

Impact of Small and Medium Scale Enterprise Resource Mobilization on Organizational Efficiency in Kwara State, Nigeria

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.23183064>

Received: 11-09-2026

Accepted: 25-09-2026

Published: 05-10-2026

ABSTRACT

Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) in developing economies, including Nigeria and other African and Asian contexts, face significant challenges in accessing and effectively mobilizing resources. These challenges have in no small measure affected their operations thereby exposing them to the threat of collapse. In view of this, there is need for concerted efforts at addressing this trajectory. It is against this backdrop that this study aims at assessing the impact which resource mobilization has on the efficiency of SMEs in Kwara State. The study adopted the mixed method research design, using questionnaire as instrument of collecting primary data which is complemented with secondary data from government publications, scholarly writings and corporate reports. Out of 1,416 registered SMEs in Kwara State (population of the study) a sample size of 312 SMEs were chosen for questionnaire administration based on Taro Yamane formula for the determination of sample size. The data was analyzed using simple percentage and regression analysis. The study found that strategic partnership and skill acquisition significantly affect operational agility, and innovation capacity respectively with r^2 of 97%, and 98.5%, both p values < 0.000 . It concluded that SMEs resource mobilization is significant to organizational efficiency. The study recommended that SMEs managers in Kwara State should actively pursue and deepen strategic partnership with complementary firms, industry associations, and support organizations; in order to enhance the efficiency of SMEs for the betterment of all and sundry.

Keywords: Small and Medium Scale Enterprise, Resource Mobilization, Organizational Efficiency, Operational Agility, Innovation Capacity

I. INTRODUCTION

In today's business world, the ability to mobilize and use resources effectively is a key factor in achieving operational success (Blouch, Khan & Kayani, 2025). In SMEs, resource mobilization has become a strategic approach that can help improve the efficiency of the company, especially in developing economies where the lack of these resources is common. Resource mobilization is the activity of gathering, acquiring, allocating and managing resources, namely financial, human, technological and material resources, to meet the goals of the organization. SMEs are faced with a highly competitive and uncertain business context, where mobilizing sufficient resources is now vital to ensure the sustainability of SMEs and to enhance organizational performance (Do et al., 2021).

Operational level resource mobilization for SMEs includes access to capital, human resource development, technology procurement and appropriate use of physical and informational resources. Financial resources provide the funds for

production, innovation, and market expansion, and human resources add managerial and technical skills, as well as entrepreneurial competence. Also, the technological and informational flexibility increases the efficiency of operations, decision-making and adaptability in changing markets. The strategic coordination of resources with the mission, vision, and goals of an SME can help them to bypass operational bottlenecks and increase general efficiency (Hernita et al., 2021).

Organizational efficiency, on the other hand, is the ability of an organization to get the desired outcomes with the best resources. It is a multi-dimensional phenomenon which involves goal achievement, efficiency of operation, productivity of employees, coordination, and adaptability. Efficiency for SMEs can be seen from providing services in time, managing costs, having efficient internal processes, and adapting to the environment. Efficacy at high level helps SMEs maintain competitiveness, build trust among

stakeholders, and maintain business growth in difficult times (Do et al., 2021).

Importantly, the efficiency of an organization is not only dependent on the qualities of its internal management but also strongly dependent on the access to resources and how the resources are managed. But SMEs that are able to mobilize and coordinate financial, human, and technological resources are more likely to improve employee performance and quality of the service or product they offer, and to streamline their operations. On the other hand, poor resource mobilization can lead to inefficiencies, productivity drop and poor organizational performance. Hence, the resource availability and managerial capability have a significant role in influencing organizational efficiency (Abid et al., 2023).

The relationship between resource mobilization and organizational efficiency is especially crucial in Kwara state where SMEs form a major part of the economy. While all these aspects are very vital to the economic development of the state, many SMEs are beset by the problems of less availability of finance, lack of skilled manpower and poor infrastructure facilities to operate efficiently. Therefore, it is crucial to understand how resource mobilization of the SMEs affects enterprise efficiency, to improve enterprise performance and guide policy interventions. Hence, this study aims at examining the effect of resource mobilization of SMEs on organizational efficiency in Kwara State, Nigeria.

In competitive settings, the efficient use of resources is essential for the success of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and depends on strategic partnerships and acquiring new skills. But, in many developing-economic countries such as Nigeria and other African and Asian settings, a substantial number of SMEs struggle in terms of access and in being able to effectively mobilise these resources. Trust, coordination and governance issues often discourage the development of strategic partnerships because they negatively impact value creation in SME networks and collaborative projects (Antoldi & Cerrato, 2020; Bertello et al., 2021). These limitations restrict SMEs' ability to leverage inter-firm alliances, university–industry–government collaborations, and other network arrangements to obtain critical financial, technological, and knowledge resources (Rossoni et al., 2023; Umar, 2020).

Agility to adapt quickly to market conditions is a longstanding problem for SMEs. Although it may be possible to form partnerships, weak governance arrangements, lack of communication, and diverging expectations can still result in drawbacks of coordination, delays, and dependency risks, especially when it comes to pre-competitive and

open innovation projects (Bertello et al., 2021; Raya et al., 2021). Evidence from the empirical study conducted with the SME networks confirms that agility and performance only become realized when a mix of trust and adequate control mechanisms are in place to facilitate effective coordination and value creation (Antoldi & Cerrato, 2020; Adomako et al., 2022). As a result, many SMEs have difficulty in realizing the actual benefits of cooperation – the impact on organization efficiency – and are unable to respond to the changing demands of the market.

