Thematic Analysis of Small and Medium Enterprise Profile Opportunities on Constituency Development Fund in Kafue, Zambia

Joe Mubuyaeta Likando*, Austin Mwange, John Moose, and Francis Simui

ABSTRACT

The small businesses in Kafue District take place to provide solutions that answer the overall economic and social development difficulties such as increase in the levels of unemployment, poverty, and inequality. The government's function has always been to create a favourable environment for business for all SMEs to thrive better. Due to such difficulties encountered by the citizenry, despite existing empowerment policies, the government introduced the Constituency Development Fund to support SMEs within their cooperatives in Zambia; this is to reduce the barriers that obstruct SMEs' profile opportunities to grow and to be sustainable to fulfil government and society expectations. The drive of this study was to analyze thematically different profile opportunities of SMEs in the manner in which they can access CDF. The study focused on opportunities that lie in each SME's profile and identified the profiles according to their needs. The method which was used in this study was qualitative and employed purposive sampling to comprehend SMEs’ profile opportunities. The results of this study resolved that SMEs' profile needs to be helped to core exists as they utilize or struggle to access funding from the existing CDF. The emergent themes reported in this study show that there are significant qualitative profiles to consider as officers in charge of CDF disburse the funds to the beneficiaries. In conclusion, the study recommended policymakers support small businesses to grow in an inclusive, innovative and sustainable way in line with the financial opportunities available. The findings in this study will establish equal distribution, utilization, and management of resources by responsible government agencies in Kafue, Zambia.

Keywords: Constituency Development Fund (CDF), opportunities, profile, SMEs.

1. INTRODUCTION

The importance of SMEs in Kafue District is the competitiveness of economies in other nations that value SMEs. Kafue SMEs have the vitality to be economic agents in Zambia. This simply means that the dynamic evolution and structure of the enterprise sector are pivotal to economic development. In this context, the structure of the enterprise or profile opportunities is vital to economic development since it shapes the competitiveness of the enterprise sector, which is pivotal to economic development, as it shapes the competitiveness of the enterprise and thereby influences the pattern of economic development. Much literature reveals that different scholars give divergent views on the characteristics of SMEs based on the area or the nation’s economy. Onugu (2005) contends that the primary physiognomies of SMEs serve as the connection to or relate to the ownership base or structure in Nigeria, which primarily revolves around an important individual or family. As a result, the majority of SMEs consist of sole proprietorships or partnerships with several partners. As a result, even in cases where a limited liability company is registered, ownership in SMEs is typically held by a single person,
a small family, or a partnership. Additionally, the Zambia SMEs Development Policy (2008, p. 9) notes that “the growth of MSMEs is considered as one sustainable approach of reducing the levels of poverty and increasing the quality of life of households through wealth and employment creation”.

It is generally agreed that MSMEs contribute to employment, growth, and sustainable development. MSMEs are thought to develop the manufacturing sector, boost competitiveness, and help achieve a more fair distribution of the benefits of economic growth, hence reducing issues related to uneven income distribution. SMEs are supported as major partners in reducing poverty levels and strengthening the economy, according to studies and policies that come out of Zambia (Caritas Zambia, 2011). This demonstrates that CDF is one of the essential elements that may help SMEs in Zambia fulfil their economic purpose. Several studies have discussed the traits of SMEs that adopt collaborative growth as part of their development process. Additionally, Ekwem (2011) study demonstrates that the primary barrier for SMEs is typically thought to be a lack of funding. Despite the possibility that this is the case, empirical data has shown that only about 25% of funds or finances contribute to the success of SMEs, a seemingly small amount. Empowerment policies are intended to provide direction and aid in resolving specific problems facing a nation, but if they are ineffective, their goals may not be achieved. Corporate governance and other types of oversight are the only ways to support domestic investment. Furthermore, according to Parker and Steel (1995, p. 32), “inadequate competence and management result in 90% of all enterprise failures”. Both SMEs and the officers in charge of managing the affairs of small and medium-sized firms in Zambia perform poorly due to management concerns. It has become clear that SMEs face major obstacles when trying to access CDF for investment activities due to a lack of managerial expertise and trained personnel. The literature demonstrates that innovation must be at the core of all African administrations for development to be enhanced. Many managers are unaware of how to apply precise technology to their organizations, and they are unable to select the right technology for their company. It was acknowledged that small-scale businesses are in a different situation from large-scale businesses in terms of. Additionally, the economy of many industrialized towns in Western countries is supported by small and medium-sized businesses. In the study on the effects of COVID-19 on small enterprises in Zambia, Mukosa et al. (2020) asserts that in Zambia, small-scale businesses are colossal supporters of the economy and are dependent upon a strong working class for their survival. This literature helps us comprehend the importance of SMEs to the economy. Furthermore, according to Chishimba (2019), the Local Authorities do not follow the established rules for using equalization payments. Due to policy restrictions and conditions on how they should utilize the funds by the central government, the local authorities may experience difficulties performing their obligations efficiently; as a result, it is challenging for SMEs to gain completely from their business.

