

ENTREPRENEURIAL ORIENTATION AMONG SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES (SMEs) IN RURAL AREAS OF THE ETHEKWINI REGION

ABSTRACT

Entrepreneurial orientation (EO) plays a profound role in enhancing the survival and growth of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in rural areas. Much remains to be learnt of the EO concept and the crucial elements that foster EO in rural communities. SMEs have been acknowledged globally as important employers and the foundation of successful businesses in rural areas. They can also serve as a catalyst for economic expansion due to their significant contribution to the gross domestic product (GDP) of any country. Hence, they are recognized as vital tools for any country looking to accomplish notable economic growth, employment creation, resource redistribution, and inequality reduction, as well as creative business practices. The study goal was to assess the significant factors influencing EO to support SMEs in rural areas of the eThekweni region trying to survive and grow. To obtain first-hand information from rural business owners-managers, a questionnaire was developed and disseminated to the sample of 309 SME owners/managers who operate in these rural areas. Respondents, selected by quota sampling, answered a Likert scaled questionnaire. The study used a quantitative approach to collect data. Using SPSS (version 27.0) for data analysis, the scientific statistical significance level was found to be (.000*) at the Cronbach's alpha reliability.

Keywords: Creative business practices; Economic growth; Entrepreneurial orientation (EO); Inequality reduction; Resource distribution; Small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

1. INTRODUCTION

Many exogenous and endogenous factors affect the growth and advancement barriers of rural entrepreneurship; however, the growth-oriented attitude of the entrepreneur plays a critical role in the survival and growth of a rural SME (Amoah-Mensah, 2024). It is critical to recognize and consider the risks and many contextual factors that influence the effectiveness of an individual entrepreneur to enhance the success of rural SMEs, as well as their entrepreneurial orientation (EO) (Utomo et al., 2024). Tsagay et al. (2024) maintain various factors, including the state of the market, industries, and customers, in addition to financial obligations, technological developments, and new product offerings, seem to substantially impact SME survival and growth. All stakeholders, therefore, need to have a clear understanding of EO, which is thought to have a bearing on the overall success of the rural SME (Wei and Duan, 2024). This phenomenon presents the personal orientation of an entrepreneur seeking novel possibilities for business, followed by procedures, behaviours, and choices made at the business level (Pinheiro et al., 2024). Thus, the main goals of this research were to identify the risks and investigate key variables impacting the EO for survival and growth of SMEs operating in rural areas of the eThekweni region in the KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) province.

Commented [MD1]: Entrepreneurial Orientation of Small and Medium scale Enterprises (SMEs) in EtheKwini region of South Africa

Commented [MD2]: Not clear the meaning

Commented [MD3]: Number of sentences used to explain the necessity of SMEs is too much... Using one or two sentences explain the importance of SMEs. Then, you need to emphasize why entrepreneurial orientation is... also, highlight what was fuel for this study (problem)...

Commented [MD4]: Do you have the licensed version ?

Commented [MD5]: No need to mention this in the abstract.

Additionally, you need to synthesize the findings of the study and some possible recommendations for practitioners and policy makers etc.

Commented [MD6]: Better to provide some insights of SMEs in SA and importance of SMEs for SA. Explain how entrepreneurial orientation supports to improve performance, survival and growth of SMEs. After the discussions on the above, you can move to the text given here..

Commented [MD7]: Think about the appropriateness of this word...

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

In South Africa (SA), most recently established SMEs fail to develop beyond their initial inception level (Amoa-Gyarteng and Dhlwayo, 2024, Adebowale and Agumba, 2023). Adebowale and Agumba (2023) echoed this concern, stating even after more than three decades of democratic governance in SA, the growth of SMEs and entrepreneurial activity continues to lag other developing economies globally. According to Ramsuraj (2023), SMEs in rural regions have not made the satisfactory contributions to communities hoped for, because they do not grow with regard to goods and services or where the generating of jobs is concerned. However, in terms of rural areas of eThekweni, numerous research studies, including that of Ramsuraj (2023), failed to provide thorough details on the crucial elements impacting EO for SME survival and expansion.

Aliamutu and Mkhize (2024) state that among the issues rural entrepreneurs face as they grow, are those related to scaling up, oversight, and operational procedures. Agholor et al. (2024) assert significant expansion in rural SMEs is frequently intermittent rather than consistent. This issue appears to be the result of an inadequate level of awareness and grasp of the variables influencing the expansion and viability of businesses in rural regions. According to Odeyemi et al. (2024), not having sufficient loan finance is one problem preventing SMEs in SA from surviving and expanding. Maesela et al. (2024) note, while the factors influencing business growth have been investigated across a range of academic fields, a multidisciplinary evaluation is currently absent. The paper emphasizes the ability of rural entrepreneurs of eThekweni to innovate through EO and identify new business possibilities that generate revenue and jobs in rural areas, which is crucial to the future prosperity of the rural economy, considering the persistent challenges facing conventional rural sectors.

3. AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The study aimed to determine critical factors examining and describing the effect of EO among SMEs for survival and growth in rural areas of the eThekweni region in the KZN province.

Objectives:

- To examine the personal attitudes that affect the EO for SME survival and growth in rural areas of eThekweni.
- To examine the elements of rural entrepreneurial resources that impact EO for the survival and growth of SMEs in rural areas of eThekweni.

Commented [MD8]: In overall, it cannot be identified any problem/issue here... Researcher needs to identify any specific issue in the study area (eg: literature gap, empirical gap etc)

Commented [MD9]: Can you provide some statistics to prove your argument? If yes, the gravity of your work will be enhanced...

Commented [MD10]: What is the referencing style followed? If it is APA, citation method is wrong. Pl revisit

Commented [MD11]: These objectives are not depicted by the conceptual framework.

Commented [MD12R11]: There should be an alignment among research problem, objectives, conceptual framework...

4. LITERATURE REVIEW

4.1. Theoretical framework

According to Cowden et al. (2024) and Morgan and Anokhin (2023), the route chosen by entrepreneurship is a convoluted one that blends strategies, abilities, and elements of the business environment that will aid in the prosperity of the business. An amicable or hostile business climate may impact the decisions SMEs make while implementing EO. Nonetheless, innovation management (a dimension of EO) enables SMEs to respond quickly to competitors in the market (Clark et al., 2024). More innovative cooperation between organisational units may be justified by the improved capacity to spot competitive movements at an early stage. Our theoretical framework was developed using the resource-based view (RBV) and contingency theory as a basis.

When Penrose first developed the RBV in 1959, it clarified how an organisation may grow considering limited resources at its disposal to maintain its operations (Pereira Júnior and Pereira, 2023). By analysing how businesses used their precious resources to create and implement their strategies, Poazi Deinmodei (2023) created new RBV keywords to highlight extraordinary performance of SMEs (Lau and Michie, 2024). The foundational assumptions of the RBV framework were put forward by Kero and Bogale (2023), who stated there may be a variety of strategic business resources, some that might be valued, rare, imperfectly imitable, and non-interchangeable.

Strategic resources could be regarded as rare when they benefit the business. Rare resources are regarded as special resources, difficult to find among existing competitors in a similar market, whereas imperfect imitability relates to how difficult it is for rivals to steal or duplicate the resources (Chatterjee et al., 2024). The final criterion, non-substitutability, shows resources are not easily changed out for ones better suited. The SME will maintain its dominant position, since it becomes more difficult for competitors to replace resources with alternatives. According to (Nayak et al., 2023) the strategic resources of comparable SMEs can account for the variations in their performance.

Using the RBV, a rural SME can ascertain the extent to which its tactical assets and competencies will enhance its competitiveness (Rihayana et al., 2023). Resources for SMEs might be either material or immaterial (Kruesi and Bazelmans, 2023) According to (Purnomo, 2024) tangible-physical resources are visible assets that aid in SME success. Intangible resources include strategic knowledge, EO, and the ability to manage. According to (Reid et al., 2023), EO is recommended as the resource-capacity of SMEs to comprehend and carry out their sustainability strategies. The EO is the source of the SME's capacities, which it converts into invaluable resources to enhance its competitive edge (Yaseen et al., 2023). As each resource is deployed differently, SMEs can be more flexible and innovative in how they employ these resources, therefore, it is important to understand how they do so (Malik et al., 2023). A greater EO within the SME may be supported by their ability to be flexible and inventive with their resource usage. While SMEs are constantly on the verge of closure, waiting to be driven out of the market by a poorly thought-out risk-taking or innovative choice, larger enterprises can employ their resources more creatively and flexibly, making them more competitive (Makhloufi et al., 2024).

According to Akbarov (2024), the contingency theory postulates entrepreneurial SMEs bear the risk of unexpected events, while pursuing their objectives. There is no one best way to manage a business or make decisions, because both internal and external factors can impact a decision (Malik and Mushtaq, 2024). SMEs should therefore adjust their plans to better fit the factors influencing how their operations are carried out. According to Conz et al. (2023), the only method to gain optimal business performance is to make adjustments based on external factors.

Many authors have shown how the concept of contingency has impacted SME performance Karray et al. (2024); Cho et al. (2023). It highlights the role the business plays in structuring its approach to become more effective (Ngo, 2023). Successful SMEs have persisted in the market, as de Oliveira Santini et al. (2023) highlighted, by modifying their strategies to the unstable ecology both internally and externally. While older businesses may lower overall costs and improve operational efficiency, there is no assurance the more established businesses will be able to continue operating in a volatile market. In order to be competitive, the SME must adjust its strategies in reaction to changing contextual circumstances (de Oliveira Santini et al., 2023).

Entrepreneurs must understand the importance of contingency factors and how they are affected, so they may keep their SMEs afloat (Dwikat et al., 2023). The interaction of internal and external factors could put the SMEs in a risky situation when compared to their competitors. Nevertheless, in reaction to unanticipated shifts in competitor behavior, SMEs may choose to coordinate efforts to develop new procedures. As the market becomes more competitive, they will also need to consider strategies for managing competition through innovation (Morgan & Anokhin, 2023).

4.2. Conceptual framework of Rural EO

According to Pidduck et al. (2023), "entrepreneurial orientation" refers to an entity's dedication to entrepreneurial initiatives or its behaviour that emulates or functions as an entrepreneur. Lumpkin and Pidduck (2021) add EO relates to a firm's strategy position, which captures methods, procedures, and initiatives that enable an enterprise to generate wealth, by engaging in entrepreneurial ideas. As a result, EO has been studied as an organisational phenomena and is essential to understanding entrepreneurship procedures and norms present within the business entity (Lubis et al., 2023). The study of EO is based on two main theoretical conceptualizations: a multidimensional and a unidimensional approach. The method is determined by how each EO category is separately evaluated. The unidimensional approach, as explained by Morgan and Anokhin (2023), views EO as a single, conceptual entity, in which its various dimensions interact with one another.

According to Moretti et al. (2020), entrepreneurial enterprises must promptly reduce elevated levels across all dimensions. The most popular notion, EO, has steadily evolved in research from the examination of entrepreneur features to the unique characteristics of an innovative business (Moraes Silva et al., 2020). The experts recommend that in addition to attempting to comprehend the aspects of EO, one should make the following effort. For instance, Mozumdar et al. (2022) propose a unidimensional strategy that combines risk-taking, innovation, and proactivity. According to the researchers, an enterprise can only be classified as

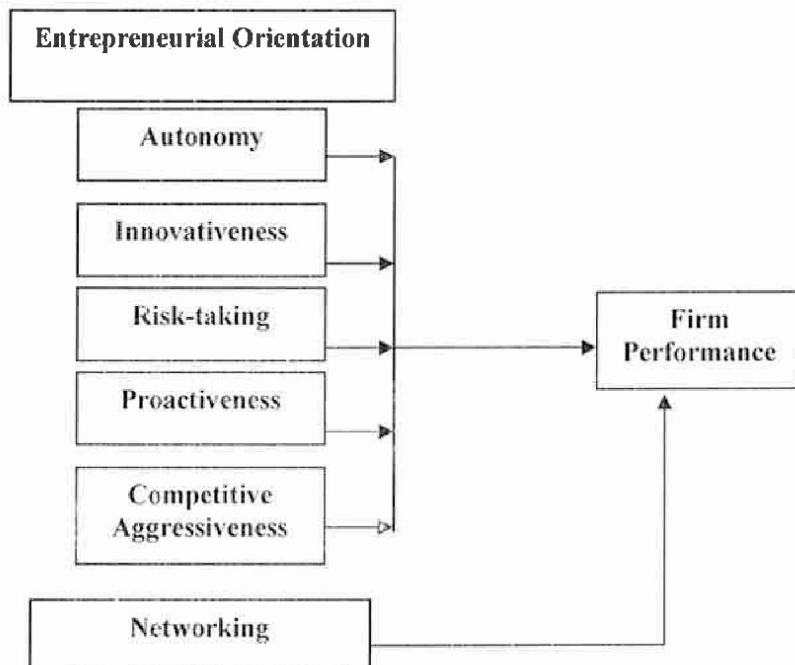
entrepreneurial if it possesses an elevated degree of each of these qualities. This is due to the strong correlation that exists between the three characteristics of EO and how they are related to success in organisations (Mostafiz et al., 2023).

Lumpkin and Pidduck (2021), however, examined the idea of a unidimensional strategy for EO and proposed each of the three dimensions may fluctuate on their own. As an alternative, academics have proposed a multifaceted strategy that includes traits like autonomy and competitive aggression. Owing to the various settings of culture, several dimensions were introduced, and organisations may exhibit significant levels of certain dimensions and low degrees of other aspects (Ma et al., 2023); (Lyons and Zhang, 2023). The five aspects are essential to comprehending EO in a multidimensional perspective. Given their independence, the relationships of the five variables to SME efficiency could differ (Lumpkin and Pidduck, 2021); (Maesela et al., 2024). In the managerial framework that marked the start of conceptual dissemination under the EO notion, this fresh revolutionary approach places an emphasis on entrepreneurship (Wiklund-Engblom et al., 2023).

