

Influence of export trade policies on internationalisation of women entrepreneurs

Student Number: 20081023

A research proposal submitted to the Gordon Institute of Business Science,
University of Pretoria, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Philosophy (International Business).

27 November 2023

Abstract

The present research endeavours to examine the effects of export trade policies on the globalization of female entrepreneurs in South Africa. It focuses on the many challenges, obstacles, and supportive elements encountered by women-owned enterprises. Comprehending the complex business environment is essential for developing policies that support the internationalisation of women entrepreneurs. We explore the intricacies of export trade regulations and how they affect women-owned enterprises, highlighting the need for flexible frameworks that consider differences in company size, sector, and expertise. Stricter, more standardized policies may unintentionally limit smaller businesses' ability to grow, underscoring the need for more adaptable and responsive frameworks. Advocating for gender equity in trade policy and highlighting the critical role that women play in propelling economic success, gender-inclusive policies are essential. We highlight the critical need for ongoing reforms to policy, systemic adjustments, and partnerships between policymakers, international organizations, and financial institutions through an exploration of policies that both enable and hinder women entrepreneurs from internationalising. Examples of these policies include efforts facilitating collaboration, simplified trade laws, and the difficulties of navigating complex marketplaces. These observations provide crucial guidance to legislators in order to build a more varied and equitable business environment, which will help South African women-owned businesses expand internationally.

KEYWORDS

Trade, export, women, entrepreneurs, international

Declaration

I declare that this research project is my own work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Philosophy: International Business at the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University. I further declare that I have obtained the necessary authorisation and consent to carry out this research.

20081023

Student Number

27 November 2023

Date

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION.....	9
1.1 Background to the Research Problem.....	9
1.2 Academic Problem.....	9
1.3 Practical Problem.....	11
1.4 Research Problem and Questions.....	11
1.5 Significance of Study.....	12
2. LITERATURE REVIEW.....	14
2.1 Theoretical Underpinning.....	14
2.1.1 Feminist theory and export trade policies.....	14
2.1.2 Institutional theory and women-owned business internationalisation.....	15
2.1.3 Export trade policies and women-owned business internationalisation....	16
2.2 Internationalisation of Women-Owned Enterprises.....	16
2.2.1 Entrepreneurial motivations and goals.....	17
2.2.2 International market entry and aspiration.....	18
2.2.3 Business growth and expansion.....	19
2.2.4 Government support and programs.....	20
2.3 Policies and Internationalisation.....	21
2.4 Enablers and Barriers to Internationalisation.....	23
2.4.1 Enablers to internationalisation.....	23
2.4.2 Barriers to internationalisation.....	25
2.5 Women in the Role of Export Policy Reform.....	26
2.6 Conclusion.....	28
3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS.....	29
3.1 Research Questions.....	29
Research Question 1 (RQ 1)	29
Research Sub-Question 1 (SQ 1)	29
Research Sub-Question 2 (SQ 2)	29
Research Sub - Question 3 (SQ 3)	30
4. METHODOLOGY.....	31
4.1 Choice of Methodology.....	31
4.2 Population.....	33
4.3 Unit of Analysis.....	33
4.4 Sampling Method, Sampling Criteria, and Sample Size.....	34
4.5 Sample Size.....	35
4.6 Research Instrument.....	35
4.7 Data Gathering Process.....	36

4.8 Data Analysis Approach	37
4.9 Research Quality and Rigour.....	38
4.10 Limitations of the Research Design and Methods.....	39
4.11 Conclusion.....	40
5. FINDINGS	41
5.1 Introduction.....	41
5.2 Outline of the Sample Study	41
5.2.1 Participants profile.....	41
5.3 Results for Research Questions	43
5.3.1 Business growth and expansion.....	45
5.3.2 Entrepreneurial motivation and goals.....	47
5.3.3 International market expansion	48
5.3.4 Similarities and differences identified	50
5.3.5 Summary- RQ1	50
5.4 Results for Research Sub - Question 1	50
5.4.1 Government support and programs	52
5.4.2 Trade policies and ease of doing business	54
5.4.3 Similarities and differences of sub-question 1	55
5.4.4 Sub-question 1-conclusion.....	55
5.5 Results for Research Sub - Question 2	56
5.5.1 Navigating global markets: export challenges.....	58
5.5.2 Inadequate export capacitation	59
5.5.3. Gender Bias, Perceptions, and Gender-Related Targets in Trade Policies	60
5.5.4 Government procedures and policy execution	61
5.5.5 Understanding and implementation of export trade policy	61
5.5.6 Export funding	62
5.5.7 Similarities and differences in sub-question 2	63
5.5.8 Sub-question 2: conclusion	64
5.6 Results for Research Sub - Question 3	64
5.6.1 International best practices	65
5.6.2 International support networks	67
5.6.3 Enhancing export quality and economic infrastructure.....	68
5.6.4 Inspiring Women in Entrepreneurship	69
5.6.5 Similarities and differences in sub-question 3	69
5.6.6 Sub-question 3 - conclusion	70
5.7 Results for Research Sub - Question 4	70

5.7.1 Collaborative knowledge exchange.....	72
5.7.2 Gender-inclusive trade targets and advocacy	73
5.7.3 Gathering of quality data	74
5.7.4 Policy and regulatory challenges in business.....	75
5.7.5 Similarities and differences in sub-question 4	76
5.7.6 Sub-question 4 - conclusion	77
6. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS	78
6.1 Introduction.....	78
6.2 Research Question 1 (RQ 1) Discussion	78
6.2.1 Business growth and expansion.....	78
6.2.2 Entrepreneurial motivations and goals	82
6.2.3 International market entry and aspiration	82
6.2.4 Conclusion- research question 1	84
6.3 Research Sub-Question 1 (SQ 1) Discussion.....	85
6.3.1 Government support and programs	85
6.3.2 Trade policies and ease of doing business	89
6.3.3 Conclusion- research sub-question 1	90
6.4 Research Sub-Question 2 (SQ 2) Discussion.....	90
6.4.1 Navigating global markets: export challenges	90
6.4.2 Gender Bias, Perceptions, and Gender-Related Targets in Trade Policies Gender-Related Challenges	93
6.4.3 Government procedures and policy execution	94
6.4.4 Export funding	94
6.4.5 Understanding and implementation of export trade policy	95
6.4.6 Conclusion- research sub-question 2	96
6.5 Research Sub - Question 3 (SQ 3) Discussion.....	97
6.5.1 International best practices	97
6.5.2 Enhancing export quality and economic infrastructure.....	99
6.5.3 Inspiring women in entrepreneurship	100
6.5.4 Conclusion- research sub-question 3	101
6.6 Research Sub - Question 4 (SQ 4) Discussion.....	101
6.6.1 Collaborative knowledge exchange.....	101
6.6.2 Gender-inclusive trade targets and advocacy	102
6.6.3 Policy and regulatory challenges in business.....	103
6.6.4 Conclusion- research sub-question 4	104
7. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	105
7.1 Introduction.....	105

7.2 Conclusion of Findings	105
7.3 Contribution of the Study	109
7.3.1 Theoretical contribution	109
7.3.2 Practical implications.....	110
7.4 Recommendations to Policymakers and Stakeholders.....	110
7.5 Limitations of the Study	111
7.6 Recommendations for Future Research	112
7.7 Conclusion.....	113
8. REFERENCE	114

1. INTRODUCTION

Export trade policies play an indisputable function in determining the environment surrounding entrepreneurial endeavours in the modern age of global trade. Nevertheless, there is a significant gap in our understanding of how this complex network of global trade affects one group of people: women entrepreneurs. With the goal of analysing and shedding light on the complex link between export trade policies and the potential for internationalisation of women-led businesses, this study sets out on an ambitious journey. The researcher wants to better comprehend this area and open the door for a more empowered and inclusive global entrepreneurial ecosystem as its subtleties, difficulties, and possibilities are explored.

1.1 Background to the Research Problem

According to Rudhumbu et al., (2020), when a woman or group of women decide to launch and run a business, this is called women entrepreneurship. A business owned and managed by women and with a minimum financial commitment of 50% of the capital is referred to as a women's entrepreneurial venture. In their research paper, Bullough et al. (2021) indicated that female entrepreneurship is an important and growing phenomenon worldwide. They face unique challenges and opportunities, and understanding their experiences and contributions is essential for promoting economic growth and development. One of the key trends in women's entrepreneurship is the increasing number of women-owned businesses. According to data from the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM), in 2022, 42% of all entrepreneurs were women, and the number of women entrepreneurs increased by 5% over the previous year.

Women's presence in export and international trade businesses has risen substantially. A growing number of women-owned enterprises have become aware of the potential clients offered by international marketplaces. Current research studies address the advancement of female entrepreneurship and the role of women entrepreneurs (Gundlach & Sammartino, 2019); however, more progress is needed in gender disparities in trade policy preferences, as well as barriers and drivers to women entrepreneurs developing international businesses and participating in exporting (Altuzarra et al., 2021).

1.2 Academic Problem

The link between export trade policies and how they support women entrepreneurs to go global must be understood theoretically (Sui et al., 2022). According to Manzoor (2017), more research is needed to examine the emergence of female entrepreneurship in the business arena. This research will encourage women to be involved in entrepreneurship and enable

them to contribute to the growth of businesses; targeted measures must be used. A comprehensive assistance program for women who want to start their businesses will also benefit from its development and marketing (Abou-Moghli & Al-Abdallah, 2019). Women-owned firms are thought to export proportionally less than male-owned enterprises (Sui et al., 2022). The challenges associated with female entrepreneurs differ significantly from those associated with male entrepreneurs. Therefore, it is critical to determine these barriers to create an effective action plan when developing export trade policies (Akter et al., 2019). More research on export trade policies that offer definitive answers to this problem is needed.

Additionally, to ensure balanced economic growth, women must participate fully in the decision-making process of export trade policies. Rare empirical studies examining the link between the proportion of women in legislative bodies and economic growth conclude that having women contributes to developing gender-inclusive export trade policies. Therefore, by enhancing the gender equality of their legislative bodies, nations may hasten economic progress (Akter et al., 2022).

In most nations, the favourable atmosphere for women entrepreneurs is evaluated very low by national experts. This might be why women perceive entrepreneurship as a career option significantly less favourably than men (Rietveld & Patel, 2022a). According to the GEM 2022 study on women and entrepreneurship, there is still much work to be done to motivate and assist female entrepreneurs as they build enterprises that promote both internationalisation and economic growth. The data directs decision-makers toward more practical ways to solve the obstacles to internationalisation that women encounter in various business sectors and nations through gender-inclusive trade policies (Rietveld & Patel, 2022b).

The framework provided by institutional theory can be beneficial for comprehending the opportunities and challenges that women entrepreneurs encounter during the internationalisation process. Women entrepreneurs' experiences are shaped by cultural, governmental, and normative variables, which can also provide formidable obstacles to their entry into international markets. Recent journal papers have emphasized the necessity for policy reforms to create a more conducive setting for women entrepreneurs and the need to comprehend the institutional background of women entrepreneurs. Studies on institutional theory and women entrepreneurs will be helpful in guiding policy and practice going ahead and supporting the expansion and prosperity of women-owned firms globally (Orobia et al., 2020).

1.3 Practical Problem

Women-owned small and medium-sized companies (SMEs) are becoming increasingly crucial in transforming international trade and building the economy. Unlocking an economy's full potential requires the participation of women entrepreneurs in international commerce. Even though there are approximately 163 million female entrepreneurs worldwide, there is still a sizable "gender gap" in entrepreneurship (Byrne et al., (2018). Akter et al., (2023) stated that gender inequality and gender-specific restrictions are to blame for the lower participation of women entrepreneurs internationalising their businesses. A question may arise about why a distinct mindset is required to assess women-owned businesses in the export arena. Using a single measure to judge both male-owned and female-owned businesses is like providing the same treatment for all ailments.

The entrepreneurial ecosystem conditions influence the capacity of women entrepreneurs to compete in the global market in various countries in terms of culture, economics, financial institutions, infrastructure, government policies, and programs (Moreira et al., 2019). Pergelova et al., (2018) state that women-owned businesses experience comparative disadvantages when they enter export markets and cannot benefit from or successfully navigate the potential difficulties of internationalisation.

Akter et al., (2019) state that women have a crucial role in economic growth, but several obstacles restrict their prospects. It holds for women's involvement in global trade as well. Even though 40% of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) globally are owned by women, just 15% of exporting firms are run by women entrepreneurs, according to the International Trade Centre, ITC. In order to properly integrate women into the global economic system, the World Trade Organization (WTO) proclaims that action must be taken (Moreira et al., 2019).

1.4 Research Problem and Questions

The research investigates how export trade policies influence the internationalisation of women-owned businesses. Specifically, the study will analyze how export trade policies enable and disable women entrepreneurs from internationalising and how they navigate these export trade challenges. Lastly, a look into how women in export-related public representative institutions can influence export trade policy changes will also be explored.

The following research issues must be addressed to further our understanding.

Main Research Question:

How do export trade policies influence the internationalisation of women-owned businesses?

Sub-Question 1: How do export trade policies enable women entrepreneurs to internationalise?

Sub-Question 2: How do export trade policies disable women entrepreneurs from internationalising?

Sub-Question 3: How do women entrepreneurs navigate export trade policy challenges?

Sub-Question 4: How do women entrepreneurs influence the change in export trade policy?

1.5 Significance of Study

In recent years, there has been increasing attention to the role of women in entrepreneurship and their participation in international trade. As part of this trend, scholars and policymakers have explored the impact of export trade policies on internationalising women entrepreneurs (Akter et al., 2019). Export trade policies aim to create a favourable environment for exporters and enhance their competitiveness in global markets. One area where export trade policies can have a significant impact is on women entrepreneurs. Women-owned businesses often face unique challenges in accessing international markets, including limited access to finance, information, and networks. Moreover, cultural and social barriers can make it harder for women entrepreneurs to navigate foreign markets and build relationships with potential customers and partners. These barriers can limit the growth and profitability of women-owned firms and reinforce gender inequalities in entrepreneurship (Ojong et al., 2021).

Against this backdrop, studying the influence of export trade policies on internationalising women entrepreneurs is significant for several reasons. First, it can help identify the most effective policies and strategies to support women entrepreneurs' internationalisation. For example, research has shown that financial incentives and technical assistance can benefit women-owned businesses, as they can help address some barriers to entry into foreign markets. By understanding which policies work best, policymakers can design targeted interventions that maximize the benefits of international trade for women entrepreneurs (Islam & Sarkar, 2023).

Second, the study can shed light on the challenges women entrepreneurs face in accessing international markets and how these challenges can be addressed. For instance, research has highlighted the importance of building women's networks and providing training on export procedures and regulations. By identifying these challenges, policymakers can design policies and programs targeting women entrepreneurs' needs and preferences (Rosenbaum, 2019).

Third, the study can contribute to a broader understanding of gender and entrepreneurship. Research has shown that gender biases and stereotypes can affect how women entrepreneurs are perceived and treated in international markets. For example, women-owned businesses may be seen as less competitive or innovative than their male counterparts, hindering their ability to secure contracts or partnerships. Scholars can shed light on these biases and develop strategies to overcome them by examining the impact of export trade policies on women entrepreneurs.

In conclusion, studying the influence of export trade policies on internationalising women entrepreneurs is significant for several reasons. By identifying the most effective policies and strategies, addressing the challenges women entrepreneurs face, and shedding light on gender biases in entrepreneurship, this study can help promote women's participation in international trade and support the growth and profitability of women-owned businesses (Ahmed & Brennan, 2019).

The growth of the SME sector in South Africa will benefit from the findings of this research. The study's conclusions are helpful for the advancement of female entrepreneurs. The findings of this study will also be helpful to current and future women-owned business owners who want to internationalize. The research findings may also help identify priority areas for the growth of the SMME sector for government, policymakers, financial institutions, and other private businesses (Mota et al., 2021)

The scholarly literature on women entrepreneurs and their internationalisation journeys will be reviewed in the ensuing chapter of this research study. Additionally, the impact of export regulations on the process of internationalisation will be examined. The study also examines the role that women may play in bringing about change in the way policies are created. The primary research topic and its three sub-questions are the subject of Chapter 3. The research method used in this study is described in Chapter 4. The study findings are presented in Chapter 5, and the key themes are discussed in detail in Chapter 6. This research report is concluded in Chapter 7, which summarizes the main findings, highlights the implications of the study for policymakers and women entrepreneurs, offers solutions, and identifies areas that require further research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section provides an overview of the literature on the internationalisation of women-owned enterprises. Policies are discussed, as well as the enablers and barriers women entrepreneurs experience and how women can play a role in policy drafting.

2.1 Theoretical Underpinning

Two important theoretical frameworks are used to examine how export regulations affect women-owned firms' internationalisation: institutional theory and feminist theory. These viewpoints offer an in-depth knowledge of how institutional structures, biases, and gender dynamics influence women entrepreneurs' experiences in the global marketplace.

On the contrary, Akter et al., (2019) explain that institutional theory concentrates on the official and informal laws, customs, and practices that influence people's and organizations' behaviour. Williams and Spielmann (2019) state that women business owners could encounter institutional obstacles such as biases in funding, networking opportunities, or industry-specific norms. According to institutional theory, policies and initiatives promoting female entrepreneurs should work to alter these institutional elements in order to level the playing field.

2.1.1 Feminist theory and export trade policies

Leading entrepreneurial publications mostly only include feminist theory implicitly, with liberal and social views predominating. Since liberal feminist thought views men and women as fundamentally similar, it promotes equal opportunity. Research with a liberal feminist perspective look at structural obstacles including barriers to entry, restricted access to capital, and marginalization from male networks that prevent women from growing their businesses in the same way as successful male entrepreneurs. The fundamental premise is that when women have equal access to opportunity, they will conduct themselves in the same manner as men (Dean et al., 2019). Feminist theory provides essential insights into the ways in which discrimination based on sexual orientation and class intersects with discrimination based on gender. According to Akter et al., (2019), discrimination based on a variety of distinguishing characteristics presents additional challenges for women from disadvantaged areas when it comes to internationalisation. The authors propose that feminist trade policies have the potential to enhance gender equality and assist female entrepreneurs in surmounting structural obstacles. A feminist approach to global trade politics formulates trade policies with the goal of prioritising progressive ways of societal reproduction as the primary objective of global trade. This entails departing from a trading framework that grants investors and

companies legal rights guaranteed by governments, while granting women just well-meaning but unenforceable rights. All trade agreements should be (re-)formulated taking into account forward-thinking methods of social development, rather than having stand-alone gender provisions or chapters added to them that are otherwise kept intact (Hannah et al., 2021). This is consistent with the idea that export trade laws based on feminist ideals can serve as enablers.

2.1.2 Institutional theory and women-owned business internationalisation

The institutional theory offers a thorough framework for examining the conduct of internationalisation with its many elements, including social, cultural, and normative viewpoints. Specifically, the normative institutional theory takes centre stage. According to Arabiyat et al. (2019), an institution's norms and values—such as its legal framework, business standards, and professional norms—greatly influence how people behave individually and as a group. According to normative institutional theory, agreements on trade, standards in the industry, and professional groups are examples of business institutions with norms and values that influence the involvement of women entrepreneurs in globalization.

The definition of institutional theory by Douglass C. North emphasizes how institutions influence and constrain human behaviour and its effects on the economy. According to this perspective, institutions play a crucial role in shaping society, politics, and economy processes by offering a framework of rules, regulations, and customs that guide decision-making (Zhai & Su, 2019). Comparably, W. Richard Scott characterizes institutions as structures that mould social interactions, behaviour, and shared values (Beugelsdijk et al., 2017). Given that societal conventions, regulations, and routines have an impact on entrepreneurial behavior, Anggadwita and Indarti (2023) contend that institutional theory is essential to understanding the factors that propel entrepreneurial success, especially the entrepreneurial environment. The author recommends incorporating feminism theories into the creation of thinking about organisations and business.

The study, which is based on a review of the literature, hypothesises that the key parameters of socio-economic freedom for women-owned SMEs when they internationalise come from the intricate relationships between the country's cultural context and society, namely tradition and legislation (the regulatory pillar), society and entrepreneurship/institutions (the normative pillar), and culture and entrepreneurship (the cultural-cognitive pillar). This results in a unique set of parameters for socio-economic freedom for female entrepreneurs, which subsequently in turn influences the capacity of women-owned SMEs to go global (Akter et al., 2023).

2.1.3 Export trade policies and women-owned business internationalisation

Research on how export trade regulations affect women-owned firms explores strategies and motives, including reinvestment theory, market-seeking tactics, and risk management (Beck et al., 2017). Rajagopaul et al., (2020) and Maluleke et al., (2022) noted that government backing and mentoring are essential elements in promoting internationalisation. According to ideas explained by Brush et al. (2018) and Cuervo-Cazurra et al. (2018), obstacles such as restricted access to financial resources, institutional biases, and cultural barriers are examples of challenges and gender biases.

According to Aladejebi (2020) and Nakku et al. (2019), using affirmative action along with quality control standards highlights the significance of networking, quality control standards, and government backing in enabling women's success in international markets. Based on frameworks such as Guimarães et al. (2021) and Colaço and Watson-Grant (2021), collaboration and gender-inclusive policy engagement emphasize the importance of teamwork, gender-inclusive policies, and high-quality data in determining export trade policies.

This theoretical underpinning of the literature review emphasizes how important it is to combine ideas from feminist and institutional theories to understand the intricate relationships between export trade policies and the globalization of women-owned businesses. This synthesis gives helpful advice for developing gender-inclusive policies that encourage the worldwide development of women-owned businesses and provide a theoretical framework for comprehending incentives and difficulties. This comprehensive knowledge significantly contributes to current debates and initiatives to promote a fairer and more inclusive atmosphere in global commerce.

2.2 Internationalisation of Women-Owned Enterprises

According to Sedziniauskiene et al. (2019), internationalisation is adapting an organization's strategies, tactics, and assets to a global setting, demonstrating how a business takes advantage of possibilities across borders. In addition to being the outcome of international operations, this strategy adjustment, also known as internationalisation, offers female entrepreneurs new opportunities for growth, innovation, and market exposure in globalization. There are various ways in which internationalisation can be beneficial to women entrepreneurs. This entails increased profits, access to global value chains, increased profitability, new markets, improved competitiveness, and innovations (Pergelova et al., 2018).

In their studies, Moreira et al., (2019) further state that internationalisation can also lead to increased self-confidence and leadership skills among women entrepreneurs.

Hussain (2022), however, explains that even though internationalisation can be beneficial to women entrepreneurs, there are grave challenges that they need to face and overcome, such as financial limitations, poor knowledge of trading internationally, barriers in language, and most crucially, the gender discrimination that can be experienced. Ahmetaj et al., (2023) raise the issue that women in developing countries, having a low number of female exporters, face challenges in accessing opportunities to trade internally and lack access to support programs.

Several studies on the internationalisation of women entrepreneurs have looked into various influences, such as the effect of gender on internationalisation, the function of government strategies in ensuring women entrepreneurs are supported, and the approach that women entrepreneurs have applied in order to flourish in international trade (Akter et al., 2019; Fazalbhoy & Naik, 2019; Moreira et al., 2019). An example would be the study conducted by Fazalbhoy and Naik (2019), which states that female entrepreneurs endure major obstacles to globalization due to preconceptions and gendered societal inequalities. The research study that the authors conducted indicated that women entrepreneurs overcome these obstacles by forming effective networks and considering the perspectives of women entrepreneurs when creating policies to assist the internationalisation process.

Women's internationalisation as business owners is a developing field of study with important implications for gender equality and economic growth. Despite the difficulties, internationalisation offers women entrepreneurs new opportunities for development, innovation, and access to markets that have never been considered. The solution to women entrepreneurs overcoming the hurdles of internationalisation and prospering in global trade would be to have export strategies in place, such as networking and looking at government programmes that are available in order for them to be export ready.

2.2.1 Entrepreneurial motivations and goals

The study emphasizes the significance of confidence and confidence in business success, elucidating the crucial relationship between international goals and entrepreneurial objectives (Seikkula-Leino & Salomaa, 2021). This is consistent with Cho and Lee's (2018) focus on the transformative power of international commerce. Romanello and Chiarvesio (2019) emphasize the significance of the early years of entrepreneurial ventures, raising doubts about

the generalization of results across different entrepreneurial phases, which raises possible conflicts in the research. Furthermore, the focus on proactive information-seeking is consistent with Li et al.'s (2020a) assessment of an entrepreneur's ability to locate and use knowledge for business success. In analysing the literature's inconsistencies on the psychological challenges that firms encounter as they grow globally, it is essential to consider these.

Romanello and Chiarvesio (2019) have underlined the importance of the early stages of an entrepreneurial journey. An entrepreneur's viewpoint and objectives are shaped throughout these early years. In the context of women exporters in particular, these formative years might provide potential and obstacles. The self-assurance and tenacity displayed during this stage frequently serve as a foundation for subsequent global undertakings.

According to Li et al. (2020a), proactive information-seeking is essential in the exporting environment. The capacity to find, understand, and use knowledge becomes an empowering weapon for female exporters. A proactive attitude to information collecting combined with confidence acts as an encouragement for growth in global trade.

However, research on how to deal with the psychological difficulties arising from globalisation is inconsistent. Samy et al., (2023) discuss the complicated constraints experienced by women exporters, which stem from a unique combination of cultural, commercial, and gender-related obstacles. The researchers further state that in order to develop more specialised tactics to assist female entrepreneurs in their exporting initiatives, it is imperative that these disparities be recognized and addressed. To promote a more diverse and equitable business environment, it is critical to address the subtleties of various entrepreneurial stages and recognise the difficulties experienced by women exporters (Samy et al., 2023).

2.2.2 International market entry and aspiration

The recognition of export prospects in Africa, especially in the SADC region, is consistent with Bronauer and Yoon's (2018) and Ferreira et al.'s (2022) views on the growing potential for global commerce in Africa. Regarding the difficulties and complexity involved in enhancing tactics and approaches to achieve traction in these areas, it is crucial to identify any possible discrepancies in the literature.

Additionally, the research that views Africa as an emerging center for corporate expansion (Malca et al., 2019; Osano, 2019) is consistent with the interest in African markets when interpreting the African continent as a centre for corporate expansion. The problems in refining

tactics and approaches suggest that enterprises can encounter obstacles while attempting to navigate the complexities of the African market environment despite the apparent potential. This balanced perspective emphasizes the necessity of taking a cautious and well-considered approach to global expansion in the African environment, considering both possibilities and obstacles. Methodical preparation and accidental movements are approaches to joining the export market that align with the "born global" strategy (Paul & Rosado-Serrano, 2019, p. 14). The emphasis placed by the participants on gaining experience is consistent with Rundh's (2022) view that extensive study should be done before entering overseas markets. Cultural anomalies and barriers to market access are significant challenges (Felzensztein et al., 2019). Success depends on several factors, including in-depth market research, strategic alliances, and local knowledge. Scholars generally agree that it is critical to comprehend regional economic ecosystems and cultural elements in order to make sense of participant experiences.

2.2.3 Business growth and expansion

The data research indicates that the demand for income diversification is a crucial factor behind the global development of women-owned businesses. This is consistent with the findings of Ribau et al. (2016), who highlighted variety as a joint driving force toward internationalisation. It is essential to acknowledge any potential inconsistencies within the literature, given that Boso et al. (2018) contend that a business catering to a single market is vulnerable to economic downturns, hence casting doubt on the notion of diversity as a risk-management strategy. In addition, deliberate attention to developing markets is consistent with the market-seeking strategy Boso et al. (2018) and Breuillot (2021) support. However, it is vital to recognize the variety of female entrepreneurs' tactics, as Vanninen et al. (2022) draw attention to how different businesses are while looking for possibilities abroad. The desire for international orders, signifying financial remuneration, supports Ribau et al.'s (2016) studies on higher export earnings.

The emphasis on product demand as a crucial driver for the globalization of women-owned enterprises aligns with Fregidou-Malama et al.'s (2022) assertion that market demand influences decisions to go global. However, the literature introduces potential contradictions, as Baccini (2021) argues that export trade regulations can significantly reduce market entrance barriers, facilitating successful entry into international markets. The focus on legume-based goods underscores the strategic significance of specific products, aligning with the literature on exporting goods with high demand abroad (Zhu et al., 2020).

Moreover, the alignment with global dietary trends, such as plant-based diets, introduces a strategic advantage, emphasizing adaptability (Ribau et al., 2016). Building a solid local foundation before going global aligns with Olaore et al.'s (2020) focus on substantial home operations serving as a foundation for global development. Recognizing a learning curve linked to global growth bolsters the viewpoint of Zahoor et al. (2023) regarding flexibility and resilience amid fluctuating market circumstances. However, the literature provides some potential inconsistencies because some academics contend that a learning curve may present difficulties in responding to local market realities and legal restrictions. The ability of female entrepreneurs to pick up new skills and adjust to changing circumstances is consistent with Olaore et al.'s (2020) focus on adaptability and learning from experience in new markets.

2.2.4 Government support and programs

The South African government offers export promotion programs and support services through organisations like the Department of Trade, Industry, and Competition (the dtic), The Small Enterprise Development Agency (Seda), and provincially located economic development entities that focuses on helping business owners access and grow in overseas markets. These activities include assistance with market access, trade trips, inclusion in international trade shows, and access to market data and intelligence (Maluleke et al., 2022; Rajagopaul et al., 2020). Export Training and Capacity Building: The Small Enterprise Development Agency (Seda) offers training courses, sessions, and capacity-building initiatives to assist business owners in acquiring the skills and information required for foreign commerce. These courses concentrate on export preparedness, market entrance techniques, trade financing, export paperwork, and adherence to international trade laws (Rajagopaul et al., 2020).

The enthusiastic reception that women-focused support initiatives, like the SheTrades Mentorship program, have received fits with a larger body of research that acknowledges the particular difficulties that women entrepreneurs confront (Brush et al., 2018). The need for programs that target certain genders prompts debates on the possibility of perpetuating gender stereotypes. In 2020, Kamberidou asserts that women entrepreneurs cannot effect change unless there are men present. She advocates for gender-neutral or gender-inclusive viewpoints, meaning that men and women should collaborate and work together to achieve sustainable development and economic growth (Kamberidou, 2020). The recognition of the function of government-sponsored activities, such as trade shows and mentoring programs

run by Seda, is in line with research on the beneficial effects of government assistance on company growth (Svenson, 2021).

