

Implementation Capacity and OTOP Program Effectiveness in a Philippine Province

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Abstract— The One Town, One Product (OTOP) program is a Philippine government initiative aimed at promoting local micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) through capacity-building, technical assistance, and market access. Despite legislative support under RA 11960, the effectiveness of OTOP programs varies across local government units (LGUs), highlighting the need to examine policy alignment, implementation capacity, and entrepreneur experiences. This study employed a convergent mixed-methods design to assess OTOP implementation in a Philippine province, integrating document analysis of LGU ordinances, key informant interviews with LGU and DTI focal persons, and a survey of 85 participating entrepreneurs. Findings indicate that LGU ordinances generally align with RA 11960 objectives, but gaps exist in IRR adoption, funding clarity, coordination, and monitoring. Implementation capacity varied across LGUs, with strengths in staffing and basic procedures offset by weaknesses in technical expertise, program coordination, and evaluation frameworks. Entrepreneur perspectives revealed high satisfaction with training and participation but lower satisfaction with product development support and marketing facilitation. The study underscores that formal policy alignment alone does not ensure program effectiveness; administrative capacity, operational execution, and stakeholder engagement are critical. Recommendations include strengthening LGU operational procedures, enhancing technical support for entrepreneurs, and improving inter-agency coordination to maximize the socio-economic impact of OTOP initiatives.

Keywords— One Town One Product, OTOP program, policy alignment, implementation capacity, MSMEs, Philippines.

I. INTRODUCTION

The development of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) is a critical driver of local economic growth, poverty reduction, and inclusive development in the Philippines. MSMEs contribute significantly to employment generation, value creation, and community development, yet they often face systemic constraints such as limited access to markets, insufficient technical capacity, and inadequate institutional support. Recognizing these challenges, the Philippine government has instituted a variety of programs aimed at enhancing MSME competitiveness and facilitating sustainable local enterprise development. Among these initiatives, the One Town, One Product (OTOP) program represents a prominent effort to leverage local resources, culture, and entrepreneurship to stimulate economic activity at the municipal and provincial levels. The program aims to promote unique local products, enhance market accessibility, provide technical support and capacity-

building opportunities, and ultimately contribute to regional development.

The OTOP program has its roots in the One Village One Product (OVOP) movement initiated in Japan, which was designed to encourage community-driven development and local economic self-reliance. The OVOP approach emphasizes the mobilization of local assets, the development of entrepreneurship, and participatory governance to improve the economic well-being of rural communities (Dipta et al., 2014; ReliefWeb, 2017). In the Philippines, OTOP has been formalized through legislative and administrative frameworks, most notably through Republic Act No. 11960, which mandates the promotion of provincial products and the institutional support for MSMEs, including technical assistance, capacity-building, and market access facilitation (Republic Act No. 11960, 2023). The law seeks to institutionalize the program across all provinces, ensuring that local governments

adopt policies that are aligned with national objectives for enterprise development and local economic growth.

Albay province, located in the Bicol region, provides an illustrative case of OTOP implementation. The province has been recognized for its active engagement in supporting local enterprises through OTOP hubs, trade fairs, and partnerships with the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and other stakeholders (About Albay, n.d.; Calipay, 2025). Reports indicate that OTOP hubs in Bicol generated PHP 394 million in sales in 2024, demonstrating the economic significance of the program for local communities (Calipay, 2025; Department of Trade and Industry – Albay, 2022). These figures underscore the potential of OTOP to contribute to inclusive local development, particularly in enhancing MSME competitiveness, providing employment, and generating revenue that benefits municipalities and provinces.

Despite the documented successes, the effectiveness of the OTOP program in the Philippines is not uniform, and several studies have highlighted persistent challenges. Fontanilla and Lagunilla (2022) note that implementation gaps exist at the local government level, particularly regarding coordination, monitoring, and enforcement of program guidelines. Similarly, Absolor et al. (2022) observed that while OTOP programs contribute to economic activity, they often face constraints related to policy operationalization, technical support, and market linkage effectiveness. Tawingan (2024) emphasizes that local governance capacity, resource allocation, and institutional support are critical determinants of whether OTOP programs achieve their intended outcomes. These studies suggest that although the program is legally supported and operationally promoted, policy adoption does not automatically translate into effective program delivery, a finding echoed in broader literature on place-based enterprise programs and local development initiatives (Parilla, 2013; Parilla, 2020; Rana, 2008).

