



# THE IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON MICRO AND SMALL SCALES BUSINESSES IN KOGI STATE, NIGERIA

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## ABSTRACT

Humans have witnessed three deadly pandemics so far in the twenty-first century which are associated with novel coronaviruses: SARS, Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS), and COVID-19. All of these viruses, which are responsible for causing acute respiratory tract infections (ARTIs), are highly contagious and/or have caused high mortalities. Corona was treated as a simple non-fatal virus till 2002. Coronavirus causes respiratory infections including pneumonia, colds, sneezing, and coughing while in animals it causes diarrhea and upper respiratory diseases. Soon after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, many governments began extending financial and other forms of support to micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and their workers because smaller firms are more vulnerable to negative shocks to their supply chain, labor supply, and final demand for goods and services than larger firms, and this was as a result of the containing modalities for curtailing the spread of this deadly disease. Since MSMEs are diverse, however, the severity of the pandemic's impact on them varies considerably depending on their characteristics. This paper attempts to deepen our understanding of the impact of the pandemic on SMEs, especially their employment, sales revenue, and cash flow in Kogi State, Nigeria. Where the researchers are keen on identifying the coping strategies as well as the possibility of switching over as a survival measure in SMEs. One of the strategic implications of our study is the need to address social protection approaches such as palliative measures, tax waivers, and soft loans, which can help to cushion the effect Covid-19 has on Micro and Small Scales Businesses in Kogi State.

**KEYWORDS:** COVID-19, Pandemic, Small, Medium scale (MES), Businesses, Government Policies

## INTRODUCTION

Millions of people's lives have recently been profoundly touched by the outbreak of numerous infectious diseases<sup>(1,2)</sup>. In addition to taxing our medical and public health infrastructure, these diseases have put a pressure on economists, scientists, and politicians as they attempt to address the financial difficulties, the development of vaccines, and the public's concerns. The condition is known as COVID-19, or coronavirus disease 2019<sup>(3)</sup>. After the emergence of SARS-CoV (severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus) and Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV), SARS-CoV-2 is another member of the coronavirus family that has a strong ability to infect human beings<sup>(4,5)</sup>. Coronavirus has been known to cause human infections since the 1960s; however, the potential of this virus to cause deadly epidemics came to the fore in the last two decades only. COVID-19 is the third major outbreak of the respiratory disease in twenty years related to coronavirus, which has significantly disturbed the socioeconomic balance of the entire

world. SARS-CoV-2 belongs to the family *Coronaviridae*, which belongs to the order *Nidovirales*.<sup>(6)</sup>

The first case of the coronavirus was notified as cold in 1960. According to a Canadian study in 2001, approximately 500 patients were identified with a Flu-like system. 17-18 cases of them were confirmed as infected with coronavirus strain by polymerase chain reaction. Corona was treated as a simple non-fatal virus till 2002. In 2003, various reports were published with the proof of spreading the corona to many countries such as the United States America, Hong Kong, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, and Taiwan. Several cases of severe acute respiratory syndrome were caused by corona and they're mortally more than 1000 patient was reported in 2003.<sup>(7)</sup> In 2012, Saudi Arabian reports presented several infected patients and deaths.<sup>[8-11]</sup> COVID-19 was first identified and isolated from pneumonia, patent belongs to Wuhan, China.<sup>[12-13]</sup>