According to Neumeyer et al. (2018), female entrepreneurs require international networking and assistance, as exemplified by the Japanese Women Entrepreneurs Network and programs overseen by entities such as GIZ. In order to guarantee long-term empowerment, the literature also acknowledges the necessity of comprehensive programs that include every facet of business (Svenson, 2021).

2.3 Policies and Internationalisation

The studies conducted by Ahmed and Brennan (2019) explain the importance of internationalisation and export trade policies and how essential they are to a nation's growth in economy and development. Many nations have recently started implementing measures to promote exports and international commerce to ensure an increase in foreign investment and economic growth (Caldara et al., 2020; Harrison et al., 2018). South Africa's export policies and programs aim to encourage entrepreneurs to expand internationally. These regulations promote and encourage companies to grow outside of their home countries. The following are some significant elements of South Africa's export regulations that support globalization:

Trade agreements are a significant tool used by nations to promote exports. Trade agreements are vital because they support international trade and open new markets for nations. South Africa has established trade and investment ties with emerging nations, which are the new global centres of economic growth. South Africa has made a more concerted effort to diversify its trade and investment contacts through the various trade agreements it has signed to take advantage of the accelerating and dynamic economic expansion in the global south. This is considering the unavoidable change in the economic geography of the international economy and the benefit of economic growth and job creation it seeks to achieve through exporting. South Africa has signed several trade agreements. The key agreements are as follows: Trade between South Africa and the other four members of the Southern African Customs Union—Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, and Eswatini—is duty-free (SACU). As of 2012, 12 of the 15 members of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) are eligible for duty-free trade. The Free Trade Agreement (FTA), the European Union-South African Trade and Development Cooperation Agreement, which went into force in 2000, has established itself as the mainstay of the regional trade system. In addition, South Africa has negotiated accords with Mercosur, the United Kingdom, and the European Free Trade Association. Phase I of the Tripartite Free Trade Agreement, which creates a free trade zone

between SADC, the East Africa Community (EAC), and the Common Market of Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), has been concluded by South Africa through SADC. Additionally, South Africa is a part of the recently established African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) (Manwa et al., 2019).

The research highlights the significance of trade policies in enabling international business in line with the favorable impression of agreements on trade and clear trade laws (Liñán et al., 2019). However, concerns about striking a balance between trade agreements' advantages and disadvantages highlight the continuous discussion in academic circles about the possible adverse effects of globalization. Researchers such as Rodrik (2018) contend that cautious thought is required to guarantee that trade policies support equitable growth while protecting regional businesses. Cultural linkages are recognized to be impacted by commercial procedures (Nurfarida, 2022). Businesses must adapt to survive when deeply rooted practices and trade restrictions collide. Studies highlight how foreign governments actively market their companies through agreements on trade and export promotion initiatives (Gupta & Mirchandani, 2018). While some participants advocate copying effective initiatives, such as those in Tanzania, academics such as Tinitis and Fey (2022) emphasize the necessity for customized strategies based on a nation's sectors and capabilities. International trade depends on strict compliance with food safety laws and appropriate labeling (Gizaw, 2019). On the other hand, trust and market access depend just as much on maintaining constant product quality (Okocha et al., 2018). These conclusions are corroborated by the research, highlighting the necessity of regulations and standards to encourage trade across various sectors (Fung et al., 2018).

Scholars such as Beugelsdijk et al. (2017), Fornes and Cardoza (2018), and Sun et al. (2021) bolster the notion that a nuanced and culturally aware approach is critical to international trade. The emphasis on understanding and respecting local cultures is consistent with the ideas of scholars and participant observations. Gender prejudice, resource scarcity, and underrepresentation are challenges female entrepreneurs face (Fang et al., 2022). Academics such as Guzman and Kacperczyk (2018) concur with the participants, stressing the necessity of implementing legislative modifications to advance gender parity in global trade. It is acknowledged that breaking down gender stereotypes and promoting various job options are important (Clarke, 2020).

By giving South African women enterprises assistance, resources, and opportunities to grow into overseas markets, these export policies and programs jointly encourage the internationalisation of South African women-owned businesses. Entrepreneurs can use these

rules and interact with pertinent government organizations and agencies to gain access to available resources and maximize the advantages of global commerce. Internationalisation and export trade policies are closely related because export trade policies play a crucial role in assisting women entrepreneurs in defeating the hurdles of internationalisation and nurturing an environment conducive to growth and innovation (Ahmed & Brennan, 2019).

2.4 Enablers and Barriers to Internationalisation

2.4.1 Enablers to internationalisation

The internationalisation of women entrepreneurs has been linked to several contributors. These include using technology, accessing networks and mentors, receiving business training, and accessing financial resources. Businesses involved in international trade are considered to need ongoing education and current knowledge (Catanzaro & Teyssier, 2020). It is emphasised how vital training sessions, conferences, and mentorship programs are. According to scholars such as Svenson (2021), government initiatives should concentrate on offering complete support, including readiness evaluations and capacity-building. The acknowledgment of export orientation and capacity-building initiatives as critical components of global success is consistent with the body of literature highlighting skill development's role in international commerce (Kuratko et al., 2021). However, the focus on export training tailored to a person's gender begs the question of how successful a segregated strategy is. Scholars such as Durnová and Weible (2020) make the case for a combined training approach that recognizes the unique obstacles women entrepreneurs face while also addressing the requirements of all entrepreneurs.

Regional intermediaries and consultants' role in helping female entrepreneurs with cross-border business is emphasized. This is supported by academics who acknowledge the importance of intermediaries in negotiating the complexity of global markets, such as Juma et al. (2019). The scalability of this strategy is called into question by its dependence on trade agents and wholesalers, and academics have warned against relying too much on intermediaries due to potential oversight and long-term sustainability issues (Madison et al., 2022). Chambers of commerce are essential in providing complete verification and safety in cross-border trade (Blackburne & Buckley, 2019). However, according to the research, successful trade facilitation requires striking a balance between official support and proactive measures (Kalafsky & Raymond, 2023).

Another crucial aspect of internationalisation is access to networks and mentorship. Gender biases and cultural customs are a significant contributor to this deterrent. In order to resolve

this matter, the SheTrades programme is a flagship programme of the International Trade Centre (ITC) that focuses on capacitation and providing market access. Furthermore, this addresses the business training required for internationalisation, as the SheTrades programme provides online training. Initiatives such as the SheTrades programme, which is government-funded, help address barriers to female entrepreneurs (Aissatou & Ruben, 2019). The SheTrades program equips female entrepreneurs to exploit global trade possibilities by fusing capacity building, market knowledge, networking, and policy advocacy. It gives them the tools to effectively traverse the world's markets and contribute to long-term economic prosperity.

Research indicates the beneficial effects of Seda's mentoring initiatives on business owners engaged in international commerce, according to Svenson's (2021) research. Participants constantly praise these programs for offering priceless advice and assistance in negotiating the intricacies of international trade. These results are supported by Kuratko et al. (2021), who highlight the value of mentoring initiatives in providing entrepreneurs with the abilities and information required for success in global commerce.

A common topic in the literature is the value of personalized guidance and support. According to Svenson (2021), entrepreneurs appreciate the critical function mentorship programs play in developing competence in global networking, expanding markets, and comprehending trade rules. This emphasizes the importance of supporting these initiatives to support ongoing business growth and competitiveness in the global economy (Kuratko et al., 2021).

Another noteworthy finding is the excellent reaction that Seda-sponsored shows have received. Participants agree that these occasions give businesses access to outside markets, extensively promoting global trade. Catanzaro and Teyssier (2020) credit the Department of Trade, Industry, and Competition (DTIC) for actively supporting trade displays, highlighting the critical role that government assistance plays in generating chances for businesses to exhibit their goods worldwide.

According to Catanzaro and Teyssier (2020), businesses must have the tools to highlight the favorable effects on the results and influence of their worldwide exhibitions.

According to Arshad et al. (2020), regional development organizations—more significantly, the Eastern Cape Development Corporation (ECDC)—play a critical role in giving local company owners a platform to sell their products abroad. The body of research lends credence to the notion that these initiatives foster regional economic development and growth in addition to helping local businesses reach international markets.

2.4.2 Barriers to internationalisation

However, Raman et al. (2022) state that irrespective of the enablers mentioned, women entrepreneurs still need to overcome several barriers to internationalisation. Limited knowledge about the global market, cultural and language barriers, limited support from export, and policies by the government that enable women entrepreneurs to flourish internationally is of concern (Raman et al., 2022).

The research by Herrington and Coduras (2019) states that export regulations play a phenomenal role in overcoming the hurdles women entrepreneurs face when expanding their businesses globally. These solutions include an export trade programme with trade missions and events. Export finance schemes and export credit insurance are also crucial when supporting export-ready women entrepreneurs. In order to ensure that there is gender equality and economic empowerment of women, trade agreements need to involve gender-specific support and consideration. In order to close these disparities, a multifaceted strategy is needed, one that involves capacity building, availability of capital, and the development of an ecosystem that supports the growth of women-owned enterprises on the global stage. This strategy will support female entrepreneurs and realize their full potential in the global economy; it is critical to guarantee that policies and programs are developed with a gender-responsive perspective (Bahri, 2020).

Access to capital is essential for business owners who want to conduct international commerce. The dtic funded Export Marketing and Investment Assistance Scheme (EMIA) intends to expand the export markets for South African goods and services and draw in fresh foreign direct investment (Maluleke et al., 2022). Successful export initiatives are recognized to need a substantial financial commitment (Sibanda et al., 2018). One obstacle affecting operational efficiency is the need for more finance. Experts and attendees alike acknowledge the significance of sufficient export funding, acknowledging its function in reducing barriers to entry and enabling global commercial transactions. For women entrepreneurs that are looking at the prospect to internationalise, financial resources are a crucial factor. Due to gender biases, gender prejudice, a lack of collateral, and poor credit history, women entrepreneurs find it cumbersome to secure finances (Boateng & Poku, 2019).

Scholtz (2019) elaborates that the South African government offers several incentives to encourage exporters to go global. The Department of Trade and Industry (dtic) offers the EMIA

incentive to expand the export markets for South African products and services. With its network of overseas offices and targeted export promotion initiatives, Trade and Investment South Africa (TISA), a part of the dtic, enables export development and promotes exports. Such incentives give women entrepreneurs more access to market opportunities, which will assist in internationalizing their businesses.

Papulová et al. (2021) draw attention to the underappreciation of small firms in the context of global expansion, underscoring the difficulties these companies encounter in forging a worldwide footprint. While acknowledging the value of reasonable expectations and being ready for the complexities of the international market, some academics contend that insufficient resources and poor strategic planning may cause undervaluation (Papulová et al., 2021).

Felzensztein et al. (2019) highlight the challenges small enterprises face when trying to enter overseas markets, highlighting the need to comprehend local distribution networks and develop strategic alliances. On the other hand, Nurfarida (2022) contends that thorough market research and knowledge of regional business ecosystems are essential to get beyond challenges brought on by complicated regulations and a dearth of local networks.

One of the biggest challenges in international markets is overcoming linguistic and cultural boundaries (Nurfarida, 2022). Sinkovics et al. (2018) stress the need to fund cultural awareness training and foster links with local communities to address these problems. Nurfarida (2022) promotes regular involvement with foreign markets to bridge cultural divides. Beugelsdijk et al. (2017) and Fornes and Cardoza (2018) draw attention to the relationship between cultural norms and commercial practices, recognizing that there may be significant obstacles if deeply ingrained customs and trade laws clash. Nevertheless, according to Logsdon and Wood (2002), these disputes could inadvertently make it harder for some goods to enter particular nations, emphasizing the need for a sophisticated knowledge of regional trade traditions.

2.5 Women in the Role of Export Policy Reform

Women increasingly assume leading positions in several fields, including international trade policy. To create more all-encompassing and fair policies that benefit all participants, including women themselves, the active involvement of women in trade policymaking is crucial (Ariffin et al., 2020).

The participation and impact of women in the formulation of export trade policy have been noted in several studies. For instance, Korinek and Van Lieshout (2023), declare that trade policies favouring male entrepreneurs will cause an economic imbalance with women entrepreneurs. Therefore, gender-focused trade policies are needed to address women entrepreneurs' unique barriers and challenges when internationalising.

The literature emphasizes the importance of supporting cooperation among female entrepreneurs and legislators (Guimarães et al., 2021). Academics who highlight the advantages of multi-stakeholder engagement in policy formation include Foss et al. (2018). On the other hand, opinions on the degree to which in-person meetings and discussions are required for productive cooperation and policy influence may differ.

In line with the demand for more diversity and inclusion in policy creation, participants emphasized the necessity for female entrepreneurs to actively participate in policy discussions (Nziku & Henry, 2020). Research supports that mentoring programs, panel discussions, and networking foster communication and teamwork (Foss et al., 2018). However, opinions among academics on how successful these campaigns are in enacting laws inclusive of both genders may differ. Similar to this thought, Ramanpreet and Pal (2019) suggest that gender-sensitive trade policies can help promote gender equality and empower women. They also discuss the challenges and limitations of incorporating gender into trade policy. Sirivunnabood and Liao (2021) examine the association between gender equality and export competitiveness from the perspective of Asian SMEs and dispute that gender-inclusive policies can assist in promoting gender equality and boosting the competitiveness of SMEs.

The body of research backs up the necessity of activities and trade policies that promote gender equality and include women (Shetty, 2021). Research supporting multi-stakeholder engagement aligns with the emphasis on international partnership for gender equality (Shetty, 2021). Scholars may disagree, meanwhile, about the contribution that multinational alliances provide to the development of gender-inclusive trade laws.

Research highlighting the importance of implementing policies for gender equity is consistent with the need for affirmative action throughout the policymaking process (Ko, 2020). Academics may have differing views on the impact and viability of enacting gender-inclusive legislation. The emphasis on specific industries is consistent with research encouraging gender diversity across various businesses (Orser et al., 2019). However, opinions on how realistic industry-specific gender-inclusive regulations are may vary. Acknowledging women's unique roles in trade and policy aligns with research highlighting the significance of

recognizing women's specific contributions (Hendriks, 2019). On the other hand, opinions among academics on how much acknowledging these roles affects policy results may differ. Bullough et al. (2021) provide theoretical evidence on the gendered nature of trade policies. The authors explore that trade policies have primarily focused on male-dominated trades, adversely affecting entrepreneurship. The research recommends that gender-inclusive trade policies can assist in addressing these challenges. Agarwal and Lenka (2018) importantly evaluates the responsibility and impact of women in the drafting of trade policies. The author says that women's opinions are often disregarded in trade policy dialogues, which results in trade policies that need to consider and address the barriers women encounter when participating in international trade. The research recommends that more gender-inclusive and gender-sensitive export trade policies be followed.

Emphasis is placed on the need for policies that are inclusive of all genders and the establishment of specific goals for the involvement of women in exports (Colaço & Watson-Grant, 2021). The request for particular data evaluation sections or procedures aligns with studies that promote target-driven, gender-sensitive methods (Colaço & Watson-Grant, 2021). Regarding the viability and effects of data-driven gender-inclusive policies, academics may vary. The focus on gathering data inclusive of all genders is consistent with studies that use statistics to comprehend the obstacles women encounter in the profession (Colaço & Watson-Grant, 2021).

2.6 Conclusion

The role and influence of women in drafting export trade policies is an essential area of research that can shed light on how gender shapes decision-making processes and outcomes in international trade. The studies reviewed above suggest that gender-sensitive trade policies can help promote gender equality and empower women entrepreneurs. In contrast, policies that prioritize male-dominated industries may have negative consequences for women. The call for more inclusive and gender-sensitive trade policy processes is an essential step toward promoting gender equality in international trade.

In conclusion, research on the role women play in policymaking is an important area to be explored to decipher how gender affects the policymaking processes. According to the studies discussed above, policies that are gender biased have adverse effects on women entrepreneurs. Studies have indicated that when policymakers focus on an inclusive trade policy, this, in turn, promotes gender equality and capacitates women entrepreneurs to internationalise.

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study aims to answer the queries derived from the evaluated literature. A careful examination of the literature was followed to point out the gaps that needed to be filled with more research. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the research questions were developed based on the gap in the literature.

According to Sui et al. (2022), it has been observed that women-owned export enterprises do better financially when they implement an intense export strategy, even though women-owned businesses are still underrepresented in the export industry. Future studies can significantly advance ones understanding of the intricate world of internationalisation for women-owned businesses and promote more focused support systems and regulations by filling in these gaps.

3.1 Research Questions

Research Question 1 (RQ 1)

How do export trade policies influence the internationalisation of women-owned businesses?

Understanding the connection between export trade policies and the worldwide development of women-owned firms is the aim of the research topic concerning the influence of export trade policies on the internationalisation of women entrepreneurs. Its main goal is to investigate how these policies impact or influence women-owned firms' capacity to expand and compete in global marketplaces. By examining this relationship, scholars may determine how export trade rules help or impede women entrepreneurs' attempts to go global (Sui et al., 2022).

Research Sub-Question 1 (SQ 1)

How do export trade policies enable women entrepreneurs to internationalise?

This question explores how export trade rules enable or empower female entrepreneurs to grow their companies globally. It aims to comprehend how these policies assist or facilitate women who want to expand their enterprises internationally. Through investigating this query, scholars want to pinpoint and emphasise the explicit or implicit clauses in trade laws that support and promote the globalization endeavours of female entrepreneurs (Korinek & Van Lieshout, 2023).

Research Sub-Question 2 (SQ 2)

How do export trade policies disable women entrepreneurs from internationalising?

This research inquiry aims to examine potential restrictions or hurdles in export trade laws that prevent or inhibit female entrepreneurs from growing their enterprises globally. It attempts to pinpoint and comprehend the particular difficulties, limitations, or flaws in these legislations

that function as roadblocks for women looking to expand their enterprises globally. By investigating this question, the researcher expects to shed light on the differences or limitations in trade laws that hinder women entrepreneurs' ability to participate in international markets. This will help identify possible policy reform or improvement areas to aid in women entrepreneurs' internationalisation efforts (Korinek & Van Lieshout, 2023).

Research Sub - Question 3 (SQ 3)

How do women entrepreneurs navigate through the export trade policy challenges?

This study question aims to comprehend the methods, techniques, and approaches used by female entrepreneurs to deal with or overcome the difficulties brought on by export trade regulations. It aims to investigate the unique approaches, modifications, or endeavours women use to pursue internationalisation while negotiating the complexity or constraints of these regulations. In order to provide valuable insights into effective tactics for dealing with policy hurdles in international business endeavours, the researcher hopes to discover effective methods, novel strategies, or areas of resiliency displayed by women entrepreneurs in navigating through the obstacles posed by export trade policies (Ghouse et al., 2019).

Research Sub - Question 4 (SQ 4)

How do women entrepreneurs influence the change in export trade policy?

This research question aims to examine how women entrepreneurs contribute to and influence changes in export trade policy. It aims to ascertain the degree to which female entrepreneurs, by their experiences, involvement, or advocacy, shape or influence changes, additions, or enhancements to these policies. The researcher seeks to shed light on women entrepreneurs' active participation and potential influence in policy-making processes by investigating this question and identifying any achievements or efforts that result in changes that benefit the larger entrepreneurial ecosystem and the businesses themselves. Comprehending this impact can provide valuable perspectives on how female entrepreneurs might proficiently participate in policy lobbying or change to bolster their internationalisation initiatives (Moreira et al., 2019).

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Choice of Methodology

This study used interpretivism to explore how trade policies influence the internationalisation of women's enterprises. The interpretive philosophy centres around using qualitative methods to understand and analyse the processes of society. Interpretivism strives to clarify people's individualized significance and encounters and the settings in which they function. Interpretivism involves performing in-depth interviews, assessments, or case investigations to examine the viewpoints of women entrepreneurs and how trade policies influence how they make decisions and approaches internationalisation when studying the impact of export trade policies on women's enterprises (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020).

For several factors, interpretivism was the ideal approach in this research study. One's subjective understanding is a critical factor that applies to this philosophy as it recognizes that each individual possesses various personal experiences and opinions that impact their behaviour and decisions. Interpretivism allowed the researcher to delve into the experiential perceptions of women entrepreneurs while evaluating women's businesses and trade policy. It enables a chance to examine their motivating factors, hurdles, and objectives while offering details on how trade policies influence their decisions about internationalisation (Alase, 2017).

Interpretivist philosophy also focuses on situational knowledge as it prioritizes the significance of comprehending happenings in the light of their circumstances. Researchers used an interpretive method to examine the cultural, interpersonal, and economic variables that influence the internationalisation processes of women entrepreneurs. This allowed for an in-depth examination of the specific factors, institutional structures, and gender-related difficulties that influenced the effect of trade policies on women-led businesses (Irshaidat, 2019). Interpretive philosophy focuses on comprehending people's subjective perceptions and interpretations of their conduct and social environments. This method included looking at how female entrepreneurs perceived and made sense of export trade policies concerning their export endeavours, which is relevant to studying the internationalisation of women-owned businesses. It examines their perspectives, drives, and the importance they place on these policies (Acharya et al., 2019).

Qualitative data collection is supported by interpretivism, using approaches including comprehensive interviews. This approach offered rich, comprehensive information demonstrating the nuanced nature and complexity of women's relationships with export trade policy. Through broad interviews, the researcher discovered the deeper motives behind

women entrepreneurs' choices, views of policy efficiency, and the obstacles they encounter when participating in international markets (Haven & Van Grootel, 2019; Rahman, 2016).

Interpretivism stresses the contribution of researchers and acknowledges the impact on the research process using reflexivity and iterative analysis. Researchers who adhere to this ideology are encouraged to investigate their prejudices, preconceptions, and assumptions and consider how these could influence their findings. This reflexivity promoted the investigation of the research findings to be more multifaceted and nuanced. Additionally, interpretivism permits iterative analysis, resulting in an improved understanding of the study problem by permitting preliminary findings to direct subsequent data collection (Stacey, 2019); (Andreas et al., 2021).

When looking at policy recommendations, the interpretive approach provided insightful policy recommendations. Researchers identified the barriers women business owners experienced because of trade policies and recommended focused policy responses by understanding the firsthand experiences of women business owners. This ideology emphasized the significance of considering the opinions and viewpoints of individuals impacted by policies, leading to recommendations for promoting the internationalisation initiatives of women that are more gender-inclusive and beneficial (Durnová & Weible, 2020).

The research strategy used was a narrative approach. The goal of narrative research was to examine unique experiences and stories. Using a narrative method, the researcher gathered comprehensive accounts from female business owners about their experiences in international commerce and the unique difficulties that resulted from export trade rules. By using rich, contextualized narratives, participants gave a thorough comprehension of their experiences. Export trade policies occur social, economic, and political circumstances. The narrative approach also brought light to the contextual understanding of the study. The researcher used a narrative research technique to document the experiences of female entrepreneurs and the more prominent societal and institutional elements that influenced their ambitions to go global. Participants shared their observations within the larger corporate contexts, enabling a comprehensive understanding of the related complexity (Cho et al., 2020; Strawser et al., 2021).

In conclusion, the interpretivist philosophy was the most appropriate preference for investigating how export trade policies affected the globalization of women-owned businesses because it supported qualitative data collection techniques. It encouraged reflexivity and iterative examination and made formulating policy recommendations that are simpler based

on the knowledge gained. The research employs a single methodology and a cross-sectional time frame. This implies that it collected data at a single point in time using a particular study approach, providing a snapshot as opposed to a longitudinal picture of the topic being studied. In the context of export trade policy and internationalisation, a narrative research technique thoroughly studied women entrepreneurs' real-world experiences, significance, and agency. It enabled a sophisticated comprehension of the intricate interplay between regulations, human behaviour, and social circumstances, adding to academic knowledge and having practical ramifications for assisting women-owned businesses in international marketplaces (Rosenbaum, 2019).

4.2 Population

Women business owners who are export-ready or are exporting were the study's target group. A group of individuals, creatures, or objects chosen for research and with similar traits is known as a target population (Stratton, 2021). These women work in various industries, including services, manufacturing, agriculture, tourism, construction, and information and communications technology. The company participates in the small, micro, and medium enterprises (SMME) sector. The research's intended study group was the population of interest. It is only sometimes suitable and practical to enlist the whole target population. Instead, investigators choose a sample from the relevant population for inclusion in the research. Women business owners who own companies involved in international trade constituted the primary focus of the demographic or the research setting in the topic that has been chosen. For the researcher to thoroughly comprehend the experiences, viewpoints, and constraints these women encounter while striving to expand their enterprises internationally, this research focused primarily on the impact that export trade policies contribute. A wide variety of female-owned businesses functioning across various sectors and geographical areas were included as the population (Gaweł & Mińska-Struzik, 2023).

4.3 Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis refers to the specific entities or cases studied, while the level of analysis refers to the level at which the analysis and interpretation were conducted in the research study (Ghouse et al., 2019). The level of analysis pertains to the degree to which the evaluation and interpretation were carried out in the research study; the unit of analysis, on the other hand, relates to the individual entities or situations that were researched. In this research, specific women-owned enterprises participating in foreign trade served as the unit of analysis. Each company is a unique context that provides beneficial insight regarding how export trade regulations affect a company's aspirations to internationalize. Researchers

thoroughly grasped companies' opinions, experiences, and tactics regarding export trade regulations (Larkin et al., 2018).

4.4 Sampling Method, Sampling Criteria, and Sample Size

Purposive sampling is a form of non-probability sampling used in research to choose participants based on predetermined requirements aligned with the study's goal. Purposive sampling, compared to random selection, entails selecting participants with the necessary attributes, knowledge, and experiences pertinent to the study problem. Using this technique, the researcher focused on specific populations or people who provided insightful input and data for the research (Johnson et al., 2019).

Several techniques were available to find prospective participants. For instance, the researcher utilized the South African SheTrades hub database, and female clients registered on the Small Enterprise Development Agency (Seda) database. The researcher also collaborated with women's business groups and governmental organizations that assist female entrepreneurs in global trade. These organizations offer beneficial information, contacts, and accessibility to prospective participants who fit the study's eligibility requirements. The selection process included characteristics like the degree of globalization, the size of the company, and the number of years in operation (Majid, 2018).

The population or list from which the research's participants were chosen is known as the sampling frame. The sample frame for this study was made up of women-owned companies that engaged in international trade. The size of the company, number of years in operation, degree of internationalisation, and prior experience with export trade procedures were considered when choosing participants. The number of years of experience in the export arena was crucial. Newly founded businesses with recent internationalisation experiences and those with an extended international trade participation track record have different experiences. Micro-enterprises, SMEs, and more prominent companies fall under the enterprise size category. When it comes to internationalisation and managing trade regulations, different sizes of businesses will experience and face different difficulties. Women entrepreneurs with at least three years of export trade experience and experience exporting within the region and internationally were considered for the study. The researcher acquired pertinent insights using these criteria since they align with the study's objectives (Johnson et al., 2019).

4.5 Sample Size

The principle of saturation, which refers to gathering evidence to the point no new findings or themes emerge, was used to calculate the number of respondents in qualitative research rather than statistical calculations. To ensure that the researcher had an in-depth understanding of the study problem, the researcher strived for an overall sample size that enabled data saturation.

Nineteen (19) businesses were included in qualitative investigations; the researcher was looking at a target of 15-20 women entrepreneurs involved in internationalisation (Guest et al., 2020).

When applying the theory to the research study, a deliberate sampling approach was ideal for a qualitative study examining the impact of export trade policies on the internationalisation of women-owned enterprises. The criteria for selection were based on pertinent characteristics, and the sample frame was made up of women-owned enterprises involved in international trade. The sample size was selected based on data saturation; this ensured a thorough grasp of the study.

4.6 Research Instrument

The research tool utilized in the qualitative research examining the impact of export policies on the internationalisation of female-owned businesses were:

A general background of the sample was investigated regarding their internationalisation journey and what made them decide to internationalize their business. The main motivations and objectives were further explored. The next area studied was how the company identified its target market internationally and what factors influenced the decision to enter that specific country or region. The participants elaborated on what assessment has been conducted to understand a need for their product or service in the country (Rosenbaum, 2017). The influence of the export trade policies on internationalisation was addressed as to whether any specific policy had supported or hindered their process. The adaptation strategy to steer through the export trade policies was focused on whether any adaptation methods had been followed to respond to the trade policies. The area of government and business support organizational assistance was probed, and how the programs had assisted in addressing any challenges posed by export trade policies.

Participants were interviewed on whether they were well informed of all the export trade policies relevant to their business area. The participant's experience regarding gender-specific challenges or enablers regarding export trade policies was a point of address. The participants

were interviewed on their opinions about the gender dynamics regarding women's involvement in policy review to have gender-inclusive export trade policies. Participants were asked what recommendations would be made to policymakers regarding export trade policies to support women-owned enterprises' internationalisation.

These questions from semi-structured interviews offered a structure for investigating several facets of globalization and trade regulations. They gave vital insights into how export trade rules affect internationalisation processes for women-owned businesses since they enabled participants to express their experiences, difficulties, solutions, and recommendations. According to Rastogi et al. (2022), it is always crucial to remember to modify and improve the questions, considering the unique study goals, the environment, and the participant demographics.

4.7 Data Gathering Process

Data collection traditionally occurs across several stages within a qualitative research approach focusing on how export policies affect the globalization of women-owned enterprises. The following are the primary elements of the data collection procedure:

Identifying research participants commenced by locating and choosing women-owned businesses with expertise in export trade policies and international trading. The deliberate sampling approach mentioned previously was used for this purpose. Gaining informed consent was the next step, whereby the participants' informed consent was acquired prior to data collection. The research participants were made aware of their rights as participants and the optional nature of their involvement. They clearly described the study's aim, nature, and potential advantages or threats. Conducting interviews was the choice of instrument for this research strategy. The chosen participants were interviewed in depth. Investigations were conducted on the lessons learned, perspectives, difficulties, solutions, and outcomes of the participants concerning export trade policy and internationalisation during these encounters. In order to ensure accurate capture of data recording, the researcher recorded the audio and video interactions using Microsoft Teams for the interview sessions. The participants' consent was acquired before the session was recorded to capture non-verbal signals, observations, and contextual information; after that, the notes were compiled on the recording (Al-Qahtani et al., 2022; Alase, 2017).

In-depth Interviews: Women entrepreneurs' experiences with export trade policies and their influence on internationalisation were studied extensively through in-depth interviews with them. The interviews were semi-structured, allowing them to delve deeply into pertinent topics

while adhering to a collection of fundamental questions (Gray et al., 2020; Rastogi et al., 2022)

Ethical Considerations: Because qualitative research entails interacting with individuals more deeply, informed permission, confidentiality, and privacy are ethical issues. Researchers addressed these issues throughout the study and followed ethical standards (Linabary et al., 2020). The study questions, objectives, and context were considered while selecting the appropriate research instrument.

