

Assessing Skill Needs for Community-Based Training in Rural Philippines

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Abstract. Rural communities in the Philippines continue to face persistent challenges in accessing structured training programs that build essential administrative and digital skills. Despite the increasing demand for professional competence among grassroots stakeholders, many remain underserved by capacity-building initiatives that are not tailored to their specific contextual realities. This study was conducted to address the identified gap in community-based training opportunities for both local government officials and senior high school students in Barangay Masaplod Sur, Dauin, Negros Oriental. Guided by Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Systems Theory, and Social Action Theory, the research employed a descriptive quantitative approach utilizing a researcher-developed survey instrument. Key areas explored included socio-demographic characteristics, perceived urgency for training, self-rated skill levels, and motivations for participation. Findings revealed that most respondents had little to no exposure to formal training programs, particularly in areas such as records management, office administration, and digital proficiency. The study also noted a mismatch between the community's training needs and the existing support mechanisms available to them. These insights underscore the critical role of higher education institutions in designing and delivering localized extension programs that bridge these capability gaps. By aligning training initiatives with the actual needs and motivations of rural stakeholders, the study advocates for inclusive development strategies that strengthen both governance and employability at the community level.

Keywords: Capacity building; Community extension; Digital skills; Rural development; Training needs.

1.0 Introduction

In many developing nations, particularly in Southeast Asia, community development continues to be hindered by limited access to structured skills training—especially in administrative and digital competencies that are critical for both governance and employability. In the rural areas of the Philippines, these gaps are particularly stark due to the lack of localized, context-driven capacity-building programs that reflect the distinct needs of grassroots stakeholders such as public servants and youth. Although national agencies, such as the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), promote inclusive and lifelong learning, many interventions remain generic, top-down, and inaccessible at the barangay level (TESDA, 2023).

This study is grounded in three complementary frameworks: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Systems Theory, and Social Action Theory. Maslow's model emphasizes the importance of fulfilling individual and community development needs, starting with foundational capacities such as skill acquisition. Systems Theory highlights how

different sectors—education, governance, and civil society—are interconnected and must work synergistically to achieve sustainable outcomes. Meanwhile, Social Action Theory underscores the role of collective engagement and participatory training models in empowering communities to drive their development. Together, these philosophies support a holistic view of skills development as a socio-structural imperative rather than a purely educational endeavor.

Despite increasing recognition of the importance of training needs assessments, significant research gaps remain. First, there is a knowledge gap in understanding the shared training needs of both barangay officials and senior high school students—two groups that are rarely assessed within the same framework, despite their shared roles in grassroots governance and future workforce participation. Second, there is a population gap, as most studies focus on either adult learners or youth in isolation. Finally, a methodological gap is evident in the lack of community-specific, data-driven approaches that integrate socio-demographic insights with motivational and self-assessment metrics. These voids result in poorly targeted extension programs and missed opportunities for inclusive development.

Given these considerations, this study aims to assess the training needs of barangay officials and senior high school students in Barangay Masaplod Sur, Dauin, Negros Oriental. Specifically, it seeks to answer the research question: What are the perceived training needs, self-assessed skill levels, and motivations for participating in community-based training programs among local government officials and senior high school students?

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This study utilized a descriptive quantitative research design to assess the training needs of local government officials and senior high school students in Barangay Masaplod Sur, Dauin, Negros Oriental. A descriptive approach was chosen to allow for systematic observation and quantification of participants' perceived training needs, self-assessed abilities, and enrollment motivations without manipulating variables. This design is appropriate for documenting and interpreting current conditions in community-based settings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

2.2 Research Respondents

The participants consisted of 26 purposively selected individuals comprising barangay officials and senior high school students residing in Barangay Masaplod Sur. A total of 30 questionnaires were distributed, with 26 valid responses retrieved, yielding an 86.7% response rate. Participants were selected based on the following criteria: being aged 16 or older, residing or serving in the barangay, and not having participated in a similar training within the past 12 months. This purposive sampling method ensured that participants had relevant experience or involvement in community service or local administration.

2.3 Research Instruments

Data were gathered using a researcher-made, structured questionnaire that was validated through expert review by three faculty members from the College of Business Administration. The instrument was composed of four sections: (1) socio-demographic profile; (2) perceived urgency for training in five skill areas (records management, minute-taking, office administration, leadership, and IT); (3) self-assessed ability levels in the same areas; and (4) motivations for training participation. A five-point Likert scale was used to measure responses. A pilot test was conducted with five individuals from a neighboring barangay to ensure clarity and reliability. Feedback was used to improve the wording and structure prior to final distribution. A reliability test was conducted using Cronbach's alpha, yielding a result of 0.8.

