



Factors Influencing the Sustainability of Microenterprise Projects Supported Through Government Assistance Among DSWD-SLP Beneficiaries

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Abstract

This study examined the influence of entrepreneurial competencies and marketing strategies on the perceived sustainability of microenterprises among beneficiaries of the Department of Social Welfare and Development-Sustainable Livelihood Program (DSWD-SLP) in Barangay San Jose, Antipolo City, Rizal, Philippines. Anchored in Human Capital Theory, the Resource-Based View, and Market Orientation Theory, the study employed an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design. Quantitative data were collected through a survey and analyzed using descriptive statistics and multiple regression, while qualitative data were gathered through focus group discussions. Results revealed very high levels of entrepreneurial competencies ($M = 4.751$), marketing strategies ($M = 4.720$), and perceived microenterprise sustainability ($M = 4.910$). Regression analysis indicated that the overall model was statistically significant ($R^2 = 0.141$, $F = 8.590$, $p < .001$). Entrepreneurial competencies significantly predicted perceived sustainability ($p = .004$), whereas marketing strategies did not demonstrate a statistically significant effect ($p = .089$). The model explained 14.1% of the variance in perceived sustainability, suggesting that other factors also contribute to enterprise continuity. Qualitative findings highlighted decision-making, communication, perseverance, adaptability, customer relations, pricing, promotion, and product accessibility as important business practices. However, beneficiaries faced challenges involving limited capital, competition, fluctuating demand, irregular income, and gaps in technical and digital skills. The study recommends strengthening capacity-building initiatives in entrepreneurial and financial management, alongside institutional support and market development interventions, to enhance the sustainability of livelihood-assisted microenterprises.

Keywords: entrepreneurial competencies; marketing strategies; microenterprise sustainability; DSWD-SLP; mixed methods research; Philippines



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INTRODUCTION

Microenterprises and self-employment livelihood activities are widely recognized as engines of inclusive economic growth and poverty reduction. It plays significant contributors to job creation, income generation and better household welfare, especially for low-income and vulnerable groups. In many developing economies, livelihood development has become a central strategy for addressing unemployment and inequality, by empowering individuals to participate in productive economic activities using existing resources and skills. Although they are important, sustainability of microenterprises is still a

major challenge especially for the beneficiaries of government assisted livelihood program.

Livelihood and entrepreneurship development programs have evolved from the provision of financial aid to comprehensive initiatives incorporating capital assistance, skills training, entrepreneurial development and access to markets worldwide. This is consistent with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular SDG 1 (No Poverty) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), which emphasize the need for just and sustainable economic prospects for all. For example, in many developing countries, experience in implemented livelihood projects has shown that

financial assistance can kick-start a small enterprise, but its long-term sustainability depends largely on entrepreneurial skills and market knowledge. Research from different countries also shows that without adequate skills, knowledge and basic marketing practices, livelihood beneficiaries often struggle to sustain and grow their businesses once the initial period of support is over.

The Department of Social Welfare and Development-Sustainable Livelihood Program (DSWD-SLP) is one of the major government programs that provide livelihood support to poor, vulnerable and low-income households. The program aims to improve the living conditions of the poor through two major options: (1) starting small businesses and (2) helping people find jobs. Those in the small business track receive seed money, training, and basic support to start income-generating activities (Department of Social Welfare and Development, 2026). However, reports and field observations show that not all supported small businesses are able to last and succeed in the long term. Many beneficiaries experience problems such as lack of entrepreneurial experience, weak managerial capacity, poor marketing practices and vulnerability to market fluctuations (DSWD, 2021).

At the local level, especially in Barangay San Jose, Antipolo City, Rizal, DSWD-SLP beneficiaries have initiated various microenterprise projects with the help of the government. These enterprises provide income opportunities initially but their sustainability over time is uncertain due to varying degrees of entrepreneurial competencies and marketing strategies of beneficiaries. This is an expression of a more general concern in livelihood program implementation whether financial assistance and training alone are sufficient to ensure the long-term enterprise success.

The focus on DSWD-SLP beneficiaries is therefore warranted as they represent a critical group of government-assisted entrepreneurs whose experiences could provide meaningful

insights on the effectiveness of livelihood interventions. The program is designed to create income and alleviate poverty, but financial assistance is not a guarantee to the sustainability of a business. The success or failure of microenterprises is highly dependent on the entrepreneurial competencies of the beneficiaries and their ability to implement adequate marketing strategies under actual market conditions. Therefore, these factors should be considered in assessing the long-term impact of livelihood programs.

Although the implementation of livelihood programs in the Philippines is growing, few empirical studies focus specifically on DSWD-SLP beneficiaries and the sustainability of their microenterprises. Most of the studies available tend to examine entrepreneurship, marketing strategies, or livelihood outcomes in isolation, and there are few studies that examine their combined effect in a government-assisted context. In addition, there are limited studies that adopt explanatory sequential mixed-methods design to integrate quantitative predictive analysis with qualitative explanations of beneficiary experiences. This methodological gap constrains a more profound understanding of why some factors significantly affect sustainability and why some factors do not.

