



Original Article

Measuring Sustainability Priorities of Micro-Businesses in Indonesia: A Phenomenology-Based AHP Approach

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Abstract: Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), particularly micro-entities, play a vital role in Indonesia's economy; however, their sustainability is constrained by limited financial reporting practices and low adoption of formal accounting standards. This study aims to identify the most appropriate financial reporting model for micro-enterprises by integrating a phenomenological approach with the Analytical Hierarchy Process (AHP). The qualitative phase employs phenomenology to explore the lived experiences of micro-entrepreneurs regarding financial practices and business continuity, while the quantitative phase uses AHP to determine priority criteria and rank alternative reporting models. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with five micro-entrepreneurs in the informal culinary sector and pairwise comparison questionnaires involving ten respondents (experts and practitioners). The findings reveal that micro-business sustainability is shaped not only by financial considerations but also by practical constraints, cultural values, and religious beliefs. AHP results indicate that Sustainability (49%) is the most important criterion, followed by Convenience (43%) and Compliance (8%). Among the alternatives, the Cash Basis approach ranks highest, outperforming SAK EMKM and Manual Records, as it offers the best balance between ease of use, financial credibility, and operational sustainability. These findings suggest that a pragmatic, context-sensitive accounting approach is more suitable for microenterprises than strictly formal standards. The study concludes that simplified reporting models, such as the Cash Basis, can serve as a transitional framework to enhance financial discipline and improve access to formal finance while aligning with the realities of micro-business operations.

Keywords: Micro-Enterprises; Sustainability; Cash Basis Accounting; Analytical Hierarchy Process (AHP); Phenomenology.

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1. Introduction

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) constitute a fundamental pillar of economic stability, particularly in developing countries such as Indonesia. This sector contributes substantially to Gross Domestic Product (GDP), employs approximately 97% of the total workforce, and plays a crucial role in poverty alleviation (Wijaya, 2025; Aprieni et al., 2024). Empirical evidence indicates that Indonesia's economic structure is overwhelmingly dominated by micro-enterprises, which account for nearly 98% of all business units. As a driver of inclusive economic growth, MSMEs have

demonstrated strong resilience to global economic shocks, making their sustainability a strategic priority for national development (Kholifah & Andini, 2024). Despite their significant contribution, MSMEs continue to face structural challenges, particularly in accessing formal financing. Only about 17.5% of MSMEs successfully obtain bank financing, while the majority rely on internal funds or informal sources (Melati et al., 2024). The low absorption of credit, including the People's Business Credit (KUR) scheme, is largely attributed to information asymmetry between MSMEs and financial institutions. In many cases, loan applications are rejected due to inadequate financial documentation and a lack of a reliable financial track record (Febrianto et al., 2024).

In response to these challenges, the Indonesian Institute of Accountants (IAI) has introduced simplified financial reporting standards. The Financial Accounting Standards for Entities Without Public Accountability (SAK ETAP), introduced in 2011, were initially designed to improve reporting practices among small entities. However, in practice, these standards were considered too complex for micro-enterprises (Lubis & Salsabila, 2024). Consequently, SAK EMKM was developed as a simpler, historical-cost-based framework tailored to the needs and capacities of micro, small, and medium-sized entities, with the aim of enhancing financial transparency and credibility in the eyes of creditors (Fitriana, 2024).

Nevertheless, the implementation of SAK EMKM remains suboptimal. Empirical studies reveal that many micro-businesses still rely on simple cash-based records, focusing solely on inflows and outflows and failing to adhere to formal accounting standards (Amalia, 2024; Rahayu et al., 2025). Several factors contribute to this low adoption rate. First, there is a lack of technical accounting knowledge, even among entrepreneurs with formal educational backgrounds (Huda, 2024; Periska et al., 2024). Second, many business owners perceive that the costs of adopting formal standards outweigh the immediate benefits (Hafsah et al., 2024). Third, the absence of a clear separation between personal and business finances further complicates proper financial reporting practices (Rahayu et al., 2025). In addition, fiscal policy plays an important role in shaping MSMEs' financial behavior. The government has extended the 0.5% final income tax incentive for MSMEs until the end of 2025 to reduce the tax burden (Kompas, 2025; Pajakku, 2025). However, this gross turnover-based taxation system is often perceived as inequitable, as it does not account for operational costs. As a result, MSMEs are required to pay taxes even when their profitability declines (Wulandari & Putra, 2024).

Given these conditions, the sustainability of MSMEs is closely linked to their ability to produce reliable, standardized, and relevant financial reports. Compliance with Indonesian Financial Accounting Standards (SAK) can reduce information asymmetry and improve access to formal financing (Ayem et al., 2024). Therefore, stronger collaboration between government institutions and educational organizations is essential to enhance accounting literacy and promote financial digitalization, enabling MSMEs to evolve into more transparent and accountable entities (Sulisit & Nanda, 2024; Nursasi et al., 2024). Building on this context, the present study highlights that micro-enterprises possess distinct characteristics, including cultural and religious considerations, which influence their financial practices. These characteristics create a gap between formal standards (such as SAK EMKM) and field practices. This study argues that practical considerations, particularly convenience and business entity separation (business unity), are often more important to micro-entrepreneurs than strict compliance with complex accounting standards. Accordingly, this research incorporates these criteria into the selection of appropriate financial reporting models (cash basis versus accrual basis), with the objective of identifying a reporting approach that supports MSME sustainability and long-term business continuity (going concern).

