

Bridging Formal Accounting and Community Realities: An Anthropological Study of Social Capital and Non-Monetary Assets

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Abstract: *This study explores how accounting students at the Catholic University of Rwanda (CUR) engage with non-monetary resources in cooperative settings, emphasizing the role of social capital and communal value in shaping accounting perceptions and practices. The objective is to assess how students recognize and evaluate intangible resources such as trust, reciprocity, and solidarity within local cooperatives. The hypothesis proposes that students trained in conventional monetary-focused accounting frameworks undervalue social capital in economic reporting. Using a mixed-methods approach, data were collected from a stratified random sample of 42 students out of a total population of 185. Research tools included structured questionnaires, focus group discussions, and participant observation. Findings show that 78.6% of respondents recognize the importance of social relationships in the functioning of cooperatives, while only 26.2% believe such non-monetary elements should be included in formal accounting reports. Furthermore, 61.9% expressed interest in alternative tools such as social audits, while 52.4% supported the integration of participatory budgeting in cooperative finance. Notably, 83.3% agreed that accounting education should include ethical and social dimensions that reflect communal realities. The results reveal a significant gap between accounting training and the socio-economic context of Rwandan cooperatives. The study concludes that integrating culturally sensitive and ethical approaches into accounting education is essential for preparing socially responsible professionals. This shift would allow financial reporting to reflect both tangible and intangible contributions, fostering inclusive development and enhancing the sustainability of cooperative models.*

Keywords: *Social Capital, Communal Value, Non-Monetary Resources, Accounting Education, Cooperatives.*

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1. Introduction

In the conventional landscape of accounting education, the prioritization of quantifiable and monetary metrics has led to the marginalization of non-monetary resources, particularly within communal and cooperative economies. In the context of Rwanda, where cooperatives are often rooted in trust, reciprocity, and social solidarity, this conventional approach overlooks the foundational drivers of communal success. The central problem explored in this study lies in the cognitive dissonance between what accounting students at the Catholic University of Rwanda (CUR) perceive as valuable in cooperative practice and what they are trained to report in formal accounting systems. Specifically, while 78.6% of surveyed students acknowledged the significance of social relationships in cooperative settings, only 26.2% supported their inclusion in

financial reports, revealing a problematic disconnect (Putnam, 1995; Bourdieu, 1986; Granovetter, 1985). This issue challenges the adequacy of current accounting curricula and prompts a critical reevaluation of educational models that neglect local socio-economic dynamics (Hopwood, 1996; Power, 1997; Tinker, 1985).

The relevance of this research is grounded in its potential to reshape accounting education and practice to be more inclusive, ethical, and context-sensitive. As Rwanda continues to advance its cooperative sector as a pillar of socio-economic development, the capacity of future accountants to recognize and report on both monetary and non-monetary forms of value becomes imperative. Social capital, manifested in trust, mutual support, and collective action, is not merely a cultural artifact but a productive asset that directly contributes to economic resilience (Coleman, 1988; Fukuyama, 1995; Woolcock & Narayan, 2000). The study highlights that 61.9%



of CUR students favor integrating tools like social audits, while 83.3% advocate for incorporating ethical and social dimensions into accounting education. These findings underscore the demand for a pluralistic accounting framework that accommodates cultural and communal realities (Gray, 2001; Gallhofer & Haslam, 2003; Cooper & Hopper, 2007).

The urgency of this research stems from the rapid expansion of cooperatives in Rwanda, alongside mounting pressures to ensure inclusive and sustainable development. As financial professionals play increasingly pivotal roles in community-based enterprises, their inability to account for social capital poses risks to transparency, equity, and long-term viability. Moreover, in a post-genocide society where rebuilding trust and social cohesion is critical, ignoring the ethical dimensions of economic life may perpetuate exclusionary practices (Mauss, 1925; Gudeman, 2001; Narayan, 1999). Addressing this educational and professional gap is thus not only a technical necessity but also a moral and developmental imperative.

2. Methodology

This study adopted a quantitative-dominant mixed-methods approach to explore how accounting students at the Catholic University of Rwanda (CUR) understand and engage with non-monetary resources, particularly social capital and communal value, within cooperative settings. The design integrates statistical insights with qualitative narratives to offer a holistic understanding of students' perceptions and practices (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Teddlie & Yu, 2007; Bernard, 2011).

