

# Internal Control Systems and Non-Financial Performance of Micro and Small Enterprises: Evidence from the Quezon City, Philippines

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## Abstract

This study examines the relationship between internal control systems and non-financial performance among micro and small enterprises in the Philippines. Using the Committee of Sponsoring Organizations (COSO) framework, the research explores how internal control components—control environment, risk assessment, control activities, information and communication, and monitoring—contribute to addressing operational inefficiencies commonly observed in small businesses.

A quantitative descriptive-correlational research design was employed. Data were collected through a structured survey questionnaire administered to 56 owners and/or managers of micro and small enterprises. Statistical tools, including weighted mean and Pearson correlation analysis, were used to evaluate the level of implementation of internal control systems and their relationship to non-financial performance indicators, namely external stakeholder management, employee-related measures, and internal process efficiency.

The findings indicate that internal control systems are generally highly implemented across the surveyed enterprises, with particular strength in control activities and monitoring mechanisms. Non-financial performance was also rated highly, especially in terms of process efficiency. Correlation analysis revealed a positive and significant relationship between internal control implementation and non-financial performance, suggesting that stronger internal control systems contribute to improved operational effectiveness and business sustainability.

The results underscore the importance of enhancing internal control mechanisms in micro and small enterprises to improve service delivery, ensure regulatory compliance, and support long-term operational sustainability. The study contributes to the growing body of literature on internal control in small businesses and provides practical insights for enterprise owners, policymakers, and management practitioners.

**Keywords:** Internal Control Systems; Non-Financial Performance; Micro and Small Enterprises; COSO Framework; Service Industry; Stakeholder Management; Employee Performance; Process Efficiency

## 1. Introduction

In today's dynamic economic landscape, micro and small enterprises (MSEs) play a vital role in promoting innovation, supporting development, and driving economic growth, particularly in emerging economies. In the Philippines, MSEs constitute approximately 99.25% of all registered enterprises, totaling 1,237,070 businesses, and account for around 60.20% of total employment (Department of Trade and Industry, 2023). As such, these enterprises significantly contribute to poverty reduction by generating employment opportunities and fostering entrepreneurial activities within local communities. Through the provision of essential goods and services, MSEs serve as fundamental drivers of economic activity both locally and nationally.

Despite their critical importance, many small-scale service enterprises continue to operate without adequately established internal control systems. In particular, such businesses often rely on basic operational practices, including informal performance assessments, customer service routines, and time tracking mechanisms, without sufficient verification processes, monitoring systems, authorization controls, or physical safeguards. This lack of structured controls exposes enterprises to operational inefficiencies and potential resource losses. Moreover, internal controls are essential in managing non-financial aspects of performance, including operational efficiency, employee management, service quality, and customer satisfaction. The absence of robust control mechanisms can negatively affect organizational performance, credibility, and stability, thereby increasing the likelihood of issues such as customer dissatisfaction and inefficient resource utilization. Consequently, evaluating internal control practices provides valuable insights into how MSEs manage risks, optimize resources, and enhance operational resilience.

For micro and small enterprises operating within a rapidly evolving local economy, the establishment of strong internal control systems is not merely an operational necessity but a strategic imperative for long-term sustainability. Service-oriented enterprises, particularly those involving frequent customer interactions and reliance on workforce compliance with procedures, are naturally exposed to various non-financial risks. Weaknesses in internal controls—such as inadequate supervision, inefficient processes, or poor communication systems—can lead to service delays, inconsistent quality, operational errors, and increased customer complaints. These shortcomings not only disrupt routine operations but also threaten business reputation and customer retention. Compared to larger organizations, MSEs are more susceptible to the adverse non-financial impacts of ineffective controls, including declining employee morale, reduced reliability of services, and weaker stakeholder relationships. Supporting this perspective, Nguyen et al. (2023) highlight that effective implementation of internal control components—such as control environment, risk assessment, control activities, and information and communication—significantly enhances non-financial performance by improving efficiency, employee satisfaction, compliance, and overall service quality. Thus, strengthening internal control systems is crucial not only for addressing operational challenges but also for ensuring sustained organizational credibility and performance.

