

SMME Collaboration Dynamics in International Construction Joint Ventures in Harare, Zimbabwe

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Abstract

This study explores the collaboration dynamics of local contractors, particularly small, medium, and micro enterprises (SMMEs), involved in international construction joint ventures (ICJVs) in Zimbabwe. It seeks to investigate the experiences, challenges, and opportunities faced by local contractors collaborating with international firms. The paper aims to identify and analyze the key obstacles that hinder their performance, as well as the strategies or practices that enhance their ability to thrive within these joint ventures. Using empirical data, the study identified success factors and potential barriers limiting SMME's in ICJV's. A qualitative approach was adopted using a semi-structured interview schedule to collect empirical data. A purposive sample of 20 Zimbabwean SMMEs that have been involved in ICJV's were interviewed. The findings revealed the primary challenges local SMMEs face in ICJVs. It also revealed strategies that have enabled some SMMEs to successfully navigate these joint ventures and achieve favourable outcomes. The limitation of this study was the potential for response bias, as participants' accounts may not reflect a broader context. Furthermore, the size of the sample restricts generalizability of the findings to the broader population.

Keywords: International construction joint ventures, small medium micro enterprises (SMME's), economic development, Zimbabwe

1. Introduction

International construction joint ventures (ICJVs) are integral to the global economy, providing significant advantages in skill transfer, technology acquisition, and market access (Bakri *et al.*, 2022; Oti-Sarpong and Leiringer, 2016; Panibratov, 2016). Nevertheless, the success of ICJVs hinges on effectively addressing cultural differences, managing risks, and ensuring regulatory compliance (Bakri *et al.*, 2022; Chao *et al.*, 2023; Hwang *et al.*, 2015). By comprehending the driving factors and challenges associated with ICJVs, businesses and policymakers can enhance these ventures for mutual benefit.

Small, medium, and micro enterprises (SMMEs) account for more than 90% of businesses and provide up to 40% of gross domestic product in developing countries (Habibi *et al.*, 2024). Many small, medium, and micro enterprises (SMMEs) face difficulties competing effectively in International construction joint ventures (ICJVs) due to constraints such as limited resources, inadequate technical expertise, and institutional barriers. For SMMEs in developing countries like Zimbabwe, participation in ICJVs involves challenges that may impede their ability to maximize these opportunities. These issues are especially evident in the construction sector, which feature intricate supply chains, substantial capital requirements, and stringent regulatory environments. Understanding the dynamics that SMMEs encounter in ICJVs is essential as developing nations like Zimbabwe work to rebuild their economy and infrastructure

(Govender and Telukdarie, 2020; Mengistu *et al.*, 2024; Tetteh *et al.*, 2023).

This study seeks to address the research gap concerning the success of small, medium, and micro enterprises (SMMEs) in developing countries within the context of international construction joint ventures (ICJVs). While existing literature has thoroughly examined ICJVs from the perspective of multinational corporations or larger firms, there is a paucity of information regarding the experiences of local contractors, especially SMMEs, involved in these partnerships. Additionally, the distinctive socio-economic and institutional contexts of Zimbabwe make it essential to investigate how local SMMEs can navigate challenges and capitalize on opportunities within ICJVs.

The research is guided by the following questions:

1. What are the primary challenges faced by Zimbabwean SMMEs in ICJVs?
2. What strategies or practices have enabled SMMEs to navigate these challenges and achieve favorable outcomes?

There are three key objectives aligned with these questions, namely:

- i. To identify the critical obstacles that limit the functioning of local SMMEs in ICJVs.

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- ii. To analyze benefits and advantages that enhance the capacity of local SMMEs to thrive in global partnerships.
- iii. To provide practical insights that can inform policymakers and business leaders in supporting SMMEs' participation in ICJVs.

This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge on ICJVs by highlighting the perspectives of local SMMEs, which are frequently overlooked in academic and policy discussions (Wang *et al.*, 2021). Additionally, the insights obtained from this research can inform the development of policies and support mechanisms aimed at increasing the competitiveness of SMMEs in global partnerships. The study also offers practical guidance to local contractors, helping them build resilience and improve their performance in ICJVs. This research addresses a gap in literature and provides actionable insights for stakeholders interested in promoting sustainable and inclusive growth in the construction industry. It emphasizes the role of local SMMEs in international collaborations, contributing to economic development and integration in developing markets (Ghauri and Elg, 2018).