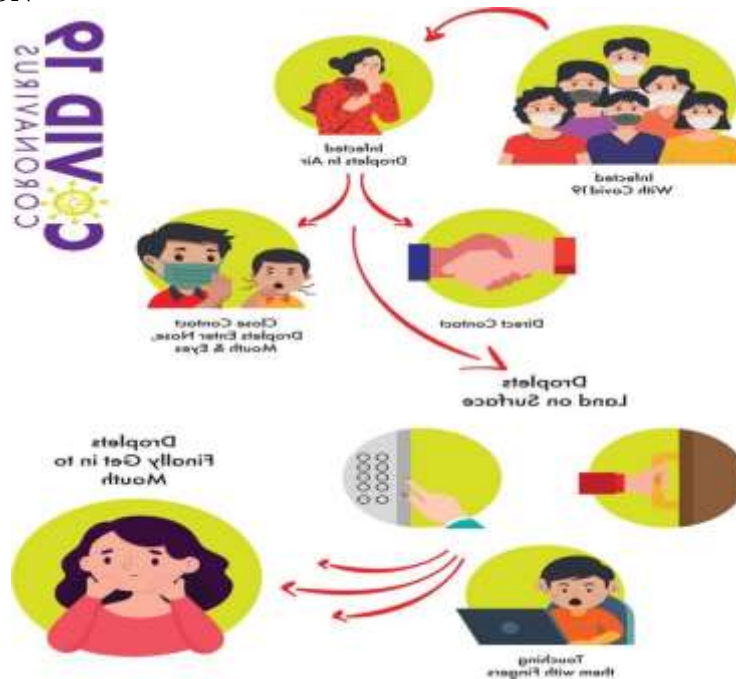
According to a report published on 24 Jan 2020, corona virus-infected patient has many common features such as fever,



cough, and fatigue while diarrhea and dyspnoea were found to be the as uncommon feature. Many of the patients reported bilateral abnormalities. Coronavirus was isolated from bronchoalveolar lavage fluid in China in 2020. It is also detected

in blood samples. Till now, the coronavirus was not confirmed in the feces and urine samples of the patient.<sup>[14-16]</sup>

## MODE OF TRANSMISSION



Source: Srikanth Umakanthan et al. Postgrad Med J 2020; 96:753-758.

## CLINICAL SYMPTOM

According to recent studies and pertinent data from the National Health Commission of China (2020), most COVID-19 patients represent relatively calm cases. The majority of patients had fever and a dry cough, but some also complained of shortness of breath, fatigue, and other unusual symptoms like muscle pain, confusion, headache, sore throat, diarrhea, and vomiting. In more extreme circumstances, it may result in multiple organ failure, pneumonia, and even death.

## PREVENTION

There isn't anything that offers comprehensive advice on how to avoid catching the coronavirus, however the WHO and ECDC have provided some recommendations. These rules are for the medical community to establish when caring for a patient who is infected. Since studies about the human-to-human transmission of corona from Wuhan, China, a lot of supporting evidence. Another study claimed that the virus may be transmitted through the air, but no concrete evidence was offered. Health practitioners were unable to offer preventative advice due to a lack of transmission proof. WHO reports that a number of basic recommendations have been made, including confining the infected patient and other family members to one

room, taking contact and droplet precautions, airborne measures, etc. Furthermore, due to the disease's rapid spread, the government has had to take hitherto unheard-of precautions, including travel bans, widespread curfews, the isolation and quarantine of affected people, etc.<sup>(17)</sup>

## GOVERNMENTAL POLICY

The PTF-COVID-19 announced the extension of Phase 3 of the Eased Lockdown for four weeks, beginning on October 19, 2020, after assessing the response across the country and coming to the conclusion that Nigeria is not yet prepared for a full reopening of the economy. This is consistent with the following modifications, which address economic, sociopolitical, and health-related issues:<sup>(18)</sup>

- ❖ Maintaining the current 12-to-4 a.m. national curfew;
- ❖ Camps for NYSC orientation are opening;
- ❖ The gradual re-opening of all educational institutions in a phased manner;
- ❖ Maintaining the restrictions on mass gatherings outside the workplace to no more than 50 persons;
- ❖ Removal of the limitation on civil servants allowed to come to work with alternate day arrangements;



- ❖ Re-commencement of sporting leagues, in particular, all outdoor activities such as football;
- ❖ Recreational parks, event centers, and restaurants to open for outdoor service only while bars and nightclubs shall remain closed;
- ❖ Mandatory use of non-medical facemasks in public spaces. **'No mask, no entry. No mask, no service;**
- ❖ Maintaining the **'No Mask, No Voting'** policy with enforcement of guidance on conducting safe elections during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The resultant effect of this policy was that a lot of businesses and even Governmental Organizations were affected, as movement, and contact with people was affected. Though it got lifted not long after, but then, other countries had also done something similar to this, as borders were shot down, thus limiting movement to-and-from other countries and continents. Now, this is no news that most countries and Continents depend on one another for basic needs and things they do not produce in their own country or states.

### SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES

The term "small office-home office" (SOHO) is useful for describing companies and other entities that fall between the SOHO and bigger enterprise categories. An SME is a legally separate business with no more than 500 employees, according to the European Union. Despite being small, SMEs are crucial to the economy. They are significantly more prevalent than large businesses, employ a sizable workforce, and are typically entrepreneurial, helping to create innovation.<sup>(19)</sup> Small and medium-sized businesses are referred to as SMEs.

Small and midsize businesses can be found in practically every sector, although they are more likely to be found in those that have lower labor costs and lower up-front investment requirements. Legal services providers, dentists' offices, eateries, or bars are examples of typical SMEs. SMEs are considerably smaller companies that generate the majority of jobs across the economy, as opposed to multinational giants with locations all over the world. Employer enterprises with fewer than 500 employees made up 46.4% of private sector payrolls as of the 2019 U.S. Census (the most recent U.S. Census statistics as of July 2022), while businesses with fewer than 100 employees made up 32.4%.<sup>(20)</sup> Around the world, small and medium-sized businesses are essential to many economies. Successful SMEs are largely attributed to their innovation, adaptability, creativity, efficiency, and proximity. SMEs have established themselves as a significant component of the industry through thoughtful customer behavior, government support, and reliance on one's neighborhood.<sup>(21)</sup>

Many economists believed that the prolonged presence of small-scale companies in less developed nations was justified until the early 1960s by the lack of capital and managerial expertise. It was frequently stated that small, traditional businesses will eventually be replaced by contemporary large-scale production methods as a result of economic expansion.<sup>(22)</sup>

In Nigeria, small and medium-sized businesses have long been scrutinized for their performance and potency as a tool for economic growth and development. Due to their poor performance and inefficiency, small and medium-sized businesses have come under a lot of criticism, especially when it comes to determining how important they are to the development and expansion of the economy.<sup>(23)</sup>

Small and medium-sized businesses have been credited with driving economic expansion and fostering equitable development. The sector's employment potential at minimal capital cost is by far its greatest benefit. Compared to large businesses, the SME sector has a substantially higher labor intensity. Small and medium-sized businesses have a well-established role in the nation's economic and social growth. The industry is a breeding ground for entrepreneurship, frequently propelled by individual imagination and ingenuity.<sup>(24)</sup>

There is no precise definition of what separates a small-scale enterprise from a medium-sized enterprise in Nigeria. In its Monetary Policy Circular No. 22 of 1988, the Central Bank of Nigeria defined small-scale firms as having an annual turnover of no more than 500,000 naira. For the purposes of commercial bank loans, the federal government of Nigeria defined small-scale enterprises as having an annual turnover of up to 500,000 naira or, for merchant bank loans, as having a capital investment up to 2 million naira (excluding the cost of land) or a maximum of 5 million naira. The National Economic Reconstruction Fund (NERFUND) set a 10 million naira limit for small businesses.<sup>(25)</sup> Section 37b (2) of the Companies and Allied Matters Decree of 1990 defines a small company as one with:

- (a) An annual turnover of not more than 2 million nairas;
- (b) The net asset value of not more than 1 million nairas.<sup>(21)</sup>

The upheaval caused by the spread of COVID-19 is having a devastating effect on small businesses. A recent Goldman Sachs survey (2020) of 10,000 small business owners found that 96 percent have already been impacted by the coronavirus and 51 percent report their business cannot survive 3 months of an economic shutdown. Exacerbating the problem, 67 percent report difficulty accessing emergency funding, and 53 percent acknowledge that their employees cannot telecommute. These statistics are alarming and suggest the economic fallout from COVID-19 will get worse for small businesses and their employees before it gets better.<sup>(26)</sup>

Because of its significant contribution to overall economic growth and development, the effect of COVID-19 on small and medium-sized businesses in Kogi State has to be highlighted. In recent years, it has been noted that an increase in SMEs has contributed to a decrease in unemployment around the world. Kogi State is not an exception, however the occurrence of the Covid-19 pandemic has significantly hampered the performance of SMEs in the State. Small and medium-sized businesses are the backbone of every economy in the globe, whether in industrialized or developing nations. Small and medium-sized businesses contribute more than half of the state's GDP and employment creation.



