



**ST. MARY'S UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES**

**LEADERSHIP BARRIERS AND THEIR EFFECT ON SCALING WOMEN-OWNED
SMEs IN ADDIS ABABA: THE CASE OF BOLE SUB CITY WOREDA 03.**

BY

FEVEN TEKLAY

ID - SGS/0033/2016A

JULY, 2025

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Declaration

I, Feven Teklay, hereby declare that the work in this research study entitled; Leadership barriers and their effect on scaling women-owned SMES in Addis Ababa: The case of Bole Sub City Woreda 03, is my original work prepared under the guidance of Mr. Reta Megerssa (PhD). All sources of materials used for this paper have been duly acknowledged and this thesis is not presented by me or any other party for any purpose.

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Endorsement

This thesis has been submitted to St. Mary's University, School of Graduate Studies for examination with my approval as a university advisor.



Mr. RETA MEGERSA (Ph.D)

JULY, 2025

ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

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List of Acronyms

Acronym	Full Term
COR	Conservation of Resources Theory
ERD	Entrepreneurial Role Demands
GD	Gender Discrimination
GEM	Global Entrepreneurship Monitor
LLDO	Limited Leadership Development Opportunity
MAR	Missing at Random (used in statistical imputation context)
MoUDH	Ministry of Urban Development and Housing (Ethiopia)
RBV	Resource-Based View
SMEs	Small and Medium Enterprises
SMU	St. Mary's University
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
SRE	Social Role Expectations
SW	Scaling Women Owned
TIN	Taxpayer Identification Number
WEF	World Economic Forum
WLIB	Work-Life Imbalance

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Abstract

This study investigates the leadership barriers that affect the scaling of women-owned small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Bole Sub City Woreda 03, Addis Ababa. Despite the increasing number of women entrepreneurs in Ethiopia, most remain unable to grow their businesses due to persistent challenges in leadership. Using a quantitative-dominant mixed-methods design, the research surveyed 125 women SME owners and conducted 5 in-depth interviews to examine the effects of work-life imbalance, limited leadership development opportunities, and gender discrimination on business scaling measured in terms of revenue, employment, and market expansion. Descriptive statistics, correlation, and multiple regression analyses were conducted using SPSS. The findings reveal that work-life imbalance and limited leadership development opportunities have significantly negative effect on scaling. While gender discrimination showed a significant correlation but did not have a statistically significant effect in the regression model. This study highlights the urgent need for gender-sensitive leadership training and policy reforms to empower women entrepreneurs and promote inclusive economic growth.

Key Words: Leadership Barriers, Women Entrepreneurs, SMEs, Scaling Businesses, Bole Sub City, and Business Growth.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Back Ground of the Study

Leadership is essential element for business scaling, enabling strategic growth and decision making, innovation, and effective team management (Jordan, 2023; Bara & Ahmad, 2024). Leadership theories such as Transformational leadership (Bass 1985), emphasizes the role of visionary leaders in fostering innovation, which is essential for scaling of enterprises. However, women entrepreneurs often face leadership barriers such as Work life imbalance having carry additional responsibilities, limited leadership training, and gender discrimination. And this barriers reduce their ability to manage and grow businesses effectively, particularly in SMEs where access to leadership resources and network is already limited (Kevane, et. al., 2021; O'Marah, 2023).

Globally, women entrepreneurs contribute significantly to economies through job creation, innovation, and economic development. Despite 32% of SMEs, women experience higher fear of failure, limited training access, cultural restrictions and gender biases (WEF, 2023; GEM, 2024). A 2019 study shows that women represent only 29% of SME ownership across 40 European countries, highlighting a significant challenge of underrepresentation in ownership within the SME sector (Kevane, et. al., 2021). These challenges are magnified by socio-cultural norms, work-life imbalance challenges, and limited leadership support, limiting business scaling and leadership growth globally and in emerging economies like Pakistan (Alreshoodi et al., 2022; Shaikh, 2020). Additionally, evidence from Bangladesh shows that Entrepreneurial Training and Education (TAE) has a significant impact on the success of SMEs owned by women entrepreneurs (Hoque & Islam, 2022).

In Africa women entrepreneurs lead 40% MSMEs, and 70% of informal Cross-Border Trade, driving economic growth in countries like South Africa, Ghana, Nigeria, Uganda, and Ethiopia (Agarwal, 2024). However, gender bias, lack of funding, and limited leadership development opportunities limited their ability to scale business (Ejike & Abhulimen, 2024). Nigerian women entrepreneurs face gender discrimination due to traditional and patriarchal beliefs that view

leadership as a male role. Women are often undermined, need male support to be taken seriously, and face social stigma for pursuing business activities independently (Ojinta, 2018). Additionally, women entrepreneurs in sub-Saharan Africa also face structural barriers, including socio-cultural restrictions which significantly constrain entrepreneurial growth (Tahir et al., 2023).

Ethiopian women entrepreneurs face similar barriers. Although SMEs supports national socio-economic development by supporting rural development, and financial stability, women face limited access to networks, unfair taxation, and administrative burdens (Abate & Sheferaw, 2023; Ahmed & Canarslan, 2023). Gender discrimination due to socio-cultural constraints, multiple responsibilities, a weak enterprise culture, inadequate business support systems, and underdeveloped markets and infrastructure are other barriers Ethiopian business women face (Desta, 2010 as cited in Beriso, 2021). In regions like Afar, women also struggle with family responsibilities, gender inequality, lack of managerial skills, and socio-cultural barriers that limited their progress (Tadesse, 2020).

In Bole Sub City Woreda 03, there is a notable presence of women entrepreneurs. Although Trade Bureau records initially listed 191 women-owned SMEs, many were found to have returned their licenses or become inactive upon further investigation. To obtain reliable data, a field screening was conducted by the researcher. This process identified 259 actively operating women-owned SMEs that had been running for at least three years, in line with the study's inclusion criteria. Despite the high participation of women in the local economy, most of their businesses remain small in scale. It found that most of these businesses employ fewer than five individuals and face no growth in revenue and market access. The challenges are worsened by a lack of formal leadership training, absence of mentorship structures, and a double burden of household responsibilities. These factors limit women's ability to lead with strategic focus or explore business expansion opportunities, making Bole Woreda 03 an ideal case for studying leadership-related barriers in urban Ethiopia.

This study explores how leadership barriers, including work-life imbalance, limited leadership development opportunities, and gender discrimination affect the scalability of women-owned SMEs in Bole Sub City Woreda 03. By examining these barriers, the research aims to provide practical recommendations for the local institutions, including SME support offices and training

centers. The findings will help inform gender-sensitive leadership programs and policies interventions. Additionally, the study contributes to the academic understanding of how leadership barriers influence women’s business growth in urban Ethiopian contexts.

1.2 Background of the Case Study

Woreda 03, located in the Bole Sub City, Addis Ababa, which is one the most commercially active districts in Addis Ababa, with a concentration of small and medium enterprises operating in diverse business activities across trade, services, manufacturing, hospitality, and transport.

Geographically. The woreda is bounded by woreda-2 to the west, woreda-4 to the north and woreda 1 to the south. It’s located within geographic coordinate; UTM zone Adindan coordinate between 475428m to 479029m East longitude; 993244m to 996133m North latitude and an elevation range from 2314 to 2362 m.a.s.l. Location map is presented in Figure 1.1 below.

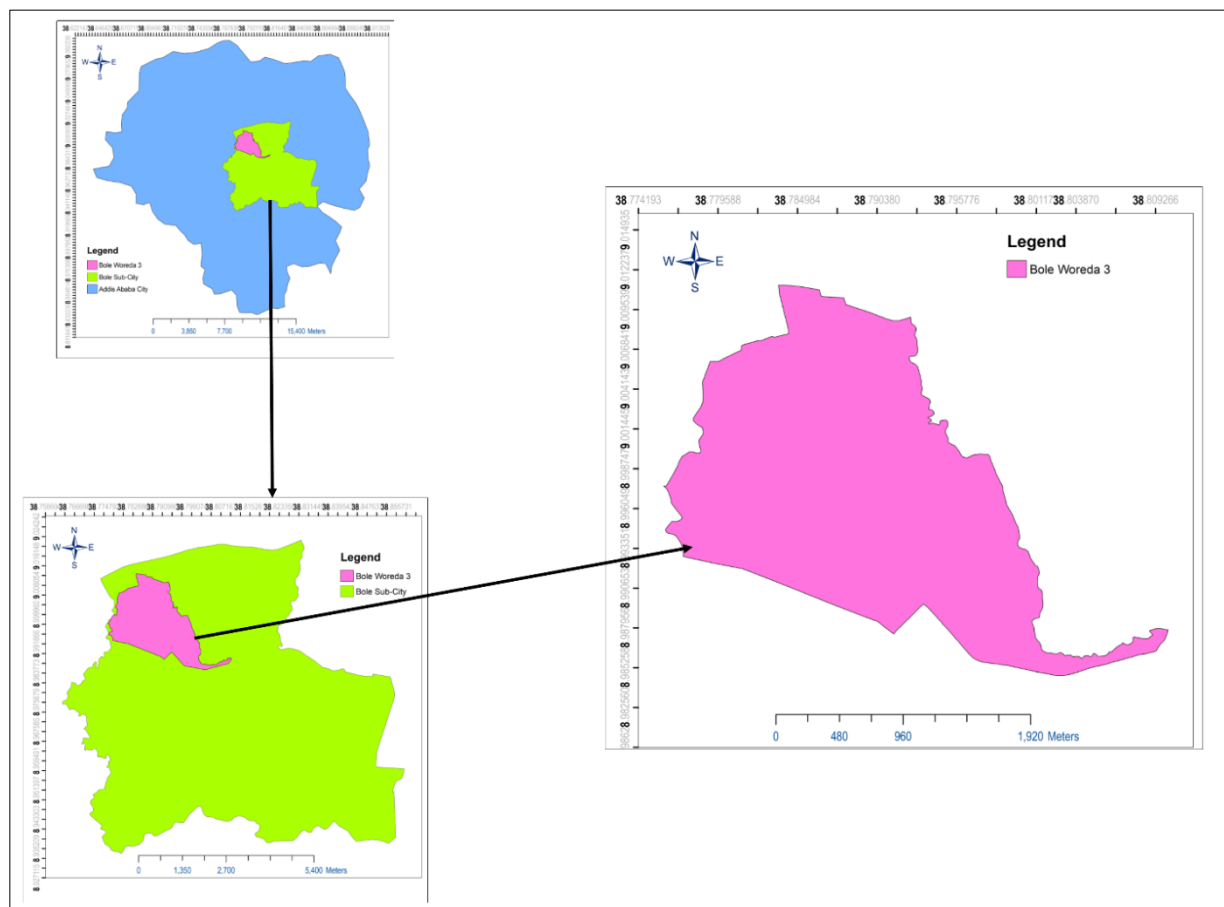


Figure 1.1: Location Map of Woreda 3, Bole sub-city

Source: online source Shapefiles and GIS

The area is characterized by a high level of female participation in entrepreneurship, making it an important urban setting for examining gender-related leadership challenges. However, while initial government records indicated a low number of women-owned businesses, but further investigation revealed that many listed enterprises were no longer active or had returned their license, making the official data unreliable for research purposes.

To address this gap, the researcher conducted a field screening to identify active women-owned businesses that met the study's inclusion criteria. The result was a verified sample of 259 SMEs enterprises, all of which had been operational for at least three years. These businesses represent a relatively stable group within the local SME sector and provide a reliable foundation for examining barriers to scalability from a leadership perspective.

The selection of Woreda 03 as a case study was based on its visibly high concentration of women-owned businesses and the diversity of sectors in which they operate. During preliminary field visits, the researcher observed active participation of women entrepreneurs across sectors such as retail, services, hospitality, and manufacturing. This visible presence, combined with the woreda's accessibility and commercial vibrancy, made it a suitable and contextually relevant site for examining how leadership barriers influence the scalability of women-owned SMEs in an urban Ethiopian setting.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Existing leadership and gender related theories provide useful foundation for understanding the barriers faced by women entrepreneurs. Social Role Theory (Eagly & Wood, 2012) and Role Congruity Theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002) explain how societal expectations shape women's participation in leadership, while Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1993) and Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) emphasize the role of skills and learning in business performance. However, these theories often assume equal access to training and leadership opportunities and do not fully explain how such barriers affect business scalability. In the context of women-owned SMEs in Ethiopia, there is limited application of these theories to outcomes like revenue growth, workforce expansion, or market penetration. This study addresses that gap by applying these frameworks to the specific context of Bole Sub City Woreda 03, to examine how internal leadership barriers influence the scaling of women-owned enterprises.

Empirical studies on women entrepreneurs in Ethiopia have largely emphasized access to finance, legal constraints, or informal business practices (Alemneh, 2019; Ahmed and Canarslan, 2023). While some studies mention gender-related challenges, few specifically examine the impact of leadership-related barriers such as work-life imbalance, limited leadership development opportunity, or gender discrimination on the scaling outcomes of SMEs. For example, Bahiru and Mengistu (2018) highlight work-life challenges but do not quantify their impact on revenue, market expansion, or employment. Gudeta et al. (2021) and Hundera (2019) describe overlapping social roles but fall short of linking them to business scalability. Similarly, while Terefe (2020) and Abdelkrim et al. (2018) demonstrate the value of leadership training, they do not assess its direct influence on firm growth. Gender bias is also well-documented (Beriso, 2021; Ssekiziyivu et al., 2025), but its effect on tangible business outcomes remains underexplored. This study fills the empirical gap by analyzing how leadership-related variables statistically influence business scalability, in a case-specific urban Ethiopian setting.

In Bole Sub City Woreda 03, 973 women-owned businesses are officially registered, yet only 191 are classified as small or medium enterprises which operated for 3 years. This study used total asset value rather than employee number to define SME size, as recommended by MoUDH (2016) and Wajebo (2022). However, the accuracy of official data remains questionable, as many businesses listed by the Bole Sub City Trade Bureau were found to be inactive or had returned their licenses, indicating unreliable data. To identify active SMEs for this study, a field screening was conducted and revealed that most operational businesses remained at small level, showing limited revenue growth, employee expansion, or market reach. Entrepreneurs also reported difficulties accessing leadership training, absence of mentoring, and the strain of household responsibilities. While existing interventions focus heavily on finance or regulatory support, leadership-related barriers remain under-addressed. These realities point to a practical knowledge gap on how internal leadership barriers affect the scaling of women-owned SMEs in this urban context. This study responds to that gap by examining how internal leadership factors affect the ability of women-led SMEs to scale in Bole SubCity, Woreda 03.

Despite the growing number of women-owned SMEs in Ethiopia, the leadership challenges they face remain under-addressed in both academic research and practical interventions. Most existing studies focus on access to finance, business environment, or market entry, overlooking

leadership barriers such as work-life imbalance, limited leadership development opportunity, and gender discrimination. These are not only critical constraints but also areas where practical solutions such as training, mentorship, and support networks can be implemented effectively. This study is timely and relevant because it focuses on women-led businesses in an urban area that is actively growing but still struggling to scale. By identifying how leadership barriers influence scalability, this research will help shape future leadership development programs, inform gender-sensitive policies, and offer actionable solutions for women entrepreneurs in Bole Sub City and beyond.

1.4 Objective of the Study

1.4.1 General Objective

To assess the leadership barriers faced by women entrepreneurs in Bole Sub City Woreda 03, Addis Ababa, and examine their effect on scaling SMEs.

1.4.2 Specific Objective

1. To assess the key leadership barriers faced by women entrepreneurs in Bole Sub City Woreda 03.
2. To explore the relationship between identified leadership barriers and business scaling outcomes.
3. To examine the effect of work-life imbalance on the scaling of Women-owned SMEs.
4. To examine the effect of limited leadership development opportunities on the scaling of women-owned SMEs.
5. To examine the effect of gender discrimination on the scaling of women-owned SMEs.

1.5 Research Questions

1. What are the key leadership barriers assessed among women entrepreneurs in Bole Sub City Woreda 03?
2. What is the relationship between assessed leadership barriers and business scaling outcomes?
3. What is the effect of work life imbalance on the scaling of women-owned SMEs?
4. What is the effect of limited leadership development opportunities on the scaling of women-owned SMEs?

