

Assessing the Impact of Entrepreneurial Skills Training on Business Competencies Among Solo Parents in Brgy. Imbang Grande, Passi City, Philippines

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Abstract. This study examined the effectiveness of an entrepreneurial skills training program in enhancing the business competencies of solo parents in Brgy. Imbang Grande, Passi City, Philippines. Using a quasi-experimental pretest-posttest design, thirty participants were assessed across five core domains—Financial Management, Business Planning, Marketing, Operations, and Customer Relations—through a validated Entrepreneurial Skill Competency Assessment Tool (ESCAT). Results revealed significant improvements in all domains, with the largest gains in Financial Management, followed by Customer Relations, Marketing, Operations, and Business Planning. Statistical analysis confirmed that the overall increase in business competency was significant, demonstrating the training's effectiveness in strengthening participants' skills, decision-making, and entrepreneurial confidence. The findings highlight the value of structured and experiential training programs for marginalized groups, showing potential to enhance microenterprise management, promote business sustainability, and support economic independence. While the study is limited by its small sample size and single-site focus, it provides promising evidence for integrating entrepreneurial training into community-based initiatives. It suggests future research on income stability, business growth, and replication in other communities.

Keywords: Business competencies; Entrepreneurial training; Financial management; Microenterprise; Solo parents

1.0 Introduction

Entrepreneurship has emerged as a powerful driver of economic growth, innovation, and poverty alleviation. Globally, entrepreneurship education (EE) has been recognized as a vital mechanism for equipping individuals with the competencies required to start, manage, and sustain successful enterprises. This is particularly important in contexts where unemployment and underemployment persist. Mack et al. (2024) argue that EE should not only build technical business knowledge but also emphasize the development of soft skills and entrepreneurial mindsets, which are crucial for long-term success. Vocational and technical education institutions, in particular, have increasingly integrated entrepreneurship into their curricula to enhance graduates' employability and entrepreneurial capacity.

However, entrepreneurship education alone may not be sufficient, especially for vulnerable groups such as solo parents, who face unique socio-economic barriers. Studies reveal that solo parents often struggle with limited income, insufficient social support, and financial literacy gaps, which can hinder their ability to pursue business ventures (Cruz et al., 2024; Echave Rees et al., 2023). These challenges make them a critical demographic for targeted entrepreneurial interventions that combine training, mentorship, and access to resources. Morales et al. (2025) further highlight that economic empowerment for solo parents is influenced not only by educational attainment but also by employment opportunities and access to childcare support—underscoring the need for flexible and inclusive approaches to livelihood generation.

Entrepreneurship training programs provide a potential pathway to address these challenges. Evidence suggests that such programs can significantly enhance participants' business acumen, entrepreneurial motivation, and performance outcomes (Md Noor Aizuddin & Adam, 2021; Shetty et al., 2024). When properly designed and implemented, they integrate both theoretical and experiential learning, enabling participants to acquire practical skills and apply them in real-world contexts. However, the effectiveness of entrepreneurship training depends heavily on contextual factors, including program design, follow-up support, and participant characteristics (Ismail, 2018). For solo parents, programs must be intentionally structured to consider time constraints, caregiving responsibilities, and socio-economic limitations.

Given these realities, it becomes essential to systematically assess whether entrepreneurial skills training programs truly translate into improved business competencies for solo parents. Program evaluation frameworks such as the CIPP (Context, Input, Process, Product) and Kirkpatrick models have proven effective in measuring learning outcomes, behavioral change, and overall program impact (Fan et al., 2022; Cumberland et al., 2024). Applying such frameworks can help determine not only whether competencies improve but also which areas—such as financial management, marketing, or operations—benefit most from training interventions.

