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# Addressing information poverty in enhancing Small and Medium-scale Enterprises for economic growth in the Global South

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**Keywords:** Access to information; Business information; Economic growth; Information Infrastructure; Information literacy; Information poverty; SMEs; Global South

**A**bstract**B**ackground: The need for economic growth among the nations of the Global South has necessitated inquiries into Small and Medium-scale Enterprises (SMEs) as drivers of such growth. However, how well SMEs will function is determined by certain factors like information poverty, which places entrepreneurs as vulnerable users of business information.**P**urpose: The article explored factors that address information poverty toward enhancing SMEs for economic growth in the Global South..**M**ethodology: The study adopted a Rapid Literature Review (RLR) approach to synthesise literature on how addressing concepts of information poverty (information literacy, access to information and information infrastructure) would enhance SMEs in the nations of the Global South. EBSCOhost, ProQuest, and Google Scholar were used for the review, which hinged on four eligibility criteria: methodology, publication year, language and publication source.**F**indings: The study found that information literacy positions entrepreneurs with the right skills to grow their enterprises in the information-driven economy, impacting their business performances. The analyses also showed that access to required information predicts entrepreneurs' business growth and sustainability. Moreover, the study found information infrastructure as an essential asset in improving the competitiveness of SME owners leading to their business growth. These three factors (information literacy, access to information and information infrastructure) were found to be crucial in addressing information poverty toward the growth of SMEs.**C**onclusion: The study concluded that when entrepreneurs possess information literacy, and have unhindered access to information and information infrastructures, there will be a better performance in their enterprises, which will in turn impact the economic growth of nations in the Global South.

## Introduction

Every nation's economic development and prosperity are primarily fuelled by the activities of Small and Medium-scale Enterprises (SMEs). SMEs are crucial to the growth of the local economy since they have major roles in job creation, poverty alleviation and economic expansion (Gherghina et al., 2020). The World Bank in Umar et al. (2020) affirmed that SMEs are vital to most economies; in emerging markets, they create 7 out of 10 jobs and account for the highest number of jobs globally, thus contributing immensely to job creation and expansion of the global economy. Thus, SMEs are relevant to the global economic revamp as well as driving economic growth and development across the nations of the World.

In Nigeria, SMEs have been seen to have a remarkable role in revitalizing the economy and providing opportunities for citizens. In line with this, Adekoya

(2018) opined that they contributed 54% to the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2013 and approximately 84% to the nation's labour force in 2014. They provide about three million jobs as of December 2017 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2019), and make up roughly 50% of manufacturing production and 70% of industrial jobs (Ogunmuyiwa & Okunleye, 2019). Therefore, the growth of these enterprises in terms of production becomes germane to national economic growth. This is informed by their contribution to job creation and, by extension, poverty eradication through entrepreneurship, increasing GDP (Adeosun & Shittu, 2022), creating employment opportunities (Porter & Kramer, 2019) and enhancing the quality of life (Erdirin & Ozkaya, 2020).

The analysis of previous studies (Batrancea, 2022, and Gumel & Bardai, 2023) has shown the influence of several factors, stimulating or impeding the economic growth of SMEs. These factors range from personal or internal factors like level of education and managerial competence; to business environment factors like competition and access to finance; and government-related factors like policies and legislation. However, there is a dearth of studies examining SME owners with regard to information-related variables and their influence on the economic growth of their enterprises. This study thus opens up an exploration of this area by examining how information poverty experienced by SME owners could affect their enterprises.

Information poverty has become an issue of concern to people, organizations, societies and nations because of its potency in affecting productivity. Information has been considered as the fifth factor of production (Limarevet al., 2018); its scarcity becomes a hindrance to production processes and as such affects economic growth. Information poverty, a term related to information inequality, information divide and data poverty, is a state where individuals, groups, and countries do not have access to sufficient information that is required to meet their needs (Al-Zaman, 2023). Information poverty is the situation in which individuals and communities, within a given context, do not have the requisite skills, abilities, infrastructure or material means to obtain efficient access to information, interpret it and apply it appropriately (International Federation of Library Association and Institutions, 2018). While people are saddled with the need for varied types of information to make life-changing decisions, it is expected that access to such information should become a fundamental right. This is in line with the opinion of Liambomba (2023) that access to information should be considered as a basic and instrumental human right that should precede other forms of rights. However, this right is compromised by information poverty which creates information-related inequalities (Gibson & Martin III, 2019). This calls for urgent intervention in addressing information poverty generally and among SME owners who are in dire need of information for increased production and to stimulate economic growth in the Global South.