1.1. Influence of Size

The size of the informal enterprise

The administration of enterprises depends on the actual size of the SMES Company, which also paints a picture of SMEs. In actuality, a company’s structure, resources, and strategic skills are more straightforward the smaller it is. According to several studies, there is a correlation between size and cooperative endeavours like joint ventures. (Mutinelli & Piscitello, 1998). Others continue to counter that the company expands through forming alliances with other businesses. (Hagedoorn & Schakenraad, 1994). It is generally accepted that the use of cooperatives is intended to help small firms expand and that these investments get simpler to manage as a company gets bigger, thanks to the opportunities that come with joining investment cooperatives. In addition, the capacity to change as necessary.

1.2. Categories of SMEs

In Zambia, any business enterprise larger than a small enterprise that is registered with the registrar of companies and whose total investment does not include land and buildings is referred to as a medium enterprise. Manufacturing and processing businesses are categorized as being in the range of twenty-one thousand to five hundred thousand (201,001–500,000). This shows that, for the majority of our SMEs, moving from small to medium firms is very difficult because of a lack of government support (Zambia SMEs Development Policy, 2008).

1.3. Statement of the Problem

The role of SMEs in the Zambian economy cannot be overstated, but the financial challenges they encounter in running their businesses are discouraging, which has hurt their growth and also restricted their ability to drive the national economy as expected in the district. This is worrying for a developing country like Zambia that lacks the infrastructure and technology to draw a significant number of major corporations. This is concerning for a developing economy like Zambia that lacks the technology and infrastructure required to draw in significant numbers of major corporations.
firms have been drawn to the country by the growth of CDF implementation, encouraging young people to apply for funding to expand their companies. “The issue of accessing local empowerment funds remains pertinent in the economy”, continues Natalie (2004, p.15). Due to their unemployment and the resulting shortage of money, this issue is mirrored in the severely inaccessible capital markets. One researcher in Zambia raised the issue that few people apply for empowerment funding because they are afraid of getting small amounts of money because of low literacy rates. In Zambia, over 90% of SMEs operate in the informal sector, which makes it challenging for the government to support the sub-sector effectively, according to Nuwagaba’s report (2015, p. 23). The majority of SMEs are acknowledged to be unattractive prospects for banks. They aim to reduce their risk profiles, making funding or finance the most worrying and important obstacle affecting the performance of SMEs, according to Osalor (2012). It has been discovered that SMEs in Zambia rely mostly on their savings and contributions to their enterprises to grow and expand both in terms of operation and size as well as in terms of innovation. They also need genuine service support from informal type firms in addition to official financial aid.

1.4. Thematic Analysis (TA)

According to Braun and Clarke (2006), who created the technique, it has been used in several academic subjects. Finding patterns or themes in qualitative data is the process of text analysis (TA). The purpose of TA is to find themes and patterns in the data that have been gathered and employ themes in qualitative data. Finding patterns and themes in the data collected is the aim of the TA, which then uses the theme to explain the study’s topics. This approach not only interprets and understands the data more thoroughly. The primary technique for locating the theme has been identified as the interview method. In this study, we followed each of the theme steps listed in Table I.

1.5. Specific Research Objectives

In this research, we aimed to explore Small and Medium Enterprise profile opportunities in the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) in Kafue District.

