# Micro-Business Owners' Inventory Management Practices

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## ABSTRACT

This study assessed the inventory management practices of micro-business owners in Buenavista, Guimaras, and determined whether significant differences exist across various demographic and business characteristics. Data were collected from 287 micro-business owners across the municipality using a descriptive research design. The results show that micro-business owners in Buenavista implement generally high levels of inventory management practices, particularly in stock classification, transparency in reporting, and meeting customer demand. However, gaps exist in using systematic tracking tools and technology-driven inventory systems. Educational attainment, average monthly income, and capital investment significantly influence the effectiveness of inventory management practices. Micro-business owners with higher educational levels, greater income, and larger capital allocations demonstrated more structured and effective inventory management practices. The findings suggest that improving educational opportunities, enhancing access to financial resources, and promoting the adoption of technology-driven systems could significantly improve microenterprises' inventory management practices and business efficiency. This research provides insights for policymakers, local government units, and support agencies in designing targeted interventions to promote the growth and sustainability of micro-businesses in rural settings.

**Keywords –** micro business, inventory management, Guimaras

## INTRODUCTION

The micro, small, and medium-sized enterprise (MSME) sector is crucial to economic growth and competitiveness when supported by a conducive business environment (Varga, 2021). In the Philippines, MSMEs are the lifeblood of the economy, as they contribute to job creation, innovation, and wealth generation, while also playing a vital role in maintaining the country's competitive advantage in the ASEAN and global market (Nwosu & Umeh, 2021). Micro enterprises, in particular, form the most significant portion of the MSME sector and provide the biggest share of national employment, thereby underscoring their importance to inclusive economic development (Obrero & Garcia, 2022). Despite this, Philippine MSMEs face challenges in accessing support, advice, and government assistance, which hinder their capacity to maximize their potential (Tecson & Garcia-Vigonte, 2022).

Inventory management is a key factor in ensuring the sustainability and competitiveness of micro-businesses. Inventory management ensures the availability of items in the correct quantity when demand arises, considering factors such as demand, replenishment lead time, review timing, and item lifetime. It also involves managing uncertainty while applying appropriate inventory models to minimize inefficiencies (Shenoy & Rosas, 2018). Inventory systems, when correctly managed, enhance business efficiency by ensuring cost reduction, preventing stock shortages, and avoiding fulfillment delays, all of which ultimately improve customer satisfaction and long-term sustainability (Mat et al., 2023; Kumar, 2024). Effective inventory management reflects how well a business controls its inventories and directly contributes to profitability and competitiveness (Ahmad & Zabri, 2016; Mamoor & Raana, 2020). In Uganda, for instance, Orobia et al. (2020) highlighted that inventory management combined with managerial competence significantly influenced the financial performance of small

businesses. Similarly, Oyetade et al. (2024) and Olawale (2025) confirmed that inventory control systems and practices substantially boost SME productivity and overall performance.

Research further demonstrates that higher levels of inventory management practice lead to improved organizational outcomes, with enterprises gaining a competitive advantage through scientific techniques and decision models (Atnafu & Balda, 2018). Poor inventory management, on the other hand, results in idle assets, reduced liquidity, and limited capacity to invest in productive resources, which negatively affects financial performance (Kasim, 2015). In the evolving context of Industry 5.0, effective inventory management practices—driven by technical, technological, and behavioral know-how—are increasingly viewed as determinants of SME competitiveness and survival (Panigrahi et al., 2024).

In the Philippine setting, improvements in how retail and micro-businesses handle inventory—whether in ordering, storage, control, or warehouse management—can significantly improve financial outcomes (Toroba et al., 2025). However, many MSMEs still rely on traditional or unsystematic methods, limiting their efficiency and growth potential. This study, therefore, seeks to examine the inventory management practices of micro-business owners in Guimaras, a province where micro-enterprises play a significant role in sustaining local economic activities. By investigating their practices, the study aims to shed light on their strengths, challenges, and improvement areas, contributing to academic discourse and practical recommendations for strengthening MSME performance in the Philippine context.

### Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of this study was to examine the inventory management practices of micro-business owners in Buenavista, Guimaras. In particular, the study sought to:

1. Describe the respondents' age, educational attainment, average monthly income, length of operation, number of workers, and capital;
2. Assess the level of inventory management practices of micro-business owners; and
3. Determine whether significant differences exist in inventory management practices when classified by profile.

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

This study employed a descriptive research design to determine the inventory management practices of micro-business owners in Buenavista, Guimaras. The focus was on merchandise-type micro-businesses. Descriptive research is appropriate since it allows researchers to study and describe the distribution of one or more variables, without regard to causal or other hypotheses (Aggarwal & Ranganathan, 2019).

### Respondents of the Study

The respondents were 287 registered micro-business owners from the 36 barangays of Buenavista, Guimaras. A multi-stage sampling technique was employed. In the first stage, cluster sampling was used to group the population by barangay. In the second stage, stratified sampling was applied to determine the proportionate number of respondents to be selected from each cluster based on the number of micro-businesses in each. Table 1 shows the distribution of respondents across the clustered barangays.

**Table 1** Distribution of Respondents

| Cluster | n | % |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | 64 | 22.3 |
| 2 | 36 | 12.5 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 3 | 25 | 8.7 |
| 4 | 20 | 7.0 |
| 5 | 20 | 7.0 |
| 6 | 75 | 26.1 |
| 7 | 26 | 9.1 |
| 8 | 21 | 7.3 |
| **Total** | **287** | **100** |

**Data Gathering Instrument**

Data were collected using a researcher-made questionnaire composed of two parts:

Part I captured the demographic profile of respondents (age, educational attainment, average monthly income, length of operation, number of workers, and capital).

Part II measured inventory management practices of microbusiness owners. Respondents rated each item on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Never Practice) to 5 (Always Practice). The scale interpretation used in data analysis is shown below.

| Scale of Means | Description |
|---|---|
| 4.21 - 5.00 | Very Highly Practiced |
| 3.41 - 4.20 | Highly Practiced |
| 2.61 - 3.40 | Moderately Practiced |
| 1.81 - 2.60 | Slightly Practiced |
| 1.00 - 1.80 | Not Practiced |

**Validity and Reliability**

The instrument underwent content and face validation by a panel of experts to ensure appropriateness, clarity, and alignment with the study objectives. A pilot test was conducted with 30 micro-business owners not included in the final sample. Reliability testing yielded a coefficient of 0.825, exceeding the acceptable threshold of 0.70. (Hussey, et al., 2025). Thus, the instrument was considered valid and reliable.

**Statistical Treatment of Data**

The following statistical tools were employed:

Frequency count and percentage – to describe the distribution of respondents' demographic profile;

Mean – to determine the level of inventory management practices in terms of perpetual and periodic systems;

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) – to test significant differences in inventory management practices when respondents were grouped by age, educational attainment, average monthly income, length of operation, number of workers and capital.

**Significance of the Study**

The findings are valuable for policymakers, academe, and business support organizations, as they highlight the need for targeted training programs and financial support to enhance inventory management, particularly for

owners with lower education levels and limited capital. Ultimately, this study contributes to developing strategies to strengthen local businesses and foster economic growth in rural communities.

**Limitations of the Study**

The study is limited to registered micro-businesses in Buenavista, Guimaras, and may not reflect the practices of unregistered or informal businesses. Furthermore, it focused only on merchandise-type microenterprises and did not include service or manufacturing sectors. As a cross-sectional study, it captures practices at a single point in time and does not account for changes or trends over time. Additionally, findings may not be generalizable beyond the geographic and business context of the study area.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The profile of the respondents, as presented in Table 2, shows that the age distribution reveals that most microbusiness owners in Buenavista fall within the 42 to 53-year-old age bracket, comprising 40.8% of the total sample. This is followed by those aged 30–41 (23.3%) and 54–65 (23.0%). Only 8.0% are aged 18–29, while the oldest group (66–67 years) accounts for just 4.9%.

