

PROJECT INTEGRATION AND PROCUREMENT CULTURAL ORIENTATION  
AND SME GROWTH: A LIBERIAN CASE STUDY

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## **Dedication**

I dedicate this creation to my father, Mr. Suresh Ghuge, and my mother, Mrs. Vaishali Ghuge, whom I adore. This accomplishment has been made possible by their ongoing support, encouragement, and drive. It would have been much harder to finish this project without their support and faith in me.

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## ABSTRACT

### PROJECT INTEGRATION AND PROCUREMENT CULTURAL ORIENTATION AND SME GROWTH: A LIBERIAN CASE STUDY

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This case study explores the impact of project integration and procurement cultural orientation on the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Liberia. With a focus on the interplay between organizational practices and local cultural dynamics, the study examines how integrated project management approaches and culturally responsive procurement processes influence SME development in emerging markets. Drawing on qualitative data from Liberian SMEs and procurement entities, the research identifies key enablers and barriers to growth, including trust-building, capacity alignment, and policy coherence. The findings highlight the importance of culturally attuned integration strategies in fostering inclusive economic development and suggest policy recommendations for enhancing SME participation in national and

donor-funded projects. Businesses in the food industry can improve their procurement processes, maintain a steady supply of high-quality ingredients, and stay competitive in an ever-evolving market by tackling these issues through strong supplier relationships, strict quality control, cost-effective strategies, technology-driven supply chain management, and sustainability initiatives. This study contributes to the broader discourse on sustainable development by providing context-specific insights into the relationship between project governance and entrepreneurial growth in post-conflict economies.

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## CHAPTER I:

### INTRODUCTION

#### **1.1 Introduction**

Globalization, the rise of technology, increased market competition, gain of access to the worldwide web, the opening of international borders, etc. have, by all analyses, all contributed to creating one of the most competitive business environments in the history of human civilization. As a result, growing firms must innovate their products, systems, and processes to avoid being eliminated or overpowered by competitors. The problem of adopting Project Integration and Procurement processes in Liberia is not as well understood, notwithstanding the need for growing firms to embrace the integration of project management and procurement processes.

The essence of a successful Project Integration and Procurement System is often misunderstood as meaning just about employing project manager or procurement personnel. Executing the processes and preparing the deliverables is often not enough. Processes must be employed with respect to relevant methodologies, frameworks, knowledge areas, and skills to achieve the anticipated outcomes. In Impartially Integrating Project Management and Procurement Processes, breadth is given to the processes, concepts involved, connections to firm characteristics and establishment of controlled and regulated system. Special attention is paid to the procurement and contracting aspect, as integrative effort here is often overlooked and much sparred. In the present global business climate, Small and Micro Enterprises (SMEs) are crucial for fostering innovation and economic growth. Many economies rely on these enterprises

since they generate a substantial number of jobs and boost GDP (Pal et al., 2017). However, SMEs have a hard time navigating the complexities of procurement and project integration, particularly when doing business across cultural boundaries (Liu et al., 2016).

The initial stage of project integration is the establishment of a project charter, which lays out the project's objectives, stakeholders, purpose, and initial requirements (Wenxin Shen et al., 2017). The next step is to draft a comprehensive project management plan that details the project's goals, budget, schedule, quality requirements, and methods of communication (Eggink, 2020). The project manager is responsible for keeping the project on track and making all the necessary decisions and adjustments to keep it moving in the right direction throughout its entire length (Yang et al., 2019).

When it comes to today's global business climate, small and medium companies (SMEs) are the engine that keeps the economy growing and new ideas coming. Based on their substantial contributions to GDP and employment, SMEs frequently serve as the foundation of national economies (Yu, et al., 2017). But bridging cultural gaps is a particular problem for SMEs in the areas of project integration and procurement (Wang et al., 2016). Creating a project charter is the first step in the project integration process. Project goals, stakeholders, purpose, and initial needs must be defined at this stage (Zhang et al., 2017). At this point, a thorough project management plan is created, which includes goals, schedules, budgets, quality standards, and a strategy for communication (Ramaprasad and Prakash, 2003). The project manager is responsible for keeping tabs on the project's status and making any necessary adjustments at each stage to ensure that the goal is met (Suresh et al., 2011).

The development of infrastructure is essential to any nation's economic prosperity, and the construction industry is vital to this process (Pal et al., 2017). In order to achieve sustainable and competitive results, IEPC projects frequently employ top-tier contractors (Yu, et al., 2017). According to Yeo and Ning (2002), IEPC projects facilitate knowledge localization, which in turn improves the work culture of local contractors and fosters long-term connections that are advantageous for international contractors, clients, and host nations. Some drawbacks of the IEPC project include a tight timeline, stages that overlap, and the need to coordinate with multiple subcontractors (Wang, et al., 2017).

According to Wang et al., (2016) and Yang et al., (2019), the biggest dangers come from foreign contractors because they are working in a foreign land where they do not know the rules and laws. Integrating foreign contractors with local procedures, policies, and work cultures is necessary to address the issues that have arisen as a result of this circumstance (Liu et al., 2016). According to Pal et al., (2017), Suresh et al., (2011), and Zhang et al., (2017), stated that this requires a variety of technologies, resource identification, skill development, recruitment, and project management. Local consultants and crew managers were formerly responsible for achieving integration. Project procedures were later shown to benefit more from the assistance of professional Native Project Management Consultants (NPMCs) (Ramaprasad and Prakash, 2003).

While successfully resolving integration difficulties, NPMCs simplify resource selection, appointment, and administration within the restrictions of the host nation (Eggink, 2020). An international organization typically manages the implementation of IEPC projects, which typically include multi-contractor structures and macroeconomic

choices (Eggink, 2020). To ensure the success of national initiatives while allowing foreign businesses to participate effectively while avoiding risks is the major problem (Wang et al., 2016).

Key concerns that may impede cross-border cooperation were highlighted by Liu et al., (2016) and include a lack of market expertise, cultural differences, disputes over priority matters, and unfamiliarity with local rules. Large projects are handled effectively by international contractors; nonetheless, it is common for these contracts to hire outside experts for engineering and project management (Wenxin Shen et al., 2017). The consultants can then take on the role of mediators, which is particularly useful in high-priority domains like stakeholder communication and risk assessment. In order to facilitate the active integration of international contractors with local resources, skills, and processes, this research aims to design a technology that introduces NPMCs as intermediaries (Pal et al., 2017). If NPMCs can help international contractors overcome obstacles, then including them into projects should boost their success rate (Ramaprasad and Prakash, 2003). The use of project management knowledge domains would be strengthened through integration increased by NPMCs, which would raise the likelihood of project success.

## **1.2 Research Problem**

The growth of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Liberia has been significantly impeded by various factors, including inadequate project integration and a lack of cultural orientation in procurement processes. Despite the critical role SMEs play in the economic development of Liberia, project management practices remain under-

researched, particularly concerning the integration of procurement strategies and cultural frameworks that can enhance SME performance.

This study aims to identify the key challenges and opportunities within the existing project integration and procurement frameworks, assessing how cultural orientation can facilitate or hinder SME growth in the Liberian context especially in procurement in the food industry.

According to Wang et al., (2016), projects can fail due to unexpected dependencies and misaligned priorities if integration management is not adequately managed. To illustrate the point, project managers frequently face the challenge of making well-informed decisions due to a limited comprehension of how changes in scope impact scheduling, budgeting, and resource allocation.

According to Yu et al., (2017), this raises the chances of going over budget, employing the wrong people, or failing to meet deadlines. One major problem that can occur is when choices made for one project end up affecting other projects that are already underway in the company (Yang et al., 2019). Unanticipated demands for resources, such as a software engineer's continued presence in the project, might lead to disagreements about who gets what. Organizations run the danger of inefficiency and internal conflicts owing to discord and disorganization in the absence of a systematic method for managing integration (Eggink, 2020). Moreover, things like handling overlapping expenditure duties (like leave compensation) and juggling numerous projects at once are still not fixed. Improved resource coordination, conflict resolution, and informed decision-making are three ways in which a structured integration management framework can boost a project's

chances of success (Ramaprasad and Prakash, 2003).

Innovation, job creation, and GDP expansion, small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) play a pivotal role as growth drivers. Nevertheless, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) have distinct obstacles to sustainable growth due to cultural diversity in the workplace, particularly in the areas of project integration and procurement. An important but little-studied component of small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) success is the interplay between cultural orientation in procurement and project management methods.

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) confront a significant obstacle in the lack of a formal framework that unites culturally relevant procurement strategies with project management concepts. Without this kind of structure, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) have a hard time scaling and competing due to operational inefficiencies, misaligned stakeholders, and poor resource management. Problems with communication, unfamiliarity with local procurement processes, and inflexible project structures all add unnecessary complexity to company operations, which in turn causes delays, higher expenses, and missed possibilities for growth. Examining how cultural orientation in procurement and project integration affects the growth of SMEs is the primary objective of this research.



Figure 01. Essential Components of Project Integration Management

The study's overarching goal is to help small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in various economic environments improve project efficiency, allocate resources more wisely, and remain in business for the long haul by identifying key issues and creating a model to overcome cultural and operational gaps.

### 1.3 Purpose of Research

The primary purpose of this research is to explore the relationship between project integration and procurement cultural orientation on the growth of SMEs in Liberia. This study seeks to analyze the existing procurement practices in relation to cultural influences, identifying how these factors interact and affect the operational effectiveness of SMEs. By focusing on a case study approach, the research aims to provide insights and recommendations for both policymakers and business leaders to enhance SME growth through improved project and procurement management strategies.

Yang et al., (2019), indicated that cultural factors impact decision-making, negotiation, and collaboration among small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) engaged in procurement and project integration. In addition, the study examines ways to promote the expansion of SMEs in an increasingly diverse and interconnected business environment through the implementation of a culturally conscious strategy and the significance of procurement in the food industry (Eggink, 2020).

Hence, Yu et al., (2017) stated that the food industry is highly competitive, operates in a constantly shifting market, and is subject to stringent regulations regarding food safety and finding reliable suppliers, maintaining product quality, controlling costs, and navigating a complex supply chain are all unique challenges for procurement specialists in this industry (Ramaprasad & Prakash, 2003).

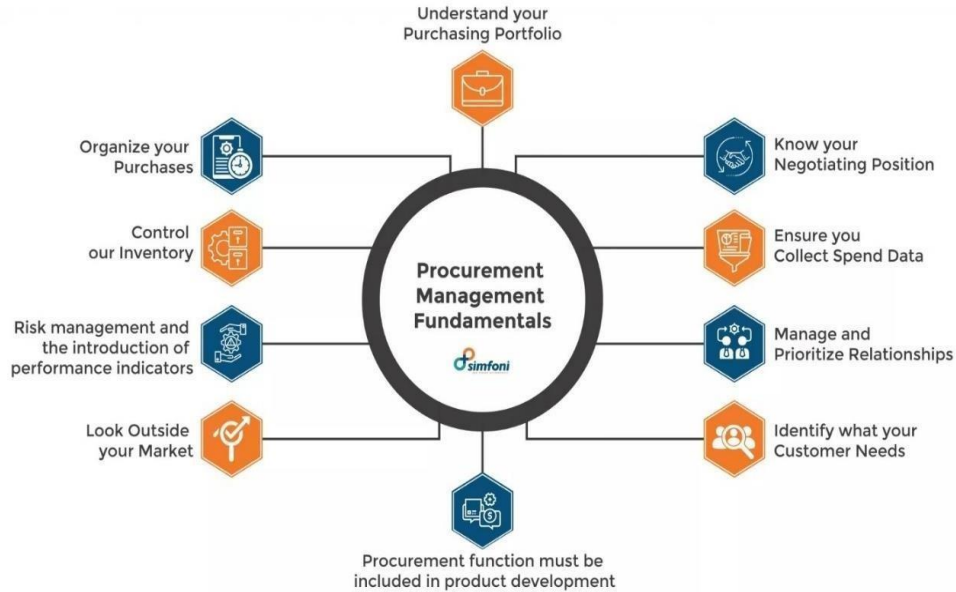


Figure 02. Procurement management Fundamental

In the food industry, selecting suppliers is an essential part of the procurement process. Choosing dependable and trustworthy suppliers is crucial for ensuring the

dependability of food goods (Yang et al., 2019). For small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) to thrive in today's ever-changing business climate, project integration and procurement play a crucial role. However, one aspect that is often overlooked is the impact of cultural orientation on these processes (Eggink, 2020).

This study aims to delve into the intricate web of relationships that SMEs' cultural values, procurement techniques, and project integration form. The goal is to understand how cultural elements affect SMEs' ability to make decisions, work together, and negotiate in today's more globalized and linked market.

The food industry presents unique challenges for procurement experts. According to Ramaprasad and Prakash (2003), the food sector is impacted by stringent regulations regarding food safety, shifting consumer preferences, and fierce competition. Due to these factors, purchasing is a critical but challenging process that necessitates meticulous management of supplier selection, quality control, and cost control (Eggink, 2020). Managing cultural variations in supplier relationships and business procedures is another challenge that companies in this industry face, on top of sourcing quality components (Yang et al., 2019).

When it comes to food procurement, choosing a supplier is crucial. Food items will always be safe, of high quality, and delivered on time if you choose the right providers (Yu, et al., 2017). Collaborating with trustworthy and reliable individuals is crucial in the supply chain because disruptions can cause financial losses and damage to one's reputation (Ramaprasad & Prakash, 2003). Eggink (2020) states that suppliers are obligated to adhere to food safety laws such as FSMA and HACCP.

Quality control is another crucial factor to think about when buying food. Buyers expect only the freshest, highest-quality food products; therefore, procurement teams must institute stringent quality assurance procedures (Yang et al., 2019). To ensure compliance with industry standards, it is necessary to set testing methodologies, conduct regular audits of suppliers, and create exact product requirements (Shen, Tang, Yu, et al., 2017). Food companies place a premium on quality control since inconsistencies in this area can lead to recalls, lawsuits, and a loss of trust from consumers (Ramaprasad & Prakash, 2003).

Particularly for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) with limited resources, cost containment is equally critical in procurement (Eggink, 2020). The food industry is vulnerable to supply chain uncertainties, transportation costs, and raw material price fluctuations (Liu et al., 2016). According to Wang et al. (2016), in order to keep costs down without compromising on quality, procurement teams should bargain efficiently, investigate bulk buying opportunities, and establish enduring supplier agreements. A well-structured procurement strategy may help small firms stay competitive while minimizing expenses (Yang et al., 2019).

An additional pressing issue is the intricate nature of the supply chain, there are many participants in the food industry's supply chain, including producers, retailers, logistics firms, and consumers. If these different groups are going to work together seamlessly, strong project integration is a must (Eggink, 2020). Technology-driven solutions, such as inventory management systems, real-time tracking, and demand forecasting powered by artificial intelligence, help businesses decrease risks and increase visibility into their supply chains (Ramaprasad & Prakash, 2003).

Integrating projects is essential for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to succeed. It comprises making sure that everything about a project is well-coordinated, from communication to risk management to the project's scope, budget, and quality. The three main objectives of project integration are risk mitigation, resource optimization, and meeting business objectives within the specified time frame (Wang et al., 2016).

To achieve a harmonious coexistence of food procurement operations, legal requirements, and company goals, project integration is vital (Eggink, 2020). Procurement teams need to work closely with logistics businesses, suppliers, quality assurance teams, and finance departments to guarantee that the entire process runs smoothly. By integrating all of these elements, businesses can boost operational efficiency, cut costs, and avoid delays (Ramaprasad & Prakash, 2003).

Cultural orientation is another factor that impacts how SMEs approach project integration (Yang et al., 2019). Commercial links in certain cultures are based on price negotiations and contracts, whereas in others, trust and long-term relationships are more important. To better traverse international marketplaces, collaborate effectively, and make informed purchase decisions, SMEs would do well to familiarize themselves with these cultural quirks (Liu et al., 2016). Taking a culturally aware tack may help small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) strengthen their connections with suppliers, communicate more effectively, and create a more efficient procurement system (Yu, et al., 2017).

#### **1.4 Significance of the Study**

SMEs make significant socio-economic contributions to developing countries in terms of

GDP, entrepreneurship, job and wealth creation, and provision of goods and services. Despite their larger share of SMEs' socio-economic contributions, many developing economies, including Liberia, have been unable to establish the necessary foundation for SMEs to expand and contribute more significantly to economic growth.

Estimates suggest that while SMEs in Liberia account for 90% of registered business and 50% of GDP, they face daunting challenges and obstacles. SMEs are less likely to adopt practices and initiatives that positively contribute to growth and performance. Despite some studies examining supply chain management practices in developed and emerging economies, insufficient knowledge exists about factors that influence the level of SCM practices' initial adoption, including SMEs in developing economies (Sivili, 2024).

Liberal democracies in developing economies remain too young and fragile to adequately regulate business transactions, develop appropriate governing institutions, or establish reliable formal governance mechanisms. Formal business institutions tend to be ineffective in governing business transactions, creating opportunities for coordination failure and competition dysfunctionality. Most SMEs experience challenges and obstacles resulting from inefficient, ineffective, inadequate, and non-existent institutions that govern business transactions. Aside from SMEs' resource scarcity and constraints presented by the socio-political environment, the aforementioned issues have impeded SMEs development (Abdul, 2021).

Liberian SMEs have been unable to organize and coordinate supply chain activities with other firms in the supply chain despite recognizing the effectiveness of supply chain integration in improving operational performance. Because SMEs comprise 93% of businesses in Liberia, failure to conduct research on them would prevent policy makers, regulators, business associations, think tanks, and researchers from gaining practical understanding of the challenges

and obstacles preventing SMEs from integrating supply chains and examining the potential positive influence on operational performance if efforts are made to encourage SMEs to collaborate, coordinate, and integrate supply chain initiatives and practices. Ensuring that SMEs are allowed the opportunity to develop, and flourish would connect the dots to leapfrog Liberia to the next level (Adetunji et al., 2024).

### **Supplier Selection**

A supplier's selection has a significant impact on the efficiency, quality, and overall performance of food companies' operations as part of the procurement and project integration processes (Handfield et al., 2015). In a field where timely delivery, high-quality products, and safety measures are paramount, picking the right suppliers can determine success or failure (Monczka et al., 2016). Companies in the food industry can achieve their operational goals with the help of efficient procurement processes that lead them to reliable suppliers of high-quality equipment, supplies, and services at reasonable prices (Kannan & Tan, 2002).

To make sure that suppliers are on board with the project's goals, timelines, and quality standards, businesses incorporate them into their project management strategies (Christopher, 2016). There is a lot of competition in the food industry because customers want more and more items that are safe, fresh, and of excellent quality (Hugos, 2018). To maintain both the reputation of the brand and the satisfaction of the consumers, it is essential to work with vendors who consistently meet these quality criteria (Van der Vorst et al., 2009).

Companies also need to work with suppliers that follow all the guidelines, both

domestic and international, when it comes to food safety (Mortimore & Wallace, 2013). Companies should ensure that their potential suppliers follow quality assurance standards like as HACCP and ISO 22000 certifications by using effective procurement methods (Codex Alimentarius, 2020).

Suppliers can build trustworthy, long-term partnerships based on mutual benefit when they are integrated into the project's overall framework (Lamming et al., 2000). This collaborative approach has the potential to help the food industry increase operational efficiency, reduce bottlenecks, and simplify the supply chain. If suppliers align with the project plan and meet delivery schedules, the organization can avoid costly delays and meet production targets (Lambert & Cooper, 2000).

Companies in the food industry can keep their finances in check, stay competitive, and manage their expenses well if they source from suppliers who provide competitive rates without compromising on quality (Porter, 1985). In a globalized market where raw material costs might vary due to several economic, environmental, and geopolitical factors, having reliable suppliers with predictable pricing structures helps stabilize procurement prices. This efficiency not only boosts profit margins, but it also frees up capital for use in other growth and innovation initiatives (Barney, 1991).

Integrating different parts of the procurement process allows for better coordination and ensures that suppliers are aware of the company's strategic goals (Mentzer et al., 2001). According to Simchi-Levi et al., (2003), suppliers can better anticipate demand changes, adjust supply schedules accordingly, and provide the necessary support to adjust to changes in production when they are involved in the project plan in the right way. The likelihood

of supply chain disruptions which can lead to income loss, product shortages, and production halts is reduced with this level of collaboration (Lee, 2004).

Suppliers and food industries can work together on innovation, product development, and quality improvement projects thanks to integration (Frohlich & Westbrook, 2001). Cooperating suppliers often offer value-added services, such as individualized solutions, technical support, and product enhancements to suit the needs of the business (Dyer & Singh, 1998).

Jüttner et al., (2003) also found that when suppliers are integrated and selected efficiently, risk management improves. Supply chain disruptions, infections, and spoilage are just a few of the numerous hazards that food firms face. Companies can lessen their exposure to these dangers by working with vendors who have robust quality assurance processes, tracking mechanisms, and crisis management plans in place (Tang, 2006).

