DELSU Journal of Management Sciences (DELJOMS)
Abbr. Title: Deljoms, FMS
ISSN: *(Online)* **: 2756-3731**
OPEN ACCESS
Research Article
Volume 8, Number 1, June 2026

Enhancing SME Performance through Teamwork Management: Evidence from North Central Nigeria

JIBRIN, Ocholi[1] Egbunu, AUDU Dangana[2], JOHN, Oltunji Alabi[3], AGADA, Solomon Reuben[4],
Department of Business Administration,
Prince Abubakar University, Ayingba.
ocholibibril1@gmail.com
dangana@yahoo.com
agadasolomonreuben@gmail.com

Publication Date: 2026/06/22

Abstract

This study examined the influence of teamwork management on the performance of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in North Central Nigeria, focusing on the roles of collaboration, coordination, and conflict resolution strategies. Specifically, the study investigated the influence of collaboration on SME performance, evaluated the role of coordination in enhancing operational performance, and analyzed the effect of conflict resolution strategies on SME sustainability. A descriptive survey research design was adopted, and primary data were collected from owners and managers of SMEs using a structured questionnaire. A total of 379 valid responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics and multiple regression analysis with the aid of SPSS version 25. The results revealed that collaboration had the strongest positive and significant influence on SME performance ($\beta = 0.627$, $t = 18.362$, $p < 0.001$), followed by conflict resolution strategies ($\beta = 0.476$, $t = 5.855$, $p < 0.001$) and coordination ($\beta = 0.334$, $t = 12.224$, $p < 0.001$). The findings indicate that SMEs that encourage collaborative work practices, strengthen coordination mechanisms, and adopt effective conflict resolution strategies achieve higher productivity, improved operational efficiency, enhanced innovation, and sustainable organizational performance. The study concludes that teamwork management is a strategic organizational capability that significantly enhances SME performance in North Central Nigeria. It recommends that SME owners and managers should institutionalize collaborative decision-making, strengthen coordination through effective workflow management, and implement proactive conflict resolution mechanisms to improve organizational performance and ensure long-term business sustainability.

Keywords: *Teamwork management, collaboration, coordination, conflict resolution, SME performance.*

Introduction

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) constitute the backbone of the economy in North Central Nigeria, contributing significantly to employment generation, income creation, innovation, and regional economic development. The region, comprising Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger, Plateau States, and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), depends heavily on SMEs operating in agriculture, manufacturing, commerce, and service industries to stimulate economic activities and improve livelihoods. Despite various government interventions through the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN), entrepreneurship development programmes, and financial inclusion initiatives, many SMEs in the region continue to struggle with low productivity, limited innovation, poor employee commitment, and weak organizational performance (SMEDAN & NBS, 2017; Onugu, 2005).

One organizational capability increasingly recognized as critical for improving SME performance is teamwork management. Teamwork management refers to the systematic coordination of employees through collaboration, coordination, and constructive conflict resolution to achieve shared organizational goals (Amah & Ahiauzu, 2013). In SMEs, where financial, technological, and human resources are often limited, effective teamwork enables employees to combine complementary knowledge and skills, enhance problem-solving, improve communication, and increase operational efficiency. Collaboration encourages knowledge sharing and creativity; coordination aligns individual responsibilities with organizational objectives; while conflict resolution strengthens trust, minimizes workplace disagreements, and promotes cohesive working relationships (Jehn, 1995; Costa et al., 2001; Salas et al., 2015).

The growing complexity of the business environment, intensified by globalization, technological change, digitalization, and increasing competition, has further heightened the importance of teamwork management for SMEs. Organizations that effectively manage collaborative work processes are more likely to improve productivity, customer satisfaction, innovation, and long-term competitiveness than organizations relying primarily on individual efforts (Salas et al., 2015). Consequently, teamwork management has become an important strategic resource for enhancing organizational performance and ensuring business sustainability among SMEs.

Statement of the Problem

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in North Central Nigeria continue to experience declining productivity, weak employee commitment, limited innovation, poor service delivery, and increasing business failure despite their significant contribution to regional economic development. These persistent performance challenges indicate that many SMEs have not fully developed effective teamwork management practices capable of fostering employee cooperation, iproving operational efficiency, and enhancing organizational performance. Although teamwork management has become increasingly important in today's competitive business environment, many SMEs in the region still operate with weak collaborative structures, inadequate coordination of work activities, and ineffective conflict resolution mechanisms. As a result, employees often work in isolation, organizational resources are not optimally utilized, and interpersonal conflicts remain unresolved, thereby reducing productivity and overall business performance. Furthermore, the extent to which collaboration, coordination, and conflict resolution strategies individually and collectively influence the performance of SMEs in North Central Nigeria remains unclear. This lack of context-specific evidence limits the ability of SME owners, managers, and policymakers to design appropriate teamwork management strategies capable of improving organizational effectiveness and business sustainability within the region. Consequently, there is a need to examine the influence of collaboration, coordination, and conflict resolution strategies on the performance of SMEs in North Central Nigeria. This study seeks to provide empirical evidence that will enhance understanding of teamwork management as a strategic resource for improving SME performance and provide practical recommendations for strengthening organizational effectiveness and sustainable enterprise development in the region.

Main Objective of the Study is to examine the effect of teamwork management on the performance of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in North Central Nigeria: the Specific Objectives are:

i. to examine how collaboration among team members influences SME performance in the region.

ii. ii. to evaluate the role of coordination in enhancing SMEs operational performance.

iii. To analyze the influence of conflict resolution strategies on the sustainability of SMEs.