2. Literature Review

2.1 Business Continuity

The concept of business continuity, commonly known as the going-concern principle, assumes that a business will continue its operations in the foreseeable future (Ikatan Akuntan Indonesia, 2023). This principle is fundamental in accounting and auditing, particularly in shaping auditors' opinions regarding an entity's ability to sustain its operations (Uno et al., 2019). A positive audit opinion on going concern enhances investor and stakeholder confidence by signaling financial stability and long-term viability. However, within the context of micro-enterprises, this formal concept is often not fully understood or considered relevant. Micro-entrepreneurs typically operate their businesses with a short-term orientation, primarily to fulfill daily subsistence needs rather than to demonstrate long-term sustainability to external stakeholders (Rayyani et al., 2021). As a result, the practical application of the going concern principle in micro-business settings differs significantly from its conventional interpretation in formal corporate environments.

2.2 Characteristics of Micro-Businesses

Micro-businesses represent the smallest scale of business entities and are generally characterized by informal organizational structures and a strong integration between business activities and household life. One of their defining features is the frequent commingling of personal and business finances, where household consumption needs are often prioritized and directly linked to business cash flows (Akyuwen et al., 2010; Sari & Wijaksono, 2023). This condition

increases the risk of decapitalization and limits businesses' ability to grow sustainably. In addition, microenterprises are typically labor-intensive, rely on simple technologies, and employ low-skilled workers. Despite their limited scale and resources, they play a crucial socio-economic role by providing employment opportunities, particularly for vulnerable and low-income groups. In Indonesia, micro-businesses dominate the economic landscape in terms of number and workforce absorption, making them a central component of inclusive economic development (Kholifah & Andini, 2024).

2.3 Micro-Entities in Indonesia

In Indonesia, the classification of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) is formally defined by Law Number 20 of 2008 concerning MSMEs. This legal framework establishes clear quantitative criteria based on asset ownership and annual turnover to categorize business entities. A business is classified as a micro-enterprise if it has net assets of no more than IDR 50 million (excluding land and buildings used for business purposes) and an annual turnover not exceeding IDR 300 million (Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia Nomor 20 Tahun 2008; Pasal 6). This classification clearly distinguishes micro-enterprises from small and medium enterprises, which operate at higher asset and turnover levels. Empirical data indicate that micro-enterprises dominate Indonesia's economic structure. According to the Ministry of Cooperatives and SMEs and the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), micro-enterprises account for approximately 98.79% of the total 64.2 million MSMEs in Indonesia (Kementerian Koperasi dan UKM Republik Indonesia, 2024). Their contribution to employment is equally significant, absorbing more than 90% of the national workforce (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2023). In terms of economic output, MSMEs contribute around 61% of Indonesia's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), with micro-enterprises forming the largest share (Kementerian Koperasi dan UKM Republik Indonesia, 2024). Despite their substantial aggregate contribution, individual micro-enterprises operate on a very small scale. Their activities are typically managed by individuals or families, utilize simple technologies, and serve local markets (Tambunan, 2021). This highlights a structural characteristic of the Indonesian economy: it is largely supported by a vast number of small-scale, resource-constrained business units whose collective impact is substantial, yet whose individual capacity remains limited.

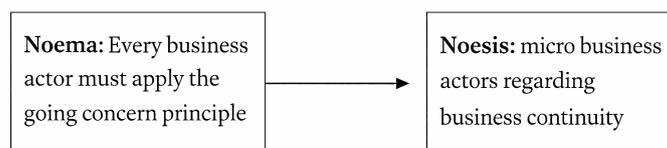


Figure 1. Business Continuity

3. Materials and Methods

This study adopts a mixed-methods approach, integrating qualitative and quantitative techniques to provide a comprehensive analysis. In the qualitative phase, a phenomenological approach is employed to explore the lived experiences and underlying meanings held by micro-entrepreneurs regarding financial practices and business continuity (*going concern*). This approach enables a deeper understanding of how business actors interpret and implement financial management in their daily operations. In the quantitative phase, the study utilizes the Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) to determine priority strategies and identify the most appropriate financial reporting model. The AHP analysis is based on criteria derived from the qualitative findings, thereby ensuring that the quantitative model reflects real-world practices and perceptions.

The subjects of this study consist of micro-business actors, specifically informal sector food stall owners, as well as external stakeholders such as banking practitioners who act as users of financial information. The study's objects include business characteristics, financial separation practices (business entity concept), perceptions of business continuity (*going concern*), and accounting information needs. A purposive sampling technique was used to select informants who could provide rich, relevant insights. The inclusion criteria were: (1) owners of food stalls that have operated for at least 10 years, and (2) businesses that demonstrated resilience by surviving the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on these criteria, five (5) micro-entrepreneurs were selected as informants. This sample size is consistent with phenomenological research guidelines, which consider 5–25 participants adequate to capture the essence of lived experiences (Creswell, 1998).

Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews and pairwise comparison questionnaires. The interviews employed open-ended questions, beginning with discussions on business survival during crises and extending to bookkeeping practices and financial information needs. In addition, AHP data were collected from 10 Informants, comprising 8 academic experts and 2 banking practitioners, to assess the relative importance of the identified criteria. The qualitative data were analyzed using a phenomenological analysis framework, which involves identifying noema (observable phenomena), applying epoche (bracketing prior assumptions), and deriving noesis (the underlying meanings). Coding techniques were used to systematically interpret interview data and extract key themes

related to financial management and business sustainability. To enhance analytical rigor, the qualitative findings were subsequently transformed into a quantitative decision-making model using AHP. This integration allows subjective perceptions of informants to be quantified and systematically evaluated in determining accounting policy priorities for micro-enterprises. The AHP procedure was conducted through several stages: (i) Pairwise Comparison – evaluating the relative importance of criteria using Saaty's 1–9 scale; (ii) Priority Synthesis – calculating local and global weights to identify the most preferred alternative; and (iii) Consistency Testing – ensuring the reliability of judgments by maintaining a Consistency Ratio (CR) of less than 0.1. Through this integrated approach, the study aims to identify a financial reporting model that aligns with the practical realities of micro-businesses while supporting their long-term sustainability.

4. Results

4.1. Description of Research Informants

The informants in this study consisted of five micro-entrepreneurs operating in the informal culinary sector. All informants met the criteria of micro-enterprises, with assets below IDR 50 million and annual turnover below IDR 300 million. The businesses included street food vendors selling chicken porridge, noodle soup, chicken noodles, green bean porridge, Madura-style dishes, and various types of satay (chicken, beef, and tongue). All informants operated roadside stalls without permanent buildings and had maintained their businesses for approximately 10 years. Their business models were characterized by simple operational systems and minimal administrative practices. Notably, none of the informants maintained systematic financial records or formal bookkeeping. Field observations revealed significant weaknesses in internal control systems across these businesses.

For example, in satay and porridge stalls, customers typically self-report the quantity consumed at the time of payment. This practice often leads to discrepancies, whether intentional or unintentional. In some cases, customers consumed more items than they reported, for instance, consuming five satay skewers but only paying for three. This issue arises from the lack of monitoring mechanisms, such as tracking the number of items served or consumed per customer. Similar conditions were observed in other micro-enterprises, including a Padang-style satay vendor operating on a sidewalk using the yard of a shop that closes at night. In addition to satay, the vendor sold snacks such as peanuts, crackers, and beverages. However, no systematic recording of orders or inventory control was implemented. As a result, inaccuracies frequently occurred in calculating customer consumption. The seller did not document the number of portions sold or monitor the distribution of snacks and drinks, leading to potential revenue leakage.

4.2 Understanding the Principle of Business Continuity

The findings from data collection and analysis reveal a critical distinction between formal accounting concepts and practical business realities. From a phenomenological perspective, the noema (objective phenomenon) identified in this study is the principle that every business actor, regardless of scale, should apply the *going concern* concept. This principle assumes that a business will continue operating in the foreseeable future and serves as a fundamental basis for financial reporting (Ikatan Akuntan Indonesia, 2023). From a theoretical standpoint, applying the going concern principle implies that businesses should monitor financial performance through indicators such as financial ratios and implement internal control systems to ensure operational stability and growth (Arimurti & Hidayaty, 2022). These practices are essential in formal business environments to support long-term sustainability.

However, the noesis (subjective meaning) derived from micro-entrepreneurs' experiences reveals a contrasting reality. Despite lacking formal financial management practices, including financial ratio analysis and structured internal controls, these businesses have demonstrated the ability to survive for more than five years. Their sustainability is not driven by formal accounting compliance but rather by intuitive decision-making, daily cash flow awareness, and strong social relationships within their local communities (Sari & Wijaksono, 2023). These findings highlight that, for micro-enterprises, business continuity is interpreted pragmatically rather than formally. Survival is achieved through adaptive practices, experience-based judgment, and trust-based transactions, rather than through adherence to standardized financial frameworks. Consequently, the concept of going concern in the micro-business context is embedded in practical resilience rather than formal financial indicators.

Table 1. Results of Data Collection and Analysis Using a Phenomenological Approach

Noema	Noesis (Interpretation)
Every business actor has implemented the principle of going concern in their own perception.	1. Weak internal control does not necessarily lead to business failure. Losses from poor control are often perceived as insignificant, as business owners believe they can be offset by profits from other sales.

Noema	Noesis (Interpretation)
	2. Business owners do not prioritize high profits; instead, they aim to sell out their products daily so that the income can meet immediate living needs. 3. Micro-entrepreneurs are generally survival-oriented rather than growth-oriented. 4. Cultural and religious values influence how business activities are conducted and decisions are made. 5. Business actors rarely perceive losses from weak internal control as substantial or threatening to business continuity. 6. High levels of trust toward customers often result in minor miscalculations, particularly for low-value transactions. 7. Cultural and religious elements consistently shape business practices and reinforce informal management approaches.

Table 1 shows that the five respondents have fairly consistent criteria regarding their perceptions of sustainability and the importance of implementing the SAK EMKM accounting standards. In this discussion, it is necessary to emphasize that SAK EMKM encompasses micro, small, and medium-sized entities, each with distinct characteristics, particularly micro-entities. The micro-entities that are the focus of this discussion require special consideration, as their operational scale and owner-manager characteristics differ significantly from those of formal small and medium enterprises (Sari & Wijaksono, 2023). The key question is whether these entities should be elevated to a more formal level or allowed to continue operating with simplified practices. While efforts are being made to increase the number of micro-entities, their contribution to GDP should be maximized not only through quantity but also through improved productivity and access to formal finance, which requires better financial reporting (Kementerian Koperasi dan UKM RI, 2024).