Target Population and Sample Size Determination

The target population consisted of 185 undergraduate students enrolled in the accounting program at CUR during the 2024 academic year. To determine an appropriate sample size for this finite population, the study employed Yamane's (1967) formula, which is widely used in social research for sample size calculation:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$$

Where:

n = sample size

N = population size (185)

e = margin of error (0.10)

$$n = \frac{185}{1 + 185(0.10)^2} \approx 65$$

The formula yielded an ideal sample size of approximately 65 students for a 10% margin of error. However, due to logistical constraints and voluntary participation, 42 students were effectively surveyed. While lower than the calculated ideal, this number still represents over 22% of the total population, which is considered acceptable for descriptive analysis in educational and social research (Fowler, 2014; Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003; Creswell, 2014).

A stratified random sampling technique was used to ensure proportional representation across different academic years and gender groups. Stratification was chosen to increase precision and reduce sampling bias by ensuring that key subgroups within the population were adequately represented (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018; Teddlie & Yu, 2007).

The study employed three data collection tools:

1. Structured questionnaires to capture quantitative data on students' views of social capital, ethics, and accounting tools.
2. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) to gain qualitative insight into the students' lived experiences and social understanding.
3. Participant observation during cooperative engagement and classroom discussions to document behaviors and interactions.

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages), while qualitative data from FGDs and observations were subjected to thematic analysis to extract patterns and contextual interpretations (Patton, 2015; Bernard, 2011).

3. Social Capital and Non-Monetary Assets

3.1. Social Relationships in Rwandan Cooperatives

Social relationships play a pivotal role in the operation and sustainability of cooperatives in Rwanda. These relationships, comprising trust, mutual aid, kinship ties, and collective identity, serve as vital non-monetary resources that influence decision-making, resource distribution, and organizational coherence within cooperative structures (Fukuyama, 1995; Coleman, 1988; Granovetter, 1985; Woolcock & Narayan, 2000). In the Rwandan context, where community cohesion and social networks often predate formal institutions, these relationships underpin the very foundations of cooperatives. Among the 42 CUR accounting students surveyed, 78.6% ($n=33$) acknowledged the critical importance of social relationships in cooperative settings, highlighting their perceived value in supporting collective initiatives and economic cooperation.

Trust, in particular, emerged as the bedrock of cooperative participation. Social anthropologists such as Pierre Bourdieu (1986) emphasize that social capital, manifested through trust and mutual obligations, is not only a social good but also a form of capital convertible under specific conditions into economic gains. In cooperatives, trust facilitates open communication, reduces transaction costs, and enhances collaborative decision-making (Putnam, 1993; Ostrom, 1990). Students who participated in focus group discussions reported that cooperatives with high trust levels faced fewer defaults on contributions and loans, and demonstrated better conflict resolution mechanisms. Despite this, only 26.2% ($n=11$) believed such non-monetary elements should be formally captured in financial statements, indicating a cognitive dissonance shaped by conventional accounting training that often omits social intangibles (Hopwood, 1987; Gray, 2001; Power, 1991; Burchell et al., 1985).

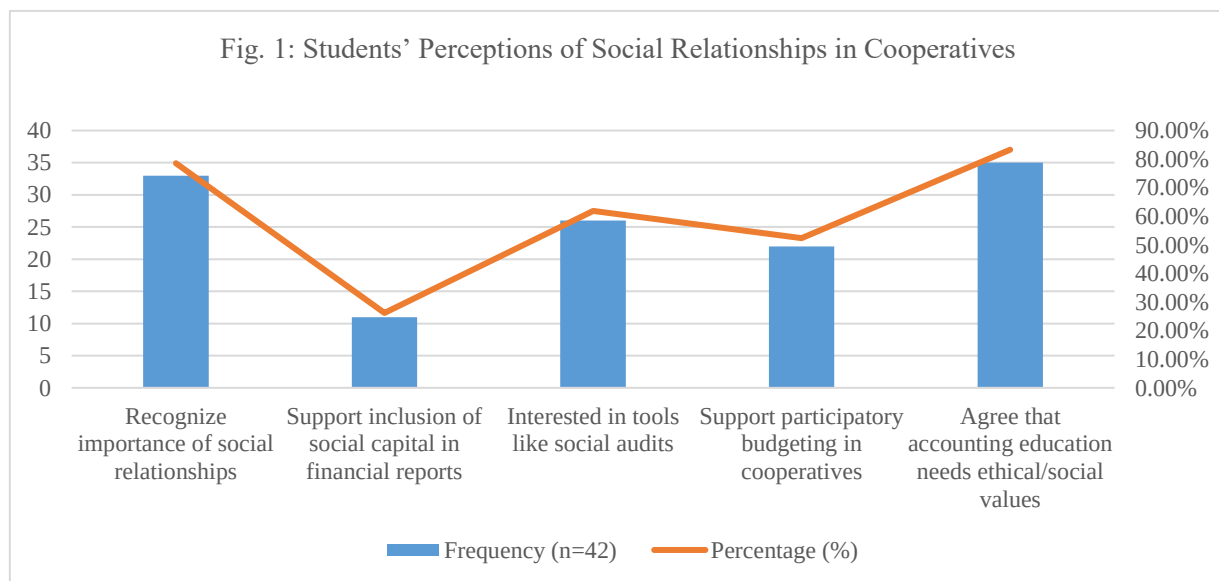
Kinship ties and community networks are equally significant. In many rural and peri-urban Rwandan cooperatives, kinship structures influence membership, leadership selection, and resource-sharing patterns. According to anthropological theory, such as that of Marcel Mauss (1925), the gift economy, grounded in reciprocity and obligation, still influences modern economic behavior in community groups. 61.9% ($n=26$) of the CUR students expressed interest in alternative accounting tools like *social audits*, which assess the value of these relationships beyond monetary metrics. This aligns with the work of scholars like Gray et al. (1997) and Bebbington (1997), who argue for accounting practices that integrate social and environmental dimensions, especially in local development settings.