1.6. Theoretical Framework

The study’s methodology was based on the strategic choice theory, which Kochan and his colleagues first put forth in the middle of the 1980s to explain how American industrial relations changed after all other modern theories fell short. A suitable theoretical viewpoint for this investigation is provided by the strategic choice theory. The operating environment of the firm, economic restrictions, and organizational structure design all have a role in strategic choice, which is the process by which managers choose the direction of strategic action (Child, 1972). According to Child (1997), strategic choice theory is a branch of organizational theory that examines how leaders or leading groups can have an impact on organizations by making decisions in a fluid political process.

1.7. Theoretical Contribution of the Study

This study also provides fresh perspectives for related research by revealing the mediating theme analysis of the constituency Development Fund’s function in SMEs’ business profiles and cooperative performance. The study demonstrates that SMEs’ decision to access and utilize the Constituency Development Fund opportunity to bridge the performance gap between market orientation and corporative enterprises has a full mediating influence on the enterprise model on the choice of the business profile. The analysis’s result demonstrates how business model innovation actively fosters the growth of construction businesses (Zahara et al., 2006). Enterprises should actively innovate and enhance the uniqueness and efficacy of business models in a dynamic and fiercely competitive environment to keep their competitive advantages (Wales et al., 2020).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE I: STAGES OF THEMATIC ANALYSIS</th>
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<td>Stage</td>
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2. Methodology

The case study research design was employed to achieve the objectives of the study. The study’s concept was excellent since it allowed the researcher to look into the Kafue District’s potential for SME profiles.

2.1. Study Area

33 participants from Zambia’s Kafue District, which is part of the province of Lusaka, took part in the study. The study was limited to SMEs that were acknowledged by the CDF policy guidelines of 2022, such as corporate entrepreneurs with at least 10 members.

2.2. Study Samples

The 33 participants in this study were divided into 18 SMEs, six members of the CDF committee, and 8 WDC from the Kafue Constituency. The results of this study were based on 33 participants who answered the questions during focus groups and interviews. The participants were the proprietors of SMEs and their staff members.

2.3. Sampling Techniques

To choose individuals who were comparable to one another and to better comprehend a phenomenon and define a specific group, the study used homogenous and expert purposive sampling. This indicates that the study’s subjects were chosen because they had attributes or characteristics with CDF and SMEs.

2.4. Data Generation and Analysis

A semi-structured interviewing process with all participants was used to gather the primary data. Eight individuals participated in the first Focus Group Discussion (FDG), and six people participated in the second Focus Group Discussion, totalling 18 semi-structured interviews, which served as the primary source of data. In this study, topics that emerged from the instruments were triangulated and probed using the two approaches. To triangulate and further explore the patterns that emerged from the instruments, data was analyzed and utilized in this study. Utilizing the thematic method, data was created and analyzed.

2.5. Ethical Considerations

The Humanities and Social Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) review number [REF.No.2023-Jan-006] provided ethical approval.

3. Results

The results of the focus group discussions and audio-recorded interviews were used to reach the conclusions. In the study, raw data that had been coded was gathered using thematic analysis. The researchers identified numerous issues about SME profile opportunities in the Kafue business community both at the time of day-to-day administration as well as start-ups of their firm using a thorough semi-structural interview guide and focus group discussion.

3.1. Different SME Profiles Opportunities

The selected sample of 33 small business operators’ opinions on facing different profile opportunities are depicted in Table II.

3.2. The Profile of SMEs in Kafue Constituency

The researcher needed to be aware of how SMEs operate or attempt to obtain funding from government constituency empowerment programs to better comprehend the profile options for SMEs. The study analyzes all SMEs as well as some of the district’s potential on a ward-by-ward basis. The first four profile SME prospects that were found in this investigation kept a list of small business standards in terms of size. The criteria established the upper boundaries for a company’s ability to obtain contracts from the local government and increase the number of jobs in the area. However, depending on the nature of the industry, having such chances is subject to restrictions that can be based on a company’s income or the number of people that it has.

The study’s findings were intriguing; Table II delineated four districts and detailed profiles of small business owners. You can see what the researcher found in the table below. They are passionate creators, freedom searchers, legacy builders, and combative survivors. According to this study, these are the profiles of SMEs in Kafue District. The profiles’ traits weren’t predetermined; rather, they
developed as a direct result of the information our respondents gave us. Regardless of their connection to Infusion Soft, each profile was uniquely distinguished from the others. Everyone who participated in the interview was a small business owner; however, their opinions on business owners varied widely depending on their profile.