Further study points to possible advantages for firms that are entrepreneurial in orientation. For example, EO disrupts the hierarchical style toward organisational transformation (Xian, 2022), by enhancing the firm's value, as it depicts its long-term objectives and management doctrines (Wales et al., 2020), and serves as an incentive for managerial efficiency and expansion (Aloulou, 2023). An organisation's EO is deemed necessary for it to participate in effective business operations, since it offers management an edge over competitors (Amaleshwari and Jeevitha, 2023); (AlShehhi et al., 2023). It is suggested a varied EO distribution inside the firm might facilitate the creation and contribution of novel concepts, improve collaborative ownership and dedication, and foster synergy for more successful business ventures (Alzghoul et al., 2023); (Amaleshwari and Jeevitha, 2023); (Amoa-Gyarteng and Dhiwayo, 2024).

According to Zin and Ibrahim (2020), EO is focused on an approach to strategy used to gain an edge over competitors. Zhang et al. (2023) assert the absence of a conceptual framework regarding successful creativity and capability, research and development (R&D), customer focus, and EO, causes only a small percentage of SMEs to be effective in attaining outstanding results and profitable expansion. Further research has revealed employees, personality types, and EO all affect business success and expansion (Zin and Ibrahim, 2020); (Zondo and Ncube, 2023).

Chokera and Mutambara (2023) and Clark et al. (2024) state the EO for rural SMEs recognizes entrepreneurs as the catalyst behind GDP growth and expansion, without which other development-related variables will be squandered or dissipate. However, were SMEs to truly be promoted in rural communities, it would undoubtedly play a significant role in transforming these places, addressing issues with destitution, joblessness, imbalance in the economy, and underutilization of rural resources, as well as stagnant economic development (Saxena et al., 2024).



CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK DIAGRAM

Source: (Gautam et al., 2020)

Commented [MD13]: Why do you identify the networking as a new dimension? Is it a new dimension of EO?

Commented [MD14R13]: You cannot add new dimensions to the existing model rather following a rigorous validation process

4.3. Entrepreneurs in rural areas

Individuals who set up and operate businesses in rural locations by applying indigenous resources are recognized as rural entrepreneurs. In guaranteeing jobs for rural community residents, they bridge the income gap and stimulate spending capacity of the populace (Zhou et al., 2024). These individuals are those who start businesses and factories in the outlying parts of the economic system by engaging in entrepreneurship. Jiang et al. (2024) describe rural entrepreneurship to mean industrialization of rural areas. Rural entrepreneurship, according to Adeyanju et al. (2024), exists and contributes to a noticeable rural economy. The operations of the rural entrepreneur are far more varied and diverse than those of the agricultural sector, leading to an economic diversification primarily composed of ventures in other industries.

Rural entrepreneurs, additionally, exhibit dynamism; nonetheless, the significance of aspirational young businesses remains somewhat modest, suggesting many start-ups could be classified as "out of desperation" ventures. As to Donga and Chimucheka (2024), a few variables affecting SME growth are its roots, the personality of the owner-manager, public authorities, and marketplace.

In the realm of management sciences, the term "entrepreneurship" lacks a single, agreed-upon meaning (Mulibana and Tshikovihi, 2024). Since it is thought of as a component of strategic stance, any kind of entity can act in an entrepreneurial manner. The risk-taking tendencies, competitive aggression, proactive approaches, and breakthroughs are all part of this strategic viewpoint (Clark et al., 2024). Small-scale enterprises with small vendors and craftsmen comprise rural entrepreneurship, which is characterized by the informal economy (Cowden and Tang, 2022).

One way to lessen impoverishment, economic-exodus, income disparities, and job losses, while also promoting development in rural communities and neglected areas, is through rural entrepreneurship (Manigandan and Raghuram, 2024). Nevertheless, for people who move from rural or partial-rural areas, rural entrepreneurship is currently a significant possibility. Conversely, it is also true a great deal of rural business owners-managers in smaller economies face numerous challenges, because of the unavailability of basic resources in their rural communities. In addition, it is challenging for rural entrepreneurs to start businesses due to illiteracy, financial difficulties, and a lack of fundamental and analytical abilities (Fasiha et al., 2024). According to Khan et al. (2024), there is not much difference between rural and non-rural SMEs; with respect to design, leadership, as well as the traits of the businessperson reflected. Nonetheless, as Bosworth et al. (2024) pointed out, rural regions increasingly resemble an array of commerce that resembles more metropolitan places, rather than being driven by jobs in agriculture and lucrative farming.

4.4. SME participation in the rural economy

In addition to creating jobs and increasing national income, entrepreneurial endeavours also support the growth of financial sovereignty and the development of communal and private talents in rural areas (Maziliauske, 2024). In new nations, SMEs are typically seen as the main drivers of GDP and inclusive growth. Aka and Enagogo (2024) find they are labour-intensive, capital-efficient, and able to contribute to the creation of the trillion additional jobs the world would require in the foreseeable future (Upulwehera et al., 2024). Compared to major enterprises, SMEs often deliver tailored services or goods more effectively (Jarinaa and Manida, 2024). Sopanah et al. (2024) maintain SMEs are crucial to the livelihoods of low-income households, as well as the advancement of socioeconomic standing of women and self-esteem. Saxena et al. (2024) provide additional support for this, outlining the following advantages of rural SMEs:

- Rural business ownership is labour-intensive but offers a direct answer to the growing joblessness issue. Rural entrepreneurship has an excellent chance to create jobs and revenue through establishment of manufacturing facilities in rural communities.
- The large income gap and inequalities between rural and urban residents can be overcome through rural entrepreneurship. In addition to assisting in the development of infrastructure—such as roads, bridges, power—rural entrepreneurship will also help curb the exodus of citizens from rural communities to towns in pursuit of opportunities.

- Rural business owners-managers can balance regional development and counteract the proliferation of overcrowded commercial enterprises in urban areas.
- Through rural entrepreneurial activities, artistry and handicrafts are protected and promoted, preserving the longstanding rich legacy of rural communities.
- The rise in rural entrepreneurship has the potential to mitigate various societal ills, including substance abuse, crime, gambling, and prostitution, along with poverty, urban pollution, and slum expansion.
- Rural entrepreneurship has the power to inspire young people in rural areas and provide them with opportunities to pursue entrepreneurial career choices.
- The literacy rate among rural residents will rise because of rural entrepreneurship. The community will gain from their educational attainment and entrepreneurial endeavours, raising their level of living.

4.5. Contributions of rural SMEs to Global Economy

Sabela et al. (2023) highlight the informal economy in numerous African nations constitutes more than 94% SMEs, in excess of 65% national income, and exceeding 70% of services. In emerging markets, the generating of jobs and economic growth are mostly attributed to the SME sector (Chege et al., 2023). For instance, microbusinesses have played a significant role in the impressive growth Nigerian SMEs have demonstrated over time (Okoli et al., 2021). SMEs also play a significant role in improving the framework of the economy, lowering impoverishment, generating jobs, fostering innovative technology, and raising societal standards in many African nations (Naradda Gamage et al., 2020); (Gherghina et al., 2020).

In a study conducted in Zimbabwe, Ahmad et al. (2022) make the case that business growth and long-term prosperity could be very helpful in reducing the nation's dire financial quandary, because their start-ups have minimal initial expenses, with minimal risks, can expand into new markets, and can develop new products through the ingenuity of the populace. Zimbabwe might increase employment rates by fostering and expanding its SMEs (Dlamini et al., 2023). SMEs account for more than 80% total output and exceeds 81% of the workforce in developing countries (World Bank Statistics, 2019).

In Singapore, SMEs comprise more than 90% of all entrepreneurs. They also employ 89% of the workforce, generate 61% of taxes and incentive payments, 71% of gross government revenue, and 68% of value addition at constant prices, as well as 63% of aggregate output in real GDP (Foli et al., 2022). In Germany, one of the most prestigious SME marketplaces in the world, these enterprises account for more than 90% of all enterprises, 80% of all formal workers, and more than 80% economic production in the manufacturing sector (Winczorek and Muszynski, 2023); (Ohno and Uesu, 2022).

Lwesya et al. (2021) state SMEs in Kenya include 89% of all enterprises, generate 69% of the country's production, and can account for as much as 55% of available open positions. This suggests in impoverished (and possibly some prosperous) nations, SMEs account for the largest employment and job creation share overall (Al Hamli and Sobaih, 2023). Consequently, these SMEs create the most opportunities, in addition to employing the highest number of people (Aker, 2023). SMEs are acknowledged globally for their unique contribution to job

creation and prosperity, and their importance to economies must not be understated (Das, 2021).

4.6. Identifying the Concept of EO

The phrase "entrepreneurial orientation" is used by entrepreneurship researchers to characterize the strategic decision-making processes of an entrepreneur. These procedures help an enterprise stay true to its goals, realize its mission, and gain an edge over its competitors (Rezaei and Ortt, 2018). According to early research on the topic, EO is a construct that emerged from the processes of strategy development (Ringo et al., 2022) and includes planning, projections, and organizing, in addition to evaluating and making choices. It also encompasses multiple facets of an organisation's culture, ethics, and goals (Rogo et al., 2023). As stated by (Rupianti et al., 2022) EO is, therefore, a good example of the procedures and guidelines that lead to the eventual entrepreneurial choices and behaviours.

4.7. Individualized EO

EO is essentially a representation of the attitude of entrepreneurship exhibited in managing an enterprise. Literature reviewed within this area indicate the approach has been used to measure an organization's entrepreneurial conduct by examining its rules and procedures, or it may be used at individual level to evaluate the behaviour of SME owners-managers on an individual basis (Sadalia et al., 2020). Saha et al. (2021) observe distinct EO characteristics have varying implications on strategies for competition, with differentiation and cost management having diverse consequences on efficiency. This indicates the management approach adopted by individual SME owners-managers accounts for a significant portion of overall performance, particularly expansion.

4.8. Distinguishing Entrepreneurship from EO

Lumpkin and Pidduck (2021) assert there are differences between EO and entrepreneurship. They state, where the establishment of new ventures is concerned, EO is acknowledged as an organisational design that pertains to the approach, procedures, and choice-making philosophies employed by owners-managers, to successfully deal with business accomplishment. Nevertheless, by focusing on whatever is done and being dependent on judgments, such as the business type, entrepreneurship is tied to the substance of entrepreneurial actions. This distinction supports the idea that EO is primarily concerned with how business owners-managers use entrepreneurship to realize their business objectives (Mahmood and Hanafi, 2013).

Due to its essential components, EO has drawn significant intellectual and practical interest from scholars studying entrepreneurship (Makhloufi et al., 2021). Researchers also support EO as a successful way to enhance enterprise efficiency (Fang et al., 2022). EO is also linked to an organisation's increased competitive advantage, when measured using constructs that comprise being proactive, innovative, and risk-tolerant. Due to their intimate participation in the operational components of businesses, SME owners-managers directly impact their EO (Covin et al., 2020). The owner-manager can easily attain greater actualization of EO by adopting mindsets that promote survival and expansion.

Commented [MD15]: Why don't you discuss the dimensions of EO?

Commented [MD16R15]: In conceptual model, you have adopted the model developed by Lumpkin and Dess.. However, You have not cited them here appropriately...

4.9. Factors affecting EO for SME growth and survival in rural areas of KZN

Numerous scholars, including Covin and Wales (2019), emphasize cognitive, sociocultural, and socioeconomic factors—as well as interpersonal ones—are the main obstacles to EO. Cowden and Tang (2022) explain there are many different factors that influence SME performance. As a result, it is challenging to link SME success or failure to a common set involvement, scheduling and establishing targets, ingenuity and innovation, along with networks, and reliability (Faloye and Owoeye, 2023).

Fatima and Bilal (2020) agree the primary factors preventing rural SMEs in KZN from surviving and expanding are limited funding available at start-up, insufficient management skills, difficulty obtaining tenders, and labour-costs, as well as VAT conformity, funding strain, guarantee to secure funding, and an absence of governmental assistance. Other obstacles impeding rural KZN SMEs to thrive and expand include inadequate oversight, inefficient facilities, and improper documentation (Department of Trade and Industries, 2022). In accordance with findings by Agbenyegah et al. (2022), the success of rural SMEs in KZN is not significantly influenced by financing availability. In addition, Aka and Enagogo (2024) state family-related values additionally impact the ability of rural SMEs to grow financially, while fostering greater firm growth necessitates implementation of regulations that modify existing benefits in close family enterprises. Beckmann et al. (2021) find SME-growth is influenced by various SME-specific variables, including own capital, foreseeable expansion possibilities, creative thinking, and modifications, along with debt levels, and conventional features of age and size, most which are lacking.

Darusman (2023) and Fanelli (2021) identify a number of significant factors that impact the growth of rural SMEs operating in rural KZN; these include both inside and outside sources of investment, the entrepreneur's approach to advertising, revenue from sales, and market value, as well as risk-tolerance, potential for market-growth, entrepreneurial spirit, and collaboration capabilities. In addition, breakthroughs in R&D, novel methodologies, significant advances in current infrastructure, and expanding its product line, were also identified as important factors impacting rural SME, as well as hands-on activities, distinctive competence, and pricing flexibility. Manzoor et al. (2021) aver, in addition to capital and environmental issues, other factors that affect their performance include SME traits, management, expertise, and merchandise, along with offerings, operational procedures, and teamwork.

While matrices for measurements are good for large organisations, they might not always be useful for SMEs, particularly those in rural areas (Cvijić Čović et al., 2023). Therefore, the operational environment of the rural SME, which encompasses both endogenous and exogenous influences, may be the true source of success or failure. A study conducted by Diaz and Sensini (2020) emphasizes creative thinking, the drive for accomplishments, the absence of red tape, and oversight, as well as possibilities for marketing, are among the elements that contribute to the success of rural entrepreneurs. Dwumah et al. (2024) affirm there is a correlation between the educational attainment of the owner-manager and the capacity of the rural SME to expand through employee growth and annual revenue. Additionally, research by Elgarhy and Abou-Shouk (2023) demonstrates

how factors such as managerial style, maturity of the businessperson, and lineage relate to the success of owners-managers and aid in the survival and growth of rural SMEs.

4.10. The unique nature and characteristics of SMEs in the rural KZN areas

SMEs in rural areas of KZN often experience resource constraints due to their smaller size, which can be connected to liquidity, personnel, time, or expertise (Testa et al., 2024). Additionally, they are typically governed by owners-managers who regularly assume key positions in these small-scale enterprises, have private ownership (Alles et al., 2021), and are more centrally managed (Li and Li, 2022). Since the owners-managers have a direct investment in the enterprise, their beliefs and opinions affect its procedures and rules (Avunduk et al., 2021). Furthermore, because their name is often associated with the SME, owners-managers tend to be more involved in the community to establish a favourable image for themselves and the business (Awonuga et al., 2024). Due to these SMEs being smaller, their staff members are also less specialized, which means they routinely perform a range of tasks, rather than being extremely specialized. Additionally, because of the small stature of the enterprise, the owners-managers frequently interact casually (Atkinson et al., 2022).