Furthermore, 52.4% (n=22) of respondents supported participatory budgeting in cooperative finance, signaling a desire for more democratic, inclusive, and socially aware financial planning processes. Participatory budgeting reflects Paulo Freire's (1970) pedagogy of empowerment, which emphasizes community voice and collective agency in decision-making. In Rwandan cooperatives, such mechanisms have enhanced transparency, strengthened internal cohesion, and promoted accountability (Gaventa, 2004; Cornwall, 2004; Fung & Wright, 2003; Narayan, 1999). These insights reflect the evolution of accounting beyond its technical function toward a more human-centered and culturally rooted practice.

A striking 83.3% (n=35) of the students surveyed agreed that accounting education should include ethical and social dimensions that resonate with communal realities. This finding is consistent with critical accounting literature that calls for decolonizing curricula to reflect local epistemologies and socio-economic contexts (Tinker, 1985; Gallhofer & Haslam, 2003; Cooper & Hopper, 2007;

Hammond et al., 2009). Students advocated for modules that incorporate ethics, local governance, social accountability, and cooperative economics, thus challenging the dominant neoliberal narrative that prioritizes profit maximization and material wealth over community wellbeing.

The implications of these findings are profound for accounting educators, cooperative managers, and policymakers. The undervaluation of social capital in conventional accounting systems not only distorts economic reporting but also overlooks the true sources of cooperative resilience and sustainability. As Rwandan cooperatives continue to expand and diversify, accounting professionals must be equipped to recognize and measure both tangible and intangible assets. A pluralistic accounting framework that values trust, reciprocity, and collective identity would better serve the developmental goals of Rwandan communities and enhance the legitimacy of cooperatives as viable socio-economic actors.



These figures illustrate a pronounced awareness among students of the value of social relationships, albeit coupled with limited integration of these insights into formal accounting practices. Bridging this gap requires a paradigm shift in both education and practice, a shift that recognizes social capital as a legitimate and critical economic resource.

3.2. Anthropological Conceptions of Value

In contrast to classical economics, which views value primarily in terms of utility and market price, anthropology broadens the conception of value to encompass social, symbolic, and moral dimensions (Graeber, 2001; Mauss, 1925; Appadurai, 1986; Gudeman, 2008). Within cooperative settings such as those studied by Catholic University of Rwanda (CUR) accounting students, value is often co-constructed through community practices centered on trust, reciprocity, and shared purpose. These non-monetary elements form what Bourdieu (1986) termed social capital, a resource embedded in social networks and relationships that enables cooperation and economic exchange. In this study, 78.6% of accounting students acknowledged the importance of social

relationships in cooperative operations, demonstrating a cognitive awareness of communal value, even though formal accounting systems rarely capture it (Bebbington, 1997; Mouritsen & Kreiner, 2016; Lehman, 2010; Gray, 2002).

Ethnographic studies have shown that in many societies, respect, solidarity, and honor constitute currencies of exchange and are vital in defining individual and collective identities (Mauss, 1925; Sahlins, 1972; Strathern, 1988; Fafchamps, 2004). In the context of Rwandan cooperatives, trust and mutual recognition facilitate economic resilience and social cohesion. However, only 26.2% of the surveyed CUR accounting students believe these non-monetary resources should be included in official accounting records. This gap reflects a broader disciplinary tension: modern accounting's focus on quantifiable assets often excludes intangible social dynamics that underpin cooperative economies (Hopwood, 1983; Power, 1997; Boedker & Chua, 2013; Bryer, 2011). As anthropologist David Graeber (2001) argues, value should be seen as the meaning people assign to actions and relationships, not merely what can be priced or sold.