4.8 Data Analysis Approach

Once the data was collected, the next step was to understand the data collected. The transcribed information was read several times to comprehend its meaning entirely. In order to find critical themes, subjects, or patterns in the data, the content of the data was thoroughly categorized and coded. Therefore, content analysis was selected as the analysis method. This technique was beneficial for analysing textual data, such as interview transcripts. It offered a methodical way to gather pertinent data on trade policies and how they affected globalization. This process allowed the researcher to be fully immersed in the data and discover initial ideas, perceptions, and patterns that were visible through the familiarization process (Alase, 2017).

The coding process followed whereby labels or codes were assigned to sections or parts of the text to begin coding the data. The coding process was to find trends, topics, or ideas within the data. The researcher employed inductive coding, which let codes arise from the data (Chandra & Shang, 2019).

After a sizable percentage of the data was classified, the codes were examined to find recurring categories and themes. While themes indicated deeper trends or ideas that developed from the data, the categories grouped comparable codes. Codes and categories were organized into codes, categories, and topics in an orderly fashion. Building linkages between the various codes and topics included developing a coding framework or coding tree. The data was explored to analyze the connections between categories and themes using the data. Links, trends, or differences within the data were analysed to provide insight into the influence of export trade regulations on the internationalisation of women-owned enterprises. This procedure entailed reviewing the data again, rearranging codes, or sharpening themes (Lester et al., 2020).

The data was interpreted by providing rationales, interpretations, and contextual knowledge of the selected themes and categories to interpret the data. The research findings were examined to analyse how the research's findings aligned with or contradicted wider theoretical and conceptual frameworks connected to the subject matter. Once the data had been transcribed and patterns were recognized, triangulation and member checking followed. This entailed utilizing the triangulation process to evaluate and find contrasts to the data from various resources or views to increase the reliability and validity of what had been concluded. When participants were included in the research process, the results of the preliminary findings were communicated to them; this is known as member checking. This was to confirm the accuracy of the data collected and gain the participants' opinions and validation (Johnson et al., 2019; Lester et al., 2020).

The findings are reported succinctly and convincingly. Quotes or extracts from the data were utilized to supplement the identified themes and provide a detailed overview of the participants' experiences. Openness was maintained by clearly detailing the steps taken throughout the data analysis process. One must keep in mind that interpreting qualitative data requires a reflective process that is continuous. When new data was analyzed, the researcher revised their judgments and was open to learning new things. Based on the information obtained, it was planned to give an extensive and in-depth understanding of how export policies impact the internationalisation of women-owned businesses (Andreas et al., 2021).

4.9 Research Quality and Rigour

Keeping up the calibre and rigor of research was essential. The following were the main elements, including dependability and validity, that were considered:

Several data sources, such as observation interviews, were utilized to strengthen the validity and dependability of the conclusions using the triangulation method. In order to increase trust, the different data sources were compared and contrasted. Potential biases the researcher may have were identified and addressed. A reflective attitude was approached throughout the research process, and how personal prejudices could influence how findings were interpreted was investigated (Johnson et al., 2019).

To represent participants' viewpoints accurately, verbatim quotes from them in the findings were used. This gave the research more authority and enabled readers to relate directly to the perspectives of the women entrepreneurs. The researcher's history, viewpoints, and biases were explained in detail. The researcher's perspective, which may or may not affect data gathering, processing, and interpretation, needed to be recognized. This encouraged

transparency and enabled readers to evaluate the potential influence of the researcher's viewpoints on the study. After being created, the sample questions were distributed among specialists for accuracy analysis. The credibility of the questions was ensured by using the expert views as a pretesting procedure (Agarwal et al., 2020).

Reliability was established by keeping research techniques transparent, recording the research procedure, and doing member screenings. Participants were contacted to provide input to confirm the veracity and reliability of the findings. The validity of the research ensured that the research's conclusions fairly represented the experiences and viewpoints of women-owned companies. Strategies including extended involvement and detailed descriptions were employed to improve validity (Hayashi et al., 2019; Rose & Johnson, 2020).

The implementation of these strategies can enhance the quality and reliability of data in a research study on the impact of export trade policies on women entrepreneurs' internationalisation. These strategies include rigorous methodology to ensure credibility, authentic verification of data sources, transparent processes to establish trustworthiness, and triangulation to validate findings (Agarwal et al., 2020; Hayashi et al., 2019).

4.10 Limitations of the Research Design and Methods

When conducting qualitative research on the influence of export trade policies on the internationalisation of women-owned businesses, several limitations of the research design and methods needed to be considered. These limitations included:

Generalizability: Qualitative research tended to focus on particular contexts and employed small sample numbers; its ability to generalize its results to larger populations or settings was constrained. It was vital to recognize that the findings did not affect all women-owned enterprises or trade policy scenarios (Young & Casey, 2018).

Subjectivity and bias: Interpretation and subjective assessments were critical components of qualitative research. Data collection, processing, and interpretation might be influenced by the researcher's prejudices, viewpoints, and previous assumptions. Recognizing and reducing these biases via reflection and openness was essential (Haven & Van Grootel, 2019).

Dependence on Participants' viewpoints: Participants' viewpoints and self-reported information were crucial to qualitative research. The data may be inaccurate or biased

because of participant differences in perception of events or inaccurate recollection or reporting of facts (Olmos-Vega et al., 2022).

Relationship between researcher and participants: This relationship may impact data collection. Due to a bias toward social desirability or a desire to please the researcher, participants may modify their behaviour or replies, which might have caused data to be distorted (Olmos-Vega et al., 2022).

When doing qualitative research on how export trade rules affected the globalization of women-owned enterprises, it was critical to be aware of these constraints. Researchers can give a more precise and nuanced knowledge of the research issue by recognizing and admitting these limitations.

4.11 Conclusion

In conclusion, the objective of this research project was to conduct a qualitative investigation of the impact of export trade regulations on the globalization of women-owned businesses. The research acknowledges the value of comprehending the difficulties and possibilities experienced by female-owned businesses in the larger context of global trade.

This study aimed to pinpoint the gaps and obstacles that prevented women-owned firms from going global by examining how export trade rules affected them. Additionally, it sought to identify possible enablers and support systems that may make their internationalisation efforts easier.

This study aimed to collect in-depth perspectives from women entrepreneurs, policy experts, and key stakeholders using qualitative research methodologies like interviews. Their viewpoints and experiences were a significant source of knowledge for policy issues and chances that women-owned firms confront in global commerce.

The results of this study can add to the body of current information and provide insight into the policy changes and interventions required to encourage the globalization of women-owned businesses. Policymakers, trade promotion organizations, and other stakeholders may establish targeted strategies, initiatives, and policies with the research findings to promote and empower female entrepreneurs as they grow their firms internationally.

This study project aimed to enhance gender equality and inclusive economic growth by filling up the gaps in export trade rules and creating an environment that allows women-owned businesses to succeed in global marketplaces.

5. FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

The main goal of the qualitative study was to explore the primary findings from in-depth interviews with 19 female entrepreneurs who are exporting or are getting ready to export. In this chapter, the researcher examined how export regulations significantly impacted these women entrepreneurs' journeys to internationalisation. From their in-depth conversations, the researcher learned more about if and how export trade rules affect their ambitions to go global. The women also discussed their struggles and how they overcame them.

The most successful practices from other nations were considered, especially those that have successfully encouraged female entrepreneurs in the export industry. This intercultural viewpoint offered insightful lessons that can guide global policies and tactics to support women exporters. The participants then shared their advice and recommendations for the policymakers. Their recommendations for improving export trade regulations provide a road map for creating an environment that is more accepting and encouraging for female entrepreneurs looking to grow their enterprises internationally. One acquires a thorough knowledge of the complex interactions between export trade policies and the internationalisation efforts of women entrepreneurs as the study progresses through the findings of this chapter.

5.2 Outline of the Sample Study

The participant profiles and the applicability of the empirical information were used to provide an overview of the research sample. The researcher collected data on exporting and export-ready female businesses through semi-structured interviews utilizing Microsoft Teams and Zoom online platforms.

5.2.1 Participants profile

The participants were all female business owners, and the researcher safeguarded the interviewee's confidentiality by merely referring to them as participants and omitting their company names. Each participant's profile lists their exportable items, the year the firm was founded, and the year they chose to begin exporting or have shipped products outside South Africa. The participants were mainly from the food industry, and there were also women from the chemical, energy metering, and healthcare industrial sectors.

Table 1**Participant profile**

Participants	Year of Founding	Annual Turnover	Products	Countries Exporting
Participant 1 (P1)	2016	R4 600 000	Infused Olive oil and vinegar	In the process of exporting to Mauritius
Participant 2 (P2)	2017	R659 775	Health juice and energy balls	In the process of exporting to the UAE
Participant 3 (P3)	2012	R1 363 827	Beef and blueberry farming	In the process of exporting to China
Participant 4 (P4)	2012	R8 381 609	Citrus Farming	Malaysia, China, Russia, Philippines
Participant 5 (P5)	2006	R4 300 000	sauces, atchar	Ghana and UK
Participant 6 (P6)	2004	R4 518 229	Honey	UAE
Participant 7 (P7)	2013	R16 500 500	Sugar Free Nougat and chocolates	South Korea, Mauritius, Seychelles
Participant 8 (P8)	2017	R4 971 501	Ginger health drinks	Namibia
Participant 9 (P9)	2015	R3 600 000	Gluten free pasta and biscuits	Mauritius
Participant 10 (P10)	2010	R1 321,778.00	Health Supplements	Ghana, Namibia, Philippines, Brazil and Botswana
Participant 11 (P11)	2020	R24 904 061	traditional medicine and cosmetics	US, Mauritius
Participant 12 (P12)	2012	R3 483 409	Protein shakes and bars	Zimbabwe
Participant 13 (P13)	2012	R19 703 801	Chemical raw materials, mechanical/engineering products	DRC and Ghana
Participant 14 (P14)	2016	R752 350	Healthy snacks (nuts)	Ghana, Botswana
Participant 15 (P15)	2009	R13 459 635	Electricity and water metering	Zimbabwe, Swaziland, Namibia, Mauritius
Participant 16 (P16)	2007	R5 703 655	Health products (Collagen)	Not Exporting
Participant 17 (P17)	2008	R500 000 000	Raisins	Europe, North America, Middle East, Africa
Participant 18 (P18)	2001	R9 750 000	Extra Virgin Olive Oil	USA, Germany, The Netherlands, Japan, Mauritius, UK, UAE, Namibia, Malawi, Sweden
Participant 19 (P19)	2010	R809 116	Flat Bread	In the process of exporting to the UAE

5.3 Results for Research Questions

Results for Research Question 1

How do export trade policies influence the internationalisation of women-owned businesses?

The first question was to analyse export regulations' impact on the objectives, execution, and results of women-owned firms' internationalisation initiatives. The sub-questions were to learn about the diverse experiences of women business owners in global trade, including their beginnings, entry into foreign markets, and the driving forces behind their ambitions to go global. This question provided background information and a personal viewpoint on their experiences conducting business abroad. Furthermore, the question also ascertained the degree of awareness and comprehension of women business owners concerning these policies, establishing if they are familiar with the export trade policies in their nation.

Lastly, the question analysed the perceived level of facilitation and assistance these policies offer female entrepreneurs seeking international commerce. This supporting question aids in determining how policies affect their efforts to internationalize.

The three main themes from the data analysis are summarized: Business growth and expansion, Entrepreneurial motivation and goals, and Aspiration for global markets. The section below presents the results of the data analysis.

Figure 1

RQ 1 theme count

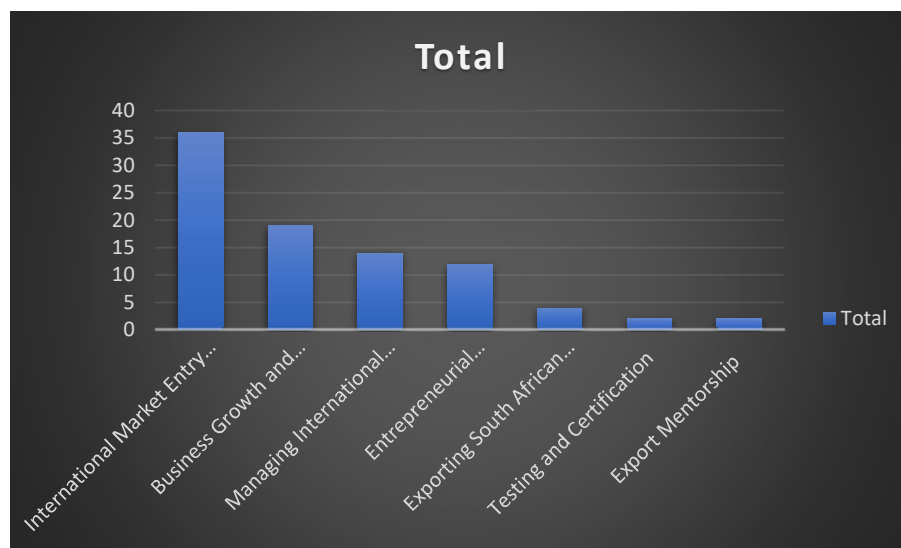


Table 2***RQ 1 Code, category and theme representation***

Code	Category	Theme
Income generation, Money in international market, Bring in revenue	Financial Motivation	Business Growth and Expansion
Demand for product, Affordable product that is healthy	Demand for the products	
Groundwork, learning on the go, Establishing operations internationally.	Business Journey	
Seeking information, Motivation for Exporting, Entrepreneurial Motivation and Intention, International Trade Experience, Persistence and Success, fear of exporting, global presence	Entrepreneurial Intentions and Capabilities	Entrepreneurial Motivation and Goals
Potential to export in SADC countries, Samples sent to Ghana, Export to Namibia, Lack of experience in exporting, Export focused	Export Market Prospects	International Market Entry and Aspiration
Export to China, strong presence globally, Shift from local to international markets, Export to Far East, Middle East, and Russia, Exporting to Ghana and UK Exporting to African countries, Philippines, and Brazil Export to South Korea, Mauritius, and Seychelles Exposure through trade shows, exported to Zimbabwe, Switzerland, Namibia, and Mauritius, exporting globally, Exporting to Mozambique, Ready for global market.	Global Market Expansion	

5.3.1 Business growth and expansion

This theme comprises of three categories: Financial Motivation, Demand for the products, and Business Journey.

Financial motivation

Many of the female business owners who were questioned cited the necessity for diversification of income as the main driver for going global. They regarded the international market as a chance to lessen their reliance on a particular market and income source. There was an emphasis on revenue development and compliance with quality standards throughout the food value chain, which participants mentioned. Participants' decision to go global is driven by the need to adhere to international food quality standards. Participant 6 informed of choosing emerging markets because they were areas of demand for their products.

"I totally think that the money is in the international market, especially with the honey... a very big order... we get so excited when we get an order." –

Participant 6

Some of the participants mentioned being able to reach broader consumer bases by entering overseas markets, which enhanced their income and profitability. The participant wants to boost the local economy by growing internationally to generate cash, which they will reinvest in their nation.

"I've been motivated by export international because of a better income and a good compliance of a good food value chain..." – Participant 4

"The main objective was to bring revenue into the country and also to distribute globally that has bigger potential than only your South African market."

– Participant 10

Demand for products

Many female business owners stated that the demand for their goods in international markets had a crucial role in their successful internationalisation. One of the interviewees mentioned that their company's foundation is legumes. Furthermore, the participant mentioned the emphasis on legumes and that these goods heavily influence their product offerings, identity as a company, and unique selling point.

"So for me, basically, I mean the basis and foundation of our business is legumes." And it's just, there's such a huge demand for it all over the world." and "There's a huge growing global shift towards plant-based diets." – Participant 9

The quote below highlights the company's main driving force, which is the idea of "affordable wellness." The premise behind the entrepreneur's economical wellness solutions is a product in a bottle that gives total well-being and lasts for a month.

"Well, the biggest motivation I think when it comes to change, our love is affordable Wellness... so one bottle will last you a month and it's complete Wellness in the bottle." – Participant 8

These quotations shed light on some of the interviewer's fundamentals, its understanding of worldwide market demand, its adherence to a global dietary trend, and its main driving force, which is inexpensive wellness.

Business journey

Participant 9 emphasizes the importance of laying the basis and preparing for business. The business owner declares they are prepared to grow worldwide after devoting time and energy to creating a solid foundation in their country of origin. The client further explained that preparation included market study, development of products, and the formation of local businesses. Participant 13, on the other hand, highlights the need to start in Africa and accepts the need to learn. The participant further understands the value of first-hand knowledge and learning.

"We've done our groundwork here with the last few years and now ready to look abroad." – Participant 9

"We starting in Africa, we're seeing, you know, learning on the go." – Participant 13

A few participants agreed that there was a steep learning curve in the early phases of international growth. They accepted the idea of "learning on the go," which is gaining knowledge and skills via hands-on experience in other marketplaces. According to them, this stage required managing regulatory constraints, comprehending customer preferences, and responding to local market realities. Some interviewees viewed on-the-go learning as a crucial component of the entrepreneurial path toward international expansion. One of the participants

stated a great desire to start businesses abroad. This involved several tactics, such as establishing manufacturing facilities or other critical infrastructure in foreign countries.

5.3.2 Entrepreneurial motivation and goals

This theme comprised of one category: Entrepreneurial intentions and belief in Global Potential.

Entrepreneurial intentions and belief in global potential

This data analysis focuses on interview quotes under "Entrepreneurial intentions and belief in Global Potential." The participant-selected quotes highlighted their beliefs, goals, and experiences as entrepreneurs pursuing global expansion.

One interviewee expressed unflinching confidence in their ability to compete worldwide. She goes on to describe how concentrating on the UAE acted as an inspiration for realizing the revolutionary power of global trade.

"I've always believed that we are ready to be on the world stage. [...] I lived in the UAE, and I realized that being on an international stage, the few business takes you to a completely different level."- Participant 16

Two of the participants highlighted the timing element of entrepreneurial development. Participant 2 said the company was founded in 2017 and has grown steadily. Participant 18, on the other hand, supports the widespread belief that establishing oneself in the export market takes three years or so.

"So at the I thought at the business in 2017 and we've grown since our first year, of course." – Participant 2

"It takes at least three years... after three years turned and we got traction into exports." – Participant 18

Many participants indicated their first apprehensions and reservations about entering foreign markets, which are reflected in the interviews. One participant clearly stated how she handled her early uncertainties and worries. She explained how she had initially tried to convince herself not to export. She tells how she realized that dread was the dominant emotion in her head at that moment as the conversation went on.

"Initially, it was pretty daunting. I just said to myself, no, you just, you definitely not export really. You know, you just, that mindset was, there was a lot of fear in that mindset..." – Participant 19

Participants spoke about how entrepreneurs fit into the larger picture of entrepreneurship. Participants believe that the actions and choices made by the entrepreneur ultimately determine the success or effectiveness of any entrepreneurial effort. A few people also thought that one's gender does not define an entrepreneur's core duties and skills. They had strong opinions about the value of active participation and research. Participant T1 discusses the value of actively looking for information, possibilities, and solutions.

"It goes back to the entrepreneur, whether it's a man or a woman, you need to go and look and find out these things." – Participant 1

Participant 1 further talks about her motivation to export: build a global presence.

"I believe that, you know, make a strong presence globally." – Participant 1

5.3.3 International market expansion

This theme comprised of two categories: Export Market Prospects and Global Market Expansion.

Export market prospects

Many female business owners recognized Expanding their export markets as a crucial strategy for company expansion. The participants believed that it reduced risks related to dependence on a single market by increasing their presence in several foreign marketplaces. In the quotation below, the interviewee declares her desire to export to China, emphasizing that China has been selected as the market due to the high demand level there. Participant 9 talked about her understanding of the necessity of global expansion and her drive to look into new export markets.

"It only makes sense to now shift overseas and look what we can do. Yeah, where we can start exporting to." – Participant 9

Participant 5 explains her journey and the realization that the company is currently well-positioned for international growth due to the previous stages. Participant 3 talks about focusing on China as a market of interest.

"So I think it's all the little stepping stones that we are now ready for the global market." – Participant 5

"We were about to export to China because this is where really our passion is based because there is readily available market." - Participant 3

Global market expansion

The category "Global Market Expansion" dominates the interview transcript. Participants in this analysis gain a vital understanding and justification for export orientation and market expansion tactics.

Some delegates identified potential export prospects in Africa, notably in the SADC (Southern African Development Community) area. Participants acknowledged the presence of prospective markets and stressed the necessity of improving their methods and tactics for successfully entering these markets.

Participant 12, who has yet to export, expressed excitement and anticipation for the launch of her product in Ghana. In addition, she said that this is a planned and careful strategy for global expansion to test the boundaries before exploring other markets.

"But yes, I mean now the product has been introduced and with Ghana we waiting for what is this?" – Participant 12

Participant 8 also viewed the business's method of entering overseas markets, with Namibia being her primary aim before venturing out to other markets.

"We are still trying to break into the international market. So the only place that we are going to is Namibia." – Participant 8

According to participant number 13, the company accidentally entered the export market in 2021. She draws attention to the need for more experience and knowledge, highlighting the company's difficulties when negotiating the complexity of international trading.

"We stumbled across our first export in 2021... We had no idea what we were doing half the time." – Participant 13

5.3.4 Similarities and differences identified

Several participants expressed a great desire to reach foreign markets to raise income or revenue. Their idea of exporting is to access more extensive, perhaps more lucrative markets. Some participants draw attention to certain goods or industries that fuel their desire to export. According to the data analysis, the reasons, experiences, and viewpoints of distinct people about international export differ in several ways. Some people claim that the possibility of better revenue initially motivated them to export. They view exports as a way to boost income. Others, in contrast, emphasize the particular product categories that spur them to investigate global marketplaces. For instance, significant focus areas include honey, legumes, and health items. Some participants see the primary goal of exporting as disseminating their products abroad and generating income for their nation. In contrast to the South African market, they stress the possibility of expansion in other markets.

5.3.5 Summary- RQ1

The participants reflect a variety of viewpoints on the reasons why people and companies want to export their products abroad, as well as the difficulties they face. While pursuing a higher income and expanding into international markets are typical goals, participants' product emphasis, target markets, and degrees of expertise vary. The respondents' perspectives on trade policy and the requirement for direction and assistance also differ. These statements generally highlight the entrepreneurial spirit and tenacity of people and companies wanting to leave their imprint on the world stage.

5.4 Results for Research Sub - Question 1

How do export trade policies enable women entrepreneurs to internationalise?

This sub-question condenses the scope of the inquiry to focus on the function of export trade regulations. Doing this ensured the research was focused and could offer a deep understanding of a particular facet of the internationalisation of women entrepreneurs. The related question ties trade policies to how they affect the efforts of female businesses to become global. This relationship is crucial in comprehending how policy decisions affect the world. This sub-question adds a gender aspect to the study by concentrating on female entrepreneurs. It admits that female entrepreneurs may have different experiences and difficulties with internationalisation than their male counterparts.

The two main themes from the data analysis are summarized: Government Support and Programs and Trade Policies and Ease of Doing Business. The section below presents the results of the data analysis.

Figure 2

SQ 1 theme count

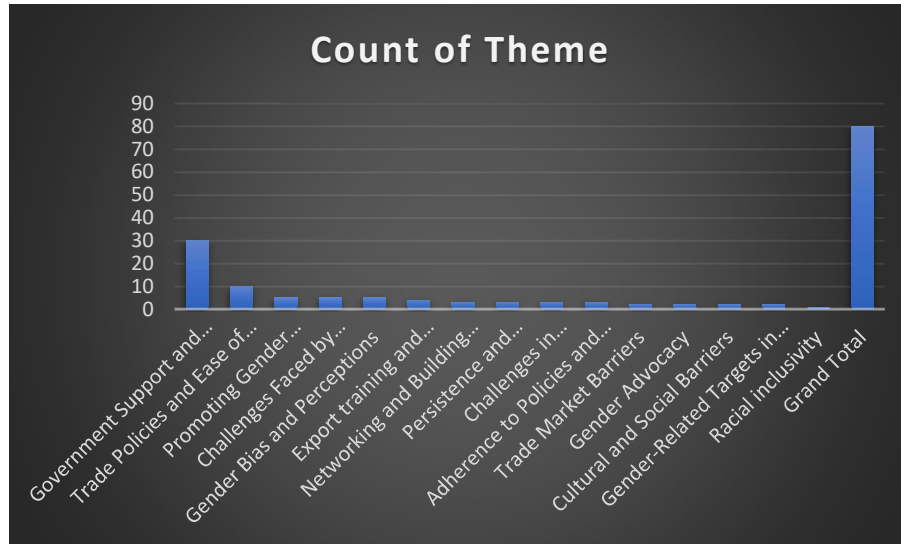


Table 3

SQ 1 Code, category and theme representation

Code	Category	Theme
Awareness Creation and Expertise Gap, Need for Local Agents and Consultants, assistance via freight forwarding company	export agent and distributor assistance	Government Support and Programs
More support for women entrepreneurs, SheTrades Mentorship	women focused assistance and mentorship	
Mentorship by Seda, Seda supported exhibitions, dtic supported trade exhibitions, Select export ready Companies for Trade Shows, SheTrades Platform, ECDC Trade Exhibitions, Support from dtic and SheTrades, trade show support from dtic and Seda, dtic assistance	Market access opportunities	
dtic assistance, Seda support, Support by dtic and Giz, Export workshop through WESGRO, export courses, Women focused export training, Courses not of substance, Export training More support for women entrepreneurs, Export training, SheTrades Mentorship, SEDA's assistance	Export training and Capacitation	

<p>Trade agreements easing trade, Trade agreements between countries, Protection for local manufacturers, Support through trade policies, gender unbiased trade policy support, positive trade experience , Opportunities from Trade Agreements, Chinese product competition, Market access opportunities, Trade policy professionalise export, Trade agreements easing trade, Opportunities in Expanding Markets Complex policies, Awareness of export trade policies, Confidence as an entrepreneur in export trade policies</p>	<p>Advantages and Opportunities of trade policies</p>	<p>Trade Policies and Ease of Doing Business</p>
--	---	--

5.4.1 Government support and programs

This theme comprises of four categories: Export Agent and Distributor Assistance, Women Focused Assistance and Mentorship, Market Access Opportunities, Export Training and Capacitation.

Export agent and distributor assistance

A number of participants mentioned the necessity for regional intermediaries and consultants who might fill the knowledge deficit and offer helpful direction in negotiating export trade rules. Participants acknowledged the value of having access to knowledgeable individuals familiar with domestic laws and foreign markets. Participants believe that the internationalisation process may be streamlined with the help of these local agents and advisors. Several female participants disclosed that they turned to freight forwarding firms for support. These businesses provided services that streamlined international trade logistics, guaranteeing that their goods could easily reach foreign markets.

“A freight forwarding company, this guy does all of our exports always from we started dealing with him in 1980 with the previous business and he just paves the way for us; he feels he does all the right red tape and paperwork and he makes my life very easy.”- Participant 17

It became clear that women business owners frequently used distributors and export agents to increase their market reach. Participants have stated that these agents assisted in locating appropriate global markets, establishing contacts with possible clients, and negotiating international trade regulatory and legal issues.

“If we could have that agent who are already in freight to working with these things on the ground. It would help to work with someone on the ground, especially to all the countries that we go to.” – Participant 12

Women-focused assistance and mentorship

The SheTrades Mentorship program stood out as a favourite among the participants. Several participants spoke highly of the SheTrades programme. The participants consistently and strongly preferred women-focused support programs. The interviewees believed that gender-specific support was crucial in tackling the difficulties that women entrepreneurs experience, particularly when they enter global markets. The mentorship programs provided by the Small Enterprise Development Agency (Seda) received consistently high comments from participants in our interviews. The mentoring programs that were implemented after the event received accolades from the attendees for providing the participants with invaluable advice and assistance as they navigated the complexity of business, especially international commerce.

“So obviously we did the see the mission to Mauritius engagement working alongside a mentor.” – Participant 13

Market access opportunities

The attendees also highly praised Seda-sponsored exhibits since they provided access to foreign markets. Trade shows were seen as essential, and the Department of Trade, Industry, and Competition (dtic) played a vital role in making them possible. Participant 17 pointed out that only export-ready businesses should be selected by business support organisations and government entities for trade exhibitions. Some attendees commended the Eastern Cape Development Corporation (ECDC) for providing regional entrepreneurs access to showcase their products globally. The quotes are:

“Up until recently we always used the dtic for trade exhibitions, absolutely invaluable.” – Participant 17

“I’ve been to Dubai, where the ECDC in February this year for an exhibition. And I’ve been to Japan for an exhibition as well with the ECDC.” – Participant 8

Export training and capacitation

Our discussions with business owners provided insight into the crucial role that export training and capacity play in helping SMEs expand globally. Several participants recognized Seda's assistance initiatives as essential elements of export training. German Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (Giz) and the dtic's collaboration were honoured for effectively educating and capacitating export entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs highlighted export workshops organized by groups like WESGRO as crucial events that allowed them to learn useful export

knowledge. Numerous participants placed a high importance on export training that focused on women. The participants said it acknowledged the difficulties and opportunities women encounter in global trade. The quotes were:

"I have been on is there is a program within the dtic which is in collaboration with the German embassy it's a GIZ program." – Participant 15

"So I have done the WESGRO export five Day Workshop which helps us to get an understanding of costings and incoterms and just a basic understanding of it all." - Participant 9

5.4.2 Trade policies and ease of doing business

This theme comprised of one theme: Advantages and Opportunities of Trade Policies.

Advantages and opportunities of trade policies

Participants in the interview acknowledged the significance of international trade agreements. According to a few participants, trade agreements ease the process of exporting. Concerns about the necessity for preservation in the face of global competition were raised by Participant 15. She talked about using non-tariff and import tariffs as preventative measures. According to the participant, local businesses can be protected by the government from unfair international competition.

"To the countries that are set... they ease quite a bit because of the trade agreements between the countries." – Participant 5

"Protect us as meter manufacturers, seeing a lot of entry into our market by Chinese products." – Participant 15

Most participants agreed that trade regulations play a critical role in supporting enterprises involved in international trade. Participants identified simplified trade regulations—driven by trade policies—as a crucial element. Interviewees raised the relevance of simplified regulations since they sped up customs procedures and lessened the administrative constraints on companies. Many participants highlighted the advantages of a well-structured trade policy by sharing their successful trading experiences. The interviewees emphasized how well-defined trade policies help to professionalize the exporting process. Participants agreed that the trade agreements improved the effectiveness and accessibility of trade across borders.