2. Literature Review

Small, medium, and micro enterprises (SMMEs) in developing countries' construction sectors can drive economic growth (Mabasa *et al.*, 2023). However, they face challenges in international construction joint ventures (ICJVs) (Nxele and Hoque, 2022). This review covers the main obstacles, success factors, mitigating strategies, and theoretical frameworks related to local SMME participation in ICJVs.

2.1. Barriers faced by SMMEs in ICJVs

SMMEs frequently face resource limitations, including financial capital, technical expertise, and skilled labor. These constraints impact their ability to meet the requirements of ICJVs, which demand advanced project management and compliance with international standards. Institutional barriers, such as regulatory complexity, lack of government support, and corruption, further compound these challenges in many developing countries (Edeh *et al.*, 2024; Nwajiuba *et al.*, 2020). Additionally, cultural differences and power imbalances in ICJVs often disadvantage local contractors compared to their international counterparts. For example, decision-making processes are often dominated by international firms, reducing opportunities for knowledge transfer and capacity building for SMMEs (Liu *et al.*, 2020).

2.2. Positive impact of SMME engagement

Involving small, medium, and micro enterprises (SMMEs) in international construction joint ventures (ICJVs) is crucial for their growth and integration into global value chains. These ventures come with challenges that can be mitigated through strategic

interventions. Building networks and forming alliances help SMMEs gain resources, expertise, and market opportunities (Sodangi, 2023). Partnerships with larger firms facilitate resource sharing and knowledge transfer, enhancing SMMEs' competitive positioning. Effective knowledge management, including training, mentorship, and experience-sharing, develops their technical and managerial capacity (Hernayanto *et al.*, 2024). Government policies promoting fair contracting, financing access, and local content requirements are essential. Such strategies enable SMMEs to thrive and sustain their participation in international ventures (Milosavljević *et al.*, 2023).

2.3. Mediating factors for SMME success in ICJV's

Mediating factors such as knowledge transfer, capacity building, institutional support, and trust mechanisms play a crucial role in enhancing the performance of SMMEs in international construction joint ventures (ICJVs). These factors bridge the gap between the challenges/barriers faced by SMMEs and their ability to achieve successful outcomes.

Knowledge Transfer, Capacity Building, Policy and Institutional Support and Trust and Communication

The transfer of knowledge from international firms to local Small, Micro, and Medium Enterprises (SMMEs) is essential for enhancing technical expertise and managerial capabilities (Siachou *et al.*, 2022). Hartini *et al.*, (2024) assert that effective knowledge transfer in joint ventures significantly improves the ability of smaller firms to adopt innovative practices and meet international standards. The willingness of international firms to mentor local enterprises and the absorptive capacity of SMMEs to utilize the transferred knowledge effectively are crucial for successful knowledge sharing. Capacity building involves initiatives that enhance the technical, operational, and managerial skills of SMMEs. Isaacs, (2007) suggest that targeted training programs, financial assistance, and technological support are fundamental in empowering SMMEs to overcome challenges in International Corporate Joint Ventures (ICJVs). Enhanced capacity enables these firms to compete with more established players and gain greater market access. Institutional support, such as favorable policies and regulatory frameworks, alleviates bureaucratic hurdles and corruption, common barriers in developing economies. In Zimbabwe, government interventions like subsidized training and grants have been recommended to boost the competitiveness of SMMEs (Bomani *et al.*, 2022). Such support ensures that these enterprises are better equipped to collaborate with international partners. Trust is a critical factor for success in cross-border partnerships. Effective communication channels foster mutual understanding and reduce the risk of opportunistic behavior. Research emphasizes establishing trust-based relationships to improve collaboration and minimize transaction costs within joint ventures (Xue *et al.*, 2018).

2.4. SMME Performance Outcomes

The outcomes for SMMEs involved in ICJVs can be classified into project-specific success metrics, growth opportunities, and the long-term sustainability of partnerships (Aulia *et al.*, 2024; Jo, 2024; Spence *et al.*, 2008).

