International Journal of Business & Law Research 14(2):407-416, April-June, 2026

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DOI:10.5281/zenodo.20799656

Empowerment And Recognition As Predictors Of Employee Productivity In Small And Medium-Scale Businesses In Delta State

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ABSTRACT
This study assessed the efficacy of empowerment and recognition as entrepreneurial leadership strategies in predicting employee productivity within small and medium-scale businesses (SMEs) in Delta State. A survey research design was adopted, targeting a population of 500 SMEs registered with the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN). A sample of 80 respondents was drawn using the stratified random sampling technique. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire, which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.899 through the test-retest method. The data were analyzed using Mean, Standard Deviation, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), and t-test statistics. The results indicated that both empowerment and recognition significantly enhance employee productivity, and these perceptions do not significantly differ based on employee age or business location. The study concludes that delegating authority and acknowledging employee efforts are potent strategies for optimizing performance. It is recommended that SME managers focus on empowering employees by delegating decision-making authority and developing formal recognition programs to foster a sense of ownership and appreciation.
Keywords: Entrepreneurial Leadership, Empowerment, Recognition, Employee Productivity, SMEs.

INTRODUCTION

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are universally acknowledged as the foundational backbone of both global and national economies, serving as primary catalysts for wealth creation and sustainable economic development (Mgeni, 2015). In advanced economies such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and Germany, SMEs represent over 95% of all established business entities, making substantial contributions to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and continuous job creation (Global Alliance of SMEs, 2013). For instance, in the United States alone, over 28 million SMEs were operating as of 2012, driving significant economic momentum (United States Census Bureau, 2012a). This profound economic significance extends to emerging markets and African economies, where SMEs constitute the largest proportion of formal businesses, driving grassroots development and providing over 55% of total employment (Zainol et al., 2018). By acting as vital connectors between local communities and broader global markets, SMEs facilitate trade and investment while fostering regional economic integration and competitiveness (Pieper, 2014).

Despite their undeniable economic contributions, contemporary SMEs operate within a highly dynamic, fiercely competitive, and increasingly unpredictable global business environment (Sandybayev, 2019).

The ability of these enterprises to navigate market volatility, manage uncertainty, and sustain operational competitiveness is intrinsically linked to the caliber of leadership and the specific management styles steering the organization (Amer, 2017). Current empirical observations indicate that ineffective leadership models are a primary root cause of underperformance, operational stagnation, and ultimately, the premature failure of many small businesses (Zheltoukhova & Suckley, 2014). Traditional, rigid leadership paradigms often fall short in addressing the complex, fast-evolving challenges of modern markets, highlighting a critical need for agile and strategic leadership approaches (Sandybayev, 2019). Operating effectively within such a turbulent business landscape necessitates the acquisition of robust entrepreneurship skills, which allow individuals and enterprise leaders to identify viable opportunities, innovate, and maintain global relevance (Okoro, 2021). Therefore, there is an urgent demand for enterprise managers to move beyond conventional management techniques and embrace innovative leadership strategies capable of inspiring workforce creativity, mitigating risks, and aligning organizational objectives with current market realities (Musambayi, 2018).

Entrepreneurial Leadership (EL) represents a critical paradigm shift from traditional management models, which typically emphasize rigid hierarchies, routine operational procedures, and strict risk aversion. Traditional leadership paradigms are increasingly viewed as insufficient for addressing the multifaceted challenges and unpredictability inherent in modern markets (Paudel, 2019). In contrast, entrepreneurial leadership merges the proactive, opportunity-seeking qualities of entrepreneurship with the strategic vision of effective management to foster a culture of continuous innovation and adaptability (Leitch & Volery, 2017). The entrepreneurial dimension fundamentally involves a systematic endeavor where individuals or groups actively pursue opportunities and create sustainable value by meeting societal and market demands through innovative means (Okoro, 2024a). Consequently, an entrepreneurial leader does not merely react to external environmental pressures; rather, they proactively craft visionary scenarios, assemble dedicated teams, and aggressively mobilize resources to capitalize on value-creation opportunities (Gupta et al., 2004). This dynamic leadership style is characterized by a strong inclination toward calculated risk-taking, intellectual stimulation, and the continuous disruption of the status quo to maintain competitive relevance (Sandybayev, 2019).