3.3. Characteristics of SME Profile Opportunities

3.3.1. Passionate Creators

SMEs who are passionate about what they do and who fully understand that there are ups and downs in business, as well as seasons, are called passionate creators (Table III). No matter what their company is going through, people with this type of profile adore doing business. R7 said, “This type of business I do gives joy and love, and as a businesswoman, I achieve a sense of accomplishment and pride.” Despite being unable to obtain CDF financing, this response surfaced when asked about their objectives as small business owners. One business owner remarked, “I love my job, running a business.” Passionate creators reported that 48% of them had always known they would launch their own company. Among the business owners in this profile, 73% identified as entrepreneurs.

3.3.2. Freedom Seekers

People who fit this description started their own businesses because they value having some degree of control over their employment. The characteristics of this type of SME show that they are in control of their working environment. When questioned about their objectives, it became apparent that they wanted to free their company and had no problem forming cooperatives with other SMEs that would ultimately help them grow. 68% of those with this freedom profile never loved many conditions in their small firm, according to the investigation. According to R6, “Having the life I want comes first.” R8

### Table II: Business Operators’ Opinions on Facing Different Profile Opportunities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of SMEs</th>
<th>Nature of industries and businesses</th>
<th>Investment of SMEs</th>
<th>Characteristics of SMEs</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Manufacturing sector: Carpentry, light engineering, food processing, and handicrafts</td>
<td>SMEs that employ more than 49 people and have a capital of between $200,000 and $800,000 (Hamisi, 2011)</td>
<td>Similar to nations like Indonesia, Tanzania, and Kenya, SMEs in Zambia employ 9% of the working class Nuwagaba’s (2015, p. 23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Trading sector: Consumable products, industrial products, agricultural produce, and printing</td>
<td>SMEs with a capital of between 10–150 thousand</td>
<td>Employing less than 30 workers. 90% operate in the informal sector GRZ 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Producing food, operating hair salons and barbershops, transporting people and goods, and providing telecommunication services are all examples of the services sector. Mobile phones from Airtel and MTN (2007)</td>
<td>SMEs with a capital of less than $250,000</td>
<td>Small enterprises are found in the informal sector or the shadow economy. Micro enterprises employ less than 10 employees</td>
</tr>
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### Table III: Summary of Study Semi-Structure Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verbatim</th>
<th>Identity of codes</th>
<th>Profiles</th>
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<tr>
<td>R3 stated that “All my business is registered with all government institutions, and I have a certificate to run the business and payment of taxes”.</td>
<td>These are businesses out of love for what they do.</td>
<td>Passionate career</td>
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<td>R8 pointed out that “CDF may be difficult to access. I would rather work hard for my own things”.</td>
<td>They value influencing the employment environment.</td>
<td>Freedom seekers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R14 made the implication that “we have built a business to help secure our retirement and leave something to our children”.</td>
<td>They are practical in their nature of business, and they love manufacturing businesses.</td>
<td>Legacy builders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R5 looked bitter and sounded like a person who was struggling. True to her statement, she said, “I ran my business and am in charge of everything, but I suffer in my business because I try every business, but things seem not to work”.</td>
<td>For this type of business profile, they overwork, but they cannot see the benefits of every business they get engaged with.</td>
<td>Combative survivors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
declared, “I run the company, and I don’t feel comfortable joining any cooperative if the prerequisites are a lengthy procedure. One works alone, autonomously”.

### 3.3.3. Legacy Builders

Poverty is a major hindrance in many economies, and in Zambia, especially in Kafue, SMEs have played a significant role as legacy builders. Compared to larger firms, these low-profile business owners think they are more moral and important to the economy. They approach their responsibilities and opportunities with a practical nature. R14 said, “My business is stable. We could have a few difficulties along the way, but we can leave a legacy for our family and the neighbourhood. I am an innovator, which is why I founded this company in Kafue to make shoes as the first person to do so. I have demonstrated my goods and several programs, including agriculture”.