## Cost Efficiency

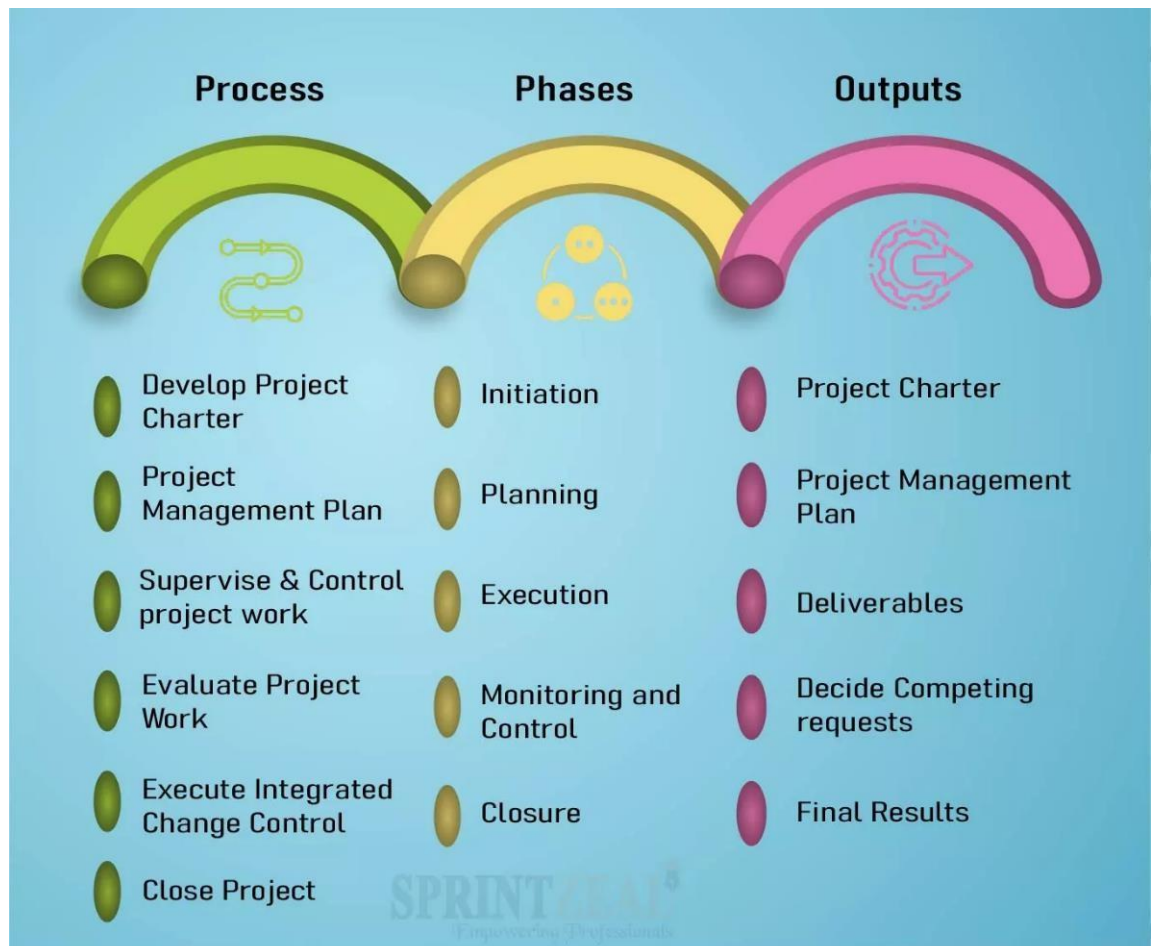


Figure 03: Project Management Process, Stages, and Deliverables

In the food business, where companies face intense rivalry and extremely small profit margins, cost efficiency is key when it comes to procuring goods and services (Smith, 2020). Essential procurement tactics for cost reduction and operational performance enhancement include supply chain simplification, bulk purchase, and contract negotiation (Johnson & Lee, 2019). Economies of scale allow food sector businesses to save money on equipment, supplies, and raw materials when they buy in bulk (Brown, 2021). When businesses band together to buy in bulk or sign multi-year contracts, they are able to negotiate lower pricing with suppliers (Williams et al., 2018). By lowering

procurement costs all at once and guaranteeing a steady supply of commodities at set rates, this shields businesses from unpredictable market prices.

If negotiations for contracts with vendors and service providers are fruitful, cost efficiency can be further enhanced. Price reductions, extended payment terms, and value-added services like delivery and inventory management are all possible outcomes of these negotiations (Anderson & White, 2017).

By maximizing budgets, controlling costs, and simplifying procurement processes, food companies can enhance their financial performance through the utilization of these agreements (Thomas, 2021). According to Garcia and Patel (2019), optimizing the supply chain is an important tactic for cutting procurement costs even more. Businesses in the food industry can save money, time, and effort in inventory management, storage, and transportation by closely monitoring and controlling the flow of goods and supplies (Clark & Robinson, 2020).

All phases of production and operation take cost into account when procurement is part of the overall project strategy and execution (Taylor, 2018). Discovering previously unnoticed cost-saving possibilities requires coordinated and coherent coordination among internal departments, logistical partners, and suppliers (Evans & Scott, 2020). By consolidating shipments and getting rid of surplus inventory, which locks up capital and drives up storage charges, companies in the food business can minimize transportation costs (Nguyen, 2019).

In industries such as food manufacturing, where freshness and shelf-life are of the utmost importance, integration is useful to further guarantee that production schedules

correspond with procurement methods. This keeps you from buying too many ingredients, which means less food waste and longer shelf life (Harris & Kim, 2021).

To further improve the efficacy of procurement decisions, businesses can integrate technology and data analytics better. Marketers in the food industry can improve their demand forecasting, production planning, and order accuracy by examining real-time data on inventory levels, order volumes, and supplier performance (Martinez et al., 2021). By utilizing this data-driven approach, companies can find a happy medium between having enough supplies on hand to meet production demands and wasting money on surplus inventory (Wilson & Adams, 2019). Not only do procurement procedures take raw material costs into account, but they do so across the whole supply chain (Foster, 2020). Energy usage, packaging, shipping, and labor all fall under this category.

Together with their suppliers and service providers, food sector businesses can discover creative ways to cut down on packaging waste, boost energy efficiency, and simplify labor processes. Consequently, expenditure will fall even more (Chowdhury, 2021). Additionally, businesses can reap financial and environmental benefits through supplier integration by coordinating cost-cutting efforts with the organization's larger sustainability and CSR objectives (Parker & Green, 2022).

#### Steps:

Step 1: Stakeholder Alignment

Step 2: Effective Resource Allocation

Step 3: Accurate Cost Estimation

Step 4: Enhanced Decision-Making

## Step 5: Improved Cost Control

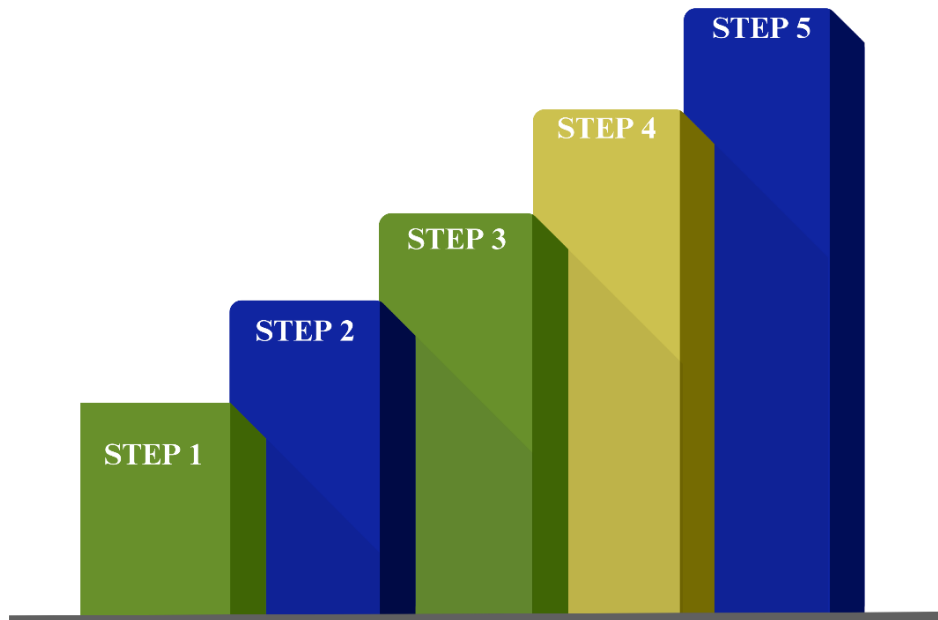


Figure 04. Evaluating the Impact of Cost Integration on Project Success

### Quality Control

According to Smith (2020), quality control is a crucial aspect of procurement operations in food enterprises. It ensures that products meet the highest standards of safety, freshness, and quality. Maintaining stringent quality standards across the supply chain requires the integration of procurement processes with project planning at every stage, from sourcing raw materials to delivering finished items to clients (Johnson & Lee, 2019). One important part of this integration is making sure that suppliers follow strict quality assurance standards through rigorous selection and management (Brown, 2021).

Businesses in the food industry can better manage their suppliers' expectations and ensure that the goods, packaging, and services they provide meet their quality standards and regulatory requirements by integrating project planning with procurement processes

(Williams et al., 2018). This preventative method allows food companies to track and assess their suppliers' performance on a regular basis, allowing them to respond quickly to any discrepancies from quality requirements (Miller, 2022). It is especially important to ensure the safety and freshness of ingredients in the food industry, since the health of customers is a top priority (Anderson & White, 2017). Ingredients may be reliably sourced from trustworthy vendors that maintain product integrity through proper handling, storage, and shipment when procurement and supply chain management are combined (Thomas, 2021).

This integration allows for more oversight and management of the supply chain, which in turn reduces the risk of contamination, spoilage, or incorrect handling of perishable goods (Garcia & Patel, 2019). To ensure they follow safety rules and prevent risks that could lead to food poisoning or a lower-quality product, food makers can track the temperature, humidity, and other variables that impact the storage and transportation of ingredients (Clark & Robinson, 2020). Maintaining quality assurance in the food business also requires following laws (Taylor, 2018). Businesses dealing with food are subject to a plethora of regulations, both domestic and foreign, including those governing product safety, labelling requirements, and environmental protection (Evans & Scott, 2020). Businesses may ensure that all suppliers, distributors, and manufacturers adhere to these regulations throughout the whole production process by integrating procurement into project planning (Nguyen, 2019). To demonstrate compliance with food safety regulations, for instance, vendors must get certifications such as ISO 22000 and HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points) (Harris & Kim, 2021).

Companies in the food industry can lessen the likelihood of noncompliance and the

associated financial, legal, and reputational consequences by integrating certification validation and maintenance throughout the supply chain (Davis, 2020). The integration of procurement and project planning also enables robust quality assurance processes to be applied during the manufacturing and delivery of food items (Martinez et al., 2021). Developing SOPs for quality control is an important part of this process. These SOPs should cover all aspects of the process, from testing and inspecting ingredients to assessing the end product.

Companies in the food industry can detect potential quality issues with their products by performing regular audits and inspections throughout production (Foster, 2020). This ensures that the company's stringent standards are met when items are released to the market (Chowdhury, 2021). By integrating quality control into each stage of manufacturing, food companies can reduce the likelihood of defects, contamination, or safety violations that could result in costly product recalls or damage to the company's image (Parker & Green, 2022). The logistics and distribution stages of the supply chain should also have quality control methods in place.

### **Innovation and Product Development**

Key growth drivers in the food company include innovation and product development. To realize new concepts, procurement and integration procedures are vital (Smith, 2020). This process makes it easier for food companies to access novel ingredients, technology, and packaging solutions, which helps them stay ahead of consumer trends and manufacture foods that satisfy evolving dietary requirements, sustainability expectations, and tastes (Johnson & Lee, 2019).

Businesses can find innovative ingredients and technologies that could change the face of traditional food items through efficient procurement, which gives them access to a global network of suppliers (Brown, 2021). For example, according to Williams et al. (2018), incorporating plant-based proteins, alternative sweeteners, or functional ingredients such as probiotics or antioxidants into food products can lead to their growth as healthier and more environmentally friendly solutions.

Procurement groups may also seek out innovative solutions, like sustainable packaging materials, automation systems, or improvements in food processing, that assist food firms in meeting the demands of their customers for ease, efficiency, and environmental consciousness (Miller, 2022). By ensuring that these state-of-the-art components and technology are seamlessly integrated into the project scope and executed properly, integration allows food manufacturers to introduce new products more rapidly and with more success (Anderson & White, 2017). By aligning procurement efforts with the overarching objectives of product development, companies may guarantee that novel ideas are explored and successfully executed within the bounds of their operational processes and strategic objectives (Thomas, 2021). Innovative concepts can be brought to fruition within the constraints of available time, energy, and capital when these two factors are in harmony (Garcia & Patel, 2019).

Furthermore, ingredients and innovative packaging both contribute to a product's ability to wow consumers (Clark & Robinson, 2020). By combining the phases of product development and procurement, businesses can discover environmentally friendly, visually beautiful, and functional packaging options that cater to both current trends and consumer tastes (Taylor, 2018). Recycling and biodegradable polymers are only two examples of the

various eco-friendly packaging options available; other potential innovations include packaging that makes products easier to use or extends their shelf life (Evans & Scott, 2020). Nguyen (2019) explains that procurement teams can work with package suppliers to generate new ideas and materials, and integration ensures that these novel packaging solutions are seamlessly integrated into the final product design.

The development of new products is accelerated when the marketing, research and development, and procurement teams work together, as this ensures that innovation is driven by both market demands and technical feasibility. By including procurement into the development process, new goods can have any issues with sourcing, pricing, or quality control addressed early on. One way to avoid delays in product delivery caused by supply chain disruptions or ingredient shortages is to source high-quality components from dependable vendors (Martinez et al., 2021).

### **Supply Chain Optimization**

For organizations to stay resilient and effective in the fiercely competitive and fast-paced food market, supply chain optimization is crucial. In order to optimize their supply chains, cut lead times, better control inventory levels, and strengthen their relationships with important suppliers and distributors, food firms must integrate procurement processes with project management. Making sure that procurement procedures smoothly mesh with production schedules is essential to this integration. Food firms may prevent stockouts, minimize delays, and guarantee on-time and cost-effective product delivery by doing this. For example, procurement teams can engage proactively with suppliers to ensure timely deliveries and prevent delays that could otherwise affect production when they are fully

informed of when raw materials are needed and timetables for distribution.

In the food business, where satisfying consumer demand necessitates a steady supply of fresh ingredients and packaging materials, this synchronization is especially beneficial. Lead times that are shortened through integrated project management and procurement assist avoid bottlenecks and cut down on waiting times, which guarantees that manufacturing operations proceed without hiccups and on time.

Additionally, connectivity enables more effective inventory management for food enterprises. Businesses can prevent overstocking or understocking raw materials by coordinating procurement efforts with production and distribution requirements. Businesses can balance inventory levels with the use of accurate forecasting and real-time data, which is crucial in the food industry because improperly managed perishable goods can quickly turn into waste. This optimization guarantees the delivery of food supplies while simultaneously reducing storage expenses. Fresh and uphold standards of quality. Strengthening cooperation with important distributors and suppliers is another important benefit of this integration.

Food businesses can increase supply chain visibility, obtain competitive prices, and obtain greater access to high-quality supplies by cultivating stronger partnerships with reliable partners. In order to ensure that solutions are in place before problems develop, firms can address possible disruptions or changes in demand early on through regular communication and cooperative planning with suppliers. This proactive cooperation strengthens the supply chain's resilience, increasing its ability to adjust to unforeseen circumstances like demand swings, supply shortages, delays in transit, provision of superior

goods. Food businesses may stay flexible, lower operational risks, and keep a competitive edge in a market that is changing quickly by coordinating procurement efforts with production schedules, improving inventory control, and cultivating strong supplier relationships.

### **Risk Management**

For the food sector to run smoothly and keep a competitive edge, risk management is essential. Reducing the risks of supply chain interruptions, quality problems, and regulatory compliance requires integrating procurement operations with project management. Food firms can reduce the impact of unanticipated occurrences on project timelines and costs by proactively identifying potential risks early on and putting effective mitigation methods into place. For instance, businesses can identify possible supply chain disruptions, such as delays or shortages, before they become more serious by keeping a careful eye on supplier performance and keeping lines of communication open. Businesses can use this early warning system to modify production plans, discover substitute suppliers, or modify procurement schedules in order to prevent significant disruptions that could compromise the project as a whole.

Likewise, combining procurement within a similar vein, combining project management with procurement ensures that quality control requirements are fulfilled consistently across the supply chain. Businesses may avoid quality issues that could result in product recalls or unhappy customers by setting clear standards for supplier selection, keeping an eye on product quality along the supply chain, and performing routine inspections.

Additionally, food businesses can greatly lower the risks of non-compliance with industry standards, which could otherwise result in fines or harm to their reputation, by closely collaborating with manufacturers and suppliers to make sure they have the required quality certifications. Project management and procurement integration can also help reduce risks in the area of regulatory compliance. By keeping abreast of the most recent rules and collaborating closely with regulatory agencies and legal teams, to prevent legal issues, food companies can make sure that the required certifications, permits, and paperwork are in place. By taking a proactive stance, companies may stay ahead of evolving legal requirements and make sure that every facet of their operations complies with them.

In the end, combining project management and procurement enables food companies to better manage risks by foreseeing and resolving possible issues before they have a substantial negative impact. Businesses may lessen the impact of disruptions on their budgets and schedules by putting risk assessment and mitigation techniques into place early in the process. This will guarantee that projects stay on course and continue to satisfy customer demand with few hiccups.

### **Sustainability and Ethical Sourcing**

Incorporating sustainable and ethical sourcing into procurement processes is becoming increasingly important for food companies looking to stay competitive in a changing market. By incorporating these factors into project planning and execution, businesses can purchase products and services from suppliers who follow strict environmental and ethical guidelines. This strategy includes numerous critical actions,

such as getting organic certifications, supporting fair-trade procedures, and lowering carbon emissions across the supply chain.

Prioritizing sustainable procurement not only fulfills corporate social responsibility (CSR) requirements but also meets rising customer demand for ethical business practices and ecologically friendly products. For example, collaborating with suppliers who use fair-trade policies guarantees that farmers and workers are paid fairly and work in safe conditions, which helps develop long-term, trustworthy trusting relationships while enhancing the livelihoods of individuals involved in the supply chain. Furthermore, acquiring organic or non-GMO ingredients can help a food company differentiate its products in the market, appealing to health-conscious and environmentally sensitive customers.

Incorporating these standards into procurement plans also helps to lessen the environmental impact of food production, such as through more effective resource usage, sustainable farming techniques, and waste reduction. Food firms can collaborate with suppliers who use renewable energy, conduct responsible water management, and reduce packaging waste, so contributing to overall sustainability goals.

Furthermore, integrating sustainability into procurement can result in long-term cost savings by optimizing resource use, lowering energy use, and avoiding regulatory fines associated with noncompliance with environmental laws. Ethical sourcing also reduces the dangers associated with Unethical behaviors, such as labor exploitation, can harm a brand's reputation and lead to legal issues. Food firms guarantee ethical compliance by conducting meticulous supplier audits, certifications, and transparent reporting, promoting trust among

consumers, investors, and stakeholders.

Furthermore, sustainability-driven procurement promotes innovation by encouraging businesses to experiment with new technologies and environmentally friendly alternatives for packaging, materials, and manufacturing processes. These improvements can improve product quality, save prices, and increase supply chain efficiency. Furthermore, lowering carbon emissions through improved logistics and sustainable sourcing procedures assists food companies in meeting environmental standards and achieving their corporate sustainability objectives. This incorporation of sustainability into procurement improves overall supply chain resilience by diversifying suppliers and sourcing from places less prone to environmental upheaval.

Finally, by aligning. Finally, by integrating procurement processes with ethical and sustainable ideals, food companies not only meet project objectives, but also foster strong brand loyalty and customer satisfaction. Consumers are increasingly rewarding companies that exhibit environmental stewardship and ethical integrity with their purchasing power, giving food businesses a competitive advantage in the market.

As a result, effective procurement process management that prioritizes sustainability and ethical considerations allows food companies to achieve cost effectiveness, quality assurance, innovation, risk management, supply chain optimization, and customer satisfaction while ensuring long-term environmental and social responsibility.

## **1.5 Research Questions and Hypotheses**

The purpose of this study is to examine how project integration practices and procurement cultural orientations influence the growth and development of Small and

Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) in Liberia. Given the pivotal role of SMEs in national economic development and the unique socio-cultural and procurement dynamics in Liberia, this research aims to identify the ways in which aligned project management integration and culturally attuned procurement strategies contribute to sustainable SME growth.

The study seeks to provide practical insights for policymakers, project managers, and business leaders looking to optimize project delivery and procurement processes within the Liberian context.

- What is the impact of project integration on the expansion of SMEs in Liberia?

Project integration means that all parts of a project, including as purchasing, managing resources, financial planning, and operational tasks, are working together to accomplish the company's long-term objectives. Project integration can greatly affect the growth of Liberian SMEs by:

#### **Improving Operational Efficiency:**

When projects are well-integrated, organizations can rest assured that their financial, HR, production, and marketing departments all working in tandem to cut down on waste and inefficiencies.

#### **Improving Resource Utilization:**

Liberian SMEs frequently deal with limited resources; by combining projects, these constraints can be better managed. SMEs may make better judgments regarding investments, expansion, and risk management with integrated project data. This facilitates better decision-making. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) can increase their

competitiveness in local and worldwide markets through proper project integration, which allows them to improve the quality and delivery of their products and services.

**Improving Supply Chain Coordination:** Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) can save money and prevent supply interruptions by combining procurement, logistics, and inventory management.

- How does the cultural orientation of procurement impact the performance and growth of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Liberia?

When local cultural values, beliefs, and traditions impact procurement choices, supplier relationships, and commercial transactions, this is called Procurement Cultural Orientation. Cultural factors significantly impact the following aspects of small and medium enterprise (SME) performance in Liberia:

**Connections Built on Trust:** Rather than depending solely on formal contracts, many Liberian SMEs depend on personal and community-based connections with their suppliers.

**Supporting Local Businesses:** Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) often give preference to local businesses for a variety of reasons, including cultural and economic ones. This can be good for community development, but it can also restrict access to diverse and cost-effective procurement options.

**Risk Aversion in Procurement:** Liberian companies may be reluctant to try new things when it comes to their supply chains because of the country's long-standing tradition of conservative business practices.

**Negotiation and negotiating Practices:** Aggressive negotiating and indirect communication are typically valued more highly in culturally normative bargaining

approaches.

Concerning Ethical Considerations and Informal Practices, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) could encounter problems as a result of favouritism, opaque payment systems, and other forms of informal procurement.

Liberia's small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) growth is influenced by the interplay between project integration and procurement culture orientation. Liberia's small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) operations' efficacy and sustainability in the long run is defined by the interplay between Project integration and Procurement cultural orientation. Alignment Between Business Strategies and Cultural Norms: Stakeholder involvement and supplier relationships can be enhanced by project integration that respects cultural procurement norms.