This study seeks to fill a gap in the literature by evaluating the impact of entrepreneurial skills training on the business competencies of solo parents. By doing so, it aims to provide evidence-based insights into how entrepreneurship programs can be designed and delivered to foster economic empowerment among this underserved population. Future programs should adopt flexible, inclusive, and context-sensitive designs that address solo parents' caregiving responsibilities and financial constraints, while also integrating mentorship, follow-up support, and community resources to sustain gains in business competencies and ensure long-term entrepreneurial success.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a quasi-experimental one-group pretest-posttest design to evaluate the effect of the entrepreneurial skills training program on the business competencies of solo parents. A quasi-experimental design was chosen because it allows measurement of change over time when random assignment or a separate control group is not feasible, as is common in community-based interventions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This design is particularly suitable for practical settings where researchers work with naturally occurring groups, such as solo parents registered in the local government database, and where the goal is to determine whether a specific intervention can produce measurable improvements.

In this design, a single group of participants was measured twice: once before the intervention (pretest) and once after the intervention (posttest). The pretest served as a baseline, capturing participants' initial business competency levels. Following this, the five-day entrepreneurial skills training program was implemented, offering participants interactive lectures, workshops, and hands-on activities to enhance their competencies in business planning, financial management, marketing, operations, and customer relations. The posttest was then administered immediately after the intervention to measure any change in participants' competency levels.

The primary advantage of this design is its ability to directly measure improvement within the same group of participants, thus controlling for individual differences that might affect results. However, it is important to acknowledge that the absence of a control group limits the ability to attribute observed improvements solely to the intervention, as external factors could also influence outcomes. Despite this limitation, the one-group pretest-

posttest design remains a valuable approach for pilot studies and community-based programs, as it provides preliminary evidence of program effectiveness and helps inform future research.

For future research, incorporating a control or comparison group is recommended to strengthen causal inferences about the effectiveness of entrepreneurial skills training. Likewise, follow-up posttests administered several months after the intervention would provide valuable insights into competency retention and the program's long-term impact on participants' business practices.

Data gathered from the pretest and posttest were analyzed using descriptive statistics to summarize scores and a paired-samples t-test to determine whether the observed differences were statistically significant at the 0.05 level. This statistical approach is appropriate for within-subject designs because it accounts for the fact that measurements were taken from the same participants before and after the intervention, thereby increasing the analysis's power to detect meaningful changes.

2.2 Research Locale

The study was conducted in Brgy. Imbang Grande, Passi City, Philippines. The training sessions were held in a community multipurpose hall within the barangay, which was easily accessible to all participants and well-equipped with tables, chairs, and audiovisual equipment necessary for interactive lectures, workshops, and group activities. Conducting the program within the participants' local community encouraged attendance, minimized travel constraints, and created a comfortable environment conducive to active learning and engagement.

2.3 Research Participants

The study participants were 30 solo parents registered with the Solo Parent Office. They were selected using purposive sampling to ensure that only those relevant to the study's objectives were included. The inclusion criteria required that participants be either currently engaged in or planning to start a microenterprise, be available to attend the full five-day training program, and be willing to participate in both pre- and post-assessments. These criteria helped ensure that the participants were in a position to benefit from the training and apply the competencies gained to their business ventures.

2.4 Research Instrument

To measure participants' business competencies, the study utilized the researcher-developed Entrepreneurial Skill Competency Assessment Tool (ESCAT). This instrument consisted of 25 Likert-scale items (1 = Very Low to 5 = Very High) that captured five core competency areas: business planning, financial management, marketing, operations, and customer relations. The ESCAT underwent expert validation to ensure each item was relevant and aligned with the study's objectives. A pilot test was conducted prior to the study, and the results were used to refine and finalize the instrument. Reliability analysis yielded a Cronbach's alpha of 0.91, indicating excellent internal consistency and confirming that the ESCAT was a reliable measure of business competency.