### 3.3.4. Combative Survivor

The SME that falls under this category exemplifies business with a hard, frigid exterior. One respondent observed that “doing business with the government nowadays was frightening because the struggle is real”. Women labour extra hours in this kind of business. Yet, they are unable to see the rewards. Due to the lack of stability among SMEs and their desire to join in every venture that is assumed to be profitable, the time spent in this profile was never adequate. Every time there is a barrier, this group of SMEs benefits the least from friends, family, or employees of the company. One participant replied, “Sir, let me tell you that because of what I go through, I’m a jack of all trades but a master of none. Not many can”. R6: “I have struggled to obtain assistance through Constituency Development Fund applications, but nothing has worked for me. The best course of action is to apply for CDF, and I have done so numerous times, but I am not applying this time to prevent issues and high blood pressure. It truly sucks that we have to go through this effort each time we apply because there are so few rewards, and I have never profited from CDF empowerment in the beginning”.

### 3.4. Details of the SME Respondents for Interview Session on Profile Opportunities

Table IV shows a total of 18 respondents under the individual SMEs who went through a semi-structural interview guide, and the findings were similar to focus group discussions. The SMEs were categorized into two types of businesses, namely Goods and Services SMEs. 10 respondents (56%) identified themselves as SMEs involved in goods or products; meanwhile, 44% (8 respondents) identified themselves as the type of business to do with services.

### 3.5. Job Creation

The findings in the study noted that the Constituency Development fund has a role in the development or growth of small and medium-sized enterprises to create growth in the businesses and more jobs for the youths and women. One respondent argued that “CDF contributes to job creation and productivity growth. In particular, it has shown that job creation is happening in every part of constituencies in Zambia and here in Kafue we are seeing the good aspect of CDF and small businesses which were closing
up because they lacked capital, when they accessed CDF it was like a fresh mandate to run their businesses one again”.

3.6. Creation of New Policies

Small and medium-sized businesses flourish when strong policies are established in a country because of the welcoming atmosphere and policies that provide SMEs with a competitive advantage to work even more for social and economic growth. The influence of CDF on SMEs, according to one responder, “cannot be properly comprehended. A better knowledge of high-growth companies could result in government policy changes to increase their contributions to economic growth. The community anticipates that if CDF becomes an effective business strategy, any remaining grey areas will be filled in by drafting a new CDF policy”. According to R17, “the CDF continues to provide difficulties for SME applicants and fund managers. The rationale is straightforward: as it is a new policy, there is still room for error on the part of both the government and SMEs”.

3.7. Economic and Social Development

When a society has no economic activity happening, we classify that society as static in terms of development. R8 viewed that, “as a matter of fact, CDF is a game changer of lives. Many lives will never be the same if the funds being accessed is utilized accordingly”. R4 specified that “The coming of CDF has created a lot of massive development for SMEs. Many businesses have been awarded opportunities to access capital, and the skills they get from trade schools and colleges enhance corporate business”. Another respondent added, “The CDF is contributing to development as we speak. We have many small businesses with skills, and this skill, when utilized within the district, is a serious economic development at family, community and national levels. Our youths and women are able to survive from economic hardship through the skills they have acquired”.

4. Discussion

4.1. SME Profile Opportunities through CDF in Kafue District

4.1.1. Project Management Opportunities

The study discovered that the skills and experience of the project management committee influence the implementation of initial projects in the study area. The study shows that the project management committee was responsible for controlling the activities of implementing all the CDF projects. These are projects that were initiated by cooperatives in the constituency for development. The skills and experience are needed among our CDF committees for the best implementation of CDF projects and experience in choosing contractors who should be able to benefit from the empowerment, but when there is poor implementation, it was obvious that the committee were still gaining skill and experience on how to run projects in the district. The study noted that it was still a challenge for the committee to have the best solutions at the time of crisis. In short, the study found that there were low levels of skills training in the study.

4.1.2. Managerial Inspiration

It was noted that most of our SMEs in the district did not know which profile they belonged to, and there was no correct profile strategic planning in the business industry for SMEs. The management inspiration for small and medium enterprises was not satisfying among individual enterprises and corporate businesses due to a lack of strategic choices in a dynamic environment. Due to this gap, several SMEs were not coordinated at the ward development and constituency level as it was anticipated. The committees are involved with SMEs at the first stage of applying, but the selection of bidders, procurement of materials, monitoring of projects, implementation and evaluation were not inspiring because the SMEs had no opportunity such as representation. The managerial inspiration was minimal to work as a collective entity between managers and corporate business. Similar findings are also made by Zhou et al. (2022, p. 30), who notes that “the external system’s design and business backdrop have caused larger enterprise needs. Businesses should consider social and environmental elements such as industry growth patterns and the status of technological innovation, as well as external economic and institutional policies, cultural considerations, and legal and regulatory frameworks.” To ensure that local government and committees are well-matched when administering the cooperatives for SMEs in the district, SMEs should be prepared to adapt their operations. Without cooperation, substantial development will never be made.