This pattern suggests that microenterprise ownership in Buenavista is predominantly led by middle-aged individuals, reflecting a mature and possibly more stable workforce. These findings are comparable to those in Ragay, Camarines Sur, where most microbusiness owners were also in their 40s (Gonzalvo & Avila, 2019). This middle-aged dominance implies a potential for both experience-driven management and a need to incentivize younger entrepreneurs to enter the sector for long-term sustainability.

A notable strength in the profile of Buenavista microbusiness owners is their relatively high level of education. Over half (53.3%) of the respondents are college graduates, while 22.3% are undergraduates. Meanwhile, 20.2% completed high school, and a small minority finished only elementary education (0.6%).

This level of educational attainment is significantly higher than that reported in similar rural settings such as Tarlac City and Ragay, Camarines Sur, where most microentrepreneurs had only finished high school or some college (Figueroa et al., 2024; Gonzalvo & Avila, 2019). The strong educational profile in the municipality offers a favorable environment for adopting business innovations and could facilitate better decision-making in areas such as inventory control, finance, and marketing.

However, as supported by Ahmad and Zabri (2016), education alone is insufficient unless translated into practice through proper training and application—especially in operational aspects like inventory and financial management.

The income distribution of microbusiness owners in Buenavista, Guimaras, reveals a moderate concentration in the lower-middle income range. As shown in the revised data, 37.3% of the respondents earn between ₱50,001 and ₱100,000 monthly, while 31.0% earn ₱50,000 and below. This indicates that nearly 68.3% of microbusinesses earn ₱100,000 or less per month, confirming the small-scale and limited earning capacity typical of microenterprises in rural areas.

A further 16.7% of business owners report monthly earnings between ₱100,001 and ₱200,000, and smaller portions earn between ₱200,001–₱300,000 (7.3%) and ₱301,000 and above (7.7%). These higher-income brackets may represent more established enterprises, diversifying their markets, or introducing value-added services.

The majority's placement within the ₱50,000–₱100,000 income range aligns with income trends in similar provincial studies. For instance, Gonzalvo and Avila (2019) found that most microbusiness owners in Ragay, Camarines Sur, earned an average of ₱7,000 per month, with few exceeding ₱10,000, reflecting a more constrained market than in Guimaras. Buenavista's slightly higher income figures may be attributed to the island's active tourism, mango production, and proximity to Iloilo City, offering cross-island trade opportunities.

This distribution shows that most enterprises operate at a low-income level, reflecting limited market reach, small-scale operations, and possibly constrained pricing power. These findings mirror those in Nueva Ecija, where most microbusinesses operated for years yet remained low-income due to capital and market access limitations (De Leon, 2021). The income data aligns with the classification of microenterprises under Philippine law, where annual revenues fall under ₱3 million. Low income can restrict reinvestment and business growth, especially in areas like Buenavista, where businesses face seasonal fluctuations in demand due to dependence on tourism and agriculture.

Regarding business longevity, many microbusinesses (45.6%) have been in operation for 1–5 years, while 26.1% have been running for 6–10 years. The remaining groups include 11–15 years (16.7%), 16–20 years (5.6%), and over 21 years (5.9%).

This indicates that most businesses are relatively young, with over 70% operating for 10 years or less. This trend is consistent with findings in Daet, Camarines Norte, where most MSMEs had been operating for only 4–6 years (Secretario & Naval, 2021). The relatively short duration of business operation may also reflect high turnover rates or the difficulty of sustaining microenterprises over the long term, especially in island economies like Guimaras, where transport costs, supply chain issues, and limited customer bases pose unique challenges.

In terms of employment, a majority of the microenterprises (82.9%) employ three or fewer workers, confirming their classification as microbusinesses. In the Philippine context, it is customary for family members to participate in the business, either directly through daily operations or indirectly by providing occasional or part-time support. As such, it is unlikely for these businesses to operate with just a single employee or to be purely owner-operated. Even informal or unpaid contributions from family members are often counted as part of the labor force. This minimal staffing suggests that most enterprises may lack the organizational scale to hire specialized personnel, including inventory managers or bookkeepers. Only 12.5% employ 4–6 workers, and just 4.5% employ 7–10 workers. This supports the findings of Secretario and Naval (2021), where most grocery MSMEs had no designated staff for managing inventory, despite this function's critical role in operational efficiency.