Another key challenge SMEs face is in the acquisition of skills. While training and capacity building programs have the potential to greatly improve productivity, innovation, and employee retention, a lack of financial resources, time constraints and external support are all factors that limit their ability to take effect (Mulenga et al., 2025; Hernita et al., 2021). Research in emerging economies reveals that the extent of human resource capacity, insufficient knowledge and ability to match training content with organizational requirements, and challenges regarding the access to advanced technologies limit the internalization and use of new skills by SMEs for process improvement and innovation (Hernita et al., 2021; Wu & Tóth, 2025). All these limitations are ultimately translated into a decrease of efficiency within the organization and into a risk of small firms' long-term sustainability.

Overall organizational efficiency of SMEs is a reflection of these challenges, which include operational agility, capacity for innovation and efficient use of resources. Some of the characteristics of firms that do not mobilise and integrate partnership resources and skills well are characterised by low productivity, low innovation and low responsiveness to the market pressures (Hernita et al., 2021; Do et al., 2021). Evidence from urban and regional SME contexts has shown that the government and donor-supported interventions still failed to produce satisfactory outcomes in terms of the enterprise and resource scarcity, as well as low levels of innovation output, which were experienced by many enterprises, thus creating a gap between the intervention that can be provided to the enterprises and the outcomes achieved. Although the existing evidence were taken from the urban and regional SME context, it could be seen that despite the intervention provided by the government and donors, there was still a gap between the intervention that can be provided to the enterprises and the outcomes that were achieved, which could be seen in the experience of enterprise resource scarcity, as well as the low output of innovations.

Thus, this study aims at exploring the effect of SMEs resource mobilization via strategic partnerships and skill acquisition on the efficiency of the organizations in Kwara State of Nigeria, in order to identify obstacles impeding the utilization of resources and to propose strategies to assist in improving their efficiency.

Research Objective

The study aimed to look at the effect of resource mobilization in SMEs through strategic partnership and skill acquisition on organization efficiency in Kwara state, Nigeria.

The goals of the study are to:

- (i)examine the effect of strategic partnership on operational agility; and
- (iii) measure the effect of learning skills on the capacity for innovation.

Research Hypotheses

In fulfilling those goals, the study is based on two hypotheses which were to be tested:

Ho1: Strategic partnership does not contribute positively and significantly to the operational agility and

Ho2: Skill acquisition does not contribute positively and significantly to innovation capacity.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of SMEs Resource Mobilization.

In the current literature on the subject, the process of resource mobilization of SMEs is regarded as a dynamic one that involves the identification, gathering, reorganization and use of scarce resources to gain competitive advantage in an uncertain and volatile context (Dey et al., 2020; Fabrizio et al., 2021). Based on the resource-based view and its extensions, research suggests that SMEs' strategic position is not based on the actual level of resources, but on the action(s) of the owner(s) and managers to orchestrate what they have and can access via networks, markets, and institutions (Abid et al., 2023; Chaudhuri et al., 2022). This is echoed in the literature related to technology adoption and digitalization, which defines mobilization as aligning technological, organizational and environmental resources to carry out transformations and performance (Putra & Santoso, 2020; Zamani, 2022; Zhang et al., 2022).

In recent years, the research has focused on how SMEs mobilize their resources, which is closely related to the concept of bricolage and circular economy practices, highlighting how SMEs creatively use and combine available resources under constraints (Li & Shafait, 2025). To overcome the limitations and foster innovation and competitiveness, SMEs employ resource bricolage

which involves the process of “making do” with available resources and the use of embedded networks (Sharma et al., 2023). The concept of resource mobilization is also discussed in the studies on circular economy and digital capabilities, where material, knowledge and digital resources are aligned to create new value propositions and sustainability outcomes (Chaudhuri et al., 2022). Thus, the SMEs Resource Mobilization team will measure Toolkits in SMEs.

Measuring Toolkits of SMEs Resource Mobilization

i.Strategic Partnership: SMEs with limited resources are able to leverage external assets, knowledge and markets that are expensive to develop within the SME that are through strategic partnerships (Beckmann et al., 2021; Vanags et al., 2018). They enable SMEs to acquire and combine network resources, mitigating scale disadvantages and uncertainty of the environment, and remaining flexible (Islam et al., 2024; Partanen et al., 2018). Strategic partnerships with NGOs and big companies and cross-sector networks are one of the resources mobilization opportunities as they offer access to finance, technology, and capabilities (Beckmann et al., 2021; Zahoor et al., 2020).

ii.Skill acquisition: Skill acquisition is an essential element in SMEs that helps them develop and invest in human resources to create and utilize knowledge resources, which is lacking in terms of financial or physical investment (Koppa et al., 2024; Ying et al., 2019). Improving the skills and capacities of the workforce and managers boosts productivity, sustainability, and market access, while simultaneously creating an internal resource development process, not just a cost (Hernita et al., 2021; \Guzmán & Pimentel, 2024; Perera & Razi, 2025). Employees' skills and managerial capacities are also crucial for implementing digital technologies and organizing complementary resources, thus, continuous skills development is key to unlocking tangible and intangible assets to gain a competitive edge (Diaz Arancibia et al., 2024; Melo et al., 2023).

Organizational Efficiency

Organizational efficiency is conceptualized as a system (or group) level construct of an organization's ability to organize and then implement courses of action necessary to attain desired organizational goals, extending self-efficacy to a system level construct (Mathieu et al., 2019; Mustapha & Hassan, 2018). Studies on organizational and team effectiveness consider efficacy as an emergent phenomenon that is rooted in the confidence of all members regarding the organization's routines, structures and

competencies to address complex tasks and environments (Walter, 2020). This belief system has an impact on the way an organization perceives problems and decides on ways forward and how they persevere in the face of adversity, linking psychological and structural components of performance (Yaxin & Adnan, 2025).