2.4 Data Gathering Procedure

The data collection took place in February 2024 through face-to-face administration of the survey, following official coordination with barangay leaders and approval from university authorities. Barangay officials were approached during regular sessions, while senior high school students were identified and gathered through the assistance of the Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) Chairperson. Each participant was given time and support to complete the questionnaire independently.

2.5 Data Analysis

Descriptive statistical tools were used to analyze the data. Frequencies and percentages were used for demographic variables, while means and standard deviations were calculated to interpret perceived urgency and ability levels. Training priorities were identified using a ranking based on weighted mean scores. Data were encoded and processed using Microsoft Excel and IBM SPSS Statistics.

2.6 Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to the ethical standards for research involving human participants. All participants were informed about the purpose of the study and provided written informed consent before participating. For students under 18 years of age, guardian notification and consent were obtained. Confidentiality and anonymity were ensured by assigning coded identifiers and not collecting any personally identifying information. The study was reviewed and approved by the College of Business Administration's ethics review committee at Negros Oriental State University.

3.0 Results and Discussion

3.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

In terms of Age

As shown in Table 1, the majority of respondents were aged 16–20 years (53.85%), followed by those aged 21–25 years (23.08%). This reflects the inclusion of senior high school students as key participants. The youth-dominant profile suggests that training content should be accessible, practical, and relevant to the early stages of career development. As noted by Labayo (2022), age-appropriate training interventions improve engagement and learning retention, especially among younger learners.

Table 1. *Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Respondents in terms of Age*

Age Range	Frequency	Percentage (%)
16 – 20	14	53.85
21 – 25	6	23.08
26 – 30	3	11.54
31 and above	3	11.54
Total	26	100.00

In terms of Sex

Table 2 shows a higher proportion of female respondents (69.23%) compared to male respondents (30.77%). This is consistent with Pilvera's (2023) finding that women are more likely to participate in community programs, particularly in administrative or volunteer capacities.

Table 2. *Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Respondents in terms of Sex*

Sex	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	8	30.77
Female	18	69.23
Total	26	100.00

In terms of Educational Background

Table 3 shows that more than half of the participants (53.85%) were senior high school graduates, while 30.77% had reached college level. Only 11.54% were elementary graduates. These findings support the need for training materials that are neither too basic nor too advanced, reinforcing the approach of layered instruction for mixed-ability groups (Albarillo et al., 2022).

Table 3. *Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Respondents in terms of Educational Background*

Educational Attainment	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Elementary Graduate	3	11.54
High School Undergraduate	1	3.85
Senior High School	14	53.85
College Level	8	30.77
Total	26	100.00

In terms of Marital Status

As shown in Table 4, the majority of respondents were single (69.23%), while 30.77% were married. This is consistent with the earlier age profile, as most respondents were within the 16–25 age bracket. The predominance

of single participants further supports the need for career-oriented and foundational training rather than specialized upskilling aimed at experienced workers. Similar demographic patterns were observed in community programs involving youth participants (Rahman et al., 2021).

Table 4. *Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Respondents in terms of Marital Status*

Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Single	18	69.23
Married	8	30.77
Total	26	100.00

In terms of Employment Status

According to Table 5, 57.69% of participants were unemployed. This suggests that the training program can serve as a bridge to employment or entrepreneurship. As De La Cruz et al. (2024) argued, skill training that aligns with labor market gaps in rural areas can improve employment outcomes.

Table 5. *Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Respondents in terms of Employment Status*

Employment Status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Employed	11	41.31
Unemployed	15	57.69
Total	26	100.00

In terms of Company or Office Affiliation

Table 6 shows that 42.31% of respondents were not affiliated with any organization, while 23.08% worked at the barangay hall. A small proportion were part of private offices or student organizations. This mix of affiliations emphasizes the dual target audience of the training program, current local officials and future service workers, and supports the integration of community and academic learning outcomes (De La Cruz et al., 2024).

Table 6. *Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Respondents in terms of Company or Office Affiliation*

Company or Office Affiliation	Frequency	Percentage (%)
None	11	42.31
Barangay Hall	6	23.08
Private Office	4	15.38
Student Council/Student Org.	3	11.54
Others	2	7.69
Total	26	100.00

In terms of Monthly Income

Table 7 reveals that 61.54% of respondents earn less than PHP 5,000 per month, indicating economic vulnerability. Only a small percentage (7.69%) earned above PHP 15,000. The limited financial resources of the participants reinforce the need for free or low-cost training programs, as access to commercial training remains unlikely. This finding supports TESDA's (2023) position on providing publicly funded skills development for low-income communities.

Table 7. *Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Respondents in terms of Monthly Income*

Income Range (Php)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Below 5,000	16	61.54
5,000 – 10,000	6	23.08
10,001 – 15,000	2	7.69
Above 15,000	2	7.69
Total	26	100.00

In terms of Trainings and Seminars Attended

As reflected in Table 8 on the following page, an overwhelming 96.15% of respondents reported not having participated in any formal training in the past year. This data validates the primary assumption of the study – that there is a significant gap in access to capacity-building initiatives. The result further supports the use of a community extension approach to deliver training in underserved localities (Pilvera, 2023).