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to addressing the limited body of research on internal control and non-financial performance within micro and small enterprises, particularly in a localized context. Although prior studies have explored these variables in broader settings, there remains a lack of research focusing on the unique conditions and challenges faced by MSEs in specific regions. This study

emphasizes the need to examine how MSEs implement internal control practices and sustain operational effectiveness within their specific economic environment.

Overall, this research seeks to contribute to existing literature by analyzing internal control practices and their influence on non-financial performance among micro and small enterprises. By investigating the specific control mechanisms adopted, the study aims to provide empirical evidence that can guide business owners, policymakers, and stakeholders in developing practical strategies to enhance resource management, operational efficiency, and long-term sustainability. Ultimately, the findings are expected to support enterprise owners in strengthening their internal control systems, improving resource utilization, and contributing to the development of a more resilient and transparent MSE sector, not only in the local context but also in similar settings globally.

### **Theoretical Framework of the Study**

This study is grounded in three complementary theoretical perspectives that explain how internal control systems influence non-financial performance in micro and small enterprises in Quezon City, Philippines: the COSO Internal Control Framework, Fraud Triangle Theory, and Agency Theory. Together, these frameworks provide structural, behavioral, and relational explanations of organizational performance beyond financial outcomes.

### **COSO Internal Control Framework**

According to COSO (2020), internal control is a process implemented by management and personnel to provide reasonable assurance in achieving operational, reporting, and compliance objectives. The framework identifies five interrelated components: control environment, risk assessment, control activities, information and communication, and monitoring. These components collectively support accountability, efficiency, and compliance within organizations. In the context of micro and small enterprises, the effective implementation of these elements enhances operational processes, improves communication flows, and ensures continuous performance monitoring, thereby strengthening non-financial outcomes such as service quality, employee coordination, and stakeholder relations.

### **Fraud Triangle Theory**

Fraud Triangle Theory developed by Cressey explains the behavioral conditions that may weaken organizational performance. The theory posits that misconduct occurs when pressure, opportunity, and rationalization coexist. In small enterprises, operational pressures, weak supervision, and unclear policies can create conditions that lead to inefficiencies, errors, and misuse of resources. Strong internal control systems help mitigate these risks by reducing opportunities for misconduct, reinforcing ethical behavior, and establishing clear procedures. As a result, internal controls play a significant role in improving operational reliability, employee performance, and stakeholder trust.

### **Agency Theory**

Using this theory it provides a relational perspective by explaining the dynamics between business owners (principals) and employees (agents). In micro and small enterprises, owners often delegate critical tasks to employees, creating potential conflicts of interest and inefficiencies. Internal control systems serve as governance mechanisms that align employee actions with organizational objectives through clear policies,

defined responsibilities, and monitoring systems. By reducing agency problems, internal controls contribute to improved accountability, operational consistency, and overall non-financial performance. In summary, the integration of these theories provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how internal control systems influence non-financial performance. The COSO framework explains the structural components of control systems, the Fraud Triangle Theory highlights behavioral risks associated with weak controls, and Agency Theory emphasizes the importance of aligning organizational roles and responsibilities. Collectively, these perspectives support the argument that strong internal control systems are essential for enhancing efficiency, employee effectiveness, and stakeholder relationships in micro and small enterprises.

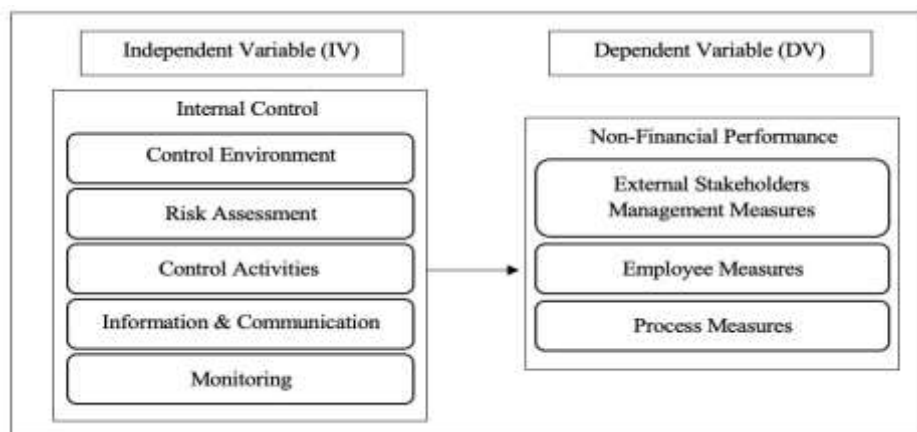
### Statement of the Problem

Micro and small enterprises frequently encounter operational challenges and financial losses when they lack well-established internal control systems (Igbojiyibo, 2024). This deficiency may adversely affect the sustainability and overall non-financial performance of enterprises, particularly in service-oriented businesses.