The challenges in implementing OTOP at the local level are multifaceted. First, there is a policy-to-

practice gap, where ordinances adopted by local government units (LGUs) may align with RA 11960 in principle, but lack operational clarity, adequate funding, and effective monitoring mechanisms (Fontanilla & Lagunilla, 2022; Tawingan, 2024). Second, local administrative capacity varies significantly across municipalities, with some LGUs demonstrating strong coordination and staffing for program implementation, while others experience turnover, technical skill gaps, and insufficient succession planning (Banwell et al., 2021; Dela Santa, 2021). Third, entrepreneurial support services—such as training, product development assistance, and market promotion—are inconsistently delivered, limiting the ability of local enterprises to fully leverage program benefits (Absolor et al., 2022; Tadeo & Muralla, 2022). Finally, external factors such as political changes, funding delays, and community engagement levels further influence program effectiveness, reflecting the complexity of implementing national development programs within decentralized governance structures (Banwell et al., 2021; Tawingan, 2024; Calipay, 2025).

Stakeholder theory provides a useful lens to understand these dynamics, emphasizing that the success of development programs depends on the active involvement, alignment, and coordination of all relevant stakeholders, including local governments, national agencies, entrepreneurs, and the broader community (Freeman, 2018; Müller, 2023; Armas & Jose, 2025). Effective implementation requires participatory decision-making, resource allocation transparency, and continuous feedback loops to ensure that program design and delivery are responsive to local needs. Studies in other sectors, such as public health and environmental governance, have similarly highlighted the critical role of stakeholder engagement in ensuring that policies achieve their intended outcomes (Banwell et al., 2021; Naeem, 2024; Sarjito, 2024). In the context of OTOP, stakeholder alignment influences the capacity of LGUs to operationalize ordinances, coordinate services, and provide entrepreneurs with the technical and market support necessary for program success.

Empirical studies also suggest that OTOP programs contribute to local economic development by enhancing microenterprise performance, generating income, and increasing employment opportunities. For instance, Absolor et al. (2022) demonstrated that OTOP hubs in Ilocos Sur significantly increased the economic viability of participating enterprises, while Calipay (2025) reported that trade fairs and promotional initiatives in Bicol facilitated substantial sales for local entrepreneurs. These outcomes indicate that when effectively implemented, OTOP programs can serve as a mechanism for place-based economic growth, aligning with endogenous development theory, which emphasizes the mobilization of local resources and capacities to achieve sustainable development (Nishikawa, 2022; Liberto, 2023). Nevertheless, the uneven distribution of program benefits underscores the need to examine both policy alignment and implementation capacity to identify factors that enable or constrain effectiveness.

In the Philippine context, several policy and programmatic initiatives interact with OTOP implementation. The Department of Trade and Industry provides technical assistance, market promotion, and training programs, while LGUs enact ordinances to support local enterprises in compliance with RA 11960 (One Town, One Product [OTOP] | Negosyo Center, 2023; Republic Act No. 11960, 2023). Research by Parilla (2020) and Fontanilla and Lagunilla (2022) highlights that successful OTOP programs require a combination of formal policy adoption, adequate funding, staff capacity, and monitoring mechanisms. Studies on similar place-based initiatives, such as the OVOP program in Indonesia and Japan, demonstrate that the translation of national policy into effective local action depends on administrative capacity, stakeholder collaboration, and continuous program evaluation (Dipta et al., 2014; ReliefWeb, 2017).

Considering these insights, it becomes evident that a comprehensive assessment of the OTOP program requires a focus on three critical areas: the alignment of LGU ordinances with RA 11960, the capacity of LGUs to implement these ordinances effectively, and the experiences of entrepreneurs who are the primary

beneficiaries of program interventions. While existing studies provide valuable insights into program outcomes and challenges in other regions, there is limited empirical evidence on how policy alignment and local governance capacity directly influence program effectiveness in Albay province. Filling this gap is essential not only for evaluating the current state of OTOP implementation but also for informing policy refinements and administrative improvements that can enhance local economic development outcomes.

