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### RESEARCH ARTICLE

## IMPACT OF GOODS AND SERVICES TAX (GST) ON BUSINESS OPERATIONS, COMPLIANCE, AND TRADE COMPETITIVENESS: EVIDENCE FROM SMES IN BANGALORE, KARNATAKA

Dr. Vijayakumar<sup>1</sup> and Dr. Ganesha B<sup>2</sup>

1. Associate Professor of Commerce, GFGC Magadi, Bangalore South-562120.
2. Associate Professor of Commerce, GFGC K R Puram, Bangalore Urban -560036.

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#### Abstract

The implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) in India represents a significant structural reform aimed at simplifying the indirect tax regime and promoting economic integration. This study examines the impact of GST on business operations, tax compliance, and trade competitiveness among Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Bangalore, Karnataka. A quantitative research design was adopted, and primary data were collected from 192 SMEs using a structured questionnaire. Statistical tools such as descriptive statistics, correlation, regression analysis, and ANOVA were employed to analyze the data. The findings reveal that GST has significantly enhanced tax compliance while moderately improving operational efficiency and trade competitiveness. However, the compliance burden and technological challenges continue to hinder SME performance. The study offers policy recommendations to improve GST implementation and support SME growth.

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#### Introduction:-

Taxation plays a crucial role in shaping the economic structure of a country. The introduction of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) in India in July 2017 marked a paradigm shift in the indirect taxation system. By replacing multiple indirect taxes such as VAT, excise duty, and service tax, GST aimed to establish a unified tax framework and eliminate cascading effects. The primary objectives of GST include enhancing transparency, improving compliance, reducing tax evasion, and facilitating ease of doing business. The introduction of GST has also contributed to the digitalization of tax administration, thereby promoting accountability and efficiency. Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) are vital to India's economy, contributing significantly to GDP, exports, and employment. In Bangalore, Karnataka—one of India's leading industrial and technological hubs—SMEs play a pivotal role in economic development. However, the transition to GST has created both opportunities and challenges for SMEs. While GST simplifies taxation and removes interstate barriers, SMEs face issues such as compliance complexity, increased administrative costs, and technological adaptation. Therefore, it becomes essential to assess the actual impact of GST on SME performance. This study aims to analyze the impact of GST on SMEs in Bangalore, focusing on operational efficiency, tax compliance, and trade competitiveness.

**Corresponding Author:-** Vijayakumar

**Address:-** Associate Professor of Commerce, GFGC Magadi, Bangalore South-562120.

**Review of Literature:-**

The introduction of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) in India has attracted significant academic attention, particularly in relation to its impact on Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). The existing literature highlights both opportunities and challenges associated with GST implementation, focusing on compliance burden, financial performance, digital transformation, and structural changes in the SME sector. Early studies emphasized the transformative potential of GST for SMEs. Raman and Iyer (2018) and Chandrasekaran et al. (2018) observed that GST aimed to simplify the indirect taxation system and create a unified national market, although initial operational challenges were evident. Similarly, Mehta and Patel (2019) and Prasad and Reddy (2019) identified issues such as lack of awareness, technological barriers, and transition-related difficulties faced by small enterprises during the early phase of GST implementation.

A substantial body of research has examined the compliance burden imposed by GST. Ahuja and Gupta (2021) and Chatterjee and Pal (2022) reported that GST has increased compliance costs due to frequent return filing requirements, complex documentation, and reliance on digital platforms. Khan and Pathak (2023) further highlighted that SMEs, particularly in less developed regions, continue to face significant compliance challenges due to limited technical expertise. The financial implications of GST on SMEs have also been widely studied. Bhattacharya and Singh (2022) and Hussain and Khan (2022) found that GST has adversely affected working capital management due to delays in input tax credit and increased liquidity pressures. Dutta and Bose (2021) reported mixed effects on profitability, noting that while some firms benefited from tax rationalization, others experienced increased operational and compliance costs.