The cost of living is cheaper in rural locations than in metropolitan areas, which makes it simpler to buy or rent reasonably priced real estate or commercial spaces in rural KZN (Cordes and Marinova, 2023). According to Bofu et al. (2023), there are advantages to living in rural areas, such as having a cheerful, light-hearted rustic routine, with accessibility to the peaceful outdoors, stress levels are reduced, and stunning scenery. Due to their unique local characteristics, ethnic backgrounds, traditional cuisines, and ecological origins, rural places of KZN possess unique cultures and related endowments (Okech and Timothy, 2023). Piskulova (2023) asserts these qualities may be especially important for the marketing of agrarian, locally made, and artisanal products, as well as travel service providers.

Powerful cultural linkages have a bearing on surrounding SMEs and since there is an overwhelming sense of cultural affiliation in rural regions, immigrants typically integrate quickly (Xu et al., 2022). Zarzycki et al. (2023) propose social capital access may be easier in rural areas. Furthermore, Varma et al. (2023) point out rural SMEs in KZN are deeply embedded in their communities, hence their heightened sense of civic duty, which is why they prioritize serving local customers. Most rural SMEs seek to promote equitable development in the countryside and create value for both the business and its neighbours (Purnomo et al., 2023). Accordingly, with family businesses common in rural areas, SMEs have an even stronger bond with the community (Swastiwi et al., 2023). With the family and the business in the same neighbourhood, the standing of a family-run business in the community impacts both business and private affairs (Turkmani and Hamade, 2023).

Although there can be strong connections between rural and urban communities, studies also indicate once someone is judged unworthy, they are more likely to face exclusion in rural communities than in metropolis (Plaikner et al., 2023). This also holds true for any enterprises they may operate. SMEs in isolated areas seem to further benefit greatly from this integration, since they have a significantly greater innate understanding of the historical, cultural, and geographic features of their surroundings (Salomaa et al., 2023). Consequently, these

SMEs are frequently more prepared to satisfy the needs of rural consumers (Bäumle and Bizer, 2023). Additionally, compared to their contemporaries in metropolitan settings, rural entrepreneurs appear to be more apparent due to the close-knit nature of the countryside (Thomä, 2023).

As stated by Mueller and Gasteyer (2023), many rural areas including those in KZN face low business densities in their neighbourhood, limited economic growth, and diminishing population levels. Local administrators are frequently found far from (crucial) marketplaces, and these rural areas are often isolated due to a lack of public transportation connections (Kasinitz, 2023). Proximity to important cities or economic centres, obstacles to transportation, and long travel times usually serve to emphasize this more (Gilmore et al., 2023). Some rural SMEs are struggling to make ends meet, and others are witnessing a consistent decrease in the supply of essentials for daily living (Ebel and Thornton, 2023). Further to this, school closures, a lack of childcare and banking options, and usually subpar local public transit, are additional challenges rural SMEs face (Ncube and Matlala, 2024).

Even though high-speed networks are increasingly important in online advertising techniques, and work by imaginative professionals, rural areas of KZN generally have poor internet platforms, because internet speeds there are typically much slower than in large cities (Gayathiri, 2023); (García and Méndez, 2022). Significant gaps remain, despite government efforts to close the "digital divide" between towns and countryside, which may increase migration to regions with stronger internet devices (Berkhout et al., 2023); (Korostelina and Barrett, 2023, Lisowska and Leszczyński, 2023). Furthermore, it is sometimes difficult for new businesses to be started in rural areas of KZN, due to rampant crime and government's incapacity to establish effective legal frameworks and programmes that support rural businesses (van Wyk and Venter, 2023).

Despite usually receiving little to no support from local government, rural entrepreneurs of KZN strive to maximize use of their surroundings (Vo and Ho, 2023). To achieve this, they try to be creative and tailor their products to suit local requirements (Handrito et al., 2023). Alternatively, they utilize the challenges faced by their rural community as a launchpad and starting point for their ventures (Chokera and Mutambara, 2023). To solve problems in these rural areas, SMEs are very adaptable and willing to test new approaches (Crick et al., 2023). Using their unique local knowledge, rural KZN firms adapt further (Priatmoko et al., 2023). Notwithstanding these examples of creativity, research indicates SMEs in rural areas of KZN are generally less innovative than their city counterparts. This is mostly due to the costs and risks associated in undertaking innovation-related projects (Hagen et al., 2023); (Yu et al., 2022).

The aversion toward transformation by rural KZN SME owners-managers is another issue that hinders their ability to innovate (de Mattos et al., 2023); (Alshourah, 2022). Furthermore, traditional industries including horticulture, pisciculture, and forestry tend to employ a higher proportion of rural SMEs (Duren, 2023). This usually happens as families continue to live in the same rural area, passing down their livelihoods to subsequent generations (León-León, 2023). Due to their small size, lack of resources, and inefficient division of labour, SME owners-managers in rural areas of KZN typically focus on day-to-day operations (Maliwichi et al., 2023). As a

result, putting out fires rather than implementing an efficient, sophisticated style of management leading to a lack of a compelling future vision is a typical priority for these owners-managers (Abdollahpour et al., 2023).

Rural communities of KZN often face challenging economic conditions that prioritize short-term planning and provide little room for innovative ideas (Ho et al., 2023). Even should many rural SMEs cater for niche markets, this is only possible in situations where their clientele is substantial (Ma et al., 2022). SMEs, particularly those engaged in processing, may be able to break out of their limited rural market by expanding into domestic or international markets, particularly in less populated and poorly industrialized rural areas (Garg and Gupta, 2023). Because they encounter greater rivalry in these sectors, even from bigger businesses, rural SMEs from KZN usually need to set themselves apart by focusing on specialty markets (Lu et al., 2023). Such specialization could be a strategy employed by rural enterprises to become independent to create hubs for specific industries, including robust factories (Jalali, 2023).

4.11. Elements of entrepreneurial resources impacting EO for SME survival and growth in rural eThekweni areas

(Enaifoghe, 2023)) asserts inputs such as funds, workforce, social structures, as well as internet linkages, have current and future impacts on rural SME survival and expansion. (Wei and Duan, 2024) and (Noormohammadi Najafabadi and Sajadi, 2023) establish that, for rural SMEs of eThekweni to prosper, their owners-managers must be equipped with the skills required to secure and manage the resources they need. Chirico et al. (2023), however, contend one of the main barriers to the survival and expansion of rural SMEs of eThekweni region is their lack of an EO, which prevents them from strategically connecting their products and services with the demands of the larger economy.

The capacity of rural SMEs of eThekweni to thrive is further hampered by the lack of institutional learning opportunities to aid in their expansion, their limited access to and use of contemporary technology, and their poor abilities as managers (Battistella et al., 2023). Additional evidence that rural SME owners-managers lack the abilities, knowledge, and skills necessary for starting and running their companies is presented by (Wang et al., 2023). The difficulties faced by rural businesses of the eThekweni region are emphasized by (Okosun et al., 2023, Li and Wang, 2023). These difficulties include small stature, scattered ecosystems, scarce inputs, and distant and scattered settings.

The cost disparity with larger companies and interacting with buyers who have more negotiating and market power are two economic risks rural SMEs of eThekweni must overcome (Doucet et al., 2023). (Dhillon and Moncur, 2023) claim it is very difficult for rural SMEs in the eThekweni region to compete in marketplaces for high-end goods. Their EO has faced numerous challenges that have hindered their survival and expansion, directly caused by their environment (Le-Dain et al., 2023). Financial constraints within institutional frameworks are significant barriers for SMEs, mostly due to government policies on state spending and revenue collection via taxes and spending plans (Ogujiuba et al., 2023).

Commented [MD17]: Why do you discuss this here? What is the importance of entrepreneurial resources towards EO?

Numerous rural SMEs are deterred from operating in SA's unrecorded economy (Strydom et al., 2023); (Zaidi et al., 2023). Berner et al. (2023) claim many newly established SMEs are survivalist businesses in need of substantial assistance during their launch, survival, and expansion phases. However, the authors claim this industry frequently encounters difficult roadblocks that prevent it from growing, such as institutional lethargy and insufficient promotion. Public office bearers should participate in fast-paced expertise-hub networks, according to Crush et al. (2023), to promote transfer of expertise between rural SMEs and large businesses. It is now challenging to meet the needs of rural SMEs in SA due to the lack of clarity surrounding policy, particularly for those in rural KZN.

4.12. The personal attitudes that influence EO for the survival and growth of small businesses in rural areas of eThekweni

Other than economic expansion, additional elements that influence entrepreneurial levels are the mindsets, beliefs, and perspectives of entrepreneurs, which play a critical role in cultivating an entrepreneurial culture (Ratnawati et al., 2023). Furthermore, where the attitudes and cognitive actions of business owners-managers are concerned in a perception-driven economic system, SA continues to do remarkably poorly (Global Entrepreneur Monitor (GEM), 2024). Authorities are aware SMEs operating in various sectors and locations of the rural parts of eThekweni are generally established by entrepreneurs with limited financial resources (Svensson et al., 2020). However, these lawmakers often fail to recognize the entrepreneurship outcomes can vary greatly, depending on the desire by the owners-managers to create a rapidly expanding business, and that entrepreneurial activity with high growth is frequently missing in rural communities (Hermawan and Sudarsono, 2023). Empirical studies reveal a positive association between the mindsets of owners-managers and actual growth outcomes for rural SMEs (Ratnawati et al., 2023)

Sentiments have a critical role in creating an environment that supports entrepreneurship and impact both the number of entrepreneurs and economic expansion (Agyapong et al., 2021). Furthermore, (Zondo and Ncube, 2023) point out SA did not do well on tests of entrepreneurial attitudes and beliefs in societies that prioritize productivity, which resembles those operating in rural eThekweni. Politicians often ignore the reality that entrepreneurs can benefit from different incentives, depending on their desire to create a rapidly expanding business, and that these entrepreneurs are often not found in rural areas of the eThekweni region (Zondo, 2022); (Maka, 2023).

The opinions of owners-managers and the actual growth results of SMEs are found to be favourably connected (Nhleko et al., 2023). Supporting this claim is (van der Westhuizen, 2023), who contends rural SME managers-owners in eThekweni need to adapt more than managers of larger businesses, since successful change management (essential to rural SME profitability and expansion) demands transformations. (Beyeme et al., 2023) assert acknowledging the need to alter people's attitudes and behaviours is the first step in implementing transformation. It is often recognized that many rural SME owners-managers in eThekweni find it difficult to modify their attitudes and behaviours in response to the changing needs of their SMEs (Hooper, 2024).

Commented [MD18]: Why do you discuss this here? What is the importance of personal attitudes towards EO?

Commented [MD19R18]: When you add these two here, your study might be deviated from the main focus...

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

5.1. Design of research

Since only quantitative data were needed for this study's primary data collection, only quantitative data were gathered. The selection of a quantitative investigation was motivated by the collection of procedures, strategies, and presumptions used in the examination of numerical patterns in social and economic activities (Liu et al., 2023); (LeBlanc et al., 2023). A comprehensive literature review was conducted and used as the source of questionnaire formulation. In order to obtain empirical data for this survey, 309 SMEs were asked to complete the questionnaires. The designed questionnaire was pre-tested to establish whether it could gather the data needed for the survey. A closed-ended Likert-scale questionnaire was employed in this investigation.

5.2. Target population

The target population for the study consisted of 1 600 SMEs operating in rural areas of eThekweni; namely Bhekhulwandle, Kwangcolosi, KwaXimba, and Umbumbulu, as well as Umdumenzulu. This population clearly possesses the information the study was designed to collect, and the group of people to whom the study results can be generalised. This number was determined from the database of the Small Enterprises Development Agency (Seda) (SEDA, 2021). The SME owners-managers included as participants were selected from the target population of rural SMEs registered with the Department of Trade and Industry (DTIC, 2021) that have been operating for at least a year and exclusively focus on generating income-profit.

5.3. Sampling method

The sample size for this study was made up of 309 SMEs, selected from the general population using a non-probability quota sampling technique. Gangiah (2024) and Neneh and Dzomonda (2024) argue a non-probability sampling technique should be used in special cases, usually when the population has much in common, such as rural SMEs. The sample frame was drawn from the list of registered names and telephone numbers from the Municipal Councilor's office where the SMEs were located, for recruitment and distribution of questionnaires. The researcher further consulted (Person Lookup-Phone Number Search, 2022) to obtain the contact details of the SMEs involved, to facilitate prior arrangements in distributing the questionnaires. Respondents were afforded 14 days to return the completed questionnaires. The sample size of 309 for this study was obtained from the generalised scientific guidelines for sample resolution established by Krejcie (1970).

5.4. Measuring instruments

As a measuring tool, the study employed a closed-ended, structured questionnaire to ensure the results were reliable and valid, in accordance with the study content and predictability. The variables among the rural eThekweni SMEs were measured using a questionnaire, developed from the literature review, which served as the primary information source. The questionnaire was provided to the respondents by the researcher and

Commented [MD20]: There is a contradiction between the sample frame mentioned here and actual sample recognition...

Commented [MD21]: In the abstract it was mentioned about the quota sampling techniques. However, nothing is mentioned here..

research assistant in person, to ensure it would be completed by the correct individual and that they would receive any help they needed with its completion.

5.5. Data collection

Data for the study were gathered from 309 SMEs that were active in rural eThekweni, using a closed-ended questionnaire to gather data from the SME owners-managers in these rural areas for this quantitative study. The researcher and research assistant travelled to each location of the sampled SMEs to distribute the surveys, because the SMEs were dispersed throughout the five selected areas. The questionnaires were provided to respondents to complete over the course of 14 days with the assistance of a research assistant, after which they were collected for processing.

