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The Influence of Financial Literacy, Digital Payment Systems, and Tax Incentives on the Business Sustainability of Culinary MSMEs in Lubuk Pakam District

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ABSTRACT

This research examines how financial literacy, digital payment systems, and tax incentives affect the sustainability of culinary MSMEs in Lubuk Pakam District. A quantitative method was applied, using primary data collected for the study. The population in this study is all culinary MSMEs in Lubuk Pakam District, totaling 108 culinary MSMEs. The study involved 52 culinary MSMEs as respondents, selected through purposive sampling. The data were examined through validity and reliability assessments, descriptive statistical analysis, classical assumption testing, multiple linear regression, t-tests, F-tests, and coefficient of determination analysis. The findings indicate that financial literacy has a significant and positive relationship with the sustainability of culinary MSMEs. Tax incentives have a positive and significant effect on the business sustainability of culinary MSMEs. Financial literacy, digital payment systems, and tax incentives jointly have a significant effect on the sustainability of culinary MSMEs. The three variables contribute 33.9% to business sustainability, while the other 66.1% is explained by factors beyond this research. The findings show that financial knowledge, digital payment adoption, and tax incentives support the continued operation of culinary MSMEs.

Keywords: Business Sustainability, Culinary MSMEs, Digital Payment Systems, Financial Literacy, Tax Incentives

INTRODUCTION

MSMEs play an important role in Indonesia's economy, contributing over 60% of GDP and employing around 97% of the workforce (UKM Indonesia, 2023). while also supporting poverty reduction and national competitiveness (Situmorang, 2025). According to SIDT-UMKM data as of December 31, 2025, Indonesia had 30,209,069 non-agricultural MSMEs, growing by only 0.10%, with micro enterprises accounting for 99.70%. Accommodation and food services ranked among the largest sectors, with 6.41 million businesses. Culinary MSMEs support local economic activity and consumer demand (Rezeki et al., 2025), while the food and beverage industry grew by 6.49% in the third quarter of 2025 (Kadin Indonesia, 2025). The food and beverage industry also grew by 6.49% in the third quarter of 2025 (Investor Trust, 2026). At the regional level, Table 1 presents the number of micro and small enterprises and the entrepreneurship ratio in Deli Serdang Regency from 2020 to 2024.

Table 1.
Trends in Micro and Small Enterprises in Deli Serdang Regency, 2020–2024

Year	Number of Micro and Small Enterprises (Units)	Growth (%)	Entrepreneurship Ratio (%)
2020	25,402	-	7.02%
2021	26,818	5.57%	7.67%
2022	27,186	1.37%	9.35%
2023	140,059	415.19%	2.11%
2024	141,258	0.86%	1.06%

Source: Dinas Koperasi dan UKM Kab. Deli Serdang (2026), Cooperative and MSME data from 2020–2024, analyzed by the authors.

Note: 2020 serves as the baseline. Due to the sharp increase in 2023, growth analysis focuses on 2023–2024.

MSME growth does not necessarily guarantee business sustainability. In 2024, Deli Serdang recorded 141,258 micro and small enterprises, with growth of 0.86%, while the entrepreneurship ratio declined from 7.02% in 2020 to 1.06% in 2024 (Dinas Koperasi dan UKM Kab. Deli Serdang, 2026). Previous studies highlight the role of financial literacy and digital finance in supporting culinary MSME sustainability (Sumastuti et al., 2026). Apriliyanto et al. (2026) also emphasize the importance of financial literacy, financial inclusion, and business performance in sustaining culinary MSMEs. In addition, budgeting and cash flow management challenges have been identified among culinary MSMEs in Deli Serdang (Ningsi et al., 2026). Therefore, examining the factors influencing culinary MSME sustainability in Lubuk Pakam District is important.

Financial literacy is an important factor in MSME sustainability, yet financial understanding remains a challenge in Indonesia. The 2026 SNLIK reported national financial literacy and inclusion indices of 69.57% and 93.61%, respectively, showing a 24.04-percentage-point gap (Otoritas Jasa Keuangan, 2026). North Sumatra's literacy index reached 71.57%, slightly above the national average (SeputarSumut, 2026). Financial literacy helps individuals manage finances and make appropriate decisions (J. N. Sari et al., 2023). This gap may lead to poor cash-flow recording, inappropriate financing choices, and limited use of formal financial services, potentially affecting business sustainability. As no local data on culinary MSME owners in Lubuk Pakam have been identified, national and provincial statistics serve as background, while this study directly measures their financial literacy.