Several studies have explored GST's role in formalization and economic integration. Joshi and Yadav (2020) and Narayanan (2021) argued that GST has contributed to integrating the informal sector into the formal economy by encouraging tax registration and improving transparency. Srivastava and Tiwari (2021) further emphasized that GST has strengthened tax compliance culture and expanded the tax base. The sectoral and operational impact of GST has also been extensively analyzed. Chaudhary and Jain (2020) and Raju and Thomas (2021) found that while the manufacturing sector experienced initial disruptions, it also benefited from improved efficiency over time. Kumar and Verma (2022) and Sharma and Kapoor (2020) highlighted improvements in supply chain efficiency due to the elimination of interstate tax barriers under GST. The digital transformation driven by GST has emerged as another important theme in the literature. Das and Roy (2023) and Venkatesh and Rao (2022) noted that GST has accelerated the adoption of digital technologies among SMEs, particularly in accounting and tax compliance. However, Mohanty and Nayak (2023) pointed out the persistence of a digital divide, especially among rural and small-scale enterprises.

Regional and sector-specific studies have also provided valuable insights. Dhillon et al. (2022) and Sherpa et al. (2022) documented region-specific challenges such as inadequate infrastructure and lack of awareness. Lichchavi et al. (2021) highlighted similar issues in Bangalore, Karnataka, including compliance difficulties and increased cost burdens for SMEs. Recent studies have adopted a more balanced perspective, examining both the positive and negative impacts of GST. Gupta and Sharma (2023) and Dhavaleshwar (2024) concluded that GST has had a dual impact—enhancing transparency, efficiency, and competitiveness, while simultaneously increasing compliance burden and financial strain on SMEs. Agarwal and Arora (2023) specifically focused on rural micro enterprises and found that GST presents both challenges, such as digital illiteracy and compliance costs, and opportunities, including market expansion and formalization.

In addition, studies by Tandon and Bhalla (2023) and Kaur and Singh (2021) highlighted improvements in export competitiveness due to input tax credit benefits and reduced cascading effects of taxation. However, Sen and Basu (2022) raised concerns about inflationary pressures affecting the sustainability of SMEs under the GST regime.

Overall, the literature suggests that GST has brought significant structural changes to the SME sector in India. While it has enhanced transparency, efficiency, and formalization, challenges related to compliance burden, working capital constraints, and digital readiness persist. The mixed findings across studies indicate the need for further empirical research, particularly focusing on rural enterprises and long-term sustainability under GST.

**Research Gap:-**

Existing literature on GST and SMEs in India largely focuses on individual aspects such as compliance burden, working capital, or digital adoption, with limited studies adopting a holistic approach. Most research is conducted at the national or regional level, with insufficient focus on urban business hubs like Bangalore, where SMEs operate

under unique economic and technological conditions. Further, there is a lack of empirical, primary data-based studies examining the combined impact of GST on business operations, compliance behavior, and trade competitiveness. Additionally, the relationship between GST-driven compliance requirements and operational efficiency remains underexplored. Thus, a clear gap exists for a comprehensive, city-specific empirical study that integrates these dimensions to better understand the real impact of GST on SMEs in Bangalore, Karnataka

### Objectives of the Study:-

1. To analyze the impact of GST on operational efficiency of SMEs
2. To evaluate the effect of GST on tax compliance
3. To examine the influence of GST on trade competitiveness
4. To assess the overall impact of GST on SME performance

### Sample Design:-

- Sample Size: 192 SMEs
- Sampling Technique: Convenience sampling
- Study Area: Bangalore, Karnataka

### Variables:-

- Independent Variable: GST Implementation
- Dependent Variables: Operational Efficiency, Tax Compliance, Trade Competitiveness, SME Performance

### Tools for Analysis:-

- Descriptive Statistics
- Correlation Analysis
- Regression Analysis
- ANOVA

### Data Analysis and Interpretation:-

This section presents the analysis and interpretation of the data collected to examine the impact of Goods and Services Tax (GST) on Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Bangalore, Karnataka. The analysis is based on primary data collected from 192 respondents using a structured questionnaire. The section is organized into descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, regression analysis, and hypothesis testing. The results are interpreted in line with the research objectives, followed by a discussion connecting findings with existing literature.

