



IMPACT OF SMALL AND MEDIUM-SCALE ENTERPRISES ON WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: *This study examines the impact of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) on women's empowerment in Oyo state. A cluster sampling procedure was used to select 283 respondents for this study. Data for this study was sourced using primary sources. The questionnaire was administered to elicit information from the study respondents. Data obtained were measured using descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage mean and standard deviation and inferential statistics using binary logistic regression. The results showed that 43.1% of the respondents were between the ages of 41-50years, 48.8% of the respondents had NCE/OND qualification, most (57.6%) of the respondents were divorced, 32.9% of the respondents were engaged in agriculture, most (66.4%) of the respondents were sole proprietorship, 43.8% of the respondents have 10-20year of operation. Furthermore, the majority (77.0%) of the respondents agreed that involvement in SMEs has positively impacted their personal empowerment or financial stability, 98.6% of the respondents believe that government policies and support systems adequately promote women's empowerment through SMEs in Oyo State, most (67.8%) of the respondent thought SMEs enhance financial literacy. Also, the majority (93.6%) of the respondents agreed that involvement in SMEs has empowered them economically and socially.*

KEYWORDS: Small and Medium Scale Enterprises, Women and Income



INTRODUCTION

Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa, stands at the crossroads of economic development and gender equality, which are integral to achieving sustainable progress. In recent years, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) have emerged as vital contributors to the nation's economic growth and job creation (World Bank, 2020). Simultaneously, women's empowerment has gained prominence as a global imperative, recognised for its potential to catalyse social and economic advancement (UN Women, 2020). In this context, the intersection of SMEs and women's empowerment in Nigeria represents a compelling area of study and action.

Nigeria's SME sector is characterised by its dynamism, encompassing various businesses across various industries, including agriculture, manufacturing, services, and technology (Ajakaiye et al., 2017). These enterprises have demonstrated resilience and the capacity to drive economic diversification, making them central to the country's development agenda. However, women's participation and success in SMEs remain affected by gender-based disparities and structural barriers. Women, who constitute a significant portion of Nigeria's population and workforce, encounter unique challenges in accessing resources, finance, and markets, hindering their entrepreneurial pursuits (Bamidele & Adesina, 2018).

Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are forms of entrepreneurship regarded as vital engines for economic growth in developed and developing countries (World Bank, 2020). These entrepreneurship ventures represent about 90% of businesses worldwide and contribute to job creation and global economic development. Similarly, MSMEs account for over 50% of global employment and contribute up to 40% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in emerging economies (World Bank, 2022). "In Nigeria, SMEs contribute 48 per cent of national GDP, 96 per cent of businesses and 84 per cent of employment. This sector contributes significantly to alleviating poverty and increasing job creation. Women's empowerment is seen as a means of reducing child and infant mortality through education and the well-being of mothers; it stimulates economic development through the participation of women in labour (Magaji *et al.*, 2022). Reducing poverty is directly connected to economic empowerment. It is recognised that women's empowerment is essential for economic development and global poverty reduction. The idea of women's empowerment is used to recognise poverty-stricken and impoverished women's circumstances. There are several explanations for weakening women in developing countries. Men demonstrate restrictions on women and ruling social, economic, and political groups over the less dominant (Magaji & Aliyu, 2007).

Research into the intersection of SMEs and women's empowerment in Nigeria has gained prominence recently. Policymakers, scholars, and development practitioners recognise that empowering women through entrepreneurship not only contributes to gender equality but also stimulates economic growth and poverty reduction (Adeyemi & Ogunnaike, 2019). This recognition has resulted in various initiatives aimed at understanding the unique experiences of women entrepreneurs, identifying barriers they face, and devising strategies to enhance their participation and success in SMEs. A growing body of empirical evidence highlights the positive impact of women's involvement in SMEs on family well-being, community development, and national economic growth (Okafor & Anyanwu, 2021). Women entrepreneurs have shown remarkable resilience and innovation in various sectors, from



agribusiness to technology startups. Their contributions have not only bolstered local economies but have also contributed to Nigeria's broader economic transformation.