The data highlights the need for human resource development support, including multitasking and cross-functional skills training, particularly for solo entrepreneurs or those with very lean teams.

Regarding capitalization, the majority of businesses (77.4%) operate with ₱1,000,000 or less, followed by 16.4% with capital between ₱1,000,001 and ₱2,000,000, and only 6.3% with ₱2,000,001 to ₱3,000,000. This indicates that most microenterprises in Buenavista are low-capital operations, likely self-funded or supported by informal financing (e.g., family loans or cooperatives). Compared to the threshold defined by DTI for microenterprises (capitalization not exceeding ₱3 million), most businesses here fall well within the lower limit.

Low capitalization affects the business's capacity to scale, acquire inventory in bulk, invest in technology, or expand operations. De Leon (2021) noted that low-capital microbusinesses often remain stagnant due to difficulties accessing formal financing and lacking other income sources. In a provincial island setting like Guimaras, these limitations are further exacerbated by logistical costs and limited banking services.

**Table 2** Profile of the Respondents

| **Profile** | **f** | **%** |
|---|---|---|
| Age | | |
| 18 - 29 years old | 23 | 8.0 |
| 30 - 41 years old | 67 | 23.3 |
| 42 - 53 years old | 117 | 40.8 |
| 54 - 65 years old | 66 | 23.0 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 66 - 67 years old | 14 | 4.9 |
| Educational Attainment | | |
| College Graduate | 153 | 53.3 |
| College Undergraduate | 64 | 22.3 |
| High School Graduate | 58 | 20.2 |
| HighSchool Undergraduate | 10 | 3.5 |
| Elementary | 2 | 0.6 |
| Average Monthly Income | | |
| Php 50,000 and below | 89 | 31.0 |
| Php 50,001 and Php 100,000 | 107 | 37.3 |
| Php 100,001 – 200,000 | 48 | 16.7 |
| Php 200,001 – 300,000 | 21 | 7.3 |
| Php 301,000 and above | 22 | 7.7 |
| Length of Operations | | |
| 1 - 15 years | 131 | 45.6 |
| 6 - 10 years | 75 | 26.1 |
| 11 – 15 years | 48 | 16.7 |
| 16 – 20 years | 16 | 5.6 |
| 21 years and above | 25 | 5.9 |
| Number of Workers | | |
| 3 and below | 238 | 82.9 |
| 4 – 6 | 36 | 12.5 |
| 7 - 10 | 13 | 4.5 |
| Capital | | |
| 1,000,000 and below | 222 | 77.4 |
| 1,000,001 – 2,000,000 | 47 | 16.4 |
| 2,000,001 – 3,000,000 | 18 | 6.3 |
| **Total** | **287** | **100** |

Table 3 presents the inventory management practices of micro-business owners. The overall mean score of 4.00, interpreted as high, indicates that micro-business owners in Guimaras generally implement effective inventory management practices. However, variations were observed across specific indicators, ranging from very high to moderate levels.

The practices rated very high include ensuring product availability when demanded by customers (M = 4.62), classifying products according to type during physical count (M = 4.48), reporting lost goods or stocks in the closing inventory (M = 4.43), and conducting an inventory of remaining items before acquiring new stocks (M = 4.33). These findings suggest that micro-business owners emphasize stock classification, transparency in reporting, prudent replenishment, and meeting customer demand, all of which are vital for sustaining business operations. This result resonates with Secretario and Naval (2021), who noted that ABC Classification was the

strongest inventory management practice among MSM grocery stores in Daet, Camarines Norte. Similarly, Toroba et al. (2025) reported that retail businesses in Cateel, Davao Oriental, achieved very high levels of inventory storage and control, practices that safeguard inventory and ensure availability. These findings affirm Oyetade et al.'s (2024) and Olawale's (2025) conclusions that effective inventory control and adequate inventory methods directly enhance SME productivity and performance.