In this context, the present study aims to examine internal control practices and their relationship with non-financial performance among micro and small enterprises in Quezon City, Philippines, Philippines. Specifically, it seeks to address the following research questions:

1. How do general managers and/or owners perceive the implementation of internal control systems in micro and small enterprises in Quezon City, Philippines, Philippines in terms of:
  - 1.1 Control Environment
  - 1.2 Risk Assessment
  - 1.3 Control Activities
  - 1.4 Information and Communication
  - 1.5 Monitoring Activities
2. How do general managers and/or owners assess the non-financial performance of micro and small enterprises in Quezon City, Philippines, Philippines with respect to:
  - 2.1 External Stakeholder Management
  - 2.2 Employee-Related Measures
  - 2.3 Internal Process Efficiency
3. Is there a significant relationship between the level of internal control implementation and the non-financial performance of micro and small enterprises in Quezon City, Philippines, Philippines?

### Conceptual Framework



This conceptual framework illustrates the relationship between internal control and non-financial performance among micro and small enterprises in Bulacan. Internal control serves as the independent variable, consisting of control environment, risk assessment, control activities, information and communication, and monitoring, while non-financial performance is the dependent variable, measured through external stakeholder management, employee measures, and process efficiency.

The framework assumes that stronger internal control systems lead to improved non-financial performance. Effective controls enhance risk management, operational consistency, communication, and monitoring, which contribute to better stakeholder relationships, higher employee productivity, and more efficient processes.

Non-financial performance is evaluated through indicators such as customer satisfaction and retention, employee productivity and reliability, and operational efficiency measures, including response time, service accuracy, and error rates. These measurable indicators provide a basis for analyzing how internal control systems influence overall business performance.

## 2.0 MATERIAL AND METHODS

### Internal Control Systems

Internal control refers to a structured system of policies, procedures, and practices designed to ensure efficient operations, safeguard resources, and ensure compliance with rules and regulations. According to the Committee of Sponsoring Organizations of the Treadway Commission (COSO, 2020), internal control systems support organizational effectiveness by preventing unauthorized activities, minimizing inefficiencies, and promoting accountability. The COSO framework identifies five core components: control environment, risk assessment, control activities, information and communication, and monitoring. These components provide a systematic approach that enables micro and small enterprises (MSEs) to strengthen operational efficiency and overall organizational performance.

The control environment serves as the foundation of internal control systems by establishing organizational values, ethical standards, and accountability structures. In many small enterprises, owner-managed operations often result in limited segregation of duties, which may lead to unclear responsibilities and inefficiencies. COSO (2020) emphasizes that a strong control environment promotes discipline and ethical behavior, while Çika (2022) highlights the importance of formal policies and supervision in reinforcing accountability and consistency in operations.

Risk assessment involves identifying and evaluating potential risks that may affect business operations. In many small enterprises, risk management is often reactive rather than proactive. Çika (2022) and Dvorsky et al. (2021) note that enterprises that regularly assess internal and external risks are better able to maintain operational stability and sustain long-term performance. Effective risk assessment allows businesses to anticipate operational challenges, implement corrective actions, and maintain service continuity.

Control activities include procedures such as approvals, verifications, and monitoring mechanisms that ensure tasks are performed correctly. COSO (2020) explains that effective control activities reduce operational errors, improve process efficiency, and support service consistency. However, in many small businesses, these controls are informal, leading to inconsistencies and inefficiencies in daily operations.

Information and communication are essential in ensuring that relevant data are properly conveyed within the organization. AuditBoard (2023) and CBH (2024) emphasize that clear and timely communication improves coordination, reduces misunderstandings, and enhances accountability among employees.