In this regard, the present study sought to fill in these gaps by examining the effect of entrepreneurial competencies and marketing strategies on the sustainability of microenterprises among DSWD-SLP beneficiaries in Barangay San Jose, Antipolo City, Rizal. It also investigated qualitative explanations to supplement quantitative findings thus providing a more comprehensive understanding of microenterprise sustainability in a government-assisted setting. Specifically, the study aimed to determine the significant influence of entrepreneurial competencies on the sustainability of microenterprises among DSWD-SLP beneficiaries; determine the significant influence of marketing strategies on the sustainability of microenterprises among DSWD-SLP beneficiaries; and determine whether entrepreneurial competencies and

marketing strategies significantly predict the sustainability of microenterprises among DSWD-SLP beneficiaries. These objectives were intended to determine the patterns and relationships among the variables and provide empirical evidence on factors associated with the sustainability of microenterprises in a government-assisted setting.

Theoretical Framework. This study is anchored on three complementary theories, namely the Human Capital Theory, the Resource-Based View (RBV), and the Market Orientation Theory. The theories provide a comprehensive explanation of how entrepreneurial competencies and marketing strategies affect the sustainability of microenterprises among beneficiaries of the Department of Social Welfare and Development-Sustainable Livelihood Program (DSWD-SLP). They are also the basis for the statement of the problem, hypotheses, conceptual framework and statistical treatment used in the study.

The concept of Human Capital Theory is associated with the work of Schultz (1961), who emphasized the importance of investing in human capabilities to improve productivity and economic outcomes. In the context of this study, entrepreneurial knowledge, skills, and competencies represent forms of human capital that may help beneficiaries manage their microenterprises and respond to business challenges. Human Capital Theory, associated with Schultz (1961), was further developed by Becker (1964), who explained that investments in education and training can enhance individuals' knowledge, skills, productivity, and economic outcomes. In the context of this study, entrepreneurial competencies represent a form of human capital that may help microentrepreneurs manage resources effectively, solve problems, identify opportunities, and make strategic decisions that support business sustainability. Entrepreneurial competencies in microenterprises are a type of human capital that enables entrepreneurs to manage resources effectively, solve problems, discover opportunities and make strategic decisions to

ensure business sustainability. Recent studies have supported this proposition. Abd Aziz et al. (2023) stated that entrepreneurial skills and government support enhance the capacity of entrepreneurs and help small businesses survive in the long term. Similarly, entrepreneurial skills and behavior enhance business performance and help businesses stay afloat (Islam et al., 2024). These findings imply that the entrepreneurial competencies of DSWD-SLP beneficiaries are vital for the sustainability of their microenterprises.

Aside from Human Capital Theory, the findings can also be explained by the Resource-Based View (RBV), which emphasizes the role of internal resources and capabilities in achieving sustained competitive advantage (Barney, 1991; Wernerfelt, 1984). The theory posits that organizations attain sustainable competitive advantage from valuable, rare, inimitable and well-organized resources. Entrepreneurial competencies are considered strategic internal resources that allow microentrepreneurs to mobilize available assets, adapt to dynamic market conditions, and sustain business operations. Iki and Otoghile (2023) examined entrepreneurial characteristics and sustainability practices among small firms, highlighting the importance of entrepreneurial characteristics in understanding business sustainability. Similarly, Taleb et al. (2023) examined the relationship between entrepreneurial resources, innovation capability, and microbusiness performance. Thus, the Resource-Based View provides theoretical support for examining how entrepreneurial competencies may contribute to the sustainability of microenterprises among DSWD-SLP beneficiaries.

Meanwhile, is supported by the work of Narver and Slater (1990), who identified customer orientation, competitor orientation, and inter-functional coordination as key components of market orientation associated with superior business performance. In this study, these concepts provide a theoretical basis for examining how beneficiaries' marketing strategies, including product, price, promotion,

and place, may help them respond to customer needs and support the perceived sustainability of their microenterprises.

The theory states that businesses that are able to identify the needs of customers and respond to market demands are more likely to continue their operations. In the context of the present study, marketing strategies of product, price, promotion, and place are customer-oriented practices that help microenterprises to attract and retain customers. Supporting the theory, Homburg et al. (2017) proposed the market orientation as a dynamic capability that enables the firm to adapt to the changing needs of customers and business conditions. Li et al. (2023) also proved that a clear marketing strategy is a must for the continuity of a business. Putranto (2025) also said that the use of digital marketing helps a business to be able to remain competitive and operate continuously for a long time. These findings suggest that effective marketing strategies may contribute to the sustainability of DSWDSLPP-supported microenterprises.

Entrepreneurial competencies are explained by Human Capital Theory and the Resource-Based View as valuable internal capabilities to improve the sustainability of microenterprises. Customer-oriented marketing strategies impact the business continuity and performance as explained by Market Orientation Theory. These theories are relevant in support of the statement of the problem and hypotheses of the study which is the individual and combined effect of entrepreneurial competencies and marketing strategies on the sustainability of microenterprise of DSWD-SLP beneficiaries. Furthermore, these theories provide the basis for the conceptual framework and justify the use of multiple regression analysis in determining the predictive influence of the independent variables on microenterprise sustainability.