Information poverty, as a deprivation of information, information infrastructure and access skills, directly undermines the sustainability of SMEs. Lack of quality business information among SME owners will significantly hinder their abil-

ity to make effective business decisions; and according to Denanyoh and Owusu (2025), poor strategic and managerial decisions are part of why small businesses fail. Also, information poverty exposes SMEs owners to unhealthy business risk and business operational failure. It is affirmed that lack of information on new developments and production, and inadequate use of information infrastructure are some of the causes of organizational failure (Hariyani et al., 2024), which compromises economic growth. SMEs are strongly anchored on information (Takacs et al., 2022), reflecting the relevance of addressing information variables for the sustainability of SMEs for economic growth.

Information has been considered a vital instrument for SMEs in leveraging production and performance outcomes. Igbinovia and Odelami (2019) affirmed that information availability and use influence the economic integration of SMEs, enabling these enterprises to freely carryout economic activities with minimal hindrances. Thus, SME owners' access to information and management of information would determine the extent of their business success (Egwuonwu & Osuchukwu, 2021). By implication, information poverty defined by the lack of requisite ability to access and manage information (Britz in Al-Zaman, 2023) will lead to the failure of SMEs. This has implications for addressing information poverty among SME owners as a stride towards enhancing their economic growth. Moreover, Information poverty is a serious problem in the Global South, yet there is a scarcity of publications on information poverty in this region compared to the Global North, which creates a scholarly imbalance or knowledge gap (Skopec et al., 2020), that this study intends to fill.

## Conceptualization of the Study

The study was carried out to investigate how addressing information poverty would enhance SMEs towards economic growth. The concept of information poverty was delineated to reflect three core dimensions or variables which are of concern to this study, as depicted in Figure 1 below.

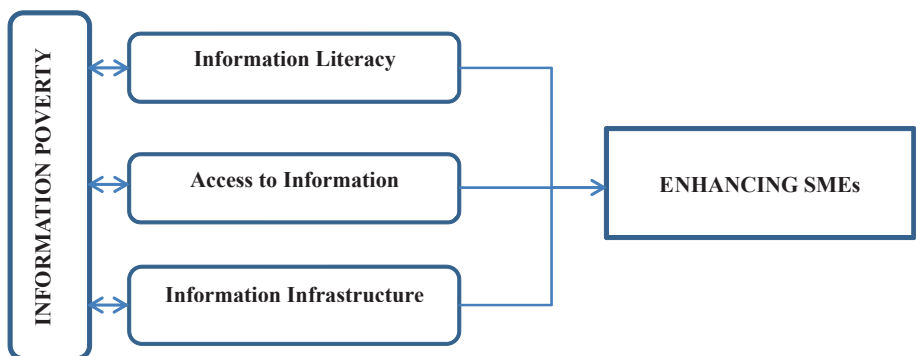


Figure 1: The Conceptual Model

Source: Developed by the authors

The conceptual model suggests that variables of information poverty (information literacy, access to information and information infrastructure) are likely to interact with and enhance SMEs. These identified variables of information poverty are interactive, implying that they could influence each other, towards enhancing SMEs. For instance, information literacy enhances access to information (Owira & Mwanzu, 2022); access to information in turn could strengthen information literacy skills (Ikenwe & Anaehobi, 2020). By implication, information literacy increases an individual's capacity to access, evaluate and use information, while access to information equips individuals with the resources to develop their information literacy skills. While access to information focuses mainly on getting the information, information literacy deals with its effective management. Also, with information literacy, people can utilise information infrastructure, and conversely, information infrastructure enhances information literacy (Akpovire et al., 2019). Information infrastructure provides access to information (Afzal, 2012). Afzal noted further that such information access is made possible because information infrastructure enables the creation, production, dissemination, storage, retrieval and preservation of information and knowledge. Therefore, these information variables are considered to be related and they depict a web of relationships that could be explored to address the information poverty of SME owners.

Furthermore, the model suggests that the menace of information poverty can be addressed by a high level of information literacy, access to information and adequate information infrastructure. Conversely, poor information literacy, lack of access to information, and inadequate information infrastructure could worsen the state. These information variables acting as dependent variables could enhance SMEs positively towards economic growth. The model serves as a conceptual structure that guides the organization of the study.