Table 8. *Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Respondents in terms of Trainings and Seminars Attended*

Trainings and Seminars Attended	Frequency	Percentage (%)
None	25	96.15
Yes	1	3.85
Total	26	100.00

3.2 Perceived Urgency for Training

Respondents were asked to rate the urgency of training in five skill areas. Table 9 shows that records management received the highest urgency score ($M = 4.57$, $SD = 0.63$), followed by office administration and minute-taking. This high perceived urgency reflects the participants' recognition of the growing need for efficient documentation in both governance and school settings. These results align with De La Cruz et al. (2024), who found that record-keeping was among the top training priorities for barangay workers and student leaders.

Table 9. Mean and Standard Deviation of Respondents' Perceived Urgency for Training ($n = 26$)

Trainings Area	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank
Records Management	4.57	0.63	1
Office Administration	4.45	0.65	2
Minute-Taking	4.42	0.69	3
Leadership Skills	4.35	0.71	4
IT Skills	4.27	0.79	5
Community Weighted Mean	4.41	0.69	

The narrow range of means and standard deviations across categories indicates a shared sense of urgency, regardless of the respondents' educational or employment background. Similar trends were reported by Pilvera (2023) in communities with limited access to previous training.

3.3 Self-Assessed Ability Levels

As shown in Table 10, respondents rated themselves highest in office administration ($M = 3.65$, $SD = 0.78$), followed by leadership skills and records management. The lowest self-assessed area was IT skills ($M = 3.34$, $SD = 0.86$), suggesting a lack of digital literacy. Albarillo et al. (2022) and Ji et al. (2024) similarly observed digital skill deficiencies among rural youth and grassroots workers.

Table 10. Mean and Standard Deviation of Respondents' Self-Assessed Ability Levels ($n = 26$)

Trainings Area	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank
Office Administration	3.65	0.78	1
Leadership Skills	3.54	0.81	2
Records Management	3.50	0.84	3
Minute-Taking	3.38	0.90	4
IT Skills	3.34	0.86	5
Community Weighted Mean	3.48	0.83	

The gap between perceived urgency and actual ability – particularly in IT highlights a critical area for intervention. As emphasized by Mangarin et al. (2024), failure to address such skill gaps may limit both public service effectiveness and youth employability.

3.4 Motivations for Enrolling in Training

Table 11 on the next page outlines the reasons respondents were motivated to join training programs. Nearly all participants (96.15%) cited personal development as the primary motivator, followed by skill enhancement (88.46%). These findings align with Labayo (2022), who noted that self-improvement is a major driver of participation in community-based learning.

Table 11. Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Respondents by Reasons for Enrolling in Training

Motivation for Enrolling	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Rank
Personal Development	25	96.15	1
Skill Enhancement	23	88.46	2
Flexibility/Adaptability	20	76.92	3
Career Advancement	13	50.00	4
Community Service Motivation	12	46.15	5

These results suggest that training programs should be positioned not only as skills development efforts but also as opportunities for holistic personal growth. Understanding learner motivation can also guide the design of more engaging and sustainable training models (Rahman et al., 2021).

4.0 Conclusion

This study contributes to the growing body of research on localized capacity-building by identifying specific skill gaps among barangay officials and senior high school students in a rural Philippine context. Rather than offering a generalized overview of training needs, it provides evidence-based insight into which administrative and digital competencies are most urgently needed, as well as how individuals perceive their preparedness. These findings are particularly significant in designing community-informed, inclusive, and responsive extension programs that align with the developmental goals of both governance and education sectors. For practice, the results support the implementation of grassroots-level training that simultaneously addresses the needs of current community leaders and future workforce entrants. For policy, the study reinforces the importance of institutionalizing community-based training modules within the mandates of higher education institutions, particularly state universities responsible for public service delivery. Programs that align with actual community needs can help operationalize national frameworks, such as TESDA's skills development strategy, at the barangay level.

From an educational perspective, the study highlights the value of integrating service-learning and extension activities into professional courses such as the Bachelor of Science in Office Administration. It also calls for the use of differentiated instruction strategies, taking into account the varying educational attainment and digital literacy levels of the participants. Future research should expand this model by applying the same assessment framework in other rural barangays to establish comparative benchmarks. Longitudinal studies could also be conducted to evaluate the long-term impact of training on employment, community involvement, and administrative efficiency. Additionally, exploring hybrid or technology-assisted delivery models could further address accessibility barriers in geographically isolated communities.

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7.0 Conflict of Interests

Not indicated

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