2.4.1. Project outcomes, Growth opportunities and Partnership success

The success of projects, such as timely delivery and adherence to quality standards, is a primary measure of SMME performance. Recent research by Wang *et al.*, (2023) highlights that effective collaboration in ICJVs enhances project execution capabilities, enabling SMMEs to achieve benchmarks typically dominated by larger firms. Participation in ICJVs provides SMMEs with avenues for market expansion and increased competitiveness. A study by Kurukulasooriya *et al.*, (2024) depicts that collaboration with international firms helps local contractors gain exposure to global practices, enhancing their market reputation and enabling them to bid for larger, high-value projects. The longevity and sustainability of ICJVs depend on the ability of SMMEs to build strong, enduring relationships with their international counterparts. Research by Sunil *et al.*, (2020) indicates that SMMEs that successfully navigate cultural and organizational differences within joint ventures are more likely to secure repeat partnerships, ensuring continued business growth and stability.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Research philosophy and approach

This study adopted a qualitative method underpinned by the interpretivist philosophy, which was selected for its capacity to analyze the complex and subjective nature of the research problem. Interpretivism facilitates a deeper exploration of participants' experiences, viewpoints, and interpretations (Creswell and Creswell, 2017). An **inductive approach** guided the research, focusing on theory development through data collection (Saunders *et al.*, 2023). This approach was deemed appropriate as it avoids preconceived hypotheses, aiming instead to explore the experiences of local SMMEs in international construction joint ventures (ICJVs) in Zimbabwe.

3.2. Research population and sampling process

The research population comprised construction firms in Zimbabwe, registered with the Construction Industry Federation of Zimbabwe (CIFOZ) and possessing prior experience in international joint ventures (ICJVs). Limiting the population to CIFOZ-registered firms ensured relevance, as CIFOZ serves as the official regulatory body overseeing Zimbabwe's construction industry (Saris and Gallhofer, 2014). This focus guaranteed that only legally recognized and established market participants were included, providing a robust

basis for analyzing IJV experiences. Following Saunders *et al.*, (2023), the sample frame included construction contractors categorized by CIFOZ under classifications D, E, F, G, and H. These classifications reflect the diverse sizes and capacities of construction firms, ranging from medium-sized enterprises (categories D and E) to small- and micro-scale enterprises (categories F, G, and H). By including firms across these categories, the study aimed to capture a broad spectrum of perspectives and skill sets, offering a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of various construction organizations engaged in ICJVs. The targeted sample size consisted of 30 contractors, deemed sufficient to represent diverse viewpoints and experiences while maintaining feasibility for data collection and analysis. This aligns with Yin, (2015), who recommend a minimum of 30 participants in a population of 100 for robust and practical research. This sample size ensured adequate representation while facilitating manageable data analysis.

3.3. Data Collection

30 participants were invited on email to take part in the study. Only 20 participants responded and were interviewed in the study. The study utilized purposive techniques to select knowledgeable participants who had relevant experience in international construction joint ventures (ICJVs) in Zimbabwe. **Purposive sampling** ensured the inclusion of individuals with specific expertise, enabling the collection of meaningful insights (Cohen *et al.*, 2002). Additionally, **snowball sampling** was used to identify further participants through referrals, focusing on contractors within CIFOZ categories D to H to enhance the sample size and diversity. **Primary data** was collected through semi-structured interviews with contractors who had prior ICJV experience, allowing for detailed exploration of their challenges, benefits, and perspectives (Krueger and Casey, 2015). This method enabled the acquisition of rich, qualitative data directly aligned with the research objectives.

3.4. Development of the Research Instrument(s)

The research instrument was designed to ensure alignment with study objectives, employing thematic analysis to interpret data effectively (Yin, 2018). Table 1 outlines the objectives, data collected, and analysis methods, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of ICJVs within Zimbabwe's construction sector. This approach integrated primary insights with secondary evidence to provide a nuanced understanding of the challenges, benefits, and improvement strategies for local SMMEs in ICJVs.

Table 1: Data analysis and presentation methods

Objectives	Data Collection	Data Presentation	Data Analysis Method
To determine the benefits of local SMMEs enrolling in International Construction Joint Ventures?	The benefits associated with ICJVS to local Contractors	Text form	Thematic analysis
To determine disadvantages of local contractors enrolling in International Construction joint ventures?	The disadvantages associated with ICJVS to local contractors	Text form	Thematic analysis
To recommend strategies to improve the development of SMMEs through participation in international construction joint ventures?	The steps that can be taken to improve the development of local contractors	Text form	Thematic analysis

3.5. Data Analysis

The study employed a process of examining, categorizing, and recombining evidence to address its initial proposition (Yin, 2018). The data presentation was in text form, focusing on qualitative approaches and thematic analysis. Interviews with 20 participants resulted in a 67% response rate. These interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed based on study objectives and semi-structured questions. Emergent themes were coded from these interviews.