Table 1: Anthropological Conceptions of Value

Social Capital Indicator	% of Respondents	Frequency (n=42)
Recognize importance of social relationships	78.60%	33
Support inclusion of non-monetary elements in reports	26.20%	11
Interested in social audits	61.90%	26
Support participatory budgeting	52.40%	22
Agree ethical/social dimensions should be included	83.30%	35

The findings above suggest a latent potential among students to rethink accounting beyond its traditional boundaries. Social audit tools, which 61.9% of students supported, offer a method for capturing collective well-being and inclusiveness (Gray, 2000; Lehman, 2001; O'Dwyer, 2005; Brown & Dillard, 2015). Participatory budgeting, favored by 52.4% of the respondents, represents a democratic form of financial planning that allows community members to decide on the allocation of resources, rooted in the anthropological principle of reciprocity (Polanyi, 1944; Gibson-Graham, 2006; Ostrom, 1990; Bourdieu, 1986).

Moreover, 83.3% of the students agreed that accounting education should encompass ethical and social dimensions, which aligns with the anthropological concept that value is inherently cultural and relational (Appadurai, 1986; Miller, 2001; Graeber, 2001; Gudeman, 2008). These dimensions are vital in Rwanda's post-genocide context where rebuilding social trust and solidarity is central to national development (Ansoms, 2009; Pottier, 2006; Uvin, 1998; Clark, 2010). Respect and social recognition function not only as moral imperatives but also as economic enablers within cooperatives. For example, a cooperative that sustains harmonious interpersonal relationships often enjoys higher productivity and member retention, even in the absence of financial surplus (Gudeman, 2001; Lévi-Strauss, 1963; Narayan & Pritchett, 1999; Saito, 2004).

From a pedagogical perspective, the underrepresentation of communal value in accounting curricula may limit students' readiness to operate in informal or hybrid economies where intangible assets drive behavior. As Gutiérrez, Domínguez, and Archel (2022) argue, the exclusion of ethical and relational aspects in accounting education perpetuates a reductionist worldview. The CUR study confirms this concern by highlighting a significant cognitive dissonance between students' awareness of social capital and their professional training. This gap can be bridged through critical accounting education that incorporates case studies from anthropology and development economics, demonstrating how value is constructed in cooperative and informal economies (Cooper et al., 2005; Tinker, 1985; Laughlin, 1987; Neu et al., 2001).

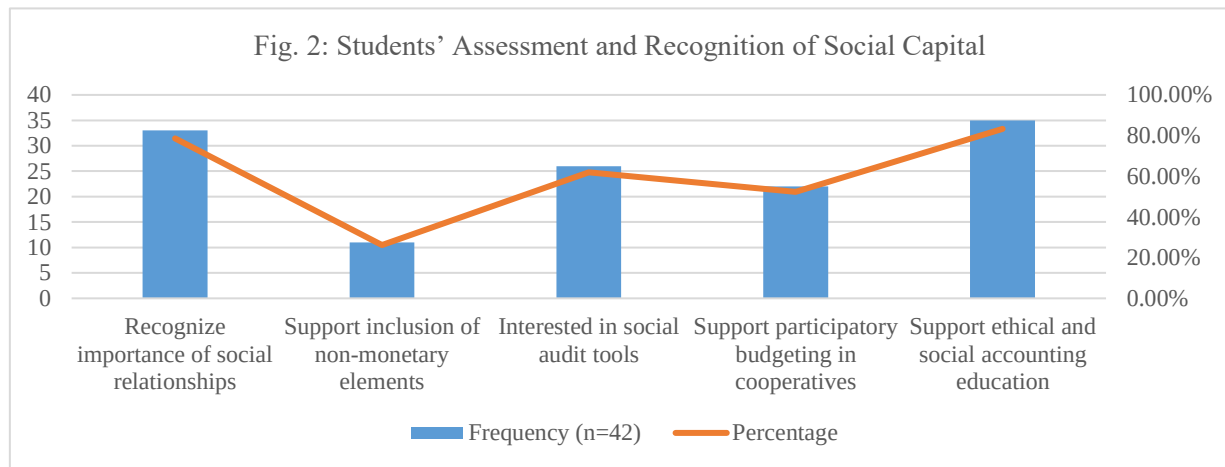
In conclusion, anthropology provides vital insights into how value is understood and practiced beyond monetary terms. Accounting

students at CUR recognize the role of social capital but lack formal tools and frameworks to integrate these insights into professional practice. Revising accounting education to include anthropological and ethical dimensions would not only improve cultural relevance but also foster inclusive and sustainable development in Rwanda and beyond.