Nguyen and Le-Anh (2021) further highlight that effective communication systems contribute to improved employee performance and service quality.

Monitoring activities ensure that internal control systems remain effective over time. Regular supervision, performance reviews, and internal checks enable enterprises to detect operational issues early and implement timely corrective actions. Cohen et al. (2021) found that organizations that actively monitor their internal controls demonstrate higher levels of efficiency and responsiveness, thereby strengthening overall performance.

In the Philippine context, many micro and small enterprises operate with limited formal internal control systems, which negatively affects operational efficiency and service consistency. The Philippine Development Plan 2023–2028 (NEDA, 2023) emphasizes the need for capacity-building initiatives and improved business practices to strengthen internal control systems and enhance long-term sustainability.

### **Non-Financial Performance**

Non-financial performance refers to organizational outcomes that are not directly measured in monetary terms but are critical for long-term sustainability and operational success. These include aspects such as service quality, employee performance, stakeholder relationships, and operational efficiency. Hardiningsih et al. (2020) emphasize that non-financial indicators provide a broader understanding of organizational performance by strengthening credibility, trust, and long-term stability.

One key dimension is external stakeholder management, which focuses on maintaining strong relationships with customers and suppliers. Vitolla et al. (2020) found that effective stakeholder engagement enhances organizational reputation and sustainability. In service-oriented enterprises, customer satisfaction is influenced by service reliability, communication, and responsiveness, making stakeholder management a critical performance indicator.

Another important dimension is employee measures, which assess workforce productivity, discipline, and reliability. Musthafa et al. (2024) highlight that human capital plays a crucial role in improving operational efficiency and service quality, particularly in small enterprises where employees perform multiple roles. Employee behavior and performance directly influence service outcomes and customer experience.

The third dimension, process measures, evaluates the efficiency and consistency of internal operations. Rathnayake et al. (2021) and Yanti et al. (2023) note that structured processes and effective control mechanisms reduce errors, improve coordination, and enhance service outcomes. Process efficiency is particularly important in service industries, where operational delays and errors can negatively affect customer satisfaction.

In the Philippines, Capina (2021) found that enterprises with efficient processes and effective employee management demonstrate higher service quality and operational stability. Non-financial performance thus serves as a practical measure of how well small enterprises utilize limited resources and meet customer expectations.

### **Relationship Between Internal Control and Non-Financial Performance**

Existing studies consistently highlight the significant relationship between internal control systems and organizational performance. Tam and Tuan (2021) found that effective internal control systems improve non-financial performance indicators such as service quality, employee behavior, operational efficiency, and customer satisfaction. Strong internal controls reduce operational inefficiencies, enhance accountability, and improve overall service delivery.

Similarly, Adela et al. (2024) and Utami and Nugroho (2022) emphasize that internal control practices, even in simplified forms, contribute to improved accountability and asset protection in small enterprises. Herjuna et al. (2024) further stress the importance of continuous monitoring and employee training to maintain effective internal control systems.

Case-based evidence from Kaparang et al. (2025) demonstrates that the implementation of structured internal controls, such as clear roles, transaction documentation, and monitoring systems, leads to improvements in accountability and operational consistency. These findings confirm that even small-scale enterprises benefit significantly from formalized control systems.

However, research gaps remain. Many studies focus on large or formally structured organizations, while limited research examines internal control practices in micro and small enterprises within specific industries and local contexts. Furthermore, the effectiveness of informal control practices—common in small enterprises—has not been extensively explored.

### **Synthesis and Research Gap**

The reviewed literature demonstrates that internal control systems are essential for improving non-financial performance in micro and small enterprises. The COSO framework provides a structured approach to strengthening operations, while empirical studies confirm that effective controls enhance stakeholder relationships, employee performance, and process efficiency.

Despite these findings, there remains a lack of localized and industry-specific research, particularly in service-oriented micro enterprises. Many studies focus on financial outcomes or larger organizations, overlooking the unique operational challenges faced by small enterprises with informal structures.

Thus, this study addresses these gaps by examining how internal control systems influence non-financial performance in micro and small enterprises, providing insights into practical control mechanisms that can enhance operational efficiency, accountability, and long-term sustainability.