Research Hypotheses: The following null hypotheses are formulated to guide the study:

i. H_{01}: Collaboration among team members does not significantly influence the performance of SMEs.

ii. H_{02}: Coordination has no significant effect on the operational performance of SMEs.

iii. H_{03}: Conflict resolution strategies have no significant impact on the sustainability of SMEs.

Literature Review

Concept of Teamwork Management

Teamwork management is a strategic management approach that involves organizing, coordinating, and directing the collective efforts of employees to achieve common organizational goals through effective collaboration, coordination, and conflict resolution. It has become an essential organizational capability for enhancing employee productivity, operational efficiency, innovation, and sustainable business performance, particularly among Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), where limited financial and human resources require employees to work interdependently. Salas et al. (2015) define teamwork management as the coordination of team members' interactions, behaviours, and efforts to accomplish shared objectives through cooperation, communication, and mutual accountability. Similarly, West (2012) views teamwork management as the strategic facilitation of team processes that encourage shared leadership, innovation, and effective decision-making. Within the SME context, Obi and Okeke (2019) describe teamwork management as the integration of employees' efforts to create synergy, improve operational efficiency, and enhance organizational performance.

Contextually, teamwork management in North Central Nigeria reflects the ability of SME owners and managers to foster collaboration, coordinate employees' activities, and resolve workplace conflicts in ways that improve productivity, operational efficiency, and long-term organizational sustainability. SMEs that institutionalize these teamwork management practices are better positioned to enhance employee performance, stimulate innovation, improve customer satisfaction, and achieve sustainable competitive advantage. Therefore, this study conceptualizes teamwork management as the effective management of collaboration, coordination, and conflict resolution strategies to improve the performance of Small and Medium Enterprises in North Central Nigeria (Olokundun et al., 2018; Adebayo & Ahmed, 2021).

Collaboration

Collaboration is a fundamental dimension of teamwork management that involves employees working collectively by sharing knowledge, skills, responsibilities, and ideas to achieve common organizational objectives. Unlike simple cooperation, collaboration emphasizes mutual trust, shared decision-making, interdependence, and joint problem-solving, enabling team members to integrate their expertise to improve organizational outcomes (Salas et al., 2015). Within Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), collaboration is particularly important because employees often perform multiple roles and operate under financial and human resource constraints. Consequently, collaborative work practices enhance resource utilization, organizational flexibility, and the ability to respond effectively to changing business environments.

Effective collaboration strengthens organizational performance by promoting knowledge sharing, innovation, creativity, and coordinated task execution. Teams characterized by collaborative relationships are more likely to generate innovative solutions, reduce duplication of effort, improve service quality, and achieve higher levels of productivity than teams operating independently (Morgeson et al., 2010). Furthermore, the relatively flat organizational structures of most SMEs facilitate collaborative decision-making, allowing employees to contribute actively to organizational problem-solving and continuous improvement (Abasilim & Ofobruku, 2020).

The concept of collaboration is supported by the Social Capital Theory, which posits that relationships, trust, and social networks constitute valuable organizational assets that facilitate knowledge exchange and collective action (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). Similarly, the Resource-Based View argues that collaborative capability represents a strategic intangible resource capable of creating sustainable competitive advantage when effectively developed and utilized (Barney, 1991).

Within the context of North Central Nigeria, collaboration has become increasingly important as SMEs operate in highly competitive environments characterized by infrastructural deficiencies, limited access to finance, and shortages of skilled labour. Collaborative teamwork enables employees to pool their competencies, improve customer responsiveness, strengthen innovation, and enhance operational efficiency despite these constraints.

Coordination

Coordination is a key dimension of teamwork management that refers to the systematic integration and synchronization of employees' activities, responsibilities, and resources to achieve organizational objectives efficiently. It ensures that individual tasks are aligned with organizational goals, thereby minimizing duplication of effort, reducing operational delays, and improving overall productivity. In SMEs, where organizational structures are often informal and employees perform multiple roles, effective coordination is essential for maintaining operational efficiency and business continuity (Fayol, 1949/2013; Ogunyomi & Bruning, 2016).

From a theoretical perspective, coordination is supported by Contingency Theory, which argues that organizational effectiveness depends on aligning internal structures and management practices with environmental conditions. Similarly, the Resource-Based View (RBV) regards coordination capability as a valuable organizational resource that enhances the efficient utilization of human and material resources, thereby strengthening competitive advantage (Barney, 1991). Within SMEs, effective coordination facilitates communication, clarifies employee roles, and promotes collaboration across functional areas, leading to improved operational performance.

In the context of North Central Nigeria, SMEs operate in a business environment characterized by resource limitations, infrastructural deficiencies, and intense market competition. Under these conditions, effective coordination enables managers to allocate scarce resources efficiently, monitor workflow, and ensure timely completion of organizational tasks. Practical coordination mechanisms, including regular team meetings, task scheduling, performance monitoring, and structured reporting systems, enhance communication, improve decision-making, and strengthen accountability among employees (Ogunyomi & Bruning, 2016).