Meanwhile, practices rated high include following target stock levels instead of placing constant order sizes (M = 4.18), performing physical counts at fixed intervals (M = 3.92), placing orders at specific time intervals (M = 3.85), and updating inventory records regularly (M = 3.52) and ensuring inventory updates are complete and accurate (M = 3.51) . These practices reflect diligence in stock monitoring and replenishment, though they still fall short of systematic or technology-based methods. The reliance on manual or routine procedures echoes Ahmad and Zabri's (2016) observation that many Malaysian micro-retailers adopt systematic and unsystematic approaches, preferring the "rule of thumb." Similarly, Mat et al. (2023) observed moderate practices and weak IT adoption among SMEs in Malaysia, suggesting that inventory records are often updated but not necessarily optimized through digital systems. Compared internationally, Alam et al. (2024) highlighted that SMEs in Bangladesh increasingly use digital technologies and online media to manage raw materials, underscoring a gap between micro-businesses in Guimaras and those adopting modern, technology-driven approaches.

The only practice rated moderate was using beginning and ending inventory data in business operations (M = 3.16). This indicates limited integration of systematic tracking tools and reflects a continued reliance on traditional methods. The result aligns with Kasim (2015), who reported that SMEs in Ghana often relied on manual processes and had limited awareness of advanced inventory models such as the Economic Order Quantity (EOQ). Similarly, Mat et al. (2023) noted weak inventory control practices when discrepancies arose, often due to a lack of structured systems.

While micro-business owners in Guimaras demonstrate strong operational practices in classification, reporting, and customer demand fulfillment, they lag in inventory management's systematic and IT-based dimensions. This pattern is consistent with national studies showing that SMEs tend to be strong in operational routines but weaker in formalized, technology-driven systems (Secretario & Naval, 2021; Toroba et al., 2025; Ahmad & Zabri, 2016). Compared with international trends such as those in Bangladesh (Alam et al., 2024), Guimaras micro-businesses remain dependent on manual approaches. Strengthening systematic record-keeping and digital inventory systems would enhance efficiency, accuracy, and long-term sustainability.

**Table 3** Micro-Business Owners' Inventory Management Practices

| Items | Mean | Description |
|---|---|---|
| 1. perform physical count of stocks at fixed time interval (e.g. monthly). | 3.92 | High |
| 2. update inventory records at set intervals. | 3.52 | High |
| 3. ensure that the inventory updates are complete and accurate | 3.51 | High |
| 4. conduct inventory of remaining items before acquiring new stocks. | 4.33 | Very High |
| 5. place order at specific time intervals. | 3.85 | High |
| 6. use date of beginning and ending inventory in the business operation. | 3.16 | Moderate |
| 7. follows enough number of stocks to reach the fixed target inventory rather placing a constant order size. | 4.18 | High |
| 8. report the lost goods/ stocks in the closing inventory at the end of the period (e.g. monthly, quarterly, yearly) | 4.43 | Very High |
| 9. classify products according to their type during physical count. | 4.48 | Very High |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 10. ensure products are available when needed by or the customer in demand. | 4.62 | Very High |
| Overall Mean | 4.00 | High |

**Micro-Business Owners' Inventory Management Practices when Grouped According to Variables**

As presented in Table 4, data reveal that age ($F = 0.637$, $p = 0.636$), length of operation ($F = 0.148$, $p = 0.964$), and number of workers ($F = 2.078$, $p = 0.127$) do not significantly affect the inventory management practices of microbusiness owners in Buenavista, Guimaras. These results suggest that neither the maturity of the entrepreneur nor the age of the business nor staffing size plays a statistically significant role in how inventory is managed.

These findings are consistent with the study of Secretario and Naval (2021), who found no significant relationship between the length of business operation, current capitalization, and the number of inventory personnel and the effectiveness of inventory management in MSM grocery stores in Daet, Camarines Norte. Longevity in business or having more workers does not automatically lead to better inventory systems. This may be due to the lack of formal training in inventory techniques or the absence of standardized procedures across microenterprises.

In contrast, a statistically significant difference was found in inventory practices based on educational attainment ($F = 3.221$, $p = 0.008$). This highlights that better-educated microentrepreneurs are likelier to apply structured and effective inventory practices.