### Objectives of the Study

- To assess the size and resilience of small and medium enterprises in Kogi State
- To examine the implications of the covid-19 lockdown on the survival of SMEs in Kogi state
- To assess the level of availability of coping mechanisms in the state business environment
- To recommend appropriate policy options for the survival of SMEs in an ailing economy

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study used the structured electronic questionnaire (Google form) to gather and analyze data from selected respondents. The focus of this study was by type of business, categorized as:

- Public Limited Company
- Private Limited Company
- Family Business
- Partnership
- Co-operative Business
- One-man Business

### The population of the Study

This can be regarded as the total population of the study. The population of the study is mainly small and medium enterprises within Kogi state, using Lokoja, the capital as a case study. They are 680 in number.

### Sample Size

Therefore, the sample for the study is calculated thus;

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where,

- n = The required sample Size.
- N = Total population of the study = 680
- e = The expected error (0.05)
- n = 252

Therefore, the required sample size for the study is 252.

### Sampling Techniques

This is the process of examining and selecting a representative number of respondents from the total population. The simple random sampling technique will be used for this study. It is a technique that allows all members of the population to have an equal chance of being selected or included in research work.

### Instrument of Data Collection

A descriptive survey design was employed for the investigation. CEOs of Small and Medium-Sized Businesses make up the majority of the populace in Lokoja Metropolis, Kogi State. A total of 252 of these respondents will be used at the sampling location. The respondents were chosen using a random sampling procedure. Because they are employees of the chosen station, the respondents for this study were chosen for that reason. A 10-item survey served as the data gathering tool. The reliability coefficient for Cronbach's Alpha was used to assess the internal consistency of the questionnaire's items. The obtained reliability coefficient of 0.74 demonstrates the validity of the study's questionnaire. Some of the questionnaires were delivered personally to the respondents, while others were mailed to them. 100% of the questionnaire responses were received back through their emails to the researchers. Simple percentages were used to evaluate the data. The data will be interpreted analytically, logically, and thoroughly. The results will be addressed.

By contrasting the findings with the research questions guiding the study, the results will be interpreted to reinforce the research problem under investigation. The main method of data collection will be used in this study to obtain appropriate and pertinent data.

Validity of Data Instrument: The research instruments that will be utilized for the study will be put to the test for data analysis in order to get to a reasonable and agreeable conclusion. This will help to collect appropriate and relevant data. In order to guarantee that the results are accurate, true, and reliable, the research's equipment will also be put to the test. The extent to which a test measures what it is intended to measure is referred to as "validity."

Reliability of the data instrument: According to "reliability," reliability cannot be precisely calculated and must instead be determined. Any research tool's capacity to produce the same result after numerous applications or usage is referred to as its reliability.

Data Analysis Method: A straightforward % arithmetic table will be used to examine the data gathered from the questionnaire.

### CONCLUSION AND RESULTS

The display and analysis of information gathered and assembled from questionnaires that respondents answered. A social sciences statistical software was used to analyze the data (SPSS).

The questionnaire was sent out using social media platforms and the target audience was 252, and a total of 252 responses were collected from the respondents. These respondents are owners of SMEs around the Lokoja metropolis.



**Table 1: What type of SME do you operate?**

| Variables    | Percentage |
|--------------|------------|
| FMCG         | 69.04      |
| PHARMACY     | 21.43      |
| RESTAURANT   | 5.56       |
| LAW FIRM     | 3.97       |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>100</b> |

Source: Google form survey, 2022

It was gathered from this survey that most of the SMEs were involved in Fast Moving Consumable Goods (FMCG), pharmacies ranked top next, and then Restaurants and Law firms.

**Table 2: How old is your establishment?**

| Variable          | Percentage |
|-------------------|------------|
| Less than a year  | 7.94       |
| A year old        | 17.06      |
| 2 years old       | 31.75      |
| Above 5 years old | 43.25      |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>100</b> |

Source: Google form Survey, 2022

A larger portion of the respondents have been in their business for more than 5 years and above.