2.5 Data Gathering Procedure

The data-gathering procedure for this study followed a systematic approach to ensure accuracy, consistency, and ethical integrity. Prior to the actual conduct of the study, permission was secured from the Solo Parent Office of the local government unit in Brgy. Imbang Grande, Passi City, to access their list of registered solo parents and to conduct the entrepreneurial skills training program. A formal letter of request was submitted, outlining the objectives, scope, and expected outcomes of the study. Once approval was granted, a briefing session was held to inform potential participants about the nature of the research, the training program schedule, and their rights as respondents. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection began.

The pretest was administered on the first day of the program, prior to the start of the intervention. Participants completed the Entrepreneurial Skill Competency Assessment Tool (ESCAT) under the researcher's supervision to ensure uniform administration and address any clarifications regarding the items. The pretest results provided the baseline data on participants' business competency levels across the five domains (Business Planning, Financial Management, Marketing, Operations, and Customer Relations).

Following the pretest, participants underwent a five-day entrepreneurial skills training program facilitated by the researcher and resource speakers with expertise in entrepreneurship and business development. The training included lectures, interactive workshops, group activities, and hands-on exercises to strengthen participants' entrepreneurial knowledge and skills. Special emphasis was given to financial management, as this domain registered the lowest baseline scores.

Immediately after completing the training program, participants were given the posttest using the same ESCAT instrument. This post-assessment aimed to measure the degree of improvement in their competencies and to determine whether the training achieved its intended learning outcomes.

After data collection, all responses were encoded and analyzed using SPSS software. Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) were computed to summarize pretest and posttest scores for each domain, and a paired-samples t-test was conducted to determine whether the observed differences were statistically significant at the 0.05 level. This analysis allowed evaluation of the training program's overall effectiveness and its impact on each specific competency area.

Throughout the process, ethical considerations were strictly observed. Participants' identities were kept confidential, and the data collected were used solely for research purposes.

2.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethical standards were strictly observed throughout the study. Participation was entirely voluntary, and participants signed informed consent forms before data collection. They were fully informed of the objectives and procedures of the research and assured of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without negative consequences. Confidentiality was maintained by anonymizing participants' responses and ensuring that all data were stored securely and used solely for academic purposes. The study minimized potential risks and safeguarded participants' psychological, social, and economic well-being while respecting their dignity and rights.

3.0 Results and Discussion

3.1 Entrepreneurial Skill Pre-Training on Business Competency Levels

Business competency in this study refers to the participants' ability to plan, manage, and sustain small-scale businesses through effective decision-making across five core domains: Business Planning, Financial Management, Marketing, Operations, and Customer Relations. The pre-assessment results, presented in Table 1, summarize the participants' mean scores, standard deviations, and descriptive interpretations across these domains.

Table 1. *Pre-Training Business Competency Levels by Domain*

Competency Area	Mean	SD	Description
Business Planning	3.15	0.40	Average
Financial Management	2.85	0.38	Average
Marketing	3.10	0.39	Average
Operations	3.05	0.37	Average
Customer Relations	3.10	0.41	Average
Overall	3.05	0.42	Average

Note: Very High (4.21–5.00); High (3.41–4.20); Average (2.61–3.40); Below Average (1.81–2.60); Very Low (1.00–1.80)

The results of the pre-assessment indicated that the overall business competency level of the participating solo parents was within the Average range ($M = 3.05$, $SD = 0.42$), as indicated by the standardized interpretation of the assessment scale. This finding suggests that, while participants possessed a foundational understanding of entrepreneurial concepts, there remained considerable room for improvement in their practical application and strategic decision-making. Similar results have been observed in entrepreneurship education (EE) research, where participants often demonstrate baseline knowledge but limited confidence in translating theory into practice (Mack et al., 2024).

An analysis of the five assessed competency domains indicated varying levels of proficiency. Financial Management emerged as the weakest domain, with the lowest mean score. This result highlights a notable gap in participants' knowledge and skills in essential financial practices, including bookkeeping, budgeting, cash flow monitoring, and informed financial decision-making. These competencies are widely recognized as fundamental to the sustainability and growth of small-scale businesses (Scarborough, 2018; Gitman et al., 2019). Deficiencies in financial literacy have been linked to poor resource management, limited cost control, and suboptimal investment choices, which can jeopardize small business viability (Ekanem, 2017).