3.6. Ethical considerations

Participants received an information sheet about the study's purpose, procedures, and expectations to ensure transparency. Confidentiality was maintained, and informed consent was obtained before participation. Privacy was protected, responses remained anonymous, and participants were reminded of their right to withdraw at any time without repercussions. Consent was also obtained to record interviews for transcription and analysis.

3.7. Demographics of the study

The study gathered data from 20 professional stakeholders in Harare building projects using purposive and snowball sampling methods between May and July 2022. Of the participants, 85% were male and 15% female, with 60% aged 20-39. Formal professional training was present in 65%, including architects, engineers, and estimators (50%), while 35% lacked formal qualifications. The majority were Black Africans (65%), followed by White (20%) and Coloured individuals (15%). Most respondents (35%) had 0-9 years of experience, and 70% of their companies had 0-10 years of operational experience. These insights reflect the professional and demographic composition of Harare's construction sector but are limited by the small sample size and cannot be generalized.

4. Findings

20 SMME's from Harare's building sector participated, selected via purposive and snowball sampling. Most were aged 20-39, predominantly male (85%), and 65% held formal qualifications, reflecting relevant construction knowledge. Data saturation was reached as no new themes emerged, and trustworthiness was ensured through diverse roles. Below are the participant profiles (Table 2) and response rates (Table 3).

4.1. Advantages and benefits of ICJVs

The research findings, supplemented by participant interviews, underline the significant advantages Zimbabwean small, medium, and micro enterprises (SMMEs) gain through their involvement in International Construction Joint Ventures (ICJVs). These advantages span access to resources, market expansion, knowledge transfer, capacity building, and financial stability, all of which contribute to their growth and competitiveness in international markets.

Access to resources

Participants highlighted that ICJVs provide access to advanced resources like cutting-edge technologies and specialized equipment. One participant stated, *"Participating in ICJVs has provided us with access to cutting-edge technologies and specialized equipment that we would not have been able to afford on our own. This has boosted our productivity and project quality – R6."* Another example mentioned was the introduction of innovative construction technologies through ICJV partnerships, which significantly enhanced project efficiency and quality. These findings align with Barnes *et al.*, (2009), who emphasized the role of ICJVs in adopting technologies that improve operational capabilities and project outcomes for local firms.

Market expansion and business development

Participants emphasized that ICJVs help local contractors and SMMEs access larger markets, diversify opportunities, and leverage international partners' expertise. One respondent stated, *"ICJVs have enabled us to secure otherwise unattainable projects,*

Table 2: Profile of participants

Contractor Category (CIFOZ)	Tendering Capacity Maximum	Respondent	Designation	Qualification	Years of in industry
D	USD 1 500 000	R1	MD	NDip	6
D	USD 1 500 000	R2	MD	No qualification	9
D	USD 1 500 000	R3	SM	No qualification	8
D	USD 1 500 000	R4	CD	BArch	6
E	USD 1 000 000	R5	MD	BTech	5
E	USD 1 000 000	R6	Director	No qualification	8
E	USD 1 000 000	R7	PM	BSc	6
E	USD 1 000 000	R8	SM	No qualification	4
F	USD 800 000	R9	CD	BEng	5
F	USD 800 000	R10	Snr. QS	BScQS	7
F	USD 800 000	R11	PM	BScCM	3
G	USD 500 000	R12	MD	No qualification	5
G	USD 500 000	R13	CM	BEng	3
G	USD 500 000	R14	CM	No qualification	7
G	USD 500 000	R15	PM	BTech	3
H	USD 250 000	R16	MD	BArch	6
H	USD 250 000	R17	SPD	No qualification	9
H	USD 250 000	R18	SPD	BEng	8
H	USD 250 000	R19	CM	No qualification	4
H	USD 250 000	R20	SE	BScQS	9
Total		30	20		

Table 3: Response rate

Contractor Category (CIFOZ)	Tendering Capacity Maximum	Targeted	Respondents	Response Rate
D	USD 1 500 000	6	4	67%
E	USD 1 000 000	6	4	67%
F	USD 800 000	6	3	50%
G	USD 500 000	6	4	67%
H	USD 250 000	6	5	83%
Total Respondents		30	20	67%

strengthening our market presence – R9.” This collaboration enhances local firms' competitiveness and operational capabilities. Examples include securing major infrastructure contracts and gaining new suppliers. These benefits lead to immediate financial gains and long-term growth. These findings align with Tong *et al.* (2008) on joint ventures facilitating market access and scalability for smaller firms.