Businesses might enter untapped markets to broaden their consumer base and increase their reach.

"All the agreements that we have with neighboring countries and other countries, because I know they are largely based on opening the market opportunities for all entrepreneurs to be able to trade fairly." - Participant 12

"It makes it easier when we have the trade agreements." – Participant 5

5.4.3 Similarities and differences of sub-question 1

Many respondents stressed the importance of having competent agents or specialists on their side as they navigated the complexity of global commerce. Participants had favorable encounters with intermediaries who streamlined trade procedures and swiftly handled paperwork. However, other participants felt the necessity for knowledgeable brokers specialising in freight and export. Several participants expressed appreciation for the help and support from government agencies like Seda and the dtic and programs and initiatives like SheTrades and Giz. These initiatives emphasized the need for mentoring and access to export markets. The participants acknowledged the advantages of trade agreements in creating new market possibilities. They saw these agreements as being crucial to growing their companies. The participants acknowledged the importance of trade policy in terms of tariffs and the convenience of doing business. They believed that these regulations supported their export-related activity.

5.4.4 Sub-question 1-conclusion

The quotes from the interviews highlight recurring topics, including government assistance, the significance of trade policy, and the multifaceted nature of policies. In addition, there are divergent views on the function of professional export agents and the importance of trade displays. These observations show the various viewpoints and experiences of female business owners engaged in international trade.

5.5 Results for Research Sub - Question 2

How do export trade policies disable women entrepreneurs from internationalising?

In a study interview, the question aims to investigate and comprehend the difficulties and restrictions that female company owners have while trying to grow their enterprises worldwide, with an emphasis on export trade regulations. It concentrated on how export trade rules may support or thwart their initiatives.

The four main themes from the data analysis are summarised: Navigating Global Markets, Export Challenges, Export Capacitation and Economic Trade Knowledge, Gender Bias, Perceptions, and Gender-Related Targets in Trade Policies and Government Procedures and Policy Execution. The section below presents the results of the data analysis.

Figure 3

SQ 2 theme count

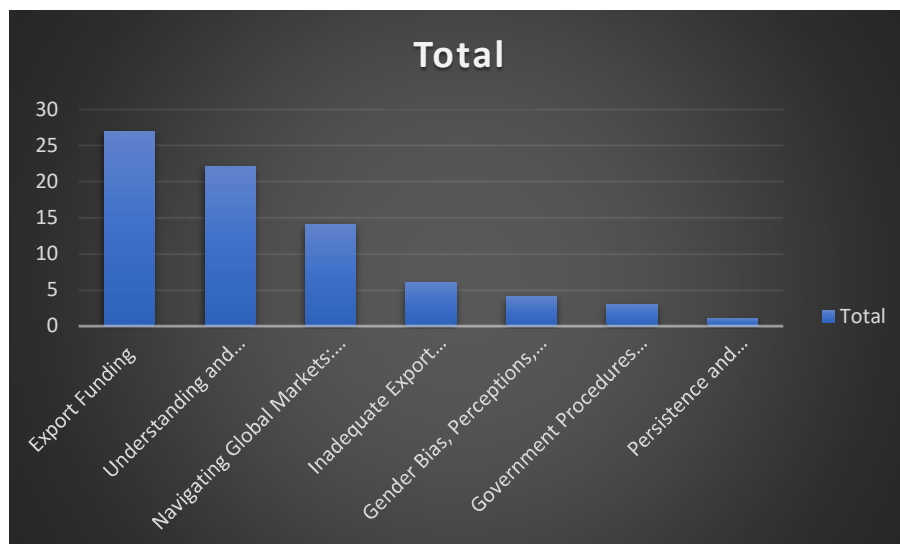


Table 4**SQ 2 Code, category and theme representation**

Codes	Category	Themes
Small business under-estimated, Challenges when exporting to Indonesia, Lack of market access, Importance of Repeat Exhibitions Language and cultural differences	Market and Cultural Challenges	Navigating Global Markets: Export Challenges
trade policies challenging cultural comfort zone, Product Support through trade policies, Non-Tariff Barriers challenges, Challenges in business, including malicious practices, policy issues, tariffs, and duties in entering new markets, Lack of Knowledge and Support, challenges during export	Lack of Trade Policy support for Export operation challenges	
Need for staying informed about current affairs and training, Effectiveness of continuous export mentorship, unaware of export logistical processes, comprehensive export understanding and assistance, Understanding Currency Exchange and Inflation Rates	Inadequate Export Competence and Knowledge	Inadequate Export Capacitation
Barriers to Women in Business, Women and men treated differently in business, Discrimination of doing business with women, evaluation of successful women exporters	Gender-related Challenges	Gender Bias, Perceptions, and Gender-Related Targets in Trade Policies
Systemic Problem, Distinction between Policy and People, Challenges with trade, Challenges of Policy Implementation	Systemic Export barriers	Government Procedures and Policy Execution.
Lack of understanding, Trade Policy and Research, lack of guidance and access, barriers in export trade policy implementation, Export Guidelines, Complex policies, Awareness of export trade policies	Challenges in Policy Understanding and Implementation	Understanding and Implementation of export trade policy
export readiness requires funding, Cost Implications, Lack of funding During Export, , Export Capital, financial assistance for Initial export activities, Accessibility to Incentives	Funding Challenges for Export Activities	Export Funding

5.5.1 Navigating global markets: export challenges

This theme comprises of two categories: Market and Cultural Challenges and Lack of Trade Policy Support for Export operation challenges.

Market and cultural challenges

The interview aimed to learn more about the many obstacles that small firms must overcome to grow abroad. Participant 7 found that small firms are frequently underestimated when it comes to global expansion.

"I think smaller companies are underestimated." – Participant 7

Participants admitted that while having lofty objectives for internationalisation, they frequently discovered that the global market demands and competition were more than they had anticipated. Establishing market access in other countries was challenging for several participants. They underlined the need to know local distribution networks and form strategic alliances. Some players asserted that a lack of local networks and complicated rules frequently impeded market access. To overcome commercial and cultural obstacles, Participant 6 emphasized the value of participating in follow-up shows. Navigating the linguistic and cultural divides in international markets was also raised as a challenge by participants. The quotes are:

"You can't go to one exhibition and think you're going to break them into the market. You have to go again and again and again into the same market." – Participant 6

"I think the barriers that one would look at is religious and cultural, religious and cultural." – Participant 10

Lack of trade policy support for export operation challenges

The influence of trade practices on how they relate to culture was one issue that frequently plagued the participants. The interviewees indicated that there were moments when rules clashed with deeply rooted cultural norms and preferences in other countries. The participants stated that when businesses entered international markets, they were compelled to conform to new business methods due to cultural barriers. While there were trade policies and cultural adaptation issues, several participants also raised concerns about parts of those policies that prohibited their product in a particular nation. According to Participant 17, certain nations' trade practices foster an atmosphere where their products cannot flourish.

"Yeah, it's they've got Indonesia. I've got lists of products that are permitted to be imported and South African raisins are not on that list, so we can't send the container."- Participant 17

5.5.2 Inadequate export capacitation

This theme comprises of one category: Inadequate Women's Export Competence and Knowledge.

Inadequate women's export competence and knowledge

Many participants emphasized the need to keep up with current events and obtain sufficient training for conducting business internationally. Numerous respondents stress the value of ongoing export mentorship initiatives. They discovered that a significant factor in their export success was having mentorship that could help them navigate the challenges of international commerce, provide continuing assistance, and impart valuable ideas. A few participants acknowledged that they needed to learn more about the logistical procedures involved in exporting.

"So we don't have that experience of what is happening there in the harbour or what is happening in the uh, freight forwarders." – Participant 4

The respondents pointed out that mentoring programs had to concentrate mainly on effectively using money for export operations and offering advice on export fundamentals. They expressed a need for mentors or programs that could provide an all-encompassing view of export, including a range of topics such as market entrance tactics, trade laws, regulations, and the practicalities of conducting business overseas.

"And I think it's one of the areas where in terms of mentoring and it needs to be focused on because it's very specialized for you to get funding to execute a contract." – Participant 15

Effective financial resource management for global growth was a key component of export mentoring. Participants highlighted that inflation and currency exchange rates are significant variables that can affect export operations' profitability. Understanding these economic factors was deemed essential for proficient decision-making in global commerce.

"You know you have to be up to date with the current affairs also , women also need to be educated on that. Yeah, I think basically you know. You have to educate yourself and I think maybe through training" – Participant 1

5.5.3. Gender Bias, Perceptions, and Gender-Related Targets in Trade Policies

This theme comprises of one category: Gender-Related Challenges.

Gender-related challenges

In contrast to their male colleagues, participants frequently reported experiencing unequal treatment when conducting business. Participants spoke about differences in access to influential networks, financial assistance, and opportunities. Participants noted that this unfair treatment seriously hindered their business activities. Many respondents discussed their experiences with prejudice in their business collaborations, particularly when interacting with male counterparts. They discussed instances where they felt undervalued or unimportant during discussions and business dealings. Participant 10 emphasized the significance of monitoring and evaluating trade policies focusing on gender-related aims. The participant noted the need for legislation and initiatives to address gender imbalances in global trade and ensure that female entrepreneurs have equal access to resources and opportunities. According to Participant 2, society tends to steer women away from starting their enterprises and into historically female-dominated fields like catering or home-based businesses.

"So you're a woman. Maybe women are not really encouraged to be business owners or your thoughts of as no you must be in like a catering industry like more home-oriented industry, not a problem of the paper, the paper says. Let's push women." – Participant 2

Participants felt that gender prejudices exist and prevent women from starting their businesses in a variety of industries. One interviewee suggests that rather than limiting women to specific industries based on sexist gender conventions, it is critical to challenge these prejudices and encourage them to explore a broader range of economic prospects.

"How are the businessmen in other countries perceive women in business, so that's why regional trade agreements need to have like evaluations or monitoring or goals. It's on how much percentage of women do they want to help or how must be considered within export trades." - Participant 10

5.5.4 Government procedures and policy execution

This category theme comprises of one category: Systemic Export Barriers.

Systemic export barriers

The interviewees provided information about the difficulties female business owners face in global commerce. They underlined how deeply embedded and systematic the obstacles that women face around the globe are. The fact that problems are systemic suggests that solving them calls for a thorough, systemic transformation rather than only changing policies. The respondents also stressed that although free trade agreements and policies may be helpful, the real advantages of trade are only sometimes obvious. One participant further explained that although agreements and rules have a part to play, more is needed *to address the problems*.

"But the countries that I've travelled to, these women are moving, but the barriers are systemic again, so they need to be a systemic change, not just the policy change. It's not really a policy problem. It's people. People now are the challenge." – Participant 2

5.5.5 Understanding and implementation of export trade policy

This theme comprises of one category: Challenges in Policy Understanding and Implementation.

Challenges in policy understanding and implementation

Many respondents described dealing with administrative red tape and bureaucratic complications that caused obstacles and errors in executing policies. Participants frequently voiced concern about the complexity of the policies intended to assist their endeavours and the need for more understanding. Some respondents stressed the requirement for more profound training and education courses. The respondents requested resources that will aid women business owners in better comprehending policies and their ramifications. Many women entrepreneurs mentioned the intricacy of legislation as a critical hurdle. They acknowledged that it might be challenging to understand the complexities and technical language used in trade policies. Due to the significant documentation and legal facets of export trade rules, participants frequently needed help understanding the exact criteria and processes.

Despite being aware of these regulations, several participants expressed difficulties comprehending and applying them. The participants acknowledged a disconnect between

theoretical understanding and actual application, indicating the need for direction in interpreting and implementing policy. Several participants noted that converting policy papers into workable tactics was difficult. The interview subjects emphasized the need for increased knowledge of export trade regulations and their effects. Some participants claimed they were ignorant of important export trade rules and how they may help or hurt their companies. Accessible teaching tools that may raise knowledge of these regulations and their actual implementation were frequently requested. Participant 6 highlighted how she has more faith in her business endeavours since she better understands export trade policies.

"Sometimes things make sense on paper, but in execution it's a bit of a different story. Maybe it's not the policy that's a problem. Maybe it's a lack of interpretation." – Participant 2

"Policies are quite good, but the road to implementing the policies, there is a very big gap." – Participant 14

"But it would be nice if there were better user-friendly guidelines so that when we are exporting let's say in the future or we export to Germany, what are the rules." – Participant 13

5.5.6 Export funding

This theme is comprised of one category: Funding challenges for Export Activities.

Funding challenges for export activities

Participants stressed the need for a significant financial commitment to equip for export endeavours fully. The interviewees were aware of the substantial economic consequences of export-related operations. They informed us that costs are spread across several areas, including distribution, marketing, compliance, and logistics. The participants emphasised that businesses need more financial support while carrying out actual export transactions, which prevents export activities from moving forward smoothly.

Most participants concurred that having access to sufficient export financing is essential for doing business abroad. A critical point that a few clients discussed was the accessibility of export financing. Numerous participants emphasized the value of getting financial support, especially in the beginning stages of their export activity. The suggestion of initial expenses to be covered by start-up capital, assuring a smooth initial phase of exporting, was also brought forth.

Some of the quotations are:

"It would help if we had, like we could raise a voucher for your samples to be sent through as the initial support type thing. Sometimes we delay because you know you don't have the actual funds to send the sample over." – Participant 12

"We can underplay the issue of funding because most of the time, you don't have the money to get into those markets yourself." – Participant 15

5.5.7 Similarities and differences in sub-question 2

Several participants brought up the challenges with market access. The participants also stated that regulations, non-tariff barriers, and the call for persistent efforts to penetrate new markets were frequently the source of these challenges. Two recurring issues in the interviews were language and cultural disparities. Participants emphasized the importance of comprehending these obstacles and going over them to engage in international trade.

The most prevalent issue among numerous participants was the need for more information and assistance, particularly in domains like export logistics, customs processes, and currency exchange rates. They emphasized the importance of ongoing instruction and assistance. The interviewees generally agreed that perceptions and gender prejudice affected how women in business were treated. Gender equality is necessary, as many of the participants have highlighted.

A few individuals brought up Certain market-specific obstacles, such as the fact that South African raisins aren't allowed to be imported into Indonesia. These difficulties are specific to certain areas or goods. Some respondents stressed the value of ongoing export mentoring and training, while others pointed out that more than attending webinars and training sessions is needed. Participants' degrees of confidence and skill differed. Various people had different perspectives on how businessmen saw women. While some participants thought gender equality was a structural issue that went beyond changes in legislation, others said it was vital for advancement. Many attendees emphasized that structural change, not simply legislative changes, is necessary to overcome the problems in international trade. They emphasized how intricate the obstacles facing women in business are.

Many respondents stressed the need for money for many trading areas, such as funding costs, beginning the process, and maintaining cash flow, since financial difficulties were a significant

worry. The intricacy of trade policy came up frequently. Many respondents said that exporters needed improved comprehension, more precise direction, and more user-friendly rules for trade policy execution. Participants regularly brought up problems with the expensive nature of international trade. Tariffs, costly red tape, and additional expenses that reduce profitability were all concerning causes. The interviewees believed that having access to finance and financial resources was essential for resolving these problems.

5.5.8 Sub-question 2: conclusion

The interview quotes shed light on the complex difficulties faced by participants who want to grow their companies globally. There were differences in the perceptions of women in business, export training and mentorship, market-specific challenges, and the role of systemic change, but common themes like market access difficulties, cultural and linguistic barriers, lack of knowledge and support, export funding, and gender-related challenges were present.

5.6 Results for Research Sub - Question 3

How do women entrepreneurs navigate export trade policy challenges?

The question's primary objective is to encourage and empowering female business owners in international trade. The participants highlight their approaches and the potential of replicating functional models for effective trade.

The researcher identified four themes from the data analysis: International Best Practices, International Support Networks, Inspiring Women in Entrepreneurship, Enhancing Export Quality and Economic Infrastructure.

Figure 4

SQ 3 theme count

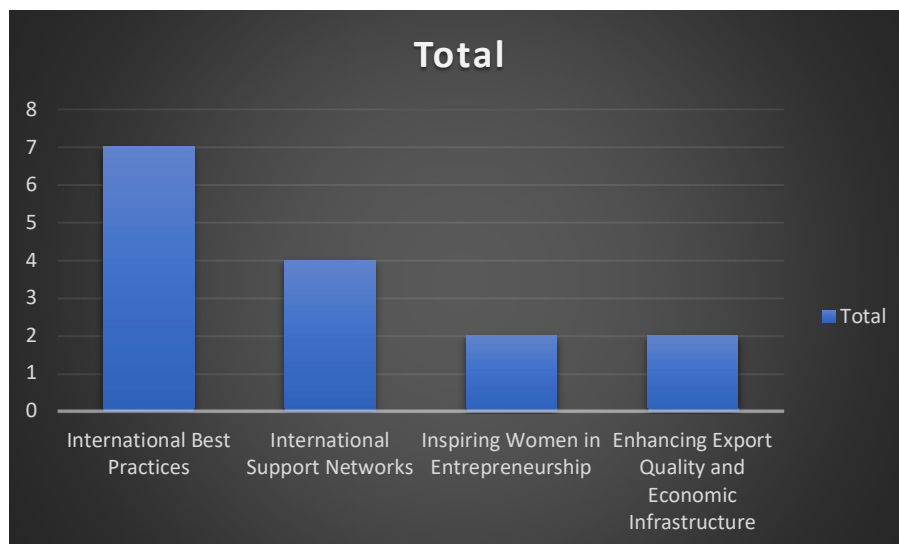


Table 5**SQ 3 Code, category and theme representation**

Code	Category	Theme
US assist women in federal contracts, Australian Women Leadership Program, Banks supporting and empowering women entrepreneurs	International Models for Women's Empowerment	International Best Practices
Chinese Government Support, Government Involvement in Product Intake, Importance of Localized Production	Government Support and Assistance	
Women entrepreneur network for mentorship and training in Japan, German Support program,	International Networking and Support	International Support Networks
vetting of prospective clients by the Chamber of Commerce in internationally, engaging with Zimbabwean embassy	Government-Facilitated Vetting and Support	
stricter quality control in South Africa,	Export Quality Control Standards	Enhancing Export Quality and Economic Infrastructure
UN and Switzerland digitizing export, Bank of Products of local entrepreneurs for export	Trade Digital Transformation and Export Economic Infrastructure	
female entrepreneurs advising on Instagram, Inspiration from Rachel Kolisi's Story	Inspirational Success Stories of Female Entrepreneurs	Inspiring Women in Entrepreneurship

5.6.1 International best practices

This theme is comprised of two categories: International Models for Women's Empowerment and Government Support and Assistance.

International models for women's empowerment

Participant 3 talked about how the United States has been successful in helping female businesses obtain federal contracts. She explained further that this tactic entails specific laws and initiatives designed to allow women-owned enterprises to win government contracts.

"The United States Small Business Administration, they help women, you know, to compete for federal contracts." – Participant 3

Participant 9 emphasized the Australian Women Leadership Program as an additional global example. She said that the initiative has helped develop leadership qualities, giving women in

leadership positions the confidence they need, and providing them with the resources they need to succeed in their chosen industries.

"Australia has the Australians Women Leadership program and they're actually, yeah, it's quite it's all just basically focus on developing women's leadership skills and business skills and it offers gone some training opportunities to help women entrepreneurs to build, you know, the capabilities, not only domestic but also internationally and yeah." - Participant 9

Participant 3 also mentioned the assistance and empowerment of women entrepreneurs provided by financial institutions, especially banks. These organizations support the growth of women-owned enterprises by offering advice, mentorship, and financial resources.

"South Korea, European Union, European Bank. You know they are there for women and they really mean it." -Participant 3

Government support and assistance

A productive instance of a technological relationship with China was brought up by Participant 15. She underlined how much of their commercial success has been attributed to their cooperation. The organization has benefited from the intense dedication of Chinese technical partners to invest in their company operations. The proactive role that foreign governments play in promoting their enterprises was brought up by Participant 14. She believes governments offer essential assistance in ensuring companies are ready for international trade. This assistance includes initiatives to encourage and facilitate exports that benefit their organizations.

"For example in Tanzania, the government is very much involved in the intake of their produce... So the involvement of the government is what I would like to see happening in South Africa in terms of creating access market opportunities for us." -Participant 14

Participant 15 said that she hoped South Africa's government would get involved similarly to open up markets like the Tanzanian government actively does, facilitating the export procedure. Participant 15 underlined the value of localized production by using China's achievement in dominating the semiconductor sector as an example. She proposed that South Africa may improve its capacity to export goods to other markets by using a similar strategy.

"I find it very, very successful in making sure that they are businesses. We are a technical partner in China, and they are going full steam ahead in terms of investments into the

organization. They, for the support of their governments, make sure that they then go out and do the export." – Participant 15

5.6.2 International support networks

This theme is comprised of two categories: International Networking and Support and government-facilitated Vetting and Support.

International networking and support

The results of the interviews give insightful information on global models that support female entrepreneurs by giving them access to networking, training, and mentorship. A Japanese Women Entrepreneur Network is said to exist in Japan, according to Participant 3. This network is essential in helping women entrepreneurs by offering resources and assistance. It provides networking, training, and mentorship opportunities with a focus on empowering women entrepreneurs.

"In other countries like, you know Japan, there is this Japanese women entrepreneur network. They have established women entrepreneur Network to provide mentoring, training, and networking opportunities for women business owners" – Participant 3

Participant 18 reported her experience participating in a program run by the German international development organization GIZ. The strategy used by GIZ includes identifying and assisting entrepreneurs.

"I've just been involved in a in an incredible program from, excuse me from Germany. And then if you're aware of the program GIZ, an amazing amount of support finding they found people that they thought she should go and see." – Participant 18

Government-facilitated vetting and support

Participants underlined the importance of appointments made possible by chambers of commerce. A few attendees stated that these meetings give entrepreneurs a certain amount of security and screening. Setting up appointments through the Chamber guarantees that the parties involved may be thoroughly screened. The respondents also discussed their firsthand encounters addressing consignment duty and customs-related concerns with foreign embassies and equivalents. They adopted this proactive stance to ensure the tools were in place to enable consignments free of duties and customs.

"You find that there's no way we are able to vet them, but if we had appointment set up via the Chamber, we know that these are people that we can vet them, if something happens, you're able to trace them back using the Chamber. I think that would also alleviate a lot of fear as far as export is said." – Participant 12

"So we had to engage on our own with the embassy and the Zimbabwean counterparts to make sure that they then had an instrument in place to make the consignment duty and customs-free." – Participant 15

5.6.3 Enhancing export quality and economic infrastructure

This theme is comprised of two categories: Export Quality Control Standards Trade Digital Transformation and Export Economic Infrastructure.

Export quality control standards

In their sector, participant 17 underlined the critical importance of food safety. She stated that upholding strict guidelines for food safety is essential for companies and is a legal need. The respondent emphasized more stringent labelling regulations as another crucial component of export quality control. One of the participant's top concerns in their sector is quality control. Credibility and market success depend on maintaining constant product quality.

The participant voiced worries about the potential harm that uneven quality control may do to the industry's brand.

"Well, food safety and stricter labelling requirements and yes, stick to quality control of what's exported, I would say is probably our biggest. Our biggest problem in our industry. Because people acknowledge that they're good suppliers and bad suppliers, but generally it is giving our industry a bad name." – Participant 17

Trade digital transformation and export economic infrastructure

The respondent underlined how important digitization of commerce is to the state of the world economy today. They pointed out that several nations, including Switzerland, have realized how vital digitization is to trade-related operations. One body highlighted as actively involved in trade digitization measures was the United Nations. A unique way to help exports is proposed by Participant 14, and it entails creating a "Bank of products." This bank would be a hub for showcasing and gathering goods from regional business owners.

"I think you I think the only problem program that I can think of now added Switzerland and all them have is like your digitalization of trade. And I know the United Nations is busy with those programs." – Participant 10

"There should be a bank, a Bank of products, of the local entrepreneurs." – Participant 14

5.6.4 Inspiring Women in Entrepreneurship

This theme comprises of one theme: Inspirational Success Stories of Female Entrepreneurs.

Inspirational success stories of female entrepreneurs

Participant 5 presents the function of Instagram, notably an account dedicated to female entrepreneurs, in showcasing and endorsing the achievements of women in business. Moreover, participant 8 emphasizes the importance of female entrepreneurs as role models and cites watching Rachel Kolisi on Instagram. The final remark, which refers to "Boss Tea in France" as being available throughout the nation, emphasizes how successful female entrepreneurs can have a significant presence in the market. The participant's last statement, "I thought to myself, that could be Ginger Love," expressed how these success stories motivated her to start her own business.

"It's called female entrepreneur on Instagram, and with this they bring in entrepreneur women entrepreneurs...how all the advice they give." – Participant 5

"I was actually watching Rachel Kolisi on Instagram yesterday...Look at Boss Tea here in France and the brand is available countrywide. I thought to myself, that could be Ginger Love." – Participant 8

5.6.5 Similarities and differences in sub-question 3

A significant number of participants highlighted the significance that government assistance plays in boosting companies and exports. For example, initiatives in the United States, Australia, South Korea, and China are highlighted as encouraging women-run exports and enterprises. Several participants emphasised the significance of skill development and training, especially regarding women entrepreneurs. Leadership and business skills are the focus of programs in the US, Australia, and other nations. A recurrent worry in certain statements is the importance of food safety, quality control, and labelling standards in the export sector.

There were examples of Australia's Women Leadership Initiative and the United States Small Business Administration. It is unique to China's economic environment that it is mentioned as having a monopoly on semiconductors and that local production may be used to boost export potential. None of the other statements address the topic of trade digitization or the UN's involvement in such initiatives, emphasizing how crucial contemporary technology is to trade. Some quotations provide suggestions for enhancements, such as creating a "Bank of products" to pool the goods of regional business owners for more straightforward export sales.

5.6.6 Sub-question 3 - conclusion

The quotations that were supplied highlighted a wide range of methods and viewpoints in the areas of government assistance, entrepreneurship, company growth, and global trade. There are several noticeable differences in addition to these commonalities. Some several special projects and programs are designed to meet the specific requirements and goals of every area. These quotes offer a complex perspective on initiatives to advance trade, business, and entrepreneurship internationally. Despite some similarities, the variety of initiatives, settings, and concepts highlights the depth and complexity of these efforts across many nations and areas. Policymakers, company owners, and entrepreneurs can find inspiration and innovation in the cross-cultural interchange of ideas and experiences.

5.7 Results for Research Sub - Question 4

How do women entrepreneurs influence the change in export trade policy?

Sub-Question 4 sought to determine whether specific export trade policy initiatives or measures would, in the opinion of female entrepreneurs, best assist their internationalisation efforts. This inquiry sought to identify potential weak points or areas where existing policies needed improvement. By requesting advice from female entrepreneurs based on their experiences, the question helped stakeholders and policymakers gain valuable information. Lastly, the questions also looked at strategies to improve cooperation between female entrepreneurs, policymakers, and pertinent stakeholders to foster a more welcoming and encouraging atmosphere for women to expand their businesses internationally.

Figure 5

SQ 4 theme count

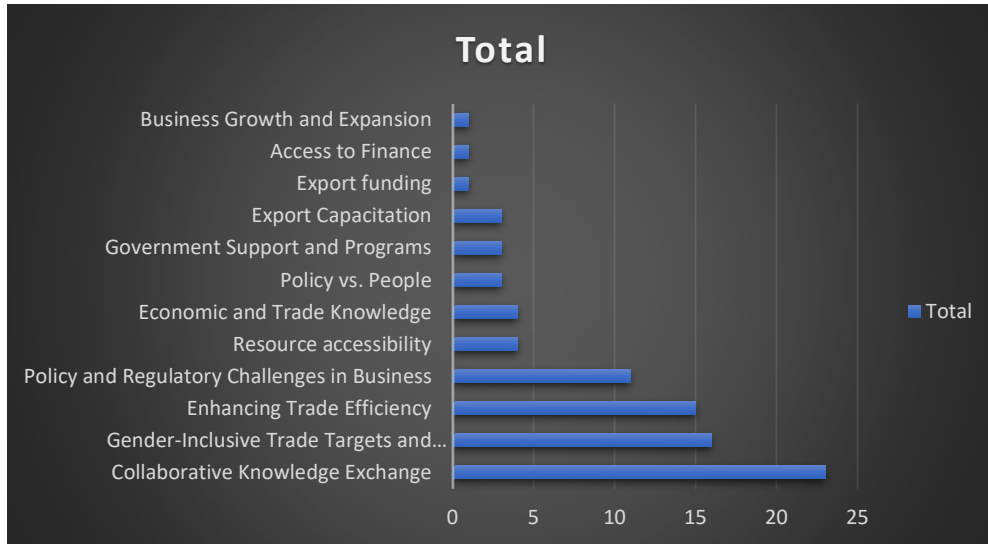


Table 6

SQ 4 Code, category and theme representation

Code	Category	Theme
Call for Amendments to Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) Requirements, Collaboration and Networking between women entrepreneurs and policymakers, Breaking Silos in Working Together, Collaboration and Networking between women entrepreneurs and policymakers, Engagement in Policy Discussions, Personal Interaction with policy makers, Personal Interaction with policy makers, Personal Interaction with policy makers, The Need for Collaboration and Dialogue, Involvement of Women in Export, Raise concerns to policymakers, Mentorship and Networking for women entrepreneurs and policymakers, SME Summit, Inclusivity and Participation, Sharing Insights, Women entrepreneurs contribution to policy, research and analysis, Insights into barriers faced, Face-to-Face Meetings and Large-Scale Virtual Meetings, Accessibility to Policy Makers, Women Exporters' Events, Collaboration and Partnerships with government agencies, and women business networks, Emphasizing Communication and Empathy to Remove Barriers, trade policy should address the needs of the business, Accessibility to Policy Makers	Collaboration Between Women Entrepreneurs and Policymakers	Collaborative Knowledge Exchange

Collaborating with International organizations focused on gender, assistance for gender representation, Focusing on Underrepresented women Industries, Understanding Women's Unique Role, Inclusivity in Policy-making, Personal Interaction with policy makers, Gender Inclusive Trade Policies, Gender Inclusive Trade Policies, Regional Trade Agreements and Policy Implementation, Women to be treated equally, Put women at the forefront of policies, Focus on Women as Exporters	Advancing Gender-Inclusive Policy Engagement and Gender equality	Gender-Inclusive Trade Targets and Advocacy.
evaluation of successful women exporters, Conduct gender analysis to understand barriers, Database collection of exporters and their progress	Gathering of quality data	
Access to finance policies, Frustration with the Regulatory Environment, Call for Simplification and Support for Businesses	Policy and Support	Policy and Regulatory Challenges in Business
"Industry Representation and Policy Issues, Limited Focus on Smaller Industries, Export and Taxation on Flatbreads"	Industry Representation and Policy Advocacy	
Reducing Red Tape, understanding of policies, bridging gap between understanding and implementing policies, policies not being implemented, Documentation Overload and repetitive	Effective Streamlining of Administrative Processes	

5.7.1 Collaborative knowledge exchange

This theme comprises of one category: Collaboration Between Women Entrepreneurs and Policymakers.