Commented [MD22]: repeating

5.6. Data analysis

In addition to being used to verify data coding, frequencies were employed to ascertain the frequency with which a respondent provided a specific response to a given question. The degree of factors influencing the survival and expansion of rural SMEs in the eThekweni region was ascertained through a descriptive statistical analysis approach. Using correlation analysis, a chi square test analysis was also conducted, with the association between the variables ascertained using the Spearman rho test, while internal consistency tests were conducted using Cronbach's coefficient alpha, to verify the reliability and validity of the findings. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27.0 was used to analyse the data. Following a presentation of the data using tables and graphs, the findings were examined in accordance with the study goals. The final usable sample is shown in Table 1 below.

5.7. Validity, reliability, and credibility

To guarantee the findings of this study will be dependable and credible, 309 SME owners-managers were selected as respondents.

Commented [MD23]: Where are the validity and reliability test data ?

Table 1. Biographical information of rural SMEs surveyed

Variables	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Location of the SMEs	Bhekulwandle	63	20.4
	Kwangcolosi	63	20.4
	KwaXimba	66	21.4
	Umbumbulu	63	20.4
	Umdumezulu	54	17.4
How the SMEs are owned	Owner and		
	manager	309	100.0
Years of operation	1 year or less	50	16.2
	1-2 years	82	26.5
	3-5 years	65	21.0
	6-8 years	53	17.2

	Over 10 years	59	19.1
Types of businesses	Agriculture	20	6.5
	Mining	16	5.2
	Construction	69	22.3
	Wholesale/retail	36	11.7
	Financial services	31	10.0
	Manufacturing	28	9.1
	Motor trade	19	6.1
	Communication	33	10.7
	Personal services	20	6.5
	Catering	37	12.0

Among the respondents in the specified rural regions, KwaXimba accounted for the highest number with 66 (21.4%), followed by Bhekhulwandle, Kwangcolosi, and Umbumbulu at 63 (20.4%) each, and Umdumezulu with 54 (17.5%) respondents. All respondents, or 309 (100%) SMEs that responded, oversaw their businesses as managers and sole proprietors. In terms of how long SMEs have been in business, 65 (21.0%) have been in business for three to five years, while the majority (82 or 26.5%) have been in business for one to two years. Most SMEs—69 or 22.3%—are in the construction sector, followed by the catering industry (37 or 12%) and wholesale/retail enterprises (36 or 11.7%). A further 33 (10.7%) respondents provided communication services, 31 (10.0%) provided financial services, and 28 (9.1%) worked in the manufacturing sector. The biographical information of participants provides the contextual knowledge needed to understand specific social, cultural, or interacting situations (Korbmacher et al., 2023).

6. RESEARCH OUTCOMES

Table 2 below shows the frequency distribution and descriptive statistics for the key factors impacting EO among SMEs for survival and growth in rural areas of eThekweni.

Table 2. Frequency distribution

Commented [MD24]: Not a rigorous analysis done..very simple and primitive..

Statement		Frequency Distribution					Descriptive Statistics			
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	Standard Deviation	P-Value	N
Most of my time is spent on business administration	Count	176	70	42	9	12	1.7411	1.05265	< 0.001	309
	%	57.0	22.7	13.6	2.9	3.9				
Most of my time is spent on customer relationships	Count	169	95	24	11	10	1.6990	.98530	< 0.001	309
	%	54.7	30.7	7.8	3.6	3.2				
A significant time is focused on sales strategies	Count	130	135	26	13	5	1.7961	.88302	< 0.001	309
	%	42.1	43.7	8.4	4.2	1.6				
Increasing revenue is critical for business growth.	Count	168	86	40	9	6	1.7023	.93734	< 0.001	309
	%	54.4	27.8	12.9	2.9	1.9				
I launched my business for my social status	Count	126	113	45	13	12	1.9385	1.03483	< 0.001	309
	%	40.8	36.6	14.6	4.2	3.9				
The business was founded to gain family income	Count	149	83	52	10	15	1.8964	1.10001	< 0.001	309
	%	48.2	26.9	16.8	3.2	4.9				
I founded the SME to create jobs for the community	Count	196	76	20	10	7	1.5631	.91881	< 0.001	309
	%	63.4	24.6	6.5	3.2	2.3				
The firm does not employ many people in management	Count	151	23	54	37	44	2.3528	1.51887	< 0.001	309
	%	48.9	7.4	17.5	12.0	14.2				
Family are involved in decision-making of the business	Count	49	113	73	59	15	2.6052	1.11050	< 0.001	309
	%	15.9	36.6	23.6	19.1	4.9				
The SME does not have associates in decision-making	Count	103	41	113	36	16	2.4207	1.20780	< 0.001	309
	%	33.3	13.3	36.6	11.7	5.2				
Employees with tertiary degrees do not work in the SME	Count	68	114	59	42	26	2.4951	1.21308	< 0.001	309
	%	22.0	36.9	19.1	13.6	8.4				
The firm does not hire employees who previously worked in other organisations.	Count	113	43	73	45	35	2.5016	1.3995	< 0.001	309
	%	36.6	13.9	23.3	14.6	11.3				

In all, 309 SMEs were considered in the survey. With regard to the personal attitude of rural entrepreneurs, 176 (57,0%) and 70 (22,7%) respondents concurred most of their time was spent managing the administrative aspects of their rural SMEs. A small respondent portion expressed disagreement with the statement, comprising nine (2,9%) and 12 (3,9%), while 42 (22,7%) respondents were unsure how much time the SME spent on administrative tasks. To ascertain whether the amount of time rural SME owners-managers spend on business administration impacts the SME's capacity to demonstrate EO, survival, and growth, a Chi-square test was employed. The results show ($\chi^2 = 303,702$; $df = 4$; $P = < .001$), signalling the amount of time rural SME owners-managers spend on business administration has a considerable effect on the EO of their SMEs, and the ability to

survive and flourish.

Regarding the significant amount of time spent on developing sales strategies to increase profits, the findings indicated most respondents—169 (54,7%) and 95 (30,7%)—agreed they spent much of their time interacting with clients in-person to preserve existing relationships. However, 24 (7.8%) respondents were ambivalent toward the statement, while 11 (3,6%) and 10 (3,2%) respondents disagreed. A Chi-square test of the data was performed to see whether the time spent by rural SME owners-managers on in-person interactions to maintain their links with current and new clients affected the EO, survival, and growth of their businesses. The variable's results ($\chi^2 = 312,084$; $df = 4$; $P = <,001$) indicated the amount of time rural SMEs spend interacting with clients has a significant impact on the EO, survival, and growth of their businesses.

Most respondents said much time was spent to develop sales strategies that boosted profits. While 135 (43,7%) and 130 (42,1%) respondents agreed, 26 (8,4%) respondents had no view. Only 13 (4,2%) and five (1,6%) respondents disagreed with the assertion. A Chi-square test of the data was performed to determine whether the time spent by rural SME owners-managers on sales techniques to boost profitability affected the EO, survival, and expansion of their SMEs. The results for the variable showed ($\chi^2 = 273,443$; $df = 4$; $P = <,001$), reflecting the time spent on sales strategies by rural SME owners-managers had a significant impact on the EO, survival, and growth of their businesses.

In terms of increasing revenue, which is critical for rural SMEs' existence and success, 164 (54,4%) and 86 (27,8%) respondents agreed the growth in revenue from sales was crucial for EO, survival, and growth. While 40 (12,9%) respondents indicated they were neutral to the statement, only a small number of respondents (nine or 2,9% and six or 1,9%) disagreed with the statement. A Chi-square test was performed on the data to determine whether the increase in sales was noteworthy for the EO, survival, and growth of rural SMEs. For this variable, the Chi-square test results showed ($\chi^2 = 295,159$; $df = 4$; $P = <,001$). These results indicated SMEs in rural areas of eThekweni had a higher likelihood of being entrepreneurial oriented and for thriving and expanding due to increased sales.

Regarding the individual attitudes of rural SME owners-managers on EO, the findings showed 126 (40,8%) and 113 (36,6%) respondents concurred they started their SMEs to improve their social status. In addition, 13 (4,2%) and 12 (3,9%) respondents disagreed with the statement, while 45 (14,6%) respondents were indifferent. To determine whether owners-managers started their rural SMEs to become well-known in the community, a Chi-square test was employed to analyse the data. According to the Chi-square test results, ($\chi^2 = 192,343$; $df = 4$; $P = <,001$) for this variable. These results showed the decisions of owners-managers to start businesses to raise their social status had a substantial impact on the EO, survival, and growth of rural SMEs. This supported research by Adams (2022) on township SMEs, which showed some entrepreneurs established their rural SMEs in a conspicuous way to show off their financial successes and boost their ego or social status.

In terms of financial support for their families, on the one hand, the study results showed 149 (48,2%) and 83 (26,9%) respondents agreed the main reason the enterprises were formed was to provide financial support for

their family. On the other hand, 52 (16,8%) respondents were neutral, and 10 (3,2%) and 15 (4,9%) respondents disagreed with the statement. A Chi-square test of the data was performed to determine whether the main motivation of owners-managers of rural SMEs to launch their businesses was to support their family financially. The variable's results indicate ($\chi^2 = 210,725$; $df = 4$; $P = <,001$), which suggest the main motivation for owners-managers of rural SMEs to start their businesses to provide financial support for their families, had a significant effect on the EO leading to survival, and growth.

As per the study results, 196 (63,4%) and 76 (24,6%) respondents agreed starting a business was a means for SMEs to contribute to their communities by generating employment. Only 10 (3,2 %) and seven (2,3 %) respondents disagreed with the statement, whereas 20 (6,5 %) were undecided. A Chi-square test of the data was performed to determine whether rural SME owners-managers launched their SMEs to provide jobs for the rural populations of KZN. The results of the variable ($\chi^2 = 414,964$; $df = 4$; $P = <,001$) indicated the owners-managers of rural SMEs establish their businesses to create jobs in their communities. This variable had a major impact on the survival, growth, and EO of rural SMEs.

Relative to the components of rural entrepreneurial resources that influenced EO, most rural SMEs struggled to find qualified workers and staff, since they were unable to finish their post-secondary education. A considerable proportion of the respondents, 151 (48,9%) and 23 (7,4%), concurred with the assertion, whereas 37 (12,0%) and 44 (14,7%) disputed their establishments lacked skilled individuals occupying managerial roles. A further 54 (17,5%) respondents indicated their indifference. A chi-square test was performed on the data to determine whether the number of persons in managerial roles affected the EO, survival, and growth of rural SMEs of eThekweni. The findings of the Chi-square test indicated ($\chi^2 = 169,172$; $df = 4$; $P = <,001$) for this variable. According to these findings, the EO, survival, and expansion of rural eThekweni SMEs were significantly influenced by this variable.

Agreement was indicated by 49 (15,9%) and 113 (36,6%) respondents that family members participated in decision-making in rural SMEs. Of the responders, 59 (19,1%) and 15 (4,9%) disagreed with the statement, while 73 (23,6%) remained neutral. To establish whether family members who participated in business decision-making influenced rural SMEs' EO, survival, and growth, a Chi-square test of the data was run. According to the findings of the Chi-square test, ($\chi^2 = 82,667$; $df = 4$; $P = <,001$) for this variable. These results showed this variable had a major impact on the survival, growth, and EO of rural eThekweni SMEs. Numerous respondents, 103 (33,3%) and 41 (13,3%), concurred with the statement that their SMEs lacked associates who assisted in making decisions on business-related matters. Furthermore, 113 (36,6%) respondents expressed neutrality, while 36 (11,7%) and 16 (5,2%) disputed that they did not have collaborators who assisted in decision-making. To promote EO, survival, and growth in rural eThekweni SMEs, a Chi-square test of the data was conducted to ascertain whether these businesses lacked colleagues who helped with decision-making on business-related matters. The findings of the Chi-square test showed, for this variable, ($\chi^2 = 121,599$; $df = 4$; $P = <,001$). According to these results, there was a substantial relationship between this variable and the survival, growth, and EO of rural SMEs of eThekweni.

The study found 68 (22%) and 114 (36,9%) respondents agreed with the statement that staff members with post-secondary education did not work with their rural SMEs. Further to this, 42 (13,6%) and 26 (8,4%) respondents disagreed with the claim, while 59 (19,1%) respondents remained indifferent. A Chi-square test was performed on the gathered data to determine whether employing individuals with post-secondary degrees influenced the EO, survival, and growth of SMEs in rural areas. The results of the Chi-square test indicated ($\chi^2 = 71,922$; $df = 4$; $P = <,001$), therefore, this variable significantly impacts the survival, growth, and EO of rural eThekweni SMEs.

In terms of rural SMEs not hiring experienced employees who had previously worked for other organisations, according to the findings, 43 (13,9%) and 113 (36,6%) respondents agreed their SMEs did not employ experienced employees. In addition, 45 (14,6%) and 35 (11,3%) respondents disagreed with the statement, while 73 (23,6%) had no opinion. A Chi-square test of the data was performed to determine whether the employees had acquired the experience required for EO, survival, and growth among SME in rural KZN. According to the results of the Chi-square test, ($\chi^2 = 66,356$; $df = 4$; $P = <,001$) for this variable. These results showed recruiting employees who previously worked for other companies had a major impact on the survival, growth, and EO of rural eThekweni SMEs.

7. DISCUSSION

Duong and Vu (2023) define attitude as an individual's perception of their own favourable traits when conducting business. According to Tseng and Wang (2023), an individual's attitude in business is determined by how favourable or negative their assessment or appraisal of the action in question is. This is corroborated by the study findings, which indicated 80% participants spent a significant amount of time managing their SMEs. This demonstrated rural SMEs have positive sentiments toward EO on an individual basis and a strong desire for their businesses to continue operating and expanding. To maintain their current relationship with clients, 85% spent most of their time interacting face-to-face, as agreed by 86% respondents; rural SMEs aspire to expand by capitalising on existing client ties, simultaneously developing sales techniques to increase earnings.

As per the findings, 82% participants agreed SME growth can only be expedited by boosting turnover or sales. Consequently, these respondents exhibited EO by devoting substantial time to devising sales methods that enhanced profitability. The literature review supports this viewpoint, demonstrating how diverse interpretations of what defines an EO affect the capacity of a business to endure and expand (Mathafena and Msimango-Galawe, 2023). Every business sector needs strategy, according to Susanto et al. (2023), since it is a collection of decisions and actions intended to achieve company goals. Moreover, entrepreneurs need a marketing strategy for their business. This is noteworthy because, as Ali et al. (2020) aver, it is a crucial tool meant to assist the enterprise in achieving its goals, providing a sustainable competitive edge in every market it enters and through the advertising campaigns it runs for its target audience.