Conceptual Framework. As presented in Figure 1, the methodological framework of this study is anchored on an Explanatory Sequential Mixed Methods Design which proceeds in two sequential phases, initially with the quantitative,

and followed by qualitative, with integration at the interpretation stage. The explanatory sequential mixed-methods design is appropriate for this study because it allows researchers to first identify statistical relationships among variables through quantitative analysis and then explore these findings through qualitative inquiry. The integration of both phases provides a more comprehensive interpretation of the research problem (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

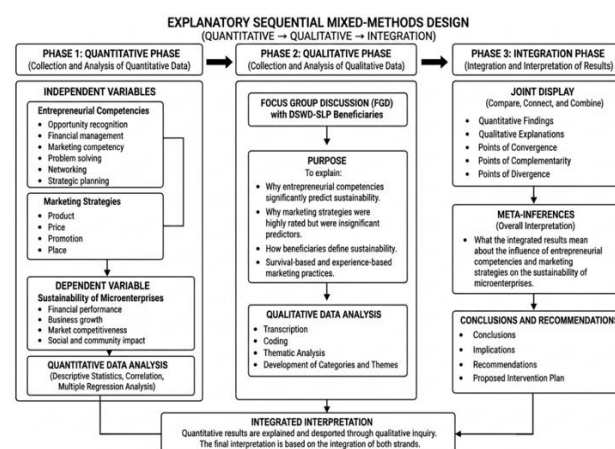


Figure 1

Research Paradigm

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Phase 1 – the quantitative phase of the study has aimed to measure and analyze the relationship between the main variables. The independent variables are the entrepreneurial competencies and marketing strategies of the DSWD-SLP beneficiaries. The entrepreneurial competencies include the skills such as identifying business opportunities, money management, product marketing, problem solving, building connections, and planning for the business. These are the personal skills necessary for effectively operating a small business. The marketing strategies are the product, price, promotion, and place representing how beneficiaries are selling and delivering their products to customers. The dependent variable is the sustainability of microenterprises which refers to the longevity and success of the business. This is measured

by income or financial performance, business growth, market competitiveness, and contribution to community. Simple statistical tools such as averages, relationships between variables, and regression analysis are used to determine how entrepreneurial competencies and marketing strategies affect business sustainability in this phase (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

Phase 2 – the qualitative phase was meant to have a better understanding and a real-life explanation of the results from the first phase. At this stage, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted among the selected beneficiaries of DSWD-SLP to collect information about their experiences in managing and sustaining their small business. The purpose was to understand why certain factors can affect the success of the business but not show strong results, and how the beneficiaries personally understand and experience business sustainability in real situations. The qualitative data collected during the second phase were transcribed or documented, organized, and grouped into common patterns and themes. These themes were then used to explain and provide deeper insights into the quantitative findings from the first phase (Ivankova et al., 2006; Plano Clark & Ivankova, 2016).

Phase 3 – the integration was the merging of the results of the quantitative and qualitative phases. It juxtaposed the numerical results with the answers of the FGDs to determine the similarities and differences. From which, the study generated general conclusions that offer a clearer and fuller understanding of the impact of entrepreneurial skills and marketing strategies on the sustainability of microenterprises among DSWD-SLP beneficiaries. The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings provided an overall interpretation of how entrepreneurial competencies and marketing strategies relate to the perceived sustainability of microenterprises among DSWD-SLP beneficiaries. This integration helped identify the relationships observed in the quantitative

results and explain how these relationships were reflected in beneficiaries' experiences and business practices. By combining both sets of findings, the study developed a more comprehensive interpretation and a basis for evidence-informed policy recommendations and intervention strategies to strengthen microenterprise sustainability (Fetters et al., 2013; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

Thus, the explanatory sequential mixed-methods framework illustrates how the quantitative phase identifies patterns and relationships, the qualitative phase helps explain the quantitative findings, and the integration phase combines insights from both phases to develop a more comprehensive understanding of perceived microenterprise sustainability among DSWD-SLP beneficiaries (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The following hypotheses are proposed for empirical testing:

H_{01} : Entrepreneurial competencies do not have a significant influence on the sustainability of microenterprises among DSWD-SLP beneficiaries.

H_{02} : Marketing strategies do not have a significant influence on the sustainability of microenterprises among DSWD-SLP beneficiaries.

H_{03} : Entrepreneurial competencies and marketing strategies, taken together, do not significantly predict the sustainability of microenterprises among DSWD-SLP beneficiaries.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Entrepreneurial Competencies and Sustainability of Microenterprises. Entrepreneurial competencies are important internal resources that influence how entrepreneurs identify opportunities, make decisions, adapt to changing conditions, manage resources, and respond to challenges. The literature reviewed in the study indicates

that competencies such as opportunity recognition, adaptability, innovation, leadership, perseverance, and managerial capability can contribute to enterprise performance and sustainability. These competencies allow entrepreneurs to respond to market changes, manage limited resources, and maintain business operations despite constraints.

Marketing Strategies and Sustainability of Microenterprises. Marketing strategies help microenterprises attract and retain customers and compete within local markets. The study's literature review emphasizes the relevance of the marketing mix, particularly product, price, place, and promotion. Effective pricing, distribution, promotion, customer understanding, and product development may support business performance. However, marketing practices alone may not guarantee sustainability when enterprises face limited capital, intense competition, weak skills, or other external constraints.

Sustainability of Microenterprises. Microenterprise sustainability reflects the capacity of a business to continue operating, generate income, support household welfare, adapt to challenges, and remain viable over time. Sustainability is influenced by both internal capabilities and external conditions. Financial resources, human capital, market conditions, competition, customer retention, and institutional support may affect the ability of beneficiaries to maintain their enterprises.