In Nigeria, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) play a crucial role in economic development, contributing significantly to job creation, wealth generation, and poverty reduction. However, despite their undeniable importance, women entrepreneurs face substantial challenges that hinder their full participation and contribution to SMEs, thus limiting the overall impact of SMEs on women's empowerment in the nation (Magaji, 2002). The lack of recognition for business opportunities has resulted in lower participation levels of women in entrepreneurship than men, primarily because women are not sufficiently informed or empowered to choose their desired business ventures (Shaba et al., 2018). This lack of information and support has created market failures, leading to discrimination against women who aspire to become entrepreneurs and limiting their potential for success.

The problem lies in the significant gender disparities and barriers that hinder women from effectively starting, growing, and sustaining their businesses. Women often struggle to access loans, credit facilities, and other financial resources necessary for starting and expanding their businesses (Okoroafor et al., 2018). Discrimination and lack of collateral often limit their chances of securing funding from financial institutions, and these may thus affect their empowerment, assets acquired, and income (Chinedu et al., 2021).

This study embarks on a comprehensive exploration of the dynamic relationship between SMEs and women's empowerment in Nigeria. Drawing upon recent citations and references, we aim to shed light on how SMEs can act as catalysts for women's empowerment. This includes examining empirical evidence, case studies, and policy initiatives that elucidate the critical role played by SMEs in advancing gender equality and women's economic participation within the Nigerian context. The impact of women's empowerment on society and national building must be considered; as such, this study seeks to examine the impact of SMEs on women's empowerment in Oyo state, Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Conceptual Review

Two concepts were reviewed in this study: The Concept of Small and Medium Enterprises and Empowerment

Small and Medium-Scale Enterprises

African SMEs are defined based on size, employment, and financial thresholds. One widely used definition is provided by the African Development Bank (AfDB), which classifies microenterprises as those with less than ten employees, small enterprises as those with 10-49 employees, and medium-sized enterprises as those with 50-99 employees. (African Development Bank, 2020). In Nigeria, SMEs are defined based on their asset base, workforce size, and annual turnover. The Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) provides the following classification: Micro Enterprises: Asset base not exceeding ₦5 million and employing less than ten people. Small Enterprises: Asset base between ₦5 million and ₦50 million, employing 10 to 49 people. Medium Enterprises: Asset base between ₦50 million and ₦500 million, employing 50 to 199 people (SMEDAN, 2018).



Magaji (2002) defines SMEs in Nigeria using the federal government budget from 1990. They define SMEs in Nigeria as commercial firms with a maximum annual revenue of 500,000. They describe SMEs as businesses with a capital investment of up to five million naira, including the cost of landed property, but not more than two million. As a result, the definition of SMEs in Nigeria is arbitrary and dependent on the type of commercial operations carried out by the companies and their geographic location (Elyaqub et al., 2023). Numerous companies from various economic areas are included in the SME sector. It can be divided into two major categories: growth-oriented businesses and small and micro businesses operating at a subsistence level, primarily providing employment and income for its owners and a small number of external employees (Magaji, 2004). In poor nations, the bulk of SMEs are subsistence businesses. Growth-oriented businesses, on the other hand, focus on innovation and operate in growing markets (Magaji et al., 2022). Acquisitions are frequently used by network- or efficiency-focused businesses to expand (Ikpor et al., 2017).

Empowerment

According to Bailey (1992), how we precisely define empowerment within our projects and programs will depend upon the specific people and context involved. As a general definition, however, Bailey (1992) suggests that empowerment is a multidimensional social process that helps people gain control over their own lives. It is a process that fosters power (that is, the capacity to implement) in people for use in their own lives, their communities, and in their society by acting on issues that they define as important. Nanette and Cheryl (1999) suggest that there are three components of understanding empowerment. Empowerment is multidimensional, social, and a process. It is multidimensional, occurring within sociological, psychological, economic, and other dimensions. Empowerment also occurs at various levels, including individual, group, and community. Empowerment, by definition, is a social process since it occurs in relationships with others. Empowerment is a process similar to a path or journey that develops as we work through it. Other aspects of empowerment may vary according to the specific context and people involved, but these remain constant. In addition, a critical implication of this definition of empowerment is that the individual and community are fundamentally connected.