## Objectives of the Study

The overall objective or purpose of the study was to examine how addressing information poverty would enhance SMEs for economic growth in the Global South. To achieve this, the specific objectives were to examine how:

1. Information literacy enhances SMEs for economic growth in the Global South.
2. Access to information enhances SMEs for economic growth in the Global South.
3. Information infrastructures enhance SMEs for economic growth in the Global South.

## Methodology

The study adopted a Rapid Literature Review (RLR) approach. According to Smela et al. (2023, 2), “a rapid review is a form of knowledge synthesis that accelerates the process of conducting a traditional systematic review through streamlining or omitting a variety of methods to produce evidence in a resource-efficient manner”. This method was adopted to enable the researchers to synthesise available literature on how information poverty can be addressed in order to enhance SMEs towards ensuring economic growth. To achieve this RLR, EBSCOhost (Academic Search Complete) and ProQuest, which contain a high volume of scholarly works in information science, business management and social sciences, were adopted as the information source. This was complimented by Google Scholar due to its broad scope and accessibility; and as a valuable source of grey literature for the study.

The eligibility criteria for including or excluding literature in the review were grouped based on methodology, publication year, language, and publication source, as shown in Table 2 below:

**Table 1**

Eligibility Criteria for the Review

Source: Developed by the authors

S/N	Eligibility items	Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
1.	Methodology	Articles that are either qualitative, quantitative or mixed. Also, reviews (scoping, systematic, narrative and rapid reviews).	Interventions and experimental research (pre-experimental, quasi-experimental and pure experimental research).
2.	Publication source	Articles published in journals, books, book chapters, conference proceedings professional blogs/websites and newspaper reports.	Editorials and letters to the editor.
3.	Language	Articles published in English or with an English translation available.	Articles that are not published in English or with no English translation available.
4.	Publication year	Articles published between 2019 to 2024.	Articles that are not published within 2019 to 2024.

As shown in Table 1, the four eligibility criteria adopted for the review helped to define the search process and filter literature that would be included or excluded from the study. The methodology criteria refer to the approach used in

conducting the study. This RLR included various approaches and excluded those perceived to be irrelevant to the nature of this study, which are interventions and experiments. Because of the peculiarity of this review and the scarcity of literature experienced from the initial search, the RLR accommodated a broad publication source from which information can be retrieved to substantiate the position of this review. Although professional blogs/websites and newspapers are not subjected to rigorous quality control mechanisms, they are considered valuable primary sources of information that can improve this study. Given the language proficiency of the authors, only articles published in the English language alone or which are so translated were considered for the study. Moreover, given the timeliness of RLR and the need to synthesise only recent literature, the publication year for consideration was articles published between 2019 and 2024, a five years time-frame. However, few exceptions were made to the timeline out of necessity, i.e. where no recent work(s) was/were found to support a claim.

In searching the identified databases, a comprehensive search strategy was carried out, which included the development of search strings. The objectives of the study were used to generate the search strings. These search strings were (1) “information literacy” AND “economic growth” AND SMEs (2) “information access” AND “economic growth” AND SMEs (3) “information infrastructure” AND “economic growth” AND SMEs. The search strings were entered into the databases and customized by relevance. The results from the search were subjected to a preliminary screening process using titles and abstracts to expunge irrelevant and duplicate results. The full-text materials were further screened for content relevance. The authors evaluated the reliability and credibility of the selected studies to ensure the integrity of the review. Only quality and pertinent sources were included in the final analysis, which streamlined the search results used for the review.

## **Information Literacy as Enhancer of SMEs for Economic Growth**

The analysis of literature on information poverty revealed that information literacy is a major component of information poverty. That is, a lack of information literacy displayed in people’s inability to manage (identify need, find, evaluate and use) information, will deepen the incidence of information poverty. Conversely, information literacy will transcend SME owners or Entrepreneurs from the state of information poverty to being information rich with increased capacity to grow their enterprise. Orrensalo et al. (2024) in their systematic literature review on Entrepreneurs’ information-seeking behaviour affirmed that information literacy is one of the most important literacies for entrepreneurial activities which enables them to grow in the digital world. In a similar empirical study using Nigerian digital entrepreneurs, it was revealed that Entrepreneurs with higher critical information literacy are better equipped to deal with digital information sources in today’s in-



formation-based economy, with greater ability to effectively and efficiently obtain and use relevant information in their startup journey (Ibrahim, 2023). It is thus implied that the information literacy of entrepreneurs is vital to their startup, adaptation and growth in an information-driven economy. According to Hasdiansa and Hasbiah (2023), when information literacy is enhanced, it enables owners of SMEs to seize new opportunities, adapt to changes in market conditions and invariably contribute to economic growth and development of the region.