Central to the successful operationalization of entrepreneurial leadership are the strategic mechanisms of employee empowerment and recognition, both of which function as critical catalysts for enhancing employee productivity. Empowerment is conceptualized as the strategic delegation of authority, granting employees the autonomy, discretion, and necessary resources to execute their responsibilities while maintaining accountability for the outcomes (Raub & Robert, 2010). This delegation transcends mere task assignment; it requires cultivating a work environment where employees feel implicitly trusted and capable of making meaningful contributions to organizational success (Seung et al., 2016). Complementing this autonomy is the strategy of recognition, which entails formally or informally acknowledging an employee's efforts, innovative behaviors, and professional achievements (Lwin & Chau, 2021). While empowerment equips workers with the authority to act, recognition serves as a potent intrinsic motivator that reinforces positive behaviors and builds professional self-esteem (Nayak, Nayak, & Jena, 2020). Furthermore, when individuals are equipped with practical capabilities and sufficiently empowered to navigate operational challenges, their capacity for sustained productivity and independent problem-solving significantly increases (Okoro, 2024b). Thus, the synergistic application of empowerment and recognition directly influences employee productivity by cultivating a highly engaged, motivated, and agile workforce capable of driving the enterprise toward its strategic objectives (Ghosh et al., 2016).

The theoretical foundation of this study is primarily anchored in the Transformational Leadership Theory, initially conceptualized by Downton (1973) and significantly expanded by Burns (1978) and Bass (1985). This theory posits that leadership transcends mere transactional exchanges; rather, it is a dynamic social process wherein leaders and followers engage in mutual elevation, raising one another to higher levels of motivation and ethical purpose. Transformational leaders act as visionary change agents who fundamentally alter organizational paradigms by presenting clear, motivating visions, questioning existing

practices, and pushing employees to pursue high standards (Pradhan & Pradhan, 2015). According to Bass (1985), this transformative effect is achieved through idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, all of which are critical mechanisms for effective empowerment. By showing genuine concern for the personal needs and goals of their followers, these leaders cultivate a supportive environment where employees are empowered to take ownership of their work and make meaningful, innovative contributions to the enterprise (Pardo-del-Val, Fuentes, & Dobón, 2012). Furthermore, equipping individuals with transformative skills and an entrepreneurial mindset serves as a critical panacea for driving self-reliance and mitigating broader economic challenges like unemployment (Okoro, 2024b). Therefore, transformational leadership provides the robust theoretical justification for why empowering employees, specifically by aligning overarching organizational objectives with individual values, fosters the trust, cohesion, and intrinsic motivation necessary for heightened productivity in SMEs (Mom et al., 2015; Northouse, 2015).

Complementing the transformational approach is the Goal Setting Theory, pioneered by Dr. Edwin Locke in 1968 and further advanced in collaboration with Dr. Gary Latham in 1990. This theory revolutionized contemporary understandings of workplace motivation by demonstrating that the establishment of specific, challenging, yet attainable goals acts as a primary catalyst for elevated employee performance. A central tenet of Locke and Latham's (1990) framework is the absolute necessity of timely, constructive feedback and recognition; without knowing how their efforts measure against expected outcomes, employees' motivational drives significantly diminish. Within this theoretical paradigm, recognition serves not merely as a pleasant interpersonal gesture, but as a critical, formal feedback mechanism that validates an employee’s progress, satisfies their innate need for achievement, and reinforces desired organizational behaviors. By systematically acknowledging an individual's or team's contributions, entrepreneurial leaders provide the powerful intrinsic motivation required to sustain high levels of effort and engagement. Consequently, Goal Setting Theory provides a solid theoretical underpinning for the recognition variable in this study, illustrating that when employees operate in environments characterized by clear expectations coupled with consistent, meaningful acknowledgment, they are significantly more likely to exhibit the persistence, focus, and drive required to maximize productivity.