According to the World Bank, empowerment entails giving impoverished individuals the authority to exert more influence over governmental aspects that directly affect their means of living. This is achieved through strategies that facilitate their engagement in political processes and enable them to express their opinions regarding local determinations that impact their quality of life. This process involves the elimination of factions or associations that impede the advancement opportunities of underprivileged individuals, often accomplished by dismantling socio-political and economic obstacles. This removal of hindrances consequently permits poor individuals to engage in heightened market-oriented endeavours, mainly due to increased ownership of assets (Ibrahim & Alkire, 2007).

Women empowerment involves granting women the knowledge, resources, and authority to make independent decisions and participate actively in various aspects of society, including economic, political, and social realms (Magaji & Yahaya, 2012). It aims to challenge and dismantle gender-based inequalities, enabling women to achieve their full potential and contribute to improving their communities and societies (Kabeer, 2005).



THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Psychological (Individual) Empowerment

Developed by Conger and Kanungo in 1988, this theory focuses on individuals' perceptions of control, competence, and impact. It suggests that empowerment is rooted in individuals' beliefs about their ability to influence their environment and outcomes. These perceptions influence self-efficacy, sense of autonomy, and meaningful participation.

Research related to psychological empowerment has focused on perceived control and citizen participation. Perceived control refers to a person's internal belief about how their role influences the achievement of some outcome. The outcome can be avoidance or goal-achievement-oriented. Perceived control is critical to understand because people react differently to situations they believe they have suffered. Weight control is compared to when the situation is uncontrollable or lacks control. This factor also influences a person's social and political standing, and more control leads to better livelihood and personal well-being. This makes it fitting to bind perceived control into three domains- personality, which focuses on locus of control; cognitive refereeing to self-efficacy; and motivation, which relates to intrinsic needs. People with a high locus of control and self-efficiency to achieve desired outcomes have more confidence in their perceived success and are more empowered, while those with low motivation to influence their environment's activities feel less in control. Citizen participation, on the other hand, is believed to increase perceived control and capabilities. Participation refers to attendance in activities; therefore, community activities reduce feelings of isolation that individuals sometimes feel in society. Several studies have been conducted using correlations with other theories, such as the learning theory, where individuals were taught how to resolve shortages in the community and gain better access to resources to help increase individuals' sense of control in livelihood. These theories have helped develop the 'Psychological Empowerment Theory', which combines consensus of the level of control one perceives they have with how a person achieves control and the learning they possess of their external social environment. These measures have been studied to identify variables of psychological empowerment. The main variables identified include intrapersonal components- belief of how well a person can make decisions which cause change in their life; interactional components- their interaction with their social and political environment, which includes components of critical awareness and causal agents and behavioural components- how a person's group, organisational or individual activities impact their level of control in the socio-political environment in which they exist (Zimmerman, 2000). The theory measures the degree to which an individual possesses these components of participation and control, as high levels would result in a highly empowered individual.

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

A study by Klapper et al. (2019) assessed the impact of support programs for women entrepreneurs within SMEs. Their study found that targeted interventions, such as access to training and networks, significantly contributed to women's empowerment and improved business performance. These findings highlight the importance of tailored support mechanisms in maximising the impact of SMEs on women's economic empowerment.



Ab-Rahim & Mohamed (2019) examines the moderating role of youth empowerment on the relationship between Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) in Niger State, Nigeria. The study used a survey technique and questionnaire to collect data from 432 SME owners in 8 selected Local Government Areas of Niger State, Nigeria. The Partial Least Square-Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) tests hypotheses. The results showed positive changes in the socio-economic status of the people due to their involvement in SME activities of employment, innovation, human capital development and income; the results showed that the moderating effect of youth empowerment positively influences the relationship between SMEs and MPI.

Adeyemi and Ogunnaike (2019) researched women's entrepreneurship in Lagos State, Nigeria, focusing on the role of government policies. Their findings revealed that while government policies aimed at supporting women entrepreneurs in SMEs existed, access to finance remained a significant challenge. The study underscored the importance of addressing financial barriers to enhance women's empowerment in SMEs.