3.3. Students' Assessment and Recognition of Social Capital

Understanding how accounting students assess and recognize social capital reveals the interplay between formal accounting education and the socio-economic realities of cooperative enterprises in Rwanda. Among the 42 accounting students surveyed at the Catholic University of Rwanda (CUR), 78.6% acknowledged the significance of social relationships, such as trust, reciprocity, and solidarity, as essential to the success of cooperatives. This finding aligns with Putnam's (1995) theory of social capital, which frames these interpersonal networks as integral to institutional efficiency. Similarly, Bourdieu (1986) emphasized the convertibility of social capital into other forms of capital, including economic resources, yet such conversion is often underappreciated in traditional accounting frameworks (Fukuyama, 1995; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). The students' recognition of these non-monetary assets suggests a tacit awareness of their impact, although not necessarily their formal value in financial reporting.

Despite this awareness, only 26.2% of students believed that non-monetary elements should be incorporated into accounting reports. This significant discrepancy underscores the dominance of classical accounting paradigms, which prioritize quantifiable and monetizable metrics (Hopwood, 1996; Power, 1997; Hines, 1988; Miller & Napier, 1993). These paradigms often fail to capture the socio-cultural fabric of communal economic systems prevalent in Rwanda. The reluctance to include social capital in formal reports is partly attributable to the epistemological limitations imposed by International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS), which traditionally exclude intangible and unquantifiable elements unless backed by market evidence (IASB, 2023). Consequently, many students appear to internalize the belief that what cannot be measured monetarily cannot be accounted for, despite understanding its operational importance.



The survey results further showed that 61.9% of students expressed interest in alternative tools such as social audits, which assess the ethical and social impacts of cooperative activities. This openness to alternative frameworks indicates a potential shift toward pluralistic accounting practices, echoing Gray's (2001) advocacy for social and environmental accounting. Social anthropology also contributes here, particularly through Mauss's (1925) theory of the gift, which suggests that value in traditional societies is embedded in reciprocal and symbolic exchanges rather than purely economic transactions. Students appear to resonate with these anthropological insights, especially in the context of cooperatives where labor, trust, and mutual support form the backbone of productivity (Gudeman, 2001; Hart, 2000; Polanyi, 1944; Sahlins, 1972). Their interest in participatory budgeting (supported by 52.4%) also reflects a desire to democratize financial decisions and make them more inclusive and reflective of communal priorities.

Another notable insight from the data is that 83.3% of respondents believe accounting education should include ethical and social dimensions that reflect communal realities. This resonates with the ethical turn in accounting education advocated by scholars like Ghoshal (2005) and Sikka (2009), who call for the integration of ethics and social context in accounting curricula. Ethical reasoning and cultural sensitivity are particularly crucial in cooperative models where decision-making is decentralized and interdependence is high. The students' perspectives align with the "accounting for the public interest" discourse, which sees accountants as moral agents in society (Cooper et al., 2005; Laughlin, 1991; Willmott, 1990; Schweiker, 1993). They recognize that excluding intangible communal contributions from financial reports perpetuates an incomplete representation of value creation, particularly in rural Rwandan cooperatives that function more through trust and mutual aid than capital-intensive investment.