Conflict Resolution Strategies

Conflict resolution is a critical dimension of teamwork management that involves the systematic processes and strategies used to address disagreements among employees in ways that promote cooperation, trust, and organizational effectiveness. Workplace conflicts are inevitable because employees possess diverse values, experiences, and interests; however, their impact depends largely on how they are managed (Rahim, 2017). Common conflict resolution strategies include avoidance, accommodation, competition, compromise, and collaboration, with collaborative problem-solving widely regarded as the most effective approach because it seeks mutually beneficial outcomes that strengthen team cohesion and long-term working relationships (Thomas & Kilmann, 2007; Jehn & Bendersky, 2003). Within Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), effective conflict resolution is particularly important because organizational structures are relatively informal, employees perform multiple roles, and interpersonal relationships significantly influence operational performance. Constructive conflict management encourages open communication, mutual respect, and shared decision-making, thereby reducing workplace tension and improving employee commitment, productivity, and innovation (Uzonwanne, 2016). Conversely, unresolved conflicts may result in poor morale, absenteeism, high employee turnover, and declining organizational performance, especially where limited resources intensify workplace pressures (Adebile & Ojo, 2011).

From a theoretical perspective, conflict resolution aligns with Organizational Behavior Theory, which emphasizes that constructive management of interpersonal relationships enhances team cohesion, psychological safety, and organizational effectiveness. Similarly, organizations that institutionalize conflict management through effective communication, participatory leadership, and feedback mechanisms create environments that support employee engagement and continuous improvement (Edmondson & Lei, 2014). In the context of North Central Nigeria, SMEs operate in a challenging business environment characterized by resource constraints, economic uncertainty, and increasing competition. Under these conditions, effective conflict resolution enables enterprises to maintain harmonious working relationships, improve employee retention, strengthen customer service, and enhance organizational sustainability.

Performance of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)

Performance of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) refers to the extent to which an enterprise achieves its strategic and operational objectives through the efficient utilization of available resources. SME performance is commonly assessed using both financial indicators, such as profitability, sales growth, and market share, and non-financial indicators, including productivity, customer satisfaction, innovation, employee commitment, and business sustainability (Kaplan & Norton, 2004; Fatoki, 2014). Similarly, the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN, 2021) views SME performance as the ability of enterprises to sustain operations, remain competitive, expand market opportunities, and create value despite challenging business environments. Consequently, organizational performance extends beyond financial outcomes to include the firm's capacity to adapt, innovate, and achieve long-term growth.

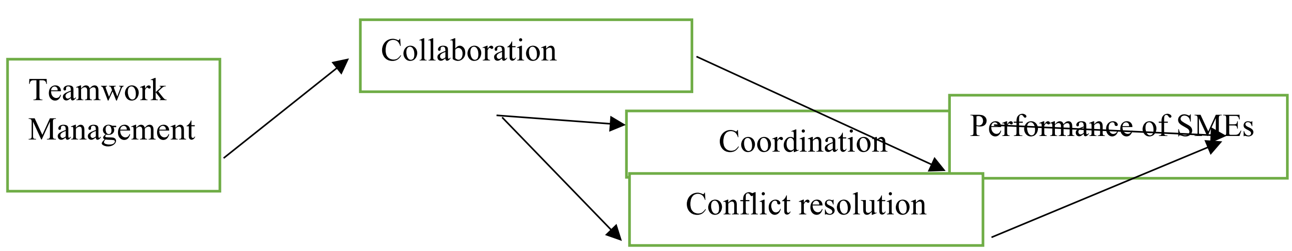
The performance of SMEs is influenced by several organizational capabilities, among which teamwork management has received increasing scholarly attention. Effective teamwork enhances knowledge sharing, employee commitment, coordinated decision-making, and operational efficiency, thereby improving organizational outcomes. Specifically, collaboration enables employees to combine complementary skills and expertise to solve organizational problems and stimulate innovation. Coordination ensures that organizational activities and resources are effectively aligned to achieve operational objectives, while constructive conflict resolution strengthens trust, promotes employee cohesion, and minimizes disruptions to organizational processes (Salas et al., 2015; Dirks & Ferrin, 2001). These dimensions collectively enhance productivity, service quality, customer satisfaction, and organizational sustainability.

The Resource-Based View (RBV) provides a useful theoretical explanation by suggesting that intangible organizational capabilities, including teamwork management, constitute valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable resources capable of generating sustainable competitive advantage (Barney, 1991). Likewise, the Input–Process–Output (IPO) Model explains that organizational performance results from transforming employee capabilities and organizational resources through effective team processes such as collaboration, coordination, and conflict resolution into desirable performance outcomes (McGrath, 1964).

Within the context of North Central Nigeria, SMEs operate under conditions of resource constraints, infrastructural deficiencies, and intense market competition. Consequently, enterprises that institutionalize effective teamwork management are better positioned to improve operational efficiency, stimulate innovation, enhance customer satisfaction, and achieve sustainable business performance. Therefore, this study conceptualizes SME performance as the extent to which collaboration, coordination, and conflict resolution strategies contribute to improved productivity, operational efficiency, and organizational sustainability among Small and Medium Enterprises in North Central Nigeria.

Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework of the Study

Independent Variables Dependent Variables



Theoretical Framework

Social Capital Theory

Social Capital Theory was pioneered by Bourdieu (1986), extended by Coleman (1988), and further developed by Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998). The theory postulates that social relationships, trust, shared norms, and networks constitute valuable organizational resources that facilitate cooperation, knowledge sharing, and collective action. It assumes that organizations with strong interpersonal relationships are better positioned to mobilize knowledge, exchange information, and utilize human resources effectively to achieve superior organizational performance (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). A major strength of the theory is that it explains how collaborative relationships promote trust, learning, innovation, and organizational effectiveness through social interaction. However, its limitation lies in the difficulty of measuring social capital objectively, while excessive internal cohesion may reduce exposure to new knowledge and external opportunities.