Organizational efficiency is also tied to other constructs of the organizational, such as agility and sustainability, and resilience (Mathieu et al., 2019; Ozanne et al., 2022; Walter, 2020), indicating efficacy as an underlying element in the organization's perceived ability to adapt, learn and sustain results over time. With respect to performance management and strategic management, efficiency is perceived as a process that converts knowledge, training and strategic alignment into action and corporate sustainability in an organization (Fuertes et al., 2020). These views see organizational efficiency as the product of past experiences, but also as an antecedent to future performance, which sits between the influence of the organizational structure, culture and stakeholder engagement and the organizational results (Ozanne et al., 2022; Yaxin & Adnan, 2025).

Measuring Benchmark for Organisational Efficiency

The efficiency of an organization is determined by measuring it;

i. Operational Agility: this can be defined as the organization's ability to transform structure, process and resources into timely and efficient action and reactions that maintain performance in dynamic situations (Walter, 2020). It is a dynamic ability that can quickly change operations and routines, and is connected to day-to-day operations and strategic results (Asghar et al., 2025). Higher Operational and Process Agility has been found to be related to enhanced financial, market and quality performance (Carvalho et al., 2023; Nguyen et al., 2024). Agility is a practical indicator of the efficiency of the organization and a signal of its robust systems, governance and culture (Margherita et al., 2020).

ii. Innovation Capacity: Innovation capacity is the ability of an organization to create, capture and implement new ideas in the development of products, processes and business models, thus contributing to long-term competitiveness (Saunila, 2020). It is a higher level capability which is able to manage knowledge, learning and technology and turns resources into tangible results (Crescenzi & Gagliardi, 2018; Motamedimoghadam et al., 2024). Firms with high innovation capability are able to generate a better financial and non-financial performance; the relationship between internal capability, external collaboration and competitive

advantage is mediated through innovation capability (Al-Kalouti et al., 2020; Chatzoglou & Chatzoudes, 2018). In the case of SMEs, innovation capacity helps to respond to resource limitations and maintain dynamic capabilities, and is, therefore, an important proxy of organizational efficiency (Fabrizio et al., 2021).

Effect of SMEs' Resource Mobilization on Organizational Efficiency

Conceptual and empirical discussions imply that how SMEs mobilize resources shapes organizational members' shared beliefs about the firm's ability to survive, adapt and grow, thereby influencing organizational efficiency (Ozanne et al., 2022; Sharma et al., 2023). When SMEs successfully exploit bricolage, network embeddedness or circular economy initiatives to secure financial, technological and knowledge resources, they expand the perceived set of feasible actions, reinforcing confidence in handling uncertainty and competition (Abid et al., 2023; Dey et al., 2020; Li & Shafait, 2025). Studies of SMEs during COVID-19 show that strategic responses grounded in mobilizing social capital and dynamic capabilities strengthened resilience narratives, suggesting a link between effective resource use and a collective sense of capability (Ozanne et al., 2022; Zamani, 2022).

At the same time, resource mobilization directed toward digital transformation, sustainability and learning systems provides infrastructural and cognitive support that can stabilize and enhance organizational efficiency over time (Chaudhuri et al., 2022; Putra & Santoso, 2020; Zhang et al., 2022). Reviews of strategic and performance management indicate that when organizations invest in knowledge, training and strategic structures, they not only improve objective performance but also foster stronger shared beliefs about what the organization can accomplish in complex environments (Fuertes et al., 2020; Mustapha & Hassan, 2018). In SMEs, this suggests a reciprocal dynamic where effective mobilization builds efficiency, which in turn encourages more ambitious and innovative mobilization, reinforcing long-term resilience and competitiveness (Ozanne et al., 2022; Sharma et al., 2023).

Growing evidence also illustrates that how these shared efficiency beliefs are formed is critically influenced by the types of internal capabilities that are formed as an outcome of mobilizing resources. Strategic measures focused on developing internal capabilities and organizational learning have been demonstrated to increase SME resilience and innovation as a result of resource based management initiatives aimed at merging resources together in systematic improvement of internal

resource development, which is depicted as confirmation of confidence in the firm adaptive capacity (Do et al., 2021). On the same note, organizational psychological capital shared hope, efficiency, resilience and optimism have also assisted SMEs in channeling their meager resources into innovative, creative practices and enhanced performance during crisis thus in the process of fostering a good positive collective belief that an organization can survive and prosper in the wake of adversity (Grozinger et al., 2021). The organization cultural and leadership evidence marks that the ability to develop flexibility capabilities through mobilizing these firm level resources can boost competitiveness in tumultuous markets, strengthening members of the organization that the organization can reorganize its resources and be effective in responding to change (Anning Dorson, 2021). The accumulation of these findings indicate that there are more powerful ways to mobilize resources to enhance organizational efficiency and it is stronger when accompanied by the purposeful input of resources in learning, psychological capital and flexible cultures that enable the SMEs transform the resources into claritable and innovative action in the short run.

III. THEORETICAL REVIEW

Dynamic Capabilities Theory

Developed by Teece and his colleagues (Teece, Pisano, and Shuen, 1997, summarized by Kay et al., 2018; Teece, 2007, discussed by Bitencourt et al., 2020), Dynamic Capabilities Theory is a theory that argues that firms can maintain performance in environments with high levels of change by sensing opportunities or threats, seizing them through timely decision making, and reconfiguring their resources accordingly. The theory builds upon the resource-based view, paying attention to purposeful managerial action instead of the static resource ownership, and has been used as a main theory in strategic management to understand the sources of heterogeneity in firm competitiveness over time (González-Samaniego et al., 2023). It is based on the key assumptions that capabilities are path dependent, accumulative and are the result of learning and managerial orchestration, and that the outcomes of performance are a result of the match between capabilities, strategy and environmental conditions (Fainshmidt et al., 2019; Cyfert et al., 2021).