An empirical study was conducted by Hasdiansa and Hasbiah (2023) to investigate the determinants of small enterprises' performance in the culinary industry in Makassar City, Indonesia. This study's population consisted of all 289 small culinary enterprises registered with the Office of Cooperatives and SMEs in Makassar, 74 of which were sampled for the study. Responses that were retrieved using a questionnaire were analysed descriptively and inferentially. The result of the analysis showed that information literacy and entrepreneurial behaviour had favourable and significant impact on small business performance in Makassar's culinary industry. It is the position of the authors that strengthening information literacy among other measures will positively influence the performance and success of SMEs.

The performance of women-owned SMEs in the South-west region of Nigeria was among the variables examined in the study by Omiunu (2019). One of the null hypotheses generated for the study was "There is no significant relationship between e-literacy and business information strategy adopted by women-owned SMEs in Southwestern, Nigeria". The study used a correlational survey research design while a multistage sampling technique was used to select a sample size of 240 women-owned SMEs in Oyo State, Southwestern, Nigeria. However, 236 were retrieved, resulting in a 94.4% response rate. The result showed that information literacy and digital literacy were the variables under investigation that were statistically significant. By implication, information literacy and digital literacy have a significant influence on the business information strategy of women-owned SMEs in Oyo State, Nigeria. Moreover, Bosman et al. (2023) discovered from their study that information literacy exercises develop the entrepreneurial mindset of people. This mindset is needed by owners of SMEs in growing their business enterprise, and to remain relevant in the face of the industrial revolution. This is in tandem with the assertion of Abdila and Saputro (2022) that the 4.0 industrial revolution has compelled Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise (MSME) actors to digitize their businesses by developing digital and information literacy. This is a strategic step towards boosting MSMEs.

A study that investigated the influence of information literacy, training and ICT competence on the job performance of Artisans in three states in North Central Nigeria was carried out by Oyetunji (2023). One of the study's objectives was to examine if information literacy would affect the performance of Artisans who naturally fall within SMEs. The study revealed that information literacy enables the Artisans to improve their job, better their records keeping, enhance their iden-

tification of relevant information, and guides them in sourcing raw materials for their craftwork, which eventually makes them perform better. This better performance would likely improve their productivity and economic growth. Also, how the managerial performance of SMEs is influenced by information literacy and tolerance of ambiguity was the crux of Meutia et al.'s (2019) investigation. This study surveyed 52 SME managers and owners in Banten Province in Indonesia. The retrieved data were tested using a structural model test to ascertain the relationship between constructs. The findings of the study revealed that information literacy had a significant positive effect on strategic management accounting and managerial performance. The study reinforces the need for SMEs to possess information literacy to achieve progress in the dynamic business environment. Besides general information literacy, specific information literacy has also been investigated in the context of SMEs.

The role of financial information literacy in strategic decision-making effectiveness and sustainable performance among agribusiness entrepreneurs in Nigeria was examined by Obi-Anike et al. (2023). The study surveyed 397 "agribusiness entrepreneurs registered with the Edo State Agricultural Development Programme for the Central Bank of Nigeria Anchored Borrower's Programme (ADP) for farming businesses". The analysis of retrieved data showed that financial information literacy had a significant impact on the performance sustainability of agribusiness entrepreneurs. Also, the study found a relationship between financial information literacy and strategic decision-making effectiveness among agribusiness entrepreneurs. This establishes the places of financial information literacy in the performance, sustainability and decision-making effectiveness of SMEs as a stride towards ensuring economic growth.