The theory is highly relevant to this study because collaboration is a fundamental dimension of teamwork management. Within SMEs in North Central Nigeria, where financial and technological resources are often constrained, collaboration enables employees to share knowledge, combine complementary skills, and jointly solve organizational problems. Consequently, Social Capital Theory provides the theoretical foundation for explaining how collaborative relationships among employees enhance productivity, innovation, customer satisfaction, and the overall performance of SMEs in North Central Nigeria.

Contingency Theory

Contingency Theory was developed by Burns and Stalker (1961) and later refined by Lawrence and Lorsch (1967). The theory postulates that there is no single best approach to organizational management because organizational effectiveness depends on the alignment between organizational structure, managerial practices, and environmental conditions. It assumes that managers should adapt organizational processes and coordination mechanisms to respond effectively to changing internal and external environments. The principal strength of the theory is its flexibility, allowing organizations to adopt management practices that best suit their operating environments. However, the theory has been criticized for providing limited guidance on how managers should determine the most appropriate organizational fit under varying circumstances.

The theory is particularly applicable to this study because coordination is essential for aligning employees' activities, organizational resources, and operational processes within SMEs. SMEs in North Central Nigeria operate in an environment characterized by limited resources, infrastructural deficiencies, economic uncertainty, and increasing competition. Under these conditions, effective coordination enables managers to synchronize employee activities, allocate resources efficiently, and improve operational performance. Accordingly, Contingency Theory provides the theoretical explanation for how coordination contributes to enhanced organizational effectiveness and improved SME performance.

Organizational Behavior Theory

Organizational Behavior Theory evolved from the pioneering works of Mayo (1933), Lewin (1947), and subsequent organizational behavior scholars, including Robbins and Judge (2017). The theory postulates that employee attitudes, interpersonal relationships, communication, motivation, leadership, and group dynamics significantly influence organizational effectiveness. It assumes that organizations achieve superior performance when employees interact within supportive environments characterized by trust, effective communication, and constructive conflict management. The major strength of the theory lies in its comprehensive explanation of individual and group behaviour within organizations, making it particularly useful for understanding teamwork management and employee performance. Nevertheless, the theory is limited by the dynamic nature of human behaviour, which varies across organizational, cultural, and environmental contexts, making behavioural outcomes difficult to predict with certainty.

The theory underpins this study by explaining the importance of conflict resolution as a key dimension of teamwork management. In SMEs operating in North Central Nigeria, constructive conflict resolution encourages open communication, mutual respect, employee commitment, and team cohesion while minimizing workplace tensions and interpersonal disputes. These behavioural outcomes strengthen organizational stability, improve employee productivity, and enhance business sustainability. Therefore, Organizational Behavior Theory provides the behavioural foundation for explaining how effective conflict resolution strategies contribute to the performance of SMEs in North Central Nigeria.

Empirical Review

Agustin et al. (2026) investigated the role of entrepreneurial leadership, network capability, and strategic agility in improving SME performance in Indonesia. The study adopted a quantitative survey design and analysed the data using Structural Equation Modelling. The findings indicated that coordinated organizational capabilities significantly improved SME international performance and strengthened strategic agility under turbulent business conditions. The authors recommended that SME managers should improve coordination among leadership, internal capabilities, and strategic planning to sustain organizational competitiveness. Although the study emphasized strategic capability rather than operational teamwork coordination, it remains relevant because it demonstrates that coordinated organizational processes contribute significantly to superior SME performance (Agustin et al., 2026).

Likewise, Woo (2025) investigated the relationship between strategic leadership, collaborative work practices, and the performance of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in South Korea. The study, titled Strategic Leadership in SMEs: The Mediating Roles of Corporate Entrepreneurship and Intrapreneurship, sought to examine whether strategic leadership enhances SME performance through entrepreneurial behaviour and collaboration. A quantitative cross-sectional survey design was adopted, involving 112 SMEs, while regression and mediation analyses were employed to analyse the data. The findings revealed that strategic leadership significantly enhanced collaborative behaviour, intrapreneurship, and organizational performance. The study recommended that SME managers should promote collaborative work environments and encourage employees' active participation in organizational decision-making. However, the study was conducted within the South Korean business environment; therefore, differences in institutional, cultural, and economic contexts may limit the generalizability of the findings to Nigerian SMEs (Woo, 2025). Nevertheless, the study provides empirical support for the proposition that collaboration enhances organizational performance and justifies its inclusion as a key dimension of teamwork management in the present study.

Ojiaku (2025) examined the influence of conflict resolution strategies on employee performance among SMEs located in Abuja, Nigeria. The study specifically investigated the effects of avoiding, obliging, compromising, integrating, and dominating conflict resolution strategies on employee performance. A cross-sectional survey research design was employed, and multiple regression analysis was used to analyse the data. The findings showed that the integrating (collaborative) conflict resolution strategy had the strongest positive influence on employee performance, whereas avoiding and dominating strategies negatively affected employee outcomes. Consequently, the study recommended that SME managers should institutionalize collaborative conflict management practices and strengthen communication among employees. However, the study measured employee performance rather than overall organizational performance, thereby limiting its ability to explain broader SME performance outcomes. Nevertheless, the findings provide direct empirical evidence supporting the inclusion of conflict resolution strategies as a predictor of SME performance in the present study.