A substantial body of empirical literature has explored the relationship between employee empowerment and productivity, consistently highlighting its positive impact on organizational outcomes. For instance, Lee and Ok (2021) investigated the effect of empowerment on job performance in small and medium enterprises, finding that delegating decision-making authority significantly boosts both job satisfaction and overall employee output. Similarly, Yang and Wang (2022) emphasized the role of entrepreneurial leadership in fostering workplace innovation, noting that empowered employees exhibit higher levels of motivation and creative problem-solving. Kim and Park (2023) further corroborated these findings by establishing a strong link between empowerment and organizational commitment, which translates into sustained productivity. Furthermore, empowering individuals involves not only assigning autonomous tasks but also equipping them with essential competencies, a strategy that Okoro (2018) identifies as critical for stimulating successful skills acquisition, operational competence, and self-reliance within business environments. However, the literature also presents contrasting perspectives; Smith and Brown (2021) cautioned that excessive or unstructured empowerment can lead to role ambiguity, potentially dampening productivity rather than enhancing it. Despite these nuances, the predominant empirical consensus maintains that strategic empowerment is a vital predictor of enhanced employee performance and operational efficiency.

Parallel to empowerment, empirical investigations into recognition programs reveal a strong correlation with elevated employee morale and productivity. Johnson and Smith (2023) demonstrated that recognition significantly boosts employee motivation and productivity in small businesses, validating the premise that acknowledging contributions is a powerful intrinsic driver. Brown and Taylor (2023) expanded on this by showing that consistent recognition practices not only improve overall employee performance but also deeply embed job satisfaction within the organizational culture. Furthermore, Bradler, Dur, Neckermann, and Non (2016) found that employee recognition, when delivered meaningfully and consistently, yields

measurable improvements in subsequent performance, particularly among top performers. Even small gestures of praise or personal notes acknowledging achievements can significantly impact employee morale and motivation (Reese, 2020). Nevertheless, some scholars offer a critical perspective; Garcia and Martinez (2023) suggested that while recognition enhances productivity, its effects may be overestimated in certain high-stress organizational settings where other intrinsic motivators might be necessary. Overall, the empirical evidence strongly supports the deployment of structured recognition programmes as an effective entrepreneurial leadership strategy to maximize workforce productivity and sustain organizational morale.

Statement of the Research Problem

Despite the acknowledged economic importance of small and medium-sized enterprises, a persistent and critical challenge facing these businesses is the absence of effective leadership paradigms, which frequently results in underperformance and severe operational stagnation (Zheltoukhova & Suckley, 2014). While traditional leadership models have been extensively studied, they often fail to address the dynamic and unpredictable nature of contemporary markets, leaving small business entities struggling to adapt to changing conditions and maintain competitiveness (Sandybayev, 2019). Consequently, there is an increasing recognition of the need for SME leaders to embrace agile, entrepreneurial leadership styles that can inspire creativity, encourage innovation, and navigate complex challenges to achieve strategic objectives. However, a significant gap exists in the current body of literature; there is a profound lack of targeted empirical research exploring the specific influence of distinct entrepreneurial leadership strategies, such as empowerment and recognition, on employee productivity within the unique socio-economic context of Delta State. This knowledge deficit restricts the capacity of business leaders and policymakers to implement evidence-based practices that could directly enhance workforce output and ensure the long-term sustainability of their enterprises.

It is anticipated that bridging this critical knowledge gap will reveal a strong, positive influence of targeted empowerment and recognition strategies on employee productivity. By empirically isolating these variables, this study expects to demonstrate that when managers effectively delegate authority and systematically acknowledge employee contributions, there is a commensurate rise in organizational commitment, innovation, and overall task output. Consequently, the findings of this research will provide highly actionable insights for business owners, human resource practitioners, and policymakers within Delta State. Ultimately, equipping leaders with these specific, evidence-based entrepreneurial strategies will not only enhance individual workforce productivity but also significantly boost the broader regional economic competitiveness and longevity of small and medium-scale enterprises in the global marketplace.

Objectives of the study

The main objective of this study is to explore the impact of entrepreneurial leadership strategies on employee productivity within small and medium-scale businesses in Delta State. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Examine the influence of empowerment as an entrepreneurial leadership strategy on employee productivity in small and medium-scale businesses in Delta State.
2. Analyze the relationship between recognition as an entrepreneurial leadership strategy and employee productivity in small and medium-scale businesses in Delta State.

Research Questions

The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. In what ways does empowerment, as an entrepreneurial leadership strategy, affect employee productivity within small and medium-scale enterprises in Delta State?
2. How does recognition, as a component of entrepreneurial leadership, influence employee productivity in small and medium-scale enterprises in Delta State?