Fanggidae et al. (2023) carried out a study to broaden the corpus of information previously accessible on small and rural enterprises. His empirical findings showed social resources, finance accessibility, design thinking, and economic standing, as well as market competition greatly enhanced EO, survival, and growth among SMEs in the rural parts of Indonesia's Java province. In addition, 77% participants concurred they started their rural SMEs to elevate their social status. According to the study results, 75% participants started a range of SME businesses to provide financial support for their families. According to Statistics South Africa (SA, 2024), in the fourth quarter of 2023, SA's unemployment rate rose to 32.1% in the formal sectors, trade, utilities, and social services, as well as agriculture. The purpose of 88% business founding stated by respondents was to support the job creation efforts of their rural communities.

Srimulyani et al. (2023) point out a wealth of studies and literature show the ability of SMEs to innovate and be entrepreneurial is influenced by several factors, including the entrepreneur's innovative stance, which is founded on their knowledge of business practices. In this regard, the study findings indicate 18% respondents neither agreed nor disagreed their rural SMEs employed many workers in managerial jobs. Fanaja et al. (2023) state the main barrier to the strategic expansion of rural SMEs is their inability to match their products and services to the demands of the exogenous (external) environment. The study findings showed respondents were unsure whether to express agreement or disagreement with the claim that family members played a role in corporate decision-making in their enterprises. This relates to the finding that more than 24% respondents expressed no opinion at all.

The lack of a formal educational background and limited use of cutting-edge tools and technology by rural eThekweni SMEs further impede their ability to operate, survive, and develop (Pearce and Bah, 2024). Additional evidence supporting the hypothesis that SME owners-managers generally lack the competences needed for development and operation of their enterprises is provided by (Atiase et al., 2023). The results also showed a significant participant proportion disagreed with the assertion that family members and co-workers in their SMEs participate in decision-making processes related to their companies. The results also indicated many respondents disagreed with the assertion that SMEs employ individuals with higher education. Additionally, the study conclusions showed disagreement by most participants that SMEs employed seasoned workers who had retired from other companies.

8. LIMITATIONS

Other rural settlements of the KZN province were not studied, with only five rural areas included in the study. Therefore, extrapolating the findings to other rural villages in the province is inappropriate. Considering this is a small-scale exploratory quantitative study, more research with a larger sample size is recommended, and care should be taken when extrapolation of the results is necessitated. This study used a closed-ended, structured questionnaire, which limited respondents in saying more on their attitudes, with regard to the constraints that affect the EO, survival and growth of their businesses.

9. IMPLICATIONS

For SMEs in rural areas, this study has both theoretical and practical ramifications.

9.1. Theoretical implications

The theories required to support the EO, expansion and success of SMEs, particularly those operating in rural communities, must be thoroughly understood by the South African government, SME owners-managers, and other relevant parties. To maximize the benefits of SMEs on the social, economic, and environmental fronts, new theoretical insights must be developed and used. This study suggests a theoretical framework for rural SME growth should adopt intention-growth theories, such as the RBV and contingency theories (Poazi Deinmodei, 2023; Cho et al., 2023). This suggests SME owners-managers need to understand and acknowledge their place in the economic scene to assist the country in realizing the 2030 National Development Plan and sustainable development goals.

9.2. Practical implications for practice of SMEs

This study extends our knowledge of the different elements that drive the EO of SMEs and, ultimately, their expansion and prosperity in rural areas of eThekweni. It has been established there are several factors responsible for rural SME performance, including the attitudes of rural entrepreneurs regarding the time spent on business administration and focusing on one-on-one interactions to maintain existing relationships with customers and develop sales tactics to increase profits. The knowledge that boosting revenue is essential to SME survival and growth might be beneficial for EO. It is important to consider the components of rural entrepreneurial resources that will support EO when starting enterprises, whether the goal is to raise money for their families, advance their social status, or assist rural communities in creating jobs.

The many aspects of rural entrepreneurial resources were, additionally, demonstrated to influence the attitude toward entrepreneurship, where these resources can support sustainable development in eThekweni's rural communities. EO is further impacted by family members who participate in the decision-making processes of rural SMEs, which often employ few individuals in management roles. Consultants for rural SMEs should be able to assist with specialized decision-making, and owners-managers should improve their personnel by providing all the required training and resources. Rural SMEs ought to, furthermore, favour hiring experienced workers with prior experience from other companies and be open to hiring staff members with post-secondary degrees.

Commented [MD25]: These are too general. Not specific to the study..

10. CONCLUSIONS

Regarding the personal attitudes of respondents toward EO, it was determined the rural SMEs of eThekweni have a positive mindset. This is demonstrated by their motivation to dedicate much of their time to business administration and to concentrate on in-person interactions to maintain current customer relationships. It might

Commented [MD26]: Factors affecting on EO was not highlighted in the conclusion

further be determined a considerable portion of their time is devoted to creating marketing strategies to boost revenue, since respondent opinions tend to favour higher revenue, which is essential to the survival and profitability of rural SMEs. Nonetheless, some respondents started their SMEs merely to raise their status in their rural communities. Some SMEs were established simply to support their household's livelihood, while others were established to assist rural communities in creating employment. The study concludes owners-managers perceive proactive skill adoption among rural SMEs to have a significant impact on EO.

According to the study findings, SMEs can become more proactive in their business by increasing their awareness of rivals selling similar products and by implementing well-thought-out strategies that direct them in maintaining their competitive aggressiveness. In adopting this stance, rural SMEs would be able to effectively manage environmental hazards and achieve their primary objectives of increasing their market share through product enhancement strategies. Where rural entrepreneurial resources are concerned, the study concludes SMEs in rural areas of eThekweni lack qualified managers and do not hire seasoned employees. The findings also showed a sizable respondent portion expressed agreement with the claim that colleagues in their enterprises as well as family members help make decisions on matters pertaining to achieving EO for SME survival and growth in the rural areas of eThekweni.

11. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Rural SME owners-managers should place a high priority on entrepreneurial instruction and certification. This suggests specific knowledge is needed for some entrepreneurial concepts and practices. For instance, promoting and publicizing various entrepreneurship tactics with a focus on the detached countryside, and far-removed communities; important elements driving EO; and entrepreneurial partnerships; as well as entrepreneurship conferences and workshops; and more innovative rural-based business models. The general structure of the local prosperity guidelines should be re-evaluated by officials at all levels of government to incorporate a rural SME monitoring mechanism. This would enable the authorities to oversee and evaluate SMEs through rural governments in all regions, with a particular emphasis on rural eThekweni.

This study also argues that public-private partnerships (PPPs) should be fostered to boost the rural economy and begin establishing a balance between encouraging rural community growth and local administrations. This will promote business operations and investment in rural areas for SMEs, while it will also incentivize intelligent, young adults to remain and launch their enterprises in the rural areas where they initially originated.

12. **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

The goal of this study was to elucidate some fundamental elements needed for EO to function as a survival and expansion tool for rural SMEs of eThekweni. Future investigations may include greater sample sizes and research

Commented [MD27]: Recommendations should be aligned to the study findings. The given recommendations are too general and not specific to the study.

Commented [MD28]: Not at a satisfactory level

in other rural areas and possibly other regions of SA, given the study results and limitations. To better understand the obstacles rural SMEs face in serving as an instrument for decent growth, a comprehensive qualitative study may be conducted.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared no competing interests exist.

REFERENCES

- ABDOLLAHPOUR, N., HELALI, F., RASOULZADEH, Y. & HASSANKHANI, H. 2023. Barriers and Challenges to Human Factors/Ergonomics Knowledge Transfer to Small Business Enterprises in an Industrially Developing Country. *IJSE Transactions on Occupational Ergonomics and Human Factors*, 1-22.
- ADAMS, G. 2022. *An assessment of local economic development support provided to small businesses within the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality*. University of Johannesburg.
- ADEBOWALE, O. J. & AGUMBA, J. N. 2023. Construction SMEs labour productivity: causal layered analysis. *Journal of Engineering, Design and Technology*.
- ADEYANJU, D., MBURU, J., GITURO, W., CHUMO, C., MIGNOUNA, D. & MULINGANYA, N. 2024. Harnessing the job creation capacity of young rural agripreneurs: A quasi-experimental study of the ENABLE program in Africa. *Social Sciences & Humanities Open*, 9, 100791.
- AGBENYEGAH, A. T., KUMADEY, G., AMANKWAA, R., HANU, C. & OFOSU-APPIAH, S. 2022. Interaction Effect of Selected Variables and Perceived Barriers of Performance of Rural SMEs. *International Journal of Innovative Technology and Interdisciplinary Sciences*, 5, 954-970.
- AGHOLOR, I. A., CHOWDHURY, A. & OLAMIDE, E. 2024. Evaluating Inspiring Factors and Obstacles in the Start-Up of Owned Agri-Preneurial Businesses: Underlying Evidence from South Africa. *Administrative Sciences*, 14, 47.
- AGYAPONG, A., MAALEDIDONG, P. D. & MENSAH, H. K. 2021. Performance outcome of entrepreneurial behavior of SMEs in a developing economy: the role of international mindset. *Journal of Strategy and Management*, 14, 227-245.
- AHMAD, M., WU, Q. & KHATTAK, M. S. 2022. Intellectual capital, corporate social responsibility and sustainable competitive performance of small and medium-sized enterprises: mediating effects of organizational innovation. *Kybernetes*.
- AKA, K. G. & ENAGOGO, C. A. 2024. Collaborations in innovation activities of rural SMEs: a configurational analysis. *Journal of Small Business & Entrepreneurship*, 36, 358-382.

Commented [MD29]: References are not up to the satisfactory level. Either APA or Harvard style should be followed..

- AKBAROV, D. I. 2024. Big Data Analytics Capability and Entrepreneur Innovation: The Role of Entrepreneurial Readiness and Entrepreneurial Creativity. *New Practices for Entrepreneurship Innovation*. IGI Global.
- AKTER, S. 2023. Retail business practices in Bangladesh: an empirical study. *International Journal of Critical Accounting*, 13, 113-130.
- AL HAMLI, S. S. & SOBAIH, A. E. E. 2023. Factors influencing consumer behavior towards online shopping in Saudi Arabia amid covid-19: Implications for E-businesses post pandemic. *Journal of Risk and Financial Management*, 16, 36.
- ALI, G. A., HILMAN, H. & GORONDUTSE, A. H. 2020. Effect of entrepreneurial orientation, market orientation and total quality management on performance: Evidence from Saudi SMEs. *Benchmarking: An International Journal*, 27, 1503-1531.
- ALIAMUTU, K. F. & MKHIZE, M. V. 2024. The Obstacles of Women Entrepreneurship on Empowerment in Rural Communities KwaZulu Natal, South Africa. *Indonesian Journal of Innovation and Applied Sciences (IJIAS)*, 4, 88-96.
- ALLES, L., JAYATHILAKA, R., KUMARI, N., MALALATHUNGA, T., OBEYESEKERA, H. & SHARMILA, S. 2021. An investigation of the usage of capital budgeting techniques by small and medium enterprises. *Quality & Quantity*, 55, 993-1006.
- ALOULOU, W. J. 2023. Be innovative and resilient: Empirical evidence from Saudi firms on how to translate entrepreneurial orientation into firm performance. *Administrative Sciences*, 13, 168.
- ALSHEHHI, M. R., CHERIAN, J. P., FAROUK, S. & AL NAHYAN, M. 2023. Influential dynamic capabilities and small and medium enterprises' internationalization success: mediating role of international entrepreneurial orientation. *Review of International Business and Strategy*, 33, 55-78.
- ALSHOURAH, S. 2022. Role of strategic orientation dimensions of green supply chain management practices in Jordanian manufacturing companies. *Zarqa J. Res. Humanit. Accepted Unpublished*.
- ALZGHOUL, A., ALGRAIBEH, K. M., KHAWALDEH, K., KHADDAM, A. A. & AL-KASASBEH, O. 2023. Nexus of Strategic Thinking, Knowledge-Oriented Leadership, and Employee Creativity in Higher Education Institutes. *International Journal of Professional Business Review*, 8, e01107-e01107.
- AMALESHWARI, U. A. & JEEVITHA, R. 2023. Entrepreneurial orientation and circular business practices: A conceptual framework. *Journal of Management and Public Policy*, 14, 16-26.
- AMOA-GYARTENG, K. & DHLIWAYO, S. 2024. Globalization, entrepreneurial development and unemployment: a mediation analysis in the context of South Africa. *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, 31, 272-297.
- AMOA-MENSAH, A. 2024. Fostering organisational innovation in small retailers: Unleashing the power of family support, competencies, wellbeing, and customer capital. *Entrepreneurial Business and Economics Review*, 12, 55-75.

- ATIASE, V., WANG, Y. & MAHMOOD, S. 2023. Does managerial training increase SME managers' effectiveness? A capability development approach. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research*.
- ATKINSON, C., LUPTON, B., KYNIGHOU, A. & ANTCLIFF, V. 2022. Small firms, owner managers and (strategic?) human resource management. *Human Resource Management Journal*, 32, 449-469.
- AVUNDUK, Z. B., KAZAN, H., TATOGLU, E. & ZAIM, S. 2021. How does external knowledge sourcing affect business performance in large-scale firms? The mediating role of open technology strategies. *IEEE Transactions on Engineering Management*, 70, 437-453.
- AWONUGA, K. F., NWANKWO, E. E., OLADAPO, J. O., OKOYE, C. C., ODUNAIYA, O. G. & SCHOLASTICA, U. C. 2024. Driving sustainable growth in SME manufacturing: The role of digital transformation, project, and capture management. *International Journal of Science and Research Archive*, 11, 2012-2021.
- BATTISTELLA, C., FERRARO, G. & PESSOT, E. 2023. Technology transfer services impacts on open innovation capabilities of SMEs. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 196, 122875.
- BÄUMLE, P. & BIZER, K. 2023. A resource-based analysis of strategic alliances between knowledge intermediaries in regional innovation support systems. *Industry and Higher Education*, 09504222231155764.
- BECKMANN, M., GARKISCH, M. & ZEYEN, A. 2021. Together we are strong? A systematic literature review on how SMEs use relation-based collaboration to operate in rural areas. *Journal of Small Business & Entrepreneurship*, 1-35.
- BERKHOUT, E., SOVOVÁ, L. & SONNEVELD, A. 2023. The Role of Urban–Rural Connections in Building Food System Resilience. *Sustainability*, 15, 1818.
- BERNER, E., GOMEZ, G. M. & KNORRINGA, P. 2023. 'Helping a large number of people become a little less poor': The logic of survival entrepreneurs. *Global Labour in Distress, Volume I: Globalization, Technology and Labour Resilience*. Springer.
- BEYEME, R. N., THOMAS, P. & SCHACHTEBECK, C. 2023. A Delphi Approach to Explore the Entrepreneurial Ecosystem of Gabonese and South African National Park Tourism. *African Journal of Business and Economic Research*, 18, 319-347.
- BOFU, R. M., SANTOS, E. M., MSUGUPAKULYA, B. J., KAHAMBA, N. F., SWILLA, J. D., NJALAMBAHA, R., KELLY, A. H., LEZAUN, J., CHRISTOFIDES, N. & OKUMU, F. O. 2023. The needs and opportunities for housing improvement for malaria control in southern Tanzania. *Malaria Journal*, 22, 69.
- BOSWORTH, G., PRICE, L., ARDLEY, B. & WESTWOOD, C. 2024. Examining the need for organisational learning and entrepreneurialism to meet the changing roles and expectations of rural and agricultural shows in the UK. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 106, 103222.