Vuong (2025) examined the influence of coordinated strategic management processes on organizational creativity and financial performance among SMEs in Vietnam. Specifically, the study sought to determine how effective coordination within strategic management contributes to improved organizational outcomes. A quantitative survey involving 411 SMEs was conducted, and Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was employed for data analysis. The findings revealed that coordinated organizational processes significantly enhanced organizational creativity and financial performance. Based on these findings, the study recommended that SME managers should strengthen internal coordination mechanisms and integrate strategic planning with operational activities to improve business performance. A notable limitation of the study is that it focused primarily on strategic coordination rather than employee-level coordination within teamwork processes. Nevertheless, the study demonstrates the importance of effective coordination in enhancing SME operational performance (Vuong, 2025).

In another study, Keelson et al. (2024) investigated the influence of market competition and process innovation on SME performance in Ghana. The study employed a survey research design involving 365 SMEs and analysed the data using regression and moderation techniques. The findings indicated that SMEs with stronger internal organizational processes, effective employee relationships, and innovation capabilities recorded superior organizational performance. The study recommended that managers should strengthen internal management practices and employee engagement to sustain competitiveness. Although conflict resolution was not examined explicitly as an independent variable, the study provides indirect evidence that effective management of workplace relationships contributes to improved organizational performance. Accordingly, the study reinforces the need to investigate conflict resolution strategies as an important dimension of teamwork management influencing SME performance.

Methodology

This study utilized a survey research design to examine how teamwork management specifically collaboration, coordination, and conflict resolution affects the performance of SMEs in North Central Nigeria. Based on SMEDAN/NBS (2021), the population was 5,188,310 SMEs. A sample size of 400. was determined using Krejcie and Morgan formula, and questionnaires were proportionally distributed across six state and FCT in North Central Nigeria using stratified random sampling. A total of 379) valid responses were analyzed. Data were collected using a structured five-point Likert scale questionnaire and analyzed with SPSS version 20.0 through descriptive statistics and multiple regression to test hypotheses and identify relationships. The methodology ensured statistical validity and broad regional representation.

Model Specification

The functional model for the study is:

$Y = f(X_1, X_2, X_3)$

Where:

Y = SME Performance

X_1 = Collaboration

X_2 = Coordination

X_3 = Conflict Resolution

Regression Model

$Y=\beta 0+\beta 1X1+\beta 2X2+\beta 3X3+\mu$

Where:

$B_1–\beta_3$ = coefficients

μ = error term

Data Presentation and Analysis

Table 4.1: Collaboration among employees improves productivity in my organization

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	66	17.4	17.4	17.4
	Disagree	72	19.0	19.0	36.4
	Undecided	23	6.1	6.1	42.5
	Agree	110	29.0	29.0	71.5
	strongly agree	108	28.5	28.5	100.0
	Total	379	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.1 indicates that the majority of respondents (57.5%) agreed or strongly agreed that collaboration among employees improves productivity in their organizations, while 36.4% disagreed or strongly disagreed and 6.1% remained undecided. This suggests that effective collaboration among employees is widely perceived as a key driver of productivity and, consequently, enhances the overall performance of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in North Central Nigeria.

Table 4.2: Collaboration enhances the quality of products and services offered

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	68	17.9	17.9	17.9
	Disagree	76	20.1	20.1	38.0
	Undecided	22	5.8	5.8	43.8
	Agree	103	27.2	27.2	71.0
	strongly agree	110	29.0	29.0	100.0
	Total	379	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.2 shows that a majority of the respondents (56.2%) agreed or strongly agreed that collaboration enhances the quality of products and services offered by their organizations, whereas 38.0% disagreed or strongly disagreed and 5.8% were undecided.

This indicates that effective collaboration among employees is perceived to improve product and service quality, thereby contributing positively to the overall performance and competitiveness of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in North Central Nigeria.

Table 4.3**:** Effective coordination enhances productivity in my organization.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	77	20.3	20.3	20.3
	Disagree	60	15.8	15.8	36.1
	Undecided	23	6.1	6.1	42.2
	Agree	110	29.0	29.0	71.2
	strongly agree	109	28.8	28.8	100.0
	Total	379	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.3 indicates that the majority of respondents (57.8%) agreed or strongly agreed that effective coordination enhances productivity in their organizations, while 36.1% disagreed or strongly disagreed and 6.1% were undecided. This implies that effective coordination of employees' activities and organizational resources is widely perceived to improve productivity, thereby enhancing the overall performance of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in North Central Nigeria.

Table 4.4: Coordination reduces operational errors and delays in task execution.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	69	18.2	18.2	18.2
	Disagree	73	19.3	19.3	37.5
	Undecided	21	5.5	5.5	43.0
	Agree	106	28.0	28.0	71.0
	strongly agree	110	29.0	29.0	100.0
	Total	379	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.4 reveals that 57.0% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that effective coordination reduces operational errors and delays in task execution, whereas 37.5% disagreed or strongly disagreed and 5.5% were undecided. This suggests that efficient coordination enhances operational effectiveness by minimizing errors and delays, thereby improving the overall performance of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in North Central Nigeria.

Table 4.5: Effective conflict resolution reduces disruptions in business operations.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	69	18.2	18.2	18.2
	Disagree	75	19.8	19.8	38.0
	Undecided	20	5.3	5.3	43.3
	Agree	107	28.2	28.2	71.5
	strongly agree	108	28.5	28.5	100.0
	Total	379	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.5 shows that the majority of respondents (56.7%) agreed or strongly agreed that effective conflict resolution reduces disruptions in business operations, while 38.0% disagreed or strongly disagreed and 5.3% were undecided. This indicates that effective conflict resolution promotes smoother business operations by minimizing workplace disruptions, thereby enhancing the performance and sustainability of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in North Central Nigeria.