In relation to these characteristics, the results of the phenomenological study indicate several key criteria, namely convenience, compliance, business unity, and spiritual values. The identification of these criteria follows a bottom-up approach, where they emerge from the real challenges and needs of business actors (Amalia, 2024). The convenience criterion reflects the extent to which a method can be implemented independently by the owner without external assistance. This highlights that the primary constraints faced by micro-entrepreneurs are often limited time and accounting knowledge, rather than capital alone (Periska et al., 2024). The compliance criterion refers to the extent to which financial reports are acceptable to banks for credit applications, a factor crucial to business growth (Ayem et al., 2024). The business entity criterion reflects the ability to separate personal and business finances, which remains a fundamental challenge for micro-entrepreneurs (Rahayu et al., 2025). Meanwhile, the spiritual values criterion aligns with the mindset of business actors who prioritize blessings (*barakah*) and inner peace, where business sustainability is not solely driven by profit (Ahmad & Mardani, 2023).

For micro-entities such as food stalls, profit remains important; however, maintaining operational sustainability is a greater challenge. Many businesses that generate profits still fail due to the commingling of personal and business funds (Akyuwen et al., 2010). Therefore, this study focuses more on how financial information is generated (convenience) and how businesses sustain their operations (spiritual values and business unity). The cash basis approach is used to test the hypothesis that disciplined cash flow recording can serve as a practical starting point for micro-entities (Huda, 2024). SAK EMKM is included as the formal benchmark for measuring the gap between ideal standards and actual practice (Lubis & Salsabila, 2024), while the traditional manual method serves as the status quo for evaluating its continued relevance.

The main rationale for combining these criteria is to identify a balanced approach. If only convenience is prioritized, business actors may remain dependent on manual records but fail to meet bank compliance requirements. Conversely, if compliance is prioritized, SAK EMKM may be appropriate but could be impractical for daily implementation (Hafsah et al., 2024). The cash basis approach is therefore proposed as a potential middle ground by operationally feasible, moderately compliant, and supportive of financial discipline. The selection of these criteria is based not only on the literature but also on observed limitations in implementing formal standards within the micro sector. By integrating both technical and philosophical dimensions, this study aims to propose a model that is both practical and accountable.

4.3. Financial Practices and Business Continuity Behavior

The results of data collection and analysis indicate that the observed micro-entrepreneurs, particularly street food vendors, have limited understanding of formal internal control concepts. They tend to operate their businesses based on intuition and practical experience rather than structured systems or formal financial calculations.

"Yes, we just go with it, Miss. The ordering process is usually like that. It's just me and my child, so I don't have time to take notes (i.e., record orders). Usually, I remember what was ordered; if I forget, I just ask. Later, when it's time to pay, the customer simply tells me what they ordered."

"Oh, there's no record, really. The staff usually remembers what the orders were. When it's time to pay, my staff helps count the orders and checks them."

Interviews revealed that the absence of record-keeping is largely due to operational constraints. Most businesses are managed by only one or two individuals, making it difficult to handle both customer service and administrative tasks simultaneously. As a result, transactions are rarely documented, and reliance is placed on memory or customer self-reporting during payment. This informal approach reflects a deliberate choice to prioritize efficiency and service speed over accuracy and control. This finding highlights a key characteristic of micro-enterprises: operational simplicity is preferred over formal management systems. Business owners perceive that recording transactions or implementing internal controls may slow down their workflow. For instance, allowing customers to directly take items such as satay or snacks reduces service time but also increases the risk of miscalculation and revenue leakage. However, such risks are generally tolerated and considered part of normal business operations.

Despite their limited knowledge of formal accounting principles, these entrepreneurs demonstrate an implicit understanding of business continuity (*going concern*). While they may not explicitly apply theoretical concepts, they practice basic financial management in their daily activities. One common practice is separating daily income into business capital and personal use. Typically, a portion of revenue is retained as operating capital for the following day, while the remainder is used to cover household expenses. This behavior indicates an informal application of the business-entity concept, in which business and personal finances are only partially separated. Such practices enable micro-entrepreneurs to maintain operational continuity and make basic financial decisions, even in the absence of formal financial reporting systems. Although they are unable to prepare standardized financial statements, their intuitive financial management supports business sustainability.

*"Every day I count how much I earn; I save the capital, and the rest is for food and household needs."
(Every day I count how much I earn, save the capital, and use the remainder for food and home expenses.)*

Furthermore, the study finds that these micro-entrepreneurs do not adopt formal strategic planning to ensure business survival. Instead, their approach is largely reactive and grounded in resilience. Their primary objective is not business expansion but daily survival, ensuring that income is sufficient to meet immediate living needs. This survival-oriented mindset is supported by non-economic factors such as perseverance, cultural values, and religious beliefs. Business continuity is also reinforced by strong family involvement. Many businesses are managed collectively by family members, including children and in-laws, which strengthens operational sustainability across generations. The intention to continue the business long-term is evident, even in the absence of formal planning or performance measurement systems.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, these characteristics became more evident. Rather than ceasing operations, business owners chose to persist despite declining revenues. Their primary survival strategy was to rely on personal savings to sustain production and cover operational costs. Although microenterprises are inherently vulnerable due to limited assets, the findings show that resilience, adaptability, and strong personal commitment are crucial for maintaining business continuity. These results suggest that, in the context of micro-enterprises, business sustainability is not solely determined by formal financial structures or asset size. Instead, it is driven by practical financial habits, social capital, and the entrepreneurs' mindset. This supports previous findings that small asset ownership does not necessarily indicate an inability to sustain business operations, and that going concern in micro-enterprises is shaped more by behavioral and contextual factors than by formal financial indicators.