- CHATTERJEE, S., RANA, N. P. & DWIVEDI, Y. K. 2024. How does business analytics contribute to organisational performance and business value? A resource-based view. *Information Technology & People*, 37, 874-894.
- CHEGE, C. G. K., ONYANGO, K. O., LUNDY, M. M. & KABACH, J. 2023. Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) disrupt food systems to deliver healthy diets to urban consumers: Twiga case study, Nairobi, Kenya.
- CHIRICO, F., NALDI, L., HITT, M. A., SIEGER, P., SIRMON, D. G. & XU, K. 2023. Orchestrating resources with suppliers for product innovation. *Journal of Product Innovation Management*.
- CHO, H. J., JIN, B. E. & SHIN, D. C. 2023. Do contingencies matter between organizational capabilities and SME export performance? *Review of International Business and Strategy*, 33, 605-626.
- CHOKERA, F. & MUTAMBARA, E. 2023. Exploring value-addition initiatives among small-to-medium enterprises in the leather sector in emerging economies. *Acta Commercii-Independent Research Journal in the Management Sciences*, 23, 1000.
- CLARK, D. R., PIDDUCK, R. J., LUMPKIN, G. & COVIN, J. G. 2024. Is it okay to study entrepreneurial orientation (EO) at the individual level? Yes! *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 48, 349-391.
- CONZ, E., MAGNANI, G., ZUCHELLA, A. & DE MASSIS, A. 2023. Responding to unexpected crises: The roles of slack resources and entrepreneurial attitude to build resilience. *Small Business Economics*, 61, 957-981.
- CORDES, D. L. & MARINOVA, D. 2023. Systematic literature review of the role of e-commerce in providing pathways to sustainability for poverty alleviation in Sub-Saharan Africa. *Discover Sustainability*, 4, 7.
- COVIN, J. G., RIGTERING, J. C., HUGHES, M., KRAUS, S., CHENG, C.-F. & BOUNCKEN, R. B. 2020. Individual and team entrepreneurial orientation: Scale development and configurations for success. *Journal of Business Research*, 112, 1-12.
- COVIN, J. G. & WALES, W. J. 2019. Crafting high-impact entrepreneurial orientation research: Some suggested guidelines. SAGE Publications Sage CA: Los Angeles, CA.
- COWDEN, B., KARAMI, M., TANG, J., YE, W. & ADOMAKO, S. 2024. The spectrum of perceived uncertainty and entrepreneurial orientation: Impacts on effectuation. *Journal of Small Business Management*, 62, 381-414.
- COWDEN, B. & TANG, J. 2022. Institutional entrepreneurial orientation: Beyond setting the rules of the game for blockchain technology. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 180, 121734.
- CRICK, J. M., CRICK, D. & CHAUDHRY, S. 2023. Interfirm collaboration as a performance-enhancing survival strategy within the business models of ethnic minority-owned urban restaurants affected by COVID-19. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research*, 29, 587-613.

- CRUSH, J. S., KAZEMBE, L. & NICKANOR, N. 2023. Opportunity and Survival in the Urban Informal Food Sector of Namibia. *Businesses*, 3, 129-149.
- CVIJIC ČOVIĆ, M., BOROCKI, J., DJAKOVIĆ, V., VEKIĆ, A. & OKANOVIĆ, A. 2023. Entrepreneurial Strategic Orientation: Prerequisite for SMEs Success in IoT and Digital Transformation Sphere? *Systems*, 11, 272.
- DARUSMAN, D. 2023. The Perspective of Rural Entrepreneurs in Indonesia toward the Challenges of Developing Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs): An Evidence from Sambas Regency, West Kalimantan Province. *Journal of Business and Management Studies*, 5, 50-62.
- DAS, D. 2021. Role Of Micro, Small, And Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) In Economic Development of India. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Explorer (IJMRE)*, 1, 1-7.
- DE MATTOS, C. S., PELLEGRINI, G., HAGELAAR, G. & DOLFSMA, W. 2023. Systematic literature review on technological transformation in SMEs: a transformation encompassing technology assimilation and business model innovation. *Management Review Quarterly*, 1-39.
- DE OLIVEIRA SANTINI, F., KRETSCHMER, C. & MARCONATTO, D. A. B. 2023. Antecedents, consequents and moderators of business models in SMEs: A meta-analytical research study. *Journal of Small Business & Entrepreneurship*, 35, 483-514.
- DEPARTMENT OF TRADE AND INDUSTRIES. 2022. *Number of registered SMEs in rural KZN* [Online]. Available: <https://www.myusbusiness.solutions/services/> [Accessed].
- DHILLON, R. & MONCUR, Q. 2023. Small-Scale Farming: A Review of Challenges and Potential Opportunities Offered by Technological Advancements. *Sustainability*, 15, 15478.
- DIAZ, E. & SENSINI, L. 2020. Entrepreneurial orientation and firm performance: evidence from Argentina. *International Business Research*, 13, 47-55.
- DLAMINI, T. M., IWU, C. G. & OGUNLELA, G. O. 2023. Support Strategies of Government-Owned Business Incubators for SMEs' Sustainability. *Leadership and Governance for Sustainability*. IGI Global.
- DONGA, G. & CHIMUCHEKA, T. 2024. Rural Women Entrepreneurship in South Africa: Issues and Challenges. *African Journal of Inter/Multidisciplinary Studies*, 6, 1-12.
- DOUCET, P., REQUEJO, I. & SUÁREZ-GONZÁLEZ, I. 2023. Business groups' internal labour markets and SME labour productivity. *Small Business Economics*, 1-19.
- DTIC. 2021. *The Department of Trade, Industry and Competition (the dtic) was established after the merger of the Department of Trade and Industry and the Economic Development Department*. [Online]. Available: <https://www.bing.com/ck/a?!&&p=e4d07c58c77c2714JmldtHM9MTcyNzMwODgwMCZpZ3VpZD0xNGZmZjA1NC1hNzM3LTlY0ZWItMzllZC1lNGEYyTzYTY1MjcmaW5zaWQ9NTI4NA&ptn=3&ver=2&hsh=3&fclid=14fff054-a737-64eb-39ed-e4a2a6ca6527&psq=department+of+trade+and+industry&u=a1aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZGhlZHRpYy5nb3YuemEvZGVwYXJ0bWVudC1vZi10cmFkZS1pbmR1c3RyeS1hbmQtY2>

[9tcGV0aXRpb24vlzp-OnRleHQ9UHJvbW90ZSBzdHJ1Y3R1cmFslHRyYW5zM9ybWF0aW9uLCB0b3dhcmRzIGegZHUyZW1pYw&ntb=1](https://doi.org/10.3390/9tcGV0aXRpb24vlzp-OnRleHQ9UHJvbW90ZSBzdHJ1Y3R1cmFslHRyYW5zM9ybWF0aW9uLCB0b3dhcmRzIGegZHUyZW1pYw&ntb=1) [Accessed 26 September 2024].

- DUONG, C. D. & VU, N. X. 2023. The single, complementary, balanced, and imbalanced influences of entrepreneurial attitudes and intentions on entrepreneurial behaviors: Polynomial regression with response surface analysis. *Heliyon*, 9.
- DUREN, S. 2023. *Tourism Geographies: A Defining Paradigm for Building a Sustainable Tourism Industry in Bahia Solano, in Colombia's Remote Pacific Coast Region*. California State University, Los Angeles.
- DWIKAT, S. Y., ARSHAD, D. & MOHD SHARIFF, M. N. 2023. Effect of competent human capital, strategic flexibility and turbulent environment on sustainable performance of SMEs in manufacturing industries in palestine. *Sustainability*, 15, 4781.
- DWUMAH, P., AMANIAMPONG, E.-M., ANIMWAH KISSIEDU, J. & ADU BOAHEN, E. 2024. Association between entrepreneurial orientation and the performance of small and medium enterprises in Ghana: the role of network ties. *Cogent Business & Management*, 11, 2302192.
- EBEL, R. & THORNTON, A. 2023. The importance of the food system for rural vitality and livelihoods in the US Northern Great Plains. *Journal of Rural and Community Development*, 18.
- ELGARHY, S. D. & ABOU-SHOUK, M. 2023. Effects of entrepreneurial orientation, marketing, and innovation capabilities, on market performance: The mediating effect of sustainable competitive advantage. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 35, 1986-2004.
- ENAIFOGHE, A. 2023. Enhancing the Role and Contributions of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in a Globalized and Innovative Economy: Challenges and Opportunities.
- FALOYE, O. D. & OWOEYE, I. 2023. Business Model Innovation and Micro and Small Enterprises' Performance in Nigeria: Does Entrepreneurial Orientation Mediate?
- FANAJA, R. A., SAPUTRI, M. E. & PRADANA, M. 2023. Knowledge as a mediator for innovativeness and risk-taking tolerance of female entrepreneurs in Indonesia. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 9, 2185989.
- FANELLI, R. M. 2021. Barriers to adopting new technologies within rural small and medium enterprises (SMEs). *Social sciences*, 10, 430.
- FANG, G. G., QALATI, S. A., OSTIC, D., SHAH, S. M. M. & MIRANI, M. A. 2022. Effects of entrepreneurial orientation, social media, and innovation capabilities on SME performance in emerging countries: A mediated-moderated model. *Technology Analysis & Strategic Management*, 34, 1326-1338.
- FANGGIDAE, H. C., SUTRISNO, S., FANGGIDAE, F. O. & PERMANA, R. M. 2023. Effects of Social Capital, Financial Access, Innovation, Socioeconomic Status and Market Competition

on the Growth of Small and Medium Enterprises In West Java Province. *The ES Accounting And Finance*, 1, 104-112.

FASIHA, F., ERWIN, E. & MUSDALIFAH, U. 2024. The role of Entrepreneurial Culture in improving the performance of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises in Yogyakarta. *Hasanuddin Economics and Business Review*, 7, 103-112.

FATIMA, T. & BILAL, A. R. 2020. Achieving SME performance through individual entrepreneurial orientation: An active social networking perspective. *Journal of Entrepreneurship in Emerging Economies*, 12, 399-411.

FOLI, S., DURST, S., DAVIES, L. & TEMEL, S. 2022. Supply Chain Risk Management in Young and Mature SMEs. *Journal of Risk and Financial Management*, 15, 328.

GANGIAH, S. 2024. ThriveZA-Nurturing Sustainable Entrepreneurship for South African Youth: A Review. *African Journal of Inter/Multidisciplinary Studies*, 6, 1-15.

GARCÍA, R. A. C. & MÉNDEZ, O. J. M. 2022. True entrepreneur versus false entrepreneur: Implications for family business. *Family business debates*. Emerald Publishing Limited.

GARG, S. & GUPTA, S. 2023. What influences village-level access to a bank branch? Evidence from India. *International Journal of Bank Marketing*.

GAUTAM, O., AGRAWAL, P. & SHARMA, D. 2020. A conceptual framework for entrepreneurial orientation: is philanthropy missing in family business? *International Journal of Business and Globalisation*, 25, 204-223.

GAYATHIRI, P. 2023. The Real-Time Problems and Solutions in Online Classes for Students and Parents. *Redefining Virtual Teaching Learning Pedagogy*, 253-274.

GHERGHINA, Ș. C., BOTEZATU, M. A., HOSSZU, A. & SIMIONESCU, L. N. 2020. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs): The engine of economic growth through investments and innovation. *Sustainability*, 12, 347.

GILMORE, A. B., FABBRI, A., BAUM, F., BERTSCHER, A., BONDY, K., CHANG, H.-J., DEMAIO, S., ERZSE, A., FREUDENBERG, N. & FRIEL, S. 2023. Defining and conceptualising the commercial determinants of health. *The Lancet*.

GLOBAL ENTREPRENEUR MONITOR (GEM). 2024. *Perception-driven economy, South Africa's performance*. [Online]. Available: https://www.googleadservices.com/pagead/aclk?sa=L&ai=DChcSEwiBxYPL2oWHAXXEqGgJHY9yBtEYABACGgJ3Zg&ase=2&gclid=CjwKCAjwp4m0BhBAEiwAsdc4aLdk2MGJD212ZwueIFZhQwPx-NSkAYIezZ_VYDW6doylxWibV7ZZmxoCZm0QAxD_BwE&ohost=www.google.com&cid=CAESVuD2ggeiQ4YyrS8-1wlH2JGu80VdCjc_zZgKCUBb_1yi3esXopq5lidT2IS3zwJtAfbH9b0c1HmdGWyws_oAo7Z1Qjyd_Cu5vxxSY5FSen8fglIBPr7&sig=AOD64_0oxOfhOzGBuxvd8Ar4mhCQjgGzIA&q&nis=4&adurl&ved=2ahUKEwiW5vzK2oWHAXU4yglIHaugBbgQ0Qx6BAgIEAE [Accessed].