Moreover, the workplace information literacy and organizational innovation of Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) of SMEs was studied by Ahmad et al. (2020). The survey was carried out using 184 company CEOs in Finland. The study revealed that information literacy positively impacts the development of innovations (exploratory and exploitative) in SMEs. It also improves the enterprise's flexibility in innovation. This is capable of improving the production scale of the enterprise, as such leading to economic growth. By implication, the dearth of information literacy among SME owners could cripple businesses and hinder their sustainability. In light of this, Mubofu et al. (2023) noted that a lack of information literacy would hinder infopreneurs from exploiting opportunities capable of sustaining their existence. This reaffirms information literacy as a critical variable in enhancing SMEs towards economic growth. From the foregoing, information literacy is considered a tool for economic growth in the current dispensation characterized by a myriad of business and financial information requiring specialized skills for effective management. Another characteristic of this dispensation is the prevalence and adoption of digital marketing among SMEs owners. The effective utilization of digital marketing for business sustainability is facilitated by information literacy which is a component of digital fluency (Lathabhavan & Kuppusamy, 2023). Thus,

information literacy positions SME owners to be relevant in the global market. This is because information literacy equips them with the required skills to take advantage of global business opportunities and increase their chance of sustainable business growth.

## **Access to Information as an Enhancer of SMEs for Economic Growth**

Studies have revealed that access to information will bridge the information gap and address the menace of information poverty among people (Al-Zaman, 2023). Since information poverty connotes a lack of access to required information, it naturally implies that access to information will eradicate information poverty. As such, this section examined studies that justify how access to information enhances the economic growth of SMEs. For clarity and in the context of this study, although there is a meeting point between information literacy and access to information, they are considered as two different variables. While information literacy is a set of abilities that include the ability to access information, it has other components like the ability to recognize an information need, evaluate and use information, which makes it holistic (Hasdiansa & Hasbiah, 2023). However, access to information as a concept in this study encompasses an individual's ability to access, accessibility of an information source and barriers to information access. Inadequate access to information causes SME owners to experience information poverty (Ndumu & Mabi, 2021) which is unhealthy for business growth. As such, addressing access to information becomes a gateway to enhancing SMEs for economic growth.

Msomi et al. (2022) carried out an investigation of access to information, access to competition, and performance of SMEs in Durban, South Africa. The study was inspired by the authors' belief that the poor performance of SMEs among other things is a result of a lack of access to information. The study adopted a quantitative method, which was backed by the positivist paradigm. The study used a sample size of 140 SMEs. A purposive sampling technique was employed to recruit SME owners, in the province of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa, as respondents of the study. Thus a total of 250 SMEs were selected out of 295 SMEs whose emails were accessible and with which data were collected using Question Pro. Out of the 250 copies of the questionnaire sent, 140 copies were retrieved and four were not duly completed. The remaining data were subjected to descriptive and regression analysis. The result from the regression analysis showed that access to information is a predictor of SME performance. Specifically, the finding revealed that access to information accounted for a 26% variance in SMEs performance. By implication, when SME owners have access to information, their performance increases significantly; which invariably impacts the economic growth of their enterprises.

The study of Hussain et al. (2020) examined the moderating role of entrepreneurs' education between contextual variables and SMEs' growth and development in Mirpur, Azad Jammu and Kashmir in Pakistan. The study as part of its hypotheses aimed to ascertain if the availability and access to relevant information would positively and significantly impact the growth and development of SMEs. The study covered SMEs in agriculture, manufacturing, retailing and services in the three areas under investigation. A self-administered questionnaire was used to elicit responses from the SME owners and therefore subjected to descriptive, correlation and regression analyses. The result shows that SME growth and development had a positive correlation with information access ( $r = 0.357$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This result implied a significant and positive relationship between information access and the growth and development of SMEs. The outcome of the study supports the notion that when SME owners are provided with access to quality information (relevant and timely), they are able to enjoy the growth and development of their enterprises which results in economic growth of the nation.

Although there seems to be a scarcity of empirical investigation on how access to information enhances SMEs for economic growth, there are some theoretical assertions that support the relationship. According to Isac and Badshah (2019), a lack of information about related issues within the context of one's business could pose an obstacle to the business growth of SMEs, while access to sufficient information will enhance their growth. This supports the assertion of Amoro (2019) that SMEs require access to information to increase their production and promote market access. The author furthered by noting that access to and use of excellent business information are crucial for enhancing the growth of SMEs in both developed and developing countries. Thus, SMEs grow by the adequacy of quality information at their disposal, which invariably impacts their contribution to economic growth in the Global South.