4.1.3. Influence of Management Training

The results of the Kafue SMEs profile study revealed that these companies work hard to run their operations and qualify as major beneficiaries of constituency development money. Because business
Leadership is a serious tool which is needed in managing CDF in every constituency of the district to experience massive development. We need quality management in running the affairs of SMEs. Leadership is needed in those who identify themselves as SMEs. SME members of cooperatives also play a significant role in society by helping to cover the costs incurred by individual SME members who join cooperative enterprises. These cooperatives frequently hire a significant portion of the workforce's most vulnerable groups. Increasing this company's competitiveness would lower the young unemployment rate and boost the number of women in the workforce. The reduction of social exclusion and the improvement of productive capacities would both advance the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations. CDF may be the right opportunity for SMEs to boost their businesses. Unfortunately, others without quality leadership fail to utilize the funds well, either through grants or loans. It is in this vain that through CDF, managers for businesses need to have skills in leadership to manage public funds for the development of the community.

4.2. Disaster Management for SME Survival

In this study, it was discovered that the findings agree with other authors on natural disasters. SMEs fail to operate during natural disasters, and a lot of them experience expenses during the time of floods or rainy seasons because of bad conditions of roads, especially in rural areas and transport becomes so expensive to ferry their merchandise to and from marketplaces. The findings indicate that, during COVID-19 in 2021, the local council authority could not find any solutions to help such small businesses in the district. It's sufficient to mention that disaster obstructions differ based on the environment in Africa. The local council authority could not find any solutions to help such small businesses in the district due to a lack of funds. SME members of cooperatives also play a significant role in society by helping to cover the costs incurred by individual SME members who join cooperative enterprises. These cooperatives frequently hire a significant portion of the workforce's most vulnerable groups. Increasing this company's competitiveness would lower the young unemployment rate and boost the number of women in the workforce. The reduction of social exclusion and the improvement of productive capacities would both advance the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations. OECD (2021) quoted the Oxford Stringency Index (April 2021) that the COVID-19 pandemic has led to a more integrated approach to SME support. The MSME guidelines cover a wide array of laws and regulations of importance to SMEs, such as finance, digitalization, labour, skills, procurement, and health. The study, which was done, shows that Chile's entrepreneurship and policy framework was defined by a multi-action-annual action plan. This study is contrary to what is happening in Zambia. The findings of the researcher indicate that when disasters strike, no action plan for SMEs needs help through CDF, but the emergency fund seems to be just academic work on a piece of work.

4.3. Lack of Information and Unnecessary Procedure

The purpose of CDF was to help the communities by bringing development, not for political mileage. It's disheartening to learn that most of the policies and guidelines are not followed because implementers take CDF as an alien program by all answerable officers. With the information gathered around rural responses from Shimabala ward, Lukolongo and Kabweza ward, it's noted that the Ward development committee overcharges applicants in a manner in which they ask a little money time and again for their applications to be successful. However, it is believed that if massive sensitization on how to apply and the benefits of CDF was done in the constituency, we would not have a few applicants in the district that have contributed to low uptake of CDF.
4.4. Contracts Opportunities

It was discovered that SMEs and cooperatives struggle to win tenders connected to CDF. When projects were identified, and bidders submitted the requirements from the study, it was found that the local SMEs lost out on these opportunities in Kafue, and most of the contractors were not from the constituency. It was found that contractors are never considered as they are pictured not to have quality standard tools and experience to deliver standard projects that will stand the test of time. One district constituency committee member official supported the idea of not selecting a contractor of little skill to empower that SME. According to the officers, the constituency development fund is not for jokers but for heavenly sake; it was meant for community development that will benefit members. The findings show that the failure of local SMEs to be awarded contracts for projects is the fear of sub-standard projects which can’t last longer and that, within a few years, the building has become dilapidated. The committee believed that highly unskilled SMEs are a loss to the community, which was why they scrutinized the applicants and selected the right contractor as they followed the requirements to have the best.