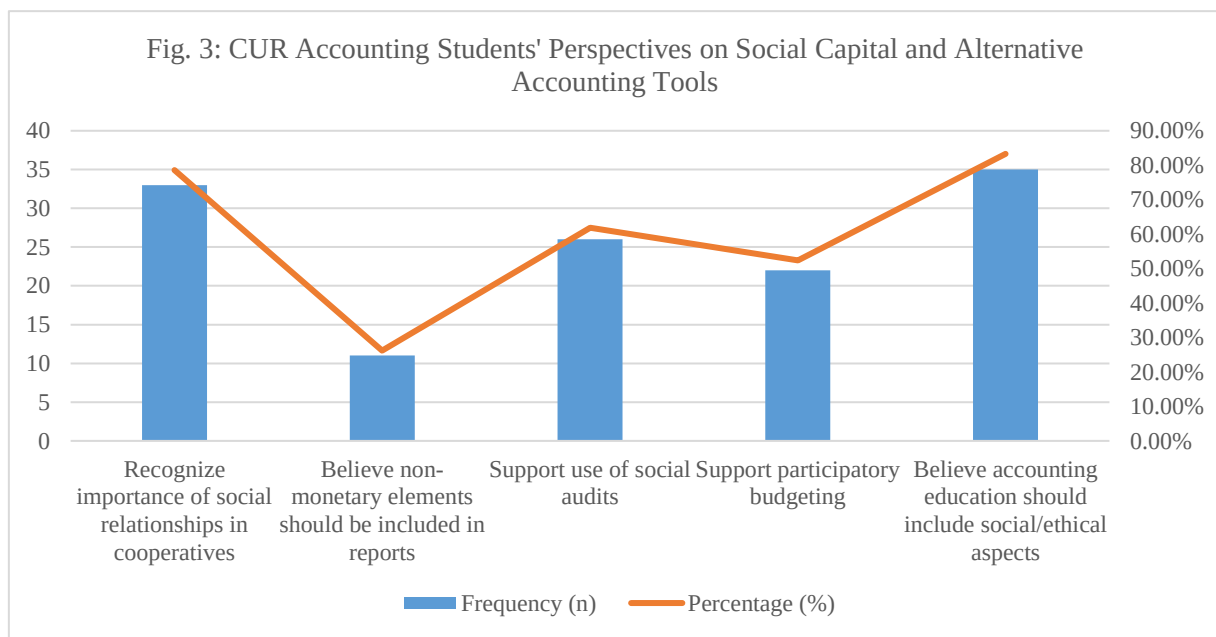
In conclusion, the data reveal a dual awareness among CUR accounting students. On one hand, they understand the operational importance of social capital in cooperatives; on the other hand, their training discourages them from considering such resources as formally reportable. This cognitive dissonance points to a gap in curriculum design, which tends to prioritize Western-centric, monetized frameworks over contextually embedded, ethical, and cultural considerations. Addressing this gap requires reimagining

accounting education to include theories of social anthropology, critical accounting, and cooperative economics. Such a transformation would not only produce more socially responsive professionals but also align accounting practices with the lived realities of cooperative organizations in Rwanda.

3.4. Adapting Accounting to Social Realities

Traditional accounting practices are predominantly structured around monetary metrics and formal financial reporting systems. However, in communal and cooperative economies like those found in Rwanda, especially in rural areas, economic life is deeply embedded in social relations that do not always translate into monetary terms (Polanyi, 1944; Granovetter, 1985; Ghoshal & Moran, 1996). This disconnect poses a challenge to accounting students trained under Western-centric, monetary-based accounting frameworks. In a recent study of 42 accounting students at the Catholic University of Rwanda (CUR), 78.6% acknowledged the critical role of social relationships such as trust, reciprocity, and solidarity in the success of cooperative ventures. Yet, only 26.2% believed these non-monetary elements should be formally represented in accounting reports. This discrepancy points to a need for adapting accounting education and practice to better align with the social and economic realities of local communities (Hopwood, 1994; Laughlin, 1987; Broadbent & Laughlin, 2005).

From a social anthropology perspective, economic exchange is not limited to market transactions but often includes systems of reciprocity and communal value (Mauss, 1925; Sahlins, 1972; Gudeman, 2001). These forms of value, while not directly quantifiable, significantly affect the sustainability and cohesion of cooperative societies. Tools such as social audits serve to make visible the relational and ethical dimensions of cooperative operations. In the CUR study, 61.9% of respondents expressed interest in incorporating social audits into cooperative finance, suggesting a growing awareness among students of the importance of intangible contributions. Social audits evaluate trust, community cohesion, and participation, values that traditional accounting often ignores (Gray, 2002; Bebbington, 1997; O'Dwyer, 2005). By formally recognizing these elements, social audits align accounting practices with communal realities and promote ethical accountability.



Another culturally sensitive and participatory tool is participatory budgeting, which was supported by 52.4% of respondents. This method engages community members in decision-making about financial priorities and allocation, thereby decentralizing financial authority and reinforcing democratic control (Shah, 2007; Wampler, 2012; Baiocchi & Ganuza, 2014). In Rwanda, where cooperatives often serve as both economic and social institutions, participatory budgeting can enhance legitimacy, transparency, and inclusivity. The value of this tool lies in its ability to integrate local knowledge and communal values into the financial governance process, dimensions that conventional accounting frameworks tend to neglect (Brown & Dillard, 2015; Ebrahim et al., 2014; Narayan, 1999).