Abdila and Saputro (2022) asserted that Indonesia is challenged by several factors including limitations in accessing available information which adversely affect the development of their MSMEs on a scale from national to international. They implied that unhindered access to information is critical to the growth of MSMEs for a robust international market thus contributing to the nation's economic growth. Similarly, Ibrahim (2023) opined that access to a wide range of information enables entrepreneurs to launch their businesses through the discovery of new opportunities, reduce costs, access new markets, increase efficiency and connect effectively with customers and investors. Access to information is often a response to information need, Orrensalo et al., (2024) noted that such need propels entrepreneur to adopt several strategies to access information on specific areas to solve their entrepreneurial problems. By implication, when SME owners are faced with enterprise-related problems, accessing the right information is a means to solving the problem for sustainability and growth.

Information access is considered a strategy for SMEs to access business loans that are required to stabilise and grow businesses for job creation and pov-

erty eradication (Ahmed, 2019). Such information access is a pointer to loan facilities that are vital for business startups (Patnaik & Pasumarti, 2020). Information access can have a significant impact on the success of SMEs. This assertion is empirically supported by the investigation of Jeremiah et al. (2021), whose findings revealed that the performance of SMEs is influenced by access to business information. These revelations have practical implications for providing relevant and quality information as an enhancer of SMEs towards improving the economic growth.

## **Information Infrastructures as Enhancer of SMEs for Economic Growth**

Information infrastructure is a concept that has attracted various interpretations and received several meanings, as such it is quite multifaceted. According to Kumar et al. (2021), the definition of information infrastructure varies according to discipline and circumstance. The authors referred to the concept as a technology-enabled foundation or framework that promotes communicative interaction among local communities, stakeholders, policymakers and governance at large. The Information Infrastructure Task Force defined information infrastructure as “a seamless web of communications networks, computers, databases, and consumer electronics” designed to provide users with immediate access to vast amounts of information (Afzal, 2012). Wierzbicka (2018) defined one of the cornerstones of the knowledge-based economy as a contemporary and appropriate information infrastructure. It enables more effective communication, dissemination and processing of information and knowledge. The author also underlined that the development of information infrastructure is an essential prerequisite for the emergence of an information society and the construction of a knowledge-based economy.

Information infrastructures comprise interconnected and interdependent systems of hardware, software, people and procedures working together for proper management of information. Information infrastructure thus functions as a system that comprises various components like hardware, software/applications, network, procedures and processes, interconnected and working together for effective information management. Information infrastructures support business strategies and improve corporate competitiveness (Adama, 2024). This competitiveness is improved given the potency of information as a tool for competitive and organizational advantage. Accordingly, Wilkins (2021) opines that information infrastructure helps organizations and enterprises to describe, organize, integrate, share, and govern their information assets independently of applications and use cases. It complements industrialization and enhances efficiency and sustainable growth among enterprises.

How information infrastructure will affect the digital transformation of enterprises based on industrial connection was investigated by Wang (2023). The

study found that “artificial intelligence accounts for 25.4% of digital transformation, followed by IoT at 19.7% and 3D printing at 1.4% of digital transformation” (p. 1). The overall objective of digital transformation achieved through information infrastructure is to enhance the performance of enterprises and gain a core competitive advantage. The study agrees with that of Sarangi and Pradhan (2020) who found that ICT infrastructure has a wide range of direct and indirect effects on economic growth through its impacts on industries and societies. Xu et al. (2023) examined how information infrastructure upgrades impact companies’ innovation ability (input, output and quality). The study showed that information infrastructure is up-scaling or upgrading to boost economic growth in both developing and developed countries. They also added that information infrastructure enables companies and enterprises to obtain information resources to improve their investment and innovation efficiency.

Using the “Broadband China” strategy as a quasi-natural experiment, the study of Zhou et al. (2024) ran a difference-in-differences estimation to show that information infrastructure construction is a substantial contributor to enterprises’ export performance. The study identified three avenues through which information infrastructure can enhance the performance of export business which are increasing the firm’s production scale, supporting digital transformation and improving firm supply chain management capabilities. The study therefore shows a positive and significant relationship between information infrastructure and the performance of export firms in emerging countries. Gunjati and Adake (2020) did a review on innovation in Indian SMEs and the study was premised on the fact that although SMEs in developing economies are smaller compared to those in developed economies, they contribute largely to economic growth and create employment opportunities. It was further noted that SMEs need a boost through innovation for greater productivity and one such innovation is information infrastructure. The authors noted that information infrastructure can be infused into SME operations by extending the ICT framework into rural and urban areas and adapting it to the research and development of SMEs.