According to the study’s findings, the Kafue constituency’s small and medium-sized businesses have faced numerous obstacles lately, in addition to various opportunities to operate and establish their companies. The study found that SMEs across all of their profile areas, regardless of age, size, or turnover, considered that several failures greatly affected their profitability and that the majority of the time, the existence of the business itself is in doubt. Now, the situation in the district, according to the findings, is slowly changing towards the attitude display of local civic and national leaders to initiate necessary measures faced by SMEs or corporate businesses. The initiation of the constituency development fund has come as a serious opportunity to support corporate enterprise and is seen as a tool for business growth change.

4.5. Business Opportunities

The researcher’s collection of small business owners’ perspectives on potential business opportunities in the Kafue neighbourhood is particularly noteworthy. From the findings, it was clear that the constituency development fund (CDF) brought mammoth business opportunities in retailing, leather goods, gems and jewellery, both interior and outdoor decoration, ready-made garments, finance and Shantumbu quarry mines business in the district. One of the opportunities for SMEs within cooperatives is to access the constituency development fund (CDF) and build a long-term business that protects individual businesses within a corporate business. The agro-based industries like dairy, poultry, sheep, goat, and food-processing, spa clinics, printing and binding, internet and photocopying centres, mini-passengers and transportation industry, restaurants, and customized, fast food centres are also considered direct investments based on SMEs' interest in a significant portion of potential small businesses.

4.6. Women Opportunities

When women were questioned about whether they had tried alternative means of obtaining funding to expand their businesses apart from the women’s village banking that they have done, the replies from the survey indicated that it has been challenging to acquire sufficient funding. Others appreciated it, and others proved that other avenues of funds were at a substantial risk of embarrassment compared to the Constituency Development Fund. From the findings, we can agree with Heather (2013) who quoted Meier & Missonier (2009), who studied women in Ethiopia, that they were disadvantaged in growing their businesses due to finances. The failure rate for women-owned small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) in Ethiopia is 78%, despite their ownership of up to 30% of SMEs, confronting challenges such as the inability to obtain loans from formal lenders like commercial banks, inadequate managerial abilities, low levels of education, and restricted access to networking opportunities and information. About the cultural bias that lending to women is too dangerous because it is believed that they are less capable of managing a business than men, Narian’s (2009) statement still holds today, supporting the conclusions of this study. Men were considered superior to women in the study, which was fully conscious of such prejudices. As a result, because they were guys, CDF refused to pay them benefits. This bias arises from embedded social norms and culture. The findings of this study prove further that women in rural business need huge capital to stand for a more extended period due to many challenges most rural women path through as a result of family. Most women entrepreneurs, when they have pressure in terms of family, typically shift their business to support family and allow the businesses to suffer. Little (1991), quoted by Stavriani (2015), mentioned that self-employment in rural areas can be seen as disadvantageous to women, for while some women may find it liberating to organize their employment, the majority are reluctant, for various reasons, to assume personal responsibility. They have no access to money or to the formal and informal networks that can help in providing the advice, training and even premises that would allow them to start their businesses.
4.6.1. Influence of Family or Non-Family on Organizational Structure

Others who disagree with the conclusions that most firms are small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) contend that SMEs are not the same as family businesses or that all SMEs are not family enterprises. The family business, as perceived by others as a family business, is neither a corporate type nor has its unique regulations. The survey found that family businesses typically start as SMEs because obtaining the necessary funding to grow can be challenging, particularly in the beginning. Over time, if a good opportunity is found and the relevant risks are taken, the family business could continue to grow. Another understanding is that family plays a key role in describing some of the profile opportunities of SMEs in Kafue District. It was found that some of the businesses are controlled by families. The family inherits the business according to the generation, and this form of business is classified as legacy builders (SMEs). Gallo (2004) affirms what we have found, saying that a company is considered a family business if just one family owns and operates it. This SME profile puts all of the control and financial resources in the hands of the offspring or blood relatives.

Furthermore, Menguzzato and Dasi (1999) state that this legacy builder business aims to pass it on to another generation. This characteristic makes us suspect hesitation on their part in this regard because maintaining strategic autonomy is a top concern for managers who are family members of the business. Collaborative growth may seem like a good option for this type of business because it is a faster method of growth than internal development and allows them to maintain their independence, unlike growth, which so-called family businesses prefer to give up if it threatens business control.