5. What is the effect of gender discrimination on the scaling women-owned SMEs?

1.6 Hypothesis of the Study

H₁: There is statistically significant correlation between leadership barriers and the scaling potential of women-owned SMEs in Bole Sub City Woreda 03.

H₂: Work-life imbalance has statistically significant effect on scaling women-owned SMEs in Bole Sub City Woreda 03.

H₃: Limited leadership development opportunities have statistically significant effect on the scaling women-owned SMEs in Bole Sub City Woreda 03.

H₄: Gender Discrimination has statistically significant effect on scaling potential of women-owned SMEs in Bole Sub City Woreda 03.

1.7 Significance of the Study

This study is significant for several reasons. First, it provides practical insights for women entrepreneurs in Bole Sub City Woreda 03 by identifying leadership-related barriers such as work-life imbalance, limited leadership development opportunity, and gender discrimination that limits business growth. These insights can help women better understand their challenges and seek relevant support.

Second, the findings offer useful guidance for local government offices, SME development agencies, and NGOs working in women's entrepreneurship. Most existing programs focus on access to finance, while leadership development is under-addressed. This study helps inform more balanced and targeted interventions.

Finally, the research contributes to academic knowledge on gender and entrepreneurship by linking internal leadership constraints to measurable business outcomes. It adds evidence from an under-researched urban Ethiopian context and supports future research on leadership-focused SME development.

1.8 Scope of the Study

This study focused on internal leadership barriers and their effect on the scaling of women-owned small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Bole Sub City Woreda 03. The conceptual scope focused on three specific leadership barriers such as work-life imbalance, limited leadership

development opportunity, and gender discrimination, as independent variables. The dependent variable scaling, was measured using revenue growth, employee growth, and market expansion.

Geographically, the study was conducted in Woreda 03 of Bole Sub City, Addis Ababa. Which is one of the city's most commercially active areas with a high concentration of women-owned SMEs. The area was selected due to its diverse business sectors, including trade, hospitality, and manufacturing, as well as the visible entrepreneurial participation of women, making it a representative location for studying the specific challenges women entrepreneurs face.

Methodologically, the study used a mixed-methods approach, combining both explanatory and descriptive research designs. Quantitative data were collected through structured questionnaire from 125 respondents, and qualitative were gathered through interviews with five women entrepreneurs. The research was conducted from February, 2025 through May 2025.

1.9 Limitations of the Study

Conceptually, this study focused only on internal leadership barriers specifically work-life imbalance, limited leadership development opportunity, and gender discrimination as factors influencing the scaling of women-owned SMEs. It excluded other factors such as access to finance, market competition, or policy issues. Micro enterprises were also excluded, as they tend to focus more on survival than on scaling. In addition, most are self-run and do not involve formal leadership roles, making them less suitable for analyzing leadership-related challenges. This exclusion allowed the study to focus on enterprises where leadership responsibilities are more clearly present.

Geographically, the study was limited to Bole Sub City Woreda 03 in Addis Ababa. While this location was selected due to its high concentration of women-owned SMEs, the findings may not be generalizable to other sub-cities in or to rural areas where the business environment and leadership barriers may differ. The study did not include other locations primarily due to time and budget constraints, which restricted the scope of data collection and fieldwork to a single woreda.

Methodologically, the research originally aimed to conduct a full census of women-owned SMEs operating for at least three years in Woreda 03. However, only 130 out of 259 identified businesses participated: 85 were unreachable (e.g., out of the country), and 44 declined to

participate. While missing data were addressed using multiple imputation, the assumption that the data were missing at random (MAR) may not fully eliminate bias. The study relied on self-reported survey and interview data, which may introduce response bias or social desirability effects. Despite these challenges, the mixed-methods design allowed for a balanced understanding of both statistical patterns and personal experiences.

1.10 Definition of Terms

- **Women-Owned SME:** A business owned by a woman, classified as small and medium based on total asset value.
- **Leadership Barriers:** Internal factors that limited a women's ability to lead and grow her business, including work-life balance, limited leadership development opportunity, and gender discrimination.
- **Work-Life Imbalance:** The extent to which women entrepreneurs experience conflict or struggle to manage household and business responsibilities simultaneously.
- **Limited Leadership Development Opportunity:** Limited access to training, mentorship, and skills-building programs that enhance leadership capacity.
- **Gender Discrimination:** Systemic and cultural practices that limit women's leadership roles, access to networks, and resources due to entrenched gender norms and expectations.
- **Scaling:** The process of expanding a business efficiently in terms of revenue growth, workforce, and market reach.
- **Women Entrepreneurs:** Women who own and operate businesses, particularly SMEs, while facing unique leadership barriers.
- **Revenue Growth:** An increase in the business's income over time, used as a key metric for scalability.
- **Market Expansion:** Reaching new customer groups or entering new markets.
- **Employee Number Growth:** The increase in number of people employed by the business.
- **Small, and Medium Enterprise (SMEs):** Businesses classified using Ethiopia's asset-based criteria, excluding microenterprises.

1.11 Organization of the Study

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter One introduces the study through the background, background of the case study, problem statement, objectives, research questions and hypotheses, significance, scope, limitations, and definition of terms. Chapter Two presents the review of literature, including theoretical and empirical perspectives, and the conceptual framework. Chapter Three describes the methodology, covering research design, research approach, population, data collection and analysis methods, model specification, validity and reliability, and ethical considerations. Chapter Four provides data presentation, analysis, and interpretation of findings from both the survey and interview. Chapter Five presents the summary of findings, conclusion, and recommendations based on the study results.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews existing literature relevant to the study's focus on leadership barriers and their effect on scaling women-owned small and medium enterprises (SMEs). It aims to synthesize theoretical insights and empirical evidence related to leadership challenges such as work-life imbalance, limited leadership development opportunities, and gender discrimination, and their effect on revenue growth, market expansion, and employment generation. While international and African studies highlight the significance of these barriers, there remains a notable lack of context-specific research examining how such challenges affect women entrepreneurs in Addis Ababa. By addressing this gap, the chapter provides a foundation for the study's conceptual framework and guides the analysis of the relationship between leadership barriers and business scaling outcomes.

2.2 Theoretical Literature Review

This section presents the theoretical foundations of the study by reviewing key concepts related to entrepreneurial leadership, SME classification, the role of women-owned businesses, leadership barriers, and scaling dimensions. These theoretical insights support the analysis of how leadership challenges influence the scalability of women-owned SMEs in the study context.

2.2.1 Defining Leadership in Entrepreneurship

Leadership in entrepreneurship is defined a leadership style in which leaders actively inspire and guide their supporters toward entrepreneurial goals by setting a strong example and focusing attention on innovation and opportunity-seeking (Renko et al., 2015, as cited in shieferaw et al., 2023). This leadership approach fosters intellectual growth and is essential for managing challenges in modern institutions, helping organizations maintain competitive advantage and adapt to changing market needs (Abbasi & Zamani-Miandashti, 2013; Bagheri & Harrison, 2020, as cited in shieferaw et al., 2023). Entrepreneurial leadership is crucial for business success, influencing growth, effectiveness, and competitiveness. Entrepreneurial leaders possess qualities like risk-taking, innovation, vision, and courage. They create and generate jobs, invest in new

ideas, build strong teams, and work collaboratively to achieve shared goals (Nidhan & Singh, 2022), making entrepreneurial leadership especially relevant for women-owned SMEs aiming to overcome growth barriers and scale their businesses in competitive environments.

2.2.2 Defining Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)

Despite the lack of a universal definition, defining SMEs is essential for economic analysis, comparisons, regulation, and access to public support (UNIDO OECD, 2004, as cited in Berisha & Pula, 2015). SMEs make up 90% of global firms and employ 63% of the workforce (Munro, 2013 Berisha & Pula, 2015), but their definitions vary across countries and institutions. Though qualitative traits distinguish them from large firms, they are mainly classified using quantitative criteria like size and finances.

According to the European Commission, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) are categorized based on the number of employees (a mandatory criterion) and either annual turnover or annual balance sheet total. A medium-sized enterprise has fewer than 250 employees and either an annual turnover not exceeding €43 million or a balance sheet total not exceeding €50 million. A small enterprise has fewer than 50 employees and either an annual turnover or balance sheet total not exceeding €10 million (Raczyńska, 2019).

According to World Bank small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are categorized based on the number of employees, and either total asset or total annual sales. A medium-sized enterprise has greater than 50 and fewer than 300 employees and either total asset greater than \$ 3,000,000 and less than \$15,000,000. A small enterprise has greater than 10 and fewer than or equal to 50 employees and either a total asset or total annual sales greater than \$100,000 or less than or equal to €10 million (Berisha & Pula, 2015).

According to Ethiopia Small enterprises are defined based on the sector they operate in. In the industrial sector, which includes manufacturing, construction, and mining, small enterprises are those employing between 6 and 30 people and possessing total assets ranging from ETB 100,001 to ETB 1,500,000 (approximately USD 4,630 to USD 69,500). In contrast, for the service sector covering areas such as retail trade, transport, hospitality, tourism, IT, and maintenance small enterprises also employ 6 to 30 individuals but have lower asset thresholds, between ETB 50,001 and ETB 500,000 (roughly USD 2,310 to USD 23,150) (Ministry of Urban Development and

Housing [MoUDH], 2016). For medium enterprises in industry sector with total asset greater than 1.5 million, employees 30-100 and for service sector with total asset greater than 500,000, employee number between 30-100 (Wajebo, 2022). Definitions of medium enterprises in Ethiopia are not consistent across sources, as different documents provide varying criteria based on asset thresholds.

2.2.3 Role of Women-owned Small and Medium Enterprise (SMEs)

Women-owned SMEs play a critical role in economic development by contributing to GDP, job creation, and innovation. They support household income and offer employment opportunities, especially in underserved communities, and are vital drivers of inclusive growth in both developing and emerging economies (Mistry, 2025; Kevane et al., 2021). In LMICs, these businesses also improve women's social mobility and community resilience.

In Ethiopia, SMEs are essential for rural development, expanding local markets, and improving livelihoods (Oshora et al., 2021). However, women entrepreneurs remain underrepresented due to persistent structural and cultural barriers. In Bule Hora, for example, low participation is often due to perception-based challenges and gender norms (Adula & Kant, 2023). Although women constitute a significant portion of the population, their economic participation is still constrained. In the context of Bole Sub City Woreda 03, women-owned SMEs are present across sectors such as trade, hospitality, and services. However, many of these businesses remain small in scale. This study addresses the gap by linking their economic role to internal leadership barriers, offering localized insights that contribute to both policy and academic debates.

2.2.4 Leadership Barriers in Women-Owned SMEs

Work-Life Imbalance: Role theory explains how conflicting expectations from different societal roles create tension for women who must balance household duties and entrepreneurship (Anglin et al., 2022). According to Conservation of Resource Theory (COR), stress arises when individuals lack the necessary resources to manage demands, such as balancing work and family responsibilities, where individuals face high demands without sufficient support, leading to stress, burnout, reduced well-being, and productivity (Bon & Mohamud, 2022). In Addis Ababa, many women struggle to maintain sustainable leadership due to household responsibilities, which hinder business expansion. This study builds on these theories by analyzing how work-life

balance affects measurable outcomes such as revenue growth, market reach, and employment levels in Bole Sub City.

Limited Leadership Development Opportunity: Human Capital Theory emphasizes that training enhances entrepreneurial performance through improved knowledge, skills, and competencies. It implies without proper training, individuals may lack the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities to perform effectively, which could impact organizational performance and growth (Wuttaphan, 2017). Social Learning Theory further suggests that mentorship allows women to develop leadership capabilities by modeling real-life experiences (Cojocaru et al., 2023). However, women in Ethiopia often lack access to such structured programs, weakening their leadership capacity. This study addresses a theoretical and contextual gap by evaluating the statistical effect of limited leadership development on business scaling in an under-researched urban Ethiopian setting.

Gender Discrimination: According to Role Theory, societal gender expectations negatively affect women's leadership in business by positioning entrepreneurship as a masculine trait. These stereotypes reduce access to credit, limit delegation opportunities, and undermine authority in male-dominated industries (Biddle, 1986; Anglin et al., 2022). Societal expectations about gender roles influence women entrepreneurs' leadership behaviors, often leading to lower growth expectations and performance outcomes, particularly in male-dominated industries (Martiarena, 2022). This study builds on these theories by exploring how gendered expectations may indirectly restrict firm growth capacity through leadership exclusion and stereotype-driven resource denial in an urban Ethiopian context.

2.2.5 Scaling Dimensions of Women-Owned SMEs

Scaling SMEs involves expanding revenue, market access, and employment in ways that ensure sustainability. This section examines theories relevant to these dimensions, focusing on their applicability to women-owned SMEs in Addis Ababa, specifically in Bole Sub City Woreda 03.

Revenue growth: Revenue growth is a critical indicator of scaling in SMEs. According to the Resource-Based View (RBV), firms scale through the effective use of internal resources that are valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (Barney & Hesterly, 2019). Dynamic Capital Theory (Penrose, 1959, as cited in Korl et al., 2016) adds that financial, human, and social capital must be developed and reinvested strategically for long-term revenue growth. Leadership

barriers may prevent women from leveraging these assets, making it harder to sustain income increases. This study investigates whether such barriers statistically limits revenue growth among women-owned SMEs in Bole Sub City.

Market Expansion: RBV theory again applies, as entry into new markets depends on deploying strategic resources (Mailani et al., 2024) and defines market expansion as leveraging a firm's unique internal resources and capabilities to enter new markets. Additionally, Innovation Diffusion Theory (Dearing & Cox, 2018) explains that new products and practices spread through social systems, often requiring leadership adaptability. For women entrepreneurs, barriers like poor access to mentorship or gender bias may restrict this adaptability. This study evaluates whether leadership factors limit women's ability to expand into new customer bases and market segments.

Employee Number Growth: Greiner's Growth Stage Theory suggests that employee expansion is a necessary phase in business scaling, tied to evolving organizational complexity (Greiner, 1998). Leadership skills such as delegation, planning, and formal management structures become increasingly necessary as staff numbers grow. Employee growth reflects the business's need to scale its workforce to handle expanded responsibilities, decentralization, coordination, and teamwork as it moves through each stage (Greiner, 1998). This study tests whether leadership barriers prevent this form of scaling, using data from women-owned SMEs in Bole Sub City, Woreda 03.

2.3 Empirical Literature Review

While studies have addressed general challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in Ethiopia, most have not explicitly examined how leadership-related variables affect measurable business growth. This section reviews the literature related to work-life balance, limited leadership development opportunity, and gender discrimination, and identifies their effects on key scaling indicators such as revenue, employee growth, and market expansion within the urban SME context of Bole Sub City Woreda 03.

2.3.1 Leadership Barriers in Women-Owned SMEs

Work-life Imbalance: Work-life imbalance remains a significant challenge for women entrepreneurs. Bahiru & Mengistu (2018) found that women struggle with balancing domestic

and business responsibilities, which limits business growth. Gudeta et al. (2021) also found that women entrepreneurs in Ethiopia face intense work-family conflict due to lack of partner support, being primarily responsible for household tasks and childcare, and time constraints. These pressures reduce productivity, innovation, and long-term planning capacity. However, these studies stop short of measuring the effect of work-life imbalance on business scaling. This study addresses that gap by statistically examining this relationship.

Limited Leadership Development Opportunity: Lack of education and training is a major obstacle for Ethiopian women entrepreneurs, restricting their ability to manage operations and scale (Adula & Kant, 2023). Women often lack access to formal leadership education, which undermines confidence, limits planning, and reduces engagement in strategic business decisions. Alene (2020) highlights that participation in training significantly improves business performance, while Beriso (2021) found that trained women entrepreneurs earn more, attributing growth to mentorship and business exposure. Singh & Belwal (2008), cited in Ssekiziyivu et al. (2025), observed that many Ethiopian women business owners struggle with technology and distribution due to training gaps. Terefe (2020) also affirms that business training is strongly linked to SME growth. Despite this evidence, few studies directly test whether lack of leadership development statistically limits scaling dimensions. This study fills that gap by empirically analyzing whether leadership development opportunity influences revenue, employee growth, and market access among SMEs in Bole Sub City Woreda 03.