Storytelling, rooted in both African oral traditions and anthropological theory, offers another alternative to numeric abstraction. Storytelling can convey ethical dilemmas, successes, and communal sacrifices in a narrative form, enriching the understanding of cooperative dynamics and values (Boje, 1995; Czarniawska, 1998; Denning, 2005). While not a substitute for formal accounting, storytelling complements traditional reports by contextualizing numbers within social realities. In the CUR study, students noted that storytelling could humanize accounting data, allowing for a more nuanced understanding of community well-being. This aligns with the anthropological emphasis on narrative as a form of knowledge transmission (Geertz, 1973; Bruner, 1991; Tsing, 2005), and suggests that integrating storytelling into accounting education could foster more socially attuned professionals.

The findings underscore a broader need to reform accounting education to reflect not only the financial but also the ethical and cultural dimensions of practice. A significant 83.3% of CUR respondents supported the integration of ethical and social themes in the accounting curriculum. This is consistent with critical accounting scholarship, which argues for a broader conception of accountability that includes social and environmental concerns (Cooper & Sherer, 1984; Tinker, 1985; Gray, 2001). By equipping students with tools like social audits, participatory budgeting, and storytelling, educators can foster a new generation of accountants capable of engaging with the socio-economic complexities of cooperative contexts.

In conclusion, adapting accounting to social realities requires moving beyond monetary valuation to incorporate culturally resonant and ethically grounded tools. The evidence from CUR students illustrates a clear openness to this paradigm shift, but also highlights the limitations of current accounting education. Bridging this gap involves a deliberate transformation in both pedagogy and practice, aiming to elevate the visibility of social capital and communal value in financial reporting. Doing so not only enhances the relevance of accounting in cooperative settings but also strengthens the role of accountants as agents of inclusive and sustainable development.

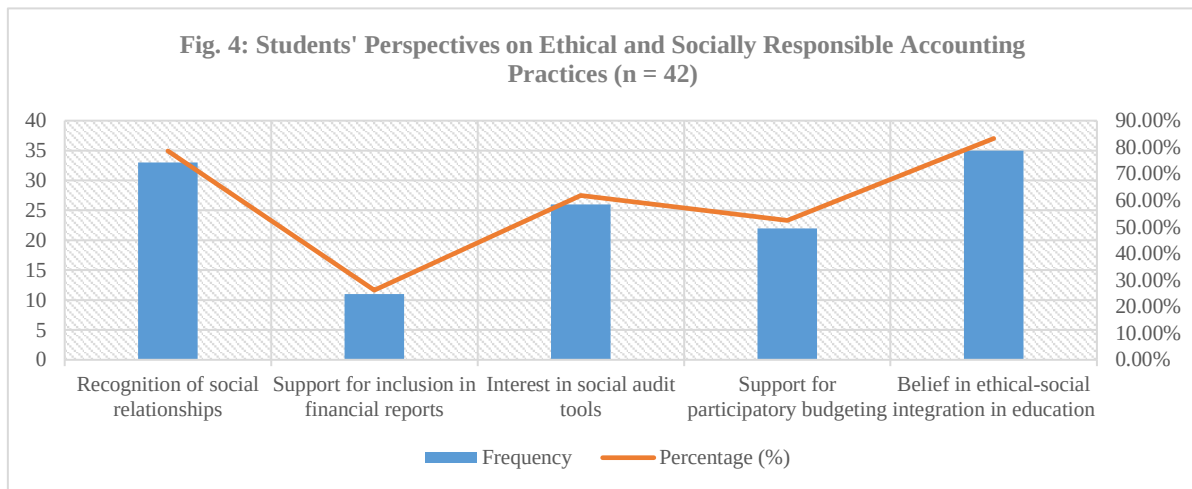
3.5. Ethical and Socially Responsible Accounting Practices

Ethical and socially responsible accounting practices have become central in redefining the role of accountants beyond traditional financial reporting, especially within cooperative and community-centered economic structures. At the Catholic University of Rwanda (CUR), accounting students operate in an environment where trust, solidarity, and reciprocity are key intangible resources. These elements are aligned with the theory of *communitarian ethics*, which emphasizes the importance of moral obligations within communities (Etzioni, 1995). Social anthropology further reinforces this by highlighting the embeddedness of economic transactions in social relations, as Granovetter (1985) argued in his concept of embeddedness. Accounting scholars such as Gray and Bebbington (2001) contend that ethical accounting must reflect broader social realities rather than merely monetary outcomes. In this study, while 78.6% of CUR respondents acknowledged the significance of social relationships in cooperative functioning, only 26.2% believed these should be included in formal accounting reports. This dichotomy points to an educational gap in aligning accounting practices with ethical and social dimensions.