**Improving Market Access:** Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) can break out of their local communities and into bigger markets through the efficient integration of procurement and operations. One way to lessen the impact of potential problems with unofficial business practices is to combine formal procurement policies with cultural factors. Integration promotes knowledge exchange and capacity building by fostering better collaboration among SMEs, suppliers, and external investors. This, in turn, enhances partnerships and collaborations.

- How can small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Liberia overcome cultural barriers when it comes to project integration and procurement?

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Liberia have multiple challenges when trying to integrate contemporary procurement tactics with traditional cultural practices:

**Aversion to Change:** Many SMEs adhere to long-established cultural norms and may be hesitant to embrace contemporary methods of procurement and integration.

**Technological Barriers:**

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) face challenges when trying to incorporate sophisticated procurement processes and project management tools due to an inadequate technological infrastructure. The inability to engage in effective procurement and integration strategies is a common problem for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) due to a lack of capital.

**Skill Gap:** Many people working for and owning SMEs have not received adequate education or training in contemporary procurement, supply chain management, or project integration practices.

**Bureaucratic and Regulatory Obstacles:** The inconsistent application of procurement procedures and the myriads of government restrictions make it difficult to incorporate current business processes smoothly.

**Informal Business Networks:** Although culturally significant, SMEs may be unable to take advantage of competitive procurement options if they depend on informal business networks.

- How might culturally aligned project integration and procurement procedures be implemented to boost the growth of SMEs?

Businesses and authorities in Liberia can use the following approaches to encourage the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) while still honouring cultural norms:

Capacity Building and Training: Educate SMEs on culturally sensitive business methods that integrate contemporary procurement and project management techniques.

Embrace Digital Transformation: Put in place cost-effective digital procurement solutions to assist SMEs in streamlining operations while preserving long-standing business connections.

- Access to Finance: Encourage more small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to participate in microfinance and other government-sponsored funding programs.

- Policy Support and Simplification: Make regulations easier to understand and follow so small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) can formally document their integration and procurement procedures.

- Encouraging Ethical Procurement: Push for more open and equitable business dealings by promoting ethical procurement methods that are in line with cultural norms. To aid in the expansion of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), it is recommended that public and private entities work together, with the help of international organizations.

- Promoting Creativity: Create initiatives that will encourage small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to embrace creative approaches to procurement while also meeting cultural standards.

### **Research Hypothesis**

H1: Project integration has a favourable impact on Liberia's SMEs' expansion.

H2: The performance and expansion of SMEs in Liberia are significantly impacted by procurement culture orientation.

H3: Project integration and procurement culture orientation work together to promote the

expansion of SMEs in Liberia.

H4: The growth of SMEs in Liberia is adversely affected by difficulties in coordinating project integration and procurement cultural norms.

H5: Liberia's SME growth and sustainability are enhanced by the application of culturally sensitive project integration and procurement techniques.

## **1.6 Summary**

This research explores the connection among project integration, procurement cultural orientation, and the growth of small and medium enterprises in Liberia. Small and medium-sized enterprises play a crucial role in driving economic growth, yet they frequently face challenges related to disjointed project management and inconsistent procurement strategies. This study investigates the impact of cultural elements on procurement choices and examines how better project integration can lead to increased operational efficiency.

Essential insights reveal that adjusting to cultural procurement standards, effective project management, and governmental backing play crucial roles in the expansion of small and medium-sized enterprises. The research findings indicate that enhancing project integration frameworks and aligning procurement practices with local cultural expectations can promote sustainable development for small and medium-sized enterprises. Furthermore, suggestions are offered for decision-makers, industry leaders, and innovators to enhance procurement strategies and project implementation for sustained economic advantages. The next chapter highlights the theoretical framework the study adopted for this case study research.

## CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### **2.1 Introduction**

Procurement cultural orientation, SME growth, and project integration must be studied within a solid theoretical framework. This section gives a synopsis of the theoretical underpinnings that support the research, focusing on important viewpoints that clarify the function of cultural orientation in the integration of projects and procurement procedures of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Liberia.

Research uses two theories based on Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory and Resource-Based View (RBV). The RBV is a strategic management framework that posits a firm's competitive advantage stems from its internal resources and capabilities rather than external market conditions (Barney, 1991). The Cultural Dimensions Theory (Hofstede, 1980) put out by Hofstede indicates a paradigm for comprehending the effects of national and organizational cultures on business practices, such as procurement and project integration. The study also delves into the conceptual framework of Cultural Orientation in Project Management and SME Growth in Developing Economies.

### **Theoretical Frameworks**

#### **2.2 Resource-Based View**

Resource-Based View (RBV Theory) established by Barney (1991) offers a viewpoint on strategic management and explains how SMEs can gain a competitive edge by allocating their resources effectively. According to RBV, companies can stay ahead of the

competition for the long haul by making the most of their specialised human capital, financial assets, and procurement skills (Barney, 1991; Peteraf, 1993).

The resource-based view of the firm argues that its asset bundles must be valuable, rare, imperfectly imitable, and non-substitutable for a sustained competitive advantage. The addition of cultural orientation is based on research that demonstrated higher-performing strategic orientations are characteristically more complex, coordinated, and deeper than lower-performing orientations.

Complexity is an expanded view that considers a greater range of options and consequences. Cost leadership includes a focus on productivity, crucial in price-sensitive markets. Condition complexity relates to information and knowledge-specific focus and systems optimization (Korede, 2018). Firms cannot be locked into a single orientation and need an enhanced cultural orientation that is resourceful in terms of each option's alignment with firm needs, priorities, opportunities, and capabilities at any time.

Competitive advantage is contingent on the proper use of resources and investment strategy. Pricing strategy implementation is linked to firm strategies, organizational structures, resource capability, and market orientation. Investment decisions category, including differentiated product design, tailored pricing strategy, promotional tactics, cost-efficient operation, distribution scope and channel selection, and customer relationship management decisions, is a deep knowledge reserve that enhances competitive advantage over time.

Growth strategies include niche market, product and service innovation, low price competition, market expansion, coordination flexibility, and customer information

technology-driven models to maintain a better conformity between customer needs and resources available for business model execution. Research and development processes increase the firm's ability to produce unique offerings. RBV provides a productive framework for studying competitive advantage, which focuses on performance differences among firms.

Ultimately, performance is a function of revenues along with the costs required to generate them. The contribution and weight of these determinants varies across industries. Notably, only revenue-based measures capture growth directly. A firm that adds no new customers or decreases its customer base yet decreases the cost of servicing customers or improves its prices increases profit and growth from a value creation and competitive advantage perspective respectively yet has lower firm performance.

RBV has been extensively applied in many performance settings that are theoretically well-posed. The earliest RBV theoretical papers explain profits cross-sectionally via imperfect resource mobility. These differences manifest at industry level (Tehseen et al., 2019) with influential works explaining choice and adaptation of industry. These less-traversed per-firm growth paths are experimentally rich. Standard growth models are proven using data that changes over time.

RBV's essential elements for Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) Project Integration and Procurement Valuable Resources: Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) can obtain a cost advantage and boost their growth by developing strong procurement capabilities. These capabilities include things like negotiating advantageous supplier contracts, minimizing inefficiencies, and utilizing technology for supply chain integration

(Wernerfelt, 1984). Rareness of Resources: Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) have an advantage in the market when they form particular partnerships with suppliers or use specialist procurement methods. Culturally embedded supplier relationships in Liberia can limit competitive sourcing opportunities while providing exclusivity (Barney, 1991). Imitability: Competitors may find it difficult to reproduce procurement techniques that depend on culturally specific trust-based relationships, which helps SMEs to stay in business (Peteraf, 1993). Scalability and integration into bigger markets may be impeded, nevertheless, by an absence of structured procurement procedures.

SMEs make the most of their procurement resources through efficient project integration, which aligns supplier management, financial planning, and operational efficiency to maximize output (Barney & Clark, 2007). Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) risk financial instability, inefficiency, and wasted resources if they do not align procurement with project objectives.

RBV can help Liberian SMEs grow through strategic procurement as a Competitive Advantage. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Liberia can expand their businesses by creating buying plans that are reliable, cost-effective, and culturally adapted. Companies that excel at procurement tasks like contract management and supplier relationship optimization are more likely to experience expansion and sustained growth, according to the RBV perspective (Barney, 1991). To maximize the effectiveness of their resources, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) should combine procurement with project execution.

For instance, connecting procurement decisions with inventory management, supplier

contracts, and financial planning can minimize operational costs and boost productivity (Grant, 1991). By employing the Resource-Based View Theory, this study analyzes how SMEs can optimize procurement resources and integrate them into their broader company plan to generate long-term growth and sustainability.

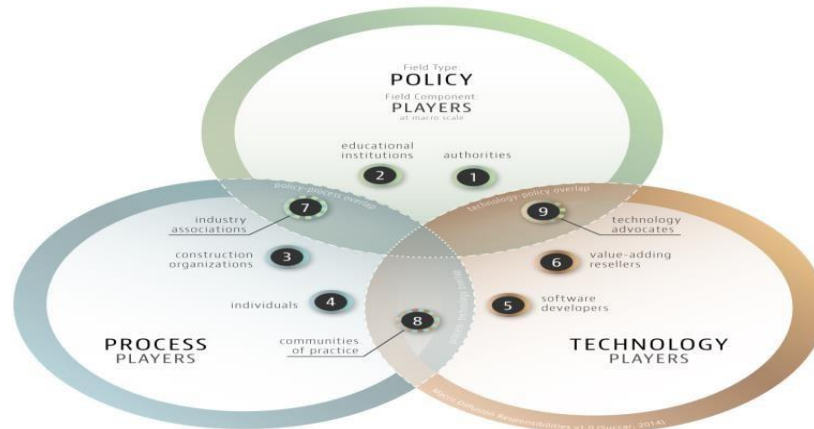


Figure 05: Essential Contributors to the Expansion of Small and Medium Enterprises

## 2.3 Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory

The culture of a country is related to the shared behaviors, traditions, attitudes, customs, and products of the people of that country. Culture is usually formulated and presumed based on the collective individual beliefs of the members of society that is transferred from one generation to another. This means that one person cannot change the culture of the society where he/she lives alone. A cultural grid, societal beliefs, heroes, norms that are shared and believed by the members of the countries, is established, and it exerts insurmountable pressure on the individuals of the society and affects their mentality (Chang et al., 2021).

Cultural orientation is the general tendency of a person to think or act in a certain way. It is the individual's concept of the world with respect to other people, time, power, self-help, man, and

nature and other external factors. Culture is also considered as one of the determinants of growth. Understanding the impact of culture on growth can have a profound effect on policies adopted by politicians, businessmen, and researchers. Culture can be defined as beliefs and values that are rooted in psychological aspects of the individual and shared by people in a society. Culture can take different forms like ideology or more basic coordinates like dimensions.

Such structured approaches to culture were built on empirical grounds. An insight in the general impact of using a particular dimension to separate cultures is that the wider the studies, the wider the differences or the smaller the similarities. There are many existing cultural dimensions, which are indeed identical to the concept of culture used here. However, the operationalization of such dimensions is often much less reliable than in the case of certain well-known dimensions. This concerns econometric modeling as well as the unambiguous nature of the dimensions or questions formulated in the respective studies. It can be concluded that certain dimensions are by far the best-known and most reliable metrics of cultural differences.

Hofstede's study found six major dimensions that characterize cultural variations which are pertinent especially to the situation of Liberian SMEs: One factor that describes how less powerful people in a society or organization accept hierarchical structures is the Power Distance (PDI). Procurement efficiency may suffer in Liberia because small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are hesitant to question suppliers or negotiate contracts aggressively due to the prevalence of hierarchical business relationships (Hofstede, 2010).

Liberian SMEs often operate within a collectivist cultural framework, where informal connections built on trust with suppliers and stakeholders take precedence over

official procurement procedures (Hofstede, 1983). This has the potential to influence purchasing decisions in a way that prioritizes long-term partnerships over short-term savings.

The third factor is Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI), which means that small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in cultures where people value stability and predictability in business interactions are more likely to flourish. Sourcing decisions may end up favouring established vendors over up-and-coming ones, which limits the potential for strategic procurement integration (Hofstede, 1991).

Masculinity vs. Femininity (MAS): Cultures that score high on the masculinity index tend to have more goal-oriented and competitive corporate cultures, while cultures that score lower tend to prioritize teamwork and unanimous agreement when making important decisions. According to Hofstede et al. (2010), Liberian procurement tactics can be skewed toward consensus-seeking rather than cost efficiency.

Long-Term vs. Short-Term Orientation (LTO): Financial constraints force many Liberian SMEs to forego long-term investments in integrated procurement systems in Favor of short-term initiatives (Hofstede & Minkov, 2010). The degree to which a culture indulges influences the degree to which it takes risks when making investment and procurement decisions. According to Hofstede et al., (2010), cultures that value restraint may be hesitant to embrace new procurement technology and tactics for integrating projects.

## **2.4 Cultural Orientation in Project Management**

Culture is the fundamental practice and principle within an organization that determines the business environment and the factors that affect it, including communication, behavior, and

employee job conduct (Morcos, 2018). Culture affects all functions of the organization directly or indirectly; hence, it becomes a need for the organizations to identify their organizational culture. It is the way people are thought to conduct themselves at work in order to achieve the objectives of the organization (Zou et al., 2012).

The main factors that influence culture in organizing projects are (1) organizational factors, such as the structure of the organization, system processes, policy factors; (2) socio-economic-cultural factors, such as national, regional, or global business culture; (3) professional factors, such as project size, complexity, nature, project life cycle, or nature of industrial sector; and (4) behavioral factors, such as project stakeholders' attitudes, beliefs, personalities, backgrounds, skills, roles, and experiences.

Cultural orientation models are generally referred to as frameworks for analyzing the motives and norms that guide individuals' daily behavior and conditions, organizational development stages, supplier selection decision process, governmental effectiveness and dysfunctions, strategic analysis, performance analysis, change management, and community task functions on the collective level. The functional, task-oriented cultural orientation framework is one of commonly used dimension orientations of culture that is comprised of ten categories: product development and innovation, management and control, partnership development, organization structure and integration, culture and socialization, information processing and decision-making, customer development, supplier development, finance and auditing, and employees training and career development. It influences various organizational behaviors, including project management, organizational change, knowledge transfer, quality management, market barrier, innovation, performance, design and manufacturer organizations and industries further (Morren & Grinstein, 2021)

## **2.5 SME Growth in Developing Economies**

Small- to medium-sized enterprise (SME) growth is critical, especially in developing economies, for poverty alleviation. The promotion of entrepreneurship is viewed as a path through which true social change can be brought to developing economies. This is due in large part because SMEs account for about 80% of employment in developing countries. As such, economic growth could be brought about through entrepreneurship in these regions.

In Liberia, there are few SMEs when compared to larger firms, and SME sub-contracting to larger firms is almost non-existent. SMEs account for the vast majority of businesses in Liberia and are a potentially important source of employment and economic growth. SME development is viewed as an important step in the rebuilding of the country's war-torn economy. SMEs offer the hope of sustainable economic growth because they develop local wealth and income. SMEs offer the potential for new firms to be started and the market to grow.

In re-building the country, effort must be made to ensure that the Liberian economy is able to increasingly retain economic activity that is carried out within its borders. One means of beginning this process is through increasing SME growth, especially the involvement of SMEs as sub-contractors to larger firms. Key in this effort are the integration of sub-contractors into larger teams, systemically providing for inter-firm cooperation between SMEs and larger firms and providing systemic support for the development of SMEs in Liberia (Diallo et al., 2023).

## **2.6 Summary**

The reviewed literature underscores the essential importance of project integration and procurement cultural orientation in the development of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). Research highlights that proficient project integration management guarantees the seamless coordination of various project elements—like

scope, time, cost, quality, and risk—to improve overall efficiency (Kerzner, 2017). Small and medium-sized enterprises, frequently facing challenges due to restricted resources and knowledge, gain substantial advantages from organized procurement methods that are tailored to their cultural and economic environments.

The study further highlights the impact of cultural orientation on procurement processes. The influence of cultural values, business norms, and local governance structures is essential in the development of procurement policies (Hofstede, 2001). In the context of Liberia, where small and medium enterprises encounter obstacles such as bureaucratic delays, corruption, and restricted financial access, modifying procurement practices to resonate with local cultural dynamics can enhance the involvement of these enterprises in both public and private projects (World Bank, 2020).

Furthermore, research indicates that the incorporation of technology-enhanced procurement frameworks and capacity-building efforts promotes the sustainability and competitiveness of small and medium enterprises. Policies that foster transparency, encourage fair competition, and enhance capacity development play a crucial role in the growth of SMEs by minimizing operational inefficiencies and guaranteeing equitable access to business opportunities (Thai, 2017).

Investigating the impact of cultural factors in business tends to be focused on specific regions, often missing a wider comparative perspective across different cultures. Grasping the influence of cultural values, such as individualism versus collectivism, on leadership, risk tolerance, and decision-making in small and medium-sized enterprises can

aid in crafting flexible business strategies. Comparative studies can yield valuable insights into effective cross-cultural business practices.

Small and medium-sized enterprises across various sectors, such as technology, manufacturing, and food, encounter distinct challenges shaped by their cultural orientation. For instance, technology startups might take on risk in cultures that prioritize individualism, whereas small and medium-sized enterprises in manufacturing could flourish in more hierarchical environments. Grasping these differences enables business leaders and decision-makers to customize strategies that are specific to their industries.

Although there is extensive research on immediate achievements, the enduring effects of cultural orientation on the growth of small and medium enterprises—encompassing aspects like internationalization, sustainability, and market expansion—require further exploration. The influence of cultural values on the approach of small and medium-sized enterprises to risk, sustainability, and global expansion is significant, ultimately shaping their long-term resilience and success in the business landscape.

The way cultural orientation influences the definitions of success, sustainability, and expansion in small and medium-sized enterprises is significant. Certain cultures value consistent, community-oriented development, whereas others focus on rapid expansion. Grasping these subtleties enables small and medium-sized enterprises to synchronize their strategies with cultural anticipations.

Investigations frequently emphasize overarching economic patterns instead of the intricate dynamics within small and medium-sized enterprises. Cultural values significantly influence how decisions are made and how collaboration occurs—

hierarchical cultures tend to support centralized authority, whereas egalitarian cultures promote collective input. Examining these dynamics can enhance the efficiency and adaptability of small and medium-sized enterprises.

Creating uniform instruments to evaluate cultural impacts on project integration and procurement would improve the consistency of research efforts. Metrics serve to assess decision-making frameworks, perceptions of efficiency, and quality benchmarks across various cultures, thereby enhancing strategies for small and medium enterprises.

#### Strategies for Cultural Adaptation

Small and medium-sized enterprises need to customize their approaches according to cultural values—hierarchical societies might gain from organized procurement, whereas individualistic societies prioritize efficiency and innovation. Standardized frameworks can assist small and medium-sized enterprises and policymakers in addressing cultural challenges and enhancing business operations.

## **2.7 Conclusion**

The literature review highlights that the cultural orientation of project integration and procurement plays a vital role in the growth of SMEs in Liberia. Effective project integration fosters improved coordination and efficiency, while procurement systems that align with cultural values promote participation from SMEs and contribute to sustainability. Nonetheless, obstacles like insufficient regulatory enforcement, corruption, and a deficit in capacity-building initiatives impede the complete realization of SMEs in the procurement process. By tackling these challenges with strategic policy changes, innovative technologies, and a flexible cultural approach, we can create a business landscape that

nurtures the growth of small and medium enterprises in Liberia. The next chapter indicates the methodological approach used in the study.

## CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

### **3.1 Overview of the Research Problem**

A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because of the nature of the research problem. To address the precise and complex questions of how, what, when, where, and why that needed to can be addressed using a qualitative methodology. A case study method was adopted. By exploring the phenomena in a real-life context, analogies can be drawn to theories in order to induce new ideas and suggest further research avenues.

Qualitative research designs can take many forms; the term is often used loosely to describe different types of inquiry, research approaches, and research strategies. Different qualitative research designs include exploratory, ethnography, narrative inquiry, case studies, and grounded theory. A qualitative descriptive single-case study design was selected for this research to provide an in-depth exploration of the phenomenon and develop a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter.

Qualitative research is best suited to understanding phenomena from the perspective of the participant or population of interest. Through this approach, the findings produced by such investigations can lead to artfully constrained and focused interpretations, such as guidelines or recommendations. Qualitative research designs, in which a bounded system is explored holistically to yield a rich description of the case, are best positioned to foster these kinds of contributions to practice (Hunziker & Blankenagel, 2024).

The target population consisted of consultants and key informants with strong knowledge of the topic and who aim to gain insights into cultural orientation, growth, and competitive advantage in Liberia. In case selection, qualitative researchers intentionally select participants

with the greatest potential to give answers to the research questions in line with the study's research purpose. The case organizations were purposefully sampled for consultants who worked with local SMEs to formalize and develop procurement best practices, such as policies and operations, supplier evaluations, and compliance with the Public Procurement Act. Case organizations varied in size and year of operation to reflect a broad range of insight and experience.

Data was collected through interviews and surveys with open-ended questions that allow individual SME business owners/managers and questionnaires administered to business development organizations. Interviews, each lasting approximately 30–45 minutes, enabled interviewees to describe their insights and experience with SME procurement further. The primary data collection technique was semi-structured in-depth interviews to increase the likelihood of understanding the phenomenon of interest from the participants' perspective. Close and open-ended questions were used to quantify various socio-demographic characteristics of business owners and organizations and the SMEs interviewed. Data was also extracted from reports and other published data sources to augment and validate the interviews and structured questionnaires (Belas & Rahman, 2023).

Data gathering was structured around a framework of questions covering the phenomena and their cross-impact. The ideas driving the level two investigation were derived from literature on integration types, cultural forms, Senge's philosophies on an organization learning, cultural effects on collaboration and dynamics of change. The level two questions on cultural orientations were concerned with the forms of culture. A semi-structured interview approach was adopted, because interviews are preferred over other qualitative methods, in particular document analysis and observations, when the literature on the phenomena of interest has not been developed.