Gender Discrimination: UNICEF and IMF's document shows, in Ethiopia discriminatory gender norms have placed women and girls in stereotyped roles, leading to gender inequalities in socioeconomic and political spheres (UNICEF, 2019; IMF, 2018; cited in Gebreselassie, & Abdisa, 2024). Further study shows women entrepreneurs in Ethiopia face challenges due to socio-cultural barriers, limited access to finance, and discrimination in business licensing, loans, and skills development (Amha & Admassie, 2004; Wole, 2004; cited in Beriso, 2021). They are disadvantaged by cultural, religious, and traditional factors, which result in lower capital and fewer opportunities for credit compared to their male counterparts (Geda, Shimeles, & Weeks, 2009; Rahmato, 2004; Amha & Narayana, 2004; cited in Beriso, 2021). Previous studies rarely connect these disadvantages to business scaling. This study fills that empirical gap using statistical methods and context-specific data.

2.3.2 Scaling

Scaling a business refers to the process of expanding operations by increasing output, reaching more customers, and improving internal systems (Kiradoo, 2023). It includes both internal adjustments and external growth. While it is a key element of entrepreneurial success, research on scaling women-owned SMEs remains underdeveloped. Jansen et al. (2023) note that scaling is often fragmented in literature, especially regarding women's businesses. Women entrepreneurs face challenges like limited funding, biases, and fewer networks (Khattar et al., 2025), reducing their representation in high-growth sectors. These barriers make it more difficult for women to scale their firms beyond survival level operations.

Revenue growth: Revenue growth is a key measure of business scaling. It reflects a firm's ability to expand income through increased customer engagement, product innovation, or pricing strategies. Spacenco & Mandari (2020) state it is the most commonly used measure of growth due to its connection with reinvestment and competitiveness. Majka (2024) also notes that consistent revenue increases signal scaling success, while stagnation may indicate operational inefficiencies. However, gendered leadership limitations such as lack of financial literacy or strategic planning may slow revenue scaling. This study contributes by examining how leadership barriers, especially lack of training and gender bias, influence women entrepreneurs' ability to drive revenue growth in SMEs.

Market Expansion: A study by Jost (2024) stated that market expansion a firm's capacity to reach new customers or geographies, this involves adjusting business strategies and offerings to appeal to new segments. This growth enables increased revenue, stronger market presence, and improved competitiveness, though it may also lead to challenges such as pricing pressure and increased competition. Another study by Kiradoo (2023.) adds that multi-channel strategies like digital sales and partnerships can aid in growth. However, women often face gendered limitations in accessing networks and technologies essential for such expansion. This study tests whether leadership barriers reduce women's ability to explore new markets in Bole Sub City.

Employee Number Growth: A study by Delfmann & Koster (2016) states hiring and growing a workforce is a key scaling dimension. Another study by Spacenco & Mandari, (2020) argue that employee growth signals institutionalization and long-term scaling intent. However, leadership

weakness in delegation, planning, and resource allocation often linked to lack of training or WLB pressures can limit this growth. This study assesses whether such leadership barriers have statistically significant effects on employee growth in women-owned SMEs.

2.3.3 Effect of Leadership Barriers on Scaling of Women-owned SMEs

While prior studies document the presence of leadership barriers, only few empirically link them to outcomes of scaling like revenue, employment, or market expansion of women-owned SMEs, particularly in Ethiopia. This section reviews how each barrier may influence scaling potential and formulates related hypotheses.

Effect of work-life imbalance on scaling women-owned SMEs: Work-life imbalance reduces women's availability for leadership functions such as planning, networking, or supervising operations. Bahiru & Mengistu (2018) found women entrepreneurs in Addis Ababa face time pressures and social roles, which affects their ability to grow their businesses. Gudeta et al. (2021) noted that these pressures lead to burnout and limited business hours, affecting performance. Hundera (2019) argued that societal expectations often push women to choose between family and business, limiting their scaling efforts. However, none of these studies tested whether work-life balance statistically predicts outcomes like revenue growth or market expansion. This study addresses that gap by testing the hypothesis that work-life imbalance significantly affects scaling potential in women-owned SMEs.

- **H2:** Work-life imbalance has statistically significant effect on scaling women-owned SMEs in Bole Sub City Woreda 03.

Effect of limited leadership development opportunities on scaling women-owned SMEs: Lack of structured leadership development programs restricts entrepreneurial growth. Hoque & Islam (2022) found that leadership training improves confidence and scaling capabilities. Alene (2020) and Beriso (2021) emphasized that trained women reported better revenue outcomes and were more resilient. Abdelkrim et al. (2018) stated that training gaps hinder managerial and financial capabilities. Singh & Belwal (2008), cited in Ssekiziyivu et al. (2025), added that lack of technical training blocks access to technology and markets. Terefe (2020) further highlighted that limited training significantly restricts women's ability to grow their firms. Though these studies point to training as a factor, most fall short of connecting it directly to firm growth data.

This study bridges that gap by statistically assessing whether limited leadership training negatively influences scalability across all three indicators.

- **H₃:** Limited leadership development opportunity has statistically significant effect on scaling women-owned SMEs in Bole Sub City Woreda 03.

Effect of gender discrimination on scaling women-owned SMES: Gender-based discrimination remains a key challenge for women entrepreneurs in Ethiopia, limiting their business growth potential. Gebreselassie and Abdisa (2024) reported that women-owned enterprises face reduced profitability and access to growth opportunities due to entrenched social norms. Ssekiziyivu (2025) found that 69% of women entrepreneurs in Uganda experienced bias in decision-making and resource allocation, leading to low confidence and scaling limitations. Adamu (2023) explained that traditional beliefs in Ethiopia discourage women from pursuing leadership roles, while EMAH Consulting (2022) highlighted structural barriers that limits women's access to networks, training, and credit. Kapinga & Montero (2017) and Guma (2015), as cited in Ssekiziyivu (2025), emphasized how gender bias affects women's self-esteem and risk tolerance further limiting their business expansion. While these studies confirm the presence of gender discrimination, most do not test its effect on scaling indicators such as revenue, market access, or employee growth. This study fills that empirical gap by examining whether gender discrimination significantly affects the scalability of women-owned SMEs in Bole Sub City Woreda 03.

- **H₄:** Gender discrimination has statistically significant effect on scaling of women-owned SMEs in Bole Sub City Woreda 03.

2.4. Conceptual Framework

This study's conceptual framework outlines how three leadership barriers such as work-life imbalance, limited leadership development opportunities, and gender discrimination related to the scaling of women-owned SMEs, measured through revenue growth, market expansion, and employee growth. The framework illustrates both the correlation and the effect of these independent variables on the dependent variable, as tested through Pearson correlation and multiple regression analysis. It supports four hypotheses that examine whether these leadership

barriers are significantly associated with and have an effect on the scaling potential of women-owned SMEs in Bole Sub City Woreda 03.

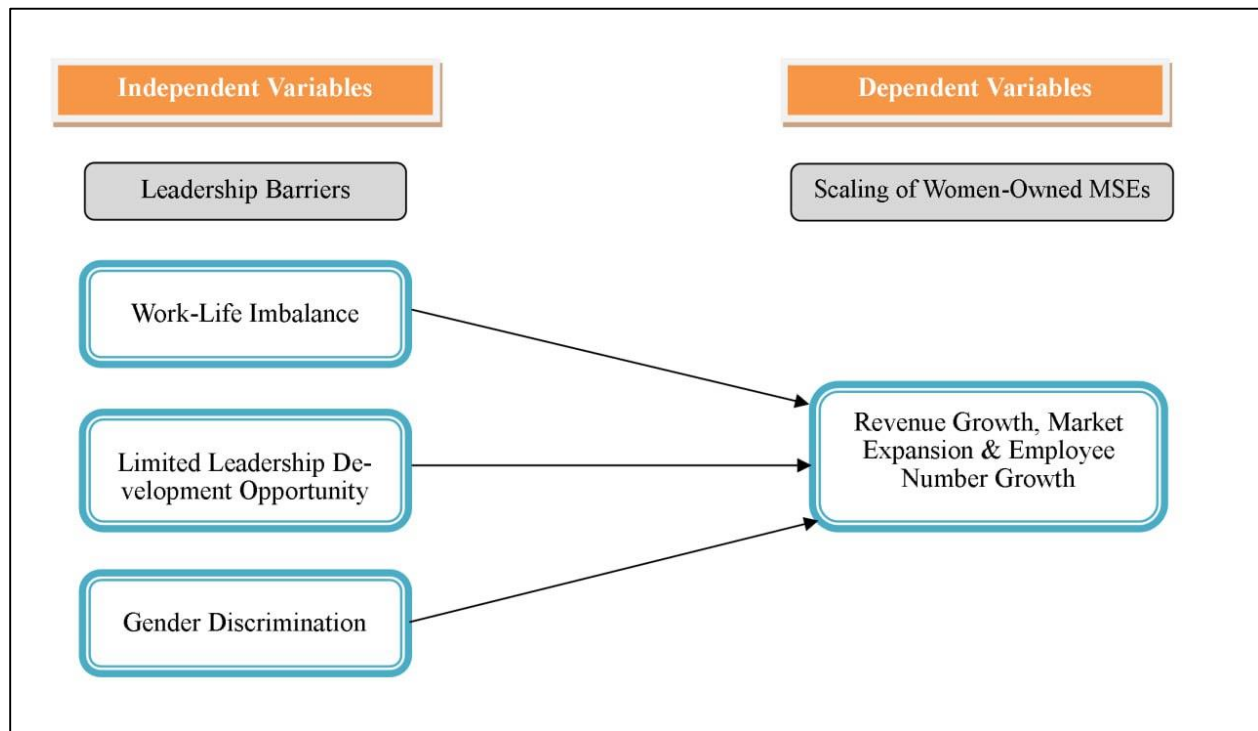


Figure 2.1: Conceptual framework between independent and dependent variables

Source: Developed based on Literature

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methodology used to explore how leadership barriers effect the scaling of women-owned SMEs in Bole Sub City Woreda 03, Addis Ababa. It details the research design, data collection methods, sampling techniques, and analytical approaches which is employed to achieve the study's objectives. This methodology is appropriate because it enables a comprehensive examination of how internal leadership barriers affect business scaling in a localized urban Ethiopian setting.

3.2 Research Design

Research design is the structured plan that guides the entire research process, specifying how data will be collected, measured, and analyzed to address the research question (Akhtar, 2016). This study employs a mixed research design, combining descriptive and explanatory approaches.

Descriptive research design focuses on detailing the characteristics of individuals, groups, or situations, aiming to provide a comprehensive and accurate understanding of the subject under study, often involving clear definitions of what is being measured and the population being studied (Kothari, 2004). Descriptive research design is employed for a detailed understanding of existing leadership barriers among women entrepreneurs.

Explanatory research design focuses on identifying the reasons or causes behind observed patterns or behaviors. It aims to answer the question "*why*" something happens by exploring the underlying relationships and causal factors (Nascimento & Freitas, 2023). This research design is chosen because it helps to identify and test causal relationships between these barriers and business scaling outcomes.

3.3 Research Approach

This study employed mixed-method approach, quantitative-dominant mixed –methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative methods to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research problem. Nair & Prem (2020) stated that the mixed-method approach is useful as

it combines the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative methods, offering a deeper understanding, greater accuracy through triangulation, and the ability to corroborate and clarify findings to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research problem.

Quantitative approach is a method of studying social phenomena by examining measurable variables and numerical data to test hypotheses, forecast outcomes, and identify cause-and-effect relationships (Lim, 2024). This approach adopted to determine the effect of the independent variables on the dependent variable.

Qualitative approach is a type of research that focuses on understanding experiences, behaviors, and complex relationships without relying on quantitative measurements or statistical analysis, often using methods like interviews, observations, and ethnography (Hamilton & Finley, 2019). This approach is employed to gain deeper insights into the experiences and challenges of women entrepreneurs, allowing for a detailed understanding of their leadership barriers and their effect on business scaling.

3.4 Population and Response Rate

This section outlines the population, sample size, and sampling method that is used to collect data for this study, which focuses on leadership barriers and their effect on the scaling of women-owned SMEs in Bole Sub City Woreda 03, Addis Ababa.

3.4.1 Population

Population refers to the complete set of units or elements that possess the characteristics under study and to which the findings of the research are to be generalized (Shukla, 2020). The target population for this study consists of women-owned small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Bole Sub City Woreda 03, Addis Ababa.

As accurate secondary data was unavailable, the researcher conducted a field screening to identify all eligible businesses, aiming to conduct a census of women-owned SMEs in the woreda. A total of 259 businesses were found to meet the study's criteria:

- Registered as small and medium enterprises in accordance with the Ethiopian government's guidelines for small enterprises (MoUDH, 2016) and for medium enterprises as defined in related studies (Wajebo, 2022), using asset based classification.
- Owned and operated by women.

- Operational for at least three years, this timeframe ensured that respondents had sufficient operational experience for meaningful input on scaling processes.

Additionally, 15 business owners were involved in a pilot study to pre-test the questionnaire and were not included in the main study population or analysis.

3.4.2 Response Rate

Although a census approach was intended, full coverage could not be achieved due to practical constraints. Out of the 259 identified businesses, 125 owners participated in the survey, and 5 owners provided in-depth interview responses.

The remaining non-responses occurred for the following reasons:

- 85 owners were unreachable (e.g., abroad permanently or on extended work trips).
- 44 owners declined to participate.

These factors resulted in a final response rate of 48.3% for the survey (125 out of 259).

3.5 Methods of Data Collection

This study employed both interviews and surveys as data collection methods to gain a comprehensive understanding of the leadership barriers facing women entrepreneurs. The interview method provided in-depth qualitative insights, while the survey method captured broader, quantifiable trends among a larger sample. The combination of both tools allowed for triangulation of data, improving the credibility and validity of the findings.

An interview is a method of data collection where the researcher and the respondent interact verbally, either face-to-face or through technology (Mwita, 2022). This study used semi-structured interviews, which combine a set of predetermined questions with flexibility for follow-up questions. A total of 14 interview questions were developed and administered to 5 selected participants. These open-ended questions allowed the participants to share detailed perspectives on the leadership barriers they face and each interview lasted approximately 15 minutes. This method was chosen because it allows for deeper exploration of individual experiences and perspectives, providing rich, context-specific insights that cannot be captured through surveys alone.

A survey or questionnaire consists of questions or statements designed to collect information from respondents to meet research objectives, which may include open-ended questions for

detailed opinions or close-ended questions that limit responses to predefined options ((Mwita,2022). In this study, a structured questionnaire consisting of 25 Likert-scale questions and 8 demographic questions were distributed to 125 women entrepreneurs in Bole Sub City Woreda 03. The Likert scale allowed respondents to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with various statements related to leadership barriers, enabling the measurement of attitudes and perceptions (South et al., 2022). The survey method was chosen for its ability to measure attitudes and perceptions towards leadership barriers in a structured, quantifiable way, supporting statistical analysis and examining its effect on the growth of women-owned businesses.

3.5.1 Data Sources

To achieve the objective, the study will use both primary and secondary data.

- **Primary sources:**

The primary data for this study was collected through surveys and interviews. These methods enabled direct interaction with women business owners in Bole Sub City Woreda 03, providing valuable insights into the leadership barriers they face and their impact on scaling SMEs.

- **Secondary sources:**

Initially, secondary data was collected from the Bole Sub city Trade Bureau to identify women-owned small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the study area. However, upon verification through an online license check using the businesses' TIN numbers, it was found that many of the businesses listed had either returned their licenses or failed to renew them. As a result, this data was considered unreliable for the study. Due to unreliability of the initial secondary data, the researcher conducted a field screening to ensure the accuracy and relevance of the business sample.

3.6 Methods of Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process of examining, processing, and interpreting collected data to identify patterns, derive meaningful information, and support decision-making or comparisons, as outlined in a research plan (Dibekulu, 2020). In this study, both quantitative and qualitative data will be analyzed using various techniques to draw comprehensive conclusions regarding the

leadership barriers faced by women-owned Small, and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Bole Sub City Woreda 03, Addis Ababa. The data analysis methods are outlined below:

3.6.1 Survey Data Analysis

The quantitative data collected through surveys is analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. According to Murugan & Govindarajan (2023) SPSS is defined by its development, features, uses, and applications across various fields. It is used for data management, statistical analysis, and advanced analytics, specifically for analyzing logical information related to sociology and other disciplines.