Hypotheses

The following tentative statements were formulated and stated in the null to guide the thrust of the study:

1. **H01:** There is no significant difference in the mean rating of empowerment as an entrepreneurial leadership strategy on employee productivity in small and medium-scale businesses in Delta State across different age groups.
2. **H02:** There is no significant difference in the mean rating of recognition as an entrepreneurial leadership strategy on employee productivity in small and medium-scale businesses in Delta State based on the location of the business.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a survey research design, which is highly suitable for exploring the opinions and existing conditions of a specific population. This design allowed the researchers to systematically investigate the perspectives of employees and managers regarding the impact of specific entrepreneurial leadership strategies on productivity. The targeted population for the study comprised 500 small and medium-scale enterprises (SMEs) formally registered with the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) within Delta State. This population encapsulates a diverse range of business sectors, including food processing, livestock rearing, trading, arts and crafts, bakery, bottled water production, fashion design, hairdressing, and information and communication technology (ICT).

To ensure a highly representative subset of this population, the study employed a stratified random sampling technique. This method involved categorizing the population into distinct strata, enabling the random selection of a sample that accurately reflects the broader population dynamics while actively minimizing selection biases. Through this technique, a sample size of 80 employees and managers was selected from the SMEs operating specifically within the Ughelli North Local Government Area of Delta State.

The primary instrument utilized for data collection was a structured questionnaire designed specifically to assess the independent variables (empowerment and recognition) against the dependent variable (employee productivity). The instrument was divided into sections capturing demographic attributes and core subject matter utilizing a 4-point Likert rating scale. To establish the psychometric integrity of the instrument, face and content validity were rigorously conducted by the research supervisor, an expert from the Department of Business Education, and an expert from the Department of Measurement and Evaluation at Delta State University, Abraka. These experts meticulously analyzed the items to eliminate ambiguity and inconsistency, ensuring the tool accurately measured the intended constructs. Furthermore, the reliability of the instrument was ascertained through a pilot study involving 30 respondents from Edo State using the test-retest method. A two-week interval was observed between the administrations, yielding a high reliability coefficient of 0.899, which confirmed the instrument's internal consistency and stability for the study.

Data collection was executed through physical distribution of the printed questionnaires directly to the respondents, facilitated by three well-briefed research assistants. For the statistical analysis of the generated data, descriptive statistics, specifically the mean and standard deviation, were employed to answer the research questions. A criterion mean of 2.50 was established as the decision threshold; thus, any item with a calculated mean of 2.50 or above indicated agreement, while a mean below 2.50 indicated disagreement. Inferential statistics were utilized to test the formulated null hypotheses at a 0.05 probability/confidence level. Specifically, a One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was utilized to test Hypothesis 1 (concerning age group variations), and an independent samples t-test was employed to test Hypothesis 2 (concerning business location variations). In adherence to the decision rule, a p-value less than the 0.05 threshold would lead to the rejection of the null hypothesis, whereas a p-value greater than 0.05 mandated its retention.

RESULTS

Research Question 1 *In what ways does empowerment, as an entrepreneurial leadership strategy, affect employee productivity within small and medium-scale enterprises in Delta State?*

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics on Empowerment as an Entrepreneurial Leadership Strategy

S/N	Variable Name	Mean	Std. Deviation	Decision
1	Empowerment positively affects employee productivity.	3.56	0.809	Strongly Agreed
2	Employees feel more motivated when their leaders empower them.	3.74	0.522	Strongly Agreed
3	Employees perform better when trusted with more responsibilities.	3.22	0.927	Agreed
4	Empowerment leads to greater employee loyalty to the organization.	3.44	0.525	Agreed
5	Empowerment promotes innovation among employees.	3.63	0.511	Strongly Agreed
6	Empowerment encourages employees to take risks that lead to new ideas.	3.52	0.596	Strongly Agreed
7	Empowerment leads to greater employee commitment to the organization.	3.55	0.526	Strongly Agreed
8	Empowerment helps to build a culture of trust and openness.	3.39	0.629	Agreed
9	Empowering employees reduces turnover rates in the organization.	2.86	0.956	Agreed
10	Empowerment enhances overall performance and competitiveness.	3.61	0.543	Strongly Agreed
Grand	**Overall Empowerment Strategy**	**3.45**	**0.397**	**Agreed**

Source: Field Study, 2024

Table 1 reveals that empowerment as an entrepreneurial leadership strategy significantly boosts employee productivity. The respondents strongly agreed that empowerment increases motivation (Mean = 3.74), promotes innovation (Mean = 3.63), and enhances overall organizational competitiveness (Mean = 3.61). The grand mean of 3.45 indicates a strong consensus that empowering employees effectively answers the research question by positively driving workforce productivity.

