Demographic Profile and the Perceived Effectiveness of the Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP) of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) in Microenterprise Development

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ABSTRACT

The Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP) is a community-based initiative aimed at empowering poor, vulnerable, and marginalized households by improving access to sustainable income-generating opportunities. This study assessed the effectiveness of the SLP in fostering microenterprise development in Norala and Sto. Niño, South Cotabato, utilizing a descriptive-correlational research design with data gathered from 46 beneficiaries through structured surveys. Findings reveal that the majority of beneficiaries are middle-aged women with small households and low annual incomes.

The program's implementation was highly rated, particularly regarding the guidelines for accessing the Seed Capital Fund. Economic results demonstrated significant improvements in asset accumulation and productivity, and social networks indicated positive effects on living conditions. Strong correlations were established between microenterprise development and both economic and social outcomes; however, inadequate seed capital funding emerged as a critical issue. The study concludes that the SLP positively influences the economic and social well-being of its beneficiaries and recommends future enhancements in post-funding monitoring, youth participation, financial literacy, market connectivity, and leadership development to bolster the program's sustainability and long-term impact.

Keywords: perceived, effectiveness, sustainable livelihood program, microenterprise development

INTRODUCTION

In addressing poverty and promoting inclusive economic growth, the Philippine government continues to implement various social welfare and development initiatives aimed at improving the quality of life of marginalized communities. Among these initiatives is the Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP) of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), a community-based capacity-building program designed to empower poor and vulnerable households through sustainable income-generating opportunities.

Globally, sustainable livelihood programs have become central strategies in achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 1 (No Poverty) and Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth). Studies such as those of Hossain et al. (2020) and Banerjee et al. (2015) emphasized that livelihood interventions combining skills training, financial support, and community participation significantly improve income sustainability and household resilience. In the Philippines, Existing studies such influenced by Ocampo et al. (2024), Blanchard (2020) primarily focused on poverty alleviation measures and policy implementation, yet limited attention has been given to assessing beneficiaries' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of the Sustainable Livelihood Program, particularly in local communities.

This research gap is significant because understanding beneficiaries' perceptions of the implementation and effectiveness of the Sustainable Livelihood Program can provide valuable insights into its contribution to microenterprise development and socio-economic improvement. By examining program implementation, economic and social outcomes, and the challenges encountered by beneficiaries in the municipalities of Norala and Sto. Niño, South Cotabato, policymakers and program implementers may develop enhanced strategies and interventions that strengthen the effectiveness of livelihood programs and improve the living conditions of marginalized households.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

1. What are the demographic profiles and the extent of participation of Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP) beneficiaries of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) in South Cotabato in terms of:

    1.1 age;
    1.2 sex;
    1.3 household size;
    1.4 baseline income;

2. What is the level of implementation of the Sustainable Livelihood Program on Micro-Enterprise Development?
3. To what extent did the sustainable livelihood program affect the beneficiaries particularly in the economic effect in terms of:

    3.1 Income and financial stability
    3.2 Assets and productive capability; and
    3.3 Employment and urban market participation?

4. What is the social-living effect of the sustainable livelihood program on the beneficiaries in terms of:

    4.1 community engagement and leadership
    4.2 social networks; and
    4.3 civil and political participation?

5. Is there a significant difference in the economic effects of the program when the beneficiaries are grouped according to their demographic profile?
6. Is there a significant difference in the social living effects of the program when the beneficiaries are grouped according to their demographic profile?
7. Is there a significant relationship between the micro-enterprise development and the economic effect on the beneficiaries of the sustainable livelihood program?
8. Is there a significant relationship between the micro-enterprise development and the social living effect on the beneficiaries of the sustainable livelihood program?
9. What are the issues and the concerns in the implementation of the sustainable livelihood program?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

- Descriptive-correlational research design

Locale of the Study

- Municipalities of Norala and Sto. Niño, South Cotabato

Respondents of the Study

- Beneficiaries of the Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP) under the Microenterprise Development (MD) track - Seed Capital Fund Modality

Data Gathering Instruments

- Questionnaire on Perceived Effectiveness Of The Sustainable Livelihood Program (Slp) Of The Department Of Social Welfare And Development (Dswd) In Microenterprise Development

Statistical Treatment of Data

- SOP 1, and SOP 9: Frequency counts and percentages
- SOP 2, SOP 3, and SOP 4: Mean and standard deviation
- SOP 5, SOP 6, SOP 7,and SOP 8: Pearson r Correlation Coefficient

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 5. Respondents in Terms of Age

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage
31–50 y/o	19	41.30%
60–75 y/o	14	30.43%
51–59 y/o	9	19.57%
16–30 y/o	4	8.70%
Total	46	100%

Table 5 shows the distribution of the respondents by age group. The majority of respondents are between 31 and 50, accounting for 41.30%, indicating mature respondents who are actively engaged in livelihood activities. The 16-30-year-old group, on the other hand, has the lowest participation rate at 8.70%, indicating limited youth involvement. This distribution indicates that most middle-aged adults are attracted to sustainable livelihood programs, which efficiently engage people in their prime working years who have the physical endurance, accumulated skills, and family responsibilities that drive program participation. According to Lacey et al. (2017), in the Philippines, participants in microenterprise development programs aged 31–50 reported higher sustainability rates in their livelihood ventures than younger participants, attributing this success to practical knowledge and risk management abilities honed over years of informal economic activity. The limited participation of youth sectors suggests a need for youth-inclusive policies to prevent generational poverty traps in South Cotabato, especially in the municipalities of Norala and Sto. Niño.