Before the main analysis, the dataset was checked for missing values. Missing survey responses were treated using the multiple imputation method, which is recommended for reducing bias in datasets with low non-response rates and for improving estimate accuracy in social science research. 20 imputations were generated to improve estimate stability, and pooled results were used in the analysis. This method improved data reliability and helped ensure more accurate correlation results by reducing bias caused by missing values.

In the first stage, descriptive (frequency) analysis was used to summarize the demographic characteristics of the respondents. This included age, education level, marital status, family size, type of business, years in business, number of employees, and total assets. Frequency tables, percentages, and charts (such as pie and bar graphs) were used to clearly present patterns in the background information of women entrepreneurs in Bole Sub City Woreda 03.

In the second stage, a Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the strength and direction of the relationship between the three independent variables such as work-life balance, leadership development opportunity, and gender discrimination and the dependent variable, scaling of women-owned SMEs. This helped identify whether the variables were significantly related before running a regression model. Correlation coefficients and significance values were calculated to determine the level of association among the variables.

Following the correlation analysis, multiple linear regression was applied to assess the effect of the independent variables on business scalability. Multiple regression analysis examines the relationship and effects between one dependent variable and two or more independent variables to predict outcomes (Dibekulu, 2020).

To ensure the accuracy and validity of the regression results, the following diagnostic tests were conducted: Linearity test to confirm a linear relationship between predictors and the outcome variable. Normality test of residuals to check whether the errors (residuals) follow a normal distribution. Multicollinearity test, using Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) and Tolerance values, to make sure the independent variables were not too closely related. Homoscedasticity test to confirm that the residuals have equal variance across all predicted values. Durbin-Watson test to check for autocorrelation, ensuring that the residuals are independent from each other. All statistical tests, including correlation and regression, were conducted at a 95% confidence level with significance level of $p < 0.05$.

3.6.2 Interview Data Analysis

The interview data was analyzed using thematic analysis, focusing on leadership barriers such as work-life imbalance, limited leadership development opportunity, and gender discrimination. Instead of software, the data was manually coded in Excel by identifying, categorizing, and grouping recurring themes from the transcripts. This approach ensured a structured yet flexible analysis of participants' experiences.

3.7 Model Specification

This study employed a multiple linear regression model to examine the influence of selected leadership barriers on the scaling of women-owned SMEs. The model specifies the dependent variable as the Basic Scaling Factors (BSF), while the independent variables include Work-Life Imbalance (WLB), Limited Leadership Development Opportunity (LLDO), and Gender Discrimination (GD). The relationship is modeled as follows:

$$\text{Scaling of SMEs} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 (\text{WLB}) + \beta_2 (\text{LLDO}) + \beta_3 (\text{GD}) + \epsilon$$

Where:

Scaling of women-owned SMEs is the dependent variable, reflecting business growth in revenue, market expansion, and growth number of employees.

β_0 is the constant term.

β_1 , β_2 , and β_3 are regression coefficients for the independent variables, representing their respective effects on the scalability of SMEs.

ϵ is the error term, accounting for other unobserved factors influencing scalability.

3.8 Validity and Reliability

3.8.1 Validity

To ensure the validity, the research tools were designed to accurately capture the experiences and perspectives of women business owners regarding leadership barriers. Clear and relevant interview and survey questions were developed based on the research objectives and literature review. The data collected was carefully reviewed to confirm that it reflects the intended concepts and objectives of the study.

3.8.2 Reliability

Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha to test the internal consistency of the questionnaire items. A threshold of 0.70 was used as the acceptable standard, indicating that the survey items reliably measured the intended constructs. Reliability was Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha to test the internal consistency of the questionnaire items.

Additionally, a pilot study was conducted with 15 women entrepreneurs who were not part of the main sample. Based on their feedback, minor adjustments were made to improve clarity, particularly for items related to gender bias and leadership development. This ensured that the instrument was better aligned with the cultural and contextual realities of the respondents. These modifications further strengthened the reliability of the data collection tools used in the final study.

3.9 Ethical Consideration

This study upheld ethical standards by obtaining informed consent from all participants. Participants were provided with an explanation of the study's purpose, their involvement, and any potential risks, with the option to withdraw at any time. To ensure transparency, participants were shown the support letter from St. Mary's University and my university ID before participation. Confidentiality and anonymity were strictly maintained, and personal data was securely stored. The interview questions were designed to minimize discomfort, respecting

participants' comfort levels. Findings were reported accurately and transparently. Ethical approval was obtained from St. Mary's University to comply with institutional guidelines. Participants' decisions to participate or decline were respected at all times.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS and INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and interprets the research findings from both quantitative and qualitative data. It begins with demographic characteristics of respondents, followed by descriptive statistics of key variables, correlation, regression analysis, and diagnostic tests. The final section summarizes the qualitative insights obtained from interviews. Out of 259 women-owned SMEs screened in Bole Sub City Woreda 03, 130 participated in this study 125 completed the survey and 5 were interviewed, yielding a response rate of 50.2%.

4.2 Survey Analysis and Interpretation

4.2.1 Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

This section presents the demographic profile of women entrepreneurs surveyed in Bole Sub City Woreda 03. It includes age, education level, marital status, family size, type of, business duration, number of employees, and total assets. These details provide context for understanding their leadership experiences and the environment in which these women operate.

Age:

Table 4. 1: Age of Respondents

	Frequency		Percent
Valid	18-25	26	20.8
	26-35	58	46.4
	36-45	33	26.4
	46-55	4	3.2
	56-59	2	1.6
	64	1	0.8
	65	1	0.8
	Total	125	100.0

Source: From researcher own survey, 2025.

The table indicates that most respondents (46.4%) are between 26 and 35 years old, showing that women entrepreneurs in Bole Sub City Woreda 03 are mainly young adults in their most productive working years. The next largest group (26.4%) consists of those aged 36–45, while older age groups are less represented. This suggests that scaling challenges primarily impact

women in the early to middle stages of their careers, who may also be balancing family or increasing responsibilities.

Education Level:

Table 4. 2: Education Level of Respondents

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	10+1	1	.8
	Certificate	3	2.4
	Diploma	26	20.8
	Elementary School	2	1.6
	First Degree	59	47.2
	High School	14	11.2
	Master's Degree	18	14.4
	P.H.D	2	1.6
	Total	125	100.0

Source: From researcher own survey, 2025.

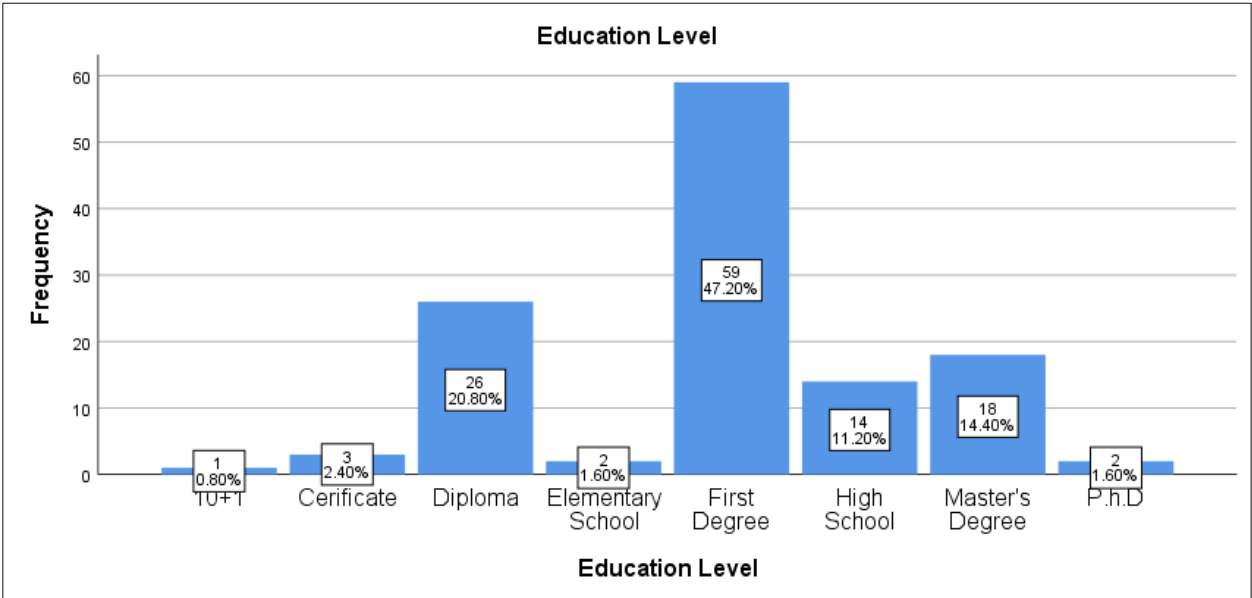


Figure 4. 1: Education Level Graph

Source: From researcher own survey, 2025.

The data shows that most respondents (47.2%) have a bachelor's degree, while 14.4% hold a master's and 20.8% have a diploma. This reflects a generally well-educated group of entrepreneurs. The trend is visually supported by the figure, with the highest peak at the

undergraduate level. Such high education levels suggest that leadership barriers are not due to lack of academic qualification but may instead arise from structural barriers like societal norms or restricted access to opportunities.

Marital Status:

Table 4. 3: Marital Status of Respondents

		Frequency	Percent
	Divorced	7	5.6
	Married	71	56.8
	Single	46	36.8
	Total	125	100.0

Source: From researcher own survey, 2025.

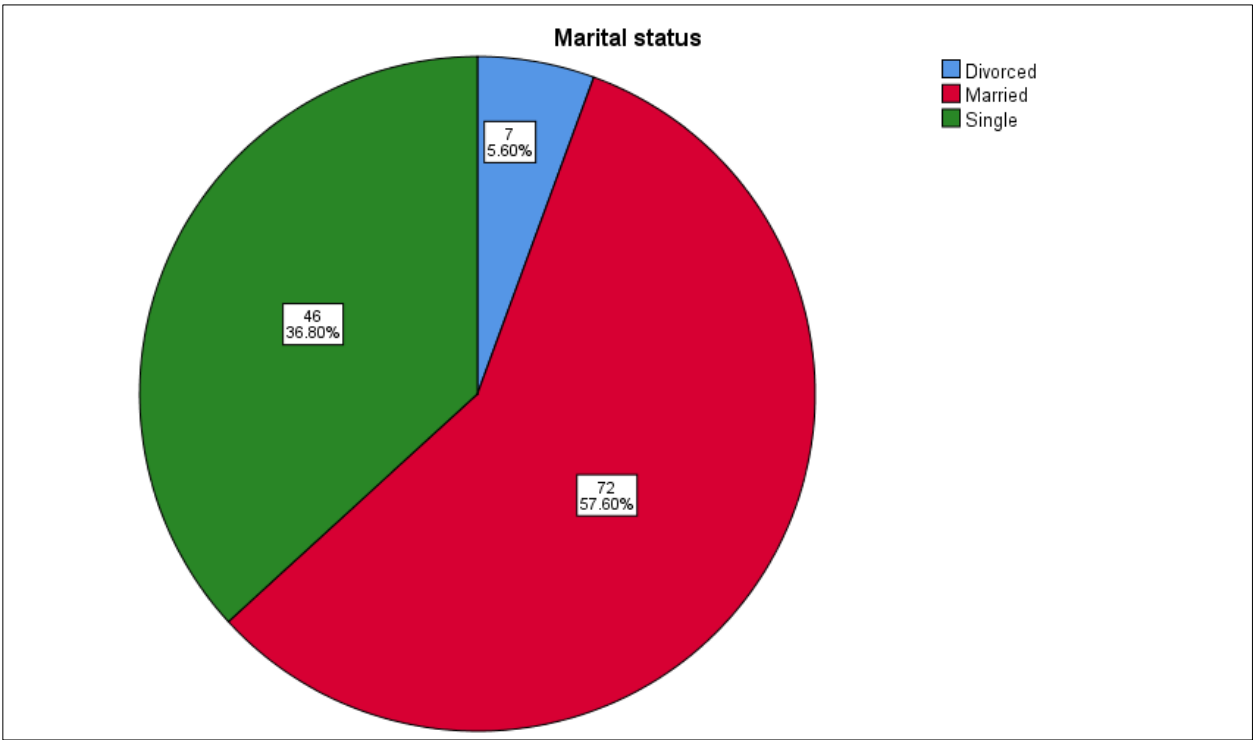


Figure 4. 2: Marital Status Pie Chart

Source: From researcher own survey, 2025

The majority of respondents (56.8%) are married, while 36.8% are single and only 5.6% are divorced. Marital status could impact work-life balance and leadership engagement, as married

women often juggle multiple responsibilities that may limit their ability to fully dedicate time to growing their businesses.

Family Size:

Table 4. 4: Family Size of Respondents

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	≥7 Members	11	8.8
	1-2 Members	29	23.2
	3-4 Members	45	36.0
	5-6 Members	40	32.0
	Total	125	100.0

Source: From researcher own survey, 2025.

The data shows that the largest group of respondents (36%) have with 3–4 family members, while 32% report having 5–6 family members. Larger households may increase domestic responsibilities, potentially limiting women's time and energy for leadership activities or professional development. This reinforces the connection between family demands and work-life balance challenges in entrepreneurship.

Business Type:

Table 4. 5: Business Types of Respondents

Business Type		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Construction	2	1.6
	Handcraft/ Artisan	6	4.8
	Manufacturing	12	9.6
	Service	45	36.0
	Textile and garment	3	2.4
	Trade	57	45.6
	Total	125	100.0

Source: From researcher own survey, 2025.

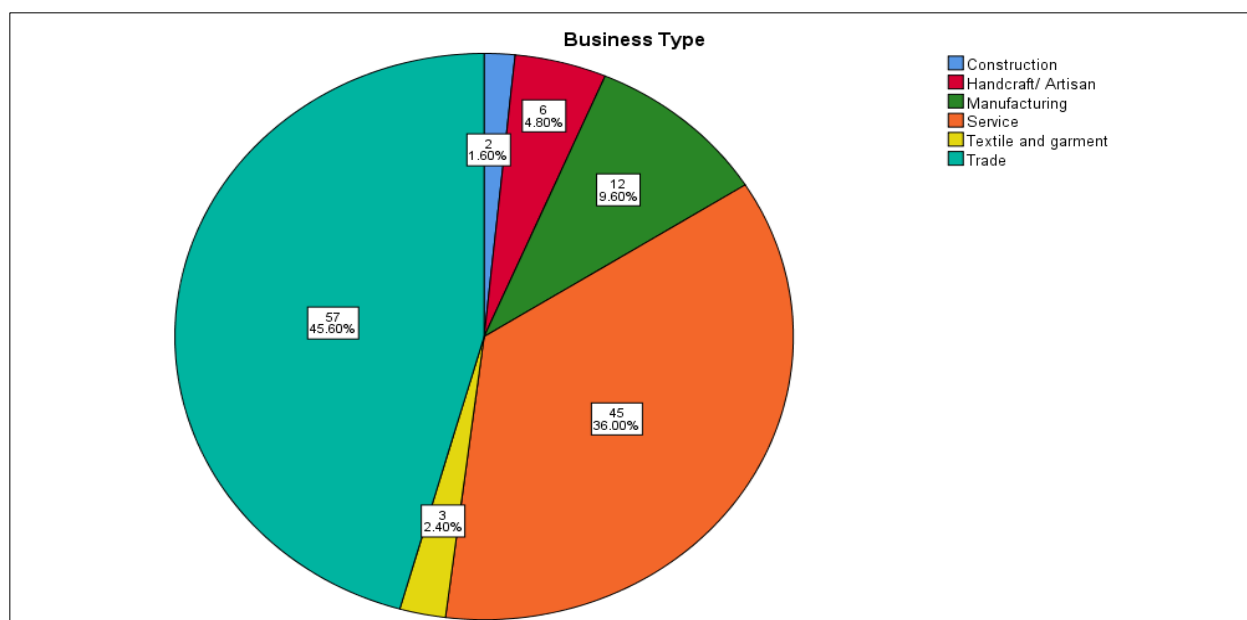


Figure 4. 3: Business Type Pie Graph

Source: From researcher own survey, 2025.