4.4. Sustainability of Micro-Entities

The findings reveal a consistent pattern among respondents, characterized by determination, surrender, trust in God's provision, and sincerity. These principles shape the understanding that business is not merely about production, marketing, financial evaluation, or financial management. Instead, non-economic dimensions also play a crucial role in determining business success. In the context of micro-enterprises, which inherently possess unique characteristics, this study highlights a strong connection between business practices and cultural and religious values.

"I am sincere, Miss. If one or two satay skewers are not counted, it is fine. I consider it as my charity for today. I do not count those items because they are not significant. There is still profit."

One of the distinctive characteristics of micro-enterprises is the highly personal nature of business perception. Since these businesses are typically owned and managed solely by the owner, individual cultural, religious, and social values strongly influence how they are operated. The respondents demonstrated a sense of religiosity that is reflected in their daily behavior and business practices. This includes values such as honesty, respect, charity, and acceptance of God's will (Fauzan, 2013). For example, one respondent with a Madurese background and Islamic beliefs interprets the concept of business continuity (*going concern*) through a religious lens. According to this perspective, sincerity, charitable actions, and trust in God's destiny will lead to increased blessings. Profit is not viewed solely in monetary terms; instead, sustainability is also reflected in non-material outcomes such as health, peace of mind, and comfort in worship. These values shape their understanding of business continuity.

"The most important thing about a business is that it can provide for daily needs, and most importantly, that it is blessed."

The concept of *blessing (barakah)*, which is intangible and immeasurable, becomes the primary objective of these micro-businesses, rather than growth, high profit, or optimal capital structure. Business actors believe that by practicing ethical conduct and adhering to religious values, they can achieve both spiritual and operational sustainability (Ahmad & Mardani, 2023). This perspective is particularly evident among Madurese-origin respondents who adhere to Islam. Madurese culture is closely intertwined with Islamic values, in which religion is an integral part of social and cultural identity (Nasrullah, 2019). The integration of Islam into local culture has resulted in strong acceptance and implementation of values such as trust (*amanah*), honesty (*shiddiq*), and the pursuit of blessed income (Fauzi & Nisa, 2024). Consequently, this socio-cultural and religious foundation significantly influences how micro-entrepreneurs perceive business sustainability and make decisions in their daily operations.

4.5. Informants Perception

Data collected from 10 respondents (business actors/experts) showed a stark contrast between perceptions of operational ease and the need for formality. In the Simplicity Criterion, the Cash Basis received a perfect score (50), far surpassing Manual Notes (40) and SAK EMKM (25). Respondents considered the Cash Basis model to be the most realistic for traders with limited time. Interestingly, Manual Notes ranked second, indicating that although they are considered "easy," respondents realized that overly simple records can make it difficult to determine the final balance. SAK EMKM was considered the most difficult because it requires knowledge of technical accounting. When it comes to capital access within the Regulatory Compliance Criterion, the Cash Basis again leads with a score of 50, followed by SAK EMKM (40) and Manual Notes (20). An interesting finding is that respondents rated the Cash Basis as equivalent to, or even more convincing than, SAK EMKM for banking purposes. This suggests that for banks targeting the micro sector, clarity of cash flow is much more valued than complex but difficult-to-verify financial statements. Manual records are considered the least credible by financial institutions.

In the Business Continuity Criterion (Going Concern & Spiritual), which reflects a more philosophical dimension, SAK EMKM narrowly leads with a score of 40, followed by Cash Basis (35) and Manual Records (20). Respondents acknowledged that the formal standard (SAK EMKM) provides the most structured approach for maintaining financial discipline and separating personal and business assets. However, the Cash Basis closely follows, as it is perceived to maintain the "dignity" of the business by recording cash inflows and outflows honestly. Manual records were considered inadequate for supporting business continuity due to the high risk of data loss and unclear separation of funds. Based on the distribution of scores, it can be concluded that the Cash Basis is the "perception winner" in practice. Although SAK EMKM is theoretically superior in ensuring business continuity through a comprehensive reporting structure, respondents tend to prefer the Cash Basis because it offers an optimal balance (trade-off). The Cash Basis not only provides the convenience required by busy traders but also delivers a relatively high level of credibility for banking purposes. These findings reinforce the argument that accounting for micro-entities should be pragmatic rather than purely administratively ideal.

4.6. AHP Analysis

4.6.1. Pairwise Comparison

The pairwise comparison matrix above illustrates the relative ratings among three main criteria: Convenience (C1), Compliance (C2), and Sustainability (C3). The values in this matrix are obtained using Saaty's 1–9 scale, where 1 indicates equal importance and 9 indicates significantly higher importance. For example, a value of 5 in the cell comparing C1 to C2 indicates that Convenience is considered five times more important than Compliance, while a value of 0.2 in the opposite cell (C2 relative to C1) represents the reciprocal relationship (1/5). The column totals at the bottom of the matrix 2.2 for C1, 12.0 for C2, and 2.16 for C3 represent the sums of each column and are used in the normalization stage.