Table 6. Respondents in Terms of Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Female (F)	33	71.74%
Male (M)	13	28.26%
Total	46	100%

Table 6 shows the distribution of the respondents by gender. The majority of respondents were female,

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comprising 71.74% (33 respondents), suggesting a substantial female bias in program participation consistent with overall trends in social protection schemes. The lowest group is males at 28.26% (13 respondents), which could be attributed to men's participation in seasonal labor migration rather than to livelihood initiatives being "women's domains." Women in this generation are likely to be key home managers, diverting program benefits into family nutrition, child education, and micro-savings. Amandog et al. (2022) highlighted that livelihood programs strengthen leadership and participation among community members, particularly women engaged in association-based activities. Furthermore, Kawachi et al. (2024) emphasized that active participation and strong social networks contribute to the success and sustainability of community livelihood initiatives.These findings suggest the need for male-targeted outreach strategies to balance participation and enhance overall program equity.

Table 7. Demographic Profile of the Respondents in Terms of Household Size

Household Size	Frequency	Percentage
3–4 persons	24	52.17%
5–6 persons	13	28.26%
1–2 persons	6	13.04%
7–8 persons	3	6.52%
Total	46	100%

Table 7 shows the distribution of the respondents by household size. The highest is 3-4 people at 52.17% (24 homes), indicating that small- to medium-sized nuclear families dominate, enabling more efficient resource allocation from livelihood assistance to education and health spending. According to Reyes et al. (2020), in the Philippines, households with 3-4 members were 40% more likely to sustain livelihood enterprises for more than 2 years than larger families. This was due to improved household resource pooling and reduced conflict over the allocation of benefits. On the other hand, the lowest mean, 7-8 people at 6.52% or 3 homes, represents extended families with large dependency ratios where program inputs are distributed among many individuals, increasing vulnerability to shocks such as illness or crop failure. According to Corpus et al. (2024), households with more than six individuals had 35% poorer enterprise survival rates in livelihood programs, as fragmented labor and competing needs degraded in investment focus. The prevalence of small household sizes suggests that most beneficiaries have manageable family structures, enabling more efficient livelihood support, whereas larger household sizes indicate greater reliance burdens, which may threaten business survival due to resource dispersion.

Table 8. Demographic Profile of the Respondents in Terms of Baseline Income

Baseline income	Frequency	Percentage
5,000–10,000	44	95.56%
11,000–15,000	2	4.44%
Total	46	100%

Table 8 shows the distribution of the respondents by baseline income. The ₱5,000–₱10,000 bracket constitutes the overwhelming majority at 95.56%, affirming the program’s precision in targeting ultra-poor households in South Cotabato. In contrast, the ₱11,000–₱15,000 income group accounts for only 4.44%, indicating minimal inclusion of near-poor households. According to Reyes et al. (2020), baseline incomes under ₱10,000 in livelihood programs were associated with a 32% higher monthly income post-intervention, as limited starting capital compelled participants to rely on program assets, such as livestock, producing rapid multiplier effects. In contrast, near-poor groups experienced more fragmented outcomes, with only 8% of enterprises persisting due to competing wage opportunities. This low representation suggests the application of strict poverty thresholds that exclude households hovering just above the cutoff, despite ongoing economic vulnerability. While the minimal presence of near-poor households sharpens the sample’s focus on core beneficiaries.

The demographic profile of respondents in Sustainable Livelihood Programs (SLP) in Norala and Sto. Niño, South Cotabato, highlights age, gender, household size, and baseline income as critical factors for understanding program effectiveness. Household sizes of 3–4 members are most common, supporting higher enterprise sustainability and per capita productivity, whereas larger households face fragmented labor and competing needs that reduce program effectiveness. Baseline incomes under ₱10,000 indicate that the program targets ultra-poor households and yields higher post-intervention incomes and greater asset accumulation than near-poor participants (Reyes et al. 2020; Corpus et al., 2019). Thus, the demographic profile of the respondents enhances the reliability of the study's findings, as it reflects data from participants deeply embedded in the local socioeconomic context, providing grounded, experience-based insights into program performance and outcomes.

Table 9. SLP Micro-enterprise in Terms of Seed Capital Fund

Indicators	Mean	SD	Verbal Description	Verbal Interpretation
1. The guidelines and requirements for availing the Seed Capital Fund were clearly explained.	3.93	0.25	Strongly Agree	The SLP is implemented excellently, with a few issues.
2. The process of applying for and accessing the Seed Capital Fund was fair and transparent.	3.91	0.28	Strongly Agree	The SLP is implemented excellently, with a few issues.
3. The release of the Seed Capital Fund was timely and well-coordinated.	3.91	0.28	Strongly Agree	The SLP is implemented excellently, with a few issues.
4. The amount provided was sufficient to start or expand a micro-enterprise.	3.67	0.63	Strongly Agree	The SLP is implemented excellently, with a few issues.
5. Monitoring and follow-up support were provided after receiving the Seed Capital Fund.	3.65	0.60	Strongly Agree	The SLP is implemented excellently, with a few issues.
General Mean	3.81	0.41	Strongly Agree	The SLP is implemented excellently, with a few issues.

Table 9 presents respondents' perceptions of the implementation of the Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP) Micro-Enterprise Development in relation to the Seed Capital Fund. Among the five indicators, the highest mean score was observed in the clarity of guidelines and requirements for accessing the Seed Capital Fund, with a mean of 3.93 and a standard deviation of 0.25. According to Orbeta et al. (2020), 91% of participants in the SLP's Microenterprise Development track formed associations after the explanation, resulting in higher initial compliance rates. In contrast, the lowest mean score was recorded for monitoring and follow-up support, at 3.65 with a standard deviation of 0.60. Although these indicators remained in the "Strongly Agree" category, they identify areas that could benefit from reform. According to Castillo and Mantillas (2024), while beneficiaries recognized the importance of monitoring, logistical barriers such as limited space and the absence of dedicated SLP offices hampered regular assessments, resulting in business closures due to poor oversight, implying a lack of follow-up. The general mean of 3.81 and standard deviation of 0.41 indicate that respondents believe the Seed Capital program is effectively implemented.