The table shows that majority of respondents operate in Trade (45.6%) and Services (36%) sectors. While these industries often require less initial investment, they tend to be highly competitive with relatively limited institutional support. This sector distribution provides important context for understanding scaling difficulties, particularly regarding access to of business training programs.

Experience in years:

Table 4. 6: Number of Years respondents stayed in Business

		Frequency	Percent
Valid		1	.8
	> 10 Years	21	16.8
	3 Years	44	35.2
	4-7 Years	45	36.0
	8-10 Years	14	11.2
	Total	125	100.0

Source: From researcher own survey, 2025.

The data shows that most respondents have been in business for either 4-7 years (36%), while 35.2% have operated for 3 years. This suggests that most women-owned SMEs in Bole Sub City Woreda 03 are in their early to mid-growth stages. Only 16.8% of respondents have operated

their businesses for more than 10 years, indicating that relatively few have achieved long-term sustainability or growth, potentially due to barriers preventing effective scaling.

Number of Employees:

Table 4. 7: Number of Employees including the respondents

		Frequenc y	Percent
Valid	2-5 Employees	88	70.4
	31-100 Employees	4	3.2
	6-30 Employees	33	26.4
	Total	125	100.0

Source: From researcher own survey, 2025.

The table shows that majority of businesses (70.4%) operate with 2-5 employees, while 26.4% have 6-30 workers. Only a small fraction (3.2%) employ more than 30 staff. This distribution suggests limited workforce expansion, which can be an indicator of restricted scaling efforts. The data implies that many women-owned SMEs remain small in size, possibly due to leadership barriers or limited growth strategies.

Assets:

Table 4. 8: Total asset of respondents

		Frequenc y	Percent
Valid	Medium Enterprise	30	24.0
	Small Enterprise	95	76.0
	Total	125	100.0

Source: From researcher own survey, 2025.

The table indicates that 76% of the respondents operate small enterprises, while only 24% run medium enterprises. This limited asset growth may reflect difficulty in expanding business operations, infrastructure, or capacity, key factors necessary for scaling. The data suggests that the majority of women-owned SMEs have yet to transition into larger, more scalable operations.

4.2.2 Reliability Test

This section assesses the internal consistency of the survey items using Cronbach's Alpha. It ensures the measurement instruments for each variable are reliable and suitable for further analysis.

A reliability test was conducted to assess the internal consistency of the instrument used to measure the three constructs in the study. Cronbach's Alpha coefficient ranges from 0 to 1, where values closer to 1 indicate higher reliability. Typically, a value of 0.70 or above is considered acceptable for research, while values below 0.70 suggest the instrument may lack sufficient reliability (Andersson, et al., 2024).

Table 4. 9: Reliability Analysis (cronbach's alpha)

Variable of the study	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Work Life Imbalance	5	0.788
Limited Leadership Development Opportunity	5	0.838
Gender Discrimination	5	0.711
Scaling "Women-owned SMEs"	10	0.733

Source: From researcher own survey, 2025.

The table shows the reliability analysis through Cronbach's Alpha, evaluating the internal consistency of each construct's items. The result reveals strong reliability for three key constructs: Work-Life Imbalance (5 items, $\alpha=0.788$), Limited Leadership Development Opportunity (5 items, $\alpha=0.838$), and Gender Discrimination (5 items, $\alpha=0.711$), all surpassing the 0.7 reliability benchmark. Additionally, the complete 10-item scaling women-owned SMEs achieved $\alpha=0.733$, confirming the measurement tool's consistency. These results demonstrate the survey's effectiveness in assessing leadership-related obstacles to women-owned SMEs growth.

4.2.3 Descriptive Statistics Analysis

This section presents the descriptive statistics for the three leadership barriers: work-life imbalance, limited leadership development opportunity, and gender discrimination. Each variable was measured using five Likert-scale items.

4.2.3.1 Work-Life Imbalance

Table 4. 10: Descriptive Statistics Analysis Work-life Imbalance

Item Statistics	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. I find it difficult to balance my business and family responsibilities.	125	3.04	1.370
2. My household duties prevent me from focusing on growing my business.	125	2.75	1.463
3. Lack of childcare support affects my ability to manage my business effectively.	125	2.97	1.492
4. I often feel stressed due to managing both business and family responsibilities.	125	3.03	1.420
5. Work-life balance challenges limited my ability to focus on scaling my business.	125	2.97	1.441
Valid N (listwise)	125		

Source: From researcher own survey, 2025.

The above table shows the descriptive statistics for items measuring leadership barrier related to work-life imbalance (WLIB). Mean scores for the items ranged from 2.75 to 3.04, indicating respondents generally expressed moderate agreement with the items presented. The highest mean score of 3.04 with standard deviation of 1.370 was for WLIB-Q1 (I find it difficult to balance my business and family responsibilities.) concerning difficulties balancing business and personal life. Similarly, WLIB-Q4 about leadership limitations due to home/work conflicts scored slightly lower mean of 3.03 and standard deviation of 1.420. These results suggest participants moderately recognize work-life imbalance challenges.

The remaining items showed slightly lower agreement levels, with WLIB-Q3 recording mean of 2.97 with standard deviation of 1.492 and WLIB-Q5 recording mean of 2.97 with standard deviation of 1.441. WLIB-Q2 regarding leadership demands affecting personal wellbeing had the lowest agreement (mean=2.75) and greatest response variation (SD=1.463). Overall, the data reveals that while work-life imbalance is perceived as a moderate leadership barrier, respondents' views vary in intensity across different aspects of this challenge. The standard deviations indicate notable differences in how strongly participants experience these work-life imbalance pressures.

4.2.3.2 Limited Leadership Development Opportunity

Table 4. 11: Descriptive Statistics Analysis Limited Leadership Development Opportunity

Item Statistics	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. Leadership training programs to support my business	125	3.338	1.496

growth are inaccessible to me.			
2. Mentorship and networking opportunities to enhance my leadership skills are rare or hard to access.	125	3.34	1.469
3. Business development programs tailored to women entrepreneurs are not widely available in my area.	125	3.75	1.354
4. Training on business scaling strategies (market expansion, financial management) is not sufficient for my needs.	125	3.53	1.436
5. Limited access to leadership development has constrained my business growth potential.	125	3.25	1.411
Valid N (listwise)	125		

Source: From researcher own survey, 2025.

The above table shows respondents' perspectives on leadership barriers concerning limited leadership development opportunities (LLDO). The mean scores fall between 3.25 and 3.75, demonstrating overall agreement that insufficient access to leadership development poses a significant challenge. The item with strongest agreement was LLDO-Q3 ("Business development programs tailored to women entrepreneurs are not widely available in my area "), scoring a mean of 3.75 with a standard deviation of 1.354, reflecting widespread agreement with some variation. LLDO-Q4 ("Training on business scaling strategies (market expansion, financial management) is not sufficient for my needs.") followed with a mean of 3.53 (SD=1.436), highlighting many entrepreneurs' experience of missing mentorship support.

LLDO-Q1 and LLDO-Q2 recorded means of 3.38 and 3.34 respectively (SDs=1.496 and 1.469), confirming respondents' perception of scarce formal training and ongoing leadership education. LLDO-Q5 ("Limited access to leadership development has constrained my business growth potential.") showed the lowest mean (3.25, SD=1.411), though still above neutral, suggesting this concern is recognized but perhaps less acute than other issues. Collectively, the data confirms that deficient leadership development resources substantially limit the growth of women-owned SMEs.

4.2.3.3 Gender Discrimination

Table 4. 12: Descriptive Statistics Analysis Gender Discrimination

Item Statistics	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. I have been perceived as 'bossy' or 'trying to be masculine' due to my role as a business leader by society or family.	125	2.83	1.529

2. In my community, women are expected to prioritize household responsibilities over business leadership.	125	3.85	1.432
3. I have experienced sexual harassment from investors, clients, or government officials.	125	2.64	1.460
4. In my industry, male entrepreneurs have more access to partnerships and business networks.	125	3.20	1.557
5. Gender bias has influenced my business expansion efforts.	125	2.95	1.460
Valid N (listwise)	125		

Source: From researcher own survey, 2025.

The above table shows the descriptive statistics for gender discrimination as a potential barrier to scaling women-owned SMEs. The five items had mean scores between 2.64 and 3.85, revealing varying levels of agreement about gender discrimination's effects. The strongest agreement was for GD-Q2 (mean=3.85, SD=1.432), showing many respondents perceive significant gender-based obstacles in related to gender roles believes in society. In contrast, GD-Q3 had the lowest mean (2.64, SD=1.460), indicating more neutral or divided opinions on that particular aspect.

The remaining items - GD-Q1 (mean=2.83, SD=1.529), GD-Q4 (mean=3.20, SD=1.557), and GD-Q5 (mean=2.95, SD=1.460) also showed response variability. The consistently high standard deviations (all exceeding 1.4) suggest diverse experiences with gender discrimination among respondents. This variation means not all women entrepreneurs encounter the same degree of gender-related challenges. The findings highlight that while gender discrimination is clearly present as a barrier, its effects differ across individuals and businesses in Bole Sub City. The data confirms gender discrimination remains a significant and perceived barrier to women's leadership and business scaling to women in Bole Sub City Context.

4.2.3.4 Scaling Women-Owned SMEs

Table 4. 13: Descriptive Statistics Analysis Scaling Women-owned SMEs

Item Statistics	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. My business has increased revenue without significantly increasing costs over the past three years.	125	2.39	1.407
2. Training gaps have made it harder to grow revenue efficiently.	125	2.98	1.402
3. Gender discrimination has reduced my access to revenue-boosting opportunities (e.g., loans, partnership, and networking).	120	3.57	1.370

4. My business has expanded into new markets or customer segments using efficient strategies (e.g., technology, partnership) in the past three years.	125	3.22	1.324
5. Limited leadership development opportunity has slowed my ability to expand into new markets using efficient strategies (e.g., technology, partnership).	125	3.17	1.436
6. The number of employees in my business has increased in a way that supports long-term sustainability over the past three years.	121	2.76	1.385
7. Work-life balance challenges have reduced sustainable employee growth.	125	2.88	1.457
8. Gender discrimination has limited my ability to hire qualified staff.	125	3.59	1.356
9. If I had better access to leadership opportunities, my business would be better positioned for sustainable growth.	125	2.26	1.363
10. Leadership barriers (training gaps, work-life, and discrimination) have delayed my business's long term and efficient growth.	125	2.91	1.396
Valid N (listwise)	125		

Source: From researcher own survey, 2025.

Table 4.13 presents the descriptive statistics for ten items measuring factors that influence the scaling of women-owned SMEs (SW-SMEs) in Bole Sub-City, Woreda 03. The items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale. SW-SMEs –Q8 received the highest mean score of 3.73 (SD=1.336), indicating strong agreement that gender discrimination restricts hiring capacity. Similarly, higher mean scores were found for SW-SMEs Q3 (“Gender discrimination has reduced my access to revenue-boosting opportunities”) with a mean of 3.57 (SD = 1.370) and SW-SMEs Q4 (“My business has expanded into new markets...”) with a mean of 3.22 (SD = 1.324), showing moderate agreement that market expansion strategies are somewhat effective.

In contrast, lower mean scores were found for SW-SMEs Q1 (Mean = 2.39, SD = 1.407), showing that many businesses have not significantly increased revenue without increasing costs. SW-SMEs Q9 (“If I had better access to leadership opportunities...”) scored the lowest at 2.26 (SD = 1.363), suggesting many respondents feel they lack sufficient leadership support for sustainable growth. SW-SMEs 5 (“Limited leadership development opportunity has slowed my ability to expand into new markets...”) had a mean of 3.17 (SD = 1.436), indicating moderate agreement that limited leadership development opportunities directly slow down scaling into new markets using efficient strategies

Other items like SW-SMEs Q6 (“The number of employees has increased...”) with Mean = 2.76 (SD = 1.385), and SW-SMEs Q7 (Mean = 2.88, SD = 1.457) indicate that work-life imbalance and leadership gaps modestly limits sustainable workforce development. The standard deviations, ranging from 1.324 to 1.457, show there is notable variation in respondents’ experiences, underscoring diverse barriers faced by women entrepreneurs in scaling their businesses. Overall, the findings emphasize the need for better leadership opportunities, fair hiring, and stronger market expansion strategies.

4.2.4 Correlational Analysis

This section investigates the relationships between leadership barriers and business scaling using Pearson correlation. It helps determine whether the independent variables are significantly associated with the dependent variable before applying regression analysis.

A Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to assess the relationships between work-life balance, leadership development opportunity, gender discrimination, and scaling Women-Owned SMEs. Correlation coefficients are commonly interpreted based on their absolute values. A value between 0.00 and 0.10 indicates a negligible relationship, 0.10 to 0.39 reflects a weak correlation, 0.40 to 0.69 suggests a moderate correlation, 0.70 to 0.89 shows a strong correlation, and values from 0.90 to 1.00 represent a very strong correlation (Schober, et al., 2018).

Table 4. 14: Correlation between dependent and independent variables

No	Variables	1	2	3	4
1	Scaling Women-owned SMEs	1			
2	Work Life Imbalance	-.453**	1		
3	Limited Leadership Development Opportunity	-.476**	.266**	1	
4	Gender Discrimination	-.291**	.309**	.356**	1

**.

Source: From researcher own survey, 2025.

Table 4.14 presents the Pearson correlation coefficients between the dependent variable (Scaling Women-Owned SMEs (SW-SMEs)) and the independent variables: Work-Life Imbalance (WLIB), Limited Leadership Development Opportunity (LLDO), and Gender Discrimination (GD). All relationships are statistically significant at the 0.01 significance level (2-tailed). The

strongest correlation is between SW-SMEs and LLDO ($r=0.476$), indicating a moderate negative relationship. This suggests that limited leadership development opportunities are associated with lower scaling potential for women-owned SMEs. The correlation between SW-SMEs and Work-Life Imbalance ($r = -0.453$) also shows a moderate negative association, implying that greater work-life imbalance reduces the capacity for scaling. Likewise, the correlation with Gender Discrimination ($r = -0.291$) indicates a weak negative relationship, suggesting that gender discrimination also hampers scaling to some extent.

The inter-correlations among the independent variables also reveal meaningful relationships: Work-Life Imbalance correlates with LLDO ($r = 0.266$), WLIB with GD ($r = 0.309$), and LLDO with GD ($r = 0.356$), all significant at the 0.01 level. The correlation analysis indicates significant negative relationships between the independent variables (Work-Life Imbalance, Limited Leadership Development Opportunity, and Gender Discrimination) and the dependent variable (scaling of women-owned SMEs). However, these results show relationship only, not causation. The predictive effects of these variables are tested further through multiple regression analysis to determine their specific effect on scaling. These findings support including these barriers in the study model and emphasize their importance in understanding factors affecting the growth of women-owned SMEs.

4.2.5 Diagnostics tests

This section presents the results of diagnostic tests required for multiple regression analysis. These include checks for linearity, normality, multicollinearity, homoscedasticity, and autocorrelation to ensure the model's assumptions are met.

4.2.5.1 Linearity Test

The linearity test results are presented below in Figure 4, evaluating whether straight-line relationships exist between the predictors (Work-Life Imbalance, Limited Leadership Development Opportunity, and Gender Discrimination) and the outcome variable (scaling of Women-owned SMEs). The scatterplot visualization reveals approximately linear trends between the predicted and actual values, supporting fulfillment of the linearity requirement. These findings validate the suitability of applying multiple linear regression analysis to examine how leadership barriers influence business scaling of SMEs.