Livelihood Programs and Microenterprise Development. Government livelihood programs are designed to improve household economic capacity through financial assistance, skills development, and related support. For beneficiaries, sustainability depends not only on the initial livelihood grant but also on the ability to manage the enterprise, understand the market, adapt products and practices, and respond to changing economic conditions. Continuing capability-building and appropriate institutional support can therefore complement financial assistance.

Research Synthesis. Overall, the reviewed literature suggests that entrepreneurial competencies and marketing strategies are relevant to microenterprise development, but their effects may vary according to the enterprise context and available resources. This study addresses the need for empirical evidence among DSWD-SLP beneficiaries by examining the relationship of entrepreneurial competencies and marketing strategies with microenterprise sustainability and using qualitative findings to explain the quantitative results.

METHODS

Research Design. The study employed an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design consisting of a quantitative phase followed by a qualitative phase and integration of findings (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The quantitative phase measured entrepreneurial competencies, marketing strategies, and microenterprise sustainability. The qualitative phase used focus group discussions to explain and deepen the quantitative findings.

Locale and Participants. The study was conducted among DSWD-SLP beneficiaries in Barangay San Jose, Antipolo City, Rizal. The quantitative population consisted of 201 beneficiaries who received livelihood assistance during 2023–2024. A sample of 134 was elicited using Slovin's formula at a 5% margin of error; however, only 108 respondents participated. Convenience sampling was used for the quantitative phase while the qualitative phase involved 12 purposively selected participants, including program beneficiaries, capacity-building officers, and monitoring staff directly involved in the DSWD-SLP.

Research Instrument. A structured questionnaire was used for the quantitative phase. It consisted of sections covering the respondents' profile, entrepreneurial competencies, marketing strategies, and microenterprise sustainability. The items were developed based on the study objectives, conceptual framework, and relevant literature.

Prior to data collection, the questionnaire was subjected to content validation by qualified experts to assess the relevance, clarity, and appropriateness of the items. The instrument was revised based on their recommendations before administration to the respondents.

A five-point Likert scale was used to measure the respondents' assessments. The scale was interpreted as follows: 5.00–4.51 = Strongly Agree; 4.50–3.51 = Agree; 3.50–2.51 = Moderately Agree; 2.50–1.51 = Disagree; and 1.50–1.00 = Strongly Disagree. Higher mean scores indicated stronger agreement with the statements.

For the qualitative phase, a focus group discussion (FGD) guide was developed based on the quantitative findings and the research questions. This allowed the qualitative phase to explain and provide context to the quantitative results, consistent with the explanatory sequential mixed-methods design. The guide included open-ended questions on how participants apply entrepreneurial competencies, use marketing strategies, sustain their enterprises, and experience challenges and support needs. Sample questions included: "How do your entrepreneurial skills help you manage and sustain your business?" "What marketing practices do you use to attract and retain customers?" and "What challenges do you experience in maintaining your livelihood enterprise?" The guide was reviewed for clarity and alignment with the study objectives before the FGD was conducted.

Data Collection and Analysis. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and multiple regression analysis to examine the relationship of the independent variables (entrepreneurial competencies and marketing strategies) with the dependent variable (microenterprise sustainability). Qualitative data from the FGDs were transcribed, coded, categorized, and analyzed thematically. The qualitative findings were then compared and integrated with the quantitative results through

a joint display to explain, confirm, or provide contextual meaning to the statistical findings.

Ethical Considerations. Participation in the study was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all participants. Confidentiality, privacy, and anonymity were maintained throughout the research process. The data were used solely for academic research purposes and handled in accordance with applicable ethical standards and the Data Privacy Act of 2012. The study also secured a Certificate of Ethical Compliance (Certificate No. 525-0032) prior to the conduct of the research.

RESULTS

Respondents' Profile. The 108 respondents of the study were predominantly female, with the largest age group being 51–60 years. Most enterprises were individually operated microenterprises, with sari-sari stores comprising the largest business type. The profile indicates that livelihood activities were generally small-scale and community-based.

Descriptive Findings. This section presents the descriptive analysis of the key variables examined in the study, namely entrepreneurial competencies, marketing strategies, and microenterprise sustainability among DSWD-SLP beneficiaries. The findings provide an overview of the respondents' assessments of their competencies and business practices, as well as the perceived sustainability of their microenterprises. These results establish the empirical basis for the subsequent regression analysis and discussion of relationships among the study variables.

Entrepreneurial Competencies. Respondents reported a very high level of entrepreneurial competencies, with an overall mean of 4.751. Understanding the target market obtained the highest mean ($M = 4.869$), while time management had the lowest ($M = 4.593$). These results indicate strong market awareness and decision-making confidence, while time management remains an area for improvement.

Table 1
Respondents' Assessment of their Entrepreneurial Competencies as DSWD-SLP Beneficiaries

Indicator	Standard Deviation	Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1. I am confident in making business decisions.	.555	4.833	Strongly Agree	3
2. I continuously look for ways to improve my business.	.612	4.713	Strongly Agree	4
3. I understand my target market and customer.	.339	4.869	Strongly Agree	1
4. I manage my time effectively to run the business.	.698	4.593	Strongly Agree	5
5. I am aware of market trends that affect my enterprise.	.347	4.861	Strongly Agree	2

Marketing Strategies. Marketing strategies were also rated very highly, with an overall mean of 4.720. Pricing, distribution, and promotion received the highest ratings, while product-related strategies were comparatively lower. This suggests that beneficiaries generally apply basic marketing practices but may require further support in product innovation and diversification.