A comprehensive study by Anderson et al. (2020) examined the challenges and opportunities for women entrepreneurs within SMEs. The research highlighted various obstacles that women entrepreneurs face, including limited access to financing and networks. However, it also emphasised that women entrepreneurs who received support and mentorship within SME ecosystems were more likely to overcome these challenges and achieve economic empowerment.

Asfiah (2020) analysed the empowerment model of women in SMEs as one of the notable actors for national economic growth that can last throughout the world crisis. The purpose of the study was to analyse models of empowerment of women in the work area of The Association of Women SMEs. The data for the study was collected by interviewing women entrepreneurs and by triangulation technique. The triangulation technique helps with data collection and analysis simultaneously and verification. The result shows the critical dimensions of SMEs. To exist, women SMEs need to build a model of women empowerment on SMEs.

Islam (2020) examined Women's Empowerment through Entrepreneurship Development in Bangladesh. The study used a Multivariate Analysis. The study used probability and non-probability sampling techniques to select 397 women business entrepreneurs involved in SME businesses for an interview. The data were analysed using Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) techniques. The results show that the factors concerning women's entrepreneurship development, such as regulatory framework, entrepreneurship education and training, role of women business associations and husband engagement in women's business, have direct and significant effects on Women Empowerment Development. The access to finance and market facilities was not significant. Through the development of entrepreneurship in the SME sector, women's empowerment factors such as economic empowerment, social empowerment, and women's entrepreneurial leadership capabilities were developed among women entrepreneurs.

Okafor and Anyanwu (2021) conducted a study on women's economic empowerment through SMEs in Nigeria. Their study revealed that women entrepreneurs are crucial in improving family well-being, including access to education and healthcare. The study emphasised that



empowering women in SMEs has a positive ripple effect on the broader community and contributes to sustainable development.

Abubakar and Danjuma (2021) examine the effects of the government Enterprise Empowerment programme on the performance of SMEs in Gombe State, Nigeria. The study used a sample of 100 respondents selected randomly from SMEs operating in Gombe. Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was used as the statistical procedure to analyse the data. The result shows that three services, Trader Moni, Anchor Borrower, and Youth Entrepreneurship Support, significantly affect SMEs' performance.

Riaz and Chaudhry (2021) investigate the role of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in women empowerment and poverty alleviation in Southern Punjab. The findings showed that the education level of the women, participation in SMEs, skills development index, employed persons in the household, the value of physical assets, and women's economic, familial, and social empowerment index adversely and significantly influenced the poverty. In contrast, the household size and family setup positively and significantly influenced poverty. To alleviate poverty in Pakistan and specifically in Southern Punjab, women's participation in the labour force must be encouraged, educational facilities for women should be provided, especially in the rural areas, and technical education should also be promoted, which will not only empower the women but will also open the doors of employment.

Nguse et al. (2022) examine enhancing women's economic empowerment through financial inclusion: evidence from small and medium-sized enterprises in Ethiopia. Their study used an explanatory research design and a mixed research approach. For this study, a judgment sampling technique was used to select respondents from women's SMEs, and data were collected from 324 women-owned SMEs in Ethiopia. SMART-PLS version 3.3.5 was used to estimate both measurement and structural analysis of research variables. The findings show that government policies and regulations positively and significantly affect women's economic empowerment directly and indirectly. Besides, financial inclusion positively and significantly affects women's economic empowerment directly.

Jacob et al. (2022) examined the Role of Micro-Enterprises in the Four-Dimensional Framework of Women's Empowerment. The study used a quantitative research approach and a cross-sectional research design. Survey research and purposive sampling were used to select 384 respondents (women entrepreneurs under the Kudumbashree Mission of Kerala state in India). The data gathered from a structured questionnaire was used for confirmatory factor analysis, model fit evaluation, and making a structural equation model to test the proposed relationship in the four-dimensional model of women's empowerment. The study explicates the relationship between attributes of micro-enterprises and women's empowerment. The field data were analysed using SPSS and AMOS software. The finding shows that economic development will only happen if women are empowered.