These findings indicate that the SLP micro-enterprise program successfully addressed procedural and operational barriers. The criteria and requirements are clearly understood and acquired by the beneficiaries. However, the lowest mean suggests that the monitoring and follow-up support, while excellently implemented, still presents some issues. This emphasizes that the program implementation has not been continuously monitored by the implementers**.** Pandey et al. (2019) emphasize that implementing livelihood programs at scale presents both opportunities and challenges, underscoring the importance of adequate monitoring systems and adaptive management approaches to ensure program effectiveness. This suggests that implementers should strengthen the program's post-implementation supervision and technical assistance.

Table 10. Economic Status in terms of Income and Financial Stability

Indicators	Mean	SD	Verbal Description
1. My income increased because of participating in the program.	3.65	0.60	Strongly Agree
2. I was able to manage my household finances more effectively.	3.70	0.47	Strongly Agree
3. The program helped me attain greater financial stability in supporting my family's needs.	3.54	0.69	Strongly Agree
4. I was able to set aside savings or emergency funds after joining the program.	3.54	0.69	Strongly Agree
5. The financial improvements gained from the program are sustainable over time.	3.50	0.72	Strongly Agree
General Mean	3.59	0.63	Strongly Agree

The data in Table 10 show the extent of the sustainable livelihood program's effects on beneficiaries, particularly regarding income and financial stability, as evaluated by respondents. Among the five indicators, the highest mean score was observed for "I was able to manage my household finances more effectively," with a mean of 3.70 and a standard deviation of 0.47, indicating strong agreement that the program excels in enhancing financial management skills among participants. According to Orbeta et al. (2020), substantial increases in household consumption expenditure and food security were attributable to improved financial planning skills among women beneficiaries, which they attributed to the program's seed capital fund, which encouraged better budgeting practices. Improved management alleviates cash flow difficulties.

On the other hand, the lowest mean score was in "The financial improvements gained from the program are sustainable over time" with a mean of 3.50 and a standard deviation of 0.72, suggesting that while immediate benefits are notable, perceptions of long-term sustainability remain slightly less robust. Orbeta et al. (2020) found that while overall household income had little effect, entrepreneurial components increased per individual, improving financial management through diverse streams. The General Mean of 3.59 and standard deviation of 0.63 reflect a strong verbal interpretation, indicating that the SLP is implemented excellently, with few issues or problems in this domain.

These findings emphasize that the program's implementation significantly affects beneficiaries' economic status, particularly income and financial stability. The highest mean indicators indicate that, with the program, the beneficiaries have been able to manage their household finances more effectively. However, the beneficiaries still face financial improvement problems as it has the lowest mean. This implies that some beneficiaries may still struggle with limited capital growth, unstable market conditions, or insufficient business profits despite receiving assistance. Bhoyar et al. (2025) investigated long-term outcomes and resilience in entrepreneurship education, finding that most participants rated training programs as well-equipped or well-prepared for business conditions. However, the study identified areas for development, including expanded practical experience through internships, enhanced experiential learning, and stronger mentorship components. This indicates the need for enhanced financial literacy training, ongoing mentorship, and stronger market linkages to ensure income gains are sustained over time.

Table 11. Economic Status in terms of Assets and Productive Capability

Indicators	Mean	SD	Verbal Description
1. I was able to acquire livelihood assets (tools, equipment, materials) through the program.	3.57	0.62	Strongly Agree
2. The assets I obtained were adequate to support my livelihood activities.	3.67	0.52	Strongly Agree

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3. These assets improved my capacity to produce goods or deliver services.	3.72	0.50	Strongly Agree
4. My business or livelihood became more productive and competitive because of the assets.	3.65	0.57	Strongly Agree
5. The assets provided contribute to long-term sustainability of my livelihood.	3.67	0.56	Strongly Agree
Overall Mean	3.66	0.55	Strongly Agree

Table 11 shows the extent of the sustainable livelihood program's benefits on recipients, particularly in terms of assets and productive capability, as assessed by respondents. Among the five indicators, the highest mean score was in "These assets improved my capacity to produce goods or deliver services" with a mean of 3.72 and a standard deviation of 0.50, indicating strong agreement that the provided assets directly improve production efficiency. According to Castillo & Mantillas (2024), while the availability of equipment increased output and supported livelihood sustainability, constraints in monitoring and training assessment limited long-term effects. The general mean of 3.66 and standard deviation of 0.56 indicate good agreement, confirming successful SLP implementation in improving productive capacities. These findings demonstrate how the SLP program influences beneficiaries' assets and productive capacity, enabling improved yields and better service quality in their livelihoods. Based on the highest mean indicators, the program has improved beneficiaries' capacity to produce goods or deliver services, with positive outcomes evident in program implementation. However, the findings also highlight the need for beneficiaries to acquire additional livelihood assets, such as tools, equipment, and materials..

Table 12. Economic Status in terms of Employment and Urban Market Participation

	Indicators	Mean	SD	Verbal Description
1.	The program provided me with access to new employment or livelihood opportunities.	3.61	0.61	Strongly Agree
2.	My livelihood became more stable after joining the program.	3.72	0.58	Strongly Agree
3.	The program improved my access to urban markets for selling my goods or services.	3.65	0.64	Strongly Agree
4.	I was able to actively participate in urban market activities (trade fairs, business linkages, etc.).	3.61	0.71	Strongly Agree
5.	The program created long-term opportunities for employment and market participation.	3.65	0.57	Strongly Agree
	General Mean	3.65	0.62	Strongly Agree

Table 12 shows the extent of the sustainable livelihood program's benefits on recipients, particularly in terms of employment and urban market involvement, based on respondent evaluations. Among the five variables, the highest mean score was for "My livelihood became more stable after joining the program," with a mean of 3.72 and a standard deviation of 0.58, indicating strong agreement with the benefits of SLP participation. In contrast, the lowest mean score was tied between "The program provided me with access to new employment or livelihood opportunities" and "I was able to actively participate in urban market activities" with a mean of 3.61 and standard deviation of 0.61, indicating marginally moderated access to new opportunities. According to the Department of Social Welfare and Development (2023), the lowest means for new opportunities and market participation reflect limitations such as transportation expenses or skill shortages, indicating the need for improved urban connectivity. The general mean score of 3.65 and standard deviation of 0.62 indicate great agreement, validating the SLP's excellent performance in this area.