Digital payment systems can improve MSME sustainability through greater transaction efficiency, accuracy, and financial transparency (Tannia & Afrida, 2025), making digitalization increasingly important for culinary businesses (Tantri & Afrizal, 2025). As of June 2026, Indonesia had 65.77 million QRIS users and 44.86 million merchants, 96.68% of which were MSMEs (ANTARA News, 2026). Theoretically, the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) suggests that perceived usefulness and security encourage digital payment adoption (Kala'lembang et al., 2024), improving transaction efficiency and financial management (Rahman & Prabowo, 2026). Empirically, Cahyasari et al. (2025) linked QRIS and fintech use to business sustainability. Adewirza & Hayati (2024) found a significant effect of QRIS-based fintech on MSME sustainability in Medan Marelan. Aghniya et al. (2026) identified QRIS utilization as the strongest direct predictor of sustainability among young entrepreneurs in Makassar, although findings remain mixed. Therefore, digital payments are expected to support culinary MSME sustainability.

Another factor is government tax incentives. The utilization of tax incentives by MSME actors has also not been optimal. Fiscal incentives for MSMEs, including the final income

tax (PPh) rate of 0.5% and the interest subsidy for the People's Business Credit (KUR), are designed to support the sustainability and growth of MSMEs, particularly by easing operational burdens and mitigating economic pressures on business continuity (Ditjen Perbendaharaan Kemenkeu, 2024). This utilization gap is also confirmed by the findings of the Directorate General of Taxes (DGT) that 93,260 taxpayers, or 17.21% of the 542,000 registered MSME taxpayers, were indicated to have engaged in firm splitting in order to continue enjoying the 0.5% final income tax rate, prompting the government to issue Government Regulation Number 20 of 2026 to refine the policy (DDTCNews, 2026). This condition shows a gap between the tax incentive policies designed by the government and the level of their utilization in the field, which is suspected to be influenced, among other things, by low literacy and outreach to business actors.

Financial literacy, digital payments, and tax incentives support *Smart Business and Sustainable Value Creation* through financial management, technology adoption, and policy support. Technology integration also improves MSME efficiency and product development (Putra et al., 2025). Previous studies examined digital payments and business sustainability (Cahyasari et al., 2025), while Aghniya et al. (2026) examined QRIS use alongside digital literacy and entrepreneurial orientation. However, research integrating all three factors remains limited, particularly among local culinary MSMEs. Therefore, this study examines their effects on culinary MSME sustainability in Lubuk Pakam District using primary data to support business management and policymaking.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Financial Literacy

According to Masdupi et al. (2024), financial literacy is a key resource for entrepreneurs to cognitively process newly acquired information in times of uncertainty.
According to POJK No.76/POJK.07 (2016), financial literacy is the knowledge, skills, and confidence that influence attitudes and behavior to improve the quality of financial decision-making and management in order to achieve well-being. According to Arifuddin et al. (2023), the indicators of financial literacy are:

1. Personal Financial Knowledge
2. Savings and Loans
3. Insurance
4. Investment

Theoretically, financial literacy is a strategic resource supporting MSME sustainability (Cahyaningtyas et al., 2025). Its indicators cover budgeting, cash flow, liquidity, risk protection, and reinvestment.

Digital Payment Systems

According to Khando et al. (2023), digital payment refers to transactions carried out through digital or online means without the physical exchange of cash.
According to Oktaria & Hermansyah (2023), the cashless payment mechanism is a payment mechanism that can take the form of cards or applications featuring barcode scanning. The indicators of digital payment systems are:

1. User interface design.
2. Reliability.
3. Responsiveness.
4. Trust or confidence.
5. Security and privacy.

Theoretically, the Technology Acceptance Model explains digital payment adoption through perceived usefulness and security (Kala'lembang et al., 2024).

Tax Incentives

According to Lynch et al. (2026), tax incentives are a manifestation of the commitment of public institutions and policymakers to encourage certain behaviors for the advancement of markets and the broader economy.