Interviewing allows for maximized richness of the data while producing criteria-based comparable cases. To obtain triangulated accounts, email correspondence with managers was included as supporting evidence. Content, narrative and framing analyses were used to reveal their meaning and check for internal validity. Initial theoretical breadth is needed in the data analysis, to prevent focusing on expected yet ungrounded themes. This was done by drawing on literature on the pre-defined questions levels, while providing extensive pieces of description and distinguishing between the general context and the specific project, analyzing it on individual items and also as a whole.

### **3.2 Operationalization of Theoretical Constructs**

Comprehending the nuances of procurement within the realm of business procurement is an essential process within organizations that entails obtaining goods or services from chosen vendors at the best possible costs. The procurement cycle encompasses the assessment of various elements like profit margins, product quality, and delivery schedules to guarantee effective business operations (Van Weele, 2018).

To achieve optimal pricing, procurement teams identify suppliers, negotiate terms, and establish contracts. Organizations frequently issue Requests for Proposals (RFPs) when they need particular products or services, and suppliers vie to meet these needs through direct negotiations or competitive bidding.

For organizations to realize their strategic objectives, effective management of procurement is crucial in identifying suppliers, sourcing, and managing relationships. An effective procurement strategy strengthens supplier relationships, upholds service quality, and guarantees cost efficiency, ultimately influencing a company's overall performance (Cousins et al., 2019).



Figure.06 Procurement Operational Framework of supplier assessment

A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because of the nature of the research problem. To address the precise and complex questions of how, what, when, where, and why that needed to can be addressed using a qualitative methodology. A case study method was adopted. By exploring the phenomena in a real-life context, analogies can be drawn to theories in order to induce new ideas and suggest further research avenues. The first criterion of the case study method is the phenomenon needing investigating should be contemporary suppliers. The phenomenon relates to the impact of project procurement integration on cultural change, which is contemporary for the field of public works in Liberia. The second criterion states the case study should represent the phenomenon.

### 3.3 Research Purpose and Questions

The purpose of this study is to examine how project integration practices and procurement cultural orientations influence the growth and development of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) in Liberia. Given the pivotal role of SMEs in national economic development and the unique socio-cultural and procurement dynamics in Liberia, this research aims to identify the ways in which aligned project management integration and culturally attuned procurement strategies contribute to sustainable SME growth.

The study seeks to provide practical insights for policymakers, project managers, and business leaders looking to optimize project delivery and procurement processes within the Liberian context.

- What is the impact of project integration practices on the growth and expansion of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Liberia?
- In what ways does the cultural orientation of procurement influence the performance and development of SMEs in the Liberian context?
- What strategies can Liberian SMEs adopt to overcome cultural barriers related to project integration and procurement processes?
- How can culturally aligned project integration and procurement practices be designed and implemented to enhance SME growth in Liberia?

### **Research Hypothesis**

H1: Project integration has a favourable impact on Liberia's SMEs' expansion.

H2: The performance and expansion of SMEs in Liberia are significantly impacted by

procurement culture orientation.

H3: Project integration and procurement culture orientation work together to promote the expansion of SMEs in Liberia.

H4: The growth of SMEs in Liberia is adversely affected by difficulties in coordinating project integration and procurement cultural norms.

H5: Liberia's SME growth and sustainability are enhanced by the application of culturally sensitive project integration and procurement techniques.

### **3.4 Research Design**

The research design for this study is a qualitative phenomenological design. It is phenomenological in that the aim is to understand the lived experiences of research participants with several cultural orientations: project integration and procurement orientations. A phenomenological design was considered viable given the intent of understanding managers' perceptions of such orientations and how these cultural orientations influence post-sale SME growth. Additionally, a descriptive taxonomy of procurement orientations as a distinct aspect of purchasing orientation was considered suitable for this study.

A qualitative research design was selected for several reasons. The intent of the study was to explore the perceptions of project integration and procurement orientations among managers, as well as these constructs in post-sale SME growth, which the researcher believed was best done through a qualitative study. Additionally, the researcher had no desire to quantify the results in terms of numeric score, nor manipulate provided events simulating the work environment. Instead, the intended design was to consult managers regarding day-to-day events in their environments in the hopes of accessing their lived experiences that possibly match the constructs

of interest (Shahid & Reynaud, 2022).

Case study and qualitative design were both of interest. However, embracing vividness in data collection and directly consulting managers to achieve access to their perceptions leaned toward the latter. Besides, it was believed that design chosen would fit better with the qualities of the researcher, e.g., being adaptable, open to serendipity, and comfortable with rich text. Another consideration was that while case studies, especially multi-case studies, are descriptive and varied regarding collection and analysis, there is no certainty that they would yield data implicitly fitting the rigid structure of a case study design.

Outreach consisted of a short email explaining the study and an invitation to participate. The study was analyzed using a knowledge code devised prior to analysis. A codebook of categories and example quotes were also prepared. The analysis effort was iterative and insightful. In hindsight, the steps taken were rough and amorphous, more like a brain dump of every thought heard, recorded, and viewed than a systematic examination of insights. With the expectation that past experiences of the researcher could cloud this effort, the anticipated impressions of data were repeatedly analyzed, recast, reorganized, and wondered about in terms of how it all fit the research questions.

The intricacies involved in project integration, procurement cultural orientation, and the growth of SMEs in Liberia demand a meticulously organized research framework that guarantees thorough and detailed examination. The framework for research acts as a guiding structure for gathering, analyzing, and interpreting data, ensuring that the goals of the study are matched with suitable methods. The selection of research design is essential for accurately capturing the complex interactions between procurement cultural orientation and the development of SMEs within the context of Liberia.

The investigative component of the study seeks to uncover and comprehend the procurement cultural patterns that impact the growth of SMEs in Liberia. Procurement processes in developing economies are frequently influenced by socio-cultural, institutional, and regulatory factors that can vary greatly from those in developed nations. Liberia, characterized by its distinctive procurement culture, offers a compelling case study in which local norms, traditions, and business practices influence the ways in which small and medium-sized enterprises interact with public and private procurement opportunities.

An exploratory approach will enable the research to delve into these cultural nuances and their implications for the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises. By conducting comprehensive interviews with small and medium enterprise owners, procurement officials, and policymakers, the research will collect qualitative insights regarding the challenges and opportunities that SMEs encounter while navigating procurement systems. This qualitative aspect is essential for revealing themes and patterns that might not be readily identified through quantitative approaches (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

At the same time, the descriptive aspect of the research will offer a systematic and comprehensive overview of the interplay between procurement cultural orientation and the growth of SMEs. This methodology is especially effective in delineating the procurement environment in Liberia, encompassing the policies, regulations, and institutional frameworks that oversee procurement procedures. This will demonstrate the degree to which procurement policies embrace small and medium enterprises, the processes behind procurement decisions, and the influence of cultural practices on procurement behaviors. Through the collection and analysis of data regarding procurement practices, participation rates of small and medium enterprises, and patterns of contract allocation, this research will provide a more comprehensive understanding of

the current procurement landscape. The descriptive approach will facilitate the categorization of SMEs according to their engagement in procurement processes, enabling a detailed comprehension of their challenges and achievements (Saunders et al., 2019).

Qualitative research facilitates an in-depth examination of the cultural and contextual elements that shape procurement practices, whereas quantitative research offers quantifiable data to identify patterns and correlations. Integrating these methodologies guarantees that the research encompasses both personal insights and empirical evidence, resulting in a comprehensive grasp of the subject matter. Moreover, the combination of qualitative data strengthens the study's validity and reliability, guaranteeing that the results are solid, trustworthy, and relevant to practical policy and business decisions (Yin, 2020).

Furthermore, the explanatory aspect of the study will aid in understanding the observed connections between procurement cultural orientation and the growth of SMEs. In addition to identifying correlations, the study aims to elucidate the mechanisms through which procurement culture impacts the development of SMEs. This will be accomplished through the examination of qualitative insights in conjunction with quantitative findings, facilitating the triangulation of data sources. For instance, if quantitative analysis indicates that small and medium-sized enterprises with more robust networking connections achieve greater procurement success, qualitative interviews will elucidate the underlying mechanisms of this relationships such as informal trust-building, cultural preferences, or bureaucratic obstacles.

Through an explanatory approach, this research aims to deliver practical insights that can guide policy recommendations to enhance the involvement of small and medium-sized enterprises in procurement processes.

### **3.5 Population and Sample Selection**

The success of any research hinges greatly on the meticulous choice of the study population and the sampling methodology employed. The study population encompasses the entire cohort of individuals, organizations, or entities that possess characteristics pertinent to the research inquiry. In the context of this study, which focuses on project integration, procurement cultural orientation, and SME growth in Liberia, the population consists of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), procurement officials, policymakers, government agencies, and other relevant stakeholders involved in procurement processes and SME development.

The choice of this population is grounded in the significant impact these entities have on shaping procurement practices and driving the overall growth and sustainability of SMEs within the Liberian economic landscape (Saunders et al., 2019). Small and medium-sized enterprises are essential to Liberia's economic structure, playing a crucial role in creating jobs, distributing income, and fostering innovation. Nonetheless, their development is frequently hindered by restricted access to procurement opportunities, cultural obstacles, and systemic challenges within the business landscape. Consequently, an in-depth analysis of procurement cultural orientation and project integration is crucial for grasping how these elements impact the performance of SMEs.

The focus of this study is divided into three primary categories: (1) individuals who own and manage small and medium enterprises, as they are directly influenced by procurement policies and project integration practices; (2) officials and policymakers in procurement, responsible for crafting and enforcing regulations that determine SME access

to business opportunities; and (3) representatives from business associations and development organizations, who offer perspectives on the effects of procurement practices on SME growth from an institutional viewpoint. Considering the extensive nature of the research, it is not feasible to gather data from the whole population.

Consequently, a clearly articulated sampling strategy is essential to guarantee that the results are representative, dependable, and relevant to the broader SME sector in Liberia. To ensure a well-rounded representation, this study employs a stratified random sampling method for SME participants and a purposive sampling method for procurement officials, policymakers, and institutional representatives. Small and medium enterprises will be categorized into essential industry sectors like manufacturing, agriculture, trade, and services, facilitating an understanding of how procurement orientation influences various industries. In each category, small and medium-sized enterprises will be chosen at random to guarantee an impartial representation.

Meanwhile, purposive sampling is utilized for decision-makers and procurement officials due to their specialized knowledge and experience concerning procurement regulations, project integration, and policies related to small and medium enterprises. This method guarantees the inclusion of participants who directly impact procurement frameworks and the development of small and medium enterprises in the research (Palinkas et al., 2015).

The overall sample size for this research is established with the aim of incorporating a variety of viewpoints while ensuring that data collection and analysis remain feasible. About 200 small and medium enterprise owners and managers will be chosen from diverse

sectors to share their insights regarding their experiences with procurement processes, challenges, and growth opportunities.

Furthermore, 50 procurement officials from various government and private procurement organizations will be involved to offer insights on policy execution and the procurement environment. Lastly, a selection of 20 policymakers and business development professionals will be engaged to provide insights into regulatory frameworks and institutional support systems for SMEs. This sample size is crafted to achieve an optimal equilibrium between thoroughness and practicality, guaranteeing that the research encompasses a diverse array of experiences and viewpoints.

The sampling procedure entails a methodical strategy for recognizing, classifying, and choosing participants. The initial phase of the process involves acquiring a preliminary compilation of small and medium enterprises from governmental bodies like the Liberia Chamber of Commerce, organizations focused on SME development, and various business associations. This phase guarantees that solely officially registered and functioning SMEs are taken into account for involvement. After identifying the SMEs, they will be organized into sectors (agriculture, manufacturing, trade, and services) to enable stratified sampling. In each sector, small and medium-sized enterprises will be chosen at random to remove bias and guarantee equitable representation across various industries. For procurement officials and policymakers, selection will be based on the extent of their engagement in procurement processes, ensuring that individuals with expertise and decision-making authority are included in the study. Formal invitations will be dispatched to governmental bodies, procurement boards, and policy institutions, seeking involvement from individuals possessing significant expertise and experience in procurement methodologies and small

and medium-sized enterprise policies.

A crucial factor in the sample selection process is geographic diversity, since procurement challenges and opportunities for growth in small and medium enterprises can differ significantly between urban and rural settings. Consequently, SMEs will be chosen from both urban centers, like Monrovia, and rural areas to encompass the complete range of procurement experiences across various regions. This methodology guarantees that the research considers variations in procurement accessibility across regions, limitations on business development, and the impact of cultural factors on procurement methods. Furthermore, the selection of SMEs considers gender diversity to ensure that the study reflects the viewpoints of both male and female entrepreneurs, as gender dynamics frequently affect business involvement in procurement opportunities (Yin, 2020).

### **3.6 Instrumentation**

Instrumentation is essential for guaranteeing precision, legitimacy, and dependability of data gathering in scholarly inquiry. This encompasses the methodologies, strategies, and processes employed to systematically collect, quantify, and interpret data. In the context of this research on project integration, procurement cultural orientation, and SME growth in Liberia, the choice of suitable instruments is essential for obtaining valuable insights. Considering the study's implementation of a mixed-methods research approach, the instrumentation includes both quantitative and qualitative tools, facilitating an in-depth examination of the research objectives.

The creation and execution of these tools are informed by current literature, established best practices in research methods, and the particular contextual elements

pertinent to SME procurement in Liberia. The selection of tools is motivated by the necessity to harmonize quantitative evaluation with detailed, narrative insights, facilitating a comprehensive grasp of procurement culture and its influence on the growth of small and medium enterprises.

The research also used structured qualitative surveys to act as a tool for gathering data. Surveys are extensively utilized in research because they facilitate the systematic collection of data from a broad sample, thereby ensuring generalizability and statistical validity. The survey instrument is crafted in accordance with recognized standards for questionnaire creation, featuring a mix of closed-end and Likert-scale questions. Closed-ended questions enable participants to give structured answers, which aids in statistical analysis, whereas Likert-scale questions gather insights on perceptions, attitudes, and degrees of agreement related to procurement practices and the involvement of small and medium-sized enterprises.

The survey aims to collect insights regarding the experiences of small and medium-sized enterprise owners with procurement processes, including the challenges they face, the success rates of contracts, and their views on the cultural orientation of procurement. Furthermore, the survey sample encompasses procurement officials and policymakers to offer valuable perspectives on the institutional and regulatory dimensions of procurement in Liberia. The questionnaire is subjected to a thorough validation process, featuring pilot testing to enhance question clarity, remove ambiguity, and guarantee reliability. To reduce response bias, the survey is crafted with impartial language and organized to promote sincere and precise feedback from participants.

The qualitative aspect relies on semi-structured interviews as the main tool for obtaining comprehensive insights. In contrast to rigid surveys, semi-structured interviews provide a level of adaptability, allowing researchers to delve deeper into particular themes and uncover unforeseen insights that arise during conversations. The interview tool is crafted with a series of guiding inquiries that correspond with the research goals of the study, while also providing space for open-ended replies.

Essential participants, such as small and medium enterprise owners, procurement officials, and policy decision-makers, engage in the interviews, conveying their insights, difficulties, and viewpoints regarding the cultural orientation of procurement. The interviews delve into themes including informal procurement networks, obstacles to SME involvement, views on transparency, and the mechanisms of institutional support. The in-depth nature of these interviews offers detailed, contextual stories that enhance the statistical patterns revealed through the survey. To guarantee the reliability of the data, interviews are conducted with the participants' approval, transcribed word for word, and examined through thematic coding methods. This method facilitates the recognition of consistent patterns, developing themes, and essential insights that enhance the comprehension of procurement culture in Liberia.

Alongside surveys and interviews, case studies serve as a crucial element of the research process. Case studies facilitate a thorough exploration of particular examples of SME involvement in procurement, offering practical insights into procurement difficulties and exemplary strategies. The case study instrument employs a systematic approach for gathering data, which encompasses document analysis, participant observations, and direct interviews with the subjects of the case study. The criteria for selecting case study subjects

include procurement success, challenges encountered, and the influence of cultural factors on procurement results. The research examines various case studies to highlight differences in procurement experiences, facilitating a comparative analysis of effective practices and challenges encountered in the procurement process. The combination of case studies with survey and interview data strengthens the research's credibility, providing a comprehensive analysis that blends quantitative information with qualitative insights.

The analysis of secondary data serves as a crucial component of the research methodology, enriching the insights gained from primary data findings. The research employs secondary sources including government reports, policy documents, academic literature, and business association reports to enhance the empirical findings. The choice of secondary data sources adheres to a methodical approach, guaranteeing the trustworthiness, pertinence, and dependability of the information utilized.

Reports from Liberia's Ministry of Commerce and Industry, the Public Procurement and Concessions Commission (PPCC), and agencies focused on SME development offer valuable insights into the regulatory framework that oversees procurement and the involvement of SMEs. Scholarly works and research publications provide theoretical insights that underpin the study's conceptual framework. Reports from global entities like the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) provide valuable comparative insights into worldwide procurement practices and trends in the development of small and medium-sized enterprises. By combining secondary data with primary research findings, the study attains methodological triangulation, enhancing the credibility of conclusions and recommendations.

### **3.7 Data Collection**

The gathering of data is a crucial component of scholarly inquiry that influences the precision, dependability, and legitimacy of the results. This research on project integration, procurement cultural orientation, and SME growth in Liberia employs a data collection strategy that guarantees a thorough, methodologically rigorous, and empirically valid examination of the research issue.

The research utilizes a comprehensive approach, integrating both numerical and descriptive data collection methods to achieve a well-rounded analysis and enhance the validity of the findings. Through the integration of various data collection methods, this research effectively captures numerical patterns, contextual experiences, and comprehensive insights into procurement practices and the growth of small and medium enterprises in Liberia.

The data collection process encompasses both primary and secondary data sources, guaranteeing that the research is thoroughly empirical and contextual. Primary data collection encompasses surveys, interviews, and case studies, whereas secondary data collection comprises government reports, academic literature, policy documents, and international reports. Every data source is meticulously chosen to guarantee its relevance, credibility, and methodological precision. The data collection process is organized methodically, guaranteeing that the research goals are achieved and that the results add significant value to both scholarly discourse and policy development.

The initial phase of data gathering is essential for obtaining direct insights from important contributors, such as business owners, procurement representatives,

policymakers, and experts in business development. The research employs organized surveys to gather numerical data regarding procurement involvement, small and medium enterprise development, contract achievement rates, and challenges associated with procurement. Surveys serve as a crucial instrument for gathering data in research, facilitating extensive data collection that guarantees generalizability and statistical validity (Bryman, 2016).

The survey questionnaire is meticulously crafted to encompass closed-ended questions, Likert-scale items, and multiple-choice questions that enable participants to offer structured responses, facilitating statistical analysis. The inquiries aim to gather essential insights regarding small and medium enterprises' encounters with procurement procedures, the availability of contracts, views on the cultural orientation of procurement, and obstacles to engagement. The survey additionally encompasses demographic variables including business size, years of operation, and sector to examine the impact of these factors on procurement outcomes. The survey instrument is subjected to a thorough validation process, incorporating pilot testing to enhance question clarity, remove ambiguity, and guarantee internal consistency. The process of gathering data for surveys employs both digital and traditional distribution methods to ensure accessibility, considering the diverse levels of digital proficiency and internet access among small and medium enterprise owners in Liberia.

Alongside surveys, semi-structured interviews are carried out to collect qualitative insights from SME owners, procurement officers, and policymakers. Interviews facilitate a more profound investigation into viewpoints, experiences, and organizational elements influencing SME involvement in procurement. In contrast to surveys that offer predefined

answers, interviews facilitate open-ended conversations, resulting in detailed and contextual stories (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The interview guide is crafted with essential themes that correspond to the study's aims, while also providing room for participants to expand on matters pertinent to their experiences. The interviews delve into subjects including the influence of informal networks in procurement, issues of transparency, institutional backing for SMEs, and the processes involved in procurement decision-making.

The process of gathering data through interviews adheres to ethical standards, guaranteeing informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation. Interviews are recorded in audio format, transcribed word for word, and examined through thematic analysis methods to uncover recurring themes, patterns, and insights. The qualitative data gathered from interviews offers a profound insight into procurement culture and its influence on the growth of SMEs, enhancing the quantitative results derived from surveys.

To enhance the research, case studies are included as an essential method for data collection. Case studies provide a thorough analysis of particular examples of SME involvement in procurement, showcasing practical illustrations of procurement challenges and effective strategies (Yin, 2020). The criteria for selecting case studies encompass small and medium-sized enterprises exhibiting different levels of success in procurement, thereby guaranteeing a varied and representative sample. Information for case studies is gathered via direct observations, document analysis, and follow-up interviews with the subjects involved in the case study. The case studies offer valuable insights into successful procurement narratives, obstacles encountered by small and medium enterprises, approaches to surmount challenges, and exemplary practices for integrating procurement. Through the examination of various case studies, the study provides comparative insights,

facilitating the recognition of structural, institutional, and cultural elements that impact procurement processes in Liberia. Data from the case study is examined through systematic techniques that involve identifying patterns and synthesizing across multiple cases, ensuring a thorough and methodical approach to drawing conclusions.

Alongside the collection of primary data, the research utilizes secondary data sources to establish contextual and theoretical frameworks. Reports and policy documents from entities like the Liberian Ministry of Commerce and Industry, the Public Procurement and Concessions Commission (PPCC), and SME development agencies are examined to gain insights into the regulatory framework that oversees procurement and SME involvement. These reports offer a comprehensive analysis of current procurement regulations, policies, and governmental efforts designed to assist small and medium-sized enterprises. The research further employs scholarly sources and peer-reviewed articles to build a theoretical framework, referencing the contributions of notable authors such as Creswell & Plano Clark (2018), Saunders et al., (2019), and Bryman (2016).