These findings indicate that the SLP has the potential to be a cornerstone of inclusive growth, as it significantly influences beneficiaries' employment and urban market participation, as indicated by its mean. This emphasizes that the program improved the stability of the beneficiaries' livelihoods, reflecting a positive effect on program implementation. However, although the program has improved beneficiaries' livelihoods, participants show low participation in urban market activities such as trade fairs and business, with the lowest mean. The International

Labor Organization's research on employment trends in 58 nations indicated significant wage disparities between rural and urban workers, with rural workers earning 24% less than their urban counterparts on an hourly basis. These highlight the need to tackle systemic barriers that limit rural job prospects, rather than individual beneficiary capacities (Ananian & Dellaferrera, 2024). This suggests that while financial assistance and skills training have strengthened their productive capacity, there remains a need to enhance market access and external networking opportunities, including partnerships with local government units, private-sector stakeholders, and market facilitators.

Table 13. Summary of The Economic Status of the Beneficiaries

Indicators	Mean	SD	Verbal Description	Verbal Interpretation
1. Income and financial stability	3.59	0.63	Strongly Agree	The SLP has a significant effect on the Income and financial stability of the beneficiaries.
2. Assets and productive capability	3.66	0.55	Strongly Agree	The SLP has a significant effect on the beneficiaries' assets and productive capacity.
3. Employment and urban market participation	3.65	0.62	Strongly Agree	The SLP has a significant effect on beneficiaries' employment and participation in the urban market.
General Mean	3.63	0.60	Strongly Agree	The SLP has a significant effect on the Economic status of the beneficiaries.

Table 13 presents a summary of the extent of SLP on the economic status of the beneficiaries, with the highest mean in assets and productive capability, with a mean of 3.66 and standard deviation of 0.55, and the lowest in income and financial stability, with a mean of 3.59 and standard deviation of 0.63. The general mean of 3.65 and standard deviation of 0.60 indicate that the SLP is implemented excellently, with no major issues, and has strong positive impacts on beneficiaries' economic status through enhanced asset-building and income-stabilization efforts. The highest mean in assets and productive capability demonstrates the SLP's strong success in providing beneficiaries with critical resources such as tools, livestock, and equipment. The development track led to large increases in capital assets and productive investments, as well as persistent benefits for entrepreneurial output, despite problems with group-based scaling (Orbeta et al., 2020). The lowest mean income and financial stability indicate gaps in converting assets into consistent cash flows, most likely due to market obstacles or a lack of financial skills, underscoring the need for bundled interventions, such as savings training and market linkages, to prevent relapse into poverty. SLP pilots and asset gains exceeded income stability in the short run among vulnerable groups, owing to external shocks, suggesting the need for integrated financial services for holistic empowerment (Acosta & Avalos, 2018). These findings suggest that SLP implementers should prioritize complementary financial mechanisms to fully realize economic empowerment and to improve beneficiary economic status.

Table 14. Social Living in Terms of Community Engagement and Leadership

	Indicators	Mean	SD	Verbal Description
1.	The program encouraged me to take part in community activities.	3.70	0.59	Strongly Agree
2.	I became more confident in assuming leadership roles in the community.	3.65	0.64	Strongly Agree
3.	The program strengthened my sense of responsibility as a community member.	3.76	0.43	Strongly Agree

	Indicators	Mean	SD	Verbal Description
4.	I actively contributed to decision-making and planning in community projects.	3.78	0.55	Strongly Agree
5.	The program developed my skills in managing and leading group initiatives.	3.72	0.54	Strongly Agree
	General Mean	3.72	0.55	Strongly Agree

Table 14 shows the social and livelihood impacts of the sustainable livelihood program (SLP) on beneficiaries, including community engagement and leadership. Among the five indicators assessed, the highest mean score was observed for "I actively contributed to decision-making and planning in community projects," with a mean of 3.78, indicating strong beneficiary involvement in community governance. On the other hand, the lowest was "I became more confident in assuming leadership roles in the community" with a mean of 3.65, indicating room for targeted confidence-building. According to Acosta and Avalos (2018), the social preparation stage significantly increased community engagement by organizing beneficiaries into formal associations, providing skill development opportunities, and strengthening leadership through structured capacity-building interventions.

These findings emphasize that while the SLP improves recipients' participatory roles, further leadership training may be required to fully empower them. Booth et al. (2024) highlight that livelihood programs that address economic constraints may enhance political participation by reducing the opportunity costs of voting and improving a sense of political efficacy. This implies that while beneficiaries participate in group activities, they may lack the skills, experience, or support needed to take initiative and lead projects independently, highlighting a vital area for program improvement and targeted interventions to strengthen leadership capability.