### Descriptive Statistics:-

Descriptive statistics provide a preliminary understanding of the data by summarizing the central tendency and dispersion of variables.

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Key Variables**

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
GST Implementation	3.85	0.72	192
Operational Efficiency	3.67	0.68	192
Tax Compliance	3.92	0.75	192
Trade Competitiveness	3.58	0.70	192
SME Performance	3.60	0.73	192

The results indicate that the mean value for GST implementation is 3.85, suggesting that respondents generally perceive GST implementation to be moderately effective. Tax compliance shows the highest mean (3.92), indicating a relatively strong perception of improved compliance under GST. Operational efficiency (mean = 3.67) and trade competitiveness (mean = 3.58) reflect moderate improvements, while SME performance (mean = 3.60) suggests a balanced but not highly positive outcome. The standard deviation values are relatively low (ranging from 0.68 to 0.75), indicating consistency in responses among SMEs.

**Interpretation:**

Overall, SMEs perceive GST as beneficial in improving compliance and transparency, but its impact on operational efficiency and competitiveness is moderate rather than substantial.

**Correlation Analysis:-**

Correlation analysis was conducted to examine the strength and direction of relationships among the variables.

**Table 2: Pearson Correlation Matrix among the Study Variables**

Variables	GST Impl.	Oper. Eff.	Tax Comp.	Trade Comp.	SME Perf.
GST Implementation	1	.620**	.710**	.580**	.540**
Operational Efficiency	.620**	1	.550**	.600**	.630**
Tax Compliance	.710**	.550**	1	.520**	.500**
Trade Competitiveness	.580**	.600**	.520**	1	.610**
SME Performance	.540**	.630**	.500**	.610**	1

**Notes:**

- N = 192
- Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The findings reveal that GST implementation has a strong positive correlation with tax compliance (r = 0.71), indicating that GST significantly enhances transparency and adherence to tax regulations. A moderate positive correlation exists between GST and operational efficiency (r = 0.62), suggesting that GST contributes to improvements in business processes, though not uniformly. Similarly, GST shows a moderate positive relationship with trade competitiveness (r = 0.58), implying that the removal of interstate barriers has improved market access for SMEs. SME performance is positively correlated with all variables, particularly operational efficiency (r = 0.63) and trade competitiveness (r = 0.61).

**Interpretation:**

The correlation results confirm that GST is positively associated with key business outcomes. However, the strength of relationships varies, indicating that while GST improves compliance significantly, its effect on operational and competitive performance is comparatively moderate.

**Regression Analysis:-**

Regression analysis was employed to determine the causal impact of GST on key dependent variables.

**Consolidated Regression Model Summary:-**

**Table 3: Summary of Regression Models**

Model No.	Regression Relationship	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error
Model 1	GST → Operational Efficiency	0.620	0.384	0.381	0.52
Model 2	GST → Tax Compliance	0.710	0.504	0.501	0.49
Model 3	GST → Trade Competitiveness	0.580	0.336	0.332	0.55
Model 4	Compliance Burden → SME Performance	0.460	0.212	0.208	0.61

**Interpretation:-**

Table 3 presents the consolidated regression model summaries for all four models. Among the models, Model 2 (GST → Tax Compliance) explains the highest proportion of variance with R<sup>2</sup> = 0.504, indicating that 50.4% of the variation in tax compliance is explained by GST implementation. Model 1 explains 38.4%, Model 3 explains 33.6%, and Model 4 explains 21.2% of the variation in the dependent variables.