However, even in the face of its widespread use, some significant criticism has been voiced on Dynamic Capabilities Theory on the issues of conceptual ambiguity, difficulties in empirical measurements and tautology. Consistency in definitions and operationalization can be challenging, and this presents the problems of

comparability and empirical rigour from one study to another (Bleady et al., 2018; Laaksonen & Peltoniemi, 2018). Some critics have also challenged the explanation of, and use as evidence for, dynamic capabilities in terms of its falsifiability and predictive power (Arend & Bromiley, 2009; González-Samaniego et al., 2023; Bitencourt et al., 2020). As such, recent scholarship has been calling for better internal coherence of the theory, via clearer constructs, standardized measures and longitudinal, context-sensitive research designs (González-Samaniego et al., 2023; Heubeck, 2023).

Dynamic Capabilities Theory is relevant in the context of SMEs, especially in emerging economies like Kwara State, Nigeria, as it allows one to connect the dots between resource mobilization and organizational efficiency. Resources, knowledge and alliances are seen to affect performance not only depending on whether the firm holds the resources or knowledge but more importantly on how well they are sensed, learned, coordinated, and reconfigured (Bitencourt et al., 2020; Garrido et al., 2020). In the last few years, some studies have pointed to the importance of dynamic capabilities for SMEs operating in volatile environments and resource scarcity, such as the ability to mobilize financial, human, and relational resources for competitiveness and effectiveness (Cyfert et al., 2021; Fabrizio et al., 2022, as summarized in González-Samaniego et al., 2023). The use of this framework is thus useful for analyzing the translation of SMEs' resource-mobilization practices through the lens of dynamic capabilities into organizational efficiency, as well as for providing theoretical and policy-related implications (Heubeck, 2023; González-Samaniego et al., 2023).

Empirical Review

Based on survey data of 230 SMEs, and structural equation modeling, Jiang et al. (2025) investigated the impact of social network characteristics on the sustainable performance of SMEs. They conclude that larger and stronger social networks boost sustainable performance, indirectly by means of resource bricolage and dynamic capabilities (but especially opportunity identification and exploitation). The study demonstrates that in addition to network access, SMEs have to be actively mobilizing resources and recombining social and knowledge resources to sustain performance, showing resource mobilization processes to be important factors in the efficiency of the organizations when operating in dynamic environments.

Anjaningrum et al. (2024) conducted a study to examine the effects of business intelligence,

learning, customer value anticipation, and innovation on the performance of creative-economy SMEs in East Java by employing PLS-SEM. Results indicate that business intelligence improves performance only through organizational learning and innovation, while network learning and innovation exert strong direct effects. The authors conclude that SMEs perform better when they effectively mobilize informational, relational, and knowledge resources through learning and innovation capabilities, rather than merely possessing data or technologies.

In a meta-analysis by Oduro (2024) entitled *Eco-innovation and SMEs sustainable performance: A meta-analysis*, synthesized 99 empirical works on 134,841 SMEs psychometric meta-analytic, random-effects in a meta-analysis efforts on eco-innovation and sustainable performance of SMEs. In the review, there was a positive, moderate influence of eco-innovation, particularly eco-organization innovation, or change in structures, systems and management processes, on the economic, social and environmental performance of SMEs, a factor reinforcing the presumed capacity of corporations to compete and adapt. The researchers concluded that the ability of SMEs to effectively organize resources to implement eco-innovation allows developing dynamic capabilities and structural properties that contribute to the sustainable performance and, consequently, efficiency of organizations to respond to environmental and market challenges.

Yahaya and Nadarajah (2023) conducted a systematic review of 469 articles, followed by expert verification and statistical testing, to identify key determinants of SME performance. From the most relevant studies, they identified 13 significant factors, including innovation, learning, strategic orientation, and effective resource access and allocation. The study concludes that, given SMEs' resource constraints, performance depends largely on how resources are strategically acquired, allocated, and leveraged, thereby reinforcing the link between effective resource mobilization and organizational efficiency in uncertain environments. The systematic literature review by Dasanayaka et al. (2022) is called *triggers of and barriers to the adoption of environmental management practice of small and medium-sized enterprises: A critical review*, which is based upon institutional isomorphism, resource-based view as well as contingency theory. Through a descriptive and thematic content analysis of the existing empirical research, they established as causes of environmental management practices adoption the presence of internal resource capabilities and the presence of coercive external pressures (e.g., regulation, customer demands) and as obstacles the

presence of internal constraints, and in particular the absence of financial, human and knowledge resources. The results indicated that the more SMEs utilize internal resources to execute environmental actions, the more they enrich their competence in the eyes of the stakeholders in respecting their expectations as well as adhering to the administrative requirements, which increases their perceived survival and competitiveness opportunity. Central to the development of more effective and strategy resilient SMEs, the authors concluded, is the need to overcome resource barriers and use capabilities to enhance environmental management.

In A quarter-century review of HRM in small and medium-sized enterprises: Capturing what we know, exploring where we need to go, Harney and Alkhalaf (2020) utilized evidence-based synthesis over thirty seven articles to perform a systematic review on the topic, namely, covering HRM in SMEs over twenty five years. The methodology of their review was a descriptive mapping used together with the thematic analysis that would merge such fragmented studies as the roots of the HRM-performance relationship and the associations of HR practices with context. The results showed that HRM in SMEs, such as staffing, development and performance systems is formal but yet central in the way of limited financial and human resources being brought together to help in growth and survival. They also suggested that efficiency HRM should be regarded as an essential source of resource mobilization which is fundamentals of SMEs performance and flexibility, however, they argued that further studies should be done to relating HR arrangements and resource coordination with the results of performance and resilience of the organization.