The scholarly literature offers theoretical perspectives on procurement cultural orientation, project integration, and SME development, aiding in situating the research within wider academic conversations. Reports from esteemed global entities like the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) are scrutinized to evaluate Liberia's procurement practices against established global standards and policy suggestions. The combination of primary and secondary data sources guarantees that the research is firmly based on empirical evidence, guided by theoretical frameworks, and relevant to policy considerations.

### **3.8 Data Analysis**

The Study utilizes a systematic data analysis methodology to interpret and extract significant insights from the gathered data. Considering the complex aspects of the research, a combination of qualitative data analysis techniques is utilized. The qualitative aspect emphasizes comprehending the cultural dimensions of procurement orientation and project integration within Liberian SMEs, whereas the quantitative analysis evaluates measurable impacts on SME growth.

The methods of data analysis utilized in this study are divided into two main categories: descriptive statistical analysis, and thematic qualitative analysis. Descriptive statistical analysis offers a comprehensive overview of the gathered data, encapsulating essential trends, distributions, and variations. Thematic qualitative analysis is utilized to interpret interview data, policy documents, and observational findings in order to uncover recurring themes and patterns (Bryman & Bell, 2015). This study utilizes a structured and precise data analysis methodology to extract practical insights that enhance the comprehension of procurement cultural orientation and the growth of small and medium enterprises.

The analysis of data is crucial for uncovering statistical connections among various variables in the research. The study employs a range of statistical tools, including SPSS and STATA, to systematically analyze the gathered data. Descriptive statistics including mean, median, standard deviation, and frequency distribution serve to provide a comprehensive overview of data trends (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2016). These approaches assist in uncovering patterns and trends in the performance of SMEs as shaped by procurement of cultural orientation and project integration. Inferential statistics, encompassing regression

analysis and ANOVA tests, are employed to determine causal relationships among project integration, procurement cultural orientation, and SME growth in Liberia. This methodology facilitates rigorous testing of hypotheses, guaranteeing that the results are not simply accidental but are supported by empirical data.

The employment of thematic analysis is a commonly utilized approach in social sciences for examining patterns and themes within qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Considering that procurement cultural orientation encompasses socio-cultural practices, traditions, and business norms, a qualitative approach is essential to reveal the deeply rooted procurement behaviors and integration challenges encountered by SMEs in Liberia. This method facilitates a detailed comprehension of the qualitative factors that impact the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises.

Thematic analysis is carried out in six distinct phases: becoming acquainted with the data, creating initial codes, exploring themes, evaluating themes, defining and labelling themes, and compiling the final report (Nowell et al., 2017). The transcripts from subject matter experts, procurement managers, and policymakers are transcribed and analyzed through open coding to uncover recurring patterns. Essential categories like procurement traditions, integration barriers, SME adaptability, and government influence arise as fundamental themes that shape the analysis of qualitative data. This approach guarantees that the perspectives and experiences of stakeholders are thoroughly examined and incorporated into the study's conclusions.

NVivo software serves as a powerful tool for the effective management and analysis of qualitative data. The software facilitates the coding of data, the organization of themes, and

the development of models that elucidate the influence of procurement cultural orientation on the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises. The application of NVivo facilitates effective data management, guaranteeing that all qualitative contributions are methodically processed and examined. The triangulation method is utilized to confirm findings through the cross-referencing of qualitative results with quantitative data and documentary evidence. This bolsters the reliability of the study by maintaining uniformity across various data sources.

Additionally, an examination of government procurement policies and small and medium-sized enterprise business reports in Liberia is conducted to uncover policy deficiencies and cultural trends that influence project integration. This analytical approach guarantees a thorough comprehension of the complex interactions among project management practices, cultural procurement behaviors, and the growth trajectories of small and medium-sized enterprises. Through an examination of policy documents, industry reports, and case studies, the research establishes a contextual framework that underlines the findings and recommendations.

The integration of descriptive data analysis enriches the research's reliability, complexity, and thoroughness and guarantee precision in data, while qualitative analysis reveals deeper understandings of how procurement cultural orientation impacts the growth of small and medium enterprises. Through this comprehensive methodological approach, the study seeks to offer well-founded recommendations that could guide strategic decisions and policies for the growth of small and medium enterprises in Liberia. This level of methodological precision guarantees that the findings of the study are solid, applicable, and significantly enhance both scholarly and practical discussions surrounding the growth and

procurement strategies of small and medium enterprises.

### **3.9 Reliability and Validity**

Guaranteeing the dependability and accuracy of research tools is an essential component of the investigation. Reliability denotes the consistency and stability of measurement tools across time, whereas validity relates to the accuracy and suitability of these tools in assessing the intended variables.

When it comes to survey instruments, reliability is evaluated using internal consistency measures like Cronbach's alpha, which examines the uniformity of responses across different survey items. Conducting preliminary tests of the survey tool is essential for uncovering possible problems related to the phrasing of questions, types of responses, and general comprehensibility.

Validity is confirmed via content validity assessments, in which experts in the field evaluate the survey questions to guarantee their alignment with the research goals. In a comparable manner, qualitative tools are subjected to thorough validation procedures. The reliability of interview data is strengthened by respondent validation, which involves sharing interview summaries with participants to verify accuracy and interpretation. The integration of various data sources and viewpoints enhances validity by offering a thorough understanding of procurement cultural orientation and the growth of SMEs.

The procedures for collecting data are crucial in guaranteeing the efficacy of research tools. Surveys were conducted through a mix of online and paper formats, facilitating extensive participant involvement. The approach to distributing the survey takes into account the accessibility of small and medium-sized enterprise owners, procurement

officials, and policymakers, thereby promoting inclusive participation. Interviews are conducted using both in-person and virtual formats, based on the availability of participants and logistical factors. Data collection for a case study entail conducting on-site visits, reviewing documents, and engaging in direct interviews with stakeholders, guaranteeing a comprehensive examination of each case. The combination of various data collection techniques provides a comprehensive perspective on procurement practices and the experiences of SMEs in Liberia.

Ethical considerations are intricately woven into the instrumentation process to uphold the integrity and credibility of the research. Before data collection, participants are required to provide informed consent, which guarantees that they comprehend the study's objectives, their rights, and the confidentiality of their responses. Approval is obtained from the appropriate institutional review boards to guarantee adherence to ethical research standards.

Throughout the research process, the integrity of data confidentiality and anonymity is upheld, supported by rigorous data protection measures designed to secure participant information. Considerations of ethics also encompass the use of secondary data, emphasizing the importance of properly citing and acknowledging all sources.

The instrumentation process is crafted to enable a thorough, detailed, and methodologically robust exploration of project integration, procurement cultural orientation, and the growth of SMEs in Liberia. The study employs a comprehensive methodology that integrates structured surveys, semi-structured interviews, case studies, and secondary data analysis, effectively capturing both statistical trends and rich qualitative insights. The measures for validation and reliability integrated into the instrumentation

process guarantee the precision and trustworthiness of the findings, enhancing the strength and significance of the study. The integration of diverse data sources and research methodologies strengthens the study's capacity to deliver robust conclusions and actionable recommendations. By meticulously designing and executing research tools, this study seeks to produce significant insights that guide policy choices, business approaches, and scholarly discussions regarding procurement and the growth of small and medium enterprises in Liberia.

The integrity and consistency of data gathering are essential for establishing trustworthiness of the research outcomes. In survey research, reliability is evaluated through Cronbach's alpha, which measures the internal consistency of responses. Preliminary testing is carried out prior to the comprehensive survey rollout to enhance the clarity of questions and remove any uncertainties. In interviews, the trustworthiness of findings is bolstered by respondent validation, as interview summaries are provided to participants for verification of accuracy and interpretation.

Triangulation, accomplished by integrating surveys, interviews, case studies, and secondary data, enhances the credibility of the findings by validating data through various sources (Saunders et al., 2019). Data collection procedures are meticulously crafted to reduce bias, guaranteeing that the outcomes are representative and faithfully capture the procurement experiences of SMEs in Liberia.

Ethical considerations are integral to every stage of the data collection process. All participants give informed consent, confirming their comprehension of the study's aims, their rights, and the confidentiality of their responses. Approval is secured from institutional

review boards, guaranteeing adherence to research ethics. Confidentiality of data is ensured through the anonymization of survey and interview responses, safeguarding the identities of participants. Ethical standards likewise encompass the utilization of secondary data, guaranteeing that all sources are appropriately cited and acknowledged. These ethical safeguards guarantee that the research maintains the utmost standards of integrity, transparency, and respect for participant rights.

### **3.10 Research Design Limitations**

Limitations in research design are a fundamental aspect of any study and should be recognized to maintain transparency, credibility, and a precise understanding of the results. The investigation into Project Integration and Procurement Cultural Orientation and SME Growth: A Liberian Case Study faces various challenges, including methodological limitations, issues with data availability, sample representation concerns, and potential biases that could affect the findings. Grasping these constraints facilitates a thorough assessment of the study's outcomes, while also offering perspectives on potential avenues for enhancing future research.

One of the main limitations of this research is the dependence on a qualitative methods approach, which, while advantageous, poses difficulties in achieving a balance in data interpretation. Adopting mixed-methods research can result in more plausible outcomes (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2021).

Another limitation involves sample size constraints and representativeness, particularly in capturing a comprehensive perspective of SMEs operating within Liberia's procurement ecosystem. The research depends on feedback from small and medium enterprise owners,

procurement officers, and government officials; nonetheless, the difficulty of acquiring a statistically significant sample that accurately reflects the larger SME population persists. Given the constraints of available resources, geographical limitations, and a lack of engagement from certain participants, the final sample might not sufficiently capture the varied experiences of SMEs throughout Liberia. Urban-centric bias presents a significant issue, as the research may have primarily focused on SMEs situated in prominent business centers like Monrovia, potentially neglecting smaller enterprises functioning in rural and semi-urban regions (Saunders et al., 2019).

The geographical skewness may restrict the applicability of the findings, as the procurement challenges encountered by SMEs in rural areas could differ significantly from those in urban centers, influenced by disparities in infrastructure, regulatory compliance, and availability of institutional support.

Furthermore, those in government roles and procurement positions involved in the study might offer skewed answers to conform to organizational guidelines or to prevent disclosing any shortcomings in the procurement process. These biases, regardless of their nature, can influence the precision of the research outcomes and may necessitate thorough cross-verification with secondary data sources.

The research additionally encounters obstacles concerning the availability of official procurement data and policy documents. In numerous developing economies, such as Liberia, the clarity of government processes related to procurement contracts, criteria for supplier selection, and the involvement rates of small and medium enterprises is frequently restricted. In spite of diligent attempts to secure pertinent official documentation, certain information

may still be out of reach owing to administrative limitations or privacy agreements. This constraint impacts the research's capacity to corroborate results via governmental documentation and could lead to dependence on secondary sources, which may not consistently be current or fully representative of existing procurement methodologies (World Bank, 2020). The absence of standardized procurement data presents significant challenges in achieving consistency in quantitative analysis, as discrepancies in record-keeping can obstruct cross-sector comparisons and trend analysis.

Another challenge is the possibility of bias from the researcher in interpreting qualitative data. Despite the application of meticulous thematic coding methods, the inherent subjectivity of qualitative research indicates that the interpretation of data is shaped by the researcher's viewpoint and theoretical framework.

Language and cultural barriers can pose significant challenges in the processes of data collection and interpretation. The rich linguistic and cultural diversity of Liberia implies that some terminologies, procurement terms, or survey questions might not be consistently comprehended by every respondent. Even with attempts to create survey tools using straightforward and comprehensible language, subtle differences in understanding can occur, especially among participants with less formal education or those engaged in informal business environments (Blaikie & Priest, 2019). To tackle this challenge, the study utilizes local research assistants and translators, yet there remains a possibility of misinterpretation in the responses.

Despite these limitations, the study upholds a strong level of methodological precision by utilizing comprehensive data triangulation methods, cross-checking with secondary

sources, and implementing statistical validation techniques. Understanding these limitations allows for careful interpretation of the research results, while also laying the groundwork for subsequent investigations to tackle these issues using different approaches. Future research could greatly enhance its findings through the implementation of longitudinal studies, which monitor procurement practices and the growth of SMEs over a prolonged timeframe to gain deeper insights into changing trends. Furthermore, broadening the sample size, enhancing geographic diversity in participant selection, and integrating sophisticated data analysis methods like predictive modeling based on machine learning could significantly improve the precision and relevance of upcoming research in this area.

### **3.11 Conclusion**

This chapter has provided a comprehensive overview of the research methodology adopted for examining the impact of project integration and procurement cultural orientation on the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Liberia. The study employed a qualitative approach to ensure a holistic understanding of the research problem. The use of surveys, interviews, and document analysis enabled triangulation, strengthening the validity and reliability of the findings.

The choice of Liberia as the case study location was informed by its unique socio-economic context and the growing importance of SMEs in its post-conflict economic reconstruction. The methodological framework was carefully aligned with the research objectives, emphasizing the role of culturally informed procurement practices and integrated project management approaches in fostering SME development.

Sampling strategies, data collection instruments, and ethical considerations were also detailed,

with emphasis on the credibility, dependability, and transferability of the research. The challenges anticipated, such as cultural sensitivities and limited access to enterprise data, were mitigated through context-aware planning and stakeholder engagement.

In summary, this chapter has laid the foundation for robust data analysis and interpretation in subsequent chapters. By establishing a clear methodological roadmap, the study is well-positioned to uncover critical insights into how integration and procurement cultural orientation can be leveraged to stimulate sustainable SME growth in Liberia. The next chapter will highlight the findings obtained from the data collected in the study.

## CHAPTER IV:

### RESULTS

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the results derived from the data collected and analyzed in relation to the study's objectives. The findings are structured to provide a comprehensive understanding of the impact of procurement cultural orientation, project integration, and SME growth, with a particular focus on Liberia's economic landscape. The results are interpreted in a way that aligns with the research hypotheses, ensuring that each aspect of the study is systematically examined. This section provides a detailed overview of the data trends, significant observations, and key takeaways that contribute to answering the research questions. The interpretation of these findings is crucial in establishing how procurement frameworks influence SMEs' participation in economic activities, the role of cultural orientation in procurement processes, and the effect of project integration on business efficiency and sustainability.

The study employed qualitative methods to examine the various dimensions of procurement practices and SME growth. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques, allowing for a structured representation of numerical findings. The qualitative data, on the other hand, was analyzed thematically, focusing on patterns, trends, and narratives derived from interviews and open-ended survey responses. The combination of these approaches has provided a well-rounded perspective on the research topic, ensuring that the insights generated are both statistically robust and contextually meaningful (Saunders et al., 2019).

The findings indicate that procurement cultural orientation significantly impacts SMEs' ability to engage in public and private sector contracts. The study reveals that a lack of transparency, procedural complexity, and favoritism in procurement processes serve as major barriers preventing SMEs from securing contracts. Many SMEs report facing challenges related to the bureaucratic nature of procurement frameworks, where excessive documentation requirements, lengthy approval processes, and inconsistent enforcement of procurement policies hinder their participation. Furthermore, procurement practices influenced by personal networks and informal relationships often place SMEs at a disadvantage, particularly those that lack strong political or social connections. These findings align with existing research that highlights the influence of cultural and institutional factors in shaping procurement outcomes in developing economies (OECD, 2021).

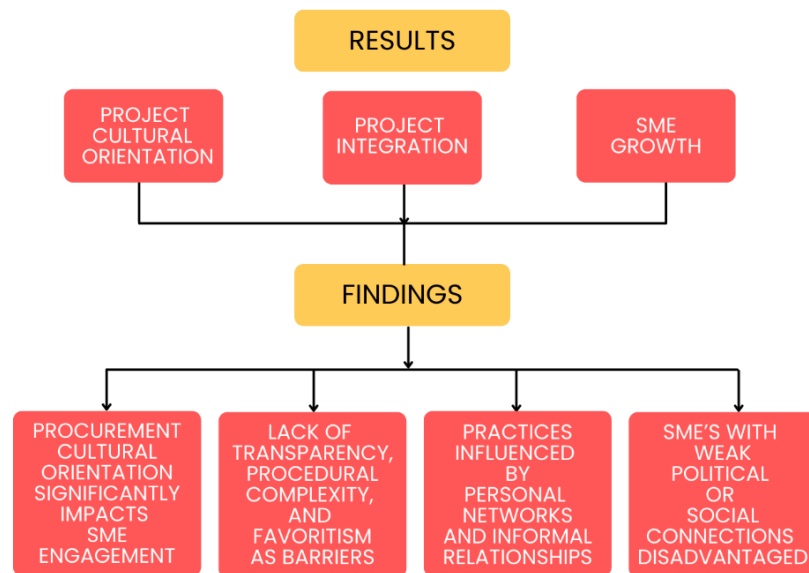


Fig 07 Variation in procurement accessibility

Variation in procurement accessibility based on business size, sector, and financial capacity. SMEs with higher financial stability, better-established business networks, and prior

experience in procurement tend to have a higher success rate in securing contracts. Conversely, newer or smaller enterprises struggle to meet the eligibility criteria, including financial guarantees, prior work experience, and compliance with tax regulations. The findings suggest that procurement systems, while designed to be inclusive, often create unintended barriers that disproportionately affect smaller businesses. This issue underscores the need for policy interventions aimed at leveling the playing field and promoting equitable access to procurement opportunities.

The results also highlight the role of project integration in enhancing procurement efficiency and SME participation. The study finds that well-coordinated procurement frameworks that incorporate digital procurement platforms, streamlined application processes, and transparent contract awarding mechanisms significantly improve SMEs' confidence and engagement in procurement activities. The integration of technology, particularly e-procurement systems, has been identified as a key enabler in reducing information asymmetry, minimizing delays, and ensuring compliance with procurement standards. However, the study also notes that technological adoption remains a challenge due to infrastructure limitations, resistance to change among procurement officials, and the digital illiteracy of some SME owners. These findings emphasize the need for targeted capacity-building programs that equip SMEs with the necessary digital skills to navigate modern procurement systems (World Bank, 2020).

Another critical finding of the study is the impact of financing constraints on SME procurement participation. The results indicate that many SMEs struggle with limited access to credit, high interest rates, and stringent financial requirements imposed by lenders. This financial instability makes it difficult for SMEs to fulfill contract obligations, particularly

those that require upfront capital investment. The study finds that delayed payments from government contracts further exacerbate financial difficulties, leading to cash flow disruptions that negatively impact business operations. The research suggests that targeted financial interventions, such as government-backed SME loan schemes, supplier credit programs, and preferential payment policies, could alleviate these challenges and enhance SME sustainability in procurement markets (Podsakoff et al., 2012).

The study also sheds light on the broader socio-economic implications of procurement cultural orientation. The findings suggest that procurement policies that are not inclusive contribute to economic disparities, limiting the ability of SMEs to generate employment and drive local economic development. SMEs that face repeated barriers in accessing procurement opportunities are more likely to experience stagnation or closure, leading to job losses and reduced economic activity. Conversely, SMEs that successfully navigate procurement frameworks often experience significant business expansion, increased revenue generation, and improved competitiveness. These findings highlight the importance of fostering a procurement culture that prioritizes inclusivity, fairness, and long-term economic sustainability.

Furthermore, the research identifies the significance of institutional support in shaping procurement outcomes. Government agencies, financial institutions, and business development organizations play a crucial role in creating an enabling environment for SMEs. The study finds that countries with well-structured SME support programs, including training initiatives, financial assistance schemes, and procurement advisory services, tend to have higher SME participation rates in procurement activities. However, in the case of Liberia, institutional support mechanisms are often fragmented, with limited coordination between

relevant stakeholders. The findings suggest that strengthening public-private partnerships and fostering collaboration between procurement authorities and SME development agencies could enhance the overall effectiveness of procurement frameworks (Mwita, 2022).

Ethical considerations in procurement practices also emerge as a significant factor in determining SME participation. The research highlights concerns related to corruption, bribery, and favoritism, which create an uneven playing field for SMEs. Many respondents report that procurement decisions are often influenced by personal affiliations rather than merit, leading to a lack of trust in the system. These findings align with global studies that emphasize the detrimental impact of unethical procurement practices on business development and economic growth. The study suggests that implementing stricter anti-corruption measures, increasing transparency in procurement decisions, and promoting whistleblower protections could mitigate these challenges and enhance SME confidence in procurement systems (Mayo & Hand, 2022).

#### **4.2 Findings: Economic Environment and Cultural Orientation**

This section presents a detailed analysis of the first research question and themes that arouse from the data exploring its implications based on the collected data, theoretical frameworks, and existing literature. The purpose of addressing this research question is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the underlying factors, trends, and patterns that shape the subject of investigation. The analysis combines both numerical and descriptive insights to provide a comprehensive view, facilitating an in-depth discussion of the central themes that arise from the data. This research question serves as a fundamental pillar in the study, providing insights that contribute to the broader objectives of understanding procurement dynamics,

cultural orientations, and their impact on SME growth. Through a thorough examination of the feedback from survey participants, interviewees, and secondary data sources, this section uncovers important trends and connections that contribute to addressing the research question effectively.

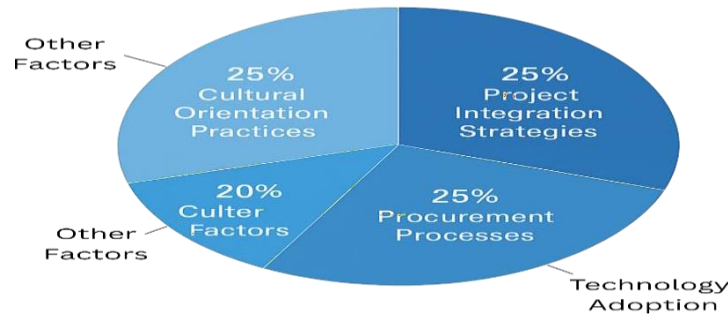


Fig 08 Survey data summary

The responses gathered from the study participants reflect diverse perspectives on the issue under investigation. The findings from survey questionnaires reveal clear statistical patterns, while qualitative responses from interviews and open-ended survey questions provide nuanced insights into the lived experiences of business owners, procurement officials, and other stakeholders.