Collaboration between women entrepreneurs and policymakers

Several participants emphasized the importance of having female entrepreneurs and officials in the same room. A physical presence can promote fruitful communication and understanding, which may impact policy choices. Participants emphasized the need to participate actively in policy conversations, emphasising the requirement to comprehend women's goals and how they desire regulations to assist their enterprises. Several participants felt networking and ongoing interaction between female entrepreneurs and politicians was crucial. This involves developing mentoring programs and discussion panels to encourage communication and teamwork. A few participants proposed convening discussions that

facilitate the immediate sharing of thoughts and requirements between policymakers and female entrepreneurs. Participants suggested setting up gatherings, conferences, and summits where female business owners and decision-makers could network, talk about projects, and assess the efficacy of policies.

"I think definitely an SME woman Summit can actually work. Proper summit, where these initiatives can be discussed and tested on the effectiveness of, because practically policies are not always very effective. And this will influence policy makers. You know what? What we women aspire, how do we want? Women should be actively, you know, involved or participate actively" – Participant 10

The participants also emphasized the significance of cooperation and alliances amongst many stakeholders, such as government entities, trade organizations, international entities, and networks of women entrepreneurs. Many respondents believed that effective communication was essential to removing obstacles and promoting mutual understanding amongst various stakeholders, which would result in trade policies that are more welcoming and inclusive. Some participants underscored the significance of policymakers possessing direct knowledge of business operations, as this may augment their capacity to formulate trade policies that are both pragmatic and productive. A few participants believed that knowledge-sharing and conversations between seasoned business owners and novices may help to reduce barriers and increase accessibility.

"I think one of the things for a person writing a trade policy, and this comes from my heart, is have you ever run a business yourself?" – Participant 18

5.7.2 Gender-inclusive trade targets and advocacy

This theme comprises of two categories: Advancing Gender-Inclusive Policy Engagement and Gender Equality, Gathering Quality Data.

Advancing gender-inclusive policy engagement and gender equality

A few panelists underscored the need to partner with global organizations concentrating on gender equality and trade since this partnership can potentially propel trade policies that include gender perspectives. The significance of advancing affirmative action across the whole policy creation spectrum, from application to execution, was brought up by the participants. Many participants believe that actively putting gender-inclusive policy into practice is essential. According to participants, focusing on sectors not now dominated by

women will inspire women to enter these fields and may result in a higher gender diversity. The attendees stressed the need for inclusive trade policies that reflect women from all races and backgrounds and that it is essential for women to participate actively in the formulation and execution of trade policies. Participants have called for enforcing policy viewpoints that address cultural and religious barriers. The participants advocated prioritizing women in trade policy deliberations, acknowledging their capacity to effect change and potential to multitask.

"It cannot be done without us. We should be included in how we want to be handled or managed or developed. It should be all inclusive women of color with all the women from walks of life." – Participant 3

"I think starting with your regional trade agreements. They need to implement policy points whereby cultures and religions are challenged by setting a certain percentage of women for exports." – Participant 10

5.7.3 Gathering of quality data

The participants emphasized the necessity for specific goals regarding female involvement in exports. They recommend that policies have particular sections or procedures that assess data and establish a target proportion for female exporters. Participant recommendations for addressing the obstacles faced by female entrepreneurs in the creation and execution of policies include gender analysis. They claimed that this study will assist in identifying particular obstacles that women face and develop policies specifically tailored to solve these difficulties. The gathering and examination of data about women's involvement in export-related activities was requested, as, according to participants, this data offers insights into the variables influencing women's engagement in trade and policy reforms. They further explained that it should also contain an analysis of the consistency in female participation and the causes for any discrepancies. The quotes are:

"You want to have to look at targets for women, so it needs to export needs to be evaluated on, in checking statistics there must be a process, or a clause placed into the policy to say that. And of all the exporters, a certain percentage needs to be women." – Participant 10

"I think, for me, it's just to collect the database that we have. Look at the consistency, consistency of those ones and those that were not consistent. Check what is the reasons for those?" – Participant 14

5.7.4 Policy and regulatory challenges in business

This theme comprises of three categories: Policy and Support, Industry Representation and Policy Advocacy, Effective Streamlining of Administrative Processes.

Policy and support

The significance of financing accessibility was underscored by the participants, especially for nascent and youthful enterprises. Policies that support small startups and enable them to compete with bigger businesses have been requested. The participants expressed dissatisfaction with many facets of corporate operations that impede economic sustainability, functioning as obstacles to their advancement and prosperity. Interviewees highlighted arduous and convoluted corporate processes and laws as impediments to entrepreneurship prospects. To navigate these difficulties, participants emphasized the need for aid and simplicity. Women entrepreneurs may be empowered and given the tools they need to grow their firms by supporting and encouraging initiatives run by them. Quote by Participant 17:

"There's so many frustrations in business that we have to deal with instead of going on and being economically viable. And that, for me, is my biggest frustration. It's closed a lot of doors to us, and there's nothing we can do about it." – Participant 17

Industry representation and policy advocacy

A perception of underrepresentation in the South African flatbread business was stated by Participant 19. The speaker underscored the importance of having a cohesive voice and representation to champion industry-specific requirements and secure backing from pertinent parties. According to Participant 7, government initiatives frequently highlight and assist well-established businesses like wine and dried fruit production. Participant 19 also expressed issues about the flatbreads' application of the value-added tax (VAT).

"I'd like to say that I'm the voice of the industry... we don't really have representation in South Africa for the flatbread industry... having a lack of home that we can go and say, I need your support, please." – Participant 19

"You know, we're only looking at the wine manufacturers. We're looking at the dried fruit, the fruit, you know, we'll we're looking at industries that have dominated, but we're not looking at new industries." – Participant 7

Effective streamlining of administrative processes

Participant 2 proposes that there should be less "red tape" associated with policy modifications. She has asked for the administrative procedures to be simpler, and policy changes to be more readily available. Participants draw attention to the difficulty business owners need to understand every policy. They draw attention to a need for more information and communication about governmental rules. The 30% allotted for women-owned firms is discussed by Participant 12, highlighting a discrepancy between the intentions of the policy and how it is being carried out. Interviewees discussed how policies may seem significant on paper but might be challenging to implement. In addition, policies sometimes provide the desired results. Numerous quotations highlight the burden of copious documentation, pointing out that it impedes the effective execution of policies and points to streamlining administrative procedures.

"So maybe reducing the red tape around policy changes?" – Participant 2

"But I think the red tapes, what happens behind these policies is the red tapes. It's the, the tedious, the tediousness of all the bureaucracy behind it all." – Participant 13

5.7.5 Similarities and differences in sub-question 4

Numerous statements emphasize how important it is for stakeholders such as governmental bodies, business groups, global organizations, and female business networks to collaborate and form partnerships. This partnership is viewed to get past obstacles and develop more equitable trade laws. Several participants stressed the importance of including female entrepreneurs in policy talks and supporting their active involvement. It is emphasized that a crucial first step in establishing policy is comprehending the unique requirements and difficulties experienced by women in business. Several participants bring up the necessity of streamlining rules and cutting back on bureaucratic red tape. A more straightforward and intuitive method is recommended to facilitate the navigation of trade rules and requirements for female businesses. A few quotations emphasize how crucial it is to keep an eye on and assess the performance of policies. As part of this, evaluate if policies achieve their goals and where gaps may exist.

Quotations provide several strategies to deal with policy issues, such as technology adoption, market access, mentorship programs, and roundtable conversations. The impact and mode of execution of these strategies differ. Regional trade agreements and the necessity for tailored policy solutions that consider cultural and regional considerations are topics covered

in a few quotations. It is understood that policies should be tailored to the needs of specific areas. Only some firms will face the same obstacles because these are industry-specific issues. A participant brought up the significance of policies about Black Economic Empowerment (BEE), which can have inadvertent outcomes, particularly for foreign-owned businesses in South Africa or foreign investments in South African businesses.

5.7.6 Sub-question 4 - conclusion

The common viewpoints in these quotations highlight how important it is to create and execute policies that foster gender-inclusive commerce and entrepreneurship. The search for more equal and encouraging policies for female entrepreneurs has shown common themes, including cooperation, comprehension, the need for continual monitoring and assessment, and the need for rules to be simplified. In the end, these quotations from many people offer a wide range of perspectives and experiences, all of which add to the more extensive discussion on how to develop laws that support female entrepreneurs. While the variations highlight the need for flexibility and agility in addressing the issues encountered by women in the business and commerce sector, the commonalities serve as benchmarks for future policy development. In this changing environment, stakeholders and policymakers must continue to engage with these perspectives to create more effective, inclusive, and responsive policies.

6. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

6.1 Introduction

The study aimed to investigate how export policies affect women entrepreneurs' internationalisation. Following the interviews with female entrepreneurs, the data was analyzed thematically to identify significant themes. The chapter looks at the results and how trade policies affect female entrepreneurs who are becoming export-ready. The contextualization of the findings is in accordance with the body of literature on export trade policies and female businesses that are exporting, which was examined in Chapter 2 in the Literature Review. The results are analyzed to see if they confirm, refute, or expand on the body of knowledge. The conversation is organized according to the topics mentioned in Chapter 5 and is connected to the answers to all the research questions and their sub-questions.

6.2 Research Question 1 (RQ 1) Discussion

How do export trade policies influence the internationalisation of women-owned businesses?

6.2.1 Business growth and expansion

Financial motivation

The findings revealed several noteworthy themes, one of which is the driving force behind women-owned enterprises' global expansion. Going worldwide is primarily motivated by the desire for income diversification, according to many female entrepreneurs interviewed. This is consistent with the study findings of Ribau et al.(2016), who found that entrepreneurs frequently use diversity as a driving force for internationalisation. The participants saw a chance to lessen their dependency on specific markets and sources of revenue by taking advantage of the global market. This aim for revenue diversification aligns with the risk-management approach companies frequently use when looking to expand internationally. A company that only serves one market is susceptible to shifts in the local market or economic downturns (Boso et al., 2018). The participant's view that internationalisation is a way to bring earnings back to the country's economy may not consider female entrepreneurs' varied objectives and aspirations. While it may be one of the factors, supporting local economic progress may not always be the primary or exclusive driving force behind global expansion. Osano (2019) explains that entrepreneurial endeavours usually enter global market entrepreneurial endeavours usually enter global markets to take advantage of resources, skills, or innovation that may not be accessible locally.

Another important finding is that some women-owned businesses intentionally target emerging markets. They recognize these regions as having high product demand, presenting growth opportunities. This strategy aligns with the market-seeking approach to internationalisation, where businesses seek markets with high demand and growth potential (Boso et al., 2018). This tactic fits the market-seeking strategy for internationalisation, which looks for markets with strong development potential and high demand (Breuillot, 2021). The members' enthusiasm for obtaining sizable overseas orders highlights how internationalisation has helped their firms. This enthusiasm is a sign of the financial advantages that come with placing orders internationally in addition to being an emotional reaction. The fervor reflects the possibility of financial benefits from worldwide markets, which aligns with the study conducted by Ribau et al. (2016), which highlighted the possibility of increased earnings from global sales. Several participants expressed the desire to use internationalisation to create income and support the expansion of their local economies. They regard foreign growth as a way to transfer funds back to their place of origin so they may contribute to economic growth. The idea of "reinvestment theory," which contends that foreign profits may be returned and applied to regional economic growth, is consistent with this (Beck et al., 2017, p. 1206). Distribution abroad is viewed as a calculated move to reach markets and revenue streams bigger than the home market. This market-seeking strategy, which aims to find possibilities in overseas countries where companies may potentially increase sales and profits, is consistent with this strategic perspective (Vanninen et al., 2022). Furthermore, it would be a mistake to dismiss localization tactics, cultural adjustments, and long-term sustainability concerns in these countries in favor of portraying distribution outside as a strategic decision made only to gain access to more significant markets. The study has indicated that businesses may place a higher value on having a 'global presence' than the possibility for income, preferring to focus on meaningful involvement and sustainability above quick profit (Miocevic & Morgan, 2018).

Demand for products

The crucial role that product demand plays in the globalization of women-owned enterprises is one of the main themes that developed from the data presented in Chapter 5. Several female entrepreneurs attributed the success of their globalization initiatives to the high demand for their goods in other markets. This result is consistent with research in the literature on international business that highlights how market demand influences companies' decisions to go global (Fregidou-Malama et al., 2022). However, crediting market demand alone to achieve globalisation could overlook the creative approaches, branding activities, or strategic positioning that women-owned businesses use to generate and maintain demand in international markets. Success for entrepreneurs expanding globally frequently depends on

several variables outside of intrinsic market demand, such as competitive differentiation, innovative advertising, and flexible business structures (Osano, 2019).

Export trade regulations have the potential to significantly reduce market entrance barriers, allowing these entrepreneurs to reach their intended audience more successfully (Baccini, 2021). Export trade regulations frequently make it easier for women entrepreneurs selling unique or niche items to enter international marketplaces where their specialized products are in great demand. This is indicative of an internationalisation strategy known as "market-seeking," in which companies try to break into areas where there is a need for their distinctive products or services (Zhu et al., 2020, p. 208). According to recent scholarly discussions, the claim that export trade restrictions considerably lower market entrance barriers for female entrepreneurs seeking to reach their target audience is untrue. On the other hand, a 2018 study by Doan and Xing indicates that trade rules frequently pose significant obstacles rather than making it easier for small businesses to reach markets. This calls into question the notion that trade laws naturally make it easier for these business owners to enter new markets.

The fact that one of the participants stated that legumes are the basis of their company's operations shows how vital these goods are to developing their brand and unique selling point. This is a crucial realization since assessing a company's focus and skill requires a grasp of its primary goods. Legume specialty highlights the items' strategic significance for their globalization initiatives. The impression of a sizable worldwide market for the items above is another intriguing conclusion drawn from the data. This view is consistent with the business strategy that emphasizes exporting goods with high demand abroad, which is a common tactic in the literature on international business (Zhu et al., 2020). The interviewee's mention of a need for legume-based goods globally highlights their awareness of the global market environment and their capacity to take advantage of global opportunities. Furthermore, even while the study emphasizes how crucial legumes are to confident entrepreneurs' businesses, crediting the accomplishment of their globalization efforts exclusively on these products might oversimplify the many factors influencing worldwide market penetration. The presumption that concentrating on a particular category of goods suggests strategic importance for globalization may leave out other critical elements like supply chain resilience, marketing techniques, or flexibility to accommodate a wide range of customer preferences (Acikdilli et al., 2020).

The statement emphasizing the company's primary motivator as "affordable wellness" illustrates how their product line complements a larger worldwide trend in eating habits: the increasing inclination towards plant-based diets. For an international corporation, aligning with

a worldwide pattern can be a strategic advantage since it puts the organization in a position to adapt to changing customer preferences (Ribau et al., 2016).

Business journey

The participant quotations highlight the first phase, highlighting the importance of establishing a solid basis before expanding internationally. Entrepreneurs know that establishing a stable home foundation takes a lot of time and effort before taking the world by storm. Activities like product creation, market research, and starting local enterprises are all part of this preparedness. It is essential because it provides the framework for further attempts at worldwide growth. These female entrepreneurs' sentiments are consistent with a body of recognized business studies literature emphasising the critical role of robust domestic operations as a springboard for international development. Their openness to learning and adapting will define the next stage of their business journey (Olaore et al., 2020). Studies, such as those by Cuervo-Cazurra et al. in 2018, propose a more dynamic approach to international expansion, suggesting that waiting to establish a robust domestic base before entering global markets might not always align with current business realities (Cuervo-Cazurra et al., 2018). This challenges the notion that a solid home foundation is an absolute prerequisite for successful global growth.

As participants have pointed out, there is unavoidably a high learning curve associated with international expansion. They recognize the difficulties in adjusting to regional market realities in overseas markets, comprehending customer preferences, and dealing with legislative restraints. Their readiness to accept learning while on the go indicates their spirit of entrepreneurship, as they recognize the need for flexibility and acquiring expertise via firsthand encounters in unfamiliar markets. This strategy reflects the adaptability and resilience of entrepreneurs in the face of shifting market conditions, which is essential for success on a global scale (Zahoor et al., 2023). The last step of the "Business Journey" is a more developed stage when these business owners hope to launch global operations. They want to grow their business outside of their nation of origin by establishing processing plants or other vital infrastructure elsewhere. At this point, it represents the global vision they have realized. Furthermore, it demonstrates the entrepreneur's ambition and export readiness to take on the international market (Olaore et al., 2020). According to Che Omar et al. (2020), establishing infrastructure and following a phased progression are not the only indicators of success in developing an international firm; a more flexible and strategic strategy is needed.

6.2.2 Entrepreneurial motivations and goals

Entrepreneurial intentions and capabilities

The results clarify the critical interaction between global ambitions and entrepreneurial goals. Many of the participant's steadfast confidence supports the notion that self-efficacy and conviction in one's talents are essential to business success (Seikkula-Leino & Salomaa, 2021). The literature emphasizing the strategic significance of internationalisation for firms aligns with the focus on the transformational force of global trade (Cho & Lee, 2018).

As noted by some participants, the time factor is consistent with research highlighting the importance of the initial years of entrepreneurial endeavours (Romanello & Chiarvesio, 2019). The three-year term one participant mentioned indicates the typically noted gestation period companies need to establish themselves in international markets (Etemad, 2018). Furthermore, research by Yan et al. (2018) indicates that time factors may differ significantly depending on industry, market dynamics, and business strategies, even though it acknowledges the significance of the early years in entrepreneurial endeavours and the gestation period for establishing in international markets. This calls into question the idea that worldwide market formation requires a conventional three-year gestation time.

One participant's account of their first concerns in exporting is consistent with studies on the psychological obstacles businesses have when expanding internationally (Seikkula-Leino & Salomaa, 2021). The opposition to gender stereotypes is consistent with increasing research highlighting the value of gender-neutral viewpoints in entrepreneurs (Rosca et al., 2020). Studies that support seeking information proactively in entrepreneurial decision-making are consistent with one participant who focuses on active involvement and research (Li et al., 2020b). This supports the idea that an entrepreneur's capacity to find and use knowledge enhances the success of their firm. The study adds significant insights into the complex dynamics of entrepreneurial ambitions and worldwide endeavours by connecting these findings to recent literature, supporting and expanding on previous studies in the area.

6.2.3 International market entry and aspiration

Export market prospects

Upon analysing the interview transcripts, a recurring topic surfaced: the acknowledgement of export opportunities in Africa, namely in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) area (Bronauer & Yoon, 2018). A number of the participants recognized the potential markets in this area and stressed the necessity of improving their strategies and techniques to get traction in these areas. This is consistent with previous studies showing how the African

continent is seeing an increase in the chances for international trade (Ferreira et al., 2022). Participants' interest in African markets indicates a worldwide trend that views Africa as a developing hub for corporate growth.

Several scholarly works (Malca et al., 2019; Osano, 2019) have highlighted the pivotal function of growing export marketplaces in cultivating aggregate business success. Female entrepreneurs acknowledge this tactic as crucial for negotiating the intricacies of the international business environment. Women-run businesses want to expand their competitive advantage by reaching a more comprehensive range of consumers domestically and internationally. The participant insights are consistent with research on market diversity to reduce risk (Jin & Cho, 2018). There are inherent hazards associated with relying just on one market, and female entrepreneurs are actively working to reduce these risks by expanding their presence in other international markets. This calculated action aligns with general business research on managing risks in global company settings (Gamage et al., 2020). A more nuanced understanding is provided by recent research perspectives, which suggest that while the study emphasizes the keen interest in African markets and the search for competitive diversity for risk reduction, these strategies may not always ensure company expansion and decrease risk in global business settings, despite Africa's potential (Kaplinsky & Morris, 2019).

The findings provide a thorough picture of the strategic factors that female business owners consider while growing their enterprises abroad. In today's global business environment, female-led enterprises stand out for their innovative and dynamic approach to risk mitigation and identifying export market growth as a critical strategy (Madison et al., 2022).

Global market expansion

Some participants who have yet to venture into the export market showed enthusiasm and eagerness for the introduction of a product in a particular market. Their method shows a methodical and careful approach to international expansion to assess the boundaries before venturing into new areas. This strategy is consistent with the "gradual internalisation" approach, which aims to have companies join foreign markets and grow gradually (Paul & Rosado-Serrano, 2019, p. 6). This strategy fits the idea that expanding geographically is a gradual process frequently fuelled by elements like proximity, cultural likeness, and market experience. Typical technique businesses use to address the challenges of internationalisation is shown in some participant strategies, which prioritize a particular target market (Rundh, 2022). A few participants unintentionally moved into the export sector, highlighting the obstacles and difficulties businesses confront while managing the complexity of international trade.

Participants emphasise the importance of acquiring expertise and understanding before entering foreign markets, as a lack of readiness can lead to difficulties and disappointments (Rundh, 2022). This result emphasizes the importance of conducting thorough market research, comprehending regulatory requirements, and adjusting to novel company settings when venturing into foreign markets. Furthermore, while stressing the value of knowledge and comprehension prior to joining international markets, research by Gerschewski et al. (2020b) raises the possibility that preparedness and market research may not be sufficient to address all of the difficulties and complexities associated with doing business internationally, calling for more all-encompassing approaches. This calls into question the notion that comprehensive regulatory knowledge and market research ensure a smooth entry into international markets.

6.2.4 Conclusion- research question 1

To sum up, the responses to the question offer insightful information on the wide range of corporate perspectives and strategies related to export trade regulations. The divergence in how companies interact with rules is shown by the difference between one participant's passive, compliance-based approach, and another's more flexible, responsiveness-based approach. These results highlight how crucial it is to understand that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to policy compliance. Companies are different, and factors like size, industry, and regulatory climate greatly influence how they handle regulations. Due to resource constraints, small firms may naturally lean toward reactive compliance; more prominent organisations, on the other hand, may choose proactive involvement through specialized compliance departments. This study emphasizes how important it is for policymakers to use an advanced strategy that considers this variability. Instead of enforcing inflexible, one-size-fits-all regulations, authorities must consider the variety of attitudes and abilities in the corporate world. By doing this, they may provide a regulatory framework that encourages flexibility and compliance, fostering a more productive and successful interaction between companies and regulations. This study adds to the continuing conversation on the complex link between firms and policy in a larger context. It lays the platform for more investigation and study into this dynamic and developing topic by providing a fundamental grasp of policy compliance and adaptation in diverse corporate environments.

6.3 Research Sub-Question 1 (SQ 1) Discussion

How do export trade policies enable women entrepreneurs to internationalise?

6.3.1 Government support and programs

Export agent and distributor assistance

The findings highlight the critical role that local brokers and advisors play in promoting cross-border commerce, especially for female entrepreneurs. The study's participants underscored the importance of readily available informed personnel proficient in domestic and global markets. This illustrates how intricate and varied international trade is, sometimes requiring negotiating various regulations and dynamics unique to individual markets. The internationalisation process was thought to be streamlined using local consultants and agents. These middlemen are crucial in giving firms aiming to enter international marketplaces insightful direction and counsel. Due to their experience with the complexities of global marketplaces, company owners have utilized these consultants' well-informed judgments and successfully navigated the barriers to export (Juma et al., 2019).

Notably, the study emphasized the contribution of female participants who sought assistance from freight forwarding companies. Freight forwarding companies provide a variety of services to streamline the logistics of global trade. This involves ensuring that items are transported to international markets effectively, which is essential for companies looking to grow. The usage of these services emphasizes how crucial effective logistics are to global trade and how crucial intermediaries are to seamless operations. The results also show that women entrepreneurs usually used export brokers and wholesalers to expand their market reach. These middlemen help in several crucial areas, including finding appropriate international markets, building beneficial relationships with possible customers, and managing intricate legal and regulatory requirements (Juma et al., 2019). Furthermore, although discussions by Poliak et al. (2018) highlight the importance of freight forwarding firms in expediting logistics for international trade, they also raise the possibility that, despite their value, these services may not always guarantee the smooth transport of goods to foreign markets due to multiple logistical complexities. This casts doubt on the fact that freight forwarding services themselves ensure efficient global commerce logistics.

This demonstrates how companies, especially those run by women, frequently depend on a network of consultants and intermediaries to negotiate the difficulties of global trade successfully. Furthermore, the highlights mentioned above are the significance of trade brokers and distributors in broadening market reach. It shows that although intermediaries

have a supportive function, companies must prioritize cultivating direct links with global marketplaces to augment their agility and responsiveness to market developments. This casts doubt on the idea that the primary tactic for expanding markets in international commerce is relying only on middlemen (Akerman, 2018).

Women-focused assistance and mentorship

The results of the qualitative interviews illuminated the noteworthy influence of the SheTrades Mentorship initiative, which the participants identified as their favorite. The program has received favourable responses and significant support, demonstrating the need and efficacy of efforts explicitly targeting women entrepreneurs in international trade (Evaluation of the ITC SheTrades Initiative, 2022).

The interviews clearly show that participants regularly favored women-focused assistance programs like SheTrades. This choice might be explained by the participants' conviction that gender-specific support is crucial for tackling female entrepreneurs' difficulties in venturing into international markets. This viewpoint is consistent with the general knowledge that women frequently encounter unique challenges and inequality in the business sector, particularly in international commerce, where hurdles may be encountered relating to gender biases, access to necessary resources, or networking opportunities (Mukhlisa, 2022).

The viewpoint of Wu et al. (2019) is consistent with the broader recognition that women frequently suffer unique challenges and inequalities in the business sector, particularly in international trade, where they could run into problems with gender prejudice, resource accessibility, or networking possibilities (Akter et al., 2019). It is implied that the SheTrades Mentorship program has successfully addressed the unique requirements and challenges of women entrepreneurs in the international trade setting because it has garnered such high accolades. The program may provide customized advice and assistance to assist female entrepreneurs in navigating the intricacies of international marketplaces, making contacts, and getting beyond any obstacles they may face (Brush et al., 2018).

This research emphasizes how crucial it is to promote trade and entrepreneurship through inclusive, gender-sensitive strategies. It emphasizes the need for programs that acknowledge the difficulties encountered by female entrepreneurs and actively seek to give them the resources, opportunity, and guidance necessary to be successful in global trade. Furthermore, the inclination towards assistance programs tailored to a particular gender indicates that these efforts enable women to explore global marketplaces confidently. These initiatives can aid in closing the gender disparity in international trade, encourage diversity, and support general

growth and expansion in the economy by attending to the unique requirements of female entrepreneurs (Ogundana et al., 2021).

Market access opportunities

The qualitative interviews have yielded significant insights into the efficacy of trade-related initiatives and mentorship programs in bolstering firms, particularly those involved in international trade. The results show that participants regularly gave the Small Enterprise Development Agency's (Seda) mentorship programs excellent marks. These initiatives received praise for helping entrepreneurs manage business challenges, particularly in international commerce, by offering them insightful counsel and support, which is detailed in Svenson's (2021) study.

Positive comments about Seda's mentoring programs emphasize how important it is for company owners to get individualized advice and assistance. Mentorship programs provide entrepreneurs with the information and skills necessary to succeed in worldwide networking, market expansion, and trade regulations prominent in international business. This research emphasizes how crucial it is to fund mentoring programs consistently to promote company expansion and proficiency in foreign commerce (Kuratko et al., 2021).

The Seda-sponsored exhibitions were also highly regarded by the participants, who acknowledged giving enterprises access to outside markets. Trade displays greatly aided international trade, and the Department of Trade, Industry, and Competition (dtic) was recognized for playing a critical role in enabling these events. This acknowledgment highlights the value of trade exhibitions as venues for companies to present their products and services to a worldwide clientele. It also emphasizes how vital government assistance is in providing chances for companies to participate in these events (Catanzaro & Teyssier, 2020).

The statement made by Participant 17 on the selection of only export-ready companies for trade shows highlights the necessity for companies to be suitably equipped for global growth. It emphasizes how crucial it is to ensure companies are equipped and prepared to participate in international commerce successfully, as this may improve the outcome and influence of their exhibits (Catanzaro & Teyssier, 2020). In addition, the Eastern Cape Development Corporation's (ECDC) praise for giving local business owners a platform to market their goods internationally highlights the critical role that regional development organizations play in promoting global trade. By helping local enterprises access global markets and increase their reach and prospects, such efforts support economic growth and development (Arshad et al., 2020).

Export training and capacitation

The findings provide insight into export training and capacity-building's critical role in helping small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) increase their market penetration internationally. The knowledge acquired from conversations with company owners highlights the significance of programs designed to train and empower entrepreneurs in the export industry. Interestingly, the South African government's Small Enterprise Development Agency (Seda) support programs are acknowledged as essential elements of export education. These programs provide SMEs with many tools, direction, and assistance to help them deal with global trade challenges. This acknowledgment implies that government-sponsored initiatives are essential in providing entrepreneurs with the know-how and abilities required for profitable export ventures (Svenson, 2021).

The Department of Trade, Industry, and Competition (dtic) in South Africa and the German Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) were recognized for their successful partnership in preparing and empowering enterprises for export. These cross-border partnerships frequently provide local firms access to global best practices and experience, boosting their capacity to compete in global marketplaces (Nakku et al., 2019). The reference to export workshops run by organizations such as WESGRO, a provincial investment entity of the Western Cape, providing export building capacitation, emphasises the need for practical instruction and workshops. These gatherings provide entrepreneurs a forum to learn from the experts, apply their expertise to practical situations, and obtain personal insights. The competency of SMEs in international commerce is greatly enhanced by this type of experience learning (Nakku et al., 2019).

Participant 6's comment on the significance of well-structured and extensive training programs emphasizes the necessity of well-informed and coordinated export courses. To guarantee that businesses possess a comprehensive understanding of export procedures, these courses must encompass an extensive array of export-related subjects, ranging from market analysis to shipping and legal requirements (Bekteshi, 2019).