In their systematic literature review article *Human resource development in SMEs: A systematic review of the literature*, Nolan and Garavan (2016) reviewed 117 theoretical, quantitative, and qualitative and mixed-methods studies about SMEs published between 1995 and 2014 through a structured screening and coding process. The review revealed that human resource development is a key resource mobilization process among SMEs by way of its investments in learning, knowledge systems and through training to enhance skills of the employees alongside their learning capacity and performance. They found that HRD activities contribute to the SMEs conquering resource limit through the internal human capital development and learning patterns that subsequently assist in trusting in addressing complex environments. They have concluded that the extent to which resource mobilization is converted into heightened organizational

capabilities and expected effectively relies on the key pathway via the organisation of HRD in SMEs that is under-theorised.

Molete et al. (2025), conducted a research titled the impact of IT strategic planning process on SME performance: A systematic review, The impact of IT strategic planning process synthesized 80 empirical studies through systematic review methodology categorizing the work on methods, IT configurations and performance indicators. The quantitative research (approximately 45), as well as, thematic research (25), were combined to examine the planning and IT resources allocation prospects on the performance of SMEs. The review concluded that the appropriate alignment of the IT strategic planning with the business goals combined with efficient mobilization of IT resources with both cloud-based and hybrid infrastructures help SMEs in reducing operational costs and customer satisfaction by up to 20 and 15 percent respectively. It found that strategic agility and operational efficiency assist structural mobilization of IT resources through planning, prioritization and alignment enhances organizational confidence in mobilizing constraints and three-dimensional sustenance of competitive advantage, which signifies advanced organizational efficiency.

IV. METHODODOLOGY

In the current study to examine the impact of SME resource mobilization on organizational efficiency in Kwara State, Nigeria, survey research design was used. Survey research involves a form of the systematic gathering of data of a specified group of people with a view of describing phenomena through assessing respondents in their perceptions, attitudes, or values. The research design was chosen due to the fact that the study is descriptive in character as it aims to explain the effects of resource mobilization on SMEs organizational efficiency. The research design will facilitate effective data collection from owners and operators of SMEs, enabling the generation of measurable and objective evidence on how resource mobilization practices influence organizational efficiency.

According to Creswell (2012), population refers to a group of individuals who share a common characteristic. The registered SMEs will make up the population of this study. According to Small and Medium Scale Enterprise Development Agency of Nigeria [SMEDAN], (2024), there are a total of 1,416 registered SMEs in Kwara State. Therefore, the population under study for this research on the impact of small and medium enterprises act 2003 on entrepreneurship development, will be 1,416 SMEs in Kwara State.

Respondent selection was taken through a simple random sampling technique thus although every member of the target population had an equal and independent chance of being selected, this also increases the representativeness of the sample formed. Taro Yamane, (1967) formula will be used in calculating the target sample size by considering the following formula:

Simple random sampling techniques was adopted for the study. The simple random sampling was adopted as it involves equal chance of been selected. It was used because it guides against bias and give every SMEs in Kwara state a chance of participating. The sample size was determined using the Yamane's 1967 formula.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where:

n is the required sample size to be captured for the study;

N is the total population proposed to be used for the study;

e is the tolerable error margin at 95% confidence level

Applying the formula,

$$\begin{aligned} n &= \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2} \\ n &= \frac{1,416}{1 + 1,416(0.05)^2} \\ n &= \frac{1,416}{1 + 1,416(0.0025)} \\ n &= \frac{1,416}{1 + 3.54} \\ n &= \frac{1,416}{4.54} \\ n &= 311.8942 \\ n &\approx 312 \end{aligned}$$

Therefore, a sample size of 312 SMEs in Kwara State will be used for this study.

There are two sources of data; primary source of data and secondary source of data, for the purpose of this study on the one hand, the primary source of data is used. Primary source of data is the data collected by researcher himself or by his research assistance directly from the respondent. On the other hand, secondary data were retrieved from journal articles, official publications of SMEDAN, e.t.c.

Questionnaire was used in this study for data collection and was structure from the concepts of this study. It was divided into two section; section A is about the general information of the respondent relating to personal data, section B is about questions to gather data on the impact of SME resource mobilization on organizational efficiency. The questions are formulated from the

objectives of the study and used five (5) point Likert-scale as the measurement of response from respondents which range from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The scales are: 1 – Strongly Agree, 2 – Agree, 3 – Undecided, 4 – Disagree and the last one, 5 – Strongly Disagree.

This study used construct validity for the test of the validity of the questionnaire as it tests the concept in the report as to whether it measures accurately the impact of SMEs development programmes on enterprise sustainability. This was done by using the major concept in the report to structure the questionnaire and then present it to the supervisor of this study for authentication and validation of the concept used and the questionnaire as a whole. The average variance extracted (AVE) was used to determine the convergent and divergent validity of the research instrument which its standard gauge is set at 0.5, that is, if the AVE result is above 0.5 then the instrument is said to be valid.

Reliability test shows that an instrument is consistent i.e. it tests the extent to which an instrument produces the same result if used to test the same thing. The reliability test will use for this study is Cronbach's Alpha (CA) test reliability method and composite reliability (CR); this will be done through SPSS, version 25. The standard gauge is set at 0.6, that is, if the CA and CR result is above 0.6 then the instrument is said to be reliable.

Self-administration of questionnaire and research assistance directly from the respondent was used for the collection of data used for the purpose of this study. Self-administration is a collection procedure whereby the researcher personally collects the information from respondent.

For this study, the data collected was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics analysis. The descriptive research was done by using mean, and standard deviation to present the collected data. The inferential statistics was done

by using partial least square structural equation modelling for analyzing and making inference on the presented data and test the significance of the hypotheses.