**Table 3: How many employees does your establishment have?**

| Variable     | Percentage |
|--------------|------------|
| 5-10         | 7.94       |
| 10-20        | 17.06      |
| 20-30        | 31.75      |
| 50 Above     | 43.25      |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>100</b> |

Source: Google form Survey, 2022

The fact that most of these establishments have more than 50 employees already qualified them as SMEs

**Table 4: Do you consider your business an SME?**

| Variable     | Percentage |
|--------------|------------|
| YES          | 87.30      |
| NO           | 9.92       |
| PERHAPS      | 2.78       |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>100</b> |

Source: Google form Survey, 2022

While 87.30% agreed to if they considered their businesses SMEs, 2.78% weren't sure and of course, 9.92% replied NO.

**Table 5: How did your business fare during the COVID-19 Pandemic?**

| Variable     | Percentage |
|--------------|------------|
| Terribly     | 88.89      |
| Slow Market  | 11.11      |
| Just alright | 0          |
| Perfect      | 0          |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>100</b> |

Source: Google form Survey, 2022



This is without a guess that businesses would have fared terribly, as evidenced by the respondents.

**Table 6: What are the challenges faced by your business during the pandemic?**

| Variable                          | Percentage |
|-----------------------------------|------------|
| Low patronage                     | 3.97       |
| Low operation hours               | 3.17       |
| Inability to access raw materials | 92.86      |
| <b>Total</b>                      | <b>100</b> |

Source: Google form Survey, 2022

92.86% agreed that their major challenges were the ability to access raw materials for production.

**Table 7: How were sales before the pandemic?**

| Variable       | Percentage |
|----------------|------------|
| Good           | 83.00      |
| Averagely good | 17.00      |
| Not good       | 0.0        |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>100</b> |

Source: Google form Survey, 2022

When asked how sales were before the pandemic, 83% said it was good, and 17% said it was averagely good.

**Table 8: How were sales during the pandemic?**

| variable              | Percentage |
|-----------------------|------------|
| <b>Good</b>           | 5.00       |
| <b>Averagely Good</b> | 17.00      |
| <b>Not Good</b>       | 78.00      |
| <b>Total</b>          | <b>100</b> |

Source: Google form Survey, 2022

5% said it was good, 17% said it was averagely good and 78% agreed to it not being good when asked how sales were during the pandemic.

**Table 9: What coping mechanism did you employ for the survival of your SME during the pandemic?**

| Variable                            | Percentage |
|-------------------------------------|------------|
| <b>Practicing social distancing</b> | 11.91      |
| <b>No face mask, no entry</b>       | 14.29      |
| <b>Use of dispatch riders</b>       | 72.22      |
| <b>Total lockdown</b>               | 1.58       |
| <b>Total</b>                        | <b>100</b> |

Source: Google form Survey, 2022

The use of dispatch riders became a thing during the COVID-19 pandemic, as many businesses needed them to help deliver goods and services to their clients. As evidenced in this survey, 72.22% of respondents agreed to use the help of dispatch riders,

14.29% said no face masks, no entry, 11.91% admitted to using the social distancing scheme while only a small fragment of 1.58% went on total lockdown.

**Table 10: How available were these coping mechanisms?**

| Variable              | Percentage |
|-----------------------|------------|
| Very much available   | 83.00      |
| Not readily available | 17.00      |
| Not available         | 0.00       |
| Total                 | 100        |