### **Research Design**

This study employed a quantitative correlational research design to examine the relationship between internal control systems and non-financial performance among micro and small enterprises in Quezon City, Philippines. Data were collected through a structured survey questionnaire organized into two main variables: internal control and non-financial performance. The internal control variable included five components—control environment, risk assessment, control activities, information and communication, and monitoring—while non-financial performance was measured through external stakeholder management, employee measures, and process efficiency.

The survey instrument was developed based on the review of related literature, which highlights the importance of internal control systems in improving operational effectiveness and organizational performance. A four-point Likert scale was used to capture respondents' perceptions, ensuring consistency and reliability in data collection and analysis. This structured quantitative approach enabled the researchers to systematically assess the level of internal control implementation and determine its relationship with non-financial performance among micro and small enterprises in Quezon City, Philippines.

### **Research Locale and Sampling Procedure**

This study was conducted among micro and small enterprises operating in Quezon City, Philippines. The

location was selected due to its high concentration of small service-oriented businesses, making it an appropriate setting for examining internal control practices and non-financial performance.

The respondents consisted of general managers and/or owners of micro and small enterprises, with a total target population of 67. These individuals were chosen because of their direct involvement in operational and managerial functions, enabling them to provide relevant insights aligned with the objectives of the study.

A universal sampling technique was applied, where all identified owners and/or managers within Quezon City were included as respondents. The population frame was established through an official list of registered businesses obtained from the Business Permit and Licensing Office of Quezon City, following approval of a formal request. This method ensured comprehensive coverage and minimized sampling bias. A response rate of 83.58% was achieved through physical distribution and follow-up of questionnaires.

### **Research Instrument**

A structured survey questionnaire was used as the primary data collection instrument. It was organized into two main variables: internal control and non-financial performance. Internal control was measured using five components—control environment, risk assessment, control activities, information and communication, and monitoring—while non-financial performance was assessed through external stakeholder management, employee measures, and process efficiency.

All items were rated using a four-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree). The questionnaire was adapted from established studies, namely Habamenshi (2024) for internal control and Hernaus et al. (2012) for non-financial performance, ensuring content validity and relevance. Reliability testing using Cronbach's alpha indicated acceptable internal consistency across all constructs. Internal control components yielded coefficients ranging from 0.746 to 0.876, while non-financial performance measures ranged from 0.751 to 0.811, confirming the instrument's reliability.

### **Data Gathering, Screening, and Reliability**

Prior to data collection, a formal permission request was secured from the appropriate authorities. The research instrument was validated by a statistician to ensure clarity and accuracy. Questionnaires were distributed through on-site administration, and informed consent was obtained from all participants.

After data collection, responses were compiled and screened for completeness and consistency. Incomplete or inconsistent entries were reviewed and addressed accordingly. All data were anonymized by assigning codes to respondents and removing identifying details to ensure confidentiality. The final dataset was securely stored for analysis.

Reliability analysis was conducted using Cronbach's alpha, confirming that all constructs met acceptable standards for internal consistency.

### **Data Management and Analysis**

Data were analyzed using statistical software. Descriptive statistics, including mean, frequency, and standard deviation, were used to assess the level of internal control implementation and non-financial performance.

Composite mean scores were calculated for each dimension to represent overall performance levels. To examine the relationship between variables, Pearson product-moment correlation analysis was employed.

Additionally, partial correlation analysis was conducted to control for potential confounding variables, particularly enterprise size, using micro and small enterprise classification as a proxy.

## **Results, Discussion and Detailed Interpretation of Findings**

### **1. Profile of Respondents**

The respondents of the study consisted of 56 general managers and/or owners of micro and small enterprises operating in Quezon City, Philippines. The majority of enterprises were classified as micro enterprises, indicating that most businesses operate on a small scale with limited resources, manpower, and formal organizational structures. This context is essential in interpreting the level of internal control implementation and non-financial performance.

### **2. Perception of Internal Control Systems**

#### **2.1 Control Environment**

The overall mean of 3.44 (Strongly Agree) indicates that enterprises in Quezon City generally maintain a strong control environment. High ratings in employee coordination and proper handling of supplies suggest that businesses emphasize teamwork and safeguarding of resources. However, the relatively lower rating in management information systems indicates that many enterprises still rely on informal or manual systems. The findings imply that while the foundation of internal control exists, technological integration and formal documentation systems need improvement. A strong control environment enhances accountability and operational efficiency, which are critical in small enterprises.