Table 15. Social Living in Terms of Social Networks

	Indicators	Mean	SD	Verbal Description
1.	The program helped me build stronger connections with other beneficiaries.	3.78	0.42	Strongly Agree
2.	I developed new friendships and support systems through the program.	3.80	0.40	Strongly Agree
3.	The program expanded my network for livelihood and business opportunities.	3.72	0.50	Strongly Agree
4.	I feel more socially included because of the program.	3.83	0.38	Strongly Agree
5.	The program enhanced cooperation and unity among community members.	3.74	0.49	Strongly Agree
	Overall Mean	3.77	0.44	Strongly Agree

Table 15 shows the social-living impact of the sustainable livelihood program (SLP) on beneficiaries in terms of the social network. Among the five indicators assessed, the highest mean score was "I feel more socially included because of the program," with a mean of 3.83 and a standard deviation of 0.38, showing significant inclusion benefits. According to Petallo (2024), SLP implementation resulted in major socioeconomic benefits, including improved social networks that enabled users to share resources, knowledge, and market access for microenterprises. The lowest is "The program expanded my network for livelihood and business opportunities" with a mean of 3.72 and a standard deviation of 0.50, indicating solid but somewhat less robust economic networking. According to Shelton et al. (2022), focused programs improve interpersonal cooperation but struggle to scale business networking due to external social impediments, reflecting SLP's pattern and supporting adaptive measures such as digital integration. This suggests the need for governmental changes to improve these indicators, ensuring that SLP not only generates social capital but also catalyzes meaningful economic mobility and long-term community sustainability. The general mean of 3.77 and standard deviation of 0.44 indicate great agreement, implying effective program execution.

This finding emphasizes that the SLP has a significant effect on respondents' social lives, particularly regarding Social Networks, as the general mean indicates strong agreement among beneficiaries. Xu et al. (2024) investigated reciprocal interactions across social capital dimensions in 30 nations, discovering that generalized trust, or the idea that most people can be trusted, supported the growth of weak social links that enable access to new information and possibilities. This suggests that while the SLP effectively promotes social cohesion and engagement, it may need to incorporate strategies that foster broader networking and connection-building to maximize economic and social benefits for the participants.

Table 16. Social Living in Terms of Civil and Political Participation

Indicators	Mean	SD	Verbal Description
1. The program motivated me to participate in barangay or community assemblies.	3.78	0.42	Strongly Agree
2. I became more aware of my rights and responsibilities as a citizen.	3.83	0.38	Strongly Agree
3. I engaged more in civic activities such as clean-ups, campaigns, or local projects.	3.76	0.43	Strongly Agree
4. The program encouraged me to participate in political or governance-related discussions.	3.67	0.56	Strongly Agree
5. The program strengthened my confidence to express opinions on community and political issues.	3.67	0.60	Strongly Agree
General Mean	3.74	0.48	Strongly Agree

Table 16 shows the social and living impact of the Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP) on beneficiaries in terms of civil and political participation. Among the five indicators assessed, the highest mean score was "I became more aware of my rights and responsibilities as a citizen" with a mean of 3.83 and a standard deviation of 0.38, indicating excellent implementation without major issues. According to Orbeta et al. (2019), the preparatory stages of SLP significantly improved civil participation indicators, participants reporting increased awareness of citizen rights via Livelihood Assets and Market Maps (LAMM), which contextualized household roles in municipal development. This pinnacle score highlights SLP's achievement in raising civic consciousness, most likely due to its structured capacity-building phases, which include orientations on government and community roles and empower previously marginalized individuals to recognize their agency in local affairs.

In contrast, the lowest means are tied at 3.67, and the standard deviation of 0.56 and 0.60, for both "The program encouraged me to participate in political or governance-related discussions" and "The program strengthened my confidence to express opinions on community and political issues", indicating relative reluctance in overt political expression despite larger gains. According to Romano et al. (2022), improved livelihood stability appears to increase respondents' awareness of their rights and obligations, as well as their willingness to participate in governance-related conversations and community actions. These findings demonstrate SLP as a catalyst for social mobilization, reducing vulnerability by integrating beneficiaries into the governance structure. These findings imply that the program significantly affects beneficiaries' civil and political participation, as reflected in the strong overall agreement among respondents. Booth et al. (2024) emphasize that voting behavior varies substantially by socioeconomic status, with lower-income populations showing lower turnout rates. However, livelihood programs that address economic constraints may enhance political participation by reducing the opportunity costs of voting and improving political efficacy.

Table 17. Summary of the social-living effect of the SLP

Indicators	Mean	SD	Verbal Description	Verbal Interpretation
1. Community engagement and leadership	3.59	0.63	Strongly Agree	The SLP has a significant effect on the social living of the beneficiaries, specifically in terms of Community engagement and leadership
2. Social networks	3.66	0.55	Strongly Agree	The SLP has a significant effect on the social living of the beneficiaries, specifically in terms of social networks
3. Civil and political participation	3.65	0.62	Strongly Agree	The SLP has a significant effect on the social living of the beneficiaries, specifically in terms of Civil and political participation
General Mean	3.63	0.60	Strongly Agree	The SLP has a significant effect on the beneficiaries' social lives.

Table 17 presents a summary of the Social-living effect of the SLP on the beneficiaries. It shows social networks with the highest mean of 3.66, indicating that recipients strongly agree that the program has improved their interpersonal ties and support systems. According to Acosta and Avalos (2018), micro-enterprise development tracks significantly increased beneficiary associations and linkages, resulting in long-term social cohesion beyond initial grants, as participants formed self-sustaining groups for ongoing collaboration. This superior outcome implies that SLP effectively builds relational capital, enabling mutual aid, information sharing, and resilience against economic shocks in vulnerable Philippine communities, with implications for policy scaling to prioritize network-strengthening modalities like group-based micro-enterprises.