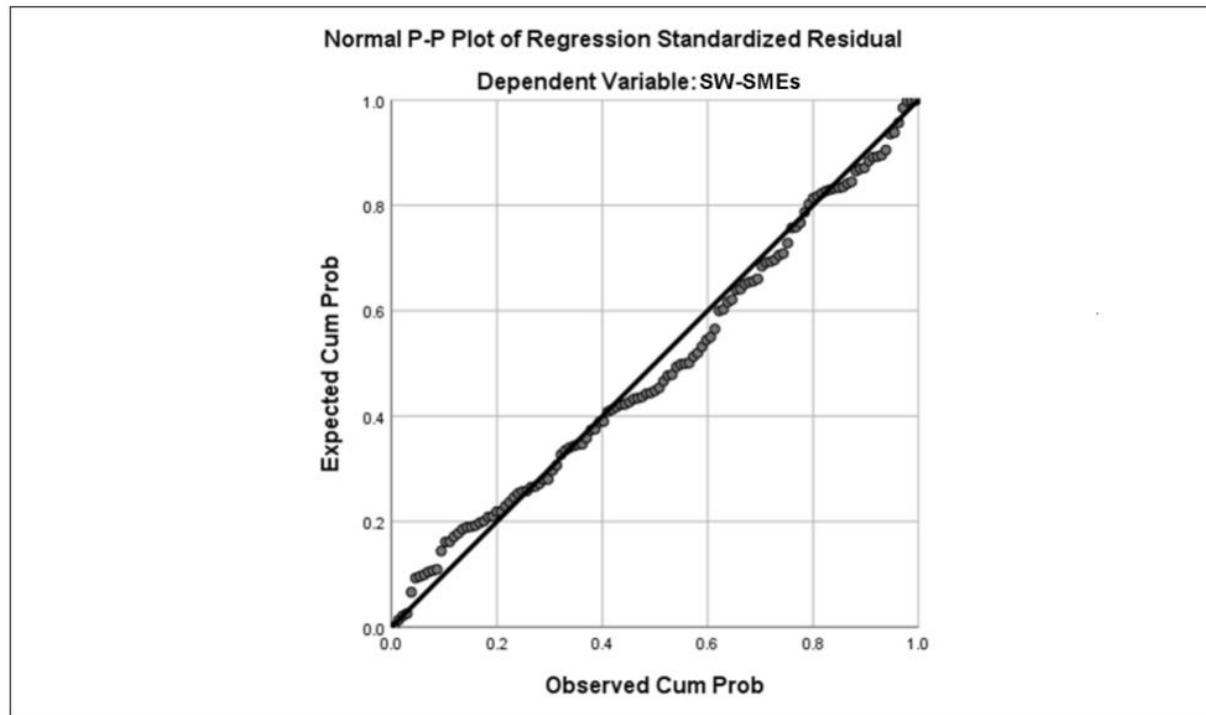


Figure 4. 4: Test of Linearity

Source: From researcher own survey, 2025.

4.2.5.2 Normality Test

The figure below presents the normality assessment of residuals through a histogram. The histogram shows that the distribution of residuals approximates a normal bell-shaped curve, indicating that the residuals are normally distributed. This satisfies the normality assumption for regression analysis, indicating that the model's error terms conform reasonably well to a normal distribution pattern. Meeting this key assumption strengthens the validity of the regression results, ensuring that both hypothesis tests and confidence intervals can be interpreted with confidence. This graphical verification supports the conclusion that the statistical model meets fundamental assumptions necessary for reliable inference.

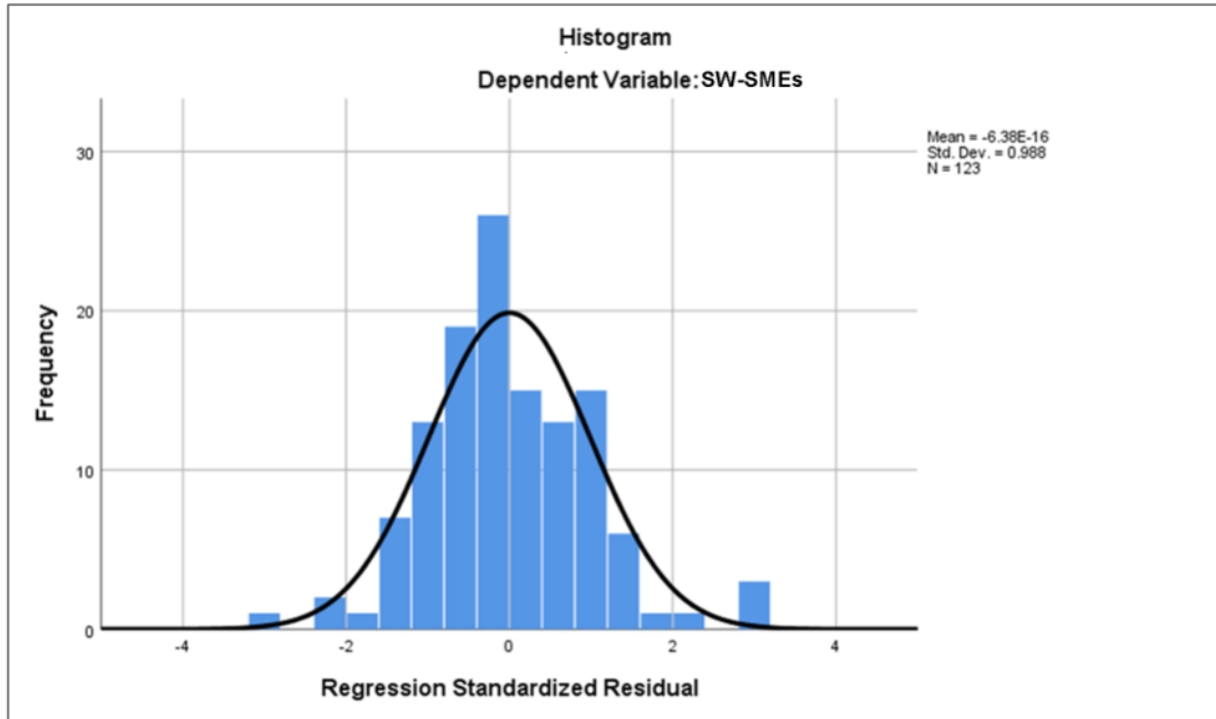


Figure 4. 5: Normality Test of Residual

Source: From researcher own survey, 2025.

4.2.5.3 Multi-Collinearity test

Multicollinearity occurs when predictors are highly correlated, and it can be detected using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF), where a VIF of 1 indicates no correlation, a value between 1 and 5 suggests moderate correlation, and a value greater than 5 indicates high correlation that may distort regression results (Daoud, 2017).

Table 4. 15: Test of Multi-Collinearity

Model Constant	Collinearly Statistics	
	Tolerance	VIF
WLIB	.876	1.141
LLDO	.847	1.181
GD	.824	1.214

Source: From researcher own survey, 2025.

Table 4.15 shows the multicollinearity diagnostics using Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) and Tolerance values for the three predictors: Work-Life Imbalance (WLIB), Limited Leadership Development Opportunity (LLDO), and Gender Discrimination (GD). Multicollinearity occurs

when predictor variables are highly correlated, which can bias regression results by inflating standard errors. However, the VIF scores for WLIB (1.141), LLDO (1.181), and GD (1.214) are all well below the commonly accepted threshold of 10. This indicates that none of the predictors exhibit problematic multicollinearity.

Similarly, the Tolerance values for WLIB (0.876), LLDO (0.847), and GD (0.824) exceed the standard cutoff value of 0.10, confirming that the predictors are not excessively correlated. These results suggest that each predictor provides unique information to the regression model, ensuring the reliability and stability of the estimated coefficients. Consequently, the study can confidently proceed with multiple regression analysis without concern for distorted or unreliable findings caused by multicollinearity.

4.2.5.4 Homoscedasticity Test

Figure 6 presents the homoscedasticity test, which examines whether the variance residuals remains constant across all predicted values. In the scatterplot, the points appear randomly and evenly scattered around the horizontal axis (the zero line), with no clear pattern such as a cone or funnel shape. This means the assumption of homoscedasticity is met. In other word, the model's errors have consistent variance, which enhances the reliability and validity of the regression results.

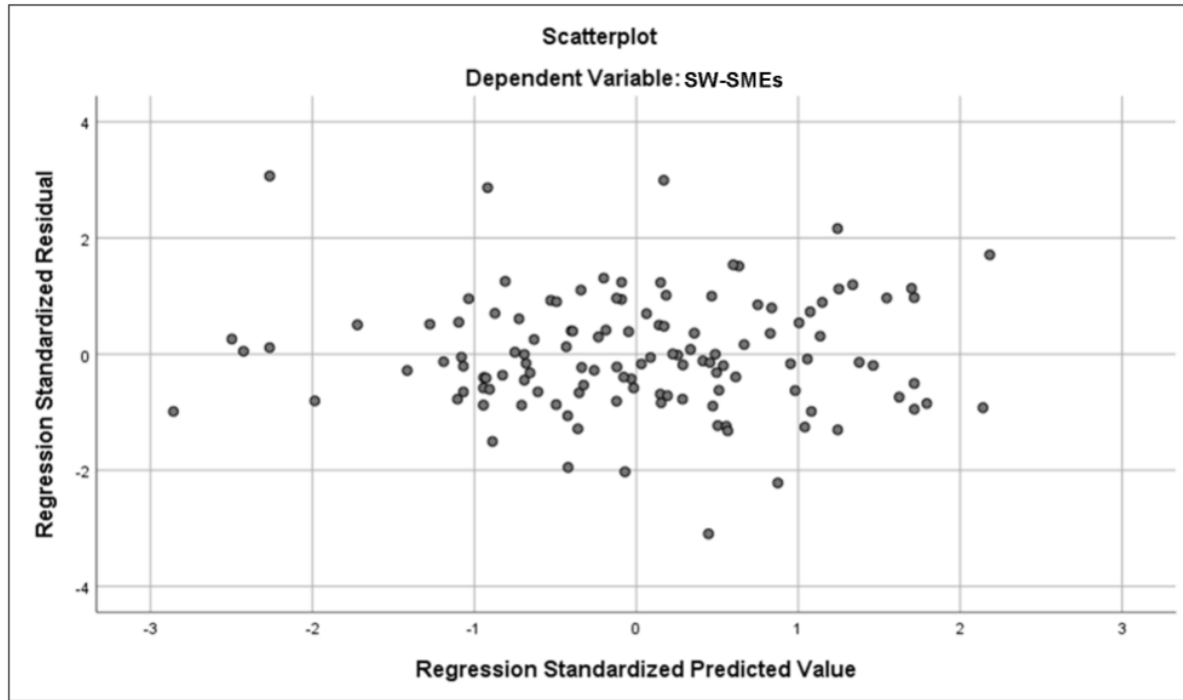


Figure 4. 6: Homoscedasticity Test

Source: From researcher's own survey, 2025.

4.2.5.5 Auto-Correlation Test

The Durbin-Watson (DW) statistic ranges from 0 to 4. A DW value near 2 indicates no autocorrelation in the residuals, while values significantly below or above 2 suggest positive or negative autocorrelation, respectively (Chen, 2016).

Table 4. 16: Durbin Watson test of autocorrelation

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin Watson
1	.586 ^a	.344	.327	.55740	2.005

Source: From researcher's own survey, 2025.

Table 4.16 presents the Durbin-Watson statistic, which tests autocorrelation in the residuals of the regression model. The reported value of 2.005 is very close to the ideal value of 2, suggesting no significant autocorrelation in the residuals. This confirms the independence assumption in linear regression and supports the reliability of the of the regression results.

4.2.6 Multi Regression Analysis

This section presents the results of the regression model that examines the combined and individual effects of work-life imbalance (WLIB), limited leadership development opportunity (LLDO), and gender discrimination (GD) on the scaling of women-owned SMEs. It also interprets the significance and strength of each predictor.

Model 2: Regression analysis of independent variables on SW-SMEs

Table 4. 17: Model Summary b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					F Change	Df1	Df2	Sig. F Change	Durbin Watson
1	.586 ^a	.344	.327	.55740	20.755	3	119	.000 ^b	2.005
a. Predictors: (Constant), WLIB, LLDO, GD									
b. Dependent Variable: SW-SMEs									

Source: From researcher own survey, 2025.

Table above (4.17) summarizes the overall fitness of the regression model used. The value of the correlation coefficient (R) is 0.586, indicating a moderate relationship between the independent variables (Work-Life Imbalance, Limited Leadership Development Opportunity, and Gender Discrimination) and the dependent variable (Scaling of women-owned SMEs).

R Square value 0.344 shows that approximately 34.4% of the variation in scaling is explained by WLIB, LLDO, and GD combined. This implies that these leadership barriers have substantial impact on SME scaling, but other unmeasured factors may also contribute. The adjusted R Square of 0.327 provides a slightly lower but more reliable estimate, adjusting for the number of predictors and the sample size.

The model is statistically significant, with an F-change value of 20.755 and a p-value of 0.000, which means the predictors collectively explain the variation in scaling better than by chance.

Overall, these results demonstrate that higher work-life imbalance, limited leadership development opportunities, and gender discrimination negatively affect the scaling potential of

women-owned SMEs. This highlights the importance of addressing these barriers to enhance business growth and sustainability.

Table 4. 18: ANOVA^a

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	19.345	3	6.448	20.755	.000 ^b
	Residual	36.972	119	.311		
	Total	56.317	122			
a. Dependent Variable: SW-SMEs						
b. Predictors: (Constant), GD, WLIB, LLDO						

Source: From researcher own survey, 2025.

The results from ANOVA table shows that the overall regression model is statistically significant, with an F-value of 20.755 and a p-value of 0.000. This indicates that the independent variables Work-Life Imbalance, Limited Leadership Development Opportunity, and Gender Discrimination collectively have statistically significant effect on the scaling of women-owned SMEs. The high F-value indicates that the model explains a significant portion of the variation in the dependent variable, and the very small p-value (less than 0.01) confirms that the result are highly unlikely to have occurred by chance. Therefore, the regression model is valid and effective in explaining the observed data.

Table 4. 19: Coefficients^a

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	4.504	.217		20.719	.000
	WLIB	-.215	.051	-.338	-4.264	.000
	LLDO	-.229	.051	-.365	-4.525	.000
	GD	-.041	.059	-.057	-.693	.489
a. Dependent Variable: SW-SMEs						

Source: From researcher own survey, 2025.

Table 4.19 presents the regression coefficients, showing the individual contribution of each predictor to the scaling of women-owned SMEs. All three independent variables Work-Life Imbalance (WLIB), Limited Leadership Development Opportunity (LLDO), and Gender

Discrimination (GD) have negative unstandardized coefficients and are statistically significant at the 0.05 level. Specifically, WLIB ($\beta = -0.215, p = 0.000$), LLDO ($\beta = -0.229, p = 0.000$), and each make a meaningful and independent contribution to the model. In contrast, GD shows negative coefficient but not statistically significance ($\beta = -0.041, p = 0.489$).

Among the predictors, Limited Leadership Development Opportunity has the strongest standardized beta coefficient (Beta= -0.365), indicating that it has the most substantial relative impact on scaling women-owned SMEs. This is followed by Work-Life Imbalance (-0.338). These results suggest that greater work-life conflicts and limited leadership development opportunities both significantly limits SME scaling in the study area. Gender Discrimination, although negatively related, does not show a statistically significant effect in this model.

Overall, these findings confirm that interventions to address work-life imbalance and improve leadership development opportunities could play a crucial role in reducing leadership barriers and enhancing the growth of women-owned SMEs.

4.2.7 Hypothesis Testing

H₁: There is statistically significant correlation between leadership barriers and the scaling potential of women-owned SMEs in Bole Sub City Woreda 03.

The correlation analysis in Table 4.14 indicates statistically significant negative relationships between leadership barriers work-life imbalance ($r = -0.453$), limited leadership development opportunity ($r = -0.476$), and gender discrimination ($r = -0.291$) and the scaling of women-owned SMEs, with all results significant at the $p < 0.01$ level. This supports H₁, confirming that leadership barriers are moderately and negatively correlated with business scaling. Therefore, the alternative hypothesis is supported, indicating that work-life imbalance, limited leadership development opportunities, and gender discrimination each associated with scaling of women-owned businesses in Bole Sub City Woreda 03.

H₂: Work-Life Imbalance has statistically significant effect on scaling women-owned SMEs in Bole Sub City Woreda 03.

The regression result shows that Work-Life Imbalance has an unstandardized coefficient (B) of -0.215 with a p-value of 0.000. Since p-value is less than 0.01, the result is statistically significant

at the 1% level. This confirms that greater work-life imbalance meaningfully impacts the ability of women entrepreneurs to scale their businesses. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is supported: Work-Life Imbalance has a significant negative effect on scaling women-owned SMEs.

H3: Limited leadership development opportunities have statistically significant effect on the scaling women-owned SMEs in Bole Sub City Woreda 03.