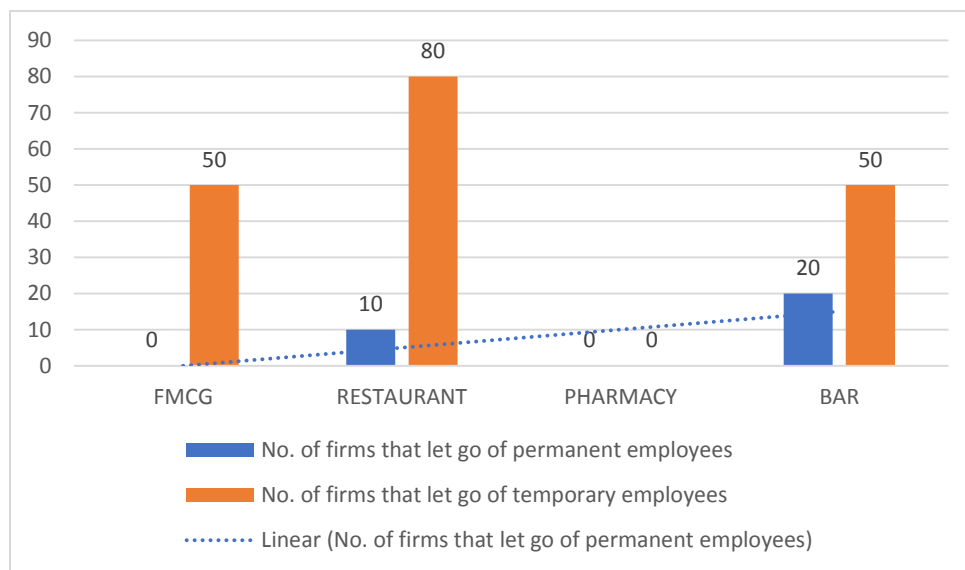
Source: Google form Survey, 2022.

These coping mechanisms were readily available, according to 83% of the respondents, 17% believed they weren't readily available.

### EMPLOYMENT AND SALES

Aside from the survey questions above, questions such as their employment, sales, and cash flow during and after the pandemic were also captured in this survey. The SMEs that experienced more severe effects of the pandemic and the related

changes in business environments than others, were captured as well. Our questionnaire included questions such as; "Was there a reduction of permanent employees to be able to manage the establishment"? "What percentage of reduction was required to keep the establishment afloat"? "What percentage of temporary employees were reduced"? Based on the responses of the respondents, Figs 1 & 2 shows the percentage of establishments that reduced their employees, both permanent and temporary, from 100%, 60%, 40%, and 20%

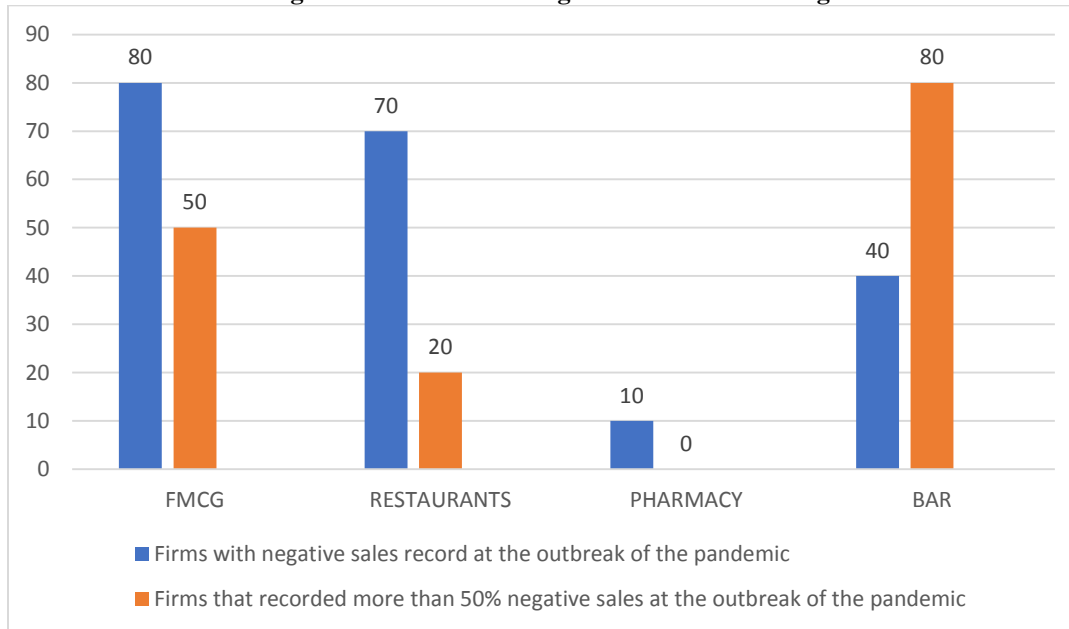
**FIG 1: Percentages of firms that reduced their permanent/temporary employees during the lockdown.**

During the survey, it was gathered that all the SMEs had to let go a larger percentage of their temporary workers (employees) as a means to reduce their expenses and because their services will

not be needed during the lockdown. Very few of these firms had to let go of some of their permanent employees as the Government policy of lockdown became tighter.