The relatively lower performance in financial management among participants mirrors broader literature findings, which show that micro-entrepreneurs and marginalized groups frequently face challenges in financial planning, accounting, and strategic decision-making due to limited exposure to formal business education (Echave Rees et al., 2023; Cruz et al., 2024). These constraints can be particularly acute for solo parents, whose caregiving responsibilities and income instability further restrict opportunities to develop financial skills (Morales et al., 2025). Consequently, targeted financial literacy and management training are crucial components of entrepreneurial development programs designed for this demographic.

In sum, the pre-assessment findings provide a clear baseline for intervention design, signaling the urgent need to prioritize financial management in the training program's curriculum. Addressing these gaps early on is likely to yield significant improvements in overall business competency and contribute to the long-term economic empowerment of solo parents.

3.2 Entrepreneurial Skill Post-Training on Business Competency Levels

Following the completion of the entrepreneurial skills training program, participants' post-assessment results, summarized in Table 2, showed marked improvements across all five competency domains.

Table 2. Post-Training Business Competency Levels by Domain

Competency Area	Mean	SD	Description
Business Planning	4.10	0.35	High
Financial Management	3.90	0.36	High
Marketing	4.05	0.33	High
Operations	4.00	0.34	High
Customer Relations	4.20	0.32	High
Overall	4.05	0.34	High

Note: Very High (4.21–5.00); High (3.41–4.20); Average (2.61–3.40); Below Average (1.81–2.60); Very Low (1.00–1.80)

The overall mean score increased from 3.05 in the pre-assessment to 4.05 in the post-assessment, representing a shift from the *Average* to the *High* competency range based on the standardized interpretation scale. This substantial improvement indicates that the training program had a positive and measurable impact on participants' overall business competencies. These findings are consistent with prior research demonstrating that well-structured entrepreneurship training programs significantly enhance participants' entrepreneurial knowledge, attitudes, and performance outcomes (Md Noor Aizuddin & Adam, 2021; Shetty et al., 2024).

Among the five domains, Financial Management showed the most significant improvement, with a mean score increase of 1.05. This gain underscores the effectiveness of the program's financial literacy sessions, which emphasized practical skills such as bookkeeping, budgeting, cash flow tracking, and informed financial decision-making. This result aligns with evidence suggesting that financial management is among the most responsive areas to targeted training interventions, as it equips entrepreneurs with the tools needed to manage resources and sustain their businesses (Ismail, 2018). Participant observations during training revealed growing confidence in preparing simple financial statements and developing operational budgets. This outcome is consistent with Andrade et al.'s (2024) finding that entrepreneurship training fosters self-reliance and decision-making capacity among participants.

Improvements were also observed in the other domains—Marketing Strategies, Business Planning, Operations Management, and Customer Relations—indicating that the training strengthened entrepreneurial competencies

holistically. This supports Gu and Tang's (2025) assertion that integrated and experiential training approaches yield broader skill development and encourage the application of learning in real-world scenarios. Moreover, the significant rise in overall competency levels aligns with Shetty et al. (2024), who observed in Entrepreneurial Development Programmes (EDPs) that comprehensive interventions improved entrepreneurial mindset, motivation, and business outcomes.

Overall, these post-intervention findings validate the structure and delivery of the entrepreneurial skills training program. They highlight the critical role of sustained capacity-building initiatives in improving the entrepreneurial potential of marginalized populations such as solo parents. When provided with guided instruction, structured practice, and opportunities for hands-on application, participants can meaningfully enhance their competencies, increasing their likelihood of achieving economic resilience and self-sufficiency (Md Noor Aizuddin & Adam, 2021; Ismail, 2018).