Table 2. Pairwise Comparison Matrix of Criteria

Criteria	Convenience (C1)	Compliance (C2)	Sustainability (C3)
Convenience (C1)	1	5	1
Compliance (C2)	0.20 (1/5)	1	0.16 (1/6)
Sustainability (C3)	1	6	1
Total Column	2.2	12	2.16

Table 2 shows that Ease of Use (C1) and Sustainability (C3) have a symmetrical reciprocal relationship (value = 1 in the C1–C3 and C3–C1 comparisons), indicating that both criteria are considered equally important. However, Sustainability obtains the highest comparison value relative to Compliance, namely 6, which confirms that Sustainability is considered much more important than Compliance. On the other hand, Compliance (C2) appears to be the criterion with the lowest influence, as indicated by its comparison values of less than 1 against the other two criteria (0.2 and 0.16). This pattern suggests that, in this decision-making context, Sustainability and Ease of Use are prioritized, while Compliance has a relatively smaller weight.

This pairwise comparison matrix serves as the main foundation in the Analytical Hierarchy Process (AHP) calculations. Using this matrix, the relative weight of each criterion is derived by normalizing its values to the sum of the column. The calculated column totals (2.2, 12.0, and 2.16) are used as divisors for each cell in the corresponding column, resulting in a normalized matrix. From this normalized matrix, the average value of each row produces the final weight of each criterion. Thus, this matrix not only represents the subjective preferences of decision-makers but also serves as the basis for objective quantitative calculations to determine priorities among the three competing criteria.

Table 3. Normalization Matrix and Priority Weights

Criteria	Convenience (C1)	Compliance (C2)	Sustainability (C3)	Average per Row (Priority Weight)
Convenience (C1)	$1 / 2.2 = 0.454$	$5 / 12.0 = 0.416$	$1 / 2.16 = 0.462$	$(0.454 + 0.416 + 0.462) / 3 = 0.44$
Compliance (C2)	$0.2 / 2.2 = 0.090$	$1 / 12.0 = 0.083$	$0.16 / 2.16 = 0.074$	$(0.090 + 0.083 + 0.074) / 3 = 0.08$
Sustainability (C3)	$1 / 2.2 = 0.454$	$6 / 12.0 = 0.500$	$1 / 2.16 = 0.462$	$(0.454 + 0.500 + 0.462) / 3 = 0.47$
Total Column	1	1	1	Total Weight = 1.00

Table 3 shows the normalization process of the pairwise comparison matrix to obtain the priority weights for each criterion. Normalization is performed by dividing each element in a column by the corresponding column total, so that each column sums to 1.000. For example, for the Convenience column (C1), which has a total of 2.2, the value of cell C1–C1 (1) is divided by 2.2 to obtain 0.454, the value of cell C2–C1 (0.2) is divided by 2.2 to obtain 0.090, and the value of cell C3–C1 (1) is divided by 2.2 to obtain 0.454. A similar process is applied to the Compliance (C2) and Sustainability (C3) columns, resulting in a normalized matrix that allows for consistent comparison across criteria.

The total priority weights of exactly 1.00 confirm the validity of the normalization and row-average calculations. These weights represent the quantitative results of the initial subjective assessments in the pairwise comparison matrix, which have been transformed mathematically to produce consistent priorities. In the context of priority synthesis, these criterion weights will be used as multipliers to aggregate the alternatives' scores for each criterion, resulting in a global ranking of the alternatives. With Sustainability dominating (49%), the final decision will be strongly influenced by how well the alternatives meet the sustainability criterion.

Table 4. Conclusions and Priority Ranking of Criteria

Ranking	Criteria	Priority Weight	Percentage	Information
1	Sustainability	0.49	49%	The most influential criterion in decision-making
2	Convenience	0.43	43%	A criterion with high influence
3	Compliance	0.08	8%	The least influential criterion

After the matrix is normalized, the priority weight of each criterion is calculated by averaging the values in each row. The row average indicates the extent to which each criterion contributes to the decision objective. The calculation produces a weight for Convenience (C1) of 0.43, obtained from $(0.454 + 0.416 + 0.462)/3$; a weight for Compliance (C2) of 0.08 from $(0.090 + 0.083 + 0.074)/3$; and a weight for Sustainability (C3) of 0.49 from $(0.454 + 0.500 + 0.462)/3$.

These results indicate that Sustainability is the most important criterion, with a weight of 49%, followed by Convenience at 43%, and Compliance at only 8% (see Table 4).

Table 5. Respondent Assessment Matrix (Cumulative Scores)

Alternative Strategy	Ease of Use	Banking Compliance	Sustainability
Cash Basis	50	50	35
SAK EMKM	25	40	40
Manual Record	40	20	20
Total Score	115	110	95

Table 5 presents the cumulative evaluation scores of three alternative financial reporting strategies—Cash Basis, SAK EMKM, and Manual Record across three key criteria: Ease of Use, Banking Compliance, and Sustainability. These scores reflect respondents' aggregated perceptions regarding the effectiveness and practicality of each alternative in the context of micro-enterprises. From the Ease-of-Use perspective, the Cash Basis method achieves the highest score (50), followed by Manual Record (40), while SAK EMKM records the lowest score (25). This indicates that respondents perceive the Cash Basis as the most practical and user-friendly approach for micro-entrepreneurs, particularly those with limited time and accounting knowledge. Although the manual record is also considered relatively simple, it is viewed as less structured, which may reduce its effectiveness. In contrast, SAK EMKM is perceived as the most complex, requiring a higher level of technical understanding and formal accounting skills.