**FIG 2: Percentages of firms that had negative Sales flow during the lockdown.**



When asked how their cash flow was during the outbreak of the pandemic, a lot of these firms were hesitant to talk about their funds and how their business was faring, but some of them answered affirmatively that sales were reduced at the outbreak of the pandemic and some even answered that they had recorded more than 50% negative sales record, as a result to the pandemic. Which helped to strengthen the reasoning behind the reduction needed for their businesses to survive the pandemic era.

## DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The study has shown the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Small and Medium Scale Enterprises in Kogi State, a finding that is reflected both in the case studies and in the statistical analysis. Moreover, the analysis of the responses from the questionnaire distributed shows that:

- Most of the SMEs were involved in Fast Moving Consumable Goods (FMCG), pharmacies ranked top next, and then Restaurants and Law firms
- A larger portion of the respondents have been in their business for more than 5 years and above.
- The fact that most of these establishments have more than 50 employees already qualified them as SMEs
- While 87.30% agreed to if they considered their businesses SMEs, 2.78% weren't sure and of course, 9.92% replied NO.
- Businesses would have fared terribly, as evidenced by the respondents.
- 92.86% agreed that their major challenges were the ability to access raw materials for production.
- When asked how sales were before the pandemic, 83% said it was good, and 17% said it was averagely good.

- 5% said it was good, 17% said it was averagely good and 78% agreed to it not being good when asked how sales were during the pandemic
- The use of dispatch riders became a thing during the COVID-19 pandemic, as many businesses needed them to help deliver goods and services to their clients. As evidenced in this survey, 72.22% of respondents agreed to use the help of dispatch riders, 14.29% said no face masks, no entry, 11.91% admitted to using the social distancing scheme while only a small fragment of 1.58% went on total lockdown
- These coping mechanisms were readily available, according to 83% of the respondents, 17% believed they weren't readily available.

## CONCLUSION

From this survey, it is obvious that most of the businesses around Kogi state are categorized as Small and Medium Enterprise, as they meet the criterion to be SMEs, and have been in their current businesses for years. While it is nearly impossible to plan for a disruptive event such as Covid-19, the strength and determination needed to propel entrepreneurs are now more important than ever. We certainly do not wish to minimize the financial and psychological effects of this upheaval; as a result, we would rather encourage Small and Medium Enterprises to engage and enhance the efforts and innovative mindset that drove them into these ventures in the first place. After all, "successful entrepreneurs and small business owners are ruthless pragmatists, effectuates, and exploiters of resources. They are nimble, quick to eliminate what does not add value, and are not afraid to make bold decisions or even cut corners" <sup>(27)</sup>.





Secondly, the use of the internet has made it easy and an equal playing field for all inventors, manufacturers, and entrepreneurs to engage with customers alike. These new virtual business channels provide a unique opportunity to reinvigorate the search for product–market fit and the hunt for new business models capable of surviving and thriving in a COVID-19-impacted world.

Again, small and medium business owners should try to assess and identify viable governmental programs that work for them, to rescue and maintain their businesses.

To build trust between the employers and employees, the employers need to be transparent, accountable, and able to over communicate with the employees about changing trends in the business world, their struggles to keep afloat and not run aground, layoffs should be communicated properly and reasons behind it, as employers are experienced with the trends of ups-and-downs in the business world, while the employees are inexperienced.

Finally, they should try to maintain current customer relationships as this is critical, and communicating effectively with existing customers is key to building trust. Small business owners should leverage their websites and social media channels to communicate any changes in business operations (for example, changing store hours or major inventory shifts).

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