Accounting in cooperative contexts requires a paradigm shift from an exclusive focus on monetary transactions to recognizing the communal value of non-monetary resources. Bourdieu's (1986) theory of social capital explains that relationships, networks, and trust are valuable assets that influence economic outcomes. However, conventional accounting education largely ignores these aspects, as shown by the low percentage (26.2%) of students supporting the inclusion of non-monetary elements in financial

reports. In contrast, 61.9% expressed interest in tools such as *social audits*, which emphasize transparency, stakeholder participation, and ethical practices (Gibbon & Dey, 2011). These findings resonate with Laughlin's (1995) mid-range theory in accounting change,

which suggests that systems must evolve to reflect their social environment. Figure 4 below illustrates students' views on the integration of social and ethical dimensions in accounting:



Participatory budgeting and social audits are two major tools promoted by ethical accounting frameworks for recognizing non-monetary contributions. These tools allow cooperative members to contribute to financial decisions, enhancing transparency and equity (Fung, 2006). More than half of the CUR respondents (52.4%) supported participatory budgeting, showing readiness to engage in inclusive financial practices. From a social anthropology standpoint, Mauss (1925) in *The Gift* emphasizes that value is often created and sustained through non-monetary exchanges, such as mutual support and shared obligations. Therefore, ethical accounting should reflect both tangible and intangible forms of capital. The lack of this reflection in formal reporting suggests that accounting education must be restructured to include indigenous knowledge systems and localized cooperative experiences (Hopper et al., 2009; Alawattage et al., 2007).

Accounting education in Rwanda, particularly at CUR, has the opportunity to shape professionals who understand and integrate social dimensions into their practice. With 83.3% of students advocating for ethical and social dimensions in the curriculum, there is a clear demand for reform. The *triple-bottom-line* approach, which emphasizes people, planet, and profit (Elkington, 1997), aligns with the values held by these students and can serve as a model. Furthermore, ethics in accounting must extend to issues of equity and representation, ensuring that cooperative members' voices are reflected in financial decision-making. Anthropologist Marilyn Strathern (2000) argues that the value of relationships is often overlooked in formal systems but is crucial to sustaining collective economies. In this light, accounting must evolve to measure and report on social impacts, solidarity practices, and communal well-being.

The role of future accountants, therefore, is not merely technical but profoundly ethical. As representatives of financial truth, they must also serve as advocates for justice, inclusion, and sustainability (Gray et al., 1997). The findings of this study reveal the urgent need to incorporate *critical accounting* perspectives that consider how power, culture, and social responsibility intersect with finance (Tinker, 1985). The integration of social dimensions into accounting ethics will prepare students to contribute meaningfully to cooperative development, ensuring that financial reports reflect both monetary and non-monetary value. This approach not only enhances

transparency but also strengthens community cohesion and promotes inclusive development.

In conclusion, CUR accounting students demonstrate awareness of the ethical implications of their future profession, particularly in cooperative settings where social capital plays a pivotal role. Although current accounting frameworks undervalue non-monetary resources, there is a growing recognition among students of the need for alternative tools like social audits and participatory budgeting. The integration of ethical and social dimensions into accounting education will ensure that future professionals are equipped to value both financial performance and communal contributions. This shift aligns accounting with local realities and supports the long-term sustainability of Rwanda's cooperative economy.

4. Conclusion

This study explored how accounting students at the Catholic University of Rwanda understand and engage with non-monetary resources, focusing on social capital and communal value within cooperative settings. The objective was to evaluate whether students recognize the significance of intangible elements, such as trust, reciprocity, and solidarity, and whether they consider them relevant to formal accounting practices. The guiding hypothesis suggested that students trained under traditional, monetarily-driven accounting frameworks undervalue social capital in economic reporting.

Using a mixed-methods approach, the study surveyed a stratified random sample of 42 students through structured questionnaires, focus group discussions, and participant observation. Quantitative data were analyzed using percentages and frequencies, while qualitative data were interpreted through thematic analysis.

Key findings reveal that 78.6% of students acknowledged the importance of social relationships in cooperative success, yet only 26.2% supported their inclusion in financial reports. Meanwhile, 61.9% showed interest in alternative tools like social audits, and 52.4% endorsed participatory budgeting. Significantly, 83.3% of respondents agreed that accounting education should incorporate ethical and social dimensions aligned with communal realities.

These results confirm a gap between accounting training and the socio-cultural contexts in which students operate. The students'

openness to ethical and participatory accounting methods indicates a demand for reform in accounting education. The hypothesis has been verified: conventional accounting frameworks do indeed lead students to undervalue non-monetary assets. Therefore, incorporating anthropological, ethical, and community-based perspectives into the curriculum is vital to preparing socially responsible professionals capable of supporting inclusive and sustainable cooperative development.

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