#### **2.2 Risk Assessment**

The overall mean of 3.78 (Strongly Agree) suggests that enterprises actively identify and manage risks. Continuous monitoring of operational risks received the highest rating. Enterprises demonstrate proactive risk awareness, which supports operational stability. However, the slightly lower score in updating procedures suggests that some businesses may not fully adapt to changing risks, limiting responsiveness to dynamic environments.

#### **2.3 Control Activities**

##### **Preventive Controls**

The overall mean of 3.80 (Strongly Agree) indicates that preventive measures such as documentation and compliance with policies are strongly implemented.

##### **Detective Controls**

The overall mean of 3.70 (Strongly Agree) shows that enterprises regularly conduct checks and reviews, although formal audits are less consistent.

##### **Corrective Controls**

With an overall mean of 3.78 (Strongly Agree), enterprises actively apply disciplinary actions and employee training to address errors.

Control activities are well-established, particularly in preventing errors and ensuring compliance. However, the limited use of formal auditing and structured training programs suggests opportunities for strengthening internal controls.

#### **2.4 Information and Communication**

The overall mean of 3.42 (Strongly Agree) indicates effective communication practices, especially in using a common language for coordination. However, management information systems showed lower

consistency. Effective communication supports daily operations, but limited adoption of formal information systems may affect accuracy, reporting, and decision-making efficiency.

### **2.5 Monitoring Activities**

The overall mean of 3.73 (Strongly Agree) indicates that enterprises consistently monitor operations through internal reviews and staff accountability. Monitoring practices are effective in detecting errors and improving operations. However, variability in the use of technology (e.g., CCTV) suggests unequal access to monitoring resources.

## **3. Perception of Non-Financial Performance**

### **3.1 External Stakeholder Management**

The overall mean of 3.74 (Strongly Agree) indicates strong customer retention, service quality, and supplier relationships.

Interpretation:

Enterprises effectively maintain customer satisfaction and trust, which enhances reputation and ensures business sustainability. However, managing customer complaints remains a potential area for improvement.

### **3.2 Employee Measures**

The overall mean of 3.63 (Strongly Agree) reflects high employee retention, commitment, and attendance, with slightly lower ratings on productivity.

Interpretation:

Employees contribute significantly to operational success, but productivity improvements can further enhance performance. This suggests a need for better training and workflow optimization.

### **3.3 Process Measures**

The overall mean of 3.81 (Strongly Agree) indicates strong operational efficiency, particularly in quick response to customer complaints and low error rates.

Interpretation:

Efficient processes enhance service quality and customer satisfaction. The results show that operational systems are effective, although variability in error rates suggests room for consistency improvement.

## **4. Relationship Between Internal Control and Non-Financial Performance**

The results reveal a moderate positive correlation ( $r = 0.508$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) between internal control and non-financial performance. The findings confirm that stronger internal control systems lead to improved non-financial performance. Enterprises with effective control environment, risk assessment, control activities, communication, and monitoring systems tend to achieve: Better service quality, Higher employee performance, Improved customer satisfaction and more efficient operational processes

The rejection of the null hypothesis indicates that internal control significantly influences non-financial performance.

### **Overall Discussion of Findings**

The results show that micro and small enterprises in Quezon City, Philippines generally exhibit a high level of internal control implementation and non-financial performance. Internal control components, particularly control activities and monitoring, are strongly practiced, contributing to efficient operations and service quality. However, certain gaps were identified: Limited use of formal management information systems, Inconsistent updating of control procedures and Variations in employee productivity

and process consistency. Despite these limitations, the significant positive relationship between internal control and non-financial performance highlights the importance of strengthening internal control frameworks in small enterprises.

Overall, the study demonstrates that internal control systems play a critical role in enhancing non-financial performance among micro and small enterprises in Quezon City. Strengthening these systems can lead to improved operational efficiency, employee performance, and stakeholder satisfaction, ultimately supporting long-term sustainability.