In terms of Banking Compliance, the Cash Basis method again ranks highest (50), followed by SAK EMKM (40) and Manual Record (20). This finding is particularly significant, as it suggests that respondents believe the Cash Basis provides sufficient financial clarity, especially regarding cash flow to meet banking requirements. While SAK EMKM is formally designed to comply with accounting standards, its complexity may limit its practical usability. Manual Record, on the other hand, is considered the least reliable and least credible for financial institutions due to its lack of structure and standardization. Regarding Sustainability, SAK EMKM obtains the highest score (40), followed closely by Cash Basis (35), while Manual Record again ranks lowest (20). This suggests that respondents recognize the strength of SAK EMKM in supporting long-term business sustainability, particularly through structured reporting and better separation of financial information. However, the Cash Basis approach remains competitive because it is perceived to support operational continuity by providing consistent and honest tracking of cash inflows and outflows. Manual Record is considered insufficient for sustaining business operations due to risks such as data loss, inaccuracies, and a lack of financial discipline.

When considering the total scores across all criteria, the Cash Basis method emerges as the most preferred alternative overall. It achieves the highest combined performance due to its strong balance between simplicity, practical compliance, and reasonable support for sustainability. SAK EMKM ranks second, demonstrating its strength in sustainability and compliance, but facing limitations in ease of use. Manual Record ranks lowest across all criteria, indicating that, while simple, it lacks the reliability and structure to support business growth and financial credibility. The results suggest that the Cash Basis approach represents the most pragmatic solution for micro-enterprises. It effectively balances operational feasibility with institutional acceptability, making it a suitable transitional model between informal practices and formal accounting standards. These findings reinforce the argument that accounting models for micro-entities should prioritize practicality and adaptability while gradually improving financial discipline and reporting quality.

Table 6. Final AHP Scores and Ranking of Alternative Strategies

Alternative Strategy	Ease of Use	Banking Compliance	Sustainability	Final Score	Rank
Cash Basis	0.187	0.036	0.181	0.404	1
SAK EMKM	0.093	0.029	0.207	0.329	2
Manual Record	0.15	0.015	0.102	0.329	3
Total Score				1	

Table 6 presents the results of the Analytical Hierarchy Process (AHP), showing the weighted scores and ranking of three alternative financial reporting strategies: Cash Basis, SAK EMKM, and Manual Record. The final scores are obtained by multiplying each alternative's performance score under each criterion by its corresponding criterion weight, then aggregating the results. The Cash Basis approach achieves the highest final score of 0.404, ranking first among the alternatives. This result reflects its strong performance across all criteria, particularly in Ease of Use (0.187) and Sustainability (0.181). Although its Banking Compliance score (0.036) is relatively modest, the overall balance across criteria enables it to outperform the other alternatives. This finding indicates that the Cash Basis method offers the most

practical and adaptable solution for micro-enterprises, as it aligns well with their operational constraints while still providing sufficient credibility for external stakeholders such as financial institutions.

The SAK EMKM alternative ranks second with a final score of 0.329. Its strongest performance lies in the Sustainability criterion (0.207), which is the highest among all alternatives. This confirms that SAK EMKM is, in theory, the most robust model for ensuring long-term business continuity through structured, standardized financial reporting. However, its relatively low Ease of Use score (0.093) limits its overall performance. This suggests that while SAK EMKM is conceptually superior, its complexity limits its practical applicability for micro-entrepreneurs, who often lack the time and technical expertise required to implement it. The Manual Record method also obtains a total score of 0.329, placing it in third position. Despite a relatively high Ease of Use score (0.150), its performance in Banking Compliance (0.015) and Sustainability (0.102) is significantly lower than that of the other alternatives. This indicates that while manual recording systems are simple and accessible, they lack the structure, reliability, and credibility needed to support business growth and long-term sustainability. The equal final score with SAK EMKM reflects a trade-off: Manual Record excels in simplicity but fails in formal requirements, whereas SAK EMKM excels in structure but struggles in usability.

The results demonstrate that the Cash Basis approach emerges as the most balanced and pragmatic alternative. Even though Sustainability is identified as the most important criterion in the AHP weighting, Cash Basis remains competitive in this dimension while significantly outperforming others in Ease of Use. This balance allows it to achieve the highest overall score. These findings highlight an important implication: for micro-enterprises, the most effective financial reporting model is not necessarily the most theoretically comprehensive, but rather the one that best aligns with practical realities. The Cash Basis approach represents a middle ground between informal practices and formal standards, offering a feasible pathway toward improved financial discipline, enhanced access to finance, and sustained business continuity.