Hypothesis I

Ho₁: Strategic partnership does not have significant effect on operational agility

Statistical Tool: Multiple Linear Regression (MLR)

Model:

$$OA = \beta_0 + \beta_1 TQ + \alpha \dots \dots \dots \text{equation 1a}$$

$$OA = \beta_0 + \beta_1 JV + \beta_2 NE + \beta_3 RS \dots \dots \dots \text{equation 1b}$$

Where;

OA= Operational Agility

B₀=constant

β₁ – β₃ = Path Coefficient for Strategic Partnership

SP = Strategic Partnership (broken down into: JV= Joint Venture, NE= Network Expansion, RS= Resource Sharing)

ε = Error term

Hypothesis II

Ho₁: Skill acquisition does not have significant effect on innovation capacity

Statistical Tool: Multiple Linear Regression (MLR)

Model:

$$IC = \beta_0 + \beta_1 TQ + \alpha \dots \dots \dots \text{equation 2a}$$

$$IC = \beta_0 + \beta_1 KU + \beta_2 ET + \beta_3 TR \dots \dots \dots \text{equation 2b}$$

Where;

IC= Innovation Capacity

B₀=constant

β₁ – β₃ = Path Coefficient for Skill Acquisition

SA = Skill Acquisition (broken down into: KU= Knowledge Upgrade, ET= Expertise Transfer, TR = Talent Recruitment)

ε = Error term

V. RESULTS

Hypothesis One: Strategic Partnership Has No Significant Effect on Operational Agility

Table 1 Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.985a	.970	.969	.18401
Predictors: (Constant), Joint Venture, Network Expansion, Resource Sharing				

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Table 1 presents the model summary with r (correlation coefficient) equal to 0.985 which indicates that there exists a strong positive relationship between strategic partnership and

operational agility. R² from the table, which is the coefficient of determination, is 0.970. This implies that 97.0% of changes in operational agility is explained by strategic partnership, through joint

venture, network expansion, and resource sharing, while the remaining percentage is attributed to

other variables not included in the model.

Table 2 ANOVAa						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	190.239	4	47.560	1404.558	.000b
1	Residual	5.858	173	.034		
1	Total	196.097	177			
a. Dependent Variable: Operational Agility						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Joint Venture, Network Expansion, Resource Sharing						

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The F-statistics shown in the ANOVA table 2 is significant since the ANOVA significance of .000 is less than the alpha level of .05. Thus, the result is achieved. Also, the regression sum of squares of

190.239 is greater than the residual sum of squares of 5.858, which further confirms the significance of the overall model. Therefore, the model is fit.

Table 3 Coefficients						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients B	Unstandardized Coefficients Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	T	Sig.
1	(Constant)	.223	.080		2.778	.006
	Joint Venture	.251	.115	.257	2.189	.030
	Network Expansion	.161	.062	.140	2.582	.011
	Resource Sharing	.286	.050	.326	5.706	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Operational Agility						

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The coefficient table 3 shows the overall significance of 0.030, 0.011, and 0.000 for joint venture, network expansion, and resource sharing respectively, which are less than the set alpha of 0.05 significance level. This implies that the stated variables have significant impact on operational agility, which consequently means there is a significant effect of strategic partnership on operational agility. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis accepted. The positive Beta value of 0.257, 0.140, and 0.326 for joint venture, network expansion, and resource sharing shows that an increase or change in these variables will lead to a 25.7%, 14.0%, and 32.6% change in operational agility respectively. Resource sharing on operational agility is the top contributor in this model over the other indicators. The present finding corroborates with Beckmann et al. (2021) who found that strategic partnerships could allow

the resource-constrained SMEs to access external resources, knowledge and markets that the SMEs would be difficult to develop internally, thus increasing the resource base and operational responsiveness of the SMEs. The dimension of strategic partnership that is conducive to resource sharing will enable the pooling of complementary capabilities of the partner firms to allow SMEs in Kwara State to reconfigure operations faster to meet the changing market demands. This is also supported by Partanen et al. (2018), who contributed that the type and strength of the collaborative agreements are critical for transforming strategic network resources into performance and that the tangible operational benefits stem from resource sharing agreements.

Decision Rule: Based on the above, the alternative and null hypotheses were stated as follows: Then,

the null hypothesis stating that "strategic partnership has no significant effect on operational agility" is rejected while the alternate hypothesis

"strategic partnership has a positive and significant effect on operational agility" is accepted.

Hypothesis Two: Skill Acquisition Has No Significant Effect on Innovation Capacity

Table 4 Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.993a	.985	.985	.13910
a. Predictors: (Constant), Knowledge Upgrade, Expertise Transfer, Talent Recruitment				

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The model summary in Table 4 shows that the correlation coefficient (r) of the model is 0.993, which means that the relationship between the independent and dependent variables is very strongly positive. The coefficient of determination, r^2 , from the table is 0.985. This means that 98.5%

of the variance in capacity to innovate is accounted for by the acquisition of skills (measured as knowledge upgrade, transfer to expertise, and recruitment of talent); the remaining percentage is explained by other factors, not captured in the model.

Table 5 ANOVAa						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	223.377	4	55.844	2886.197	.000b
1	Residual	3.347	173	.019		
1	Total	226.725	177			
a. Dependent Variable: Innovation Capacity						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Knowledge Upgrade, Expertise Transfer, Talent Recruitment						

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The F-statistics shown in the ANOVA table 5 is significant since the ANOVA significance of .000 is less than the alpha level of .05. Thus, the result is achieved. Also, the regression sum of squares of

223.377 is greater than the residual sum of squares of 3.347, which further confirms the significance of the overall model. Therefore, the model is fit.