In contrast, community engagement and leadership had the lowest mean 3.59, indicating relative implementation deficiencies such as minimal training or participatory processes that dampen leadership emergence despite overall quality. According to Orbeta et al. (2020), inadequate post-grant mentoring leads to lower leadership outcomes, with only partial increases in community roles compared to network extension, suggesting increased facilitation to overcome these gaps. It entails improving SLP frameworks for participatory decision-making, potentially increasing beneficiary agency and program ownership, and aligning with national development goals. These suggest that SLP's strength in relationship bonding highlights potential to strengthen leadership routes, ultimately driving DSWD toward more comprehensive program modifications for long-term social-living benefits.

Table 18. Significant Difference in the SLP Economic Effects by Age Group

Age	N	Mean	SD	df	F	p	interpretation
60-75 y/o	13	3.48	0.58				
31-50 y/o	20	3.68	0.45	42	0.62	0.60	not significant
51-59 y/o	9	3.70	0.44				
16-30 y/o	4	3.72	0.26				

Table 18 shows significant differences in the program's economic effects by beneficiaries' age. The estimated test statistic of 0.62, with a corresponding p-value of 0.60, indicates that the perceived efficacy of the Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP) does not differ significantly across age groups. This shows that beneficiaries, regardless of age, have similar experiences and perceptions of the program's economic advantages. The findings imply that the SLP offers its members fair access to economic opportunities such as revenue-generating activities, skill training, and financial support.

This finding aligns with the Sustainable Livelihood Framework, highlighting that access to livelihood capitals, financial, human, and social, can enhance economic conditions for individuals across demographics (Serrat, 2017). Studies by Banerjee et al. (2015) and Blattman et al. (2016) indicate that well-implemented livelihood interventions yield consistent economic outcomes among diverse groups. The program's integrated design, combining financial aid, skills training, and support services, contributes to these uniform benefits. However, although no significant differences were noted, individual variations may persist due to differences in adaptability and resource access among age groups. Onyeyirichi et al. (2025) emphasize that socioeconomic factors impact how individuals leverage program benefits.

Table 19. Significant Difference in the SLP Economic Effects by Sex

Sex	N	Mean	SD	df	F	p	interpretation
F	33	3.61	0.48	44	-0.46	0.65	not significant
M	13	3.68	0.47				

Table 19 shows the significant difference of economic outcomes from the Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP) based on beneficiary sex. The test statistic of -0.46 and a p-value of 0.65 indicate no significant difference in effectiveness between male and female participants, suggesting that both genders achieve similar economic benefits.

This aligns with the Sustainable Livelihood Framework, which asserts that access to various livelihood capitals can enhance economic conditions irrespective of demographic factors (Serrat, 2017). Research by Banerjee et al. (2015) and Blattman et al. (2016) further supports the notion that effective livelihood interventions yield comparable economic outcomes across demographics when implemented comprehensively. Despite the absence of significant gender differences, the literature emphasizes that gender roles may influence program engagement and that livelihood programs can impact empowerment differently for men and women depending on the context (Romano et al., 2022). Therefore, while the SLP demonstrates inclusivity, enhancing gender-responsive strategies could optimize its economic benefits further.

Table 20. Significant Difference in the SLP Economic Effects by the Household Size

Household Size	N	Mean	SD	df	F	p	interpretation
5-6 Persons	13	3.76	0.35				
3-4 Persons	24	3.46	0.54	42	2.50	0.07	not significant
1-2 Persons	6	3.83	0.26				
7-8 Persons	3	4	0				

Table 20 highlights the economic effects of the Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP), noting no significant difference in effectiveness across household-size categories, as indicated by a test statistic of 2.50 and a p-value of 0.07. This shows that participants from both small and large households perceive similar economic impacts, with the program providing consistent livelihood support irrespective of household composition.

The findings align with the Sustainable Livelihood Framework, which posits that various forms of capital, rather than household size, determine livelihood outcomes. Research by Banerjee et al. (2015) and Blattman et al. (2016) reinforces this, indicating that effective livelihood interventions yield comparable benefits across diverse household contexts. Although the analysis reveals no significant differences, the p-value's proximity to the significance threshold suggests potential effects of household size on resource allocation and economic stress.

Table 21. Significant Difference in the SLP Economic Effects by the Baseline Income

Baseline Income	N	Mean	SD	df	F	p	interpretation
11,000-15,000	2	3.73	0.38	44	0.31	0.76	not significant
5,000-10,000	44	3.63	0.48				

Table 21 reveals no significant difference in the economic effects of the Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP) across baseline income levels, as indicated by a test statistic of 0.31 and a p-value of 0.76. This suggests that participants experience similar outcomes regardless of their initial income, supporting the notion that the program provides uniform support for livelihood opportunities, financial aid, and capacity-building.

The findings align with the Sustainable Livelihood Framework, highlighting the importance of access to assets and opportunities over initial income status (Serrat, 2017). Previous research by Banerjee et al. (2015) and Blattman et al. (2016) corroborates that well-structured livelihood programs can yield similar economic benefits across various poverty levels. However, baseline income may still affect resource utilization and the sustainability of livelihood activities, suggesting that enhancing post-program support, such as mentoring and enterprise monitoring, could improve long-term outcomes for beneficiaries.

Table 22. Significant Difference in the SLP Social Living Effects by Age Group

Age	N	Mean	SD	df	F	p	interpretation
60-75 y/o	13	3.69	0.41				
31-50 y/o	20	3.72	0.40	42	0.54	0.66	not significant
51-59 y/o	9	3.88	0.33				
16-30 y/o	4	3.78	0.22				

Table 22 reveals no significant differences in the program's social living effects across age groups. Since the p-value exceeds the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis is not rejected, indicating that age does not influence beneficiaries' perceptions of the program’s social living effects. This implies that the Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP) delivers its benefits consistently across different age groups, allowing both younger and older participants to experience similar improvements in their social living conditions

A study by Serrat (2017) emphasizes that these programs are designed to build multiple forms of capital, human, social, and financial, which are accessible to all individuals. Moreover, the study of Naganag (2022) emphasized that SLP interventions focus on capacity-building and access to opportunities rather than demographic distinctions. This may explain why age does not significantly affect outcomes, as the program’s structure allows beneficiaries across different life stages to benefit equally from livelihood support and training.