Ahmed et al. (2024) examine the impact of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) on women's empowerment in Oyo state. The sample consisted of 40-year-old women who were sole proprietors in agriculture with ten years of operation. The study found that SMEs positively impacted their personal savings and financial stability, contributing to improved financial literacy. Women also used their savings for education, healthcare, and investments. The study emphasises the importance of SMEs in advancing women's empowerment and



suggests further support for SMEs, including financial resources, specialised training programs, and market connections.

METHODOLOGY

Population of Study

The study population comprises SME owners and operators in Oyo State, specifically women. Since no recent survey has been conducted to determine the number of registered SMEs other than the one by SMEDAN (2013), the study used the survey report to determine the population. The study's population consists of 1,358 registered SMEs operating in Oyo State. These SMEs were chosen because they are registered and recognised by relevant authorities.

Method of Data Analysis

A simple percentage frequency distribution analysis method was used to analyse the data for the study. According to Smith et al. (2020), percentage frequency distributions are commonly used in social science research. In a study by Johnson (2018), frequency analysis revealed interesting trends in consumer behaviour. A percentage frequency distribution displays data by indicating the percentage of observations for each data point or group of data points. It is commonly used to express the relative frequency of survey responses and other data. On the other hand, frequency refers to the number of times a particular value occurs in a dataset. It helps us understand the distribution of values.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

Sampling involves choosing a subgroup of individuals from the target population to estimate the entire population's characteristics (Singh & Masuku, 2014). It is vital to use adequate subjects to ensure a higher probability that the study results will be more generalisable and interpretable (Mugenda, 2008). According to Okeke (1995), sample size can be determined using Taro Yamani Formula. Thus, the sample size for this study was determined using Yamani's (1968) formula for calculating sample size as follows:

$$n = N$$

$$1 + N(e)^2$$

Where: n= sample size

N= population size

e= sample error level of significance

1 = constant

Therefore;



$$= 1,358$$

$$\frac{1,358}{1 + 1,358 (0.05)^2}$$

$$= 1,358$$

$$1 + 1,358 \times 0.0025$$

$$= 1,358$$

$$4.395$$

$$= 309$$

Therefore, the sample size of 309 respondents (owners and managers of the SMEs) out of the entire population of 1,358 operators SMEs in Oyo state would be chosen to administer the questionnaire and in-depth interview instrument.

The study used a cluster sampling technique to locate the sample out of the population. Cluster sampling is suitable where the sample to be drawn is heterogeneous within the clusters and homogeneous between the clusters (Kothari & Garg, 2014). The study adopted a cluster sampling technique to choose SMEs from the three senatorial zones of Oyo State, and a simple random sample was used to select the population from the clusters. The questionnaire was distributed based on a simple random sampling procedure.

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Demographic Data

Age

Table 1 showed that 43.1% of the respondents were between the age of 41-50 years, 37.8% were between 31-40 years, 15.5% were between 20- 30 years, and 3.5% were 51 and above years. The mean age of 39.92 implies that they are middle age and able-bodied, which can be regarded as active, agile, and physically disposed to pursue economic activities. This finding agrees with the findings of Fajimi & Omonona (2010), who opined that most respondents are mature enough to run the SMEs.

Academic qualification

As presented in Table 1, the result also showed that 48.8% of the respondents had NCE/OND qualifications, 25.8% had O'level qualifications, and 25.4% had BSC/HND qualifications. This implies that the majority of respondents in the study area were literate and highly educated, which contradicts the study conducted by Adeyemi & Larenwaju (2014) and GEDI (2014),



who concluded that the majority of the micro and small business entrepreneurs had primary and secondary education with only 13% of business owners having a college degree.

Marital status

Table 1 reveals that most (57.6%) respondents were divorced, 35.3% were married, and 7.1% were single. This implies that most of the respondents in the study area were divorced.

Business mode

Table 1 also revealed that most respondents (66.4%) were sole proprietors, while 33.6% were business partners. This implies that most of the respondents in the study area were sole proprietors.