According to Subandi & Tjaraka (2023), tax incentives have an effective impact in reducing the tax burden borne by taxpayers. The indicators of tax incentives are:
1. Ease of use of tax incentives for taxpayers.
2. Fulfillment of tax obligations by MSME taxpayers who utilize tax incentives.
3. Short-term impact of the implementation of tax incentives on taxpayers in terms of taxation and the purchasing power of MSME actors.

Theoretically, fiscal psychology explains how tax incentives support sustainable MSME performance (D. Sari & Johan, 2024). The indicators cover access, utilization, and benefits of incentives.

MSME Business Sustainability

According to Tjahjadi et al. (2024), business sustainability is the most important issue for every company, reflecting the company's success in implementing sustainable strategies.

According to Kristiawati et al. (2024), MSME sustainability refers to the ability of MSMEs to survive and grow in the long term. This includes efforts to maintain a balance between the economic, social, and environmental aspects of their business operations. The indicators of MSME business sustainability are:
1. Financial Stability
2. Market Competitiveness
3. Efficient Resource Management

Theoretically, the Resource-Based View and Dynamic Capability Theory explain MSME sustainability (Karsam et al., 2026), reflected in their capacity to survive and grow.

This study draws on the Resource-Based View and Dynamic Capability Theory, which explain MSME sustainability through valuable resources and adaptive capabilities (Karsam et al., 2026). Financial literacy represents financial knowledge (Cahyaningtyas et al., 2025), digital payments reflect technological capabilities (Kala'lembang et al., 2024) and tax incentives provide policy support (D. Sari & Johan, 2024) to support business sustainability. Based on the theoretical discussion and previous research, the relationships between the research variables are illustrated in the following framework:

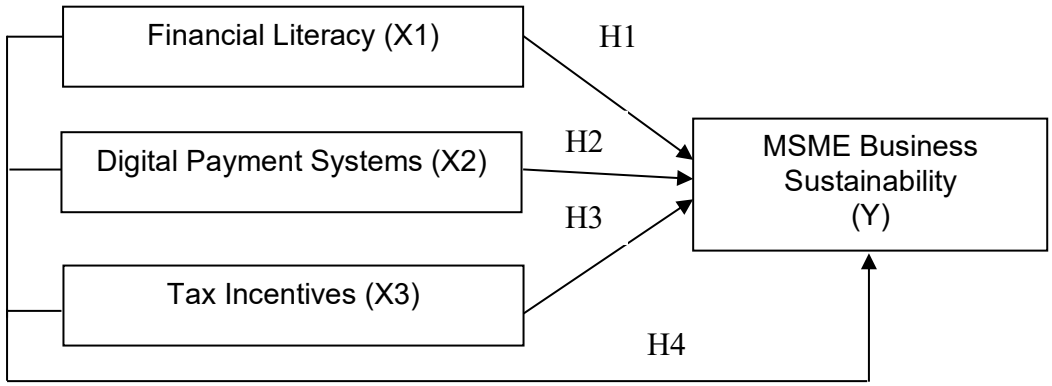


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

The hypotheses in this study are:
H1 : Financial literacy positively and significantly influences the business sustainability of Culinary MSMEs in Lubuk Pakam District
H2 : Digital payment systems positively and significantly influence the business sustainability of Culinary MSMEs in Lubuk Pakam District
H3 : Tax incentives positively and significantly influence the business sustainability of Culinary MSMEs in Lubuk Pakam District
H4 : Financial literacy, digital payment systems, and tax incentives jointly affect the business sustainability of Culinary MSMEs in Lubuk Pakam District

RESEARCH METHOD

This study was conducted among culinary MSMEs in Lubuk Pakam District, Deli Serdang Regency, North Sumatra, from August to September 2026. Based on filtering the Sada Sada platform by location and business type, 108 culinary MSMEs were identified as the research population (Sada Sada (DiskopUKM), 2026). A sample of 52 MSMEs was determined using the Slovin formula $n = N / (1 + N(e)^2)$ with a 10% margin of error. Purposive sampling was applied based on business type, location, active operation, and willingness to participate. This quantitative study employed a causal-associative design to examine the effects of Financial Literacy (X1), Digital Payment Systems (X2), and Tax Incentives (X3) on Business Sustainability (Y). Primary data were collected through questionnaires using a five-point Likert scale, comprising 30 statements: 8 items for X1, 10 for X2, 6 for X3, and 6 for Y. Following data collection, the responses were evaluated through validity and reliability assessments. Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation was applied to examine item validity, while Cronbach's Alpha was used to determine internal consistency, with a coefficient of 0.70 or higher serving as the reliability benchmark. The statistical analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics, employing multiple linear regression as the analytical method. Before hypothesis testing, the regression model was examined through classical assumption tests, comprising normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity assessments. The proposed relationships were then evaluated using t-tests and an F-test to determine the individual and joint effects of the independent variables, while the coefficient of determination (R^2) was used to measure the model's explanatory capacity.