Moreover, the importance that many participants put on gender-specific export training indicates that they recognize the possibilities and problems women face in international commerce. Gender-specific export training recognizes these inequalities and provides help suited explicitly to addressing them. It encourages inclusion and diversity, guaranteeing that female business owners have equal opportunity to acquire the information and abilities needed to be successful in the global business sector (Akter et al., 2019).

6.3.2 Trade policies and ease of doing business

Advantages and opportunities of trade policies

The results have brought to light the widely accepted importance of global trade agreements. Several participants acknowledged that trade agreements are essential for streamlining the exporting process. This acknowledgment highlights the value of trade agreements as instruments that may improve bilateral economic ties and ease cross-border commerce (Rodrik, 2018). Businesses involved in international trade can profit from various trade agreements, whether bilateral or multilateral. Trade agreements facilitate enterprises' access to overseas markets, customer base expansion, and worldwide competitiveness by addressing concerns, including tariff reductions, trade obstacles, and trade regulations. The interviewees' acknowledgment of these benefits demonstrates a realistic grasp of how international trade agreements can positively impact trade-related activities (Liñán et al., 2019).

Participants' concerns highlight the necessity of striking a balance between trade agreements' advantages and restrictions to protect homegrown businesses and maintain jobs in the community. For governments and politicians, striking this balance between resolving the issues brought on by global competition and fostering the expansion of their export-oriented enterprises is a challenging undertaking and requires thought when creating policies (González & Sorescu, 2019).

Most participants' agreement highlights trade rules' crucial role in assisting businesses that engage in international commerce. Frameworks for regulating and facilitating cross-border trade are crucial. They function as a collection of regulations and standards companies must follow while engaging in cross-border trade. During the talks, simplified trade laws kept coming up, as the respondents stressed the importance of accelerating customs processes and lowering administrative burdens on businesses. The notion that straightforward and streamlined laws may significantly improve the effectiveness of global trading is compatible with the identification of more straightforward trade regulations as an essential component. Businesses may gain from quicker and more affordable cross-border transactions by lowering regulatory obstacles and delays. This can increase their competitiveness and make expanding their business internationally easier (Rodrik, 2018).

Numerous attendees recounted their encounters with the benefits of carefully crafted trade regulations. These first-hand narratives illustrated the real-world effects of trade regulations

on international companies. It was observed that well-defined trade policies contributed to the exporting process's professionalization. By giving companies precise rules and instructions to adhere to, these policies lessen ambiguity and guarantee that international trade regulations are met. A significant development is the focus on trade agreements providing a way to increase the efficiency and accessibility of cross-border trade. Participants acknowledged that trade agreements allow companies to grow their customer base, penetrate new areas, and increase their market reach. This result is consistent with the idea that trade agreements allow companies to expand internationally and investigate new markets. These agreements promote economic growth and ease international commerce by lowering trade barriers and creating a stable trading environment (Rodrik, 2018).

6.3.3 Conclusion- research sub-question 1

The discussion in this section demonstrates how export policies support female entrepreneurs engaged in international trade. In order to enable enterprises to increase their global footprint, it is acknowledged that trade regulations, market access possibilities, export training, mentorship programs, and government backing are essential. Emphasis is placed on the necessity of all-encompassing support, particularly for female entrepreneurs. The findings of this study highlight the significance of all-encompassing programs and policies that assist female entrepreneurs in global commerce, hence advancing gender equality, company expansion, and economic advancement.

6.4 Research Sub-Question 2 (SQ 2) Discussion

How do export trade policies disable women entrepreneurs from internationalising?

6.4.1 Navigating global markets: export challenges

Market and cultural challenges

The undervaluation of small businesses amid international expansion is a significant subject from the interviews. Small businesses are frequently underestimated and undervalued compared to more prominent corporations. Due to this image, small companies trying to make a name for themselves internationally may need help. Even if many of these businesses have high expectations for their internationalisation, they frequently discover that the challenges and rivalry of the international marketplace are more than they once thought. This emphasises how important it is to have a realistic grasp of the difficulties associated with expanding internationally. Small enterprises must be well-prepared to handle the intricacies of the global market about resources and strategy (Papulová et al., 2021).

Another important topic throughout the meetings was market access in other nations. The participants acknowledged that creating a name for oneself in foreign marketplaces might be difficult. The participants emphasized the need to comprehend regional distribution networks and establish strategic partnerships. This emphasizes how crucial local expertise and alliances are to break into foreign markets successfully. Several participants highlighted how complicated rules and the lack of local networks hamper their attempts to enter new markets. This emphasizes how crucial it is to do in-depth market research and have a thorough awareness of regional business ecosystems to meet these obstacles (Felzensztein et al., 2019).

Another major issue mentioned by the participants was navigating language and cultural differences in global marketplaces. Due to linguistic and cultural barriers, small businesses sometimes need help properly communicating their goods and services in overseas markets. It was stressed that methods for bridging these gaps were required. Participants emphasized the importance of participating in follow-up performances to get across cultural and commercial barriers. Small enterprises benefit from consistent interaction with overseas markets to better comprehend regional customs and business operations (Nurfarida, 2022).

Trade policy support

The impact of trade procedures on their interactions with other markets' cultures was one of the main themes of the interviews. The occasions when trade laws clashed with deeply rooted traditions and customs in other nations were frequently brought up by participants. Businesses operating in foreign markets may need help with this conflict between cultural values and commercial practices. These cultural obstacles frequently force enterprises expanding into various foreign markets to adjust to new business practices. This emphasizes how important it is for businesses to be cognizant of the customs and cultural quirks of the areas they visit. Building solid bonds and being accepted in global marketplaces need understanding and respect for the local culture (Nurfarida, 2022).

The participants also mentioned that they needed help managing some parts of trade regulations that prevented their products from accessing certain countries and cultural adaptability. Certain products cannot flourish in the environments created by these trading practices in specific nations. This may result from several factors, such as laws and regulations, cultural resentment, or trade limitations put in place by the host nation. These obstacles are significant for companies looking to grow globally and can be considered external barriers (Sinkovics et al., 2018).

The results imply that companies seeking to expand globally must be skilled at comprehending and adjusting to the cultural characteristics of the marketplaces they participate in. To ensure

they are equipped to handle cultural differences, businesses should invest in research and training in cultural awareness. This entails being aware of local business customs and etiquette, which differ significantly between cultures and customer preferences.

Additionally, companies have to make an effort to interact with nearby communities and stakeholders to promote a better comprehension of the cultural environment in which they function. Building connections with regional partners may be very helpful in overcoming these commercial and cultural hurdles (Sinkovics et al., 2018).

Lack of trade policy support for export operation challenges

Beugelsdijk et al. (2017) confirm the impact of trade practices on cultural connections. Their study explores the complex relationships that arise between cultural norms and trade practices and how those relationships affect how companies conduct business internationally. Participants cited situations in which deeply ingrained cultural practices in other nations conflicted with trade regulations. This insight is consistent with the findings of Fornes and Cardoza (2018), which highlight the difficulties firms have when dealing with cultural obstacles that contradict established trade rules. These academics investigate how cultural acuity makes companies need to grow internationally, illuminating the revolutionary effect that cultural subtleties have on commercial procedures. Several attendees voiced worries over trade regulations and the difficulties associated with cultural adjustment. This is consistent with the study by Sun et al.(2021), which addresses the necessity for firms to deliberately handle these obstacles due to the difficulties in matching trade rules with various cultural settings. The observation made by Participant 17 that trade practices create an environment in which their products cannot thrive is consistent with research done by Logsdon and Wood (2002). These researchers investigate situations where trade regulations may unintentionally prevent certain items from entering particular countries, highlighting the need for a sophisticated awareness of regional trade customs. The results of the interviews provide insight into the complex interplay between cultural factors and trading practices. The necessity for a nuanced and culturally sensitive approach to international trade is highlighted by the difficulties caused by conflicts between laws and cultural norms, the need to adjust to new business methods, and the restriction of certain items in some countries.

Inadequate export competence and knowledge

A recurring theme that surfaced from the interviews was the necessity for companies conducting business internationally to have up-to-date knowledge of current affairs and to obtain continual training. Participants emphasized that understanding trade laws, market trends, and world events is necessary to make wise judgments and take advantage of global possibilities. The dynamic nature of global commerce demands a constant state of learning

and the capacity to adjust to shifting conditions. To prosper in the global marketplace, businesses must stay abreast of the ever-changing export landscape. This emphasizes the requirement for training courses, seminars, and other materials that give companies the most recent data and understanding of global commerce (Catanzaro & Teyssier, 2020).

Another significant element that surfaced from the conversations was the importance of continuous export mentorship programs. The participants discovered that mentoring was a significant factor in their success with exports. Effective mentoring may provide organizations with continuous support, insightful advice, and assistance in navigating the difficulties of global trade. The participants acknowledged the need for comprehensive mentoring that addresses various export-related topics, such as trade regulations, market entrance tactics, and the realities of doing business overseas. Mentorship programs should prioritize the effective use of financial resources for export-related endeavours. This implies that while engaged in international commerce, firms require counsel and helpful direction on managing their funds efficiently. Two critical factors that have been mentioned as affecting the economic viability of export operations are inflation and exchange rates. In the world of international trade, it was thought to be essential to comprehend these economic aspects to make wise judgments (Tripathi, 2019).

6.4.2 Gender Bias, Perceptions, and Gender-Related Targets in Trade Policies Gender-Related Challenges

The results of the interviews show that women face a wide range of difficulties in the commercial world, particularly in global commerce. These difficulties include underrepresentation in particular industries, restricted access to essential resources, and a conspicuous lack of assistance. It is clear that, compared to their male counterparts, the female participants frequently complained about unfair treatment. These disparities are unequal access to growth opportunities, financial backing, and robust networks. Their business aspirations need to be improved by the unfair treatment they get, especially in international commerce (Fang et al., 2022).

Numerous individuals talked about how they have encountered gender discrimination in the workplace, especially when interacting with male colleagues. They related stories of being left out or underappreciated in bargaining and commercial dealings. Prejudices of this kind impede productive teamwork and can impede the development and prosperity of female traders engaged in global commerce. This research emphasizes how important it is to recognize and eliminate gender prejudice in professional settings. Participants underlined the importance of

including gender-related goals while assessing and keeping an eye on trade policy. As one contributor correctly pointed out, there have to be governmental changes and attempts to address gender disparities in international commerce. These programs ought to provide female entrepreneurs equitable access to opportunities and resources. This suggestion emphasizes how essential policy changes are to ensure gender equality when doing business, especially concerning international trade (Guzman & Kacperczyk, 2018).

Participants raised that cultural norms often push women into traditionally female-dominated industries like home-based companies or catering. This viewpoint draws attention to the gender biases that prevent women from taking advantage of more diverse economic possibilities. The respondent emphasized the need to dispel these myths and inspire women to explore various career opportunities, defying conventional gender norms and expectations (Clarke, 2020).

6.4.3 Government procedures and policy execution

Systemic export barriers

The interviewees shed light on the formidable difficulties confronting female business owners in international trade. They emphasized the systemic nature of these obstacles, indicating that they are deeply ingrained within global business practices. This systemic nature implies that these challenges are deeply rooted and pervasive, making them more resistant to superficial changes. The participants' accounts underscore the need for a holistic, systemic approach to tackle these issues rather than merely relying on policy alterations (Akter et al., 2019).

The answers were unambiguous in saying that although trade policies and free trade agreements can have advantages, those benefits may only sometimes be immediately evident. According to this viewpoint, international trade agreements and policies can promote global trade. However, they are needed to completely solve the many issues that women involved with global trade confront. This realization emphasizes the necessity of a more thorough strategy that goes beyond changing laws in order to establish a business climate that is fair and inclusive for female entrepreneurs (Onwuatuegwu & Oraegbunam, 2023).

6.4.4 Export funding

Funding challenges for export activities

All of the participants emphasized that in order to prepare for export attempts sufficiently, a significant financial commitment is required. This result emphasizes how much money is needed for international trade to sustain different facets of the firm. The participants clearly understand the substantial financial consequences linked to operations related to exports.

These financial ramifications span several dimensions, such as marketing, distribution, compliance, and logistics, rather than being confined to just one. Exporting frequently necessitates spending money on marketing initiatives to reach outside customers, resources for adhering to international regulations, and the logistics needed to move goods across borders (Sibanda et al., 2018).

The interviewees highlighted a specific issue companies face when carrying out actual export transactions: a need for more funding. Lack of funding makes it more challenging to carry out export operations smoothly, which might result in missed opportunities or operational delays. The upfront expenses associated with conducting business internationally, such as arranging transportation, navigating customs procedures, or guaranteeing that goods satisfy international standards for quality and safety, may give rise to this problem (Raju & Rajan, 2019).

Most participants agreed that having access to adequate export finance is crucial for conducting business overseas. Export finance is a vital component of global commerce, which enables companies to get the capital required to fund various export-related operations. Specifically, a few participants highlighted the availability of export funding. They emphasized the importance of funding, particularly in the early phases of their export endeavours. This emphasises how crucial financial help is as a facilitator for companies wishing to enter international markets. Facilitating financial resources for firms can lower entrance barriers and increase accessibility to international commerce for a broader range of businesses. One helpful recommendation from the talks was to set aside certain initial costs to be paid for using start-up money. This approach aims to ensure a seamless start to exporting, lessen the financial burden on companies, and empower them to confidently negotiate global commerce's challenges (Tinits & Fey, 2022).

6.4.5 Understanding and implementation of export trade policy

Challenges in policy understanding and implementation

The testimonies of the participants made clear that obstacles and challenges arise when putting policies intended to benefit their companies. The study found that although these rules were well-intentioned, their implementation had many obstacles. Bureaucratic intricacies and administrative red tape were significant roadblocks to the efficient implementation of initiatives. These obstacles made it more difficult for the policies to achieve their goals by causing mistakes, hold-ups, and shortcomings in the business operations. The participants' experiences reflect a typical difficulty in policy implementation. Well-meaning policies frequently encounter practical problems when implemented in actual settings. Businesses

may get frustrated and inefficient due to administrative complexity and obstacles, especially when dealing with global trade, where adherence to regulations and compliance with policies is crucial (González & Sorescu, 2019).

Participants often voiced worry about policies' intricacy, which might cause understanding gaps. This is a crucial problem, as excessively complicated policies have the potential to become obstacles on their own. Participants emphasized how important it is for business owners to be able to access and comprehend policies. Non-compliance and errors can undermine the goal of policies or miss opportunities resulting from a lack of understanding of the policies. Moreover, many participants emphasized the need for extended training programs and educational courses. They realized that education is a critical component for firms to manage policy properly. For company owners to make educated decisions and take full advantage of supporting policies, they need a deeper grasp of trade policies and their consequences (Bekteshi, 2019).

A primary subject that surfaced from the research is the intricacy of laws and their importance as a significant obstacle for female entrepreneurs involved in global commerce. The participants often emphasized the complex and multifaceted character of trade policies, citing challenges in understanding these rules' technical jargon and intricacies. The survey found that business owners frequently faced obstacles due to the significant legal features of export trade regulations and the usage of technical language (Mlambo et al., 2022).

The participants' admission that the paperwork and legal aspects of export trade regulations often made it difficult for them to comprehend the precise requirements and procedures illustrates the difficulties in understanding trade policy. These difficulties might result in incorrect applications, misinterpretations, and unintentional failure to comply, all of which could harm companies engaged in international trade.

6.4.6 Conclusion- research sub-question 2

Several essential insights into the difficulties experienced by female entrepreneurs in the field of international commerce have been revealed by the qualitative interviews undertaken for this study. The findings highlight the systemic character of these issues and the necessity of thorough, systemic reform to effect long-term change. Trade agreements and policies are crucial instruments, but more is needed to address the complex problems female entrepreneurs face. There are still gender inequalities and deeply ingrained prejudices in the

corporate world and international commerce, which present significant barriers to women's economic engagement and empowerment.

These results are consistent with previous research that emphasizes how crucial it is to address gender disparities in trade and business to advance gender equality and economic growth. Academics such as Noor et al.(2021) have underscored the pivotal function that gender parity and the empowerment of women play in accomplishing developmental objectives. They have investigated the processes of "bargaining" in the context of gender, illuminating the intricacies of women's economic engagement both within and outside the home. The relationship between female empowerment and economic growth has been emphasized by Reshi and Sudha (2023), highlighting the necessity of focused efforts to alleviate gender inequities.

Given these results and the corpus of work already in existence, encouraging women to engage in global commerce and tackling the structural obstacles they encounter calls for a multimodal strategy. This strategy should include mentoring programs, legislation improvements, and a more general change in cultural norms and prejudices that prevent women from pursuing opportunities in various fields. By acknowledging the systemic aspect of these issues and striving for all-encompassing remedies, we may establish a more fair and inclusive worldwide business milieu that enables female entrepreneurs to prosper.

6.5 Research Sub - Question 3 (SQ 3) Discussion

How do women entrepreneurs navigate export trade policy challenges?

6.5.1 International best practices

International models for women's empowerment

Participants emphasized how the United States has successfully assisted women-owned firms in obtaining government contracts, drawing attention to specific legislation and programs intended to increase prospects for these businesses. Studies substantiate the beneficial effects of these initiatives. Aladejebi (2020), for instance, talks about how diversity initiatives and affirmative action laws might improve female access to leadership roles, especially regarding government contracts. These initiatives seek to address historical disparities in gender roles and provide women equitable access to opportunities across various sectors.

The global trend to empower women in leadership positions was also addressed by governments in other countries, and programs such as the Australian Women Leadership and Development Program align with this movement("Women's Leadership and Development

Program (WLDP)," 2023). Researchers who have studied the advantages of women in leadership roles and how leadership development initiatives support their achievement include Athanasopoulou et al.(2017). These initiatives may help women gain self-assurance, hone their leadership skills, and gain access to the tools they need to succeed in their chosen industries.

Additionally, participants mentioned that financial institutions, particularly banks, supported female entrepreneurs, which is consistent with the study results. The significance of women's economic empowerment has been acknowledged by institutions such as the World Bank and the International Finance Corporation (IFC), which have launched initiatives and programs to facilitate women-owned businesses' access to capital, guidance, and mentorship (Halim et al., 2020). These programs seek to remove the financial obstacles that female entrepreneurs frequently encounter and provide them with the resources they need to be successful.

Government support and assistance

The research on the significance of government assistance for international trade is consistent with the emphasis placed on the proactive role that foreign governments play in promoting their firms. Governmental actions, such as trade agreements and export promotion programs, can significantly affect a nation's capacity to increase its market share abroad. Gupta and Mirchandani's (2018) research highlights how government-assisted programs assist in overcoming barriers to succeed in the international markets.

A suggestion was made that the government of South Africa imitate Tanzania's efforts to open up markets and facilitate exports, which is consistent with studies on the beneficial impacts of state assistance. Initiatives for market access and trade facilitation spearheaded by governments have been demonstrated to be advantageous for companies looking to grow globally (Tinitis & Fey, 2022). The existing literature supports the importance of localized production, illustrated by China's hegemony in the semiconductor industry. Uddin and Oserei (2019) found that studies suggest localized production can improve a nation's export potential and competitiveness in global markets. Countries like South Africa might increase their ability to export goods to foreign markets by concentrating on particular industries and developing local expertise.

International networking and support

The Japanese Women Entrepreneurs Network is mentioned, emphasising the importance of networks and organizations specifically assisting women entrepreneurs. Studies have indicated that connections and support systems geared toward women are essential to the

success of female entrepreneurs. For instance, Neumeyer et al.(2018) describe how networking and women-specific support networks may give female entrepreneurs access to crucial chances and resources. The mention of a project managed by the German Agency for international development, GIZ, emphasises even more how essential foreign organizations are to the empowerment of female entrepreneurs. The study on the advantages of mentoring initiatives and international development projects is consistent with the role played by organizations such as GIZ in discovering and supporting entrepreneurs. These initiatives can make a significant difference in women's economic empowerment (Nakku et al., 2019).

These results underline the necessity of international role models and programs that assist female entrepreneurs by providing specialized training and resources, networking opportunities, and mentorship. According to research, women may be successfully empowered in the business sector through comprehensive programs that target all aspects of entrepreneurship (Svenson, 2021).

Government-facilitated vetting and support

The participants underscored the significance of making arrangements via chambers of commerce to guarantee comprehensive screening and security. Particularly in cross-border trade, these appointments help confirm the legitimacy and dependability of possible business partners. This supports the idea that trust-building among participants and facilitating international commercial transactions may be significantly enhanced by chambers of business and economic groups (Blackburne & Buckley, 2019). The proactive approach involved parties use to resolve shipment duty and customs-related matters via foreign embassies demonstrates their dedication to lowering trade obstacles. It displays a calculated strategy to guarantee that shipments are free of duties and difficulties associated with customs. According to research, taking proactive steps to address trade-related difficulties may result in cost savings and more accessible cross-border business activities (Kalafsky & Raymond, 2023)

6.5.2 Enhancing export quality and economic infrastructure

Export quality control standards

The participants emphasized how crucial food safety is. They emphasised that following stringent food safety regulations is not only necessary for moral corporate conduct but also required by law. Food items must be safe to comply with regulations and safeguard consumer health. Gizaw (2019) has enforced the need for strict laws to be in place to protect public health and guarantee quality, and research backs up the notion that the safety of food is a significant problem in international trade. Stricter labeling laws were shown to be yet another

essential element of export quality assurance. Transparency, consumer knowledge, and adherence to international trade laws depend on proper labeling. Building customer trust and facilitating cross-border trade need accurate product labeling (Gizaw, 2019).

Concerns were raised by participants about the uniformity of product quality. They understood the need to uphold consistency in quality for successful market entry, credibility building, and ethical business practices. Okocha et al. (2018) say a brand's reputation might suffer greatly, and financial losses can ensue from inconsistent quality management. The topics discovered correspond with the current body of research about the importance of food safety, packaging, and quality control standards in international trade. Strict standards and laws, in particular, apply to the food industry to guarantee product quality and safety and to promote trade (Fung et al., 2018).

Trade digital transformation and export economic infrastructure

The participants underlined how important digitalization is to the modern global economy. They emphasized that several nations, including Switzerland, have realized how crucial digitalization is to trade-related processes. It was also noted that the United Nations was aggressively working to digitise trade. The notion that digitalisation has revolutionized global trade by streamlining procedures, cutting trade expenses, and raising trade volumes is supported by research (Abendin et al., 2022). It was suggested that a "Bank of products" be established to promote exports. This idea entails setting up a central location to display and gather goods from nearby company owners. The theory fits the more significant concept of digital markets and platforms enabling commerce by linking buyers and sellers (Zeng et al., 2019). The themes that have been found indicate the continuous evolution of global commerce due to the advancement of digital technology and creative methods of export promotion. Increasing market access and optimizing trade procedures are two significant benefits of digitization (Marcysiak & Pleskacz, 2021).

6.5.3 Inspiring women in entrepreneurship

Inspirational success stories of female entrepreneurs

The importance of female entrepreneurs as the attendees emphasized role models. They stressed how important it is for successful women to lead in business to motivate others. Research by Byrne et al. (2018) supports this idea by emphasizing the value of role models in entrepreneurship, especially for the underrepresented. Participant 5 emphasised the function of Instagram in promoting and highlighting the accomplishments of women in business, especially accounts devoted to female entrepreneurs. For entrepreneurs, social

media sites like Instagram may be valuable for connecting with others and creating a personal brand (Byrne et al., 2018). The mention of "Boss Tea in France" and the example of Rachel Kolisi on Instagram show how success stories may inspire people to launch their enterprises. These narratives encourage people to follow their dreams of becoming entrepreneurs by providing real-world examples of what is possible (Crouth, 2022).

The themes that have been found highlight how important it is for female entrepreneurs to inspire future generations of businesswomen and contribute to economic success. Genuine success stories and social media platforms can strengthen this effect.

6.5.4 Conclusion- research sub-question 3

The results of this thorough study highlight how important it is to empower and assist female entrepreneurs in the global economy. Affirmative action legislation and diversity programs are significant factors in women's advancement into leadership positions. Research highlights that the worldwide trend of encouraging gender diversity at leadership levels aligns with the global drive to empower women. Additionally, the role of financial institutions, especially banks, in assisting female entrepreneurs is consistent with institutional goals such as the World Bank and the International Finance Corporation (IFC) to help women-owned businesses access capital and engage in mentorship.

6.6 Research Sub - Question 4 (SQ 4) Discussion

How do women entrepreneurs influence the change in export trade policy?

6.6.1 Collaborative knowledge exchange

Collaboration between women entrepreneurs and policymakers

The themes found in this thesis highlight how crucial it is to encourage interaction and collaboration between female business owners and policymakers to support well-informed and beneficial trade policies. Participants underlined the importance of physical gatherings between female officials and entrepreneurs, as they may foster more fruitful dialogue and a deeper comprehension of one another's viewpoints, both of which can substantially impact policy decisions. The literature stressing the value of multi-stakeholder collaboration in policy creation is consistent with this focus on collaboration (Guimarães et al., 2021).

Participants also emphasized the need for female entrepreneurs to participate in policy debates actively and understand women's aspirations and their particular requirements for rules that support their enterprises. Studies calling for more inclusion and diversity in policy

formulation align with this emphasis on active participation in the formulation of policies (Nziku & Henry, 2020). The significance of networking and continuous contact involving female entrepreneurs and politicians was acknowledged, and recommendations for mentorship initiatives, panel discussions, and talks aimed at promoting cooperation and communication were made. These programs align with the body of knowledge about the benefits of dialogues and mentoring for increasing women's involvement in the business and policymaking sectors (Foss et al., 2018).

The notion of organizing events such as conferences, summits, and get-togethers for female company owners and policymakers to network, share ideas, and assess the efficacy of policies is similar to the idea that physical forums are essential for stakeholders to share information and perspectives (Leonidou et al., 2020). Research recognizing the advantages of multifaceted cooperation in accomplishing shared goals aligns with the emphasis on collaboration and alliances among diverse stakeholders, including government agencies, trade associations, international organizations, and women entrepreneurs' networks (Leonidou et al., 2020). In line with research showing communication as a critical component of policy effectiveness, effective stakeholder communication is seen as necessary for removing obstacles and promoting understanding (Nair, 2020).

Lastly, studies emphasizing the importance of policymakers' in-depth comprehension of the sectors they govern (Liñán et al., 2019) are consistent with the participant's recommendation that policymakers have firsthand knowledge of company operations to develop practical and effective trade policies.

6.6.2 Gender-inclusive trade targets and advocacy

Advancing gender-inclusive policy engagement and gender equality

The relevance of gender-inclusive trade policy and the actions required to advance gender equality in trade were the main topics of this category. Several participants emphasized the need to work with international groups that promote trade and gender equality, realizing that these alliances have the power to influence trade regulations that take gender views into account. This supports research that calls for international collaboration on gender equality and highlights the significance of multi-stakeholder participation (Shetty, 2021). The participants also emphasized the need to promote affirmative action across the whole policy-development procedure, from formulation to implementation. The research emphasizing the significance of policy implementation for attaining gender equity is consistent with the focus on actively putting gender-inclusive policies into reality (Ko, 2020). Participants also talked

about how important it is to concentrate on specific industries that are not currently female-focused, a pertinent area around the studies that focus on the need to encourage gender diversity in various sectors (Orser et al., 2019).

The notion of valuing and appreciating women's various functions emphasizes how important it is to recognize the variety of contributions made by people in trade and policy. This idea is consistent with studies that support acknowledging women's distinctive responsibilities and encounters (Hendriks, 2019).

Research highlighting the necessity of integrating gender in trade policy is consistent with the demand for a gender-inclusive export approach and ensuring that women do not face disadvantages. Lastly, the participants discussed the importance of giving women a higher priority when discussing trade policy because of their ability to multitask and their potential to influence change. This is consistent with research that highlights women's leadership positions and contributions to various areas (Buvinić & O'Donnell, 2019).

Gathering of quality data

The topics this thesis has found highlight the necessity of gender-inclusive policies and the significance of setting clear objectives for female participation in exports. Participants emphasized that policies had to have specific sections or processes for evaluating data and establishing goal ratios for female exporters. This request aligns with studies that support target-driven, gender-sensitive strategies to reduce gender inequality in various professions (Colaço & Watson-Grant, 2021).

The thesis's central subject emphasises the importance of gathering and examining data about women's involvement in export-related activities. The study's participants underscored the significance of statistics as an essential instrument for comprehending the elements that impact women's participation in global commerce. Through a gender-inclusive analysis, this data may highlight the inequalities and difficulties women encounter in the trade industry, which can assist in informing evidence-based policy changes (Colaço & Watson-Grant, 2021).

6.6.3 Policy and regulatory challenges in business

Policy and support

The themes found in this section of the thesis highlight how crucial financial accessibility is, especially for young, emerging businesses run by women. Study participants emphasized how important it is to have laws and programs designed to help small startups so they can compete

on an even playing field with larger companies. This topic is consistent with current research that highlights the importance of supporting developing enterprises and providing financial inclusion (Tinits & Fey, 2022)

Industry representation and policy advocacy

The main subjects this portion of the thesis explores are the problems of inadequate representation and the significance of cogent advocacy in the South African flatbread industry. One member mentioned that this industry is underrepresented, highlighting the need for a unified voice to push for industry-specific regulations and win over pertinent stakeholders. This theme is consistent with studies on the value of industry lobbying and representation in tackling sector-specific issues (Landesmann & Stöllinger, 2019),

Effective streamlining of administrative processes

Participants emphasize the necessity of lowering bureaucratic barriers, sometimes called "red tape," connected to policy changes. They support streamlined administrative processes and greater access to changes in policy (Chandra et al., 2020). The observations made by the participants on policies that seem promising on paper but present difficulties when put into practice are consistent with the conclusions drawn by Mamman et al.(2019), highlighting the significance of overcoming the gap between the creation of policies and the realities of their implementation. Furthermore, the interviewees' agreement that excessive paperwork impedes the efficient implementation of policies is consistent with the concerns expressed by Rahman et al. (2019), highlighting the need to simplify administrative processes to improve policy implementation. These results show how complex policy implementation problems may be and how crucial it is to deal with them to improve corporate operations and governance.

6.6.4 Conclusion- research sub-question 4

The themes identified in this thesis centres around administrative procedures, gender inclusion, and trade policy. In line with the benefits of multi-stakeholder engagement, participants emphasized the significance of encouraging cooperation amongst female entrepreneurs and policymakers. Research supporting diversity and inclusion in policymaking is consistent with the active involvement of female entrepreneurs in policymaking talks (Orser et al., 2019). While physical forums are essential for information exchange, networking and contact among stakeholders are related to the advantages of dialogues and mentorship in increasing women's engagement (Guimarães et al., 2021). In order to promote gender equality and economic success, they are consistent with current research that emphasizes inclusion, clear communication, data-driven policy, and efficient procedures.

7. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Introduction

To provide adequate representation of females in the export sector, the current study examined the impact of export trade rules on the globalization of women entrepreneurs. The difficulties faced by female entrepreneurs are different from those faced by male entrepreneurs, as the research explains in Chapter 1. For this reason, when formulating export trade policies, it is essential to identify these obstacles to develop a workable action plan (Akter et al., 2019).

The main objective of the research was to comprehend the influence export trade policies have on the journey of women entrepreneurs internationalising. Lastly, the emphasis is on female entrepreneurs' role in changing trade regulations. The viewpoint of female entrepreneurs would enable the researcher to obtain a deeper comprehension of these issues and broaden the body of information regarding the exporter mindset needed for effective internationalisation, which could lead to financial benefits and business expansion. The research paper's last chapter summarises the results for each research topic, emphasizing how the study adds to our understanding of exporters' mindsets and offers suggestions to policymakers for creating gender-focused export trade policies. This section also lists the study's limitations and recommends additional research to broaden the subject's scope.

7.2 Conclusion of Findings

RQ 1: How Does Export Trade Policies Influence the Internationalisation of Women-Owned Businesses?

In international trade, acknowledging the differing landscape of enterprises is crucial in creating an atmosphere that supports the globalization of women entrepreneurs. By recognizing the subtle differences in size, industry, and skills, policymakers can create adaptable frameworks that meet the diverse requirements of various businesses. A strict, unified approach to policy may unintentionally limit small businesses' potential for expansion by making it more difficult for them to adhere to legal requirements. Therefore, the need for a more flexible, responsive framework that accommodates a wide range of enterprises arises.

Ariffin et al. (2020) highlight how crucial it is to create inclusive policies and initiatives addressing the diverse requirements of female entrepreneurs in global commerce. Ensuring women's fair involvement in international commerce requires acknowledging the importance of gender parity in trade policy and highlighting women's responsibilities in economic progress. Promoting affirmative action in all areas of policy creation is consistent with the necessity of

aggressively putting gender-inclusive policies into practice, particularly in underrepresented industries. Setting defined goals for female involvement in exports and utilizing specific data evaluation procedures are crucial for policymakers. Collecting gender-inclusive data is essential for recognising disparities and obstacles women encounter in the trade industry, hence the need for evidence-based policy modifications (Ariffin et al., 2020).

SQ1: How Do Export Trade Policies Enable Women Entrepreneurs to Internationalise?

Initiatives explicitly designed to increase the potential of female entrepreneurs play a crucial role in their international expansion. These programs provide critical support essential for success by helping businesses navigate regulatory frameworks, effectively perform market research, and comprehend the dynamics of foreign markets (Agarwal & Lenka, 2018).

For female entrepreneurs looking to expand internationally, networking possibilities are made possible by facilitating collaborations with foreign organizations or trade associations. Giving them opportunities to take part in international conferences and trade shows increases their exposure and opens new markets (Ratten & Tajeddini, 2018).

Regional agents and shipping firms are invaluable intermediaries in helping female businesses navigate the intricacies of international marketplaces. Recognizing their essential function is the initial phase. Efforts to establish partnerships with these middlemen provide networks and assistance, facilitating more seamless international operations. Increasing assistance for exporting agents and wholesalers is also essential, as it recognizes their contribution to market growth and skilful navigating of regulatory environments (Juma et al., 2019).

Programs such as SheTrades Mentorship have had a significant impact. Extending and financing comparable initiatives for female entrepreneurs can provide crucial direction, materials, and mentorship. Women's particular difficulties in this field can be addressed by gender-specific mentorship programs that are prepared with the information required for international trade (Evaluation of the ITC SheTrades Initiative, 2022).

Trade shows supported by the government are essential for opening doors to global markets. Sustained backing for these shows increases a company's visibility and expands its networking prospects, particularly for women-owned enterprises. Regional development organisations' responsibilities are strengthened by facilitating local businesses' access to global markets and fostering economic growth and expansion (Gerschewski et al., 2020a).

SQ2: How do export trade policies disable women entrepreneurs from internationalising?

It is essential to comprehend the resource limitations that small businesses encounter. These companies frequently have few resources, forcing them to take reactive compliance procedures to stay compliant. Therefore, policymakers are responsible for creating regulations that support compliance without unduly burdening these smaller businesses. It makes sense to simplify export trade laws, especially for specialized or one-of-a-kind goods. For female entrepreneurs, simplification lowers obstacles and improves market access, facilitating the smoother worldwide distribution of their goods (González & Sorescu, 2019).

In global marketplaces, small enterprises need help with challenges such as undervaluation and complexity. Comprehending regional networks, establishing strategic alliances, and appreciating cultural subtleties become critical for success. Managing these challenges requires persistent involvement to bridge linguistic and cultural differences. Complex issues arise from the interaction between trade policy and cultural norms. Overcoming these obstacles requires sophisticated strategies and adaptations for various cultural contexts. It is essential to receive ongoing training and to keep current on trade regulations and industry developments (Uygur et al., 2016).

Safari and Saleh (2019) state that for international trade contacts to be successful, comprehensive mentoring encompassing a range of export-related topics, particularly financial management, is essential. Overcoming deeply embedded barriers needs comprehensive approaches beyond simple policy changes. Establishing an inclusive workplace requires identifying and addressing structural gender disparities. Efficient export activities are impeded by inadequate finance. Encouraging financial resources and providing initial funding can significantly lower the barriers that enhance global market accessibility (Saleh et al., 2021).

Complicated bureaucracy makes it difficult to implement policies. Extensive educational initiatives and their simplification enhance trade policy comprehension and application. The diverse obstacles female entrepreneurs encounter in international trade necessitate comprehensive reform initiatives. Trade agreements and policies provide advantages, but more is needed to be more comprehensive to handle complicated problems. Policy complexity, budget deficits, poor competency, cultural issues, and gender inequities all still exist. Implementing a comprehensive plan that includes systemic reforms, policy improvements, cultural changes, and mentorship is necessary. It takes coordinated efforts to

remove prejudices and provide women the confidence to take advantage of various possibilities if we want to see more women involved in international trade. Creating an equitable and diverse international business environment is still essential to the success of female entrepreneurs (Onjewu et al., 2023).

SQ 3: How do Women Entrepreneurs Navigate Export Trade Policy Challenges?

Promoting extensive market research and preparedness evaluations before entering new markets is essential. Encouraging assistance in navigating intricate situations and adjusting to new business settings guarantees a safer and more knowledgeable debut into a global marketplace role (Felzensztein et al., 2019).

It is critical to recognize trade agreements' role in simplifying export procedures. Trade agreements assist all parties involved when a balance is struck between preserving local enterprises' viability and maintaining global competitiveness. Trade rules and regulations can be made simpler to expedite customs procedures, lessen administrative costs, and improve the efficiency of international trade (Rodrik, 2018).

These suggestions emphasize the necessity of a thorough and all-encompassing strategy to support female entrepreneurs in global trade. Various strategies, including mentoring, specialized programs, improved market access, customized training, and strategic legislative initiatives, promote diversity, equity, and long-term economic development. In order to create an atmosphere in which women may succeed as international entrepreneurs, policymakers are essential. Policymakers need to replicate successful initiatives from countries designed to support women-owned enterprises. These programs include diversity efforts and leadership development plans, which are essential for developing female entrepreneurs' confidence and talents (Elam et al., 2019).

Financial institutions should be encouraged to actively assist female entrepreneurs as this aligns with international initiatives supported by institutions such as the World Bank and AfriExim Bank. Legislators need to push for readily available funding, coaching, and direction to lessen the financial obstacles women in business encounter (Ngidi et al., 2018).

Promoting thorough screening and security via chambers of commerce is crucial to guaranteeing trustworthy commercial alliances, especially in cross-border trade situations. Promoting proactive actions through foreign embassies to handle shipping duty and customs-related issues can significantly reduce trade barriers and costs (Kahiya & Butler, 2021).

SQ 4: How do women entrepreneurs influence change in export trade policies?

It is equally important to promote policies and activities that are gender neutral. A fairer environment is possible by reducing gender stereotypes and promoting inclusiveness in the business ecosystem. Active participation in international commerce is further encouraged by providing subsidies or support programs for female-led businesses prioritising export preparedness. It is critical to support further study on the complexities of export policies and how they affect female entrepreneurship. The knowledge gained from this study may help with policy adaptation, allowing frameworks to be continuously improved. Hence, they continue to assist women entrepreneurs in their worldwide ventures while remaining flexible and successful. Essentially, policymakers can create an environment that is more favourable for the international success of women entrepreneurs by acknowledging the diversity of businesses, streamlining regulations, educating the public, developing capacities, encouraging inclusivity, cultivating partnerships, and continuously modifying policies based on research-driven insights (Agarwal & Lenka, 2018; Foss et al., 2018; Ghose et al., 2019)

The participants' focus was on encouraging in-person meetings among female entrepreneurs and policymakers to facilitate conversation, which is essential for developing well-informed and effective trade policies. This is consistent with research emphasising the importance of varied viewpoints in policymaking and supporting collaboration among stakeholders in policy creation (Nair, 2020). Working with international organizations, such as the International Trade Centre and the World Bank, and business schools, such as the Gordon Institute of Business Science (GIBS), that prioritise trade and gender equality is essential to advancing gender-inclusive policy. This partnership can impact trade laws that take gender equality into account. Promoting affirmative action in all areas of policy creation is consistent with the necessity of aggressively putting gender-inclusive policies into practice, particularly in underrepresented industries. Setting defined goals for female involvement in exports and utilizing specific data evaluation procedures are crucial for policymakers (Mintrom & Thomas, 2018)

7.3 Contribution of the Study

7.3.1 Theoretical contribution

The study's theoretical contributions are essential because they broaden our understanding of how export trade regulations affect female entrepreneurs. The study lays the groundwork for more research on this subject. In particular, the insight for influencing legislators to draft export trade laws that are inclusive of all genders by female entrepreneurs. There is great theoretical benefit in continuing to promote study into the intricacies of export laws and how they affect female entrepreneurs. The knowledge gathered from these kinds of studies

provides concrete recommendations for policy changes, guaranteeing continuous enhancements to frameworks that assist female entrepreneurs worldwide.

7.3.2 Practical implications

The research findings have practical consequences that highlight the need for concrete measures to support gender-neutral policies and practices in the corporate sector. In order to promote greater involvement by women in international trade, it is imperative to aggressively reduce gender stereotypes and promote inclusion to create a more equitable environment. Furthermore, offering grants or other forms of assistance targeted at improving export preparedness to companies run by women acts as a powerful motivator for their engagement with global markets.

This research can assist policymakers recognise the diversity of businesses, simplify regulations, educate stakeholders, build capacities, promote inclusivity, foster partnerships, and continuously refine policies based on insights from research to create an environment better suited for the global achievement of women entrepreneurs.

7.4 Recommendations to Policymakers and Stakeholders

Adaptable Policy Frameworks for Diversification:

Creating flexible policy frameworks that address the diverse landscapes of firms should be a top priority for policymakers.

Gender-Parity-Focused Inclusive Policy Formulation: To identify and address hurdles experienced by women in the trade industry, policymakers should proactively examine gender-specific policy goals, gather gender-inclusive data, and utilize assessment procedures. These actions will support evidence-based changes to create an atmosphere supporting women entrepreneurs' global success.

Networking opportunities and supportive initiatives: Sustained assistance via focused programs and networking opportunities is crucial to facilitating the global growth of female entrepreneurs. Programs designed specifically for female entrepreneurs should offer essential assistance, helping companies manoeuvre through legal structures, carry out efficient market research, and understand the intricacies of international markets.

Improved Trade Regulations and Strategic Alliances:

In order to lower barriers and increase access to markets for female entrepreneurs, it is critical to simplify export trade laws, particularly as they relate to specialized commodities. It is recommended that policymakers support continuous education to guarantee that entrepreneurs remain current with trade laws and cultural shifts. Furthermore, thorough coaching that addresses structural gender inequities and covers financial management will significantly improve women entrepreneurs' ability to surmount ingrained obstacles in global commerce. By creating digital marketplaces and platforms, trade processes may be streamlined, resulting in lower costs and higher trade volumes.

Promotion of Reputable Partnerships and Policy Reforms:

It is essential, especially in the case of cross-border commerce, to promote reliable commercial alliances via careful screening and security precautions. In order to successfully lower trade barriers, policymakers must support proactive actions handled by foreign embassies to address shipment duty and customs-related concerns. Lawmakers should also support policies that emulate the practical policies of nations that assist women-owned businesses. This covers initiatives promoting diversity, programs for developing leaders, and easily accessible funding. Financial barriers will be removed by working with financial institutions supporting global programs that assist female entrepreneurs. This will create a diversified and equal worldwide business climate favourable to the development of female entrepreneurs. To facilitate conversation, meetings between female entrepreneurs and legislators are essential for developing well-informed and effective trade policies. This is consistent with research emphasising the importance of varied viewpoints in policymaking and supporting collaboration among stakeholders in policy creation. Working with international organisations prioritising trade and gender equality is essential to advancing gender-inclusive policy.

7.5 Limitations of the Study

This study's possible lack of generalizability due to the research's scope and sample size is one of its limitations. The fact that the study was restricted to South Africa limited the findings' generalizability to other parts of the world. It is possible that a limited sample size will not accurately reflect the variety of women-led companies involved in global commerce. Because of this, the conclusions from this study may not be generally relevant to other sectors or geographical areas. Hence, care must be used when extending these results to other contexts.

Potential biases in the gathering and processing the data might be the source of another restriction. The research may have been biased or inaccurate due to subjective interpretations or data collection from the SheTrades South Africa database. Furthermore, the methodology omitted essential points of view or favoured some points of view, which affected the findings' impartiality and comprehensiveness. Any biases in the data collection or analysis procedures might impact the validity and dependability of the study's results.

The study may encounter constraints regarding the dynamic character of trade policies and their temporal importance. The study's results may represent the conditions of practices and policies at a particular time; however, these conditions may have changed or evolved after the study was finished. Furthermore, trade policies are frequently revised and modified in response to economic, geopolitical, or legislative developments, which might make the results outdated or less relevant in the present situation. The study's conclusions may thus no longer apply to the quickly changing field of international trade policy.

Determining a causal relationship or relationship between international trade policies and the globalization of women entrepreneurs may provide some inherent obstacles. Although the study looks at how policies affect company growth, it may not be easy to pinpoint a precise policy's cause and effect link with entrepreneurial results. It is difficult to credit results from international trade policies alone since several external factors, including market dynamics, cultural quirks, and economic conditions, may influence corporate internationalisation simultaneously. As such, the study may need help in conclusively determining the exact influence of regulations on the internationalisation endeavours of female businesses.

7.6 Recommendations for Future Research

In order to understand how different export trade regulations affect the internationalisation of women-owned firms across various economic and cultural contexts, future research should conduct an extended cross-country comparative investigation. This comparison method will better understand how sound policies work in various geographical areas. It must cover various nations with political systems, economic setups, and cultural standards. By analysing female entrepreneurs' experiences across many nations, scholars can ascertain the complex effects of export trade regulations and pinpoint optimal methodologies. This empowers policymakers to customize approaches that facilitate the international development of women-owned businesses.

It would be highly beneficial to carry out a long-term study focusing on how export trade regulations for female entrepreneurs are implemented and change over time. Such research ought to monitor policy modifications, their execution, and their consequences on the internationalisation trips of women-owned enterprises. Through tracking policy trajectories across time, scholars can evaluate policies' effectiveness, flexibility, and long-term viability. This long-term viewpoint will provide insights into how policy results have changed, emphasizing achievements, difficulties, and areas needing development. It will help legislators create flexible frameworks that adapt to the changing demands of female business owners involved in global commerce.

Subsequent research endeavours should assess the efficaciousness and expediency of diverse assistance initiatives designed to promote the globalization of female entrepreneurs. A wide range of activities, including networking events, financial aid programs, mentorship programs, and skill-building efforts specifically designed for women involved in international commerce, should be included in this assessment. Researchers may use mixed-method techniques to evaluate the effects of these initiatives on the development of women entrepreneurs' ability, their access to markets, and their overall performance in international trade. Through an evaluation of the program's results, which includes strengths, shortcomings, and opportunities for improvement, academics may provide policymakers with information that will help them create more focused and practical support programs for women in international business.

7.7 Conclusion

A sophisticated approach to policy is necessary to address the influence of export trade rules on the international reach of women-owned enterprises in South Africa. In order to foster an atmosphere that supports the growth of female entrepreneurs, it is imperative to acknowledge the wide range of business ventures. Policies that prioritize gender equity in international trade and acknowledge the vital part that women play in advancing the economy are essential. It is critical to support female entrepreneurs via networking, streamlined trade laws, business alliances, active mentorship programs, and increased market accessibility. To successfully support the internationalisation of women-owned businesses in South Africa, policymakers, international organizations, and financial organizations must work together to create a more diverse and equitable business environment. This can be achieved through ongoing policy reforms, systemic changes, and cooperative efforts.

8. REFERENCE

- Abendin, S., Pingfang, D., & Nkukpornu, E. (2022). Bilateral trade in West Africa: Does digitalization matter? *The International Trade Journal*, 36(6), 477-501.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/08853908.2021.2015488>
- Abou-Moghli, A., & Al-Abdallah, G. (2019). A Systematic Review of Women Entrepreneurs Opportunities And Challenges In Saudi Arabia. *Journal of Entrepreneurship Education*, 22(6), 1-14. <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/systematic-review-women-entrepreneurs/docview/2424960796/se-2>
- Acharya, R., Alamo, O., Al-Battashi, S., Boghossian, A., Ghei, N., Herrera, T., Jackson, L., Kask, U., Locatelli, C., Marceau, G., Motoc, I., Muller, A., Neufeld, N., Padilla, S., Leon, J., Perantakou, S., Sporysheva, N., & Wolff, C. (2019). Trade and Women—Opportunities for Women in the Framework of the World Trade Organization. *Journal of International Economic Law*, Volume 22, Issue 3, September 2019, Pages 323–354, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jiel/jgz023>, 22(3), 323 - 354. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jiel/jgz023>
- Acikdilli, G., Mintu-Wimsatt, A., Kara, A., & Spillan, J. E. (2020). Export market orientation, marketing capabilities and export performance of SMEs in an emerging market: A resource-based approach. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, 30(4), 526-541.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10696679.2020.1809461>
- Agarwal, S., Lenka, U., Singh, K., Agrawal, V., & Agrawal, A. M. (2020). A qualitative approach towards crucial factors for sustainable development of women social entrepreneurship: Indian cases. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 274, 123135.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2020.123135>
- Agarwal, S., & Lenka, U. (2018). Why research is needed in women entrepreneurship in India: A viewpoint. *International Journal of Social Economics*, 45(7), 1042-1057.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/ijse-07-2017-0298>

- Ahmed, F. U., & Brennan, L. (2019). An institution-based view of firms' early internationalisation. *International Marketing Review*, 36(6), 911-954. <https://doi.org/10.1108/imr-03-2018-0108>
- Ahmetaj, B., Kruja, A. D., & Hysa, E. (2023). Women entrepreneurship: Challenges and perspectives of an emerging economy. *Administrative Sciences*, 13(4), 111. <https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci13040111>
- Aissatou, D., & Ruben, P. (2019). AfCFTA for more prosperity. *International Trade Forum*, 2019(3), 38-40. <https://doi.org/10.18356/15645304-2019-3-12>
- Akerman, A. (2018). A theory on the role of wholesalers in international trade based on economies of scope. *Canadian Journal of Economics/Revue canadienne d'économique*, 51(1), 156-185. <https://doi.org/10.1111/caje.12319>
- Akter, M., Rahman, M., & Radicic, D. (2019). Women entrepreneurship in international trade: Bridging the gap by bringing feminist theories into entrepreneurship and internationalisation theories. *Sustainability*, 11(22), 6230. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su11226230>
- Akter, M., Rahman, M., & Radicic, D. (2022). Gender-aware framework in international entrepreneurship: How far developed?—A systematic literature review. *Sustainability*, 14(22), 15326. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su142215326>
- Akter, M., Akter, S., Rahman, M., & Priporas, C. V. (2023). Mapping the barriers to socio-economic freedom in internationalisation of women-owned SMEs: Evidence from a developing country. *Journal of International Management*, 101067. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intman.2023.101067>
- Aladejebi, O. (2020). 21st century challenges confronting women entrepreneurs in Southwest Nigeria. *Archives of Business Research*, 8(3), 261-280. <https://doi.org/10.14738/abr.83.8018>
- Alase, A. (2017). The interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA): A guide to a good qualitative research approach. *International Journal of Education and Literacy Studies*, 5(2), 9. <https://doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijels.v.5n.2p.9>

- Alharahsheh, H. H., & Pius, A. (2020). A Review of key paradigms: positivism VS interpretivism. *Global Academic Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2(3), 39 - 43.
https://gajrc.com/media/articles/GAJHSS_23_39-43_VMGJbOK.pdf
- Al-Qahtani, M., Fekih Zguir, M., Al-Fagih, L., & Koç, M. (2022). Women entrepreneurship for sustainability: Investigations on status, challenges, drivers, and potentials in Qatar. *Sustainability*, 14(7), 4091. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su14074091>
- Altuzarra, A., Gálvez-Gálvez, C., & González-Flores, A. (2021). Is gender inequality a barrier to economic growth? A panel data analysis of developing countries. *Sustainability*, 13(1), 367.
<https://doi.org/10.3390/su13010367>
- Andreas, B., Fernie, S., & Dainty, A. (2021). Understanding policy and change: Using a political economy analysis framework. *Construction Management and Economics*, 40(11-12), 865-883. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01446193.2021.2015795>
- Anggadwita, G., & Indarti, N. (2023). Women entrepreneurship in the internationalisation of SMEs: A bibliometric analysis for future research directions. *European Business Review*, 35(5), 763-796. <https://doi.org/10.1108/eb-01-2023-0006>
- Arabiyat, T. S., Mdanat, M., Haffar, M., Ghoneim, A., & Arabiyat, O. (2019). The influence of institutional and conducive aspects on entrepreneurial innovation. *Journal of Enterprise Information Management*, 32(3), 366-389. <https://doi.org/10.1108/jeim-07-2018-0165>
- Ariffin, A., Baqutayan, S., & Mahdzir, A. (2020). *Enhancing Women Entrepreneurship Development Framework: Policy & Institution Gap and Challenges in the Case of Malaysia*, 6(2).
<https://jostip.utm.my/index.php/jostip/article/view/58>
- Arshad, M., Ahmad, m., Ali, M., Khan, W., & Arshad, M. (2020). The role of government business support services and absorptive capacity on smes performance. *International Journal of Advanced Science and Technology*, 29(3). www.researchgate.net/profile/Waris-Khan-4/publication/340088932_THE_ROLE_OF_GOVERNMENT_BUSINESS_SUPPORT_SERVICES_A

[ND ABSORPTIVE CAPACITY ON SMES PERFORMANCE/links/5e81b358299bf1a91b8a0b73/
THE-ROLE-OF-GOVERNMENT-BUSINESS-SUPPORT-SERVICES-AND-ABSORPTIVE-CAPACITY-
ON-SMES-PERFORMANCE.pdf](#)

- Athanasopoulou, A., Moss-Cowan, A., Smets, M., & Morris, T. (2017). Claiming the corner office: Female CEO careers and implications for leadership development. *Human Resource Management, 57*(2), 617-639. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hrm.21887>
- Baccini, L. (2021). The economics and politics of preferential trade agreements. *Annual Review of Political Science, 22*, 75 -92. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198793519.013.10>
- Bahri, A. (2020). Women at the frontline of COVID-19: Can gender mainstreaming in free trade agreements help? *Journal of International Economic Law, 23*(3), 563-582. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jiel/jgaa023>
- Beck, T., Pamuk, H., & Uras, B. R. (2017). Entrepreneurial saving practices and reinvestment: Theory and evidence. *Review of Development Economics, 21*(4), 1205-1228. <https://doi.org/10.1111/rode.12300>
- Bekteshi, S. Z. (2019). The impact of education and training on export performance of SMEs. *International Journal of Research in Business and Social Science (2147- 4478), 8*(6), 272-277. <https://doi.org/10.20525/ijrbs.v8i6.565>
- Beugelsdijk, S., Kostova, T., Kunst, V. E., Spadafora, E., & Van Essen, M. (2017). Cultural distance and firm internationalisation: A meta-analytical review and theoretical implications. *Journal of Management, 44*(1), 89-130. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206317729027>
- Blackburne, G. D., & Buckley, P. J. (2019). The international business incubator as a foreign market entry mode. *Long Range Planning, 52*(1), 32-50. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lrp.2017.10.005>
- Boateng, S., & Poku, K. O. (2019). Accessing finance among women-owned small businesses: Evidence from lower Manya Krobo municipality, Ghana. *Journal of Global Entrepreneurship Research, 9*(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40497-018-0128-0>

- Boso, N., Adeleye, I., Ibeh, K., & Chizema, A. (2018). The internationalisation of African firms: Opportunities, challenges, and risks. *Thunderbird International Business Review*, 61(1), 5-12. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tie.21977>
- Breuillot, A. (2021). Exploring the role of diversity management during early internationalising firms' internationalisation process. *Management International Review*, 61(2), 125-156. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11575-021-00440-3>
- Bronauer, J., & Yoon, J. (2018). *REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN SADC: TAKING STOCK AND LOOKING AHEAD* (25). South African Institute of International Affairs. https://africaportal.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/saia_report-25_Bronnauer-Yoon_20181102.pdf
- Brush, C., Edelman, L. F., Manolova, T., & Welter, F. (2018). A gendered look at entrepreneurship ecosystems. *Small Business Economics*, 53(2), 393-408. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11187-018-9992-9>
- Bullough, A., Guelich, U., Manolova, T. S., & Schjoedt, L. (2021). Women's entrepreneurship and culture: Gender role expectations and identities, societal culture, and the entrepreneurial environment. *Small Business Economics*, 58(2), 985-996. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11187-020-00429-6>
- Buvinić, M., & O'Donnell, M. (2019). Gender matters in economic empowerment interventions: A research review. *The World Bank Research Observer*, 34(2), 309-346. <https://doi.org/10.1093/wbro/lky004>
- Byrne, J., Fattoum, S., & Diaz Garcia, M. C. (2018). Role Models and Women Entrepreneurs: Entrepreneurial Superwoman Has Her Say. *Journal of Small Business Management*, 57(1), 154-184. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jsbm.12426>

- Caldara, D., Iacoviello, M., Molligo, P., Prestipino, A., & Raffo, A. (2020). The economic effects of trade policy uncertainty. *Journal Of Monetary Economics*, 109, 38-59.
https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0304393219302004?casa_token=X-Dcgd80IA8AAAAA:uDX9Zkx31TXv_8eS0Zvnn31Hf4yIOMy9R
- Catanzaro, A., & Teyssier, C. (2020). Export promotion programs, export capabilities, and risk management practices of internationalised SMEs. *Small Business Economics*, 57(3), 1479-1503. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11187-020-00358-4>
- Chandra, Y., & Shang, L. (2019). Inductive coding. *Qualitative Research Using R: A Systematic Approach*, 91-106. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-3170-1_8
- Chandra, A., Paul, J., & Chavan, M. (2020). Internationalisation barriers of SMEs from developing countries: A review and research agenda. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research*, 26(6), 1281-1310. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ijebr-03-2020-0167>
- Che Omar, A. R., Ishak, S., & Jusoh, M. A. (2020). The impact of COVID-19 movement control order on SMEs' businesses and survival strategies. *Malaysian Journal of Society and Space*, 16(2). <https://doi.org/10.17576/geo-2020-1602-11>
- Cho, Y., Park, J., Han, S. J., Sung, M., & Park, C. (2020). Women entrepreneurs in South Korea: Motivations, challenges and career success. *European Journal of Training and Development*, 45(2/3), 97-119. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ejtd-03-2020-0039>
- Cho, J., & Lee, J. (2018). Internationalisation and performance of Korean SMEs: The moderating role of competitive strategy. *Asian Business & Management*, 17(2), 140-166.
<https://doi.org/10.1057/s41291-018-0036-8>
- Clarke, H. M. (2020). Gender stereotypes and gender-typed work. *Handbook of Labor, Human Resources and Population Economics*, 1-23.
- Colaço, R., & Watson-Grant, S. (2021). A global call to action for gender-inclusive data collection and use. <https://doi.org/10.3768/rtipress.2021.pb.0026.2112>

- Crouth, G. (2022, December 18). *Popular SA brand BOS spills the tea about going big in the UK*. Daily Maverick. <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2022-12-18-popular-sa-brand-bos-spills-the-tea-about-going-big-in-the-uk/>
- Cuervo-Cazurra, A., Luo, Y., Ramamurti, R., & Ang, S. H. (2018). The impact of the home country on internationalisation. *Journal of World Business*, 53(5), 593-604. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jwb.2018.06.002>
- Dean, H., Larsen, G., Ford, J., & Akram, M. (2019). Female entrepreneurship and the Metanarrative of economic growth: A critical review of underlying assumptions. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 21(1), 24-49. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijmr.12173>
- Doan, T. N., & Xing, Y. (2018). Trade efficiency, free trade agreements and rules of origin. *Journal of Asian Economics*, 55, 33-41. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.asieco.2017.12.007>
- Durnová, A. P., & Weible, C. M. (2020). Tempest in a teapot? Toward new collaborations between mainstream policy process studies and interpretive policy studies. *Policy Sciences*, 53(3), 571-588. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11077-020-09387-y>
- Elam, A., Brush, C., Greene, P., Baumer, B., Dean, M., & Heavlow, R. (2019). *Women's Entrepreneurship Report 2018/2019*. Smith College. https://scholarworks.smith.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1003&context=conway_research
[h](#)
- Etemad, H. (2018). The essence of entrepreneurial internationalisation: Managing the dynamic complexity of interactive relationship and reflective adaptations. *Journal of International Entrepreneurship*, 16(3), 325-337. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10843-018-0237-4>
- Evaluation of the ITC SheTrades Initiative*. (2022). International Trade Centre. <https://intracen.org/sites/default/files/inline-files/SheTrades%20Evaluation%20Report.pdf>