Table 4.6: Resolving conflicts promptly helps sustain customer satisfaction and loyalty.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	69	18.2	18.2	18.2
	Disagree	70	18.5	18.5	36.7
	Undecided	22	5.8	5.8	42.5
	Agree	108	28.5	28.5	71.0
	strongly agree	110	29.0	29.0	100.0
	Total	379	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.6 reveals that the majority of respondents (57.5%) agreed or strongly agreed that resolving conflicts promptly helps sustain customer satisfaction and loyalty, while 36.7% disagreed or strongly disagreed and 5.8% were undecided. This implies that prompt and effective conflict resolution enhances customer relationships and business continuity, thereby contributing positively to the performance and long-term sustainability of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in North Central Nigeria.

Table 4.7: Effective teamwork and collaboration lead to enhanced better Small and Medium Enterprises performance.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	66	17.4	17.4	17.4
	Disagree	76	20.1	20.1	37.5
	Undecided	21	5.5	5.5	43.0
	Agree	107	28.2	28.2	71.2
	strongly agree	109	28.8	28.8	100.0
	Total	379	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.7 indicates that the majority of respondents (57.0%) agreed or strongly agreed that effective teamwork and collaboration lead to better Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) performance, while 37.5% disagreed or strongly disagreed and 5.5% were undecided. This finding suggests that fostering teamwork and collaboration among employees enhances organizational effectiveness, productivity, and overall performance of SMEs in North Central Nigeria.

Table 4.8: Good coordination practices enhance overall operational performance of the Small and Medium Enterprises.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	68	17.9	17.9	17.9
	Disagree	70	18.5	18.5	36.4
	Undecided	20	5.3	5.3	41.7
	Agree	109	28.8	28.8	70.4
	strongly agree	112	29.6	29.6	100.0
	Total	379	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.8 shows that the majority of respondents (58.4%) agreed or strongly agreed that good coordination practices enhance the overall operational performance of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), whereas 36.4% disagreed or strongly disagreed and 5.3% were undecided. This finding implies that effective coordination of organizational activities and resources improves operational efficiency, thereby contributing significantly to the overall performance and competitiveness of SMEs in North Central Nigeria.

Table 4.9: Effective conflict resolution fosters Small and Medium Enterprises sustainability and growth.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	67	17.7	17.7	17.7
	Disagree	68	17.9	17.9	35.6
	Undecided	21	5.5	5.5	41.2
	Agree	110	29.0	29.0	70.2
	strongly agree	113	29.8	29.8	100.0
	Total	379	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.9 indicates that the majority of respondents (58.8%) agreed or strongly agreed that effective conflict resolution fosters the sustainability and growth of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), while 35.6% disagreed or strongly disagreed and 5.5% were undecided. This finding suggests that adopting effective conflict resolution strategies promotes harmonious workplace relationships, strengthens organizational stability, and enhances the long-term performance, sustainability, and growth of SMEs in North Central Nigeria.

Table 4.10: Model Summary

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.878[a]	.771	.768	1.842

a. Predictors: (Constant), COOR, CONR, COLLA,

Table 4.41: The multiple correlation coefficient, R = 0.878, indicates a strong positive relationship between the combined teamwork management factors and SME performance. The R Square value of 0.771 suggests that approximately 77.1% of the variance in SME performance can be explained by the included teamwork

management variables, demonstrating that these factors collectively have a substantial impact on organizational outcomes. The Adjusted R Square of 0.768 accounts for the number of predictors in the model, confirming that the model has strong explanatory power while adjusting for potential overestimation.

Table 4.11: ANOVA Result

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	4261.408	3	710.235	209.253	.000[b]
	Residual	1262.619	372	3.394		
	Total	5524.026	378			

a. Dependent Variable: PSMEs

b. Predictors: (Constant), COOR, CONR, COLLA.

Table 4.42 the regression model yielded a sum of squares for regression of 4261.408 with 6 degrees of freedom, and a mean square of 710.235. The F-statistic of 209.253 is highly significant at $p < 0.001$, indicating that the model as a whole significantly predicts SME performance. The residual sum of squares of 1262.619 with 372 degrees of freedom reflects the unexplained variance in SME performance not accounted for by the teamwork management variables. The total sum of squares for the dependent variable (PSMEs) is 5524.026, confirming that the model explains a substantial proportion of the total variance.

This result confirms that teamwork management variables collectively have a statistically significant effect on SME performance in North Central Nigeria. It suggests that enhancing collaboration, coordination and conflict resolution within teams can meaningfully improve operational outcomes, productivity, and overall performance of SMEs in the region.

Table 4.12: Regression Coefficients

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-8.762	1.076		-8.141	.000
	COLLA	.728	.040	.627	18.362	.000
	COOR	.627	.051	.334	12.224	.000
	CONR	.669	.114	.476	5.855	.000

a. Dependent Variable: PSMEs

The regression results presented in Table 4.43 demonstrate that teamwork management significantly influences the performance of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in North Central Nigeria. Specifically, collaboration ($\beta = 0.627$, $t = 18.362$, $p < 0.001$), coordination ($\beta = 0.334$, $t = 12.224$, $p < 0.001$), and conflict resolution strategies ($\beta = 0.476$, $t = 5.855$, $p < 0.001$) all ex mnert positive and statistically significant effects on SME performance. These findings indicate that effective teamwork management enhances organizational productivity, operational efficiency, innovation, and business sustainability. The results further suggest that SMEs that institutionalize collaborative work practices, coordinate employee activities effectively, and adopt constructive conflict resolution mechanisms are more likely to achieve superior organizational performance than those with weak teamwork management systems.