Table 2
Respondents' Assessment of Their Marketing Strategies as DSWD-SLP Beneficiaries

Indicators	Standard Deviation	Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1. I offer products or services that meet the needs of my customers.	.632	4.676	Strongly Agree	2
2. My pricing strategy helps me compete in the market.	.585	4.778	Strongly Agree	1.33
3. My current distribution methods make it easy for customers to access my products.	.585	4.778	Strongly Agree	1.33
4. I promote my products/services effectively through advertising or word-of-mouth.	.418	4.778	Strongly Agree	1.33
Overall Mean	.582	4.720	Strongly Agree	

Sustainability of Microenterprises. Perceived microenterprise sustainability was very high, with an overall mean of 4.910. The findings indicate that the enterprises contribute to income generation and household welfare, although beneficiaries continue to experience challenges related to competition, skills, customer retention, limited capital, and other business conditions.

Table 3
Respondents' Assessment on Sustainability of Microenterprises as DSWD-SLP Beneficiaries

Indicators	Standard Deviation	Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1. My business provides regular income.	.347	4.861	Strongly Agree	3
2. I intend to continue this livelihood long-term.	.230	4.944	Strongly Agree	1.5
3. My business has improved my family's standard of living.	.460	4.889	Strongly Agree	2
4. I prepared to overcome future business challenges	.230	4.944	Strongly Agree	1.5
Overall Mean	.291	4.910	Strongly Agree	

Inferential Findings. This part presents the inferential analysis conducted to examine the predictive effects of entrepreneurial competencies and marketing strategies on microenterprise sustainability. The findings provide statistical evidence of the relationships among the study variables.

Regression Analysis. Multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine whether entrepreneurial competencies and marketing strategies significantly predicted microenterprise sustainability. As presented in Table 1, the regression model was statistically significant ($F = 8.590$, $p < .001$) and explained 14.1% of the variance in microenterprise sustainability ($R^2 = .141$). Entrepreneurial competencies significantly predicted sustainability ($B = .456$, $p = .004$), whereas marketing strategies did not demonstrate a statistically significant direct effect ($B = -.218$, $p = .089$).

Table 4
Model Summary of the Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Microenterprise Sustainability from Entrepreneurial Competencies and Marketing Strategies

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Model
1	.375 ^a	.141	.124	.27227	1

Note: Dependent Variable: Sustainability of microenterprises; Predictors: (Constant), Marketing strategies, Entrepreneurial Competencies

The results show that entrepreneurial competencies were a significant predictor of microenterprise sustainability, while marketing strategies did not show a statistically significant direct contribution. Although the

overall model was significant, the R^2 value of .141 indicates that other factors not included in the model may also contribute to differences in microenterprise sustainability. These quantitative findings were further examined through the qualitative phase to provide contextual explanations for the observed statistical relationships.

Table 5
Regression Coefficients of Independent Variables (Coefficients^a)

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	3.772	.277		13.599	.000
1 Entrepreneurial Competencies	.456	.155	.749	2.951	.004
Marketing strategies	-.218	.127	-.436	-1.719	.089

Note: Dependent variable: Microenterprise Sustainability. N = 108. $R^2 = .141$ indicates that the predictors collectively explain 14.1% of the variance in microenterprise sustainability.

Qualitative Findings. The findings provide further insights into the quantitative findings and are categorized into five emerging themes.

Theme 1: Entrepreneurial Competencies as Survival Skills. The participants described entrepreneurial competencies as important survival skills that enable them to keep their businesses afloat despite financial constraints. Participant 6 stated, “Good money management and good decisions help my business survive.”

Theme 2: Problem-solving and decision-making for improved sustainability. The participants discussed the importance of adaptability and decision making in overcoming business challenges. Participant 3 stated that “I always try to adapt and find ways to keep going even when sales are low.”

Theme 3: Experience as a foundation for opportunity recognition. The participants shared that training, and experience helped them identify customer needs and market opportunities. Participant 6 stated, “I can see trending items and understand what customers want.”

Theme 4: Informal marketing practices. No formal marketing strategies were used, but word of mouth promotion and personal relationships were relied upon heavily. Participant 3 stated, “Neighbors help by supporting and buying my products.”

Theme 5: Marketing strategies are used to support survival and not growth. Although marketing strategies scored highly from a quantitative perspective, the participants said these strategies are mainly used to support day-to-day operations and not necessarily for growth.