Knowledge transfer and capacity building

ICJVs provide essential benefits in knowledge transfer and capacity-building. Participants have gained insights into advanced construction techniques and project management practices, enhancing their capabilities. *“Through ICJVs, we have gained insights into new construction techniques and project management practices, significantly improving our capabilities – R2.”* These partnerships introduce SMMEs to skilled international professionals, fostering

development in project management and adherence to global standards. This aligns with both Martin and Emptage, (2019) and Rose *et al.*, (2009) whom found that ICJVs effectively transfer technological expertise and managerial knowledge to local firms. These advantages not only improve SMMEs' technical capacity but also prepare them for larger, complex projects, enhancing their competitiveness in the construction industry.

Financial stability and funding opportunities

Enhanced financial stability and access to funding represent another significant advantage of International Corporate Joint Ventures (ICJVs). One participant noted, *“Access to funding through our ICJVs has given us the confidence to bid for more significant projects and expand our operations – R20.”* In addition to financial backing, partnerships with larger firms have diversified revenue streams, thereby reducing financial

risks and enabled business expansion. Financial support through ICJV allowed their company to undertake large-scale projects that were previously beyond their means. These observations corroborate the assertion of Alcantara *et al.*, (2006) who advocate that joint ventures with international firms provide essential financial resources, thereby improving local firms' operational capacity and reducing barriers to market participation.

4.2. Difficulties and drawbacks associated with participating in international joint ventures (ICJVs)

The interviews with Zimbabwean SMMEs involved in ICJVs revealed significant challenges that impact their operations and outcomes. Key issues included complex decision-making processes, cultural and communication differences, unequal distributions of benefits and responsibilities, and navigating legal and regulatory requirements.

Complex decision-making processes

Participants consistently noted the complex nature of decision-making in ICJVs. Participant 19 stated: *"The involvement of multiple stakeholders from different cultural backgrounds and organizational structures often led to delays and difficulties in reaching consensus – R19."* Similarly, Participant R2 observed the administrative burdens caused by aligning the interests of all parties. These findings are consistent with Nash *et al.*, (2010), who report that diverse stakeholder involvement complicates negotiations and affects project timelines. The decision-making challenges underscore the need for efficient coordination and transparent mechanisms.

Cultural and communication differences

Language barriers, divergent communication styles, and cultural nuances were identified as significant challenges. Participant R7 observed: *"The cultural and communication differences between our local team and the international partner were a major challenge."* Similarly, Participant R10 highlighted: *"friction arising from misunderstandings about expectations and work approaches"*. Liu *et al.*, (2020) support these findings, suggesting that cross-cultural disputes often stem from ideological and linguistic disparities. Addressing these issues requires proactive communication strategies and cultural sensitivity.

Unequal distribution of benefits and responsibilities

Some participants highlighted imbalances in roles and benefits within ICJVs. Participant R13 explained: *"The international partner often had a dominant role in decision-making and project management, which limited our autonomy."* This perspective mirrors Shah, (2015), who noted that foreign partners often dominate key decision-making processes, limiting local SMMEs' ability to leverage their expertise. Addressing this

imbalance necessitates clearly defined roles and equitable sharing of risks and rewards.

Legal and regulatory compliance

Navigating different legal frameworks was another challenge. Participant 11 shared: *"The differing legal frameworks and compliance standards added complexity and required substantial time and resources to ensure compliance."* Such difficulties resonate with Devarakonda *et al.*, (2021), who argue that navigating dual legal systems increases administrative burdens and the potential for legal risks. Establishing a robust understanding of applicable laws and allocating appropriate resources is critical for compliance.

5. Discussion and Recommendations

This section outlines the key findings from the study, highlighting the benefits and challenges faced by small to medium-sized enterprises (SMMEs) in Zimbabwe engaging in International Construction Joint Ventures (ICJVs).