Leadership Development Opportunity shows a coefficient of -0.229 with a p-value of 0.000, which is highly significant ($p < 0.01$). This confirms that limited access to training, mentorship, and capacity-building programs significantly constraints business expansion. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected and the alternative hypothesis is supported. Among the three predictors, Limited Leadership Development Opportunity has the strongest standardized beta value (-0.365), indicating it is the most influential barrier in this study.

H4: Gender Discrimination has statistically significant effect on scaling of women-owned SMEs in Bole Sub City Woreda 03.

Gender Discrimination has a coefficient of -0.041 and a p-value of 0.489, which is above 0.05 of the accepted significance level. Therefore, H₄ is not supported; the null hypothesis (H_0) cannot be rejected, indicating that Gender discrimination does not have a statistically significant effect on the scaling of women-owned SMEs in this model. Although the coefficient is negative, the lack of statistical significance means this effect is not strong or consistent enough to draw firm conclusions within this study's scope.

Table 4. 20: Summary of hypothesis tests

Hypothesis	Test Type	Coefficients (r or B)	P-value	Decision
H1: There is statistically significant correlation between leadership barriers and the scaling potential of women-owned SMEs in Bole Sub City Woreda 03.	Correlation	$r = -.291, -.453, -.476$	.000	Accepted
H2: Work-Life Imbalance has a statistically significant effect on scaling women-owned SMEs.	Regression	$B = -.215$	.000	Accepted
H3: Limited Leadership Development Opportunity has a statistically significant effect	Regression	$B = -.229$	.000	Accepted

on scaling women-owned SMEs.					
H4: Gender Discrimination has a statistically significant effect on scaling women-owned SMEs.	Regressi on	B= -.041	.489		Not accepted

Source: From researcher own survey, 2025.

4.3 Interview Analysis and Interpretation

4.3.1 General business information of respondents

For this survey, five women entrepreneurs were interviewed on person and phone recordings. Accordingly, 40% of them are under medium category while 60% are small entrepreneurs. They have been in the work for minimum of 3 and maximum of 12 years with employees ranging from 6 to 80. Table below presents coded respondent's general business information, two trade, two service giving and one manufacturing entrepreneurs were the total population.

Table 4. 21: general business information of respondents

No	Respondent Code	Business Category	Business Type	Duration (yrs)	No. of Employees
1	A	Medium	Service	3	80
2	B	Small	Trade	10	7
3	C	Small	Trade	3.5	6
4	D	Medium	Service	12	20
5	E	Medium	Manufacturing	8	11

4.3.2 Work-Life Imbalance

All respondents are affected by work-life conflict which is primarily due to time limitation to handle both work and family responsibilities. 100% of the respondents are affected by time shortage and gender expectations which negatively affected their business expansion. The respondents have mentioned four coping strategies namely delegation, Effective time Management, hiring maids at home and use of technology to save time for their work. Accordingly, 60% of the respondents use delegation; 40% effective time management; 20% technology and 40% hiring maid at home to minimize work-life conflict while trying to scale up their business.

Table 4. 22: Work-Life Imbalances

Group	Theme	Subtheme	Affected/ Adopted	Not Affected/ Not Adopted	%ge
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Q2–Q4	Work-Life Imbalance	Time Constraints	All	None	100.00%
		Gendered Expectations	All	None	100.00%
	Coping Strategies	Delegation	C,D,E	A,B	60.00%
		Technology Use	C	A,B,D,E	20.00%
		Effective Time Management	A,B	C,D,E	40.00%
		Hiring maid	B,E	A,C,D	40.00%
	Business Impact	Reduced Expansion	B,C,D,E	A	80.00%

On the other hand, impact of work-life conflict in women owned business growth was assessed to analyze whether the conflict has affected their business expansion decision as well as in expanding running business. With the exception of respondent A, all the entrepreneurs were affected both on their decision as well as their business growth. Table 2 summarizes the main themes and subthemes of effect of work-life balance in women owned business growth.

4.3.3 Limited Leadership Development Opportunity

In order to assess challenges of women owned business growth due to limited leadership development, three interview questions were prepared with intent whether they participate in trainings, mentorship programs and business network events and determine whether lack of those has affected their business expansion and to understand what type of trainings they owe to receive in order to support their business growth. Based on the survey, 40% of the respondents have participated in business networking events; only one (20%) took leadership trainings while the remaining 60% have never participated/took any leadership training nor participated in business networking or mentorship program.

Table 4. 23: Limited Leadership Development Opportunity

Group	Theme	Subtheme	Yes	No	%ge
Q5–Q7	Leadership Development	Participate in Business Networking	A,D	B,C,E	40.00%
		Took Trainings	A	B,C,D,E	20.00%
		Need for Training	All	None	100.00%
		Benefited from Training/Business Network	A,D	B,C,E	40.00%
	Barriers to Training	Time Shortage	C,D,E	A,B	60.00%
		Lack of Access	B,C,E	A,D	60.00%
		Need for Tailored Access	A,D	B,C,E	20.00%

Business Impact	Lack of Training affected business	All	None	100.00%
Policy Recommendations	Tailored and Specific Trainings	A,D	B,C,E	40.00%

All respondents, including those who had participated in trainings and events demands training opportunities and believe lack of training have negatively affected their business growth. Respondents A and D recommend tailored and business sector specific training types.

4.3.4 Gender Discrimination

Gender bias is another leadership challenge women face in their business. Survey was carried out to assess the factor and; all respondents have confirmed they face institutional bias, societal stereotype and inappropriate behaviors from people in contact for business issue. Additionally, 80% of the respondents have also faced client discrimination where they don't get proper treatment and some of them had to be forced to prove themselves with smaller contract amounts to be awarded with bigger ones.

Table 4. 24: Gender Discrimination

Group	Theme	Subtheme	Yes	No	%ge
Q8–Q10	Gender Bias	Client Discrimination	A,C,D,E	B	80.00%
		Institutional Bias	All	None	100.00%
		Social Stereotype	All	None	100.00%
	Harassment	Inappropriate Behavior	All	None	100.00%
		Coping with Harassment	All	None	100.00%

All respondents have adopted their own respective coping mechanisms for the gender bias among which dealing with patience was the most prominent one. Letting them know we have no interest was also mentioned by the respondents. Reporting to their line manager and letting the work opportunity down than exposing oneself were also mechanisms/decisions mentioned by respondent A and D in their respective order.

4.3.5 Overcoming barriers and recommendations

The women entrepreneurs were also interviewed for mechanisms of overcoming their challenges and their respective recommendations to eradicate those gender based challenges. As presented in table 5 below; to overcome barriers, 60% of the respondents adopt self-education while only

one (20%) stated that she overcome her bigger contract achieving challenge by proving capability of performing the task with smaller contract value.

Table 4. 25: Overcoming barriers and recommendations from respondents

Group	Theme	Subtheme	Yes/Need	No	%ge
Q11–Q14	Overcome Barriers	Self-Education	A,C,E	B,D	60.00%
		Proving Capability	D	A,B,C,E	20.00%
	Awareness of Support Programs	Low Awareness	B,C,E	A,D	60.00%
	Policy Recommendations	Early Education	All	None	100.00%
		Financial Access	C,E	C,D,E	40.00%

Concerning awareness of support programs, 60% of the respondents have no/low awareness of such entities while 40% of them do have good awareness of such organizations. All the business owners recommended early education in girls would eradicate those prominent challenges in women owned business. In line with this, 40% of the respondents have recommended financial access as policy to minimize challenges on growth of women owned businesses.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter summarizes the major findings of the study, presents the conclusions drawn from both quantitative and qualitative analyses, and provides recommendations based on the results. It also outlines suggestions for future research. The objective is to connect the findings with the research objectives and to offer actionable insights for policy, practice recommendations.

5.2 Summary of Findings

Leadership barriers showed varying levels of influence on the scaling of women-owned SMEs in Bole Sub City Woreda 03. Findings from quantitative and qualitative results shows that:

The study revealed that, Work-Life Imbalance and Limited Leadership Development Opportunity have statistically significant negative effects on SME scaling. Women entrepreneurs who faced higher work-life conflicts and had limited access to leadership development resources (such as training and mentorship) were less likely to grow their businesses in terms of revenue, employment, and market reach.

Gender discrimination, though widely cited by interview participants and supported by existing literature as a barrier, did not show a statistically significant effect at the 0.05 level in the regression model. However, qualitative data suggested it may affect business scaling indirectly by undermining confidence and limiting access to networks and opportunity.

Qualitative interviews reinforced these findings by highlighting the burden of household responsibilities, limited access to mentorship, and subtle forms of gender bias as recurring challenges that impact business growth.

5.3 Conclusion

This study was undertaken to address a research gap concerning the internal leadership barriers that affect the scaling of women-owned SMEs in Bole Sub City Woreda 03. While prior interventions and studies have often focused on access to finance, legal frameworks, or

regulatory barriers, less attention has been given to how personal and social leadership constraints such as work-life imbalance, limited leadership development opportunities, and gender discrimination, directly affect business growth outcomes. Preliminary observations and secondary data from the woreda showed that many registered women-owned SMEs remained small and stagnant, pointing to deeper challenges beyond external business conditions. This research systematically examined how internal leadership factors influence scaling in terms of revenue, market expansion, and employment.

To address the research objectives, the study employed a quantitative-dominant mixed-methods approach. Data were collected from 125 survey respondents and 5 interview participants selected from active women-owned SMEs operating for three years. The research combined both descriptive and explanatory designs. Correlation analysis was used first to examine the strength of the relationships between leadership barriers and scaling of women-owned SMEs, followed by multiple regression analysis to determine the specific effect of each barrier; work-life imbalance, limited leadership development opportunity, and gender discrimination on business scaling indicators such as revenue, market expansion, and employment growth. Based on these analyses, the study successfully achieved its specific objectives by assessing key leadership barriers and examining their relationship with and effect on scaling SME in the study area.

The results revealed that both work-life imbalance and limited leadership development opportunities have a statistically significant and negative effect on business scaling. Women entrepreneurs who experienced greater conflicts between business and household roles and lacked access to leadership development were less likely to increase revenue, expand their markets, and grow their workforce. Gender Discrimination, though widely acknowledged in the qualitative interviews and the literature, did not show a statistically significant direct impact in the regression model. However, the qualitative data suggested that its influence may be indirect, affecting women's confidence, visibility, and access to networks rather than immediate financial performance.

In conclusion, the findings of this study confirm that internal leadership barriers are not only prevalent but critical to the growth prospects of women-owned SMEs in Addis Ababa. The data show that scaling is not simply a matter of finance or infrastructure, it is deeply tied to personal, social, and institutional dynamics that shape how women lead their businesses. Addressing these

barriers requires coordinated action: leadership training programs must be accessible, support systems must be gender-responsive, and policy interventions must look beyond startup support to enable sustainable business growth. Ultimately, empowering women through leadership development and support for work-life balance is not just a business strategy; it is a pathway to inclusive economic progress.

5.4 Recommendation

Based on the major findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

Policy and Institutional Recommendations:

- Access to leadership training for women entrepreneurs should be expanded, with flexible schedules that accommodate family responsibilities.
- Develop structured mentorship programs that connect experienced women business owners with emerging entrepreneurs to share practical knowledge and confidence-building support.
- Government agencies and business support institutions should collaborate with training providers to deliver short-term, practical leadership development workshops tailored to women running SMEs.
- Implement awareness campaigns and community dialogues to challenges subtle gender discrimination that may indirectly limit women's business scaling opportunity.

Practical Recommendations for Women Entrepreneurs:

- Active participation in peer-led training sessions and informal mentoring circles should be encouraged, especially where formal programs are unavailable.
- Women's business networks should be strengthened to promote collaboration, resource sharing, and collective problem-solving.

Future directions: Future research should consider broader geographic coverage such as the entire Bole Sub City or Addis Ababa, include microenterprises, and explore the combined effects of internal and external factors to better understand the scalability of women-owned SMEs.

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APPENDICES

Appendix-1

St. Mary's University

School of Graduate Studies

Masters of Business Administration

Questionnaire to be completed by Women SMEs Business Owners

Dear Participants

My name is **Feven Teklay** currently working on a research project entitled “**Leadership Barriers and Their Effect on Scaling Women-Owned SMEs at Bole Sub-City Woreda 03**”. This questionnaire is prepared as part of the researcher's effort to partially fulfil the requirements for Master of Arts Degree in Leadership from St. Mary' University, Department of MBA. The objective of the research is to explore “Leadership Barriers and Their Effect on Scaling Women-Owned SMEs in Addis Ababa: The Case of Bole Sub City Woreda 03”. Therefore, your answers are very important and valuable for the successful completion of the study.

Please fill out all of the questions to the best of your knowledge according to the questions provided. The information you provide will be kept confidential and will be used for this research purpose only.

Thank you very much for your cooperation in advance!!!

General Instructions

- ✿ There is no need of writing your name
- ✿ In all cases where answer options are available please put “X” in the appropriate box.

In case you have ambiguities on any of the questions, please do not hesitate to contact me via my:

Cell phone: 0929264700

E-mail: feventeklay27@gmail.com

Section 1: Demographic Information

1. Age:

- A. 18-25 ☐ B. 26-35 ☐ C. 36-45 ☐
D. 46-55 ☐ E. 56-59 ☐ F. If any specify _____

2. Education Level:

- A) Cannot read and write ☐ B) Elementary school ☐ C) High School ☐
D) Certificate ☐ E) Diploma ☐ F) First Degree ☐ G) Master's Degree
H) Other (please specify) _____

3. Marital Status:

- A. Married ☐ B. Single ☐
C. Divorced ☐ D. Widowed ☐

4. Family Size (including yourself, spouse, children, and other dependents)

- A. 1-2 Members ☐
B. 3-4 Members ☐
C. 5-6 Members ☐
D. 7 or more Members ☐
E. If any, specify number of family members: _____

5. Business Type:

- A. Manufacturing (e.g., food processing, textiles, furniture) ☐
B. Trade (e.g., wholesale, retail) ☐
C. Service (e.g., hotels, IT, transport) ☐
D. Construction (e.g., small-scale contractors, artisans) ☐
E. Handcraft/Artisan (e.g., pottery, weaving, jewelry) ☐
F. Others (specify) _____

6. Number of Years in Business:

- A. 3 Years ☐
- B. 4-7 Years ☐
- C. 8-10 Years ☐
- D. More than 10 Years ☐

7. Number of Employees including the owner:

- A. 2-5 Employees ☐
- B. 6-30 Employees ☐
- C. 31-100 Employees ☐

8. Total Assets:

- A. Micro Enterprise (Less than 100,000 Birr for manufacturing /50,000 Birr for trade and service) ☐
- B. Small Enterprise (100,001 - 1,500,000 Birr for manufacturing /50,001 - 500,000 Birr for trade and service) ☐
- C. Medium Enterprise (1,500,001 - 10,000,000 Birr for manufacturing / 500,001 - 5,000,000 Birr for trade and service) ☐

Section 2: Leadership Barriers (Likert Scale Statements)

The following statements are aimed at helping you assess your feelings or perceptions of your *leadership barrier and its effect on scaling your business*. Please answer all items below by putting X mark on a number from 1 to 5 from the rating scale that best reflects your perception. Judge how frequently each statement fits you. Leave the answer blank if an item is unimportant, or if you are unsure or don't know the answer. Use the following rating scales.

1-Strongly Disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Neutral, 4-Agree, 5-Strongly Agree. Please place a tick (✓) or a mark (x) in the box (cell) that represents your appropriate level of agreement.