Discussion of Findings

The findings further reveal that collaboration is the strongest predictor of SME performance (β = 0.627, t = 18.362, p < 0.001). This result indicates that organizations that promote knowledge sharing, employee participation, joint decision-making, and collective problem-solving are better positioned to improve productivity, stimulate innovation, and enhance organizational effectiveness. The finding is consistent with Woo (2025), who reported that collaborative work practices significantly improved organizational performance by strengthening employee engagement and entrepreneurial behaviour among SMEs in South Korea. Likewise, the finding corroborates the study by Agustin et al. (2026), which established that collaborative organizational capabilities significantly enhance enterprise performance by strengthening internal relationships and improving employees' collective capacity to respond to changing business conditions. The present finding demonstrates that collaboration serves as a strategic organizational capability that enables SMEs in North Central Nigeria to leverage limited human and material resources more effectively, thereby strengthening their competitive advantage and long-term performance.

The study also establishes that coordination has a positive and significant influence on the operational performance of SMEs (β = 0.334, t = 12.224, p < 0.001). This finding implies that effective synchronization of employee responsibilities, workflow, resource allocation, and organizational processes enhances operational efficiency and overall business performance. SMEs that coordinate activities effectively are more capable of minimizing duplication of effort, reducing operational delays, and responding promptly to customer demands. This result is consistent with the findings of Vuong (2025), who reported that coordinated organizational processes significantly improved organizational creativity and financial performance among Vietnamese SMEs. Similarly, Agustin et al. (2026) found that coordinated organizational capabilities and strategic agility significantly enhance SME performance under dynamic and competitive business conditions. The current finding reinforces the importance of coordination as a critical managerial capability that strengthens operational effectiveness and improves organizational performance among SMEs in North Central Nigeria.

Furthermore, the findings indicate that conflict resolution strategies positively and significantly influence the sustainability of SMEs (β = 0.476, t = 5.855, p < 0.001). This result suggests that SMEs that manage workplace conflicts constructively are more likely to strengthen employee commitment, improve teamwork, foster trust, and sustain long-term organizational performance. Effective conflict resolution creates a supportive organizational climate that encourages open communication, mutual respect, and collective responsibility, thereby enhancing organizational resilience and employee satisfaction. This finding is consistent with Ojiaku (2025), who found that integrating and collaborative conflict resolution strategies significantly improved employee performance among Nigerian SMEs, whereas avoidance and dominating strategies adversely affected performance. The result also aligns with Keelson et al. (2024), who concluded that organizations characterized by strong internal management practices and positive employee relationships achieved higher organizational performance and sustained competitiveness. Consequently, the present finding confirms that effective conflict resolution is an indispensable component of teamwork management that contributes significantly to the sustainability and long-term success of SMEs in North Central Nigeria.

The findings of this study provide strong empirical support for Organizational Behavior Theory, which posits that employee attitudes, interpersonal relationships, communication patterns, and group dynamics are fundamental determinants of organizational effectiveness (Mayo, 1933; Lewin, 1947; Robbins & Judge, 2017). The theory argues that organizations achieve superior performance when employees operate within a supportive environment characterized by collaboration, effective coordination, mutual trust, and constructive conflict management. The positive and statistically significant effects of collaboration, coordination, and conflict resolution observed in this study validate these theoretical assumptions. Within the context of SMEs in North Central Nigeria, effective teamwork management strengthens team cohesion, improves employee behaviour, enhances operational efficiency, and promotes sustainable organizational performance. Therefore, the findings affirm the explanatory relevance of Organizational Behavior Theory in understanding how teamwork management influences the performance of SMEs and provide empirical evidence that investments in collaborative work practices, coordinated organizational processes, and effective conflict management constitute important strategic mechanisms for enhancing SME competitiveness and sustainability.

Conclusion

This study concludes that teamwork management significantly enhances the performance of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in North Central Nigeria, with collaboration exerting the strongest influence, followed by conflict resolution strategies and coordination. SMEs that institutionalize these teamwork practices are better positioned to improve productivity, operational efficiency, innovation, and long-term sustainability.

The findings further affirm the relevance of Organizational Behavior Theory by demonstrating that effective collaboration, coordination, and conflict resolution strengthen employee relationships, organizational effectiveness, and sustainable competitive performance. Consequently, teamwork management should be recognized as a strategic organizational capability for improving the performance and sustainability of SMEs in North Central Nigeria.

Recommendations

i. SME owners and managers in North Central Nigeria should institutionalize collaborative work practices that promote employee participation, knowledge sharing, and joint decision-making to enhance organizational performance and competitiveness.

ii. SME managers should strengthen coordination through clear role definition, effective workflow management, and structured monitoring systems to improve operational efficiency and resource utilization.

iii. SME owners and managers should implement proactive and collaborative conflict resolution mechanisms that foster trust, open communication, and teamwork to enhance employee commitment and ensure the long-term sustainability of their enterprises.

References

Abasilim, U. D., & Ofobruku, S. A. (2020). Teamwork and employee performance in small and medium enterprises in Nigeria. *International Journal of Business and Management Review, 8*(4), 45–60.