Research Question 2 *How does recognition, as a component of entrepreneurial leadership, influence employee productivity in small and medium-scale enterprises in Delta State?*

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics on Recognition as an Entrepreneurial Leadership Strategy

S/N	Variable Name	Mean	Std. Deviation	Decision
1	Recognition for good work increases employee productivity.	3.65	0.480	Strongly Agreed
2	Employees feel more motivated when their leaders recognize them.	3.57	0.569	Strongly Agreed
3	Recognition programs enhance employee engagement.	3.52	0.574	Strongly Agreed
4	Employees are more productive when their efforts are acknowledged.	3.55	0.549	Strongly Agreed
5	Regular recognition boosts employee morale.	3.58	0.689	Strongly Agreed
6	Recognition leads to higher levels of job satisfaction.	3.39	0.706	Agreed

7	Employees are more likely to stay with the organization when recognized.	3.50	0.675	Strongly Agreed
8	Acknowledging employee achievements improves team performance.	3.46	0.550	Agreed
9	Recognition fosters a positive work environment.	3.43	0.546	Agreed
10	Employees feel valued and appreciated when they receive recognition.	3.52	0.677	Strongly Agreed
Grand	**Overall Recognition Strategy**	**3.52**	**0.454**	**Strongly Agreed**

Source: Field Study, 2024

Table 2 demonstrates a strong overall agreement that recognition positively influences employee productivity in SMEs, yielding a grand mean of 3.52. Respondents strongly agreed that recognition for good work directly increases productivity (Mean = 3.65) and effectively boosts employee morale (Mean = 3.58). This analysis confirms that the strategic implementation of recognition effectively answers the research question by driving elevated performance.

Hypothesis 1 There is no significant difference in the mean rating of empowerment as an entrepreneurial leadership strategy on employee productivity in small and medium-scale businesses in Delta State across different age groups.

Table 3: ANOVA Summary on Empowerment Across Age Groups

S/N	Variable Name (Sources of Variance)	Mean Square	P-value (Sig.)	Decision
1	Between Groups	0.158	0.441	Retained
2	Within Groups	0.167		

Note. Significant at p < 0.05

Table 3 presents the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) used to test the first null hypothesis. The calculated p-value is 0.441, which is greater than the decision threshold of 0.05 level of significance. Consequently, the null hypothesis is retained. This indicates that age does not significantly influence how employees perceive the impact of empowerment on their productivity.

Hypothesis 2 There is no significant difference in the mean rating of recognition as an entrepreneurial leadership strategy on employee productivity in small and medium-scale businesses in Delta State based on the location of the business.

Table 4: t-test Summary on Recognition Based on Business Location

S/N	Variable Name (Location)	Mean	Std. Deviation	Decision (P-value)
1	Rural Businesses (N=13)	3.59	0.389	Retained (p = 0.315)
2	Urban Businesses (N=57)	3.47	0.375	

Note. Significant at p < 0.05

Table 4 outlines the t-test analysis used to test the second null hypothesis based on business location. The rural businesses recorded a mean of 3.59, while urban businesses recorded a mean of 3.47. The resultant p-value of 0.315 is greater than the 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is retained. This confirms that the perceived influence of recognition on employee productivity does not significantly differ between rural and urban small and medium-scale businesses in Delta State.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The empirical analysis of this study establishes that empowerment, utilized as an entrepreneurial leadership strategy, exerts a profoundly positive and significant influence on employee productivity within small and medium-scale businesses in Delta State. The descriptive statistics revealed a strong consensus among respondents, indicating that when leaders delegate authority and trust employees with expanded responsibilities, there is a commensurate surge in workforce motivation, innovation, and overall organizational competitiveness. This finding is highly consistent with the empirical assertions of Lee and Ok (2021), who demonstrated that empowering employees by decentralizing decision-making authority significantly amplifies both job satisfaction and task performance. Furthermore, the results corroborate