The One Town, One Product program represents a key government initiative for promoting MSME development and local economic growth in the Philippines. Despite its potential and legislative support, its effectiveness depends on the alignment of LGU policies with national legislation, the operational and administrative capacity of local governments, and the ability to deliver meaningful support to entrepreneurs. Challenges such as funding gaps, coordination issues, staffing constraints, and inconsistent monitoring highlight the importance of a multi-dimensional assessment of program implementation. Drawing from stakeholder theory and empirical studies of OTOP and similar programs, it is clear that policy adoption alone is insufficient without effective execution and active engagement of all relevant actors.

Building on this context, the present study provides a comprehensive evaluation of the One Town, One Product program in a Philippine province by examining three interconnected dimensions. First, it investigates how local government units have aligned their OTOP ordinances with the provisions of RA 11960, assessing the extent to which local policies reflect national legislative intent. Second, it explores the capacity of these LGUs to implement the program effectively, focusing on administrative, operational, and governance factors that influence program delivery. Third, the study evaluates program effectiveness from the perspective of participating entrepreneurs, capturing their experiences, satisfaction, and the practical impact of OTOP support initiatives. Given these three areas, the study aims to generate insights that can inform policy refinement,

strengthen local implementation, and enhance the socio-economic outcomes of the OTOP program.

II. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a convergent mixed-methods design to investigate the relationship between implementation capacity and the effectiveness of the One Town, One Product (OTOP) program in a Philippine province. The research integrated document analysis, key informant interviews (KIIs), and a survey of program participants to capture both policy-level alignment and on-the-ground outcomes. Ethical clearance was obtained prior to data collection, and participant confidentiality was maintained. The study focused on six LGUs in the province, coded as LGU A through LGU F, to examine their alignment of local OTOP ordinances with the provisions of RA 11960.

For the first objective, LGU OTOP ordinances were analyzed to determine alignment with RA 11960. Each ordinance was examined for the inclusion of key provisions, such as program objectives, capacity-building programs, market promotion, technical assistance, product development support, and compliance with labeling and packaging standards. Gaps in IRR adoption, funding, coordination, operational procedures, and monitoring were also documented.

To address the second and third objectives, qualitative and quantitative data were collected. Key informant interviews with LGU and DTI focal persons explored implementation capacity across staffing, program coordination, funding, operational procedures,

succession planning, and monitoring and evaluation. Concurrently, a survey of 85 OTOP entrepreneurs measured program effectiveness in terms of participation, satisfaction, capacity-building, product development support, and market access, as shown in Table 3. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize survey results, while thematic analysis was applied to interview transcripts to identify recurring patterns, enabling a comprehensive understanding of the factors shaping OTOP program implementation and effectiveness.

III. RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Alignment of LGU OTOP Ordinances with RA 11960

Table 1 shows that the ordinances of the six coded LGUs (LGU A–F) generally include provisions aligned with RA 11960, such as program objectives, capacity-building initiatives, market promotion, technical assistance, and entrepreneurial support.

This alignment demonstrates that local governments in the province have formally adopted the intent of RA 11960, which mirrors findings in other studies indicating that OTOP programs in the Philippines are often incorporated into LGU ordinances to promote local enterprise development (Absolor et al., 2022; Parilla, 2013; Rana, 2008). Moreover, the emphasis on capacity-building and market promotion reflects the broader role of OTOP hubs in Bicol, which have been reported to generate significant sales and support MSMEs (Calipay, 2025; Department of Trade and Industry – Albay, 2022).

Table 1. Alignment of Local Government Units' OTOP Ordinances with RA 11960

LGU	RA 11960 Provisions Addressed	Alignment Notes / Gaps Identified
LGU A	Program objectives, capacity-building, market promotion, technical assistance	IRR adoption not referenced; funding clarity insufficient
LGU B	Product development support, training programs, local enterprise support	Coordination among offices weak; monitoring not specified
LGU C	Entrepreneur participation, technical assistance, market access initiatives	Operational details lacking; evaluation framework absent
LGU D	Policy support for OTOP products, training programs, budget allocation	Funding continuity issues; procedural clarity limited
LGU E	Entrepreneur training, compliance with labeling/packaging standards, technical guidance	Staff capacity limited; IRR adoption incomplete

LGU F	Program objectives, partnerships with DTI, promotional campaigns	Monitoring and reporting weak; operational procedures unclear
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Despite these alignments, significant gaps persist. Several LGUs did not reference the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR), and issues were observed regarding funding clarity, coordination, operational details, and monitoring mechanisms. Similar implementation challenges have been reported in other Philippine contexts, where local enterprises experience inconsistent support due to weak operationalization of national programs at the LGU level (Fontanilla & Lagunilla, 2022; Tawingan, 2024; Parilla, 2020). This suggests that while policy alignment exists, effective program execution requires attention to institutional capacity, coordination, and monitoring systems—a finding consistent with studies on policy implementation and stakeholder engagement in the Philippines (Banwell et al., 2021; Dela Santa, 2021; Armas & Jose, 2025).