Work-Life Imbalance		Scales				
		5	4	3	2	1
1	I find it difficult to balance my business and family responsibilities.					
2	My household duties prevent me from focusing on growing my business.					
3	Lack of childcare support affects my ability to manage my business effectively.					
4	I often feel stressed due to managing both business and family responsibilities.					
5	Work-life balance challenges limited my ability to focus on scaling my business.					
Limited Leadership Development Opportunities		Scales				
		5	4	3	2	1
1	Leadership training programs to support my business growth are inaccessible to me.					
2	Mentorship and networking opportunities to enhance my leadership skills are rare or hard to access.					
3	Business development programs tailored to women entrepreneurs are not widely available in my area.					
4	Training on business scaling strategies (market expansion, financial management) is not sufficient for my needs.					
5	Limited access to leadership development has constrained my business growth potential.					
Gender Discrimination		Scales				
		5	4	3	2	1
1	I have been perceived as 'bossy' or 'trying to be masculine' due to my role as a business leader by society or family."					
2	In my community, women are expected to prioritize household responsibilities over business leadership.					
3	I have experienced sexual harassment from investors, clients, or government officials.					
4	In my industry, male entrepreneurs have more access to partnerships and business networks.					
5	Gender bias has influenced my business expansion efforts.					
Scaling Women-Owned SMEs		Scales				

		5	4	3	2	1
1	My business has increased revenue without significantly increasing costs over the past three years.					
2	Training gaps have made it harder to grow revenue efficiently.					
3	Gender discrimination has reduced my access to revenue-boosting opportunities (e.g., loans, partnership, and networking).					
4	My business has expanded into new markets or customer segments using efficient strategies (e.g., technology, partnership) in the past three years.					
5	Limited leadership development opportunity has slowed my ability to expand into new markets using efficient strategies (e.g., technology, partnership).					
6	The number of employees in my business has increased in a way that supports long-term sustainability over the past three years.					
7	Work-life balance challenges have reduced sustainable employee growth.					
8	Gender discrimination has limited my ability to hire qualified staff.					
9	If I had better access to leadership opportunities, my business would be better positioned for sustainable growth.					
10	Leadership barriers (training gaps, work-life, and discrimination) have delayed my business's long term and efficient growth.					

Appendix-2

ቅድስት ማርያም ዩኒቨርሲቲ

የድህረ ምረቃ ትምህርት ቤት

የንግድ አስተዳደር ማስተርስ

መጠይቅ በሴቶች SMEs የንግድ ባለቤቶች ሊሞላ ነው።

ውድ ተሳታፊዎች

ስሜ ፌሽን ተክላይ እባላለሁ በአሁኑ ጊዜ በቦሌ ክፍለ ከተማ ወረዳ 03 "የመሪነት መሰናክሎች እና በሴቶች ባለቤትነት ላይ የተመሰረተ አነስተኛ እና መካከለኛ ኢንተርፕራይዞችን በማስፋት ላይ ያለው ተጽእኖ" በሚል ርዕስ የምርምር ፕሮጀክት እየሰራሁ ነው። ይህ መጠይቅ የተዘጋጀው የተመራማሪው ጥረት አካል ከሴንት ሜሪ ዩኒቨርሲቲ፣ በ MBA የማስተር ኦፍ አርትስ ድግሪ መስፈርቶችን በከፊል ለማሟላት ነው። የጥናቱ አላማ “የመሪነት እንቅፋቶችን እና በአዲስ አበባ የሴቶች ንብረት የሆኑ አነስተኛና አነስተኛ ማህበራትን በማስፋት ላይ ያለው ተጽእኖ፣ የቦሌ ክ/ከተማ ወረዳ 03 ጉዳይ” ለመዳሰስ ነው። ስለዚህ፣ ለጥናቱ በተሳካ ሁኔታ እንዲጠናቀቅ የእርስዎ መልሶች በጣም ጠቃሚ እና ጠቃሚ ናቸው።

በቀረቡት ጥያቄዎች መሰረት እባክትን ሁሉንም ጥያቄዎች የቻሉትን ያህል ይመሉ። ያቀረቡት መረጃ በሚስጥር ይጠበቃል እና ለዚህ የምርምር ዓላማ ብቻ ጥቅም ላይ ይውላል።

ለትብብርዎ አስቀድመን ከልብ እናመሰግናለን!!

አጠቃላይ መመሪያዎች

- ስምዎ መጻፍ አያስፈልግም
- የመልስ አማራጮች በሚገኙበት በሁሉም አጋጣሚዎች እባክዎን “X”ን በተገባቢው ሳጥን ውስጥ ያስገቡ።

ግልጽ ያልሆነ ጥያቄ ካለ እባክዎን በሚከተሉት አማራጮች በኩል እኔን ለማነጋገር አያመኑ።

ሞባይል: 0929264700

ኢሜል: feventeklay27@gmail.com

ክፍል 1: የስነ ሕዝብ አወቃቀር መረጃ

9. ዕድሜ:-

ሀ. 18-25 ☐ ለ. 26-35 ☐ ሐ. 36-45 ☐

መ. 46-55 ☐ ሠ. 56-59 ☐ ረ. የሚገልጽ ካለ _____

10. የትምህርት ደረጃ:

ሀ. ማንበብና መጻፍ አይችልም ☐ ለ. አንደኛ ደረጃ ☐

ሐ. ሁለተኛ ደረጃ ትምህርት ☐ መ. የምስክር ወረቀት ☐

ሠ. ዲፕሎማ ☐ ረ. የመጀመሪያ ዲግሪ ☐ ሰ. የማስተርስ ዲግሪ ☐

ሸ. ሌላ (እባክዎ ይግለጹ _____)

11. የጋብቻ ሁኔታ፦

ሀ. ያገባች ☐ ለ. ያላገባች ☐

ሐ. የተፋታች ☐ መ. ባል የሞተባት ☐

12. የቤተሰብ መጠን (ራስዎን፣ የትዳር ጓደኛን፣ ልጆችን እና ሌሎች ጥገኞችን ጨምሮ)

ሀ. 1-2 አባላት ☐ ለ. 3-4 አባላት ☐ ሐ. 5-6 አባላት ☐

መ. 7 ወይም ከዚያ በላይ አባላት ☐

ሠ. ሌላ ካለ ፣ ቁጥር ይግለጹ: _____

13. የንግድ ዓይነት:-

ሀ. ማኑፋክቸሪንግ (ለምሳሌ የምግብ ማቀነባበሪያ፣ ጨርቃጨርቅ፣ የቤት እቃዎች) ☐

ለ. ንግድ (ለምሳሌ፣ ጅምላ፣ ችርቻሮ) ☐

ሐ. አገልግሎት (ለምሳሌ፣ ሆቴሎች፣ አይቲ፣ ትራንስፖርት) ☐

መ. ግንባታ (ለምሳሌ አነስተኛ ደረጃ ኮንትራክተሮች፣ የእጅ ጥበብ ባለሙያዎች) ☐

ሠ. የእጅ ሥራ/የእጅ ጥበብ ባለሙያዎች (ለምሳሌ፣ ሸክላ ሠሪ፣ ሽመና፣ ጌጣጌጥ) ☐

ረ. ሌሎች (ይግለጹ) _____

14.በንግድ ስራ ውስጥ የቆዩበት ጊዜ (ዓመት):-

ሀ. 3 ዓመት ☐ ለ. ከ 4-7 ዓመታት ☐

ሐ. ከ 8-10 ዓመታት ☐ መ. ከ 10 ዓመት በላይ ☐

15.ባለቤቱን ጨምሮ የሰራተኞች ብዛት:-

ሀ. 2-5 ሰራተኞች ☐

ለ. 6-30 ሰራተኞች ☐

ሐ. 31-100 ሰራተኞች ☐

16.ጠቅላላ ንብረቶች:-

ሀ. ማይክሮ ኢንተርፕራይዝ (ለማኑፋክቸሪንግ ከ100,000 ብር በታች/ለንግድና አገልግሎት 50,000 ብር) ☐

ለ. አነስተኛ ኢንተርፕራይዝ (100,001 - 1,500,000 ብር ለማኑፋክቸሪንግ / 50,001 - 500,000 ለንግድ እና አገልግሎት) ☐

ሐ. መካከለኛ ድርጅት (1,500,001 - 10,000,000 ብር ለማኑፋክቸሪንግ / 500,001 - 5,000,000 ለንግድ እና አገልግሎት) ☐

ክፍል 2: የአመራር እንቅፋቶች (Likert ሚዛን መግለጫዎች)

የሚከተሉት መግለጫዎች የተዘጋጁት ያለዎትን ስሜት ወይም የአመራር መሰናክልዎን እና ንግድዎን በማስፋት ላይ ያለውን ተጽእኖ ለመገምገም ለመርዳት ነው። እባክትን ከ1 እስከ 5 ባለው ቁጥር ላይ X ምልክት በማድረግ የእርስዎን ግንዛቤ በተሻለ በሚያንፀባርቅ መልኩ ከዚህ በታች ያሉትን ሁሉንም ጥያቄዎችን ይመልሱ። እያንዳንዱ መግለጫ ምን ያህል እንደሚስማማዎት ይፍረዱ። አንድ ንጥል አስፈላጊ ካልሆነ፣ ወይም እርግጠኛ ካልሆኑ ወይም መልሱን ካላወቁ መልሱን ባዶ ይተውሉ። የሚከተሉትን የደረጃ መለኪያዎች ይጠቀሙ።

1 - በጣም አልስማማም ፣ 2 - አልስማማም ፣ 3 - ገለልተኛ ፣ 4 - እስማማለሁ ፣ 5 - በጣም እስማማለሁ ። እባክዎን ተገቢውን የስምምነት ደረጃ የሚወክል ምልክት (✓) ወይም ምልክት (x) በሳጥኑ (ሕዋስ) ውስጥ ያስቀምጡ።

	የስራ-ህይወት ሚዛን አለመጣጠን	ሚዛኖች				
		5	4	3	2	1
1	ንግድና እና የቤተሰብ ኃላፊነቶቼን ማመጣጠን አስቸጋሪ ሆኖ አግኝቼዋለሁ።					
2	የቤት ስራዎቼ በንግድ ስራዬ ላይ እንዳላተኩር ያደርጉኛል።					
3	የልጆች እንክብካቤ ላይ አጋዥ ማጣቴ ንግዴን በብቃት የማስተዳደር ችሎታዬን ጎድቶታል።					
4	ስራና የቤት ጉዳዮችን በተለዋዋጭ ማስተዳደር ብዙ ጊዜ ጭንቀት /ውጥረት ይፈጥርብኛል።					
5	የስራ ህይወት ሚዛን የመጠበቅ ተግዳሮቶች ንግዴን ማስፋት ላይ እንዳላተኩር ገድብዎኛል።					
	ውስን የመሪነት እድገት እድሎች	ሚዛኖች				
		5	4	3	2	1
1	የንግድ እድገቴን የሚደግፍ የመሪነት ስልጠናዎችን ለኔ የማይገኙ ናቸው።					
2	የመሪነት ክህሎቶቼን ለማሳደግ የምክር ወይም የኔትዎርክ እድሎች የለም ወይም ማግኘት በጣም አስቸጋሪ ነው።					
3	ለሴቶች የተዘጋጁ ያቅም ግምባታ ስልጠናዎች በአካባቢዬ ላይ በበቂ ሁኔታ አይገኝም።					
4	የንግድ ማስፋፋት እና ማሳደግ እስትራቴጂ (የገበያ መስፋፋት ፣ የገንዘብ አያያዝ) ላይ ያተኮሩ ስልጠናዎች ለኔ ፍላጎቴ በቂ አይደሉም።					
5	የመሪነት ስልጠና እጥረት ንግዴን የማሳደግ ችሎታዬ ላይ ተጽዕኖ አሳድሯል።					
	የፆታ መድልዎ	ሚዛኖች				
		5	4	3	2	1
1	የንግድ መሪ በመሆኔ በማህበረሰቤ ወይም በቤተሰቤ ዘንድ እንደ “አባወራ መሆን የምትፈልግ (Masculine)” ወይም እንደ “ጨቋኝ (Bossy)” ታይቼ አውቃለሁ።					

2	በማህበረሰቡ ሴቶች የቤት ግዴታቸውን ከንግድ መሪነታቸው በላይ ቅድሚያ እንዲሰጡ ይጠበቃል።					
3	ከባለሀብቶች ፡ ከደንበኞች ወይም ከመንግስት ባለስልጣናት ፆታዊ ትንኮሳ ገጥሞኝ ያውቃል።					
4	በተመሳሳይ ንግድ ዘርፍ ላይ ያሉ ወንድ ነጋዴዎች የተሻለ የንግድ ኔትወርኮችን እና የሽርክና እድል ያገኛሉ።					
5	የጾታ አድልዎ ንግዴን ለማስፋፋት በ ማደርጋቸው ጥረቶች ላይ ተጽዕኖ አሳድሯል።					
	በሴቶች ባለቤትነት ስር ያሉ የንግድ ስራዎችን ማሳደግ	ሚዛኖች				
		5	4	3	2	1
1	ንግዴ ባለፉት ሶስት ዓመታት ውስጥ ወጪዎችን በከፍተኛ ሁኔታ ሳይጨምር ገቢ ጨምሯል።					
2	የስልጠና እጥረት ገቢያን በብቃት እንዳይጨምር ከባድ አድርገውታል።					
3	የጾታ አድልዎ ገቢ የሚጨምሩ እድሎችን (ብድር፣ ሽርክና ወይም ትብብር) እንዳላገኝ ተጽዕኖ አሳድሯል።					
4	ንግዴ ባለፉት ሶስት አመታት ውስጥ ውጤታማ ስልቶችን (ለምሳሌ ቴክኖሎጂ፣ ሽርክና) በመጠቀም ወደ አዲስ ገበያዎች ወይም የደንበኛ ክፍሎች ተስፋፍቷል።					
5	በቂ የንግድ አመራር እድገት ስልጠና አለማግኘቱ ውጤታማ አማራጮች (ለምሳሌ ፡ ቴክኖሎጂ ፡ ሽርክናን) በመጠቀም ንግዴን ወደ አዳዲስ ገበያዎች የማስፋፋት አቅሜን ገድቦታል።					
6	ባለፉት ሶስት አመታት ውስጥ የረጅም ጊዜ ዘላቂ ዕድገት በሚደግፍ መልኩ በስራዬ ውስጥ ያሉ የሰራተኞች ብዛት ጨምሯል።					
7	የስራና የህይወት ሚዛን መጠበቅ ተግዳሮቶች በንግዴ ውስጥ ያሉ ሰራተኞች ቁጥር በዘላቂ ሁኔታ እንዳይጨምር ገድቦታል።					
8	ከፆታ ጋር የተያያዙ ተግዳሮቶች የረጅም ጊዜ የንግድ እድገትን በሚደግፍ መልኩ ሰራተኞችን መቅጠር እና ማቆየትን አስቸጋሪ አድርጎብኛል።					
9	የተሻለ የአመራር ስልጠና እድል ባገኝ ኖሮ፡ ንግዴን በዘላቂነት ለማሳደግ የተሻለ አቅም ይኖረኝ ነበር።					
10	የመሪነት መሰናክሎች (የስልጠና፣ የስራና የህይወት ሚዛን፣ እና የጾታ አድልዎ) የንግዴን ዘላቂ እና ውጤታማ እድገት አዘግይተዋል።					

Appendix-3

Interview Questions for Women Entrepreneur

General Business Information

1. Can you describe your business in terms of size, industry, number of employees, and year of operation?

Work-Life Balance Challenges

2. How do you manage both your business and family responsibilities, and what are the biggest challenges you face in balancing them?

3. Have work-life balance challenges affected your business decisions or growth efforts (e.g., reducing operations, or avoiding expansion)? If yes, how?
4. What strategies or support systems do you use to handle work-life conflicts while trying to grow your business?

Limited Leadership Development Opportunities

5. Have you participated in any leadership training, mentorship programs, or business networking events? If yes, how have they helped you scale your business? If not, why haven't you participated?
6. Do you feel that a limited access to leadership development opportunities (such as training, mentoring, or networking) has negatively affected your ability to scale your business (e.g., expanding your market, increasing revenue, or hiring employees)? If yes, in what ways or how?
7. What specific types of training or support would help you improve your leadership skills and grow your business?

Gender Bias in Leadership

8. Have you ever experienced any gender-related challenges while running your business (e.g., societal expectations, bias, or access to networks)? Can you share an example?
9. Do you think female entrepreneurs face different obstacles compared to male entrepreneurs when trying to grow their business? If yes, in what ways?
10. Have you ever faced inappropriate behavior or harassment in business settings (e.g., from clients, officials)? If yes, how did you handle it?

Overcoming Barriers & Recommendations

11. Have any leadership challenges such as lack of training, gender bias, or work-life conflict made it harder for you to grow your business? If yes, can you share a specific example?
12. What strategies have you personally used to overcome leadership challenges while growing your business?
13. Are you aware of any current government or private programs aimed at supporting women entrepreneurs? Have you used any? If yes, how helpful have they been?
14. What policies or programs do you think could help reduce leadership barriers and support women entrepreneurs in Ethiopia?