Years of operation

Table 1 also revealed that 43.8% of the respondents have 10-20 years of operation, 30.0% have 1- 10 years, and 26.1% have above 20 years of operation. This indicated that the majority of the respondents were experienced small and medium-scale enterprises (SMEs)

Table 1: Demographic Result

Variables	Frequency	Percentage	Mean±std
Age			
Between 20-30	44	15.5	
Between 31-40	107	37.8	
Between 41-50	122	43.1	40±0.78
Between 51- Above	10	3.5	
Academic qualification			
BSC/HND	72	25.4	
NCE/OND	138	48.8	
O'Level	73	25.8	
Marital status			
Single	20	7.1	
Married	100	35.3	
Divorced	163	57.6	
Business mode			
Sole Proprietorship	188	66.4	
Business Partnership	95	33.6	
Years of operation			



1-10	85	30.0	
10-20	124	43.8	10±0.75
20years& above	74	26.1	

Source: field survey, 2023

Firm activities

Figure 1 shows that 32.9% of the respondents were engaged in agriculture, 32.2% in manufacturing, 16.6% in wholesale and retail, 15.9% in mining and quarrying, and 2.5% in transportation. This implies that most of the respondents were engaged in agriculture, which may be because agriculture is the primary occupation in the study area. This study is in line with Akinlade, Oyeniyi, and Aje's (2018) assertion that most's assertion that most women are necessity entrepreneurs.

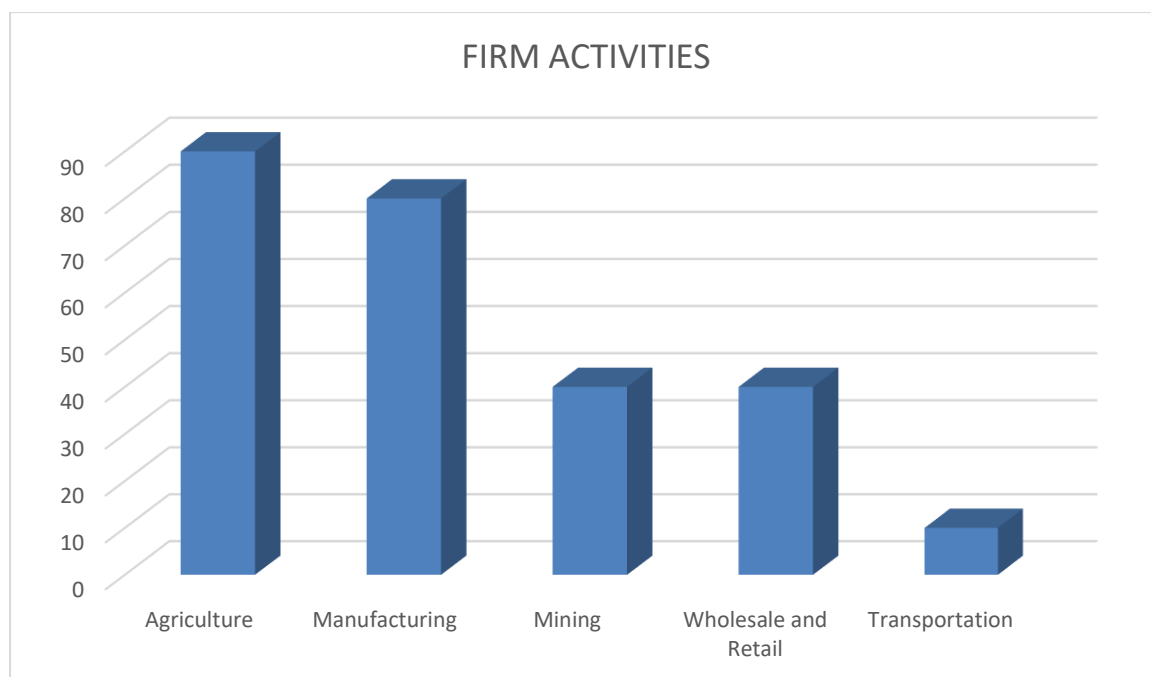


Figure 1: SMEs Firm activities engaged by women in the study area

Impact of SMEs on Women's Empowerment

Table 2 shows that most (77.0%) respondents agreed that involvement in SMEs has positively impacted their personal empowerment or financial stability. In comparison, 23.0% did not agree that involvement in SMEs has positively impacted their personal empowerment or financial stability. This indicated that involvement in SMEs has positively impacted the respondents' personal empowerment or financial stability in the study area. Almost all (98.6%) respondents believe that government policies and support systems adequately promote women's empowerment through SMEs in Oyo State. In comparison, 1.4% did not believe that