Table 6 Coefficientsa						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients B	Standardized Coefficients Beta		T	Sig.
1	(Constant)	-.116	.043		-2.725	.007
1	Knowledge Upgrade	-.085	.038	-.088	-2.254	.000
1	Expertise Transfer	.206	.046	.221	4.511	.000
1	Talent Recruitment	.480	.047	.449	10.099	.025
a. Dependent Variable: Innovation Capacity						

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The coefficient table 6 shows the overall significance of 0.000, 0.000, and 0.025 for knowledge upgrade, expertise transfer, and talent recruitment respectively, all of which are less than the set alpha of 0.05 significance level. This shows that all the stated variables have significant influence on innovation capacity and consequently implies that there is a significant effect of skill acquisition on innovation capacity. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis accepted. The negative Beta value of -0.088 for knowledge upgrade shows that it has a negative contribution to innovation capacity in the short run, while positive Beta values of 0.221 and 0.449 for expertise transfer and talent recruitment respectively indicate that they have positive contributions to the model. An increase or change in these variables will lead to a -8.8%, 22.1%, and 44.9% change in innovation capacity respectively. Talent recruitment is the most important variable in this model with analysis revealing that it has the most positive impact on innovation capacity of all the other indicators. This aligns with Koppa et al (2024) that talent management and human resource practices are a key element in the creation and renewal of the human resource base needed to develop and share knowledge in SMEs. The availability of skilled workforce among the SMEs in Kwara State places them in a good position to draw on a variety of competences that drive innovative idea generation, process enhancement, and product development – all components of innovation capacity. The negative short-term impact of knowledge upgrade can be interpreted as the cost of the transition in terms of learning new skills before they can be applied for productive purposes, which aligns with the experiences of Hernita et al. (2021) concerning the difficulty SMEs experience in making knowledge investments pay off in the short term.

Decision Rule: Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis which states that "skill acquisition has no significant effect on innovation capacity" and accept the alternate hypothesis, which states that skill acquisition has a positive and significant effect on innovation capacity in Kwara State.

Discussion of the Research Findings.

The results of the empirical analysis above indicated that there are two major findings, namely: strategic partnership has a significant positive effect on operational agility, skill acquisition has a significant positive effect on innovation capacity. These findings collectively validate the impact of the strategic partnership and skill acquisition in terms of SMEs resource mobilization on organization efficiency in Kwara State, Nigeria. This discussion contextualises these findings,

places them in the theoretical framework that was used in the study and offers some general implications for knowledge and practice.

Strategic Partnership and Operational Agility

The first finding of the study demonstrates that, more than ever, the industry needs to foster strategic partnerships and act quickly to be agile by showing that strategic partnership (joint venture $p = 0.030$, network expansion $p = 0.011$, resource sharing $p = 0.000$) has a significant positive effect on operational agility. All the p -values for the three indicators are less than the alpha level (0.05) which indicates that the relationship is strong. The positive beta value of 0.257, 0.140 and 0.326 for strategic partnership, network expansion and resource sharing respectively shows that each of these dimensions of strategic partnership has positive influence on operational agility of the SMEs in Kwara State with resource sharing having the highest influence.

This result confirms the findings of Beckmann et al. (2021) in their systematic literature review, who found that relation-based collaborations were found to allow SMEs to gain access to external resources, mitigate scale disadvantages and provide operational flexibility, which are all necessary for agility. SMEs can join in joint ventures and create network alliances, thus gaining access to other complementary capabilities and market intelligence, leading to their greater capability of responding quickly to operational needs. Likewise, Zahoor et al. (2020) have confirmed that working in collaboration and internationalizing via strategic alliances enable SMEs to overcome the limitations of resources and enhance the effectiveness of their responsiveness in competitive environments.

The first and foremost aspect of this model is the importance of sharing resources. Partanen et al. (2018) found that the link between network resources and organizational performance is mediated by the level of inter-firm arrangements and their quality. The operational gains from resource sharing arrangements — in which the various resources involved are shared and provided by the other firm — are most direct, as the resources are shared and complement the other firm's existing resources at a particular time. This finding is corroborated by Adomako et al. (2022) who showed that strategic agility among SMEs from emerging economies is significantly influenced by access to network embedded resources, since those firms with capacity to access network resources report higher strategic agility in reconfiguring operations and responding to environmental changes.

It is also important to highlight different points of view. While open innovation partnerships and

university-industry-government alliances can be beneficial, they are often limited by poor governance, coordination problems and mismatched expectations that can negatively affect operational agility, as Bertello et al. (2021) pointed out. A prerequisite for agility to be realized in SME networks is the presence of trust alongside the right control mechanisms, as also concluded by Antoldi and Cerrato (2020). The positive association found in this study between strategic partnership and operational agility might be dependent on the quality and governance of strategic partnerships created. The most agile benefit from partnerships will likely come from those SMEs that are able to integrate trust into their relationships and formalise the coordination.

Theoretically, these results are quite well accounted for by Dynamic Capabilities Theory (DCT; as discussed in Kay, Leih & Teece, 2018) which describes how firms acquire specific capabilities for dynamic capabilities. The theory is that successful organization performance in turbulent conditions relies on a firm's capacity for sensing opportunities, making timely decisions, and reconfiguring resources. The development and activation of these dynamic capabilities of SMEs is an important and critical mechanism by which strategic partnership can be developed. SMEs increase their sensing capabilities by forming joint ventures, network and resources sharing to access new market intelligence and technological knowledge and improve their reconfiguration capabilities by extending their operational resource base with external resources. The high Beta value found for resource sharing is especially consistent with the reconfiguration dimension of dynamic capabilities because resources directly add to the operational assets that can be used to quickly reconfigure in response to environmental demands.

Skills Innovation and the Ability to Innovations

The second finding is that skill acquisition (as measured by knowledge upgrade, $p = 0.000$), expertise transfer ($p = 0.000$), and talent recruitment ($p = 0.025$) significantly influence the innovation capacity. According to the coefficient analysis, it is seen that the highest positive contribution (+ Beta = 0.449) is from talent recruitment, followed by expertise transfer (+ Beta = 0.221) and the negative short-term coefficient (- Beta = -0.088) is from knowledge upgrade, but still it is statistically significant.