Table 23. Significant Difference in the SLP Social Living Effects by Sex

Sex	N	Mean	SD	df	F	p	interpretation
F	33	3.70	0.40	44	-1.39	0.17	not significant
M	13	3.87	0.28				

Table 23 reveals no significant differences in the program's social living effects when beneficiaries are grouped by sex. Since the p-value exceeds 0.05, the null hypothesis is not rejected, meaning that male and female

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beneficiaries experience similar outcomes from the program. This suggests that the SLP effectively promotes gender equality, ensuring that both sexes benefit equally from livelihood opportunities and social support.

This finding aligns with the Sustainable Livelihood Approach, which emphasizes equitable access to resources and participation regardless of gender (Serrat, 2017). Additionally, Elkhayma (2018) notes that community-based livelihood programs are designed to reduce gender disparities by providing equal opportunities for economic engagement. As a result, both male and female beneficiaries can achieve comparable improvements in their social living conditions.

Table 24. Significant Difference in the SLP Social Living Effects by Household Size

Household Size	N	Mean	SD	df	F	p	interpretation
5-6 Persons	13	3.80	0.38				
3-4 Persons	24	3.66	0.41	42	1.19	0.33	not significant
1-2 Persons	6	3.86	0.23				
7-8 Persons	3	4	0				

Table 24 reveals no significant differences in the program's social living effects across household-size groups. Since the p-value is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis is not rejected, indicating that household size does not significantly influence beneficiaries' perceptions of the program's effects.

This suggests that the SLP is effective in addressing beneficiaries' needs regardless of family size. Whether individuals belong to small or large households, the program appears to provide comparable levels of social and economic support. This may be attributed to the program's focus on strengthening financial and human capital, which benefits individuals directly and can extend to their households. According to the Sustainable Livelihood Framework, livelihood interventions aim to enhance resilience and well-being at both the individual and household levels (Serrat, 2017). Since these benefits are not strictly dependent on the number of household members, this explains why household size does not create significant variation in perceived outcomes.

Table 25. Significant Difference in the SLP Social Living Effects by Baseline Income

Baseline Income	N	Mean	SD	df	F	p	interpretation
11,000-15,000	2	3.73	0.38	44	-0.05	0.96	not significant
5,000-10,000	44	3.75	0.38				

Table 25 reveals no significant differences in the program's social living effects when beneficiaries are grouped by baseline income. Since the p-value is significantly higher than 0.05, the null hypothesis is not rejected, indicating that beneficiaries experience similar outcomes regardless of their initial income levels. This implies that the SLP provides equitable benefits, effectively minimizing disparities among participants from different economic backgrounds.

This result is consistent with the primary objective of Sustainable Livelihood Programs, which is to reduce poverty and improve economic resilience among marginalized sectors (Naganag, 2022). By providing access to livelihood opportunities, skills training, and financial support, the program enables beneficiaries to improve their social living conditions regardless of their starting point. Furthermore, Serrat (2017) emphasized that livelihood interventions aim to create sustainable income sources that benefit all participants equally.

ISSN No. 2454-6186 | DOI: 10.47772/IJRISS | Volume X Issue VI June 2026

Table 26. Correlation between Micro-enterprise Development (MD) and Economic effect to the Beneficiaries of the Sustainable Livelihood Program

Variables	Correlation Coefficient (r)	P-value	Decision
Micro-enterprise Development (MD)			
Economic Effect	0.788	< .001	There is a significant relationship between Micro-enterprise Development (MD) and the economic impact on the SLP's Beneficiaries.

Table 26 shows a strong positive correlation between Micro-enterprise Development (MD) and Economic Effect among SLP beneficiaries. The table indicates a significant positive association between Micro-enterprise Development (MD) and Economic Effect among SLP beneficiaries, suggesting that the program was implemented effectively and with minimal difficulty. This correlation coefficient suggests that investments in microenterprise growth yield significant economic benefits for beneficiaries, including increased income and greater financial stability. The p-value of .001 confirms statistical significance; the researchers reject the null hypothesis. According to Blattman et al. (2016), cash grants combined with skills training and mentoring significantly improved business income and economic outcomes among beneficiaries. Similarly, Banerjee et al. (2015) concluded that comprehensive livelihood interventions produce long-term improvements in consumption, assets, and financial inclusion. This suggests that both variables are significantly related.

Table 27. Correlation between Micro-enterprise Development (MD) and Social-living Effect on the Sustainable Livelihood Program

Variables	Correlation Coefficient (r)	P-value	Verbal Interpretation
Micro-enterprise Development (MD)			
Social-Living Effect	0.618	< .001	There is a significant relationship between Micro-enterprise Development (MD) and Social Living, affecting the Beneficiaries of the SLP.

Table 27 shows a strong positive relationship between Micro-enterprise Development (MD) and the Social-Living Effect within the Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP), implying that improvements in micro-enterprise activities significantly improve social-living outcomes such as household stability and community well-being. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between MD and the Social-Living Effect. The strong correlation coefficient suggests that as micro-enterprise development progresses through training, capital availability, and market linkages, social-living effects such as improved nutrition, housing, and family cohesion increase in proportion. According to Romano et al. (2022), livelihood interventions promoted empowerment, stability, and improved well-being among beneficiaries. Similarly, Scoones (1998) and Nath et al. (2025) emphasized that livelihood programs addressing both social and economic dimensions produce stronger and more sustainable outcomes. These findings suggest that effective microenterprise interventions increase social capital, family stability, and improve living standards among low-income beneficiaries, which is consistent with the positive r=0.618 correlation found here.