Table 6
Joint Display of the Integrated Data

Joint Display of the Integrated Quantitative and Qualitative Data	Outcomes	
SOP 1: Entrepreneurial Competencies		
<i>Quantitative Findings:</i> Respondents strongly agreed that they possess entrepreneurial competencies ($M = 4.751$). Entrepreneurial competencies significantly influenced the sustainability of microenterprises ($p = .004$). <i>Qualitative Findings:</i> Participants viewed entrepreneurial competencies as survival skills. Participant 6 stated, “<i>Good money management and good decisions help my business survive.</i>” Participant 3 also emphasized adaptability, stating, “<i>I always try to adapt and find ways to keep going even when sales are low.</i>” Moreover, Participant 6 shared, “<i>I can see trending items and understand what customers want.</i>”	Entrepreneurial competencies serve as important internal resources that enable beneficiaries to manage their businesses effectively, adapt to challenges, and identify opportunities. These competencies contribute significantly to sustaining their microenterprises.	
SOP 2: Marketing Strategies		
<i>Quantitative Findings:</i> Respondents strongly agreed that they employ marketing strategies ($M = 4.720$), but these strategies did not significantly influence sustainability ($p = .089$). <i>Qualitative Findings:</i> Participants relied mainly on informal marketing practices. Participant 3 stated, “<i>Neighbors help by supporting and buying my products.</i>” Participants also revealed that their marketing activities are mainly intended to support daily operations rather than business growth.		Although respondents perceive their marketing practices as useful, these strategies are largely informal and survival oriented. As a result, they have limited impact on the long-term sustainability and growth of microenterprises.
SOP 3: Sustainability of Microenterprises		
<i>Quantitative Findings:</i> Respondents strongly agreed that their enterprises are sustainable ($M = 4.910$), with long term business intention and preparedness for future challenges obtaining the highest ratings. <i>Qualitative Findings:</i> Participant 3 stated, “<i>I always try to adapt and find ways to keep going even when sales are low,</i>” reflecting commitment and resilience in maintaining the business. Participant 6 likewise shared, “<i>Good money management and good decisions help my business survive.</i>”	Sustainability among beneficiaries is characterized by resilience, preparedness, and commitment to continue their enterprises. These characteristics enable businesses to provide regular income and contribute to improved household welfare.	
SOP 4: Influence of Entrepreneurial Competencies and Marketing Strategies on Sustainability		
<i>Quantitative Findings:</i> The overall regression model was statistically significant ($p < .001$), explaining 14.1% of the variance in sustainability ($R^2 = .141$). Entrepreneurial competencies significantly predicted sustainability ($p = .004$), whereas marketing strategies did not ($p = .089$). <i>Qualitative Findings:</i> Participant 6 stated, “<i>Good money management and good decisions help my business survive.</i>” Participant 3 shared, “<i>I always try to adapt and find ways to keep going even when sales are low.</i>” Participant 6 further stated, “<i>I can see trending items and understand what customers want.</i>” In terms of marketing, Participant 3 noted, “<i>Neighbors help by supporting and buying my products.</i>”		The sustainability of microenterprises is influenced more by entrepreneurial competencies than by marketing strategies. Beneficiaries rely on problem solving, decision-making, adaptability, and opportunity recognition rather than formal marketing activities. Other factors beyond those included in the study may also contribute to enterprise sustainability.

Integration of Findings. The third phase integrated the quantitative and qualitative findings through a joint display to explain, confirm, and provide contextual meaning to the statistical results. The integration clarified how the beneficiaries’ experiences help explain the

observed relationships among entrepreneurial competencies, marketing strategies, and microenterprise sustainability. It also identified areas where the quantitative and qualitative findings converged or provided additional context, thereby providing a clearer and more comprehensive basis for the final interpretation of the study.

The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings demonstrates strong convergence between the two data strands. Quantitative results revealed that entrepreneurial competencies significantly predict microenterprise sustainability ($p = .004$), while qualitative evidence indicated that beneficiaries consistently draw upon problem-solving, decision-making, adaptability, and opportunity recognition to navigate business challenges and maintain operations. Taken together, these findings underscore entrepreneurial competencies as critical capabilities that enhance resilience, support business continuity, and contribute to the sustained viability of microenterprises.

Although the respondents highly rated their marketing strategies ($M = 4.720$), quantitative analysis showed that these strategies did not significantly predict sustainability ($p = .089$). Consistent with this finding, the qualitative results showed that the beneficiaries mainly adopted informal and experience-based marketing approaches such as word-of-mouth promotion and personal relationships, which are mainly directed towards supporting daily operations instead of achieving long-term business growth. In addition, the respondents considered their microenterprises to be sustainable ($M = 4.910$), and the interview participants emphasized their commitment to continue their livelihood activities despite various challenges. This reflects the importance of resilience and preparedness to sustain microenterprises and improve household welfare. Finally, the regression model was statistically significant ($p < .001$), although it only explained 14.1% of the variation in sustainability ($R^2 = .141$). This implies that there are other factors apart from

entrepreneurial competencies and marketing strategies that could lead to the sustainability of the microenterprises. Generally, the results show that internal capabilities influence more than informal marketing practices towards the long-term survival of the enterprises. These findings are in line with the Resource-Based View (RBV) and Human Capital Theory which suggest that knowledge, skills and entrepreneurial capabilities are valuable resources that lead to sustained business performance and competitive advantage.

DISCUSSION

Respondents' Assessment of Entrepreneurial Competencies. The quantitative findings showed a very high level of entrepreneurial competencies ($M = 4.751$), particularly in understanding customers, recognizing market trends, and decision-making. The qualitative findings explain these ratings by showing that beneficiaries apply decision-making, money management, adaptability, perseverance, and opportunity recognition as practical survival skills when facing financial and market challenges. This convergence supports the Resource-Based View and Human Capital Theory, which emphasize the value of internal resources, knowledge, and skills in business performance (Barney, 1991; Becker, 1993). It is also consistent with Mitchelmore and Rowley (2015) and Lans et al. (2014), who identified opportunity recognition, decision-making, and adaptability as relevant entrepreneurial competencies. However, qualitative accounts of difficulties in time management and technical business skills qualify the high quantitative assessment. Thus, entrepreneurial competencies appear important for business continuity, but their effective application may require continued capacity building, coaching, and mentoring.