Adebile, O. A., & Ojo, O. (2011). Conflict management and organizational performance in Nigerian small and medium enterprises. *Journal of Management and Enterprise Development, 8*(2), 45–58.

Agustin, H., Hanoum, S., Durman, T. Y., Hakim, M. S., Sasli, S. A. M. A., Wen-Ho, M. H., & Shubbak, M. (2026). *SMEs' international performance amidst turbulence: The role of entrepreneurial leadership in navigating network capability and strategic agility*. Journal of Innovation and Entrepreneurship, 15**(1),** Article 19. https://doi.org/10.1186/s13731-026-00631-y

Amabile, T. M. (1996). *Creativity in context*. Westview Press.Kindly reference the above

Amah, E., & Ahiauzu, A. (2013). Employee involvement and organizational effectiveness. *Journal of Management Development, 32*(7), 661–674. https://doi.org/10.1108/JMD-09-2010-0064

Barney, J. (1991). Firm resources and sustained competitive advantage. *Journal of Management, 17*(1), 99–120. https://doi.org/10.1177/014920639101700108

Costa, A. C., Roe, R. A., & Taillieu, T. (2001). Trust within teams: The relation with performance effectiveness. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology, 10*(3), 225–244. https://doi.org/10.1080/13594320143000654

Dirks, K. T., & Ferrin, D. L. (2001). The role of trust in organizational settings. *Organization Science, 12*(4), 450–467. https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.12.4.450.10640

Edmondson, A. C., & Lei, Z. (2014). Psychological safety: The history, renaissance, and future of an interpersonal construct. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior, 1*, 23–43. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-031413-091305

Fatoki, O. (2014). The causes of the failure of new small and medium enterprises in South Africa. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences, 5*(20), 922–927. https://doi.org/10.5901/mjss.2014.v5n20p922

Fayol, H. (2016). *General and industrial management* (C. Storrs, Trans.). Martino Fine Books. (Original work published 1916)

Jehn, K. A. (1995). A multimethod examination of the benefits and detriments of intragroup conflict. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 40*(2), 256–282. https://doi.org/10.2307/2393638

Jehn, K. A., & Bendersky, C. (2003). Intragroup conflict in organizations: A contingency perspective on the conflict–outcome relationship. *Research in Organizational Behavior, 25*, 187–242. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0191-3085(03)25005-X

Kaplan, R. S., & Norton, D. P. (2004). *Strategy maps: Converting intangible assets into tangible outcomes*. Harvard Business School Press.

Keelson, S. A., Cúg, J., Amoah, J., Petráková, Z., Addo, J. O., & Jibril, A. B. (2024). The influence of market competition on SMEs' performance in emerging economies: Does process innovation moderate the relationship? *Economies, 12*(11), Article 282. https://doi.org/10.3390/economies12110282

McGrath, J. E. (1964). *Social psychology: A brief introduction*. Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Mintzberg, H. (1983). *Structure in fives: Designing effective organizations*. Prentice-Hall.

Morgeson, F. P., DeRue, D. S., & Karam, E. P. (2010). Leadership in teams: A functional approach to understanding leadership structures and processes. *Journal of Management, 36*(1), 5–39.

https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206309347376

Nahapiet, J., & Ghoshal, S. (1998). Social capital, intellectual capital, and the organizational advantage. *Academy of Management Review, 23*(2), 242–266. https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.1998.533225

Ogunyomi, P. O., & Bruning, N. S. (2016). Human resource management and organizational performance of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Nigeria. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 27*(6), 612–634. https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2015.1033640

Ojiaku, O. C. (2025). Conflict resolution strategies and employee performance of small and medium enterprises in Abuja metropolis, Nigeria. *International Journal of Business & Law Research, 13*(1), 296–309. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15076818

Onugu, B. A. N. (2005). *Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Nigeria: Problems and prospects* (Doctoral seminar paper). St. Clements University.

Rahim, M. A. (2017). *Managing conflict in organizations* (4th ed.). Routledge.

Robbins, S. P., & Judge, T. A. (2017). *Organizational behavior* (17th ed.). Pearson.

Salas, E., Reyes, D. L., & McDaniel, S. H. (2015). The science of teamwork: Progress, reflections, and the road ahead. *American Psychologist, 70*(6), 593–600. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0039376

Salas, E., Reyes, D. L., & McDaniel, S. H. (2015). The science of teamwork: Progress, reflections, and the road ahead. *American Psychologist, 70*(6), 593–600. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0039376

Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria. (2021). *National survey of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) 2021*. SMEDAN.

Thomas, K. W., & Kilmann, R. H. (2007). *Thomas–Kilmann conflict mode instrument*. CPP, Inc.

Tjosvold, D. (2008). *The conflict-positive organization: It depends upon us*. *Journal of Organizational Behavior, 29*(1), 19–28.

Uzonwanne, F. C. (2016). Influence of conflict management on organizational performance in small and medium enterprises in Nigeria. *International Journal of Advanced Academic Research in Social and Management Sciences, 2*(8), 1–14.

Vuong, T. K. (2025). The impact of strategic management on organizational creativity and its influence on the financial performance of SMEs. *Journal of Entrepreneurship, Management and Innovation, 21*(1), 43–57. https://doi.org/10.7341/20252113

Woo, H. R. (2025**).** Strategic leadership in SMEs: The mediating roles of corporate entrepreneurship and intrapreneurship in organizational performance. *Administrative Sciences, 15*(4), 151. https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci15040151