RESULTS

Validity Tests and Reliability Test

According to Machali (2021), validity measures the accuracy of an instrument, while reliability measures its consistency, with a Cronbach's Alpha value above 0.70 indicating reliability.

Table 2.
Validity & Reliability Test Results

Statement	Calculated R	R Table	Results	Cronbach's Alpha	Results	Conclusion
X1.S1	0.451	0.361	Valid	0.700	0.717	Reliable
X1.S2	0.507	0.361	Valid			
X1.S3	0.683	0.361	Valid			
X1.S4	0.489	0.361	Valid			
X1.S5	0.816	0.361	Valid			
X1.S6	0.787	0.361	Valid			
X1.S7	0.387	0.361	Valid			
X1.S8	0.389	0.361	Valid			
X2.S1	0.729	0.361	Valid	0.700	0.808	Reliable
X2.S2	0.729	0.361	Valid			
X2.S3	0.500	0.361	Valid			
X2.S4	0.444	0.361	Valid			
X2.S5	0.631	0.361	Valid			
X2.S6	0.654	0.361	Valid			
X2.S7	0.640	0.361	Valid			
X2.S8	0.614	0.361	Valid			
X2.S9	0.598	0.361	Valid			
X2.S10	0.509	0.361	Valid			
X3.S1	0.852	0.361	Valid	0.700	0.898	Reliable
X3.S2	0.716	0.361	Valid			
X3.S3	0.749	0.361	Valid			
X3.S4	0.893	0.361	Valid			
X3.S5	0.845	0.361	Valid			
X3.S6	0.832	0.361	Valid			

Y.S1	0.778	0.361	Valid	0.700	0.828	Reliable
Y.S2	0.733	0.361	Valid			
Y.S3	0.647	0.361	Valid			
Y.S4	0.699	0.361	Valid			
Y.S5	0.768	0.361	Valid			
Y.S6	0.783	0.361	Valid			

Source: Data processing results, 2026

Normality Test

The normality test assesses residual distribution using a histogram and the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test (Machali, 2021).

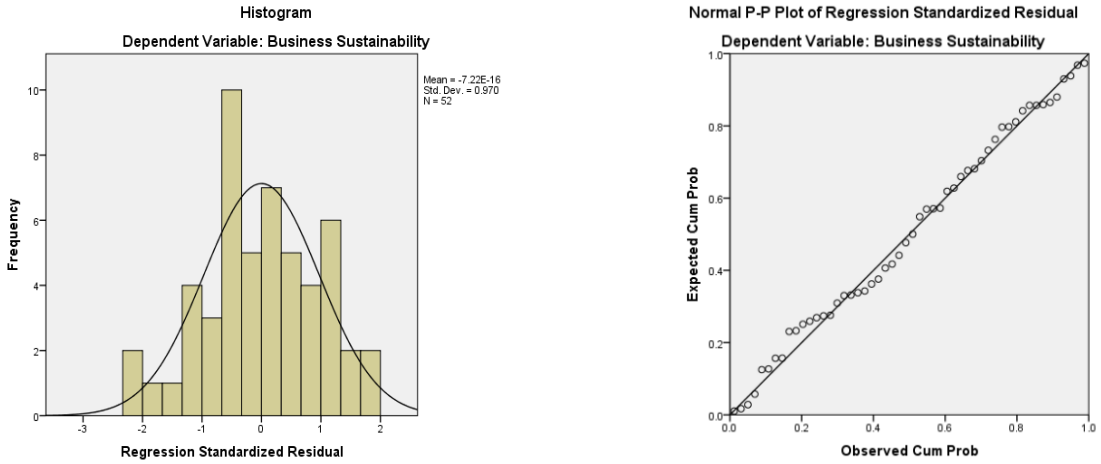


Figure 2. Histogram and P-Plots
Source: Data processing results, 2026

The normality assessment reveals that the histogram displays a relatively balanced distribution, while the observations in the Normal P–P Plot are positioned close to the diagonal reference line. These graphical patterns suggest that the regression residuals satisfy the normality assumption.

Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

The normality assessment suggests that the regression residuals follow a normal distribution. The Kolmogorov–Smirnov procedure produced an Asymp. Sig. value of 0.200, exceeding the significance threshold of 0.05. Therefore, the residuals can be considered normally distributed based on this statistical test. The graphical examination provides additional support, as the histogram illustrates a distribution pattern resembling a bell curve, while the points in the Normal P–P Plot lie approximately along the diagonal reference line.

Heteroscedasticity Test

According to Machali (2021), heteroscedasticity occurs when the variance of residuals differs across observations in a regression model.

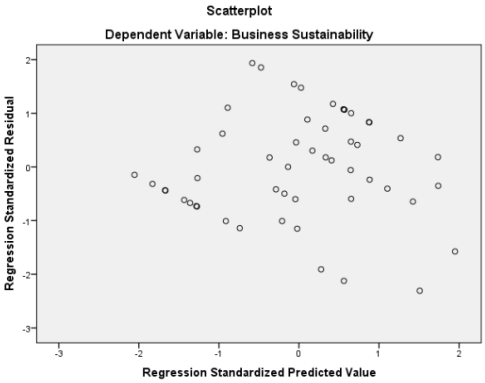


Figure 3. Scatterplot
Source: Data processing results, 2026

As illustrated in the figure, the residual points are scattered on both sides of the zero line along the Y-axis, with no discernible systematic pattern. This distribution suggests that the regression model does not show evidence of heteroscedasticity, indicating that the assumption of constant residual variance is satisfied.

Multicollinearity Test
According to Machali (2021), the multicollinearity test is used to identify correlations among independent variables.

Table 3.
Multicollinearity Test Results

Variable	Collinearity Statistics		Conclusion
	Tolerance	VIF	
Financial Literacy	0.895	1.117	No Multicollinearity
Digital Payment Systems	0.879	1.138	No Multicollinearity
Tax Incentive	0.863	1.158	No Multicollinearity

Source: Data processing results, 2026

Based on Table 3 above, it can be seen that the correlation values for the Financial Literacy, Digital Payment Systems, and Tax Incentives variables have tolerance values of 0.895, 0.879, and 0.863, respectively, all of which are greater than 0.1, and VIF values of 1.117, 1.138, and 1.158, respectively, all of which are smaller than 10, so it can be concluded that there are no symptoms of multicollinearity in the Financial Literacy, Digital Payment Systems, and Tax Incentives variables.

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis and t-Test
According to Machali (2021), multiple linear regression tests the effects of multiple independent variables, while the t-test examines each variable's partial effect.

Table 4.
Multiple Linear Regression Analysis and t-Test Results

Variable	Regression Coefficient (B)	Standardized Coefficients (Beta)	t-statistic	t-table	Sig.	Conclusion
Constant	2.258		0.423		0.674	
Financial Literacy	0.222	0.278	2.307	2.011	0.025	Positive and significant effect
Digital Payment Systems	0.331	0.304	2.502	2.011	0.016	Positive and significant effect

Tax Incentive	0.214	0.273	2.225	2.011	0.031	Positive and significant effect

Dependent variable: Business Sustainability. Criteria: t-statistic > t-table and Sig. < 0.05, with df = 48 and α = 0.05 (two-tailed).
Source: Data processing results, 2026

The regression equation is:

Business Sustainability = 2.258 + 0.222 Financial Literacy + 0.331 Digital Payment Systems + 0.214 Tax Incentives + e

The findings presented in Table 4 indicate that all three independent variables are positively and significantly associated with Business Sustainability. Financial Literacy records a significance level of 0.025, followed by Digital Payment Systems at 0.016 and Tax Incentives at 0.031. In terms of standardized coefficients, Digital Payment Systems demonstrates the greatest relative contribution (β = 0.304). Financial Literacy ranks second (β = 0.278), while Tax Incentives shows a slightly lower coefficient (β = 0.273).

F-Test
The simultaneous significance of the regression model was evaluated using the F-test. The analysis yielded an F-statistic of 9.709, exceeding the critical F-value of 2.80 at a 5% significance level, with degrees of freedom of 3 and 48. The reported significance level of 0.000 is below 0.05, providing sufficient evidence that the regression model is statistically significant. Accordingly, Financial Literacy, Digital Payment Systems, and Tax Incentives collectively have a significant effect on the Sustainability of Culinary MSMEs in Lubuk Pakam District.