Respondents' Assessment of Marketing Strategies. Marketing strategies were rated very highly ($M = 4.720$), particularly in pricing, promotion, and distribution accessibility. The qualitative findings provide context by showing that beneficiaries mainly rely on informal

practices such as word-of-mouth, personal relationships, basic pricing, and community support. This supports the Marketing Mix Theory (Kotler & Keller, 2022), while also explaining why highly rated marketing practices did not show a statistically significant direct effect on sustainability ($p = .089$).

Rather than indicating that marketing is unimportant, the findings suggest that beneficiaries primarily use marketing as survival mechanisms rather than growth strategies. The limited use of formal digital marketing, branding, product innovation, and market expansion may restrict the contribution of marketing strategies to long-term microenterprise sustainability. This interpretation is consistent with Varadarajan (2020), who discussed the role of customer information resources in marketing strategy and business performance, and Homburg et al. (2017), whose work examined the relationship between market orientation, dynamic capabilities, and firm performance. These perspectives suggest that more structured marketing practices and the ability to respond to changing customer and market conditions may help enterprises strengthen their competitiveness and sustain business operations.

Respondents' Evaluation of Microenterprise Sustainability. The quantitative findings indicated a very high level of perceived microenterprise sustainability ($M = 4.910$), particularly in the intention to continue the livelihood and preparedness to face future challenges. Qualitative narratives illuminate these results by demonstrating that sustainability is experienced through resilience, adaptability, commitment, and continued efforts to operate despite limited capital, competition, fluctuating demand, and irregular income. These findings are consistent with Fatoki (2018) and Dabić et al. (2023), who associate sustainability with continuity, income generation, and the ability to withstand challenges, and with Linnenluecke (2017), who highlights adaptability as an element of entrepreneurial resilience. The qualitative

evidence therefore qualifies the high perceived sustainability: enterprises may remain operational despite continuing vulnerabilities rather than being free from business risks.

Influence of Entrepreneurial Competencies and Marketing Strategies on Microenterprise Sustainability. The regression model was statistically significant ($R = .375$, $R^2 = .141$, $F = 8.590$, $p < .001$), explaining 14.1% of the variance in microenterprise sustainability. Entrepreneurial competencies significantly predicted sustainability ($p = .004$), whereas marketing strategies did not show a statistically significant direct effect ($p = .089$).

The qualitative findings provide explanatory depth to these results. Participants described decision-making, money management, adaptability, perseverance, and opportunity recognition as essential to maintaining their enterprises, reinforcing the role of entrepreneurial competencies as internal resources. In contrast, the informal and survival-oriented nature of marketing practices helps explain their nonsignificant direct contribution. The relatively low R^2 , together with participants' experiences of limited capital, competition, and fluctuating demand, further indicates that sustainability is shaped by factors beyond the variables included in the model.

Strategic Implications and Support Needs. The integrated findings indicate that livelihood sustainability requires support beyond the initial provision of livelihood assistance. Continuous entrepreneurship training, particularly in time management, financial management, decision-making, and business planning, may strengthen existing competencies. Market-oriented and digital marketing training, product innovation, customer analysis, mentoring, post-project monitoring, market linkages, and access to appropriate financial services may also address the gaps identified qualitatively.

Theoretically, the findings reinforce the importance of internal capabilities emphasized by the Resource-Based View and Human

Capital Theory while demonstrating that marketing practices may have limited direct contribution when primarily informal and survival-oriented. Programmatically, the findings support a continuous and developmental approach to livelihood assistance involving capacity building, technical assistance, monitoring, and market linkage.

Limitations and Future Research. The study was limited to DSWD-SLP beneficiaries in Barangay San Jose, Antipolo City, Rizal, which may limit the transferability of the findings to other settings. The quantitative phase was also limited to the variables included in the regression model, while the qualitative phase provided contextual explanations based on participants' experiences. Because of the sequential design, the qualitative findings were primarily used to explain the quantitative results. Future research may include additional factors such as capital adequacy, family support, digital marketing adoption, business location, competition, institutional support, and monitoring frequency. Longitudinal and comparative studies may also examine changes in microenterprise sustainability over time.

Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings. The findings demonstrate the value of the explanatory sequential mixed-methods design. The quantitative strand established the levels and statistical relationships among the variables, while the qualitative strand explained the experiences and conditions underlying those results. Together, the findings indicate that *entrepreneurial competencies serve as important internal resources for business continuity, while marketing practices primarily support day-to-day operations within the beneficiaries' current business context.* At the same time, limited capital, competition, fluctuating demand, and other contextual conditions indicate that sustainability is multidimensional. Thus, the integration of numbers and narratives provides a more comprehensive understanding of microenterprise sustainability than either strand alone and provides a logical basis for the

conclusions and recommendations in the succeeding chapter.

Conclusion. Based on the integrated quantitative and qualitative findings, the study concludes that the sustainability of DSWD-SLP microenterprises in Barangay San Jose, Antipolo City is a multidimensional phenomenon involving entrepreneurial competencies, marketing practices, and external business conditions. The quantitative results showed very high levels of entrepreneurial competencies ($M = 4.751$), marketing strategies ($M = 4.720$), and perceived microenterprise sustainability ($M = 4.910$). The qualitative findings explained these results by showing that beneficiaries apply decision-making, customer relations, perseverance, adaptability, pricing, and promotion in their businesses, while also experiencing challenges in time management, technical business skills, digital marketing, limited capital, competition, and fluctuating demand. Thus, the qualitative phase provided contextual explanations that could not be fully captured by the quantitative results alone.