5.1. Strategic benefits of ICJVs for local SMME's

International construction joint ventures (ICJVs) present significant strategic advantages for Zimbabwean SMMEs, particularly in the areas of resource access, market reach, skills development, and financial resilience. Participants consistently highlighted how collaboration with international partners granted them access to advanced technologies, specialized equipment, and innovative construction methods, all of which contributed to improved productivity, quality, and competitiveness. This aligns with Khan *et al.*, (2015), who emphasize the transformative role of ICJVs in equipping local firms with state-of-the-art technologies and practices.

Knowledge transfer and capacity-building were also central themes. ICJVs served as platforms for the transfer of advanced construction techniques and project management competencies, significantly enhancing local firms' technical and managerial proficiency. These contributions played a crucial role in narrowing disparities in expertise and access to resources. Supporting this, Ndlovu (2022) observed that training interventions within ICJVs helped bridge knowledge and software gaps, enabling local contractors to align with global standards through structured capacity-building efforts.

Furthermore, the exposure to experienced international professionals accelerated local skill development and readiness for large-scale infrastructure delivery. This resonates with findings by Martin and Emptage, (2019) and Rose *et al.*, (2009), who underscore the value of ICJVs in transferring technical and managerial expertise to host-country firms.

Finally, financial stability was reported as a major advantage. International partnerships introduced funding streams and shared financial risk, empowering local contractors to bid competitively for substantial projects and invest in business growth. These financial buffers not only enhanced operational stability but also positioned SMMEs to scale sustainably and compete within both domestic and international markets. Overall, ICJVs are seen as powerful enablers of long-term development in Zimbabwe's construction industry.

5.2. Challenges and constraints of SMME's in ICJV participation

Zimbabwean SMMEs in ICJVs face several challenges affecting their efficiency and success. Complex decision-making processes with diverse stakeholders often cause delays, as noted by (Chan *et al.*, 2022). Cultural and communication differences lead to misunderstandings, highlighting the need for proactive communication strategies and cultural sensitivity (Sunil *et al.*, 2020). Uneven distribution of benefits and responsibilities allows international partners to dominate projects, limiting local firms' autonomy (Devarakonda *et al.*, 2021). Navigating different legal frameworks further complicates these ventures, requiring substantial time and resources to comply with dual systems. These factors underscore the necessity for equitable role distribution, transparent decision-making, and understanding of regulatory requirements to support local SMMEs in ICJVs.

5.3. Strategies for positioning SMMEs for sustained growth

To help SMMEs grow in global markets, several strategies can be employed. Building capacity through training and mentorship will improve technical and managerial skills. Strategic partnerships like ICJVs can offer access to technology and expertise, enhancing capabilities and compliance with international standards. Governments and industry bodies should create supportive environments with subsidies, tax incentives, and streamlined regulations. SMMEs should focus on developing robust business networks and leveraging digital tools for efficiency and visibility. Connecting with professional bodies and trade

associations provides resources, funding, and insights. Participation in trade expos and workshops promotes knowledge sharing and exposure to trends. Policymakers should facilitate affordable finance and skill-sharing mechanisms. These efforts will help SMMEs build resilience and sustain growth in competitive global markets.

6. Conclusion

The study presents an analysis of Zimbabwean small and medium-sized enterprises (SMMEs) participating in international construction joint ventures (ICJVs), addressing the research questions and objectives. The findings indicate significant challenges, including cultural and communication barriers, disparities in benefits, complex decision-making processes, and issues with regulatory compliance. Despite these impediments, SMMEs gain considerable advantages from ICJVs, such as access to advanced technologies, market expansion, knowledge transfer, and financial stability. The study identifies key success factors that enable SMMEs to overcome obstacles, including leveraging the expertise of international partners, adopting proactive communication strategies, and enhancing technical and managerial capabilities through training and mentorship. These strategies not only enhance the competitiveness of SMMEs but also position them for sustained growth in global markets. Practical recommendations for policymakers and industry leaders include establishing ICJV frameworks that promote equitable partnerships, addressing training deficiencies, and fostering a supportive regulatory environment. These initiatives can help local SMMEs flourish in international collaborations, contributing to the sustainable development of Zimbabwe's construction sector. Future research could examine the long-term impacts of ICJVs on SMMEs and the broader construction industry, providing insights into strategies for promoting inclusive economic growth through international partnerships.

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