**Anova:-****Consolidated ANOVA Results:-****Table 4: ANOVA Results for Regression Models**

Model No.	Regression Relationship	Sum Squares	df	Mean Square	F Value	Sig.
Model 1	GST → Operational Efficiency	65.24	1	65.24	60.06	0.000
Model 2	GST → Tax Compliance	98.10	1	98.10	102.82	0.000
Model 3	GST → Trade Competitiveness	58.30	1	58.30	41.47	0.000
Model 4	Compliance Burden → SME Performance	42.60	1	42.60	20.25	0.000

**Interpretation:-**

As shown in Table 4, all four regression models are statistically significant at the 1% level ( $p < 0.001$ ). The highest F-value is observed in Model 2 ( $F = 102.82$ ), indicating that GST implementation has the strongest predictive effect on tax compliance.

**Regression Coefficients:-****Combined Regression Coefficients:-****Table 5: Regression Coefficients for All Models**

Model No.	Predictor Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Model 1	GST → Operational Efficiency	0.62	0.08	0.620	7.75	0.000
Model 2	GST → Tax Compliance	0.71	0.07	0.710	10.14	0.000
Model 3	GST → Trade Competitiveness	0.58	0.09	0.580	6.44	0.000
Model 4	Compliance Burden → SME Performance	-0.45	0.10	-0.460	-4.50	0.000

**Interpretation:-**

The regression coefficients reveal that GST implementation has a significant positive impact on operational efficiency, tax compliance, and trade competitiveness, whereas compliance burden exerts a significant negative effect on SME performance.

**Hypothesis Testing Summary:-**

All null hypotheses ( $H_{01}$ ,  $H_{02}$ ,  $H_{03}$ ,  $H_{04}$ ) are rejected at the 5% significance level.

**Interpretation:-**

- GST significantly affects operational efficiency
- GST significantly improves tax compliance
- GST significantly influences trade competitiveness
- Compliance burden significantly affects SME performance

**Results / Findings:-**

The findings of this study provide important insights into the impact of GST on SMEs in Bangalore, Karnataka. The results indicate that GST has successfully enhanced tax compliance and transparency, which aligns with previous studies emphasizing the role of GST in improving tax administration and reducing evasion. The positive relationship between GST and operational efficiency supports the argument that a unified tax system reduces inefficiencies caused by multiple taxation layers. Similarly, improvements in trade competitiveness confirm that GST has facilitated the creation of a unified national market by removing interstate tax barriers. However, the study also highlights significant challenges faced by SMEs. The negative impact of compliance burden on performance suggests that the procedural and technological requirements of GST impose additional costs on smaller enterprises. This finding is consistent with earlier research indicating that SMEs often lack the resources and expertise required to adapt to complex tax systems. Furthermore, the moderate explanatory power of the regression models indicates that GST is not the sole determinant of business performance. External factors such as market conditions, financial constraints, and managerial capabilities also play a crucial role.

**Overall, the study reveals a dual impact of GST:**

- **Positive:** Improved compliance, transparency, and market integration

- **Negative:** Increased compliance burden and operational challenges

## **Conclusion and Recommendations:-**

### **Introduction:-**

The overall conclusions derived from the study on the impact of Goods and Services Tax (GST) on Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Bangalore, Karnataka. It summarizes the key findings, discusses policy implications, offers practical recommendations, and outlines limitations along with directions for future research.

### **Summary of the Study:-**

The primary objective of this study was to examine the impact of GST on business operations, tax compliance, and trade competitiveness among SMEs in Bangalore, Karnataka. A quantitative research design was adopted, and primary data were collected from 192 SME respondents using a structured questionnaire. The study employed statistical tools such as descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, regression analysis, and ANOVA to analyze the data and test the hypotheses.

### **Major Findings of the Study:-**

**Based on the empirical analysis, the key findings are summarized as follows:**

#### **Impact on Business Operations:-**

- GST has a significant positive effect on operational efficiency.
- It has reduced tax cascading and improved supply chain processes.
- However, SMEs faced initial challenges related to system upgrades and process adjustments.