The results also highlight a recurring theme in OTOP research: formal policy adoption alone is insufficient to ensure program effectiveness. Operational gaps, including insufficient monitoring, unclear procedures, and limited funding continuity, may hinder the realization of intended outcomes. This observation aligns with global evidence on place-based enterprise programs, such as the OVOP movement in Indonesia and Japan, where program success depends not only on policy adoption but also on local administrative capacity, coordination among stakeholders, and sustained institutional support (Dipta et al., 2014; ReliefWeb, 2017). Therefore, improving alignment at the operational and resource level is essential for the OTOP program in Albay to fully achieve its developmental objectives.

Local Government Implementation Capacity for OTOP Programs

Table 2 presents the implementation capacity of the six coded LGUs (LGU A–F) across several dimensions, including staffing, program coordination, funding, election-related disruptions, succession planning, operational procedures, and monitoring and evaluation. The findings suggest that while LGUs generally have sufficient staffing for basic program operations, there are gaps in technical expertise and human resource continuity, highlighting vulnerabilities such as turnover and insufficient training. These challenges align with prior studies emphasizing the critical role of local capacity and technical competence in implementing enterprise support programs in the Philippines (Tawingan, 2024; Fontanilla & Lagunilla, 2022; Banwell et al., 2021).

Program coordination was present but inconsistent, with weak follow-up and gaps in communication among offices and between LGUs and the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI). This echoes earlier research on policy implementation, which shows that even when policies are formally adopted, lack of coordination among stakeholders can undermine program delivery (Dela Santa, 2021; Armas & Jose, 2025; Davila, 2024). Similarly, funding was allocated but often insufficient, and delays in release hindered timely program execution, consistent with findings from other OTOP and MSME support studies in the Philippines and Bicol region (Calipay, 2025; Department of Trade and Industry – Albay, 2022; Absolor et al., 2022).

Table 2. Local Government Implementation Capacity for the OTOP Program

Theme / Capacity Area	Findings from KIIs	Challenges / Issues
Staffing & Human Resources	Adequate for basic operations; gaps in technical expertise	Shortage of trained staff, turnover
Program Coordination	Coordination with DTI and among LGUs exists	Weak follow-up, inconsistent communication
Funding / Budgeting	Budgets allocated for OTOP programs	Insufficient funds, delays in release

Election / Political Disruptions	Programs continue during elections	Some interruptions, change in priorities
Succession Planning	Some LGUs have staff succession plans	Vulnerable to turnover, loss of institutional knowledge
Operational Procedures	Basic implementation procedures in place	Limited documentation, IRR adoption gaps
Monitoring & Evaluation	Some LGUs conduct periodic monitoring	Weak evaluation frameworks, inconsistent reporting

Operational procedures and monitoring mechanisms were partially in place, but weaknesses in documentation, IRR adoption, and evaluation frameworks were observed. Succession planning also emerged as a concern, as some LGUs lacked structured approaches to maintain institutional knowledge during staff transitions. These findings confirm broader observations that successful local program implementation requires not only formal adoption of policies but also sustained institutional support, systematic monitoring, and stakeholder engagement (Banwell et al., 2021; Dipta et al., 2014; ReliefWeb, 2017). Overall, Table 2 underscores the importance of building local governance capacity as a critical determinant of OTOP program effectiveness and aligns with the literature on stakeholder theory and place-based enterprise initiatives in the Philippines (Freeman, 2018; Atlassian, 2024; Müller, 2023).

Entrepreneur Perspectives on OTOP Program Effectiveness

Table 3 summarizes the perceptions of 85 OTOP entrepreneurs regarding program effectiveness, highlighting key areas such as accessibility, capacity-building, product development support, and market access. Overall, respondents reported positive experiences, with mean scores ranging from 3.40 to 3.91, indicating general agreement and satisfaction with the OTOP program. Accessibility and participation scored 3.76, reflecting that most entrepreneurs were able to engage with program activities, consistent with reports that OTOP hubs in Bicol have successfully facilitated MSME participation and generated substantial sales (Calipay, 2025; Department of Trade and Industry – Albay, 2022; Talavera, 2023).