- HAGEN, M., SU, W. & JUNGE, S. 2023. 60th birthday of 'A Behavioral Theory of the Firm': a review of the relational concepts and recommendations for future research. *Management Review Quarterly*, 1-46.
- HANDRITO, R. P., SLABBINCK, H. & VANDERSTRAETEN, J. 2023. Stuck in short-term, daily operations, or not?: Unraveling SME's long-term orientation. *Small Business Economics*, 1-23.
- HERMAWAN, A. & SUDARSONO, N. 2023. The Impact Of Financial Literacy, Financial Attitudes And Financial Behaviour On MSMEs Growth. *International Journal of Science, Technology & Management*, 4, 1560-1566.
- HO, C. H., NGUYEN, K. T. & TRINH, D. C. 2023. Business practices of trade and service firms: Evidence from Vietnam. *Journal of the Knowledge Economy*, 1-25.
- HOOPER, R. E. 2024. *The Correlation Between Entrepreneurship and Fixed/Growth Mindset Based on Academic Achievements of Adolescence Students*. Grand Canyon University.
- JALALI, A. 2023. The Mediating Role of Entrepreneurial Orientation Between Relational Capital and Firm Performance: Evidence From Iranian SMEs. *International Journal of Asian Business and Information Management (IJABIM)*, 14, 1-19.
- JARINAA, B. & MANIDA, M. 2024. Exploring the Impact of Rural Entrepreneurship Development in India's MSME Sector. *Social Science and Human Research Bulletin*, 1, 01-06.
- JIANG, Y., JIANG, Z. & CHEN, Z. 2024. Women entrepreneurship in China: A bibliometric literature review and future research agenda. *Journal of Business Research*, 179, 114688.
- KARRAY, S., ARGOUBI, M. & MASMOUDI, M. 2024. Identifying hotspots and emerging trends in innovation determinants: a bibliometric analysis in the context of entrepreneurship and resource-based view. *Management Decision*.
- KASINITZ, P. 2023. Global commerce, immigration and diversity: a New York story. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 1-22.
- KERO, C. A. & BOGALE, A. T. 2023. A Systematic Review of Resource-Based View and Dynamic Capabilities of Firms and Future Research Avenues. *International Journal of Sustainable Development & Planning*, 18.
- KHAN, C., RAHEMAN, A. & FAROOQ, I. 2024. Effect of Financial Inclusion on Growth of Small and Medium Enterprises in Pakistan Through Moderating Effect of Shariah-Compliant Financing. *Bahria University Journal Of Management & Technology*, 7.
- KORBMACHER, M., GURHOLT, T. P., DE LANGE, A.-M. G., VAN DER MEER, D., BECK, D., EIKEFJORD, E., LUNDVOLD, A., ANDREASSEN, O. A., WESTLYE, L. T. & MAXIMOV, I. I. 2023. Bio-psycho-social factors' associations with brain age: a large-scale UK Biobank diffusion study of 35,749 participants. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14, 1117732.
- KOROSTELINA, K. V. & BARRETT, J. 2023. Bridging the digital divide for Native American tribes: Roadblocks to broadband and community resilience. *Policy & Internet*.

- KREJCIE, R. 1970. Determining sample size for research activities. *Educational Psychol Meas.*
- KRUESI, M. A. & BAZELMANS, L. 2023. Resources, capabilities and competencies: a review of empirical hospitality and tourism research founded on the resource-based view of the firm. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Insights*, 6, 549-574.
- LAU, C. H. & MICHIE, J. 2024. Penrose's theory of the firm in an era of globalisation. *International Review of Applied Economics*, 38, 155-174.
- LE-DAIN, M.-A., BENHAYOUN, L., MATTHEWS, J. & LIARD, M. 2023. Barriers and opportunities of digital servitization for SMEs: the effect of smart Product-Service System business models. *Service Business*, 17, 359-393.
- LEBLANC, A. G., BARNES, J. D., SAUNDERS, T. J., TREMBLAY, M. S. & CHAPUT, J.-P. 2023. Scientific sinkhole: estimating the cost of peer review based on survey data with snowball sampling. *Research Integrity and Peer Review*, 8, 3.
- LEÓN-LEÓN, V. 2023. The Unintended Outcomes of Sustainable Development: Hybridizing Beaches Through Small-Scale Tourism. *Indigenous Societies in the Post-colonial World: Responses and Resilience Through Global Perspectives*. Springer.
- LI, Q. & LI, L. 2022. Integrative factor regression and its inference for multimodal data analysis. *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, 117, 2207-2221.
- LI, W. & WANG, D. How Does Liability of Origin Impact the Performance of Post-merge Integration of EMNEs? Academy of Management Proceedings, 2023. Academy of Management Briarcliff Manor, NY 10510, 16306.
- LISOWSKA, E. & LESZCZYŃSKI, D. 2023. Barriers to women's entrepreneurship in Poland and institutional support. *Women's Entrepreneurship Policy: A Global Perspective*, 162.
- LIU, Z., ZHANG, B., ZHANG, M., WANG, H. & FU, X. 2023. A quantitative method for the analysis of ship collision risk using AIS data. *Ocean Engineering*, 272, 113906.
- LU, Q., DENG, Y., LIU, B. & CHEN, J. 2023. Promoting supply chain financing performance of SMEs based on the extended resource-based perspective. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, 38, 1865-1879.
- LUBIS, A. N., BATUBARA, M. & RAHMANI, N. A. B. 2023. The Effect of Entrepreneurship Orientation, Knowledge Management, and Partnership on MSMEs Performance in the Perspective of the Islamic Economy with Competitive Advantage as an Intervening Variable. *Indonesian Interdisciplinary Journal of Sharia Economics (IIJSE)*, 6, 948-975.
- LUMPKIN, G. & PIDDUCK, R. J. 2021. Global entrepreneurial orientation (GEO): An updated, multidimensional view of EO. *Entrepreneurial orientation: Epistemological, theoretical, and empirical perspectives*. Emerald Publishing Limited.
- LWESYA, F., MWAKALOBO, A. B. S. & MBUKWAC, J. 2021. Utilization of non-financial business support services to aid development of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Tanzania.

- LYONS, E. & ZHANG, L. 2023. Female Entrepreneurs, Digital Tools, and Work-Life Balance: Evidence from Small Businesses around the World. *Digital Tools, and Work-Life Balance: Evidence from Small Businesses around the World (August 7, 2023)*.
- MA, L., CHEN, X., ZHOU, J. & ALDIERI, L. 2022. Strategic management accounting in small and medium-sized enterprises in emerging countries and markets: A case study from China. *Economies*, 10, 74.
- MA, X., RUI, Z. & ZHONG, G. 2023. How large entrepreneurial-oriented companies breed innovation: the roles of interdepartmental collaboration and organizational culture. *Chinese Management Studies*, 17, 64-88.
- MAESELA, L. M., SENYOLO, G. M. & BELETE, A. 2024. Farm entrepreneurship among emerging farmers under the land restitution program in Limpopo Province, South Africa. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 10, 2306920.
- MAHMOOD, R. & HANAFI, N. 2013. Entrepreneurial orientation and business performance of women-owned small and medium enterprises in Malaysia: Competitive advantage as a mediator. *International Journal of Business and Social Science (IJBS)*, 4, 82-90.
- MAKA, L. 2023. Entrepreneurship Education in South Africa: Policy Implementation and Impact on Youth Empowerment.
- MAKHLOUFI, L., LAGHOUAG, A. A., ALI SAHLI, A. & BELAID, F. 2021. Impact of entrepreneurial orientation on innovation capability: The mediating role of absorptive capability and organizational learning capabilities. *Sustainability*, 13, 5399.
- MALIK, F. & MUSHTAQ, R. 2024. Beyond Adversity: Exploring the Role of Entrepreneurial Resilience, Alertness, and Innovative Culture in Career Advancement. *Foundation University Journal of Business & Economics*, 9.
- MALIK, M., ALI, M., LATAN, H. & CHIAPPETTA JABBOUR, C. J. 2023. Green project management practices, green knowledge acquisition and sustainable competitive advantage: empirical evidence. *Journal of Knowledge Management*, 27, 2350-2375.
- MALIWICHI, L., MANENZHE-RAMAROPPE, M. & STRYDOM, M. 2023. The role of small-scale apparel manufacturing businesses in the provision of employment and income generation. *Development Southern Africa*, 40, 839-853.
- MANIGANDAN, R. & RAGHURAM, J. N. V. 2024. Innovation capability as a catalyst: unravelling the mediating effect between entrepreneurial orientation and firm performance in family businesses. *International Journal of Work Innovation*, 5, 1-21.
- MANZOOR, F., WEI, L. & SAHITO, N. 2021. The role of SMEs in rural development: Access of SMEs to finance as a mediator. *Plos one*, 16, e0247598.
- MATHAFENA, R. B. & MSIMANGO-GALAWA, J. 2023. Entrepreneurial orientation, market orientation and opportunity exploitation in driving business performance: moderating effect of interfunctional coordination. *Journal of Entrepreneurship in Emerging Economies*, 15, 538-565.

- MAZILIAUSKE, E. 2024. Innovation for sustainability through co-creation by small and medium-sized tourism enterprises (SMEs): Socio-cultural sustainability benefits to rural destinations. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 50, 101201.
- MORAES SILVA, D. R. D., LUCAS, L. O. & VONORTAS, N. S. 2020. Internal barriers to innovation and university-industry cooperation among technology-based SMEs in Brazil. *Industry and Innovation*, 27, 235-263.
- MORETTI, D. M., ALVES, F. C. & BOMTEMPO, J. V. 2020. Entrepreneurial-oriented strategic renewal in a Brazilian SME: a case study. *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*.
- MORGAN, T. & ANOKHIN, S. 2023. Entrepreneurial orientation and new product performance in SMEs: The mediating role of customer participation. *Journal of Business Research*, 164, 113921.
- MOSTAFIZ, M. I., HUGHES, M., SIMEONOVA, B. & SAMBASIVAN, M. 2023. Entrepreneurial orientation and knowledge management: comparing configurations of native and immigrant entrepreneurial firms. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research*, 29, 1099-1132.
- MOZUMDAR, L., MATERIA, V. C., HAGELAAR, G., ISLAM, M. A., VELDE, G. V. D. & OMTA, S. 2022. Contextuality of entrepreneurial orientation and business performance: The case of women entrepreneurs in Bangladesh. *Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation in Emerging Economies*, 8, 94-120.
- MUELLER, J. T. & GASTEYER, S. 2023. The ethnically and racially uneven role of water infrastructure spending in rural economic development. *Nature Water*, 1, 74-82.
- MULIBANA, L. & TSHIKOVHI, N. 2024. Rural Entrepreneurship and Innovation in BRICS Economies: Secondary Evidence from Rural Areas in South Africa. *Sustainability*, 16, 2408.
- NARADDA GAMAGE, S. K., EKANAYAKE, E., ABEYRATHNE, G., PRASANNA, R., JAYASUNDARA, J. & RAJAPAKSHE, P. 2020. A review of global challenges and survival strategies of small and medium enterprises (SMEs). *Economies*, 8, 79.
- NAYAK, B., BHATTACHARYYA, S. S. & KRISHNAMOORTHY, B. 2023. Integrating the dialectic perspectives of resource-based view and industrial organization theory for competitive advantage—a review and research agenda. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, 38, 656-679.
- NCUBE, T. R. & MATLALA, M. E. 2024. The Impact of Entrepreneurship Education on the Entrepreneurial Competences of Students in TVET Colleges In South Africa. BP International.
- NENEH, B. N. & DZOMONDA, O. 2024. Transitioning from entrepreneurial intention to actual behaviour: The role of commitment and locus of control. *The International Journal of Management Education*, 22, 100964.

- NGO, Q.-H. 2023. The Impact of Entrepreneurial Orientation on SMEs' Performance in a Transitional Economy: The Mediating Role of Differentiation Advantages and Innovation Capability. *Sage Open*, 13, 21582440231203035.
- NHLEKO, Z., LADZANI, W. & SEELETSE, S. 2023. Institutional development as a tool to facilitate economic access for South Africa's SMEs: the case of the Development Bank of Southern Africa. *International Journal of Research in Business and Social Science* (2147-4478), 12, 271-282.
- NOORMOHAMMADI NAJAFABADI, R. & SAJADI, S. M. 2023. The Penrose's growth theory: a systematic review of the literature. *Journal of Entrepreneurship Development*, 16, 31-44.
- ODEYEMI, O., OYEWOLE, A. T., ADEOYE, O. B., OFODILE, O. C., ADDY, W. A., OKOYE, C. C. & OLOLADE, Y. J. 2024. Entrepreneurship in Africa: a review of growth and challenges. *International Journal of Management & Entrepreneurship Research*, 6, 608-622.
- OGUJIUBA, K. K., OLAMIDE, E., BOSHOFF, E., AGHOLOR, I. & OGUJIUBA, C. 2023. SMEs, Success, and Capital Startups: Evidence from the Service Sector in South Africa. *Administrative Sciences*, 13, 127.
- OHNO, I. & UESU, S. 2022. New partnership with the private sector in Japanese development cooperation. *International Development Cooperation of Japan and South Korea*, 149-178.
- OKECH, R. N. & TIMOTHY, D. J. 2023. Culinary Traditions and Heritage Foods in Africa. *Cultural Heritage and Tourism in Africa*, 130.
- OKOLI, I. E. N., NWOSU, K. C. & OKECHUKWU, M. E. 2021. Entrepreneurial orientation and performance of selected SMEs in Southeast, Nigeria. *European Journal of Business and Management Research*, 6, 108-115.
- OKOSUN, A. E., OKEKE, F. O., IGWE, A. E., EZEMA, E. C. & OKPALIKE, C. O. 2023. Rural Area Infrastructural Challenges and the Role of Architecture in Urban-Rural Development in Nigeria. *European Journal of Sustainable Development*, 12, 305-305.
- PEARCE, R. E. & BAH, A. 2024. Estimation of Efficiency and the Effect of Access to Finance on Efficiency of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMES) in the Western area of Sierra Leone. *Journal of Applied Finance & Banking*, 14, 1-23.
- PEREIRA JÚNIOR, A. & PEREIRA, V. S. 2023. Resource-based view and contingent perspective on the relationship between geographic diversification of businesses and organizational performance. *BBR. Brazilian Business Review*, 20, 157-175.
- PERSON LOOKUP-PHONE NUMBER SEARCH. 2022. *South Africa's fastest telephone & address search. ; 5.5 million numbers. Complete landline telephone and address database for 5 million South Africans*. [Online]. Available: <https://personlookup.co.za/> [Accessed].
- PIDDUCK, R. J., CLARK, D. R. & LUMPKIN, G. 2023. Entrepreneurial mindset: Dispositional beliefs, opportunity beliefs, and entrepreneurial behavior. *Journal of Small Business Management*, 61, 45-79.