Table 7. Consistency Ratio (CR) Calculation

Parameter	Value	Information
Consistency Index (CI)	0.002	Result obtained from the consistency index calculation
Random Index (RI)	0.58	Saaty's standard value for $n = 3$ criteria
CR Formula	$CR = CI / RI$	$CR = 0.002 \div 0.58$
Consistency Ratio (CR)	0.0034	Final result (≈ 0.00345)

Table 7 presents the results of the consistency test conducted within the Analytical Hierarchy Process (AHP) framework. The consistency test is a critical step in AHP, as it assesses whether respondents' pairwise comparisons are logically consistent and reliable for decision-making. The Consistency Index (CI) obtained in this study is 0.002, which indicates a very low level of inconsistency in the pairwise comparison matrix. The CI reflects the degree to which the judgments deviate from perfect consistency. A value close to zero suggests that respondents' comparisons are highly coherent and logically structured. The Random Index (RI) used in this calculation is 0.58, which corresponds to Saaty's standard value for a matrix of size $n = 3$ criteria. The RI represents the average consistency index derived from randomly generated pairwise comparison matrices and serves as a benchmark for evaluating the CI. Using these values, the Consistency Ratio (CR) is calculated based on the formula:

$$CR = \frac{RI}{CI}$$

Substituting the values:

$$CR = \frac{0.002}{0.58} \approx 0.0034$$

The resulting CR value of 0.0034 (approximately 0.00345) is significantly below the commonly accepted threshold of 0.10. According to AHP standards, a CR value below 0.10 indicates that the level of inconsistency is acceptable and that the judgments can be considered reliable. This result demonstrates that the pairwise comparisons used in this study are highly consistent, thereby validating the credibility of the derived priority weights. The extremely low CR value further indicates that respondents had a clear and stable preference structure when evaluating the criteria of Convenience, Compliance, and Sustainability. In practical terms, this high level of consistency strengthens the robustness of the study's findings. It confirms that the resulting priority rankings and final AHP scores are based on logically sound judgments, making them suitable for supporting decision-making regarding the most appropriate financial reporting model for micro-enterprises.

5. Conclusions

This study aims to identify the most appropriate financial reporting model for micro-enterprises in Indonesia by integrating a phenomenological approach with the Analytical Hierarchy Process (AHP). The findings reveal that micro-business sustainability is not solely driven by formal accounting standards but is strongly influenced by practical, cultural, and spiritual dimensions embedded in daily business activities. The phenomenological analysis shows that micro-entrepreneurs operate based on simplicity, trust, and deeply rooted cultural and religious values. Concepts such as sincerity, acceptance, and belief in *barakah* (blessing) shape their perception of business continuity (*going concern*), which is interpreted more as the ability to sustain daily operations rather than achieving long-term financial growth through formal metrics.

From the AHP results, Sustainability (49%) emerges as the most important criterion, followed by Convenience (43%) and Compliance (8%). This indicates that micro-entrepreneurs prioritize business continuity and operational practicality over formal regulatory requirements. In evaluating alternative financial reporting models, the Cash Basis approach ranks first, outperforming SAK EMKM and Manual Records. The Cash Basis method is perceived as the most balanced solution, offering ease of implementation, sufficient credibility for financial institutions, and adequate support for business sustainability. While SAK EMKM provides a more comprehensive and theoretically robust framework, its complexity limits its applicability in the micro-business context. Meanwhile, Manual Records, although simple, lack the structure and reliability required for long-term sustainability and access to formal finance. This study concludes that a pragmatic and adaptive accounting approach is more suitable for micro-enterprises than a purely formal and standardized system. The Cash Basis model can serve as a transitional framework that bridges informal practices and formal accounting standards, supporting both operational feasibility and gradual financial discipline.

5.1. Research Limitations

This study has several limitations. First, the sample size is relatively small, consisting of only five micro-entrepreneurs and ten respondents for the AHP analysis, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Second, the study focuses primarily on micro-businesses in the informal culinary sector, which may not fully represent other types of micro-enterprises with different operational characteristics. Third, the phenomenological approach relies on subjective interpretations of participants' experiences, which, although rich in insight, may introduce potential bias. Finally, the AHP model is based on perceived preferences rather than actual financial performance data, which may affect the objectivity of the results.

5.2. Policy Implications

5.2.1. Implications for Theory

This study contributes to the literature by integrating phenomenology and AHP in understanding micro-enterprise financial behavior. It extends the concept of *going concern* by incorporating cultural and spiritual dimensions, demonstrating that business sustainability in micro-enterprises is not purely economic but also socially and spiritually constructed. Furthermore, it highlights the importance of contextualizing accounting standards, suggesting that rigid, one-size-fits-all frameworks may not be suitable for micro-scale businesses.

5.2.2. Implications for Practice and Policy

From a practical and policy perspective, the findings suggest that policymakers and regulators should adopt a more flexible, tiered approach to accounting standards for microenterprises. Rather than enforcing full compliance with complex standards such as SAK EMKM, it is necessary to promote simplified, practical reporting models, such as the Cash Basis, as an entry point. Government institutions and financial regulators should also:

1. Develop simplified accounting guidelines tailored specifically for micro-enterprises.
2. Enhance financial literacy and training programs, focusing on practical bookkeeping methods that align with the daily realities of business actors.
3. Encourage financial institutions to recognize alternative reporting formats, particularly cash-based reports, when assessing micro-enterprise creditworthiness.
4. Promote digital financial tools that simplify record-keeping while maintaining usability for low-capacity users.

Additionally, integrating cultural and religious values into financial education programs may improve acceptance and adoption among micro-entrepreneurs, as these values play a significant role in shaping their business behavior.

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