Table 3. Entrepreneur Perspective on OTOP Program Effectiveness

Program Component	Mean Score	Interpretation	Key Observations
Accessibility & Participation	3.76	Agree	Most entrepreneurs could participate in programs
Capacity-Building / Trainings	3.86	Agree	Training well-received, practical knowledge gained
Product Development Support	3.40	Agree	Support weaker, need for technical and packaging guidance
Market Access & Promotion	3.70	Agree	Entrepreneurs generally satisfied with exposure and sales opportunities
Overall Program Experience	3.68	Agree	Positive overall, but room for improvement
Satisfaction – Processes	3.72	Satisfied	Processes clear, but some delays noted
Satisfaction – Capacity-Building	3.91	Satisfied	Highly valued by participants
Satisfaction – Product Development	3.49	Satisfied	Weakest area in satisfaction

Satisfaction – Market Access	3.75	Satisfied	Entrepreneurs appreciated marketing support
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Capacity-building and training were highly valued, scoring 3.86–3.91, showing that entrepreneurs recognized the practical benefits of skill development programs. However, product development support received lower scores (3.40–3.49), indicating gaps in technical assistance, packaging, labeling, and compliance guidance. These findings corroborate previous studies highlighting the challenges in translating policy and training initiatives into tangible improvements in MSME product quality and competitiveness (Absolor et al., 2022; Fontanilla & Lagunilla, 2022; Parilla, 2020; Tadeo & Muralla, 2022). Similarly, market access and promotion scored 3.70–3.75, reflecting general satisfaction but also suggesting room for enhancement, aligning with research showing that even well-structured OTOP programs may underperform in marketing and distribution support without robust local facilitation (Rana, 2008; Dipta et al., 2014).

The survey results indicate a recurring pattern: entrepreneurs value capacity-building and training programs, which are well-implemented, but perceive gaps in product development and operational support that limit the full realization of program benefits. This underscores the broader theme in OTOP and place-based enterprise studies that effective program delivery requires not only policy alignment and training, but also continuous technical guidance, monitoring, and stakeholder engagement to enhance enterprise competitiveness and sustainability (Freeman, 2018; Müller, 2023; Tawingan, 2024; ReliefWeb, 2017). Therefore, addressing these implementation gaps is critical to improving overall program effectiveness and achieving the intended socio-economic outcomes for participating MSMEs.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

This study examined the relationship between local government implementation capacity and the effectiveness of the One Town, One Product (OTOP) program in a Philippine province. Findings indicate that LGUs generally align their ordinances with the provisions of RA 11960, incorporating program

objectives, capacity-building initiatives, market promotion, and technical assistance. However, gaps remain in the adoption of the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR), funding clarity, coordination, operational procedures, and monitoring mechanisms, suggesting that formal policy adoption alone is insufficient to ensure effective program implementation.

The assessment of LGU implementation capacity revealed both strengths and limitations. While staffing, program coordination, and funding mechanisms exist, challenges such as turnover, insufficient technical expertise, weak inter-office coordination, and inconsistent monitoring were observed. Entrepreneur perspectives corroborated these findings, showing high satisfaction with training and capacity-building programs but lower satisfaction with product development support and marketing facilitation. Collectively, these results highlight that the effectiveness of OTOP programs depends not only on policy alignment but also on the administrative capacity and operational execution at the local level.

Based on these findings, actionable recommendations are proposed. First, LGUs should strengthen operational procedures, including documentation, monitoring, and evaluation systems, to ensure continuity and transparency. Second, additional technical support should be provided for product development, packaging, labeling, and marketing, targeting the specific needs of participating entrepreneurs. Third, enhanced coordination among LGUs, the Department of Trade and Industry, and other stakeholders is essential to streamline program delivery and maximize impact. Finally, capacity-building for LGU staff, including succession planning and training, should be prioritized to sustain institutional knowledge and program effectiveness over time. Implementing these measures can improve the alignment of policy intent with practical outcomes, thereby increasing the socio-economic benefits of the OTOP program for local communities.

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