- PINHEIRO, B., HENRIQUES, I., ALMEIDA, L. & FRANCO, M. 2024. Entrepreneurial alertness as a determinant of success in the SME context: a qualitative study. *International Journal of Organizational Analysis*, 32, 545-564.
- PISKULOVA, N. 2023. Business Cultures in International Business. *World Economy and International Business: Theories, Trends, and Challenges*. Springer.
- PLAIKNER, A., WEISKOPF, B., WEISKOPF, K. & HAID, M. 2023. New concepts for traditional family-run inns. *Research Handbook on Entrepreneurship and Innovation in Family Firms*. Edward Elgar Publishing.
- POAZI DEINMODEI, W. 2023. The Significant Relationship Between Resource-Base View and Organizational Strategic Growth. *International Journal*, 7.
- PRIATMOKO, S., KABIL, M., AKAAS, A., LAKNER, Z., GYURICZA, C. & DÁVID, L. D. 2023. Understanding the Complexity of Rural Tourism Business: Scholarly Perspective. *Sustainability*, 15, 1193.
- PURNOMO, B. R. Comparative Literature Study On Resource Based View And Dynamic Capability Of The Firm. Proceeding Kilisuci International Conference on Economic & Business, 2024. 844-851.
- PURNOMO, R. A., MALYNKA, O. & PRANANTO, A. 2023. Sustainable Business Development Via Applying an Online Business Model for Gaining Benefit in Economics, Education, and Social Network. *Ekulibrium: Jurnal Ilmiah Bidang Ilmu Ekonomi*, 18, 1-10.
- RAMSURAJ, T. 2023. Assessing the role of entrepreneurship industry and SMEs to economic growth in South Africa. *International Journal of Research in Business and Social Science (2147-4478)*, 12, 283-291.
- RATNAWATI, R., RAHMAN, M., ROCHAYATUN, S., MELDONA, M. & RAHAYU, Y. N. 2023. Financial attitude and financial performance of export MSMEs: Financial well-being as a mediating. *International Journal of Applied Economics, Finance and Accounting*, 16, 77-85.
- REID, G. C., SMITH, J. A. & XU, Z. 2023. Managing intangible assets for small firm growth. *Journal of Applied Financial Econometrics*, 4, 61-87.
- REZAEI, J. & ORTT, R. 2018. Entrepreneurial orientation and firm performance: the mediating role of functional performances. *Management Research Review*, 41, 878-900.
- RIHAYANA, I. G., SUPARTHA, I., SINTAASIH, D. K. & SURYA, I. B. K. 2023. Rethinking Open Innovation from Resources Based View and Dynamic Capability Perspective: Determinants and Its Consequences. *Quality-Access to Success*, 24.
- RINGO, D. S., TEGAMBWAGE, A. & KAZUNGU, I. 2022. The effect of entrepreneurial orientation on export performance: Evidence from manufacturing SMEs in Tanzania. *Cogent Business & Management*, 9, 2157769.
- ROGO, H. B., GORONDUTSE, A. H. & HASSAN, M. 2023. The Impact of Entrepreneurial Orientation on the Performance of Small and Medium Enterprises in Kano. *International Journal of Intellectual Discourse*, 6, 149-159.

- RUPIANTI, R., HUSSEIN, A. S. & FIRDAUS, F. 2022. The Influence of Entrepreneurial Orientation an Innovation Capability by Absorptive and Networking Capability: A Case Study of Tempe Chips SMES in Malang. *Journal of Social Science*, 3, 1157-1168.
- SA, S. 2024. *Stats SA is the national statistical service of South Africa, providing official statistics and data for various sectors and purposes*. [Online]. Available: <https://www.bing.com/ck/a?!&&p=8e16a926c3256951JmltdHM9MTcyNzMwODgwMCZpZ3VpZD0xNGZmZjA1NC1hNzM3LTlTY0ZWltMzllZC1lNGEYyTjYTY1MjcmaW5zaWQ9NTM3Mg&ptn=3&ver=2&hsh=3&fclid=14fff054-a737-64eb-39ed-e4a2a6ca6527&psq=stats+sa&u=a1aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ292LnphL3NOYXRpc3RpY3Mtc291dGgtYWZyaWNhLXNOYXRzLXNhlzp-OnRleHQ9U3RhZGlzdGljcyBTb3V0aCBBZnJpY2EgKFNOYXRzIFNBKSBKc2liYWxv&ntb=1> [Accessed 26 September 2024].
- SABELA, P. T., MASUKU, M. M. & MLAMBO, V. H. 2023. Unleashing the development potential of Africa's women through African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA). *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 1-17.
- SADALIA, I., MUHARAM, H. & MULYANA, A. 2020. Entrepreneurial orientation and innovation to competitive advantage of smes in north sumatera mediated with business financing factor. *Journal of Critical Reviews*, 7, 236-240.
- SAHA, K., KUMAR, R., DUTTA, S. K. & TIWARI, P. 2021. Validating multidimensional entrepreneurial orientation in emerging economies. *European Business Review*, 33, 797-817.
- SALOMAA, M., CHARLES, D. & BOSWORTH, G. 2023. Universities and innovation strategies in rural regions: The case of the greater Lincolnshire innovation programme (UK). *Industry and Higher Education*, 37, 67-79.
- SAXENA, P. K., SEETHARAMAN, A. & SHAWARIKAR, G. 2024. Factors That Influence Sustainable Innovation in Organizations: A Systematic Literature Review. *Sustainability*, 16, 4978.
- SEDA. 2021. *The Small Enterprise Development Agency (Seda) is an agency of the Department of Small Business Development (DSBD) which provides non-financial support to small enterprises and cooperatives*. [Online]. Available: <https://www.bing.com/ck/a?!&&p=d683eb99d054e1a7JmltdHM9MTcyNzMwODgwMCZpZ3VpZD0xNGZmZjA1NC1hNzM3LTlTY0ZWltMzllZC1lNGEYyTjYTY1MjcmaW5zaWQ9NTlONg&ptn=3&ver=2&hsh=3&fclid=14fff054-a737-64eb-39ed-e4a2a6ca6527&psq=small+enterprise+development+agency+seda&u=a1aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ2VhY2V5cmcuemEvlpz-OnRleHQ9UHJvdmlkZXMGdG9vbHMgYW5kIHRIY2huaXF1ZXMGZm9yIGNsaWVudHM&ntb=1> [Accessed 26/09/2024].
- SOPANAH, A., BAHRI, S., NURHAYATI, I. D., FATONI, I. & SUCI, R. P. 2024. Strong Women to Strengthen Rural Creative Economy. *TGO Journal of Community Development*, 2, 56-61.

- SRIMULYANI, V. A., HERMANTO, Y. B., RUSTIYANINGSIH, S. & WALOYO, L. A. S. 2023. Internal factors of entrepreneurial and business performance of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in East Java, Indonesia. *Heliyon*, 9.
- STRYDOM, M., KEMPEN, E. L. & TSELEPIS, T. J. 2023. Marketing for Survival: The Survivalist Promotional Mix of Informal Clothing Manufacturing Micro-enterprises. *Journal of African Business*, 24, 19-37.
- SUSANTO, P., HOQUE, M. E., SHAH, N. U., CANDRA, A. H., HASHIM, N. M. H. N. & ABDULLAH, N. L. 2023. Entrepreneurial orientation and performance of SMEs: the roles of marketing capabilities and social media usage. *Journal of Entrepreneurship in Emerging Economies*, 15, 379-403.
- SVENSSON, P. G., ANDERSSON, F. O. & FAULK, L. 2020. Organizational capacity and entrepreneurial behavior. *Nonprofit management and leadership*, 30, 693-707.
- SWASTIWI, A. W., FEBRIYANDI, Y. F. & SIMBOLON, G. Maritime Community Food Security: Case Study of Meranti Sago. IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science, 2023. IOP Publishing, 012011.
- TESTA, S., TROISE, C., CINCOTTI, S. & CAMILLERI, M. A. 2024. The role of electronic waste management solutions and message framing in influencing consumer behaviours: Exploring the crowdfunding context. *Business Strategy and the Environment*, 33, 917-929.
- THOMÄ, J. 2023. An urban-rural divide (or not?): Small firm location and the use of digital technologies. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 97, 214-223.
- TSAGAY, T., RATTANAWIBOONSOM, V. & YAWISED, K. 2024. Determining the influence of personal entrepreneurial competencies on enterprise risk management in the Bhutanese SMEs. *Environment and Social Psychology*, 9.
- TSENG, T. H. & WANG, H.-Y. 2023. Consumer attitudes and purchase intentions towards internet celebrity self-brands: an integrated view of congruence, brand authenticity and internet celebrity involvement. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*.
- TURKMANI, N. & HAMADE, K. 2023. 5 Syrian refugees and Lebanon's agriculture sector. *Refugee Resilience and Adaptation in the Middle East: Reclaiming Agency in the Informal Economies of Lebanon and Jordan*.
- UPULWEHERA, J. M. H. M., SENANAYAKE, S. M. S. N., GAMAGE, S. K. N., JAYASUNDARA, J. M. S. B., EKANAYAKE, E. M. S., LALANI, J. M. G., ABEYRATHNE, G. A. K. N. J., RAJAPAKSHE, P. S. K. & PRASANNA, R. P. I. R. 2024. Is Women Entrepreneurship a Key Driver for Business Performance of the SMEs in Asian Developing Nations? A Case Study of SMEs in the Agricultural Sector in Sri Lanka. *Journal of the Knowledge Economy*, 1-36.
- UTOMO, A. I., TANUWIJAYA, J. & GUNAWAN, A. W. 2024. The Influence of Organizational Culture on Organizational Performance with Organizational Commitment and Leadership as Mediation. *Journal La Sociale*, 5, 531-538.

- VAN DER WESTHUIZEN, T. 2023. Introduction to Youth Entrepreneurship. *Youth Entrepreneurship: An Ecosystem Theory for Young Entrepreneurs in South Africa and Beyond*. Springer.
- VAN WYK, I. & VENTER, P. 2023. Factors influencing strategic decision-making in South African small businesses. *Acta Commercii-Independent Research Journal in the Management Sciences*, 23, 1070.
- VARMA, A., BUDHWAR, P. S. & DENISI, A. 2023. *Performance management systems: A global perspective*, Taylor & Francis.
- VO, D. H. & HO, C. M. 2023. Determinants of wealth outcomes in female-headed households in Vietnam. *Feminist Economics*, 1-38.
- WALES, W. J., COVIN, J. G. & MONSEN, E. 2020. Entrepreneurial orientation: The necessity of a multilevel conceptualization. *Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal*, 14, 639-660.
- WANG, N., CUI, D. & DONG, Y. 2023. Study on the impact of business environment on private enterprises' technological innovation from the perspective of transaction cost. *Innovation and Green Development*, 2, 100034.
- WEI, W. & DUAN, J. 2024. How do entrepreneurial activities at different levels promote business growth: a review and research agenda. *Chinese Management Studies*, 18, 755-784.
- WIKLUND-ENGBLOM, A., POLO, F., KULLBÄCK, C. & ASPLUND, S. 2023. Defining and implementing a smart working environment for employee sustainability: action research for organisational development and learning. *Journal of Workplace Learning*.
- WINCZOREK, J. & MUSZYNSKI, K. 2023. *Small and Medium Enterprises, Law and Business: Uncertainty and Justice*, Taylor & Francis.
- WORLD BANK STATISTICS. 2019. *Small and medium Enterprises output in developing countries*. [Online]. Available: <https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators> [Accessed].
- XIAN, Y. 2022. Competitiveness analysis of Korean film and television industry based on Michael Porter diamond model. *Frontiers in Art Research*, 4.
- XU, J., ZHU, D. & LI, Y. 2022. Does small and medium enterprise differential leadership increase subordinate knowledge hiding? Evidences from job insecurity, territorial consciousness and leadership performance expectation. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, 983669.
- YASEEN, S. G., DAJANI, D. & ODEH, M. Intellectual capital and sustainable competitive advantage: The mediating role of marketing knowledge management. Conference on sustainability and cutting-edge business technologies, 2023. Springer, 237-251.
- YU, Q., ASLAM, S., MURAD, M., JIATONG, W. & SYED, N. 2022. The impact of knowledge management process and intellectual capital on entrepreneurial orientation and innovation. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, 772668.

- ZAIDI, R. A., KHAN, M. M., KHAN, R. A. & MUJTABA, B. G. 2023. Do entrepreneurship ecosystem and managerial skills contribute to startup development? *South Asian Journal of Business Studies*, 12, 25-53.
- ZARZYCKI, M., MORRISON, V., BEI, E. & SEDDON, D. 2023. Cultural and societal motivations for being informal caregivers: A qualitative systematic review and meta-synthesis. *Health Psychology Review*, 17, 247-276.
- ZHANG, X. E., TENG, X., LE, Y. & LI, Y. 2023. Strategic orientations and responsible innovation in SMEs: The moderating effects of environmental turbulence. *Business Strategy and the Environment*, 32, 2522-2539.
- ZHOU, M., QIAO, Y. & GUO, J. 2024. Research on the mechanism involved in urban social inclusiveness and resident entrepreneurship: Evidence from China. *Cities*, 149, 104978.
- ZIN, M. L. M. & IBRAHIM, H. 2020. The influence of entrepreneurial supports on business performance among rural entrepreneurs. *Annals of contemporary developments in management & HR (ACDMHR)*, Print ISSN, 2632-7686.
- ZONDO, R. W. D. 2022. Insight into self-reliance of rural communities for endogenous growth in KwaZulu-Natal. *Specialusis Ugdymas*, 1, 2664-2676.
- ZONDO, R. W. D. & NCUBE, T. R. 2023. Intrinsic motivation and business competences as predictors of small and medium growth: SME owner's viewpoint. *The Seybold Report*; Vol. 18, Issue 05.