The use of information technology (a subset of information infrastructure) influences the growth of SMEs which many economies across the globe heavily depend on (Dorasamy & Kikasu, 2024). Conversely, inadequate utilization of information technology would hinder the success of SMEs and compromise economic growth. This could be because robust information infrastructure strengthens the innovative ability of SMEs owners (Xu et al., 2023), and innovation has a direct positive effect on their performances (Le et al., 2023). It is thus implied that information infrastructure influences the performance of SMEs through innovation. Therefore, where economic growth is desired, information infrastructure for SME owners is inevitable. This information infrastructure provides SME owners with seamless access to information, and their ability to effectively utilise this system is conditioned on their information literacy. This demonstrates a relationship be-



tween these information variables towards enhancing SMEs for economic growth. This information infrastructure provides SME owners with seamless access to information, and their ability to effectively utilise the information infrastructure to access required information is conditioned on their information literacy, demonstrating a relationship between these information variables towards enhancing SMEs for economic growth. This review has also shown that information literacy, access to information and information infrastructure can individually influence factors towards enhancing SMEs. For instance, these three variables for addressing information poverty can individually influence innovation, performance, decision-making, productivity and entrepreneurial spirit, which are tools for enhancing SMEs for economic growth.

## Conclusion

The economic growth of nations, especially in the Global South, is driven by SMEs through production activities, export promotion (particularly with agricultural enterprises), job creation and increased GDP. These activities eradicate poverty and enhance the quality of life for citizens. Given their crucial role in society, it is pertinent to investigate and address factors that could hinder their effectiveness. Among these factors that could deprive SMEs of achieving their full potential is information poverty caused by a lack of information literacy among SME owners, inadequate access to information and poor information infrastructure.

In the knowledge-driven economy, the information literacy of SME owners directly predicts their productivity. These entrepreneurs can perform more efficiently and effectively when they are able to identify business information needs, acquire, evaluate and use them. Thus, information literacy enables proper management of business information for competitive advantage. While information literacy exists in their domain, access to information extends beyond the personal domain to the institutional domain. As such, access to information extends to information sources and their accessibility, systems, structures and policies that enable access. This access to information should be addressed both at the individual and national level to enhance SMEs. In addition, the network of people and technology within an information ecosystem that allows seamless and effective communication, dissemination and processing of business information serves as a stimulant for the productivity of SMEs towards the economic growth of the nations in the Global South.

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## Przeciwdziałanie ubóstwu informacyjnemu w celu wspierania małych i średnich przedsiębiorstw na rzecz wzrostu gospodarczego na Globalnym Południu

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**Słowa kluczowe:** Dostęp do informacji; Informacje biznesowe; Wzrost gospodarczy; Infrastruktura teleinformatyczna; umiejętność korzystania z informacji; Ubóstwo informacyjne; MŚP; Globalne Południe

## A bstrakt

**Wprowadzenie:** Potrzeba wzrostu gospodarczego wśród krajów Globalnego Południa wymusiła zbadanie małych i średnich przedsiębiorstw (MŚP) jako siły napędowej takiego wzrostu. Jednak to, jak dobrze będą funkcjonować MŚP, zależy od pewnych czynników, takich jak ubóstwo informacyjne, które sprawia, że przedsiębiorcy są podatni na zagrożenia wobec użytkowników informacji biznesowych.

**Cel:** W artykule przeanalizowano czynniki, które rozwiązują problem ubóstwa informacyjnego w kierunku wzmocnienia MŚP na rzecz wzrostu gospodarczego na Globalnym Południu.

**Metodologia:** W badaniu przyjęto podejście oparte na szybkim przeglądzie literatury (RLR) w celu syntezy literatury na temat tego, w jaki sposób zajęcie się pojęciami ubóstwa informacyjnego (umiejętność korzystania z informacji, dostęp do informacji i infrastruktury informacyjnej) wzmocniłoby rozwój MŚP w krajach Globalnego Południa. Do przeglądu wykorzystano EBSCOhost, ProQuest i Google Scholar w oparciu o cztery kryteria kwalifikowalności: metodologię, rok publikacji, język i źródło publikacji.