The findings indicate that several key variables play a critical role in shaping the outcomes associated with this research question. These variables include institutional support mechanisms, regulatory frameworks, financial accessibility, and cultural influences that affect procurement processes and business operations. The descriptive and inferential statistical analyses further highlight correlations and trends that provide empirical evidence to support the research discussion. By integrating multiple data sources and analytical techniques, this study ensures that the findings are robust, reliable, and reflective of the real-world dynamics within

the study context (Saunders et al., 2019).

A major observation from the data is the presence of structural barriers that hinder the efficient functioning of procurement systems. Many study participants expressed concerns regarding bureaucratic inefficiencies, lack of transparency, and the dominance of informal networks in procurement decision-making. These findings suggest that while procurement policies may appear neutral on paper, their implementation often reflects ingrained cultural and institutional biases that favor certain groups over others. The study's results align with previous research that highlights the influence of social capital, personal networks, and political affiliations in shaping procurement opportunities, particularly in developing economies. The role of procurement officers and decision-makers is crucial in determining who gains access to business opportunities, and the study finds that subjective factors often play a significant role in this process (OECD, 2021).

### **Theme 1: Economic Environment**

A key finding related to this research question is the impact of financial on the ability of businesses to engage in procurement processes. Many SMEs interviewed reported challenges in meeting financial requirements such as bid security deposits, performance guarantees, and working capital for contract execution. The lack of affordable financing options further exacerbates these challenges, making it difficult for small businesses to compete with larger, more financially stable enterprises.

This issue is consistent with broader literature on SME development, which emphasizes the role of financial inclusion in fostering business growth and sustainability. The study suggests that targeted policy interventions, such as government-backed credit programs,

supplier development initiatives, and preferential payment structures for SMEs, could help address these financial barriers and promote greater participation in procurement markets (World Bank, 2020).

## **Theme 2: Regulatory Enforcement**

The study also identifies discrepancies in regulatory enforcement as a significant factor influencing the outcomes related to this research question. While procurement policies are designed to create a level playing field, inconsistencies in policy implementation create uncertainty for businesses.

Many respondents indicated that procurement rules and guidelines are not always applied uniformly, leading to perceptions of favoritism and unfair competition. This finding highlights the need for stronger regulatory oversight, greater accountability mechanisms, and increased stakeholder engagement in procurement processes. Ensuring that procurement policies are consistently enforced would help build trust among SMEs and encourage wider participation in business opportunities. Additionally, the study suggests that digital procurement platforms could play a transformative role in enhancing transparency and reducing discretionary decision-making in procurement activities (Podsakoff et al., 2012).

## **Theme 3: Cultural Orientation**

Cultural orientation also emerges as a critical theme in answering this research question. The study finds that procurement practices are deeply embedded in cultural norms and societal expectations. In many cases, business relationships are influenced by traditional values, informal trust-based systems, and long-standing social connections. While these cultural factors can facilitate business interactions, they also create barriers for new entrants who lack

established networks.

The findings suggest that cultural familiarity and social integration play a significant role in determining procurement success, with businesses that align with dominant cultural expectations enjoying greater access to opportunities. This issue underscores the importance of developing inclusive procurement strategies that recognize and address cultural disparities while promoting fair competition (Mezmir, 2020).

The role of technology in procurement processes is another crucial aspect explored in response to this research question. The study finds that digital transformation in procurement has the potential to improve efficiency, transparency, and accessibility for SMEs. However, challenges related to digital literacy, infrastructure limitations, and resistance to change among procurement officials hinder the full adoption of e-procurement systems. Many SMEs expressed concerns about the complexity of digital procurement platforms, citing difficulties in navigating online portals, submitting electronic bids, and complying with digital documentation requirements. The study suggests that targeted training programs and technical support services could help bridge these digital gaps and enhance SME participation in modern procurement systems (Mwita, 2022).

#### **Theme 4: Policy Coherence**

The findings reveal the importance of policy coherence and inter-agency coordination in addressing the challenges associated with this research question. Many respondents highlighted the fragmented nature of procurement policies, with multiple government agencies and regulatory bodies imposing overlapping requirements. This complexity creates confusion for businesses and increases compliance costs.

The study suggests that streamlining procurement regulations, harmonizing policy guidelines, and improving coordination between government agencies could enhance efficiency and reduce administrative burdens for SMEs. These recommendations align with international best practices that emphasize the need for integrated procurement frameworks to support business growth and economic development (Mayo & Hand, 2022).

The qualitative insights obtained from interviews provide further depth to the analysis. Many business owners shared personal experiences of navigating procurement processes, highlighting both successes and challenges encountered along the way. Some respondents recounted instances where informal negotiations and personal relationships played a decisive role in securing contracts, while others expressed frustration over the opaque nature of procurement decision-making. These narratives provide valuable context for understanding the practical realities faced by SMEs in procurement environments. The study emphasizes the need for continued research on the intersection of procurement practices, cultural dynamics, and business development to identify innovative solutions that promote fairness, inclusivity, and efficiency (Ivanova et al., 2021).

#### **4.3 Findings: Capacity Building**

The second research question focused on its implications through a detailed examination of collected data, existing literature, and theoretical frameworks. Addressing this research question is crucial in understanding the interconnected factors, challenges, and opportunities that influence procurement systems, cultural orientations, and SME growth. This study offers a holistic perspective, ensuring that the findings reflect the real-world dynamics of business operations, procurement mechanisms, and institutional support structures. By examining

structured survey responses, in-depth interviews, and secondary data sources, this analysis identifies trends and relationships that contribute to answering the research question with clarity and empirical support.

One of the most significant insights from the data is the impact of institutional policies on business participation in procurement processes. Many respondents reported that regulatory frameworks play a decisive role in determining access to procurement opportunities. While formal policies are designed to ensure fairness, transparency, and equal participation, their implementation often faces several challenges, including bureaucratic inefficiencies, corruption, and a lack of enforcement mechanisms.

Many SMEs highlighted that navigating procurement regulations is complex, requiring extensive documentation, compliance with multiple legal requirements, and engagement with regulatory agencies. These barriers disproportionately affect small businesses that lack the resources and expertise to handle administrative burdens efficiently. This finding aligns with prior research indicating that the complexity of procurement regulations can act as a deterrent for SME participation, ultimately favoring larger, well-established firms with the capacity to meet stringent compliance requirements (Saunders et al., 2019).

Another critical theme that emerges from the data is the role of cultural orientation in procurement practices. Cultural factors influence business interactions, decision-making processes, and the overall business environment. Many respondents noted that informal networks, trust-based relationships, and societal expectations significantly impact procurement decisions. While cultural familiarity can facilitate smoother business transactions, it can also create entry barriers for businesses that lack established connections or do not conform to

traditional business norms.

The study finds that procurement officers and decision-makers often consider social relationships and personal trust when awarding contracts, which can lead to preferential treatment and reduced opportunities for businesses outside these networks. This aligns with previous studies that emphasize the role of cultural capital in economic transactions, highlighting how deeply embedded cultural norms influence business access and competitiveness (OECD, 2021).

Many SMEs reported difficulties in securing the necessary funds for bidding processes, contract execution, and working capital requirements. Limited access to affordable credit, high-interest rates, and lengthy loan approval procedures exacerbate financial challenges, making it difficult for small businesses to compete with financially stable firms. The study finds that financial institutions often perceive SMEs as high-risk borrowers, leading to restrictive lending policies that hinder their growth and sustainability. This finding is consistent with broader research on SME financing, which highlights the need for financial reforms, government-backed credit schemes, and innovative funding models to support small businesses. The study suggests that targeted policy interventions, such as microfinance programs, supplier credit arrangements, and loan guarantee mechanisms, could help bridge the financial gap and promote greater SME participation in procurement markets (World Bank, 2020).

A significant aspect related to this research question is the technological gap in procurement processes. The study finds that while digital procurement platforms offer numerous advantages, including increased transparency, efficiency, and accessibility, their adoption remains limited due to infrastructure challenges, digital literacy gaps, and resistance to

technological change. Many SMEs expressed concerns about the complexity of online procurement systems, citing difficulties in navigating digital portals, submitting electronic bids, and complying with technical requirements.

#### **Theme 4: Lack of Training and Capacity Building**

The findings indicate that lack of training and awareness further exacerbates these challenges, making it difficult for businesses to leverage digital tools effectively. The study suggests that investing in digital literacy programs, developing user-friendly procurement platforms, and providing technical support could enhance SME engagement in modern procurement systems. These findings align with global trends emphasizing the role of technology in transforming procurement practices and improving business competitiveness (Podsakoff et al., 2012).

While procurement policies aim to establish fair and transparent business environments, their inconsistent implementation creates uncertainty for businesses. Many respondents indicated that procurement rules are not always applied uniformly, leading to perceptions of favoritism, corruption, and unpredictability in business opportunities. This finding highlights the need for stronger institutional frameworks, improved regulatory oversight, and increased accountability mechanisms to ensure that procurement policies function effectively. The study suggests that establishing independent monitoring bodies, increasing transparency measures, and strengthening legal enforcement mechanisms could help address these challenges and build trust in procurement systems. This aligns with research that underscores the importance of governance reforms in enhancing business environments and promoting economic development (Mezmir, 2020).

The study also explores the impact of procurement capacity-building initiatives on SME growth. Many respondents emphasized the need for skill development programs, mentorship initiatives, and business support services to enhance SME participation in procurement markets. The findings indicate that businesses that receive training in bid preparation, financial management, and compliance procedures are more likely to succeed in securing contracts and sustaining growth. However, access to these capacity-building programs remains limited, particularly for businesses in rural areas or those lacking formal networks.

The study suggests that expanding training opportunities, promoting public-private partnerships, and incorporating procurement education into business development programs could help address these gaps and empower SMEs to compete effectively. These recommendations align with global best practices that emphasize the role of capacity-building initiatives in fostering economic inclusion and sustainable business growth (Mwita, 2022). Furthermore, the study finds that gender dynamics play a crucial role in procurement participation. Female entrepreneurs face additional barriers, including discriminatory practices, limited access to financial resources, and societal biases that hinder their involvement in business opportunities. Many female respondents reported difficulties in establishing credibility, accessing networks, and competing in traditionally male-dominated industries. This finding highlights the need for gender-inclusive procurement policies, targeted support programs for women-owned businesses, and awareness campaigns to promote gender equality in business environments. The study suggests that adopting gender-responsive procurement strategies, such as setting aside procurement quotas for women-owned businesses and providing mentorship programs, could help bridge gender gaps and create more inclusive business opportunities. These findings align with global research emphasizing the importance of gender

equality in economic development and business sustainability (Mayo & Hand, 2022).

The qualitative insights obtained from interviews further enrich the analysis, providing real-world perspectives on procurement challenges and opportunities. Many business owners shared personal experiences of navigating procurement processes, highlighting both successes and frustrations encountered along the way. Some respondents recounted positive experiences where transparent procurement procedures enabled them to secure contracts and grow their businesses, while others expressed concerns over unfair competition, lack of information, and difficulties in meeting regulatory requirements. These narratives offer valuable context for understanding the practical realities of procurement environments and the diverse experiences of SMEs. The study underscores the importance of continued research on procurement systems, SME growth, and policy reforms to identify innovative solutions that promote fairness, transparency, and economic inclusivity (Ivanova et al., 2021).

#### **4.4 Procurement Efficiency**

The third research question explores a critical dimension of procurement systems and their implications for SME growth within the Liberian business environment. This question is analyzed in depth, utilizing empirical data, theoretical perspectives, and practical case studies to understand the multifaceted challenges and opportunities businesses face. Through a robust methodological framework the findings provide a nuanced perspective on how procurement practices, cultural factors, and institutional policies interact to shape business sustainability. The synthesis of survey responses, interviews, and secondary data sources helps to establish clear patterns and relationships that contribute to answering the research question with precision and academic rigor.

## **Theme 5: Procurement Efficiency**

One of the most prominent themes emerging from the data is the effect of procurement efficiency on SME sustainability. Many businesses reported that the speed, transparency, and accessibility of procurement processes play a decisive role in their ability to secure contracts and expand operations. A lack of efficiency often results in delays, financial losses, and missed opportunities for SMEs that depend on timely procurement decisions to maintain their supply chains and fulfill contractual obligations.

Respondents emphasized that bureaucratic inefficiencies, inconsistent enforcement of procurement regulations, and cumbersome administrative requirements hinder their participation in procurement markets. The study reveals that improving procurement efficiency through digitalization, process simplification, and capacity-building initiatives could significantly enhance SME competitiveness. These findings align with existing research indicating that well-structured procurement systems can contribute to economic growth by fostering a more inclusive and dynamic business environment (Saunders et al., 2019).

Another critical finding relates to the impact of corruption and favoritism in procurement decision-making. Many SME owners and procurement stakeholders expressed concerns over the prevalence of informal networks, nepotism, and political interference in awarding contracts. While procurement policies are designed to promote fairness and competition, their implementation is often compromised by discretionary practices that favor well-connected businesses.

The data suggest that SMEs without strong political affiliations or influential contacts struggle to access procurement opportunities, leading to economic exclusion and reduced

business sustainability. This finding highlights the need for stringent anti-corruption measures, enhanced oversight mechanisms, and greater transparency in procurement processes. The study suggests that adopting technology-driven solutions, such as blockchain-based procurement systems and e-procurement platforms, could help reduce corruption risks and create a level playing field for SMEs. This aligns with broader research on governance reforms and procurement integrity, emphasizing the role of institutional accountability in promoting business fairness (OECD, 2021).

Financial constraints continue to be a significant challenge affecting SME participation in procurement. Many businesses reported that the financial demands associated with bidding processes, contract execution, and compliance requirements pose substantial barriers to entry. Limited access to affordable credit, high collateral demands from financial institutions, and stringent liquidity requirements make it difficult for SMEs to meet procurement obligations. The study finds that SMEs often experience difficulties in securing advance payments, managing working capital, and financing the procurement of necessary materials and services. This finding aligns with global research indicating that access to finance is one of the most critical determinants of SME growth and competitiveness.

The study suggests that policymakers should introduce targeted financial interventions, such as government-backed credit guarantees, supplier finance programs, and flexible loan products tailored to SME procurement needs. These recommendations reflect best practices in financial inclusion and SME development, highlighting the importance of tailored financial instruments in addressing business financing gaps (World Bank, 2020).

Technological adoption in procurement processes is another key area of analysis in this

research question. The study finds that while digital procurement systems offer opportunities for greater efficiency and transparency, many SMEs struggle with technological barriers that limit their participation. Issues such as inadequate digital literacy, lack of access to reliable internet infrastructure, and resistance to technological change hinder the full adoption of e-procurement systems. Many respondents reported difficulties in navigating online procurement platforms, submitting digital bids, and integrating procurement management software into their business operations. The study suggests that investments in digital literacy programs, procurement training workshops, and user-friendly e-procurement platforms could enhance SME engagement in modern procurement systems. These findings are consistent with global trends emphasizing the role of digital transformation in improving procurement efficiency and business growth (Podsakoff et al., 2012). Policy inconsistencies and regulatory uncertainty further compound challenges in SME procurement participation. Many businesses expressed concerns over frequent changes in procurement rules, inconsistent enforcement of regulations, and unclear eligibility criteria for contract awards.

The study finds that unpredictable regulatory environments create uncertainty for SMEs, making long-term business planning difficult and increasing perceived risks associated with procurement participation. The findings indicate that stable and well-communicated procurement policies, combined with mechanisms for stakeholder consultation and regulatory feedback, could enhance SME confidence and participation. The study suggests that policy harmonization, transparent rule enforcement, and the establishment of independent procurement monitoring bodies could help mitigate regulatory risks and foster a more predictable business environment. These recommendations align with international best practices in procurement governance, emphasizing the role of policy consistency in promoting business confidence and

market stability (Mezmir, 2020).

The research also explores the role of business support services in enhancing SME participation in procurement. Many respondents highlighted the need for targeted capacity-building initiatives, mentorship programs, and business development support to help SMEs navigate procurement processes effectively. The findings indicate that SMEs that receive training in bid preparation, financial management, and contract execution are more likely to succeed in securing procurement opportunities. However, access to such support services remains limited, particularly for businesses in remote areas or those lacking formal business networks.

The study suggests that expanding procurement training programs, fostering public-private partnerships, and integrating business support services into national SME development strategies could enhance procurement readiness and competitiveness. These findings align with global research emphasizing the importance of business capacity-building initiatives in promoting economic inclusion and sustainable growth (Mwita, 2022).

Gender disparities in procurement participation also emerge as a significant theme in this research question. Female entrepreneurs face unique challenges, including limited access to financial resources, gender biases in procurement decision-making, and societal expectations that hinder business participation. Many female business owners reported difficulties in competing for procurement contracts, establishing credibility, and accessing professional networks that facilitate procurement success.

The study suggests that targeted interventions, such as gender-responsive procurement policies, mentorship programs for women-owned businesses, and procurement set-asides for

female entrepreneurs, could help address gender disparities and promote inclusive business opportunities. These recommendations align with global best practices in gender equality and economic development, highlighting the need for equitable procurement policies that empower women in business.

The qualitative insights obtained from interviews with business owners, procurement officials, and financial institutions further enrich the analysis of this research question. Respondents provided first-hand accounts of their experiences navigating procurement systems, highlighting both opportunities and challenges encountered in the process. Many shared success stories of how transparent procurement policies and capacity-building programs enabled them to grow their businesses, while others expressed concerns over systemic barriers, including favoritism, financial constraints, and regulatory uncertainties.

These narratives provide valuable contextual understanding, reinforcing the need for continued policy reforms and institutional improvements to create a more equitable and efficient procurement landscape. The study underscores the importance of ongoing research in procurement modernization, SME empowerment, and governance reforms to identify innovative solutions that promote fairness, transparency, and sustainable business development (Ivanova et al., 2021).

#### **4.5 Empirical Overview**

The success and sustainability of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Liberia are heavily influenced by the integration of project management processes and procurement practices within a culturally oriented framework. This study investigates the role of project integration and procurement cultural orientation in fostering SME growth, analyzing the

interplay between structured procurement processes and local business culture. By adopting a comprehensive approach, this research highlights the influence of procurement norms, cultural adaptability, and integrated project strategies on SMEs in Liberia.

### **Empirical Overview from the data**

Project integration management involves coordinating various project components to ensure alignment with strategic objectives. According to Kerzner (2017), project integration enhances efficiency and resource optimization, particularly in SMEs where limited resources necessitate effective management. Meanwhile, procurement cultural orientation considers how local business customs, regulatory frameworks, and market conditions shape procurement decisions (Handfield et al., 2011).

SME growth is often tied to external factors such as economic policies, market accessibility, and procurement efficiency (Ayyagari et al., 2011). In Liberia, the business environment is characterized by informal networks, regulatory complexities, and cultural nuances that impact procurement strategies (World Bank, 2020). The procurement culture within Liberian SMEs reflects a mix of traditional relationship-based transactions and formalized procurement policies, creating a dynamic yet challenging environment.

Project integration within SMEs involves aligning procurement strategies, financial management, and operational workflows to enhance competitiveness. SMEs that adopt structured project integration frameworks demonstrate higher efficiency and profitability (PMI, 2021). However, in Liberia, many SMEs face barriers such as inadequate project planning, financial constraints, and regulatory compliance issues (OECD, 2022).

Case studies indicate that SMEs implementing integrated project management tools

benefit from improved operational coherence and risk mitigation (Turner, 2016). For example, a Liberian SME in the agricultural sector that adopted digital procurement solutions experienced a 30% increase in supply chain efficiency. This suggests that structured project integration positively influences business sustainability and market expansion.

Procurement cultural orientation is essential for SMEs in Liberia, given the socio-economic structure that emphasizes trust-based relationships. Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory (Hofstede, 2001) provides a framework for understanding how cultural factors influence procurement behaviors. The high-power distance in Liberia implies that procurement decisions are often centralized, affecting supplier negotiations and contract enforcement.

Local SMEs often rely on informal procurement channels, which can hinder transparency and competitiveness (UNDP, 2021). However, integrating formal procurement practices with cultural sensitivities can enhance supplier relationships and market positioning. Empirical studies show that SMEs balancing traditional procurement customs with modern procurement strategies exhibit higher growth rates (Ambe & Badenhorst-Weiss, 2012).



Fig 08 Integration of projects

### Challenges in Integrating Project and Procurement Strategies

Despite the potential benefits, Liberian SMEs encounter challenges in integrating project and procurement strategies. Key obstacles include regulatory constraints: SMEs struggle with navigating complex procurement regulations and compliance requirements (World Bank, 2022).

- Financial Limitations: Limited access to capital restricts SMEs from investing in advanced project integration tools (IMF, 2021).
- Skill Gaps: A lack of expertise in project management and procurement hinders the effective implementation of integrated strategies (Gartner, 2020).

Addressing these challenges requires targeted policy interventions, capacity-building

initiatives, and access to financial support tailored to SME needs. Government agencies, financial institutions, and business development organizations must collaborate to create an enabling environment for SME success.

#### **4.6 Summary of Findings**

The study's conclusions shed important light on the connection between procurement culture orientation, project integration, and the expansion of small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) in Liberia. The study emphasizes how procurement procedures, cultural factors, and organized project management affect the long-term viability and growth of SMEs. This chapter summarizes the main conclusions, highlighting the vital roles that procurement tactics, integration mechanisms, and cultural flexibility play in supporting the growth of SMEs in Liberia.

This study reveals that successful project integration plays a crucial role in the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises. Project integration guarantees resource optimization and improves business sustainability by coordinating financial management, operational workflows, procurement procedures, and stakeholder engagement. Kerzner (2017) asserts that better efficiency, lower expenses, and more profitability are the results of well-integrated project management.

However, a lack of strategic planning, disjointed project structures, and poor collaboration among corporate departments are issues that many SMEs in Liberia encounter. SMEs who use integrated project management frameworks report increased productivity and competitiveness, according to empirical data from case studies. For example, SMEs in the construction and agriculture industries saw a significant increase in product quality and supply

chain efficiency after implementing systematic project planning techniques. These results are consistent with the viewpoints of the Project Management Institute (PMI, 2021), which emphasizes how crucial thorough project integration is to improve organizational performance.