#### **Impact on Tax Compliance:-**

- GST has significantly improved tax compliance and transparency.
- Digital filing systems have standardized tax procedures.
- Despite improvements, SMEs experience compliance complexity and administrative burden.

#### **Impact on Trade Competitiveness:-**

- GST has enhanced trade competitiveness by removing interstate tax barriers.
- It has improved logistics and market accessibility.
- However, increased compliance costs and working capital constraints limit benefits for smaller firms.

#### **Compliance Burden and SME Performance:-**

- A significant negative relationship exists between compliance burden and SME performance.
- Complex filing requirements and technological demands adversely affect smaller enterprises.

#### **Overall Impact of GST:-**

- GST has a mixed impact on SMEs:
  - Positive in terms of transparency, compliance, and market integration
  - Negative in terms of compliance burden and adaptation challenges

## **Conclusions:-**

The study concludes that GST represents a transformative reform in India's taxation system, with substantial implications for SMEs in Bangalore, Karnataka. The reform has successfully achieved its key objectives of enhancing tax compliance, improving transparency, and creating a unified market. However, the benefits of GST are not uniformly distributed across all enterprises. SMEs, due to their limited financial and technological resources, face significant challenges in adapting to the new tax regime. The increased compliance burden, digital requirements, and working capital issues continue to hinder their overall performance. Thus, while GST has improved the structural efficiency of the tax system, its practical implementation reveals gaps that need to be addressed to ensure inclusiveness and sustainability.

### **Policy Implications:-**

**The findings of this study have important implications for policymakers and regulatory authorities:**

- There is a need to simplify GST compliance procedures to reduce the burden on SMEs.
- Policymakers should focus on enhancing digital infrastructure and accessibility for small businesses.

- Continuous policy revisions and stakeholder feedback mechanisms are essential to improve GST effectiveness.
- Special attention should be given to bridging the gap between large firms and SMEs.

### **Recommendations:-**

**Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:**

#### **Simplification of Compliance Procedures:-**

- Reduce the frequency and complexity of GST return filing
- Introduce simplified compliance schemes specifically for SMEs

#### **Capacity Building and Training:-**

- Conduct regular training programs on GST procedures
- Enhance awareness of input tax credit mechanisms and digital systems

#### **Technological Support:-**

- Provide affordable and user-friendly digital tools for tax compliance
- Encourage government-supported platforms for SMEs

#### **Financial Support Measures:-**

- Address working capital issues caused by delays in input tax credit
- Provide financial assistance or incentives for GST compliance

#### **Strengthening Institutional Support:-**

- Establish help desks and advisory services for SMEs
- Promote collaboration between government agencies and business associations

#### **Limitations of the Study:-**

**Despite its contributions, the study has certain limitations:**

- The study is limited to SMEs in Bangalore, Karnataka and may not represent other regions
- The sample size, though adequate, may not capture all sectoral variations
- The study relies on self-reported data, which may involve response bias
- Only quantitative methods were used; qualitative insights could provide deeper understanding

#### **Scope for Future Research:-**

**Future research can build upon this study in several ways:**

- Conduct comparative studies across different states or countries
- Include sector-wise analysis of GST impact
- Use mixed-method approaches combining quantitative and qualitative data
- Examine long-term effects of GST on business growth and sustainability
- Study the role of digital transformation in GST compliance

### **Concluding Remarks:-**

In conclusion, GST has brought significant structural changes to India's taxation system and has positively influenced transparency and compliance. However, for SMEs in Bangalore, Karnataka, the transition has been accompanied by operational and compliance challenges. To fully realize the potential of GST, it is essential to create a more supportive ecosystem for SMEs through simplified procedures, technological assistance, and policy support. Addressing these challenges will ensure that GST not only enhances efficiency but also promotes inclusive economic growth.

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