## Conclusion

This study investigated the relationship between internal control systems and non-financial performance among micro and small enterprises in Quezon City, Philippines. The findings indicate that while these enterprises have established internal control practices particularly in preventive controls and risk assessment they largely rely on informal or manual systems for managing operations. This reliance limits the full effectiveness of internal control mechanisms, particularly in areas such as management information systems (MIS) and employee productivity.

The results highlight that the adoption of the COSO internal control framework should not be viewed merely as a compliance requirement but as a strategic tool capable of enhancing operational efficiency, service quality, and long-term sustainability. However, variations in technological adoption and workforce productivity suggest that the full benefits of internal control systems are not yet uniformly realized across enterprises.

Furthermore, the study revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between internal control and non-financial performance ( $r = 0.508$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), indicating a moderate but meaningful association. This finding confirms that improvements in internal control practices are linked to enhanced non-financial outcomes, including more efficient operational processes, reduced errors, improved service quality, and stronger relationships with employees, suppliers, and customers. Consequently, the null hypothesis was rejected, affirming that internal control systems significantly influence non-financial performance in micro and small enterprises.

Overall, the study demonstrates that strengthening internal control systems is essential for improving operational effectiveness and sustaining competitive advantage in service-oriented micro and small enterprises in urban settings such as Quezon City.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

### 1. Adoption of Cost-Effective Digital Tools

Micro and small enterprises are encouraged to adopt affordable digital solutions, such as basic accounting software and electronic record-keeping systems, to enhance monitoring accuracy and reporting consistency. Improving information systems can address observed variability in data management and communication practices.

### 2. Implementation of Formalized Monitoring Procedures

Enterprises should transition from informal review practices to structured monitoring through regular reconciliations of transaction records, physical inventory, and cash balances. Monthly spot checks can strengthen detective control mechanisms and reduce inconsistencies.

### **3. Utilization of Digital Payment Systems**

The use of e-wallet platforms, such as GCash and Maya, is recommended to minimize cash handling risks, improve transparency, and facilitate efficient financial record reconciliation.

### **4. Strengthening Employee Development Programs**

Enterprises should establish structured training and performance evaluation systems to enhance employee productivity and consistency. Continuous training initiatives can improve service quality, reduce operational errors, and reinforce both preventive and corrective control activities.

### **5. Expansion of Future Research Scope**

Future studies are encouraged to include larger sample sizes, broader geographic coverage, and additional variables such as organizational culture, leadership, and digitalization. The use of mixed-methods or longitudinal research designs may provide deeper insights into the long-term effects of internal control systems on non-financial performance.

### **6. Policy and Institutional Support**

Policymakers and relevant government agencies should develop capacity-building programs focusing on internal control, risk management, and basic accounting for micro and small enterprises. Providing access to simplified internal control frameworks, digital tools, and technical assistance can significantly enhance operational efficiency, service quality, and long-term sustainability.

## **6. Declarations**

### **6.1 Ethical Considerations**

This study was conducted in strict adherence to internationally recognized ethical standards for research involving human participants. Ethical clearance was obtained from the National University Philippines (NU Baliwag) Ethics Review Committee under Protocol No. NU-BALIWAG-ERC-2024-010. All procedures complied with the ethical principles outlined in the Declaration of Helsinki.

Participation in the study was entirely voluntary. Prior to data collection, all respondents were provided with clear and comprehensive information regarding the purpose of the study, the nature of their participation, and their rights as participants. Written informed consent was secured from each respondent before the administration of the survey and any related data collection procedures.

Participants were informed of their right to decline participation, refuse to answer specific questions, or withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or adverse consequences.

Confidentiality and anonymity were rigorously maintained throughout the research process. No identifiable personal or business information was disclosed in the presentation of findings. Respondents were assigned coded identifiers to ensure anonymity. All collected data, including responses and supporting materials, were securely stored in password-protected files accessible only to the researchers and were used solely for academic and research purposes.

### **6.2 Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)**

The authors declare that generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools were utilized solely for language refinement, organization, and grammatical editing of the manuscript. The use of AI did not influence the study's conceptualization, research design, data collection, data analysis, interpretation of results, or conclusions. Full responsibility for the accuracy, integrity, and originality of the work remains with the authors.

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As no external funding was involved, the researchers maintained full independence and control over the research process. This ensured that the data analysis, interpretation, and conclusions were free from external influence or bias.

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