the observations of Yang and Wang (2022) and Kim and Park (2023), which linked entrepreneurial empowerment to heightened levels of creative problem-solving and organizational commitment. By fostering a culture where employees feel trusted to take calculated risks, SME leaders stimulate independent problem-solving capabilities, a critical skill set required for navigating dynamic operational challenges (Okoro, 2024a). However, while the overarching impact is decidedly positive, the slightly varied responses regarding empowerment's ability to definitively reduce turnover rates reflect the cautionary findings of Smith and Brown (2021). As their research suggests, excessive or unstructured empowerment without adequate guidance can occasionally induce role ambiguity, signaling that while empowerment is a vital productivity driver, it must be strategically aligned with clear organizational frameworks.

Regarding the demographic dimensions of this strategy, the test of the first hypothesis revealed that the perceived efficacy of empowerment on productivity does not significantly differ across varying age groups. The retention of this null hypothesis underscores that the psychological need for autonomy, trust, and professional responsibility is a universal workplace driver that transcends generational divides. This specific finding provides robust empirical backing to the studies conducted by Paul and Elder (2022), which concluded that empowerment strategies yield consistent, positive performance outcomes across diverse age demographics. Consequently, SME managers in Delta State can confidently apply empowerment protocols across their entire workforce without the need for age-stratified leadership modifications.

In parallel, the investigation into recognition as an entrepreneurial leadership strategy demonstrated a strong, statistically significant relationship with elevated employee productivity and morale. The data highlighted that consistent, meaningful acknowledgment of good work functions as a potent intrinsic motivator that deepens employee engagement and job satisfaction. These results perfectly align with the empirical framework established by Johnson and Smith (2023), who validated that recognition significantly boosts intrinsic motivation and subsequent output in small enterprise settings. Furthermore, the findings reflect the extensive research by Brown and Taylor (2023) and Bradler, Dur, Neckermann, and Non (2016), which argued that structured recognition practices cultivate a positive organizational culture and yield measurable improvements in the performance of both average and top-tier employees. While Garcia and Martinez (2023) warned that the impact of recognition might be overestimated in certain high-stress environments, the strong consensus in this study indicates that within the SME ecosystem of Delta State, acknowledgment remains a fundamental and highly effective driver of workforce efficiency.

Finally, the inferential analysis of the second hypothesis established that the positive influence of recognition on employee productivity is not significantly altered by the geographic location of the business. The t-test results comparing rural and urban SMEs confirmed that employees in both settings perceive and respond to recognition with equal magnitude. This retention of the null hypothesis is particularly revealing, as it indicates that the intrinsic value of being appreciated and validated for one's professional contributions is a fundamental human constant that overrides spatial and geographic variables. Ultimately, this confirms that entrepreneurial leaders operating in any geographic enclave within Delta State can leverage structured recognition programs as a reliable, cost-effective, and universally potent mechanism for maximizing employee productivity and sustaining organizational competitiveness.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study conclusively establish that empowerment and recognition are vital entrepreneurial leadership strategies that significantly drive employee productivity within small and medium-scale businesses in Delta State. By actively granting employees decision-making authority and trusting them with expanded responsibilities, enterprise leaders can effectively cultivate a highly motivated, innovative, and loyal workforce. Similarly, the systematic and sincere acknowledgment of employee contributions serves as a powerful intrinsic motivator that elevates morale, job satisfaction, and

overall task execution. Furthermore, the study demonstrates that the positive impacts of these specific leadership strategies are universally applicable across the workforce, as their perceived effectiveness does not significantly vary across different age demographics or the rural versus urban geographical location of the business. Therefore, for small and medium-sized enterprises to achieve sustained growth, operational resilience, and competitive advantage in dynamic markets, it is imperative that their management paradigms deeply integrate the practices of empowering and recognizing their employees.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Small and medium-scale business leaders should prioritize the empowerment of their workforce by actively delegating decision-making authority, encouraging independent initiative, and supporting employee-led projects to foster a profound sense of ownership and accountability.
2. Management within these enterprises should design and implement formal recognition programmes that ensure regular, sincere, and public acknowledgment of employee achievements, thereby making the workforce feel tangibly valued and appreciated for their specific efforts.

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