In the case of Buenavista, a majority of microbusiness owners (53.3%) are college graduates—significantly higher than in many other rural provinces. This provides the municipality a comparative advantage in terms of human capital. However, despite this advantage, most microenterprises in the area still report modest income and limited capitalization, which may be limiting their ability to translate educational attainment into operational excellence without additional support or intervention. This finding is consistent with Ahmad and Zabri (2016), who emphasized that the knowledge level of owner-managers significantly influences inventory system implementation.

Another notable finding is the significant difference in inventory management practices based on average monthly income ($F = 7.463$, $p = 0.000$). Business owners with higher income levels are likelier to have better inventory systems, possibly because they have more capital to invest in tools, systems, or even dedicated staff to manage inventory.

These results can be viewed in light of the constraints faced by low-income microenterprises, as previously highlighted in this study and related literature. Limited income may prevent owners from prioritizing inventory control tools, resulting in poor stock tracking, missed sales, or overstocking. Conversely, higher-income businesses are likely experiencing growth that necessitates better inventory oversight to maintain efficiency.

The study also found a strong significant difference based on capital investment ($F = 16.168$, $p = 0.000$), showing that microenterprises with larger capital allocations can manage inventory effectively.

In Guimaras, 77.4% of businesses operate with ₱1,000,000 or less in capital. The significant relationship between capital and inventory management suggests that businesses with better funding can afford bulk procurement, stock monitoring systems, and perhaps even hiring personnel to handle inventory processes. On the other hand, undercapitalized businesses may only keep minimal stocks, manually track goods, and operate reactively rather than strategically.

This supports the assertion by Secretario and Naval (2021) that while capital does not automatically result in effective practices, it enables the means to adopt them—such as investing in software, hiring competent staff, or accessing inventory analytics. This may indicate a key area for policy intervention in the municipality. If microbusinesses can be supported through accessible financing schemes or capital grants, they may be able to adopt more systematic inventory strategies, leading to improved business performance.

**Table 4** Differences in the Micro-Business Owners' Inventory Management Practices when Grouped According to Variables

| Variables | F-value | P-value | Remarks |
|---|---|---|---|
| Age | 0.637 | 0.636 | Not Significant |
| Educational Attainment | 3.221 | .008 | Significant |
| Average Monthly Income | 7.463 | 0.000 | Significant |
| Length of Operation | 0.148 | 0.964 | Not Significant |
| Number of Workers | 2.078 | 0.127 | Not Significant |
| Capital | 16.168 | 0.000 | Significant |

# CONCLUSIONS

The microbusiness sector in Buenavista, Guimaras, predominantly comprises middle-aged, married, and college-educated individuals operating low-capital, low-income enterprises with minimal staff. Although these businesses play a vital role in the local economy, their growth potential remains limited due to financial constraints and a lack of structural support. While education provides a strong foundation, it must be complemented by access to capital, skill-building, and supportive policy mechanisms for microenterprises to thrive—especially in geographically isolated areas like Guimaras.

These findings underscore the need for multi-level interventions, including improved access to capital, education-to-entrepreneurship pathways, and targeted government programs that foster inclusive and sustainable growth in the microenterprise sector.

Moreover, microbusiness owners in Buenavista, Guimaras, consistently engage in structured and responsible inventory practices, particularly in product availability, stock classification, and loss reporting. While foundational practices are well implemented, there is room for improvement in utilizing inventory data for financial decision-making. Given the existing capacity and willingness to adopt structured approaches, targeted analytics and digital systems support could significantly enhance the region's inventory efficiency and business sustainability.

Furthermore, the analysis confirms that educational attainment, average monthly income, and capital investment significantly affect the inventory management practices of microbusiness owners in Buenavista, Guimaras. These findings highlight the importance of capacity building and financial empowerment as key levers in improving operational effectiveness. Variables such as age, length of business operation, and number of workers, while often considered important, do not significantly impact inventory practices in this context, suggesting that knowledge and resources—not experience or size—are the primary drivers of effective inventory systems among microenterprises in the region.

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