government policies and support systems adequately promote women's empowerment through SMEs in Oyo State. This indicated that the respondents in the study area believe that government policies and support systems adequately promote women's empowerment through SMEs in Oyo State. Most (67.8%) respondents thought SMEs enhance financial literacy, 15.5% thought SMEs offer investment opportunities, 11.7% thought SMEs encourage empowerment culture, and 4.9% thought SMEs provide additional income. This indicated that most respondents in the study area thought SMEs enhance financial literacy.

Furthermore, the results in Table 2 showed that little above average (56.5%) of the respondents used their empowerment for any specific purposes, such as education, healthcare, or investments, due to their involvement in the SME, while 43.5% did not use their empowerment for any specific purposes, such as education, healthcare, or investments, due to their involvement in the SME. This indicated that most of the respondents in the study area used their empowerment for specific purposes, such as education, healthcare, or investments, due to their involvement in the SME. Most (59.0%) of the respondents believe that involvement in the SMEs is not applicable, 26.1% experienced increased empowerment, 7.8% experienced no significant impact and 7.1% experienced decreased empowerment. This indicates that most of the respondent in the study area believe that involvement in SMEs impacts their empowerment in the study area.

Table 2: Impact of SMEs on Women's Empowerment:

Variables	Frequency	Percentage	±std
Has your involvement in SMEs positively impacted your personal empowerment or financial stability			
Yes	218	77.0	0.42
No	65	23.0	
Do you believe government policies and support systems adequately promote women's empowerment through SMEs in Oyo State?			
Yes	279	98.6	0.12
No	4	1.4	
How do SMEs contribute to women's empowerment in Oyo State? (Choose all that apply):			
Providing additional income	14	4.9	0.88
Encouraging empowerment culture	33	11.7	
Offering investment opportunities	44	15.5	
Enhancing financial literacy	192	67.8	
Due to your involvement in the SME, have you used your empowerment for any specific purposes, such as education, healthcare, or investments?			
Yes	160	56.5	0.49
No	123	43.5	



In your experience, how has your involvement in the SME influenced your empowerment behaviour?			
Increased empowerment	74	26.1	1.31
Decreased empowerment	20	7.1	
No significant impact	22	7.8	
Not applicable	167	59.0	

Source: field survey, 2023

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the findings, it is concluded that the average age of the women sample for this study was 40 years, they had NCE/OND qualifications, they were sole proprietorships who were involved in agriculture and had an average of 10 years of operation, It is further concluded that majority of the respondents agreed that involvement in SMEs has positively impacted their personal empowerment or financial stability and believe they tat government policies and support systems would adequately promote their empowerment through SMEs in the study area. The respondents further concluded that SMEs enhance financial literacy. Also, the women used their empowerment for specific purposes, such as education, healthcare, or investments, due to their involvement in the SME, and they agreed that involvement in SMEs has empowered them economically and socially; it is also concluded that the respondents experienced economic conditions and experienced deterioration. It is also revealed that most respondents earn income through salaries and wages and experience improved living standards.

Therefore, the study provides the following recommendations;

1. SMEs can provide women with alternative sources of finance, such as microfinance institutions or peer-to-peer lending platforms. These sources of finance can help women start or grow their businesses and access the capital they need to succeed
2. Deliberate efforts at increasing women's empowerment in SMEs should be encouraged by both government and non-governmental organisations since it has been shown that their empowerment impacts SME activities.
3. The government can facilitate networking events and opportunities for women to connect with mentors, peers, and leaders in SMEs. If implemented, this can positively improve their asset acquisition.



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