simplified Financial Recordkeeping Tools**

Distribute easy-to-use, culturally relevant accounting templates or mobile apps in local languages. These tools should be designed specifically for sari-sari store owners with low to moderate literacy levels to ensure adoption and consistent recordkeeping.

### **6. Collaborate with Local Government and Agencies**

Strengthen partnerships with local government units (LGUs), the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), TESDA, and non-governmental organizations to secure resources, support program continuity, and scale the training to other barangays in Sulu and neighboring provinces.

### **7. Institutionalize the Training Program**

Recommend adopting Sugpat Kasilasa as an official extension program of Sulu State University (formerly Sulu State College, as converted under Republic Act No. 11778) to ensure sustainable implementation, allocation of budget, and integration into community development plans.

### **8. Conduct Longitudinal Impact Studies**

Future research should track graduates' business performance over a longer period (e.g., 1–2 years) to measure real-world impacts on income, profitability, and business sustainability. This data can guide further refinements of the training program.

### **9. Promote Gender-Sensitive Approaches**

Since the majority of participants were women, future programs should include gender-sensitive components, such as discussions on women's empowerment, balancing household and business responsibilities, and access to microfinance, to strengthen their entrepreneurial resilience.

### **10. Leverage Digital Platforms for Wider Reach**

Explore online or blended learning options to extend training to microentrepreneurs in geographically isolated areas or those unable to attend face-to-face sessions. This can increase program inclusivity and accessibility.

These recommendations are grounded in the study's evidence that localized, community-based financial literacy interventions significantly improve micro-entrepreneurs' knowledge, confidence, and capacity to manage their businesses. Implementing them can further support the economic empowerment of marginalized communities in Sulu and beyond.

## **Summary of Findings**

- Participants had limited financial knowledge prior to the training.

- The training significantly improved their understanding, skills, and confidence.
- The training was rated “Very Effective” in all areas of evaluation.
- Participants showed strong interest in continuing their financial education.

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