3.3 Difference Between Entrepreneurial Skills Pre- and Post-Training Competency Levels

The results of the paired samples t-test, shown in Table 3, compared participants' pre- and post-training business competency scores to determine whether the observed improvements were statistically significant.

Table 3. Paired "t-test" Results for Overall Business Competency

Group	Mean Difference	df	t-value	Sig-value
Overall Business Competence	1.000	29	15.24	.000*

*Significant at $p < 0.001$

The analysis revealed a statistically significant improvement in participants' overall business competencies ($t = 15.24, p < .001$). This highly significant result indicates that the observed increase in competency scores from the pre-assessment ($M = 3.05, SD = 0.42$) to the post-assessment ($M = 4.05, SD = 0.38$) was not due to chance but was attributable to the entrepreneurial skills training program. The size of the t -value, paired with the very low p -value, demonstrates that the intervention produced a substantial and measurable effect on participants' entrepreneurial capabilities.

These results are consistent with prior research showing that well-structured entrepreneurship training programs can produce significant pre-to-post gains in participants' knowledge and skills. Cumberland et al. (2024) reported similar findings in a quasi-experimental evaluation, where participants experienced meaningful increases in entrepreneurial knowledge, intentions, and business readiness after completing training. Fan et al. (2022) further emphasized that active participation is a critical driver of program effectiveness, leading to measurable improvements in entrepreneurial outcomes.

The improvement can also be explained by experiential learning principles, which hold that adults learn best through hands-on, problem-focused engagement. Kolb's experiential learning theory suggests that concrete experience and active experimentation help transform knowledge into actionable competencies. The training's inclusion of practical activities—such as financial statement preparation, marketing exercises, and case-based discussions—likely contributed to these significant gains, echoing Geiger's (2022) finding that applied learning activities enhance decision-making and financial literacy.

From a policy and program design perspective, the significant pre-post difference highlights the potential of targeted, context-specific entrepreneurial training to empower marginalized groups. Firmansyah et al. (2020) similarly noted that entrepreneurship education programs must align content with learner needs and ensure proper follow-up to maximize their long-term impact. For solo parents, such interventions may serve as pathways to financial independence and resilience.

3.4 Analysis of Specific Business Competency Improvements

Table 4 presents the improvements in specific business competency domains of solo parents following the entrepreneurial skills training program. It shows the pre- and post-training mean scores, the mean gain for each competency, the interpretation of the pre-to-post change, and the rank of improvement, highlighting which areas benefited most from the intervention.

Table 4. *Improvement in Business Competency Levels by Domain*

Competency Area	Pre-Training Mean	Post-Training Mean	Mean Gain	Pre-Post Change	Rank
Financial Management	2.85	3.90	1.05	Average → High	1
Customer Relations	3.10	4.20	1.10	Average → High	2
Marketing	3.10	4.05	0.95	Average → High	3
Operations	3.05	4.00	0.95	Average → High	3
Business Planning	3.15	4.1	0.95	Average → High	3
Overall	3.05	4.05	1.00	Average → High	—

The results of the pre- and post-training assessments revealed meaningful improvements across all five competency domains, with Financial Management showing the most significant gain (+1.05). This finding underscores the pivotal role of financial literacy as a foundation for entrepreneurial competence. Tejero et al. (2019) demonstrated that financially literate individuals are more proficient in budgeting, decision-making, and managing financial resources. The significant post-training improvement in Financial Management supports this assertion. It suggests that targeted interventions focusing on financial education directly enhance participants' ability to plan, control, and sustain business operations.

Improvements in Business Planning, Marketing, and Operations can be interpreted through the lens of Business Process Management (BPM). Reijers (2021) emphasized that BPM's evolution—from process modeling to process design and enactment—enables organizations to streamline workflows and optimize efficiency. The training's focus on planning and operations likely reflected BPM principles, helping participants better understand interdependencies between business functions. Gonçalves (2010) further argued that process mapping and continuous improvement enhance organizational competencies, a finding consistent with participants' shift from average to high competence in these areas.