The positive and significant effect of the acquisition of skills on the capacity for innovation is in line with the results of Hernita et al. (2021) which proved that improving human resources capacity is essential for enhancing productivity, sustainability and overall performance of SMEs in

developing economies. They found that through their research on SMEs in Makassar City, Indonesia, had determined that workforce capability directly influences the capacity of SMEs to generate and implement new ideas which is a key to SMEs innovation capacity. It also mimics the results obtained for SMEs in Kwara state, where the three factors knowledge upgrade, expertise transfer and talent recruitment contribute 98.5% of the variance in innovation capacity of the SMEs.

In compliance with Koppa et al. (2024) that argued that talent management practices, including identifying, attracting, and retaining skilled employees, would be the most direct way of developing human capital for innovation for SMEs, the primary dimension of the human capital considered in this study was talent recruitment. Talent recruitment brings in new know-how and innovative perspectives to the organization faster and more directly than knowledge upgrade, which, though incremental training, can have implementation delays and can be disruptive in the short term, can lead to more impactful innovation outputs. This finding is also consistent with the findings of Ying et al. (2019) that the intangible managerial skills to secure valuable human resources including talent identification and selection are important for achieving competitive performance in SMEs.

At first glance, it may seem strange that knowledge upgrade has a negative short-term Beta value, but it's quite informative. Wu and Toth (2025) noted that the transition costs of skill-upgrading and digitalization of SMEs, along with the period of adjustment that may occur, are important factors to take into consideration with SMEs' productivity falling at first until the benefits of the improved knowledge are fully internalized. The findings of Mulenga et al. (2025) mirrored those of the present study, indicating that while skills development can have a positive impact on SME performance in developing economies, this relationship is not straightforward, as there are potential gaps in the alignment of skills with business needs and limited exposure to new technologies that might hinder immediate productivity gains from skills training initiatives. This indicates that knowledge upgrade is statistically significant but its negative short term coefficient could be due to an absorption lag and has policy implications in the design of training programs with realistic timelines to capture returns. The results of this study are very useful for the general field of skill acquisition and SME innovation. The authors of this systematic review, Saunila (2020), found that the ability to innovate in SMEs is dependent on the effective mobilization and development of their human resources on three

different levels: individual, organizational learning and external acquisition of knowledge. This current study takes the understanding further by breaking down the skill acquisition process into its component skills and showing that the external acquisition of skilled human capital (talent recruitment) is the strongest determinant of innovation capacity among SMEs in Kwara State.

The results from a theoretical perspective are based on the framework of Dynamic Capabilities Theory, in relation to the dimensions of sensing and seizing (Teece, 2007), as mentioned by Bitencourt et al. (2020). Skill acquisition facilitates SMEs to build and refresh their sensing capacity, thereby boosting the capacities of the workforce in sensing and understanding new opportunities in the market and new technologies. Expertise transfer, in particular, enables the organization to spread tacit and codified knowledge throughout the firm which enhances the firm's asset orchestration capability, that is, the managerial capability of integrating, building and reconfiguring internal competencies. By recruiting talent that brings in new mental models and expertise, the firm is creating more knowledge and capability to innovate, operationalizing the seizing dimension of dynamic capabilities.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study's findings confirm that the resource mobilization of SMEs has a significant and positive impact on the efficiency of the organization in Kwara State, Nigeria. In particular, strategic partnership (joint ventures, strengthening networks, sharing of resources) greatly improves the operational agility of SMEs, particularly with respect to the sharing of resources. The findings of this study can be considered as a confirmation of the advantages SMEs get when they strategically join partnerships that combine complementary resources, increase inter-firm networking and enable joint venture arrangements, raising their responsiveness and flexibility in the market, which are more volatile. This is an important finding of the strategic value of developing and maintaining high-quality collaborative arrangements as an essential form of resource mobilization for SMEs in emerging economy contexts.

In addition, the skill acquisition of knowledge upgrading, expertise transferring and talent recruiting has a significant positive impact on the innovation capacity of the SMEs in Kwara State with the impact of talent recruiting being the highest. This discovery once again highlights the importance of building human capital as an internal resource creation process to produce skills and capacities needed to innovate, be competitive and sustain the organization over time. The negative

short term effect of knowledge upgrade is an indication of transition costs in the learning intensive capacity building processes, indicating that investments in workforce training need to be implemented with sufficient time horizons and supported by implementation.

The overall findings support that strategic partnerships and skill acquisition are fundamental strategic assets that can be leveraged to enhance SMEs' organizational efficiency and provide them with sustainable competitive advantage in Kwara State. The study extends and empirically validates Dynamic Capabilities Theory for SMEs in a developing economy, and identifies specific resource mobilization strategies that can be shown to increase the capacity and agility of the SMEs to operate. The study advances theory by extending and empirically supporting DCT in the context of SMEs in developing economy and also advances practice by identifying specific resource mobilization strategies that can be demonstrated to increase the capacity and agility of SMEs to operate.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made to the owners, managers, policy makers and practitioners of enterprise development in SMEs in Kwara State and beyond:

- i. SME managers in Kwara State need to proactively seek and build strategic relationship with complementary businesses, industry associations and support services. Focus on building resource sharing strategies including sharing resources such as equipment, distribution networks, technology sharing and co-production agreements as these have the most positive impact on operational agility. To maximize the benefits of such arrangements, firms should invest in the creation of governance arrangements based on trust, and in the development of good coordination mechanisms between different firms so as to avoid collaboration failures and ensure that shared resources are effectively used.
- ii. SME owners and HR managers should prioritize talent recruitment as a strategic tool to improve the SME innovation capacity. The most successful returns on innovation will be achieved by adopting a competitive recruitment approach, seeking people with niche skills, technical expertise, and entrepreneurial skills. In situations where it is not possible for companies to hire from outside, companies can also tap into government-backed internship and apprenticeship schemes, university-industry

linkage schemes and networks of skilled people from the diaspora.

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