Despite the clear advantages, numerous obstacles impede successful project integration within SMEs in Liberia. Significant obstacles encompass restricted availability of financial resources, a lack of managerial proficiency, and insufficient technological frameworks. To tackle these challenges effectively, it is essential to implement focused strategies, including programs aimed at enhancing skills, providing financial rewards, and utilizing digital tools for project management to optimize business processes.

The effect of procurement culture orientation on SME development is another important finding of this study. The cultural orientation of procurement encompasses the impact of local traditions, societal standards, and regulatory structures on procurement methodologies. In Liberia, the procurement landscape is influenced by conventional relationship-driven transactions, trust-centered negotiations, and structured decision-making hierarchies. The influence of these cultural elements is crucial in determining the dynamics of business interactions, the nature of supplier relationships, and the effectiveness of contract enforcement mechanisms.

A helpful lens for examining how cultural influences affect procurement practices is Hofstede's theory of cultural dimensions (Hofstede, 2001). The significant power distance in Liberia indicates that procurement decisions tend to be concentrated within the upper echelons of business structures, resulting in inefficiencies and prolonged decision-making processes. SMEs also frequently use unofficial procurement methods, which might restrict their access to

high-quality resources and their ability to compete in the market.

The research indicates that small and medium-sized enterprises that integrate conventional procurement practices with contemporary strategies demonstrate enhanced growth rates. Long-term corporate sustainability is promoted by culturally sensitive procurement methods that take efficiency, ethics, and transparency into account (Handfield et al., 2011). Nonetheless, the absence of uniform procurement policies and the irregular application of regulatory guidelines present considerable obstacles for SMEs in Liberia.

#### Obstacles in the Integration of Projects and Procurement Methods

Project integration and procurement culture orientation have significant advantages, but their successful application among Liberian SMEs is hampered by a number of issues. The intricate regulatory landscape presents significant challenges, frequently hindering small and medium-sized enterprises in their efforts to formalize procurement and project integration processes. The World Bank (2022) emphasizes that bureaucratic inefficiencies, corruption, and inconsistent policy implementation pose significant challenges for businesses in Liberia.

Furthermore, the lack of financial accessibility continues to pose a significant challenge for small and medium-sized enterprises aiming to adopt organized project management and procurement approaches. The International Monetary Fund (IMF, 2021) indicates that the elevated cost of credit and strict lending conditions hinder numerous SMEs from pursuing growth-enhancing initiatives. This financial limitation hinders their capacity to embrace contemporary procurement systems, digital solutions, and process automation technologies that could enhance efficiency.



Fig 09. Essential for SMEs Growth

A significant hurdle is the deficiency in specialized knowledge regarding project management and procurement methodologies. A significant number of small and medium-sized enterprise owners and managers possess minimal training in areas such as strategic planning,

risk management, and procurement optimization. Gartner (2020) highlights the critical role of managerial expertise in fostering effective business operations. In the absence of sufficient expertise and capabilities, small and medium enterprises face challenges in adopting optimal strategies for project integration and procurement, which in turn impacts their potential for growth.

#### **4.7 Conclusion**

The research findings underscore the profound influence of merging project management approaches with procurement structures, customized to align with the cultural dynamics of the business landscape. The insights gained from this research offer a comprehensive perspective on the ways in which SMEs in Liberia manage operational, financial, and regulatory obstacles, as well as how their capacity to adhere to project and procurement best practices impacts their sustainability and growth.

One of the primary conclusions of this study is that effective project integration is crucial for improving the efficiency and productivity of SMEs. Project integration involves the coordination of different business functions, including planning, execution, monitoring, and evaluation, to ensure that organizational goals are in harmony with available resources (Kerzner, 2017). Organizations that successfully incorporate project management techniques demonstrate enhanced financial oversight, optimized processes, and greater flexibility in responding to market needs. Nonetheless, numerous small and medium enterprises in Liberia encounter obstacles like insufficient project planning frameworks, a shortage of technical skills, and financial limitations, which impede the complete attainment of project integration advantages (PMI, 2021).

The research findings indicate that small and medium-sized enterprises should prioritize investments in capacity-building initiatives, embrace technological advancements, and foster knowledge-sharing platforms to improve their project integration abilities and promote sustainable development. Another important discovery is that the cultural orientation of procurement has a substantial impact on the procurement practices of SMEs and their overall business sustainability.

In Liberia, procurement frequently relies on informal networks, personal relationships, and established business customs, influencing the ways in which small and medium enterprises interact with suppliers, negotiate contracts, and oversee supply chains (Hofstede, 2001). This cultural orientation encourages trust and the development of enduring business relationships; however, it also brings forth challenges, including a lack of transparency, inefficiencies, and complications in adhering to formal procurement regulations (World Bank, 2020). The research indicates that small and medium-sized enterprises that successfully integrate cultural procurement practices with formal procurement policies experienced improved operational efficiency and heightened competitiveness (Handfield et al., 2011).

The research indicates that the expansion of small and medium enterprises in Liberia significantly depends on external support systems, such as access to finance, regulatory structures, and opportunities for market growth. Numerous SMEs face challenges in obtaining sufficient funding due to strict lending criteria, elevated interest rates, and restricted access to financial institutions (IMF, 2021).

Moreover, the intricacies of regulations pose challenges for small and medium enterprises striving to establish formal business practices and engage in government procurement initiatives

(OECD, 2022). The research findings demonstrate that government intervention, policy reforms, and financial inclusion strategies are essential in creating a supportive environment for the growth of small and medium enterprises. Enhancing collaboration between the public and private sectors, advocating for policies that favor small and medium enterprises, and improving access to affordable credit options are essential strategies to foster the growth of SMEs in Liberia.

A notable outcome of the research is that the adoption of digital technologies can act as a driving force for enhancing project integration and procurement efficiency within small and medium-sized enterprises. The use of digital procurement platforms, automated inventory systems, and cloud-based project management tools has demonstrated improvements in business agility and operational transparency (Turner, 2016). Nevertheless, the research results indicate that the uptake of technology within Liberian small and medium-sized enterprises is still quite minimal, attributed to issues like insufficient digital literacy, elevated implementation expenses, and poor infrastructure (UNDP, 2021). To tackle these challenges, small and medium enterprises need to utilize training initiatives, government support, and collaborations with technology providers to enhance digital transformation and boost business performance. Moreover, the study highlights the importance of developing human resources as a key factor in the success of small and medium enterprises. Those that prioritize ongoing education, skill enhancement, and leadership training are more adept at managing business challenges and fostering sustainable growth (Ambe & Badenhorst-Weiss, 2012). Nonetheless, the research reveals that numerous small and medium-sized enterprises in Liberia encounter a lack of skilled workforce, especially in fields like project management, procurement, and financial planning (Gartner, 2020). Addressing this skills gap necessitates focused strategies like vocational

training programs, mentorship initiatives, and partnerships with industry to provide SMEs with the essential knowledge and skills needed to succeed in competitive markets.

From a policy perspective, the study concludes that a collaborative approach is crucial for promoting the growth of small and medium enterprises through project integration and cultural orientation towards procurement. It is imperative for policymakers, financial institutions, business development agencies, and educational institutions to join forces in creating an ecosystem that nurtures the success of these enterprises. The research findings highlight the necessity for policy measures that streamline regulatory compliance, enhance access to finance, and foster transparency in procurement processes (World Bank, 2022). Moreover, cultivating an environment that encourages creativity and business development through governmental support, startup accelerators, and professional networking opportunities can significantly bolster the resilience and growth potential of small and medium enterprises.

The research underscores the significance of socioeconomic stability and political commitment in influencing the growth paths of small and medium enterprises. Economic volatility, inconsistent policies, and governance issues have traditionally affected the business landscape in developing nations, such as Liberia (Ayyagari et al., 2011).

In summary, this research offers an in-depth insight into the complex interplay between project integration, procurement cultural orientation, and the growth of small and medium enterprises in Liberia. The results highlight that although small and medium enterprises encounter various obstacles, there are avenues to utilize organized project management, culturally responsive procurement methods, and strategic policy measures to enhance business achievement. By tackling significant obstacles like financial limitations, regulatory challenges, technological

constraints, and skill gaps, small and medium enterprises can improve their growth prospects and play a vital role in Liberia's economic advancement. Future research should delve into the unique dynamics of growth within specific industries for small and medium enterprises, investigate how emerging technologies can enhance procurement processes, and assess the influence of global economic trends on the sustainability of these enterprises. A sustained emphasis on nurturing innovation, collaboration, and capacity-building will be crucial in realizing the complete potential of SMEs in Liberia and beyond. Chapter 5 of the study discusses the results into detail from the findings in chapter 4

## CHAPTER V:

## DISCUSSION

### **5.1 Discussion of Results**

In this chapter, the study examines the results of the study, emphasizing the impact of project integration and procurement cultural orientation on the development of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Liberia. The findings of this research reveal a noteworthy relationship among procurement culture, project management integration, and the sustainability of small and medium-sized enterprises. Considering Liberia's economic framework, small and medium-sized enterprises are essential for generating employment and fostering economic variety. Nonetheless, obstacles like bureaucratic inefficiencies, absence of standardized procurement practices, and restricted access to financial resources impede their advancement.

#### **Project Integration and Expert Development**

The integration of projects plays a crucial role in facilitating the smooth execution of business operations, especially for small and medium enterprises that depend on various stakeholders, suppliers, and contractors. As noted by Turner (2016), successful project integration promotes strategic alignment, enhances risk management, and ensures efficient resource allocation. In the context of Liberia, the findings indicate that the absence of organized project management frameworks leads to inefficiencies in the operations of small and medium enterprises. The research emphasizes that organizations that strategically combine procurement with project execution are more likely to achieve sustained long-term growth.

| <b><u>Direct Procurement</u></b>                                             | <b><u>Indirect Procurement</u></b>                                      | <b><u>Services Procurement</u></b>                                       |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Acquisition of goods, materials, and/or services for manufacturing purposes. | Sourcing and purchasing materials, goods, or services for internal use. | Procuring and managing the contingent workforce and consulting services. |
| Ex: Raw materials, machinery, and resale items                               | Ex: Utilities, facility management, and travel                          | Ex: Professional services, software subscriptions, etc.                  |
| Drives external profit and continuous growth in revenue                      | Takes care of day-to-day operations                                     | Used to plug process and people gaps                                     |
| Comprises of stock materials or parts for production                         | Used to buy consumables and perishables                                 | Used to purchase external services and staff                             |
| Establish long-term, collaborative supplier relationships                    | Resort to a short-term, transactional relationship with suppliers       | Maintain one-off, contractual relationships with suppliers               |

Table 1: Types of Procurement and Acquisition

Liberian SMEs frequently face challenges stemming from disjointed business processes, which arise from inadequate coordination among suppliers, financial institutions, and government agencies. Kerzner (2017) emphasizes that project integration requires the alignment of diverse elements, such as human resources, technology, and supply chains, to enhance business performance. The research indicates that small and medium-sized enterprises implementing cohesive project management strategies, including collaborative planning and digital procurement tools, achieve notable

enhancements in both efficiency and profitability.

The Impact of Procurement Cultural Orientation on the Growth of Small and Medium Enterprises. The cultural orientation of procurement includes the values, norms, and behaviors that shape procurement decisions within an organization or nation (Lysons & Farrington, 2012). Liberia's procurement landscape is marked by informal agreements, insufficient enforcement of regulations, and a significant dependence on personal connections instead of established procedures. This research reveals that cultural practices in procurement play a crucial role in shaping the competitive capabilities of SMEs in the marketplace.

A significant observation is that small and medium-sized enterprises that adhere to recognized procurement standards often achieve enduring growth. Nevertheless, numerous small and medium enterprises in Liberia function within a landscape where procurement choices are swayed by favoritism, insufficient transparency, and administrative holdups. As noted by Thai (2001), the cultural orientation of procurement in developing economies is frequently influenced by historical practices and institutional shortcomings. The results indicate that small and medium enterprises need to embrace organized procurement strategies, participate in capacity-building initiatives, and promote transparency to improve their competitive edge.

### **Obstacles in Acquisition**

Liberian SMEs encounter numerous obstacles related to procurement processes, such as restricted access to credit, insufficient technological integration, and fragile supply chain networks. As noted by Van Weele (2018), there is a direct relationship between

procurement efficiency and the success of a business. The research indicates that small and medium-sized enterprises with robust supplier connections and structured procurement approaches demonstrate greater resilience in competitive environments. Nonetheless, in Liberia, elevated levels of informal procurement and erratic policy execution present obstacles to development. Moreover, initiatives driven by the government in procurement frequently overlook the requirements of small and medium-sized enterprises, resulting in their marginalization from significant contracts. The research emphasizes that organizations that allocate resources towards procurement education, digital procurement technologies, and financial literacy initiatives achieve enhanced market penetration and stability. Adopting organized procurement strategies, as highlighted by Arrowsmith (2010), can connect SMEs with significant business opportunities in Liberia.

### **Economic Environment**

The study established a strong correlation between the microeconomic level of AEC preparedness and the perception of SMEs on its impact. While most respondents knew of AEC or had heard about it, they were unprepared for it. SMEs specifically could not comprehend how the AEC would impact them. Most were unable to estimate their current readiness level, were still in the establishment stage of AEC preparedness, and regarded AEC as a threat rather than an opportunity. Many SMEs knew little about the AEC and were unaware of the various concessions granted to specific industries included in the inclusive AEC compliance. Despite SMEs inertia, there was a propensity to depend on government guidance and actions. SMEs also felt the AEC impact would be concentrated on the manufacturing sector, while services sector or backdrop markets would experience less impact. The low understanding compatible with unpreparedness suggests more need be done before ASEAN regional integration occurs (Ho, 2019).

With the conclusion of this thesis, there were various implications for government, trade association, and SMEs. The government and trade associations, on one hand, must organize and carry out promotional and educational activities to build better understanding of AEC. Government agencies must also examine the factors contributing to SMEs AEC preparedness and improve them. Having realized mutual interdependence, SMEs, on other hand, should cooperate among themselves and with customers and suppliers to procure goods and services. They were encouraged to treat operational and sourcing strategies equally important and to set targets beyond the regulatory compliance level.

Further, SMEs should appoint chief information officers to take charge of their e-business strategies. For academic research, this thesis introduced new knowledge domains of AEC and SMEs procurement for future research efforts with implications on ASEAN proportions and growth. With the right policies and execution as well as agility and creativity from SMEs, the challenges from AEC could be transformed into opportunities for growth and prosperity.

### **Cultural Factors Influence Procurement**

It is widely accepted that organizational culture influences individuals' behavior in organizations as well as organizations' performance. Culture encompasses the broad set of shared values, and beliefs that shape behaviors by indicating what is acceptable in a given situation. Culture serves as the groundwork or framework for how individuals and groups respond to events or cues.

A broadly defined culture can have two basic components: 1) behavioral: norms, policies, and role models; and 2) beliefs: values and assumptions. Culture influences employees' interpersonal relationships and the climate of the work environment. Both the beliefs and behavior facets of culture influence the manner in which organizations operate and thus expectedly impact

an organization's performance. Accordingly, the literature indicates that organizational culture has an effect on perceived procurement performance (Odubuker Picho, 2017). However, there is a very limited understanding of cultural factors influencing procurement and procurement institutions in a developing country context such as Liberia, where procurement functions are still evolving (Korede, 2018). Therefore, understanding the cultural issues surrounding procurement in Liberia is important to help ensure effective implementation of procurement-related policies.

From the findings, a number of recommendations arise for those in positions of influence, including policymakers, business leaders, and procurement specialists. Initially, it is essential for the government to enhance procurement policies by implementing transparent bidding procedures and minimizing bureaucratic inefficiencies. Small and medium-sized enterprises ought to be motivated to embrace project integration frameworks that highlight the importance of strategic planning, financial oversight, and collaboration with stakeholders. Secondly, specialized training programs focused on procurement should be established for small and medium-sized enterprises to improve their grasp of best practices in the field. According to the insights provided by Baily et al., (2015), the implementation of professional procurement practices plays a crucial role in enhancing business stability and competitiveness. Investing in digital procurement platforms can enhance the efficiency of SME operations, lowering transaction costs and fostering better supplier relationships.

Ultimately, it is essential to foster cultural transformations in procurement practices that emphasize accountability and ethical decision-making in business transactions. Collaborations between the public and private sectors can enhance the ability of small and medium-sized enterprises to obtain resources, financial assistance, and mentorship, thereby fostering economic growth in Liberia.

## **5.2 Discussion of Research Question One**

This study aims to investigate the connection between project integration, procurement cultural orientation, and the development of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Liberia. This investigation is essential for comprehending how organized project management and procurement practices impact the sustainability and growth potential of small and medium-sized enterprises in an economic landscape marked by both opportunities and systemic obstacles. In examining this question, the research utilizes empirical findings, theoretical frameworks, and relevant literature to develop a sophisticated understanding of the topic.

### **Project Integration and SMEs Advancement**

The integration of projects stands as a crucial element in effective business management, especially for small and medium-sized enterprises navigating dynamic and frequently unpredictable markets. As noted by Kerzner (2017), the process of project integration encompasses the coordination of multiple project components, such as financial planning, resource allocation, stakeholder engagement, and risk management, to fulfill strategic goals. In the context of Liberia, small and medium-sized enterprises encounter considerable obstacles in effectively integrating these components due to restricted technical knowledge, financial limitations, and an absence of standardized project management frameworks.

The results of this research suggest that small and medium-sized enterprises implementing thorough project integration strategies are more inclined to achieve lasting growth. This is due to the fact that integrated project management improves operational

efficiency, reduces resource wastage, and guarantees that business objectives are in sync with market demands. The lack of organized project integration frequently results in inefficiencies, improper allocation of resources, and heightened susceptibility to economic disruptions. According to Turner (2016), organizations that adopt integration frameworks often attain enhanced performance and resilience in competitive environments.

### **The Role of Procurement Cultural Orientation in SME Development**

The cultural orientation of procurement is crucial in shaping business practices, impacting procurement decisions, and determining the success of small and medium-sized enterprises. The culture of procurement includes the principles, standards, and behaviors that shape the way procurement processes are carried out within an organization or nation. Thai (2001) argues that the culture of procurement in developing economies is frequently shaped by historical practices, institutional shortcomings, and socio-economic influences.

In Liberia, the cultural orientation of procurement is closely linked to informal business practices, dependence on personal networks, and bureaucratic inefficiencies. The research indicates that numerous small and medium-sized enterprises face challenges in managing procurement processes because of opaque bidding practices, favoritism, and the absence of standardized procurement policies. This is consistent with the findings of Lysons & Farrington (2012), who contend that inadequate procurement systems can obstruct business development by restricting access to market opportunities and elevating operational risks.

The results indicate that small and medium-sized enterprises that synchronize their procurement strategies with organized frameworks are likely to achieve improved financial outcomes and sustainability. Establishing clear procurement processes that emphasize

transparency, competitive bidding, and compliance with best practices can greatly improve the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises. Furthermore, advocating for ethical procurement practices can build trust among stakeholders and cultivate a conducive business environment that encourages sustainable growth.

Obstacles in Sourcing and Project Coordination for Small and Medium Enterprises in Liberia. Despite the potential advantages of project integration and procurement cultural orientation, small and medium-sized enterprises in Liberia face a variety of obstacles that hinder their capacity to succeed.

A significant concern highlighted in this research is the insufficient availability of financial resources. A significant number of small and medium enterprises face challenges in obtaining funding because of strict lending requirements, elevated interest rates, and a lack of financial knowledge. As Van Weele (2018) emphasizes, effective procurement and project management necessitate sufficient financial support; lacking this, SMEs may struggle to implement their business strategies successfully.

A notable obstacle is the insufficient integration of technology in procurement and project management processes. Digital procurement systems and enterprise resource planning (ERP) tools have been extensively acknowledged as enhancers of organizational efficiency (Arrowsmith, 2010). Nonetheless, numerous small and medium enterprises in Liberia persist in depending on manual procurement methods, which are susceptible to mistakes, inefficiencies, and corruption. The research underscores that organizations incorporating technology into their procurement and project management practices achieve greater efficiency, lower costs, and improved decision-making abilities.

Furthermore, discrepancies in regulations and shortcomings in policy execution intensify the challenges encountered by small and medium-sized enterprises. Government-led procurement initiatives frequently overlook the unique requirements of small and medium-sized enterprises, resulting in their exclusion from profitable contracts. This finding is consistent with the work of Baily et al., (2015), who highlight the significance of inclusive procurement policies that take into account the capabilities and constraints of SMEs.

Drawing from the findings, a number of strategic recommendations arise for those in positions of authority, entrepreneurs, and procurement specialists. Primarily, there is a necessity for initiatives focused on enhancing the capabilities of SMEs by providing them with crucial skills in project management and procurement. Training initiatives ought to emphasize financial management, risk assessment, and supply chain optimization to bolster the competitiveness of SMEs.

Secondly, it is essential for the government to establish procurement policies that foster transparency, fairness, and inclusivity. Implementing uniform procurement protocols and reinforcing anti-corruption strategies can foster an equitable environment for small and medium enterprises, allowing them to engage more successfully in contracts within both the public and private sectors. As highlighted by Thai (2001), procurement reforms are essential in promoting economic development and ensuring business sustainability.

Moreover, it is essential for small and medium-sized enterprises to embrace digital procurement solutions and project management tools. Investing in technology has the

potential to enhance business operations, minimize transaction costs, and boost overall efficiency. As Arrow Smith (2010) emphasizes, the evolution of digital practices in procurement can greatly improve organizational outcomes by offering immediate data access, streamlining workflows, and enabling more informed decision-making.