Coefficient of Determination Test
The coefficient of determination test shows R = 0.615, R^2 = 0.378, and Adjusted R^2 = 0.339. This indicates that Financial Literacy, Digital Payment Systems, and Tax Incentives explain 33.9% of the variation in Culinary MSME Business Sustainability, while the remaining 66.1% is influenced by other factors, such as entrepreneurial orientation and access to financing (Maesaroh et al., 2023), business capital and product diversification (Pratiwi & Setiyono, 2024), and managerial skills (Velmurugan et al., 2023). Future research is recommended to include these variables.

DISCUSSION

The Effect of Financial Literacy on MSME Business Sustainability
The t-test results indicate that Financial Literacy positively and significantly influences Culinary MSME Sustainability in Lubuk Pakam District, as evidenced by a calculated t-value of 2.307 > t-table of 2.01063 and a significance level of 0.025 < 0.05. Therefore, H1 is accepted. These results indicate that good financial literacy helps MSME actors manage income and expenses, allocate funds appropriately, and make more planned financial decisions. Effective financial management enables culinary MSMEs to meet operational needs, maintain business stability, and adapt to changing business conditions. These findings are consistent with Dewi & Candraningrat (2022), whose study found that Financial Literacy has a positive and significant effect on MSME Sustainability in Denpasar City.

The Effect of Digital Payment Systems on MSME Business Sustainability
The partial test yields a t-value of 2.502, exceeding the critical value of 2.01063, with a significance level of 0.016 below 0.05. Thus, H2 is supported, confirming that Digital Payment Systems positively and significantly influence the Sustainability of Culinary MSMEs in Lubuk Pakam District. Digital payments facilitate and accelerate transactions,

improve efficiency, and support more organized financial recordkeeping. Furthermore, these systems help MSMEs adapt to changing consumer habits and technological developments. This finding is consistent with Kurniasari et al. (2023), who demonstrated that technology adoption supports MSME performance and business sustainability. These results emphasize that digital technology can help MSMEs maintain business continuity.

The Effect of Tax Incentives on MSME Business Sustainability

The t-test findings confirm that Tax Incentives positively and significantly affect Culinary MSME Sustainability in Lubuk Pakam District, as indicated by a t-value of 2.225 > 2.01063 and a significance level of 0.031 < 0.05. Therefore, H3 is accepted. These results indicate that tax incentives can help MSMEs maintain their business activities by providing greater flexibility in managing financial resources to meet operational needs. Understanding available tax facilities also helps business actors utilize incentives in accordance with applicable regulations. These findings are consistent with Kurniawan et al. (2023), who found that government tax incentives have a significant positive effect on SME continuity and recovery in Indonesia.

The Effect of Financial Literacy, Digital Payment Systems, and Tax Incentives on MSME Business Sustainability

The F-test results indicate that the calculated F-value of 9.709 exceeds the critical value of 2.80, with a significance level of 0.000 < 0.05. Therefore, Financial Literacy, Digital Payment Systems, and Tax Incentives jointly have a significant effect on the Sustainability of Culinary MSMEs in Lubuk Pakam District, supporting H4. These findings suggest that financial management, digital transaction technology, and tax facilities collectively contribute to business continuity. The Adjusted R^2 value of 0.339 indicates that these variables explain 33.9% of the variation in business sustainability, while the remaining 66.1% is attributable to other factors. This result supports the *Smart Business and Sustainable Value Creation* concept, which emphasizes the role of finance, technology, and policy in sustaining businesses.

CONCLUSION

The research findings indicate that Financial Literacy, Digital Payment Systems, and Tax Incentives positively and significantly affect the sustainability of culinary MSMEs in Lubuk Pakam District. The partial test results show significance values of 0.025, 0.016, and 0.031, respectively, all below 0.05. This suggests that financial management skills, digital transaction technology, and tax incentives can support business continuity. The simultaneous test also confirms a significant joint effect, with an F-value of 9.709 and a significance level of 0.000. Furthermore, the Adjusted R^2 value of 0.339 indicates that the three variables explain 33.9% of the variation in business sustainability, while the remaining 66.1% is associated with other factors outside the study.

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