**Wyniki:** Badanie wykazało, że umiejętność korzystania z informacji zapewnia przedsiębiorcom odpowiednie umiejętności do rozwijania swoich przedsiębiorstw w gospodarce opartej na informacji, wpływając na ich wyniki biznesowe. Analiza wykazała również, że dostęp do wymaganych informacji pozwala przewidzieć rozwój biznesu i zrównoważony rozwój przedsiębiorców. Co więcej, w badaniu stwierdzono, że infrastruktura informacyjna jest kluczowym atutem w poprawie konkurencyjności właścicieli MŚP, co prowadzi do rozwoju ich działalności. Te trzy czynniki (umiejętność korzystania z informacji, dostęp do informacji i infrastruktura informacyjna) okazały się kluczowe w rozwiązywaniu problemu ubóstwa informacyjnego w kierunku rozwoju MŚP.

**Wniosek:** Z badania wynika, że gdy przedsiębiorcy posiadają umiejętności korzystania z informacji i mają nieograniczony dostęp do informacji i infrastruktury informacyjnej, ich przedsiębiorstwa osiągają lepsze wyniki, co z kolei wpłynie na wzrost gospodarczy krajów na Globalnym Południu.



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# Bekämpfung der Informationsarmut zur Unterstützung von kleinen und mittleren Unternehmen für Wirtschaftswachstum in den Ländern des Globalen Südens

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**S** **tichwörter:** Zugang zu Informationen; Geschäftsinformationen; Wirtschaftswachstum; Informationsinfrastruktur; Informationskompetenz; Informationsarmut; KMU; Globaler Süden

**Z** **usammenfassung**

**E** **inführung:** Der Bedarf an Wirtschaftswachstum in Ländern des Globalen Südens hat die Untersuchung zur Rolle kleiner und mittlerer Unternehmen (KMU) als Motoren dieses Wachstums erforderlich gemacht. Wie gut KMU jedoch funktionieren, hängt von bestimmten Faktoren ab, wie z. B. Informationsarmut, die Unternehmer in Bezug auf den Zugang zu Geschäftsinformationen in eine schwierige Lage versetzt.

**F** **orschungsziel:** Im Artikel werden die Faktoren untersucht, die das Problem der Informationsarmut beeinflussen und KMU beim wirtschaftlichen Wachstum in Ländern des Globalen Südens unterstützen.

**F** **orschungsmethode:** Im Rahmen der Studie wurde die Methode von Rapid Literature Review (RLR, schnelle Literaturübersicht) durchgeführt, um die Literatur zu synthetisieren, die sich damit befasst, wie die Auseinandersetzung mit den Konzepten der Informationsarmut (Informationskompetenz, Informationszugang und Informationsinfrastruktur) die Entwicklung von KMU im Globalen Süden beeinflussen würde. Für die Übersicht wurden die Datenbanken EBSCOhost, ProQuest und Google Scholar herangezogen, wobei vier Einschlusskriterien zugrunde gelegt wurden: Methodik, Erscheinungsjahr, Sprache und Publikationsquelle.

**F** **orschungsergebnisse:** Die Studie zeigte, dass die Informationskompetenzen Unternehmer mit den notwendigen Fähigkeiten ausstatten, um ihre Unternehmen in einer informationsbasierten Wirtschaft weiterzuentwickeln, was sich auf ihre Geschäftsergebnisse auswirkt. Die Analyse ergab zudem, dass der Zugang zu den erforderlichen Informationen das Wachstum und die Stabilität der unternehmerischen Tätigkeit vorhersagt. Darüber hinaus wurde festgestellt, dass die Informationsinfrastruktur ein entscheidender Vorteil für die Verbesserung der Wettbewerbsfähigkeit von KMU-Inhabern ist, was zur Entwicklung ihrer Unternehmen beiträgt. Diese drei Faktoren (Informationskompetenzen, Informationszugang und Informationsinfrastruktur) erwiesen sich als ausschlaggebend im Kampf gegen die Informationsarmut und zur Förderung der Entwicklung von KMU.

**Schlussfolgerungen:** Die Studie ergab, dass Unternehmer, die über Informationskompetenzen sowie uneingeschränkten Zugang zu Informationen und Informationsinfrastruktur verfügen, bessere Ergebnisse in ihren Unternehmen erzielen, was wiederum das Wirtschaftswachstum in den Ländern des Globalen Südens fördert.