4.6.2. Technology Opportunities

The SMEs struggle to access information and this is one of the causes of low uptake of CDF in many districts. Modern management practices and the use of cutting-edge technology will enable businesses to compete effectively in the market and meet a variety of obstacles. Technology affects chances for SME profiles, according to some academics. Sharon et al. (2016) support the findings of this study that many individual businesses have gone into human health investment, such as drug stores or private clinics, and to enhance production, their enterprise receives technology opportunities by accessing the information on the internet and using other applications on the internet. Our SMEs found that technology opportunities were not utilized well, and applying for funds online was a serious challenge which would require training of some kind. Most of the business of respondents did not use technology opportunities to increase their business.

4.7. Classification of SMEs within Cooperatives

From the study findings, cooperatives can be classified either by sector, industry or by the number of activities the cooperatives are involved in. A cooperative which is involved in only one type of business activity is called a single-purpose cooperative; a cooperative which has more than one type of business activity but within the same sector is called a multi-purpose cooperative. From the findings, cooperatives and other businesses from social groups or economic organizations differ. Cooperatives are owned by the members who are also customers of the organization’s services, unlike the majority of commercial organizations, which are investor corporations controlled by shareholders who have invested money in a business venture. The results suggest that SMEs may gain from government empowerment through designated cooperatives to develop their communities, to put it briefly. The results show that through member education and leadership possibilities on the board of directors, cooperatives develop local human capital. Directors, staff workers, and members who do not sit on the board are frequently offered educational opportunities in fields unrelated to the core business. A duty to educate members is a traditional cooperative principle. For example, some cooperatives pay for members to attend leadership conferences or industry meetings, or they organize their own workshops. CDF can be accessed well through a cooperative than as an individual who seeks to benefit from empowerment.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1. Conclusion

To access the Constituency Development Fund in the Kafue district, the goal of this study was to analyze thematically the SME profile potential. The study concentrated on small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) that turned to the government’s request for them to organize cooperatives to gain financial empowerment. In reality, 33 small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) in the Kafue District responded to the survey, which was used to collect the data. The research questions enabled us to study whether elements or traits like age, size, management training, and company profile structure (family or no family) and corporate propensity to employ collaborative growth in their firms. The
study was able to pinpoint some SMEs’ traits in the Kafue District. Each profile opportunity came with some obstacles for SMEs, and some of the problems observed in all the profiles of SMEs were a lack of technology, a lack of skills, a government fiscal policy that was unfavourable, and a lack of accountability in the money allocation. The researcher discovered throughout the study that the use of enterprise cooperatives represents an intriguing strategic option for SMEs to receive constituency development funds, given their limited strategic capacities to be able to buy equipment and other business materials at the individual level. It was discovered that SMEs might maintain control of their enterprises by forming alliances through a cooperative of ten members. Only a small portion of our sample had been participating in cooperatives for the last two years and had been able to observe results, but it is clear from the study’s findings that Kafue SMEs were still hesitant to employ other enterprises to join cooperatives. The remaining individuals were merely associations, social groups, and members of society who adhered to the criteria.

5.2. Recommendations

Following recommendations were made, among others, considering the study’s findings.

1. There is a need to ensure that a district action plan is formulated every year to manage the geographical factors of a constituency. This is to assist the officers in charge of managing CDF among small and medium enterprises.
2. A new criterion on SMEs’ access to the Constituency Development Fund is required to ensure that officers in charge of monitoring and implementation receive separate financing.
3. To increase the likelihood that small businesses in the constituency will use the constituency development fund, the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development and its CDF stakeholders should see to it that communities are made aware of the various SME opportunities that come with it.
4. There is a need to make an appropriate assessment of the profile of SMEs in Kafue based on their corporate classification by the Ministry of Small and Medium Enterprises Development.
5. There is a need to ensure that line ministries are integrated into the CDF policy guidelines to strengthen the implementation of Constituency Development Fund projects in the district. As it stands, other ministries have no legal backing that clearly shows their mandate in the disbursement of CDF to small businesses.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relations that could be construed as a potential conflict or competing interests.

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