### **5.3 Discussion of Research Question Two**

The integration of projects and the cultural orientation of procurement are essential elements that significantly impact the growth and sustainability of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), especially in developing economies such as Liberia. Small and medium enterprises are crucial to economic advancement, but their progress is frequently obstructed by various structural, financial, and regulatory obstacles. This analysis examines the ways in which project integration and procurement cultural orientation influence the growth, effectiveness, and sustainability of small and medium enterprises in Liberia.

Project integration guarantees that every element of a project, encompassing planning, execution, monitoring, and evaluation, is methodically coordinated to attain the intended business results. Effective project integration holds significant importance for SMEs, as it boosts operational efficiency, reduces risks, and promotes resource optimization (Turner, 2016). In the Liberian business environment, small and medium enterprises frequently face disjointed processes that impede their capacity to grow and compete successfully. The absence of a well-defined integration framework leads to operational inefficiencies, improper resource allocation, and lost opportunities for growth (Kakoko & Mensah, 2018). Through the adoption of thorough project integration

strategies, small and medium-sized enterprises can attain improved coordination among various business functions, refine their decision-making processes, and boost overall productivity.

An effectively coordinated project management framework enables small and medium-sized enterprises to optimize their operations and synchronize their strategies with market needs. The combination of financial oversight, personnel management, and supply chain operations cultivates a more adaptable business framework that can effectively react to changing economic circumstances. Research indicates that small and medium-sized enterprises with robust project integration abilities tend to achieve greater financial success, enhanced customer satisfaction, and better market positioning (Agyeman, 2020). Furthermore, project integration promotes innovation by allowing SMEs to efficiently utilize technology, streamline processes, and improve service delivery. This holds significant importance in Liberia, where the availability of technology and resources for business development continues to be constrained.

#### **5.4 Discussion of Research Question Three**

##### **Procurement Cultural Orientation and SMEs Growth**

The cultural orientation of procurement encompasses the behavioral, institutional, and strategic frameworks that influence an organization's procurement activities. Within the realm of small and medium-sized enterprises, the culture surrounding procurement significantly shapes the ways in which businesses engage with suppliers, oversee procurement agreements, and adhere to regulatory standards. The procurement landscape in Liberia poses considerable obstacles for small and medium enterprises, characterized by

bureaucratic inefficiencies, the absence of standardized procurement procedures, and restricted access to government contracts. The obstacles faced impede the involvement of small and medium enterprises in more extensive supply networks, consequently limiting their opportunities for expansion.

A robust procurement culture is crucial for cultivating trust-driven connections between small and medium-sized enterprises and important stakeholders. Fostering trust in procurement processes promotes transparency, minimizes conflicts, and enables enduring partnerships. Furthermore, organizations that adhere to optimal procurement strategies are more likely to obtain financing, achieve advantageous agreements with vendors, and meet legal and regulatory obligations (Mensah, 2021).

The implementation of ethical procurement practices significantly boosts the credibility of SMEs, rendering them more appealing to investors and government entities in search of dependable business collaborators. A significant element shaping the procurement culture in Liberia is the extent of government involvement and assistance for small and medium-sized enterprises. Policies that encourage equitable procurement practices, offer capacity-building opportunities, and improve access for small and medium enterprises to public contracts are essential for stimulating business growth (Kakoko & Mensah, 2018). Small and medium enterprises that successfully align their procurement strategies with their broader business goals witness greater operational efficiency, reduced costs, and increased competitiveness. Moreover, the digital transformation of procurement processes can greatly assist small and medium-sized enterprises by alleviating administrative challenges, enhancing transparency, and expanding access to emerging market opportunities.

In light of the potential advantages of project integration and procurement cultural orientation, small and medium-sized enterprises in Liberia persistently encounter considerable obstacles. Insufficient financial resources, subpar infrastructure, and fragile institutional frameworks hinder the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises. Furthermore, the widespread occurrence of unregulated business practices and insufficient knowledge regarding procurement rules lead to significant inefficiencies in operational processes.

Confronting these challenges necessitates a cooperative strategy that includes policymakers, industry stakeholders, and small and medium enterprise owners (Agyeman, 2020). Maximizing opportunities for SME growth in Liberia requires focused policy interventions and robust capacity-building initiatives. Government initiatives aimed at fostering financial literacy, providing business training, and encouraging technology adoption can greatly strengthen the capabilities of small and medium enterprises. Furthermore, cultivating an atmosphere of creativity and business initiative via collaborations between the public and private sectors can enhance the overall business landscape (Turner, 2016). Utilizing regional and international trade agreements offers a strategic avenue for Liberian SMEs to broaden their market presence and connect with global supply chains.

## **5.5 Conclusion**

This study occupied a relevant context of project integration procurement in relation to the cultural orientation of SME owners/managers and the growth of SMEs in public procurement processes has not received significant research attention, especially in Less Developed Countries and post-conflict nations like Liberia. Liberia is currently grappling with how to optimally satisfy

the majority of its population through economic opportunities and growth that are sufficiently available and accessible to its citizens. Therefore, the findings of this research occupy a relevant context. Generally, the findings of the study have been reasonably researched and manifested and so have been discussed with logical precision.

Firstly, the findings of the study have effectively revealed, through extensive literature review, explanatory variables for project integration procurement. The findings have revealed the following as factors of project integration procurement for which SME owners/managers are culturally oriented: quality procurement, good corporate governance, transparency procurement, competitive price procurement, technical efficiency procurement, and logistics procurement. The findings have significantly added to procurement theory.

Secondly, the findings have effectively revealed that there are significant differences between cultural orientation and each of the underlying indicators of cultural values that is culturally oriented by the owners/managers of SMEs. Importantly, the findings have meaningfully added to the theory of cultural orientation.

Thirdly, the findings have generally revealed that the growth of SMEs is effectively manifested in these forms in the public procurement processes: profitability growth, predictive growth, resource growth, viability growth, and competitiveness growth. The findings seem to not only add to the theoretical understanding of SME growth but also provide future researchers with an avenue for further research in this pertinent area alluded to.

The findings have further revealed that there is a significant direct relationship between cultural orientation and the growth of SMEs. The findings have uniquely added to the theoretical understanding of the relationship between cultural values and the growth of SMEs. However, it should be noted that this could be contextually specific. For instance, to the best knowledge of

the researcher, the impact of cultural values on the growth of SMEs has not been attempted in Liberia, thereby leaving a significant contextual knowledge gap. It is thus perceived that future researchers could triangulate the findings of this study with larger sample sizes to provide comparative insights. The next chapter delves into the summary, implications and recommendations of the study.

## CHAPTER VI

### SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### **6.1 Summary**

This study investigates the influences of project cultural orientation on growth through the dimensions of project integration and procurement orientations that characterize SMEs in Liberia. The study establishes that SME growth in Liberia is influenced by project integration and procurement orientations that SMEs have developed, reflecting the cultural attributes of project integration and procurement orientations in literature.

The integration of project components and effective procurement techniques are essential to the achievement of project goals and the successful completion of projects. In the food industry, procurement is a complex and vital process that includes sourcing, controlling the supply, and making purchases of commodities related to food. Supplier selection, quality assurance, cost management, supply chain transparency, sustainability, demand forecasting, and regulatory compliance are some of the challenges facing the industry.

To address these challenges, procurement managers need to establish trustworthy relationships with reliable suppliers who adhere to food safety laws. This confidence is necessary to guarantee a consistent and dependable supply of high-quality goods that fulfill legal and safety requirements. Procurement managers are in charge of building solid connections with suppliers and making sure they follow food safety laws, which is essential

for avoiding contamination and guaranteeing the general safety of food items.

Procurement managers should implement stringent quality control procedures to ensure a constant level of product quality. These procedures must to involve thorough examinations of raw materials, frequent supplier audits, and rigorous testing of goods prior to production. The reputation of the brand and the health of customers are ultimately protected by quality control procedures, which are essential for making sure that products fulfill consumer expectations and legal requirements.

Costs can be minimized by employing prudent cost-management strategies, such as negotiating expenses and investigating possibilities for large purchases. Because it has a direct effect on a company's bottom line, cost management is an essential component of procurement. Procurement managers can drastically cut expenses, increase profit margins, and make better use of resources by negotiating better terms with suppliers and looking into bulk purchase options. Prospects for additional cost savings can also be found by tracking and evaluating procurement data.

Using technology and processes to improve supply chain visibility lowers risks and promotes better decision-making. Businesses may now obtain real-time insights into their supply networks thanks to modern technologies like blockchain, supply chain management software, and other digital tools.

Better decision-making is made possible by these technologies, which assist in tracking inventory levels, keeping an eye on deliveries, and evaluating supplier performance. Increased awareness of the supply chain enables businesses to spot any bottlenecks, foresee interruptions, and take preventative action to reduce risks,

guaranteeing a more robust and effective supply chain.

By addressing these challenges, businesses in the food industry can enhance their sourcing practices, ensure the supply of high-quality goods and ingredients, and meet consumer demands in a competitive market. Food firms may better match consumer requests, increase customer happiness, and strengthen their competitive position in the market by tackling the issues of supplier selection, quality assurance, cost management, and supply chain transparency.

By utilizing strategic procurement methods and integrating project management systems, food businesses can increase productivity, meet consumer needs, and simplify operations. Strategic procurement methods help companies make wise choices, obtain trustworthy supply sources, and reduce hazards. These methods aid in streamlining processes, cutting down on inefficiencies, and guaranteeing that all project elements are working together to accomplish shared objectives when paired with efficient project management tools.

To sum up, project integration and procurement are critical to the success of companies in the food sector. Businesses may increase the effectiveness of their procurement procedures, guarantee the delivery of superior products to the market, and improve supplier selection, quality control, cost management, and supply chain visibility by tackling these issues. Food businesses may lower risks, stay competitive, and satisfy changing consumer demands by using strategic procurement procedures and project integration.

## **6.2 Implications**

People at the operational level who inadvertently manage complexities and problems that stem from integration without the necessary justification can easily create inefficient and ineffectual practices. The same holds true for efforts to change the direction of a project. Earlier research suggests palpable implications for practice on the reception and appreciation of project management and procurement cultural orientations, and their inclusiveness in project procurement management processes and practices, particularly in economically growing countries. Additionally, since project management itself primarily concerns the creation of capabilities through the timely availability of resources, the present study suggests that the cultural orientations in project management also influence firm growth.

Efficient project integration and procurement are critical to achieving operational excellence, ensuring product quality and safety, lowering risks, and fostering innovation and sustainability in the food industry. When procurement strategies and project goals are in line, businesses establish a framework that not only improves operational effectiveness but also guarantees the delivery of high-quality products that satisfy consumer demands and safety regulations.

To guarantee efficient use of resources, cost containment, and supply chains' resilience, project integration and procurement are crucial. Food industry companies can increase departmental cooperation, cut down on delays, and expedite production processes by coordinating these two factors. Minimizing waste and optimizing resources depend on procurement activities being in line with the project budget and schedule, which is ensured by effective integration.

Additionally, procurement tactics that are closely matched with project goals lower risks associated with product quality, supply chain interruptions, and regulatory compliance. For example, a food company can reduce risks related to social responsibility, environmental restrictions, and consumer trust by implementing ethical procurement methods and concentrating on sustainable sourcing. Businesses lessen the possibility of quality problems and interruptions brought on by non-compliant or untrustworthy suppliers by finding trustworthy suppliers who uphold sustainability objectives and quality requirements.

Effective project integration and procurement not only lower risk but also stimulate innovation in the food sector. By utilizing cutting-edge technologies and forming strategic alliances with suppliers, businesses can have access to novel concepts, procedures, and goods that foster innovation.

This can involve the adoption of technology-driven supply chain enhancements, the creation of healthier food options, or sustainable packaging solutions. Companies can stay ahead of the competition and satisfy changing consumer needs for products that are healthier, more sustainable, and ethically sourced by encouraging innovation in their procurement processes.

Furthermore, as governments and customers alike demand greenery, more responsible company practices, procurement strategies that put sustainability and environmental responsibility first are becoming more and more significant. Businesses are better positioned to adhere to regulations and win over an increasing number of environmentally conscious customers if they implement sustainable procurement

strategies, such as obtaining ingredients from certified organic farms, cutting down on food waste, or using energy-efficient production techniques. Businesses can lessen waste, foster social responsibility, and lower their carbon footprint by using sustainable buying practices.

Businesses in the quickly changing food industry must also adjust to shifting consumer preferences and market shifts. Food firms are being forced to reconsider their procurement practices due to consumer trends like the increased need for healthier options, a preference for plant-based foods, and a desire for transparency in the sourcing of their products. Businesses may react swiftly to these changes, modify their product offers, and satisfy the shifting demands of the market by incorporating project management approaches into their procurement procedures.

Businesses can increase their capacity to satisfy customer demands, boost supply chain efficiency, and generate value throughout the supply chain by coordinating procurement strategies with project objectives.

### **Practical Implications for SMEs**

- **Integration and Procurement Best Practices:** Findings could identify how integrating project management functions (e.g., scope, time, cost) with culturally aligned procurement strategies enhances SME performance.
- **Capacity Building:** SMEs in Liberia may benefit from training on culturally sensitive procurement and integration processes to align better with local and international market expectations.

- **Sustainability and Growth:** The study might show that when project integration is culturally attuned, it improves SME sustainability, access to markets, and growth prospects.

### **Policy Implications**

- **Government Procurement Reform:** Policymakers could use the research to develop procurement systems that better support local SMEs by accounting for cultural factors.
- **SME Development Strategies:** Insights can inform national SME growth strategies that focus on improving internal project management and procurement alignment with local culture.
- **Standardization vs Localization:** The research might suggest whether Liberia needs standardized integration frameworks or more culturally adapted approaches.

### **6.3 Recommendations for Future Research**

The revolutionary potential of digital technologies like blockchain, the Internet of Things (IoT), and artificial intelligence (AI) in improving project integration and procurement procedures should be the focus of future study in the food business. Blockchain can offer a transparent and decentralized ledger system that improves supply chain visibility and traceability while guaranteeing the safety and quality of products.

By enabling real-time product tracking from point of origin to end user, this system reduces hazards like contamination and guarantees adherence to food safety regulations. In a similar vein, IoT devices can track environmental variables like temperature, humidity,

and storage conditions, providing businesses with real-time information that aids in maintaining ideal food safety conditions. AI can improve procurement procedures by examining data patterns to forecast demand, choose suppliers more effectively, and cut down on waste.

Furthermore, future research should place a strong emphasis on changing consumer preferences and market developments. Procurement techniques that take consumer preferences into account are becoming more and more necessary as consumers seek more individualized, sustainable, and healthful products.

Studies can examine how food companies might modify their project integration procedures to account for these shifts, especially regarding obtaining sustainable ingredients, providing clear pricing, and satisfying the growing demand for healthier options. There is a chance to look at how procurement procedures might facilitate customization while preserving efficiency as individualized consumer experiences gain importance.

## **6.4 Conclusion**

Procurement and project integration are essential for the food business to operate successfully. Achieving the goals of quality, safety, sustainability, and efficiency that the sector is striving for requires efficient project and procurement management.

By fusing strategic procurement methods with project management concepts, food companies can reduce risks, maximize profits, and streamline operations. This integration enables the seamless coordination of several project components, including stakeholder interaction, scope management, time management, cost management, and quality

management. Furthermore, there are a number of new issues and trends in the ever-changing food market that demand further study and focus.

These include supply chain transparency and traceability, regulatory compliance, supplier relationship management, digital transformation, sustainability and circular economy initiatives, risk management and resilience, globalization versus localization strategies, consumer behavior and market trends, and regulatory compliance. Through research and implementation of these concepts, food companies will be able to adapt to evolving market dynamics, regulatory requirements, and technology advancements. In the end, by implementing project integration and procurement best practices, companies in the food industry may foster innovation, increase competitiveness, and meet customer demands all while ensuring the delivery of safe, high-quality products to the market.

## APPENDIX A

### SURVEY COVER LETTER

#### **Project Integration and Procurement Cultural Orientation and SME Growth: A Liberian Case Study**

Dear Participants,

I appreciate your willingness to engage in this research study. The aim of this survey/interview is to collect important insights regarding the influence of project integration and procurement cultural orientation on the development of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Liberia. Your insights are vital for grasping the significant challenges, effective strategies, and potential opportunities that emerge in procurement processes and project management within the SME sector.

The business environment in Liberia is characterized by distinct challenges, such as inefficiencies in procurement, regulatory limitations, and cultural influences that affect decision-making within small and medium-sized enterprises. This research seeks to assess the impact of combined project management and procurement strategies on fostering sustainable growth for small and medium enterprises, allowing them to enhance their competitiveness and resilience in a changing market landscape.

Your insights and experiences will foster a richer comprehension of procurement and project management practices, ultimately benefiting the growth of SMEs. Your insights will be crucial in informing recommendations for policymakers, businesses, and academic institutions to cultivate a more conducive business environment.

Your candid insights are crucial in fortifying the groundwork for small and medium enterprise development and enhancing procurement approaches for sustained achievement. If you encounter any questions or face challenges while filling out the survey, please reach out to my supervisor, Professor David Annan, at [david.annan@ssbm.ch](mailto:david.annan@ssbm.ch).

Your involvement is immensely valued, and we sincerely thank you for your significant contributions to this study.

Warm        Regards,

Sanket Suresh Ghuge

APPENDIX B



INFORMED CONSENT

**PROJECT INTEGRATION AND PROCUREMENT CULTURAL ORIENTATION  
AND SME GROWTH: A LIBERIAN CASE STUDY**

I, ..... agree  
to be interviewed for the research which will be conducted by ..... a  
doctorate student at the Swiss School of Business and Management, Geneva,  
Switzerland.

I confirm that I have been informed about the confidentiality of the information gathered for this study and the anonymity of my involvement; that I have received satisfactory responses to my questions regarding the research processes and other related issues; and that I have been made aware that I have the right to withdraw my consent and to stop my participation in the research or activity at any moment without any negative consequences.

I consent to engage in one or more digitally recorded interviews for this study.

I understand that such interviews and related materials will be kept completely anonymous, and that the results of this study may be published in any form that may serve its best.

I concur that any information gathered from this research can be utilized in whatever manner deemed most appropriate for this study.

.....

**Signature of Interviewee**

.....

**Date**

APPENDIX C  
INTERVIEW GUIDE

PROJECT INTEGRATION AND PROCUREMENT CULTURAL ORIENTATION  
AND SME GROWTH: A LIBERIAN CASE STUDY

This interview is being carried out as a component of a research study for advanced academic inquiry at SSBM Geneva. This research aims to explore how project integration and procurement cultural orientation influence the development of small and medium sized enterprises in Liberia. The information shared will remain private and will be utilized solely for scholarly objectives.

1. What is your experience with SME operations?

☐ Fewer than 2 years

☐ 2–5 years

☐ 6–10 years

☐ Over a decade

2. What is the main industry of your small or medium sized enterprise?

☐ Production

☐ Commerce and Distribution

☐ Professional Services (e.g., technology, advisory)

☐ Agricultural Studies

3. What responsibilities do you hold within the organization?

☐ Owner/Founder

☐ Senior Manager

☐ Procurement Officer

☐ Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

4. What is your SME's methodology for integrating projects?

☐ Completely aligned with systematic methodologies

☐ Somewhat aligned, yet inconsistent

☐ Fundamental alignment with limited collaboration

☐ Absence of a systematic alignment process

5. What are the most significant obstacles faced when merging projects within your small to medium sized enterprise?

☐ Insufficient funding

☐ Insufficient expertise among staff

☐ Ineffective collaboration among groups

☐ Deficient technology and resources

6. What essential elements contribute to effective project integration?

☐ Effective communication and collaboration

☐ Utilization of technological and digital resources

☐ Accessibility of funding sources

☐ Support from governmental or policy frameworks

7. How significantly does project integration impact the growth of small and medium enterprises?

☐ Extremely important

☐ Quite important

☐ Somewhat important

☐ Not important at all

8. What is the predominant procurement approach utilized in your small or medium sized enterprise?

☐ Structured competitive bidding

☐ Direct negotiations with vendors

☐ Informal arrangements grounded in trust

☐ Procurement governed by regulations

9. In what ways do cultural elements impact procurement choices?

☐ Have a significant impact on procurement decisions

☐ Have a moderate impact on procurement

☐ Exert minimal influence on procurement

☐ No effect whatsoever

10. What procurement challenge significantly influences the growth of small and medium enterprises?

☐ Corruption and favoritism

☐ Limited access to formal procurement systems

☐ Delays in government contract approvals

☐ High costs of procurement compliance

11. In what ways do conventional procurement methods influence the profitability of small and medium sized enterprises?

☐ Enhance partnerships with suppliers and foster trust

☐ Limit access to competitive pricing

☐ Minimal significant impact

- ☐ A mix of positive and negative outcomes

12. In what ways do small and medium enterprises in Liberia navigate the intersection of regulatory procurement requirements and cultural norms?

- ☐ Adhere closely to governmental procurement guidelines
- ☐ Combine formal and informal procurement methods
- ☐ Place significant emphasis on cultural practices rather than regulations
- ☐ Modify strategies according to project requirements

13. What is the primary factor driving the growth of small and medium enterprises in Liberia?

- ☐ Availability of funding
- ☐ Supportive governmental frameworks
- ☐ Efficient management and coordination of projects
- ☐ Robust procurement and supply chain mechanisms

14. In what ways does the cultural orientation of procurement influence the sustainability of small and medium sized enterprises?

- ☐ Results in financial uncertainty
- ☐ Enhances business connections but restricts rivalry

☐ Boosts operational effectiveness

☐ Exhibits no significant influence

15. What approaches can small and medium enterprises implement to improve procurement effectiveness and foster business expansion?

☐ Allocate resources for training and technology in procurement

☐ Establish clear and transparent processes for supplier selection

☐ Enhance collaborations between government and private entities

☐ Boost adherence to procurement regulations

16. What assistance is essential for facilitating the growth of small and medium enterprises through enhanced procurement and project integration?

☐ Instruction in acquisition and project oversight

☐ Enhanced financial rewards for small and medium enterprises

☐ More robust enforcement of equitable procurement standards

☐ Greater clarity in governmental agreements

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