The study addressed its objectives by establishing the levels of entrepreneurial competencies, marketing strategies, and microenterprise sustainability and by determining their statistical relationship. The regression model was statistically significant ($F = 8.590$, $p < .001$) and explained 14.1% of the variance in sustainability ($R^2 = 0.141$). Entrepreneurial competencies significantly predicted sustainability ($p = .004$), while marketing strategies did not show a statistically significant direct effect ($p = .089$). However, the qualitative findings demonstrated that marketing practices remain useful in daily business operations, particularly in pricing, promotion, customer relationships, and product accessibility. These findings indicate that statistical significance and practical contribution should be interpreted together when understanding microenterprise sustainability.

The integrated findings generally reinforce the knowledge presented in the related literature that entrepreneurial capabilities contribute to business sustainability, while also highlighting the importance of contextual and environmental conditions. The findings further suggest that the presence of marketing practices does not necessarily translate into a statistically significant direct contribution to sustainability when these practices are largely informal and experience-based. This provides a more nuanced understanding of microenterprise sustainability among livelihood beneficiaries and demonstrates the value of examining both measurable relationships and beneficiaries' lived business experiences.

The findings have practical implications for DSWD-SLP implementation. Livelihood assistance should be complemented by continuous entrepreneurship development, particularly in time management, technical business skills, financial management, product innovation, and business planning. Market-oriented training, digital marketing capability building, business mentoring, post-project monitoring, market linkages, and collaboration with local government units and partner organizations may further support enterprise sustainability. The findings therefore emphasize that sustaining livelihood enterprises requires continuing capacity development and institutional support beyond the initial provision of livelihood assistance.

The study is limited by its focus on DSWD-SLP beneficiaries in Barangay San Jose, Antipolo City, Rizal, which may limit the transferability of the findings to other settings. The study also relied on respondents' assessments and qualitative accounts, while the regression model explained 14.1% of the variance in sustainability, indicating that other relevant factors were not included. Future research may examine other communities and consider additional factors such as capital adequacy, family support, digital marketing adoption, business location, market competition, institutional support, and monitoring frequency. Longitudinal and comparative studies may also

provide greater understanding of changes in enterprise sustainability over time.

Overall, the study demonstrates that microenterprise sustainability cannot be understood solely through quantitative measures or individual business competencies. The explanatory sequential mixed-methods design added value by allowing the qualitative findings to explain and contextualize the quantitative results, resulting in a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of how DSWD-SLP beneficiaries sustain their enterprises amid practical, market, and economic challenges. The study therefore contributes both to the understanding of livelihood enterprise sustainability and to the continuing improvement of support mechanisms for DSWD-SLP beneficiaries.

Recommendations. The following recommendations are grounded in the study's findings on the roles of entrepreneurial competencies and marketing practices in supporting microenterprise sustainability among DSWD-SLP beneficiaries. These recommendations aim to strengthen enterprise development interventions by addressing identified capability gaps, enhancing business support mechanisms, and promoting collaborative efforts among beneficiaries, implementing agencies, local government units, and partner organizations.

Enhancement of Entrepreneurship Programs. The DSWD-SLP should enhance the entrepreneurship component through continuous training on decision-making, problem solving, time management, financial management, opportunity identification, and business planning. The program should also conduct regular coaching and mentoring activities to further develop entrepreneurial skills.

Market-Oriented Training Modules. The DSWD-SLP should develop market-oriented training modules on pricing strategies, customer analysis and retention, product development and innovation, and competitive positioning.

These interventions would help the beneficiaries to adopt more structured and growth-oriented marketing practices.

Digital Marketing Capability Programs. The DSWD-SLP should introduce digital marketing capability programs to improve the beneficiaries' knowledge and utilization of social media marketing, online selling platforms, e-commerce applications, digital branding, and content creation. These initiatives may enhance the competitiveness and market reach of microenterprises.

Business Mentoring and Post-Project Monitoring. The DSWD-SLP should institutionalize business mentoring and coaching and strengthen post-project monitoring through regular business assessments, technical assistance, and linkages with cooperatives and microfinance institutions to provide continuous support to beneficiaries.

Support from Beneficiaries, Local Government Units and Partner Organizations. The beneficiaries should develop practical business skills such as customer identification, pricing, inventory management, record keeping, product improvement and promotion. The local government units and partner organizations should complement DSWD-SLP interventions through market linkage activities, local selling spaces, trade fairs, digital marketing training, product packaging assistance and access to enterprise development services and financial institutions.

DISCLOSURES

Author contributions. The author solely conceptualized and designed the study, developed the research methodology, conducted the literature review, collected and analyzed the data, interpreted the findings, and prepared the original manuscript. The author was also responsible for data validation, visualization, manuscript review and editing, project administration, and the overall supervision and completion of the research. The

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Data availability statement. The datasets generated and/or analyzed during the current study are available in the HABACON, BEVIRLY M repository.

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1ggnLAcVoJDQ1-DiMrCF4VBhe58YJMtrs?usp=drive_link

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