Strategic decision-making skills were also strengthened through the program, as seen in gains in Business Planning and Marketing. Ahmed et al. (2014) described strategic decision-making (SDM) as a structured process of identifying problems, generating alternatives, and implementing solutions, while Hlavatý and Ližbetin (2023) highlighted hybrid decision-making approaches as critical for timely and effective responses to dynamic environments. The training's applied exercises likely reinforced these processes, enabling participants to make more rational, timely, and informed business choices.

Finally, the marked improvement in Customer Relations reflects the importance of networking and social capital in entrepreneurship. Díaz-García and Carter (2009) highlighted that embedded networks provide entrepreneurs with advice, referrals, and emotional support, which are crucial for overcoming structural barriers. Ajuna et al. (2023) likewise found that mobilizing both human and political resources significantly enhances organizational role performance. The participants' enhanced customer relations competency suggests that the training program may have improved their ability to engage with stakeholders, cultivate business relationships, and respond to customer needs effectively.

Overall, the analysis indicates that the entrepreneurial skills training program successfully addressed multiple dimensions of business competence—financial, operational, strategic, and relational—consistent with literature emphasizing process optimization (Reijers, 2021; Gonçalves, 2010), rational decision-making (Ahmed et al., 2014; Hlavatý & Ližbetin, 2023), networking (Díaz-García & Carter, 2009; Ajuna et al., 2023), and financial literacy (Tejero et al., 2019).

Based on these findings, it is recommended that local government units, NGOs, and training institutions institutionalize entrepreneurial skills training as a regular component of community initiatives. Ensuring continuous access to such programs would allow solo parents and similarly vulnerable groups to sustain the competencies they have gained and adapt to evolving business challenges. To maximize long-term impact, training efforts should be complemented by mentorship, structured follow-up monitoring, and resource support to strengthen participants' business practices over time. Furthermore, incorporating modules on digital marketing, e-commerce, and financial technologies is essential to align entrepreneurial competencies with the demands of the modern economy and to enhance the competitiveness of microenterprises in both local and online markets.

4.0 Conclusion

This study assessed the effectiveness of an entrepreneurial skills training program on enhancing the entrepreneurial readiness of solo parents. The pre- and post-assessment results using ECSAT indicated statistically significant improvements across all five domains—Financial Management, Business Planning, Marketing, Operations, and Customer Relations. Financial Management showed the most significant gain, highlighting the program's relevance in strengthening participants' knowledge in an area often identified as critical to business sustainability. These findings suggest that the training program contributed to meaningful increases in participants' entrepreneurial knowledge, intentions, and readiness.

The results underscore the potential value of structured, targeted entrepreneurial training programs for marginalized groups, such as solo parents. By equipping participants with knowledge in financial management, strategic decision-making, and customer relations, such interventions may help them pursue microenterprise initiatives with greater confidence. The findings also align with prior research, which emphasizes that increases in entrepreneurial knowledge and readiness are important precursors to improved practice and economic empowerment.

At the same time, several limitations must be acknowledged. The absence of a control group prevents attributing improvements solely to the training, and ECSAT primarily measures perceived competencies rather than demonstrated business proficiency. Practical business outcomes such as income growth, profitability, or enterprise sustainability would provide more substantial evidence of competency development. Thus, while the results show measurable and significant improvements in readiness, they cannot conclusively establish that business performance has improved.

Future research should therefore consider larger and more diverse samples, include control groups, and examine practical business outcomes to capture the long-term impact of entrepreneurial training. Longitudinal studies may also assess whether improvements in readiness translate into sustained business competence and success. Additionally, integrating modules on digital marketing, e-commerce, and financial technology could further enhance participants' competitiveness in today's evolving business environment.

5.0 Contributions of Authors

All authors confirm that they have contributed substantially to all sections of this work. Each author has reviewed and approved the final manuscript and accepts responsibility for the content and integrity of the research.

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7.0 Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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