- Fang, S., Goh, C., Roberts, M., Xu, L. C., & Zeufack, A. (2022). Female entrepreneurs and productivity around the world: Rule of law, network, culture, and gender equality. *World Development*, 154, 105846. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2022.105846>
- Fazalbhoy, S., & Naik, A. (2019). Development and internationalisation of women's enterprises: Benchmarking Indian policies with OECD policies. *Entrepreneurship and Development in South Asia: Longitudinal Narratives*, 305-321. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-6298-8_14
- Felzensztein, C., Deans, K. R., & Dana, L. (2019). Small firms in regional clusters: Local networks and internationalisation in the southern hemisphere. *Journal of Small Business Management*, 57(2), 496-516. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jsbm.12388>
- Ferreira, L., Steenkamp, E., & Rossouw, R. (2022). Targeting untapped intra-regional trade opportunities for trade integration in Africa. *Journal of Economic and Financial Sciences*, 15(1). <https://doi.org/10.4102/jef.v15i1.779>
- Fornes, G., & Cardoza, G. (2018). Internationalisation of Chinese SMEs: The perception of disadvantages of foreignness. *Emerging Markets Finance and Trade*, 55(9), 2086-2105. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1540496x.2018.1518218>
- Foss, L., Henry, C., Ahl, H., & Mikalsen, G. H. (2018). Women's entrepreneurship policy research: A 30-year review of the evidence. *Small Business Economics*, 53(2), 409-429. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11187-018-9993-8>
- Fregidou-Malama, M., Chowdhury, E. H., & Hyder, A. S. (2022). International marketing strategy of emerging market firms: The case of Bangladesh. *Journal of Asia Business Studies*, 17(4), 804-823. <https://doi.org/10.1108/jabs-12-2021-0504>
- Fung, F., Wang, H., & Menon, S. (2018). Food safety in the 21st century. *Biomedical Journal*, 41. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2319417017304055>

- Game, S. K., Ekanayake, E., Abeyrathne, G., Prasanna, R., Jayasundara, J., & Rajapakse, P. (2020). A review of global challenges and survival strategies of small and medium enterprises (SMEs). *Economies*, 8(4), 79. <https://doi.org/10.3390/economies8040079>
- Gawel, A., & Mińska-Struzik, E. (2023). The digitalisation as gender equaliser? The import and export of digitally delivered services in shaping female entrepreneurship in European countries. *International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ijge-08-2022-0141>
- Gender Aware Trade Policy. (2017). World Trade Organization - Global trade. https://www.wto.org/english/news_e/news17_e/dgra_21jun17_e.pdf
- Gerschewski, S., Evers, N., Nguyen, A. T., & Froese, F. J. (2020a). Trade shows and SME internationalisation: Networking for performance. *Management International Review*, 60(4), 573-595. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11575-020-00421-y>
- Gerschewski, S., Scott-Kennel, J., & Rose, E. L. (2020b). Ready to export? The role of export readiness for superior export performance of small and medium-sized enterprises. *The World Economy*, 43(5), 1253-1276. <https://doi.org/10.1111/twec.12928>
- Ghouse, S. M., McElwee, G., & Durrah, O. (2019). Entrepreneurial success of cottage-based women entrepreneurs in Oman. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research*, 25(3), 480-498. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ijebr-10-2018-0691>
- Gizaw, Z. (2019). Public health risks related to food safety issues in the food market: A systematic literature review. *Environmental Health and Preventive Medicine*, 24(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12199-019-0825-5>
- Global entrepreneurship monitor releases new research highlighting women's entrepreneurship trends across the globe. (2022). GEM Global Entrepreneurship Monitor. <https://www.gemconsortium.org/reports/womens-entrepreneurship>

- González, J. L., & Sorescu, S. (2019). Helping SMEs internationalise through trade facilitation. *OECD Trade Policy Papers*. <https://doi.org/10.1787/2050e6b0-en>
- Gray, L., Wong-Wylie, G., Rempel, G., & Cook, K. (2020). Expanding qualitative research interviewing strategies: Zoom video communications. *The Qualitative Report*.
<https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2020.4212>
- Guest, G., Namey, E., & Chen, M. (2020). A simple method to assess and report thematic saturation in qualitative research. *PLOS ONE*, 15(5), e0232076.
<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0232076>
- Guimarães, L. G., Blanchet, P., & Cimon, Y. (2021). Collaboration among small and medium-sized enterprises as part of internationalisation: A systematic review. *Administrative Sciences*, 11(4), 153. <https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci11040153>
- Gundlach, S., & Sammartino, A. (2019). Are international small business owners really that different? *Cross Cultural & Strategic Management*, 27(1), 92-117. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ccsm-08-2018-0130>
- Gupta, N., & Mirchandani, A. (2018). Investigating entrepreneurial success factors of women-owned SMEs in UAE. *Management Decision*, 56(1), 219-232. <https://doi.org/10.1108/md-04-2017-0411>
- Guzman, J., & Kacperczyk, A. (2018). Gender gap in entrepreneurship.
<https://doi.org/10.31235/osf.io/z5he2>
- Halim, D., Ubfal, D., & Wangchuk, R. (2020). GIL top policy lessons on empowering women entrepreneurs. *GENDER INNOVATION LAB FEDERATION EVIDENCE SERIES*.
<https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099533401252340173/pdf/IDU073d63b3f0875d04f1f0af210493287698a4f.pdf>
- Hannah, E., Roberts, A., & Trommer, S. (2021). Towards a feminist global trade politics. *Reglobalization*, 70-85. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003121350-5>

- Harrison, J., Barbu, M., Campling, L., Richardson, B., & Smith, A. (2018). Governing labour standards through free trade agreements: Limits of the European Union's trade and sustainable development chapters. *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, 57(2), 260-277.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/jcms.12715>
- Haven, T., & Van Grootel, L. (2019). Preregistering qualitative research. *Accountability in Research*, 26(3), 229-244. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08989621.2019.1580147>
- Hayashi, P., Abib, G., & Hoppen, N. (2019). Validity in qualitative research: A processual approach. *The Qualitative Report*. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2019.3443>
- Hendriks, S. (2019). The role of financial inclusion in driving women's economic empowerment. *Development in Practice*, 29(8), 1029-1038.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09614524.2019.1660308>
- Herrington, M., & Coduras, A. (2019). The national entrepreneurship framework conditions in sub-Saharan Africa: A comparative study of GEM data/National expert surveys for South Africa, Angola, Mozambique and Madagascar. *Journal of Global Entrepreneurship Research*, 9(1).
<https://doi.org/10.1186/s40497-019-0183-1>
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-57365-6_21-1
- Hussain, S. (2022). Women entrepreneurs in emerging markets. *International Entrepreneurship in Emerging Markets*, 151-170. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003218357-10>
- Irshaidat, R. (2019). Interpretivism vs. positivism in political marketing research. *Journal of Political Marketing*, 21(2), 126-160. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15377857.2019.1624286>
- Islam, S., & Sarkar, P. (2023). Contribution of the establishment of Uttara Export Processing Zones to the Social Development of the Nilphamari District and Surrounding Areas in Bangladesh. *Middle East Journal of Business*, 18(1), 16-34.
www.mejb.com/upgrade_flash/March%202023/Uttara%20Export%20Processing%20Zones.pdf

- Jin, B., & Cho, H. J. (2018). Examining the role of international entrepreneurial orientation, domestic market competition, and technological and marketing capabilities on SME's export performance. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, 33(5), 585-598.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/jbim-02-2017-0043>
- Johnson, J. L., Adkins, D., & Chauvin, S. (2019). A review of the quality indicators of rigor in qualitative research. *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education*, 84(1), 7120.
<https://doi.org/10.5688/ajpe7120>
- Juma, H., Shaalan, K., & Kamel, I. (2019). A survey on using blockchain in trade supply chain solutions. *IEEE Access*, 7, 184115-184132. <https://doi.org/10.1109/access.2019.2960542>
- Kahiya, E. T., & Butler, P. (2021). "Forget it, let's go with a handshake": Contracting practices of exporting small to medium size enterprises (SMEs). *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, 37(3), 549-563. <https://doi.org/10.1108/jbim-05-2020-0246>
- Kalafsky, R. V., & Raymond, M. P. (2023). Mitigating export-related distance via temporary learning environments: Results from Nova Scotia. *Geo Journal*, 88(5), 5595-5607.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10708-023-10937-z>
- Kamberidou, I. (2020). "Distinguished" women entrepreneurs in the digital economy and the multitasking whirlpool. *Journal of Innovation and Entrepreneurship*, 9(1).
<https://doi.org/10.1186/s13731-020-0114-y>
- Kaplinsky, R., & Morris, M. (2019). Trade and industrialisation in Africa: SMEs, manufacturing and cluster dynamics. *Journal of African Trade*. <https://doi.org/10.2991/jat.k.190812.001>
- Ko, B. (2020). Analysis of gender chapters in five free trade agreements and its lessons for Korea. *Journal of Korea Trade*, 24(6), 82-100. <https://doi.org/10.35611/jkt.2020.24.6.82>
- Korinek, J., & Van Lieshout, E. (2023). Women entrepreneurs and international trade. *Joining Forces for Gender Equality*. <https://doi.org/10.1787/b4a87738-en>

- Kuratko, D. F., Neubert, E., & Marvel, M. R. (2021). Insights on the mentorship and coachability of entrepreneurs. *Business Horizons*, 64(2), 199-209.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2020.11.001>
- Landesmann, M. A., & Stöllinger, R. (2019). Structural change, trade and global production networks: An 'appropriate industrial policy' for peripheral and catching-up economies. *Structural Change and Economic Dynamics*, 48, 7-23. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.strueco.2018.04.001>
- Larkin, M., Shaw, R., & Flowers, P. (2018). Multiperspectival designs and processes in interpretative phenomenological analysis research. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 16(2), 182-198.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2018.1540655>
- Leonidou, E., Christofi, M., Vrontis, D., & Thrassou, A. (2020). An integrative framework of stakeholder engagement for innovation management and entrepreneurship development. *Journal of Business Research*, 119, 245-258. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2018.11.054>
- Lester, J. N., Cho, Y., & Lochmiller, C. R. (2020). Learning to do qualitative data analysis: A starting point. *Human Resource Development Review*, 19(1), 94-106.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1534484320903890>
- Li, C., Bilimoria, D., Wang, Y., & Guo, X. (2020a). Gender role characteristics and entrepreneurial self-efficacy: A comparative study of female and male entrepreneurs in China. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.585803>
- Li, C., Murad, M., Shahzad, F., Khan, M. A., Ashraf, S. F., & Dogbe, C. S. (2020b). Entrepreneurial passion to entrepreneurial behavior: Role of entrepreneurial alertness, entrepreneurial self-efficacy and proactive personality. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11.
<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.01611>
- Linabary, J. R., Corple, D. J., & Cooky, C. (2020). Of wine and whiteboards: Enacting feminist reflexivity in collaborative research. *Qualitative Research*, 21(5), 719-735.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794120946988>

- Liñán, F., Paul, J., & Fayolle, A. (2019). SMEs and entrepreneurship in the era of globalization: Advances and theoretical approaches. *Small Business Economics*, 55(3), 695-703.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11187-019-00180-7>
- Logsdon, J. M., & Wood, D. J. (2002). Business citizenship: From domestic to global level of analysis. *Business Ethics Quarterly*, 12(2), 155-187. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3857809>
- Madison, K., Moore, C. B., Daspit, J. J., & Nabisaalu, J. K. (2022). The influence of women on SME innovation in emerging markets. *Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal*, 16(2), 281-313.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/sej.1422>
- Majid, U. (2018). Research fundamentals: Study design, population, and sample size. Undergraduate Research in Natural and Clinical Science and Technology (URNCST) Journal, 2(1), 1-7.
<https://doi.org/10.26685/urncst.16>
- Malca, O., Peña-Vinces, J., & Acedo, F. J. (2019). Export promotion programmes as export performance catalysts for SMEs: Insights from an emerging economy. *Small Business Economics*, 55(3), 831-851. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11187-019-00185-2>
- Maluleke, G., Odhiambo, N., & Nyasha, S. (2022). The Dynamics of Private Investment in South Africa: A Review of Policies and Trends. *The USV Annals of Economics and Public Administration*, 22(2).
<http://www.annals.fea.usv.ro/index.php/annals/article/view/1413/1107>
- Mamman, A., Bawole, J., Agbebi, M., & Alhassan, A. (2019). SME policy formulation and implementation in Africa: Unpacking assumptions as opportunity for research direction. *Journal of Business Research*, 97, 304-315. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ibusres.2018.01.044>
- Manwa, F., Wijeweera, A., & Kortt, M. A. (2019). Trade and growth in SACU countries: A panel data analysis. *Economic Analysis and Policy*, 63, 107-118.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eap.2019.05.003>

- Manzoor, A. (2017). Accelerating entrepreneurship in MENA region. *Entrepreneurship and Business Innovation in the Middle East*, 57-73. <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-5225-2066-5.ch004>
- Marcysiak, A., & Pleskacz, Ż. (2021). Determinants of digitization in SMEs. *Entrepreneurship and Sustainability Issues*, 9(1), 300-318. [https://doi.org/10.9770/jesi.2021.9.1\(18\)](https://doi.org/10.9770/jesi.2021.9.1(18))
- Mintrom, M., & Thomas, M. (2018). Policy entrepreneurs and collaborative action: Pursuit of the sustainable development goals. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Venturing*, 10(2), 153. <https://doi.org/10.1504/ijev.2018.092710>
- Miocevic, D., & Morgan, R. E. (2018). Operational capabilities and entrepreneurial opportunities in emerging market firms. *International Marketing Review*, 35(2), 320-341. <https://doi.org/10.1108/imr-12-2015-0270>
- Mlambo, V. H., Thusi, X., Zubane, S., & Mlambo, D. N. (2022). The African continental free trade area: *Latin American Journal of Trade Policy*, 5(12), 75-106. <https://doi.org/10.5354/0719-9368.2022.64897>
- Moreira, J., Marques, C. S., Braga, A., & Ratten, V. (2019). A systematic review of women's entrepreneurship and internationalisation literature. *Thunderbird International Business Review*, 61(4), 635-648. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tie.22045>
- Mota, J., Moreira, A., & Alves, A. (2021). Impact of export promotion programs on export performance. *Economies*, 9(3), 127. <https://doi.org/10.3390/economies9030127>
- Mukhlisa, J. (2022). PROMOTING WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP: THE MALAYSIAN EXPERIENCE. *World Economics & Finance Bulletin (WEFB)*, 14. <https://scholarexpress.net/index.php/wefb/article/view/1413/1256>
- Nair, S. R. (2020). The link between women entrepreneurship, innovation and stakeholder engagement: A review. *Journal of Business Research*, 119, 283-290. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.06.038>

Nakku, V. B., Agbola, F. W., Miles, M. P., & Mahmood, A. (2019). The interrelationship between SME government support programs, entrepreneurial orientation, and performance: A developing economy perspective. *Journal of Small Business Management*, 58(1), 2-31.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/00472778.2019.1659671>

Neumeyer, X., Santos, S. C., Caetano, A., & Kalbfleisch, P. (2018). Entrepreneurship ecosystems and women entrepreneurs: A social capital and network approach. *Small Business Economics*, 53(2), 475-489. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11187-018-9996-5>

Ngidi, Z., Shipalana, P., & Prinsloo, C. (2018). Does South Africa Need Its Own Export-Import Bank? *South African Institute of International Affairs*, 289.

<https://africaportal.org/publication/does-south-africa-need-its-own-export-import-bank/>

Noor, S., Isa, F., & Nor, L. (2021). Women Empowerment Through Women Entrepreneurship: A Comparison Between Women Entrepreneurs and Fulltime Housewife in Pakistan. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Management Studies*, 14(2).

https://ijms.ut.ac.ir/article_77719_0.html?lang=fa

Nurfarida, I. N. (2022). The internationalisation of SMEs: Motives and barriers. *International Journal of Current Science Research and Review*, 05(05). <https://doi.org/10.47191/ijcsrr/v5-i5-43>

Nziku, D. M., & Henry, C. (2020). Policies for supporting women entrepreneurs in developing countries: The case of Tanzania. *Journal of Entrepreneurship and Public Policy*, 10(1), 38-58.

<https://doi.org/10.1108/jepp-09-2020-0073>

Ogundana, O. M., Simba, A., Dana, L., & Liguori, E. (2021). Women entrepreneurship in developing economies: A gender-based growth model. *Journal of Small Business Management*, 59(sup1), S42-S72. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00472778.2021.1938098>

Ojong, N., Simba, A., & Dana, L. (2021). Female entrepreneurship in Africa: A review, trends, and future research directions. *Journal of Business Research*, 132, 233-248.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2021.04.032>

- Okocha, R. C., Olatoye, I. O., & Adedeji, O. B. (2018). Food safety impacts of antimicrobial use and their residues in aquaculture. *Public Health Reviews*, 39(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40985-018-0099-2>
- Olaore, G. O., Adejare, B. O., & Udofia, E. E. (2020). Prospects and challenges of entrepreneurship internationalisation on the competitiveness of SMEs. *Asia Pacific Journal of Innovation and Entrepreneurship*, 14(3), 303-315. <https://doi.org/10.1108/apjie-12-2019-0094>
- Olmos-Vega, F. M., Stalmeijer, R. E., Varpio, L., & Kahlke, R. (2022). A practical guide to reflexivity in qualitative research: AMEE guide No. 149. *Medical Teacher*, 45(3), 241-251. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0142159x.2022.2057287>
- Onjewu, A. E., Olan, F., Nyuur, R. B., Paul, S., & Nguyen, H. T. (2023). The effect of government support on bureaucracy, COVID-19 resilience and export intensity: Evidence from North Africa. *Journal of Business Research*, 156, 113468. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2022.113468>
- Onwuatuegwu, C., & Oraegbunam, I. (2023). Gender Inclusivity in International Trade: Making Trade Work for Women. *African Journals Online (AJOL)*, 14(2). <https://www.ajol.info/index.php/naujili/article/view/257395>
- Orobia, L. A., Tusiime, I., Mwesigwa, R., & Ssekiziyivu, B. (2020). Entrepreneurial framework conditions and business sustainability among the youth and women entrepreneurs. *Asia Pacific Journal of Innovation and Entrepreneurship*, 14(1), 60-75. <https://doi.org/10.1108/apjie-07-2019-0059>
- Orser, B., Riding, A., & Li, Y. (2019). Technology adoption and gender-inclusive entrepreneurship education and training. *International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship*, 11(3), 273-298. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ijge-02-2019-0026>

- Osano, H. M. (2019). Global expansion of SMEs: Role of global market strategy for Kenyan SMEs. *Journal of Innovation and Entrepreneurship*, 8(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13731-019-0109-8>
- Papulová, Z., Gažová, A., Šlenker, M., & Papula, J. (2021). Performance measurement system: Implementation process in SMEs. *Sustainability*, 13(9), 4794. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13094794>
- Paul, J., & Rosado-Serrano, A. (2019). Gradual internationalisation vs born-global/International new venture models. *International Marketing Review*, 36(6), 830-858. <https://doi.org/10.1108/imr-10-2018-0280>
- Pergelova, A., Angulo-Ruiz, F., & Yordanova, D. I. (2018). Gender and international entry mode. *International Small Business Journal: Researching Entrepreneurship*, 36(6), 662-685. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0266242618763012>
- Poliak, M., Šimurková, P., Jaśkiewicz, M., & Hernandez, S. (2018). Unification proposal on market access for freight forwarding in the European Union. *New Trends in Production Engineering*, 1(1), 197-203. <https://doi.org/10.2478/ntpe-2018-0025>
- Rahman, M. S. (2016). The advantages and disadvantages of using qualitative and quantitative approaches and methods in language “Testing and assessment” research: A literature review. *Journal of Education and Learning*, 6(1), 102. <https://doi.org/10.5539/jel.v6n1p102>
- Rahman, M., Akter, M., & Radicic, D. (2019). Internationalisation as a strategy for small and medium-sized enterprises and the impact of regulatory environment: An emerging country perspective. *Business Strategy & Development*, 3(2), 213-225. <https://doi.org/10.1002/bsd2.90>
- Rajagopaul, A., Magwentshu, N., & Kalidas, S. (2020). How South African SMEs can survive and thrive post COVID-19. Mckinsey & Company. <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured->

[insights/middle-east-and-africa/how-south-african-smes-can-survive-and-thrive-post-covid-19](#)

Raju, D., & Rajan, A. (2019). SME performance and access to export markets: The role of institutional credit. *Entrepreneurship and Development in South Asia: Longitudinal Narratives*, 263-280.

https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-6298-8_12

Raman, R., Subramaniam, N., Nair, V. K., Shivdas, A., Achuthan, K., & Nedungadi, P. (2022). Women entrepreneurship and sustainable development: Bibliometric analysis and emerging research trends. *Sustainability*, 14(15), 9160. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su14159160>

Rastogi, M., Baral, R., & Banu, J. (2022). What does it take to be a woman entrepreneur?

Explorations from India. *Industrial and Commercial Training*, 54(2), 333-356.

<https://doi.org/10.1108/ict-03-2021-0022>

Ratten, V., & Tajeddini, K. (2018). Women's entrepreneurship and internationalisation: Patterns and trends. *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, 38(9/10), 780-793.

<https://doi.org/10.1108/ijssp-01-2018-0001>

Reshi, I., & Sudha, T. (2023). Economic Empowerment of Women: A Review of Current Research.

International Journal of Educational Review, Law and Social Sciences, 3(2).

<http://radjapublika.com/index.php/IJERLAS/article/view/746/634>

Ribau, C. P., Moreira, A. C., & Raposo, M. (2016). SME internationalisation research: Mapping the state of the art. *Canadian Journal of Administrative Sciences / Revue Canadienne des*

Sciences de l'Administration, 35(2), 280-303. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cjas.1419>

Rietveld, C. A., & Patel, P. C. (2022a). Gender inequality and the entrepreneurial gender gap:

Evidence from 97 countries (2006–2017). *Journal of Evolutionary Economics*, 32(4), 1205-

1229. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00191-022-00780-9>

- Rietveld, C. A., & Patel, P. C. (2022b). A critical assessment of the national expert survey data of the global entrepreneurship monitor. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 104225872211349. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10422587221134928>
- Rodrik, D. (2018). What do trade agreements really do? *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 32(2), 73-90. <https://doi.org/10.1257/jep.32.2.73>
- Romanello, R., & Chiarvesio, M. (2019). Early internationalising firms: 2004–2018. *Journal of International Entrepreneurship*, 17(2), 172-219. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10843-018-0241-8>
- Rosca, E., Agarwal, N., & Brem, A. (2020). Women entrepreneurs as agents of change: A comparative analysis of social entrepreneurship processes in emerging markets. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 157, 120067. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2020.120067>
- Rose, J., & Johnson, C. W. (2020). Contextualizing reliability and validity in qualitative research: Toward more rigorous and trustworthy qualitative social science in leisure research. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 51(4), 432-451. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00222216.2020.1722042>
- Rosenbaum, G. O. (2017). Female entrepreneurial networks and foreign market entry. *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, 24(1), 119-135. <https://doi.org/10.1108/jsbed-07-2016-0113>
- Rosenbaum, G. O. (2019). The role of export promotion programs in the internationalisation of female-owned enterprises. *International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship*, 11(3), 323-347. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ijge-01-2019-0002>
- Rudhumbu, N., Du Plessis, E. (.), & Maphosa, C. (2020). Challenges and opportunities for women entrepreneurs in Botswana: Revisiting the role of entrepreneurship education. *Journal of International Education in Business*, 13(2), 183-201. <https://doi.org/10.1108/jieb-12-2019-0058>

- Rundh, B. (2022). International expansion or stagnation: Market development for mature products. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Business Administration*, 15(4), 626-645.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/apjba-11-2021-0560>
- Safari, A., & Saleh, A. S. (2019). Enhancing export performance of small and medium-sized enterprises in emerging markets. *Pressacademia*, 9(9), 100-104.
<https://doi.org/10.17261/pressacademia.2019.1075>
- Saleh, A. S., Donovan, J., Le, V., & Safari, A. (2021). Breaking down the export barriers for small and medium-sized enterprises: Focus group study across Vietnam. *J. for Global Business Advancement*, 14(2), 142. <https://doi.org/10.1504/jgba.2021.115762>
- Samy, Y., Adedeji, A., Iraoya, A., Dutta, M. K., Fakmawii, J. L., & Hao, W. (2023). Trade and women's economic empowerment: Qualitative analysis of SMEs from Cambodia and Vietnam. *Trade and Women's Economic Empowerment*, 59-103. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-39039-5_3
- Scholtz, J. (2019). Export promotion through people: an investigation into the Export, Marketing and Investment Assistance (EMIA) incentive within the agro-processing sector (18377922) [Master's thesis]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global.
- Sedziniauskiene, R., Sekliuckiene, J., & Zucchella, A. (2019). Networks' impact on the entrepreneurial internationalisation: A literature review and research agenda. *Management International Review*, 59(5), 779-823. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11575-019-00395-6>
- Seikkula-Leino, J., & Salomaa, M. (2021). Bridging the research gap—A framework for assessing entrepreneurial competencies based on self-esteem and self-efficacy. *Education Sciences*, 11(10), 572. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci11100572>
- Shetty, S. (2021). Fostering inclusive development in sub-Saharan Africa through gender equality. *SAIS Review of International Affairs*, 41(1), 33-48. <https://doi.org/10.1353/sais.2021.0004>

- Sibanda, K., Hove-Sibanda, P., & Shava, H. (2018). The impact of SME access to finance and performance on exporting behaviour at firm level: A case of furniture manufacturing SMEs in Zimbabwe. *Acta Commercii*, 18(1). <https://doi.org/10.4102/ac.v18i1.554>
- Sinkovics, R. R., Kurt, Y., & Sinkovics, N. (2018). The effect of matching on perceived export barriers and performance in an era of globalization discontents: Empirical evidence from UK SMEs. *International Business Review*, 27(5), 1065-1079. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ibusrev.2018.03.007>
- Sirivunnabood, P., & Liao, S. (2021). Women's Economic Empowerment in Asia. Asian Development Bank Institute, 2021(8). <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/758581/adb-brief-women-economic-empowerment.pdf>
- Stacey, A. (2019). ECRM 2019 18th European conference on research methods in business and management. Academic Conferences and publishing limited.
- Stratton, S. J. (2021). Population research: Convenience sampling strategies. *Prehospital and Disaster Medicine*, 36(4), 373-374. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s1049023x21000649>
- Strawser, J. A., Hechavarría, D. M., & Passerini, K. (2021). Gender and entrepreneurship: Research frameworks, barriers and opportunities for women entrepreneurship worldwide. *Journal of Small Business Management*, 59(sup1), S1-S15. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00472778.2021.1965615>
- Stronger open trade policies enable economic growth for all. (2018, April 3). World Bank. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/results/2018/04/03/stronger-open-trade-policies-enables-economic-growth-for-all>
- Sui, S., Morgan, H. M., & Baum, M. (2022). Differences between women- and men-owned export businesses: Are women-owned export businesses more financially successful when they adopt an intensive export strategy? *Journal of Small Business & Entrepreneurship*, 34(5), 578-595. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08276331.2022.2045169>

- Sun, P., Doh, J. P., Rajwani, T., & Siegel, D. (2021). Navigating cross-border institutional complexity: A review and assessment of multinational nonmarket strategy research. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 52(9), 1818-1853. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41267-021-00438-x>
- Svenson, L. (2021). Voices of entrepreneurs: A review of entrepreneurs' perceptions of sme COVID-19 support measures in South Africa. *Journal of Entrepreneurial Innovations*, 2(SI). <https://doi.org/10.14426/jei.v2isi.1070>
- Tinits, P., & Fey, C. F. (2022). The effects of timing and order of government support mechanisms for SME exports. *Management International Review*, 62(2), 285-323. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11575-022-00465-2>
- Tripathi, A. (2019). SMES IN SAUDI ARABIA-AN INNOVATIVE TOOL FOR COUNTRY'S ECONOMIC GROWTH. https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3458372
- Uddin, G., & Oserei, K. (2019). Positioning Nigeria's manufacturing and agricultural sectors for global competitiveness. *Growth and Change*, 50(3), 1218-1237. <https://doi.org/10.1111/grow.12308>
- Uygur, D., Kahraman, E. B., & Günay, G. (2016). Empowering women through social entrepreneurship with innovative business models: Cases from Turkey. *Women's Entrepreneurship in Global and Local Contexts*. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781784717421.00015>
- Vanninen, H., Keränen, J., & Kuivalainen, O. (2022). Becoming a small multinational enterprise: Four multinationalization strategies for SMEs. *International Business Review*, 31(1), 101917. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ibusrev.2021.101917>
- Williams, C., & Spielmann, N. (2019). Institutional pressures and international market orientation in SMEs: Insights from the French wine industry. *International Business Review*, 28(5), 101582. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ibusrev.2019.05.002>

Women's leadership and development program (WLDP). (2023, February).

PM&C. <https://www.pmc.gov.au/office-women/grants-and-funding/womens-leadership-and-development-program>

Wu, J., Li, Y., & Zhang, D. (2019). Identifying women's entrepreneurial barriers and empowering female entrepreneurship worldwide: A fuzzy-set QCA approach. *International Entrepreneurship and Management Journal*, 15(3), 905-928.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11365-019-00570-z>

Yan, H., Wickramasekera, R., & Tan, A. (2018). Exploration of Chinese SMEs' export development: The role of managerial determinants based on an adapted innovation-related internationalisation model. *Thunderbird International Business Review*, 60(4), 633-646.

<https://doi.org/10.1002/tie.21969>

Young, D. S., & Casey, E. A. (2018). An examination of the sufficiency of small qualitative samples. *Social Work Research*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/swr/svy026>

Zahoor, N., Khan, Z., Meyer, M., & Laker, B. (2023). International entrepreneurial behavior of internationalising African SMEs – Towards a new research agenda. *Journal of Business Research*, 154, 113367. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2022.113367>

Zeng, Y., Guo, H., Yao, Y., & Huang, L. (2019). The formation of agricultural E-commerce clusters: A case from China. *Growth and Change*, 50(4), 1356-1374.

<https://doi.org/10.1111/grow.12327>

Zhai, Q., & Su, J. (2019). A perfect couple? Institutional theory and entrepreneurship research.

Chinese Management Studies, 13(3), 616-644. <https://doi.org/10.1108/cms-07-2017-0194>

Zhu, Y., Warner, M., & Sardana, D. (2020). Internationalisation and destination selection of emerging market SMEs: Issues and challenges in a conceptual framework. *Journal of General Management*, 45(4), 206-216. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0306307020903530>

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0306307020903530>