Table 28. Issues and Concerns in the SLP Implementation

Statements		Frequency	Percent
1.	Insufficient Seed Capital Funding	14	30.47%
2.	Lack of Market Access for Product Services	11	23.91%
3.	Lack of Materials, Facilities, Equipment	9	19.57%
4.	Limited Access to Skills Training And Seminars	7	15.22%
5.	Weak Monitoring and Follow-Up Support from Program	5	10.80%
Total		**46**	**100.0**%

Table 28 shows data from 46 respondents on challenges and concerns regarding SLP adoption, with frequencies and percentages indicating perceived impediments. Table 15 shows data from 46 respondents on challenges and concerns regarding SLP adoption, with frequencies and percentages indicating perceived impediments. The findings revealed that insufficient seed funding was the most commonly mentioned obstacle (30.43%), indicating that it is a significant constraint. In contrast, the program's weak monitoring and follow-up support was rated the least (10.87%), indicating a problem. This suggests that, while program oversight is viewed as less of a limitation, financial assistance remains the most important factor impacting beneficiary participation and success. According to Ballesteros et al. (2017), many beneficiaries reported a seamless initial rollout due to improved policy rules for targeting and project approval, with 50-60% reporting no major impediments in the early stages. These findings suggest that the program must focus on micro-enterprise investments to translate satisfaction into durable poverty reduction, avoiding the trap in which initial ease masks future failures across varied circumstances.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study entitled "Demographic Profile and The Perceived Effectiveness of the Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP) of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) in Microenterprise Development" the following conclusions were drawn:

1. The beneficiaries of the Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP) were predominantly female, aged 31–50 years old, belonged to households with three to four members, and had baseline monthly incomes ranging from ₱5,000 to ₱10,000. These indicates that the program primarily serves economically vulnerable households within the study area.
2. The implementation of the SLP Microenterprise Development track, particularly the Seed Capital Fund modality, was perceived positively by the beneficiaries. Respondents strongly agreed that the guidelines, requirements, and procedures for availing of the program were clear and properly communicated.
3. Beneficiaries generally perceived that the SLP contributed positively to their economic well-being. Among the economic dimensions assessed, assets and productive capability received the highest ratings, suggesting that the program helped improve beneficiaries' capacity to conduct livelihood activities and enhance productivity.
4. Beneficiaries also perceived positive social-living effects from the program. Social networks obtained the highest ratings, indicating that participation in the program strengthened relationships, cooperation, and support systems among beneficiaries and community members.
5. No statistically significant differences were found in the perceived economic effects of the program when beneficiaries were grouped according to age, sex, household size, and baseline income.
6. Likewise, no statistically significant differences were found in the perceived social-living effects of the program when beneficiaries were grouped according to age, sex, household size, and baseline income. The findings indicate that beneficiaries shared generally similar views regarding the program's social impacts regardless of their demographic characteristics.

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7. A significant positive relationship was found between Microenterprise Development and the economic effects experienced by the beneficiaries.
8. A significant positive relationship was also found between Microenterprise Development and the social-living effects experienced by the beneficiaries. This indicates that stronger microenterprise development was associated with better perceived social outcomes among program participants.
9. Insufficient Seed Capital Fund allocation emerged as the most frequently identified concern among beneficiaries. Although the program was generally viewed positively, respondents indicated that limited funding may constrain business expansion and long-term sustainability.
10. While the findings provide valuable insights into the perceived effectiveness of the SLP, they should be interpreted within the context of the study's limitations, particularly the relatively small sample size and the focus on beneficiaries from only two municipalities. Therefore, caution should be exercised in generalizing the results to other settings and populations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study's findings, the following recommendations are proposed to further strengthen the implementation and sustainability of the Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP) Micro-Enterprise Development in Norala and Sto. Niño, South Cotabato.

1. The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), in partnership with Local Government Units (LGUs), may develop youth-focused livelihood interventions such as digital entrepreneurship training, business incubation programs, and skills development initiatives to encourage greater participation among younger individuals, who represented the least participating age group.
2. Program implementers may strengthen post-funding monitoring and technical assistance through regular site visits, mentoring activities, progress assessments, and barangay-level monitoring mechanisms to improve enterprise sustainability and address emerging business challenges.
3. The SLP may enhance financial literacy programs by incorporating training on budgeting, savings, investment, risk management, and financial planning to help beneficiaries sustain and maximize the gains derived from the program.
4. DSWD may explore opportunities to increase or supplement Seed Capital Fund assistance and identify additional financing mechanisms that can support business expansion and improve long-term enterprise viability.
5. The program may strengthen market linkage initiatives through trade fairs, business matching activities, cooperative partnerships, digital marketing opportunities, and collaborations with private-sector organizations to improve beneficiaries’ access to larger markets.
6. Capacity-building activities focusing on leadership development, organizational management, and community participation may be enhanced to encourage beneficiaries to take more active roles in community decision-making and local development initiatives.
7. Implementers may establish stronger networking platforms among beneficiaries, cooperatives, community organizations, and business groups to transform social connections into sustainable economic opportunities.
8. Civic education and community engagement activities may be integrated into program implementation to further strengthen beneficiaries’ awareness of their rights, responsibilities, and participation in local governance processes.
9. Future program interventions may consider broader household and family-related factors, including family structure, dependency ratio, educational attainment, and employment status, to better understand the diverse circumstances affecting livelihood outcomes.
10. Future researchers may conduct longitudinal studies to examine the long-term effects of the Sustainable Livelihood Program on beneficiaries’ economic stability, enterprise sustainability, and social well-being.
11. Future studies are encouraged to utilize larger and more diverse samples from different municipalities, provinces, and demographic groups to improve the generalizability of findings and provide a more comprehensive assessment of the program’s effectiveness across various social and family contexts.

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