

The Financial Impact of COVID 19 in Zimbabwe: A Case Study of Harare Women Entrepreneurs

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Abstract

The investigation sought to examine the impact of COVID 19 on women entrepreneurs in Zimbabwe using the case study of Harare women entrepreneurs. Globally more than 50% of women entrepreneurs had closed shop, were no longer able to collect receivables and the opened women entrepreneurs are running short of inventory within a month. Authorities need to implement a comprehensive set of measures to rescue women entrepreneurs. A pragmatic approach was used and the instruments used in the investigation included questionnaires, interview guide and documentary analysis. The target population 261000 of women entrepreneurs in Harare, Zimbabwe was used using 2020 records from the Ministry of Woman affairs, Community, Small and Medium Enterprises Development (MWACSMED). A non-probability sampling technique was used for this study because it is quicker, easier and cheaper. A judgmental sampling techniques was administered on 385 sampling units generated by the Raosoft sample size calculator. Regression, correlation analysis was conducted to analyse the investigation results using SPSS version 20. Theme analysis was also administered on qualitative variables. The study concluded that small manufacturing, and trade, women-led SMEs have been among the hardest hit by the crisis financially. As a recommendation, the government, banks, and other financial providers must imperatively adopt appropriate gender-sensitive responses that consider women's unique needs, impact, and perspectives. It is also time to adapt to a new reality such as digital finance as the new normal.

Key words COVID 19, Women Entrepreneurs, Women SMEs, Financial Vulnerability, and Digital Finance.

1. INTRODUCTION

Morens et al (2009) [1] define a pandemic as an epidemic occurring worldwide, crossing international boundaries and usually infecting a large number of people. Globally the world has experienced the pandemics ranging from influenza, HIV/AIDS to Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). Economic risks of pandemics globally have not been trivial (Bloom et al, 2018). [2] COVID-19 (corona virus) is a novel virus outbreak, which started in China in December 2019 and has since been declared a global pandemic. Zimbabwe has not been spared by the spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID 19). The coronavirus was first detected in Wuhan, the capital city in the Hubei province of China in December 2019. The disease has since spread to every corner of the world causing serious health and socio-economic challenges. According to Ministry of Health and Child Welfare report (2020) [3], Zimbabwe had recorded 174 confirmed cases and 4 deaths. The government introduced COVID -19 national lockdown on the 30th of March 2020 in compliance with WHO and organisational guidelines on the prevention of the

spread of coronavirus. Through the Statutory Instrument 83 of 2020, Public Health COVID-19, Prevention, Containment and Treatment, National Lockdown Order, the government put in place a number of measures to slow the rates of local transmission, including a 21-day national lock down, which started on Monday 30th March. The lock down was then extended for two weeks until the 3rd of May 2020. The country is now on indefinite lockdown at level 2, which will be reviewed after every two weeks. The potential impact of the spread of COVID-19 in Zimbabwe could be devastating. The measures taken by the Government to contain and reduce the spread of coronavirus, have had several negative financial impacts, especially on marginalised groups including women entrepreneurs (Masomera and Chigwanda, 2020) [4]. Lai and Wong (2013) [5] viewed women as the most vulnerable whenever there are some economic challenges. The same view was also shared by Turner and Akinremi (2020) [6].

Globally more than 50% of women entrepreneurs had closed shop, were no longer able to collect receivables and the opened women entrepreneurs are running short of inventory within a month. Women-led businesses across Africa are already significantly impacted by COVID19. According to the ILO report (2020) [7], over 1,300 women SME owners across 30 African countries revealed that most women-led SMEs are at risk of permanent business shutdown as a result of the pandemic. According to the report, COVID-19 has affected their business operations, 80% of the women entrepreneurs in Africa have reported that they had to temporarily shut down their business. Of those that are still fully or partially operating, 41% have significantly reduced the number of working hours, 34% have laid off workers, and 25% have to reduce their employees' salaries. According to Tarinda (2020) [8], the rates of infection and death as a result of this COVID 19 pandemic appear to be higher for men than women. It is envisaged that women and girls will bear a disproportionate burden of the primary, concurrent, secondary and tertiary impacts of the disease, in terms of economic, social and health risks.

In Zimbabwe the national lockdown has resulted in the disruption of livelihoods and lost time for economic engagement, especially for women in the informal economy. Less than a fifth of Zimbabwe's economically active are in formal employment channels. The temporary closure of borders also affected cross border traders, a majority of whom are women. This resulted in price hikes of basic commodities especially food items. According to Masomera and Chigwanda, (2020) [4], Zimbabwe is still recovering from a devastating 2019 drought and the disastrous consequences of Cyclone IDAI that affected women and girls more by increasing poverty, displacement, loss of dignity and livelihoods, gender based violence and other risks. Pangestu (2020) [9] observed that many women-led SMEs are disproportionately affected by the economic disruptions of the COVID crisis and many more women are losing their jobs. Furthermore entrepreneurship is regarded as central to the economic empowerment and emancipation of women, especially in developing economies. Actions and support is there necessary in order re-establish their roles as engines of inclusive economic growth.

2. OBJECTIVES

The investigation sought to:

- i. Explore the COVID 19 induced financial performance of women entrepreneurs in Zimbabwe.
- ii. Examine the financial impact of COVID 19 on women entrepreneurs in Zimbabwe.
- iii. Assess the mitigating measures for the financial vulnerabilities of women entrepreneurs in Zimbabwe.

3. LIMITATIONS

The research had several limitations:

Primary data collection had to be conducted remotely, however the questionnaires were self-administered and it was structured in a format that did not require much follow up on the responses given.

Community engagement was limited due to the restrictions in mobility and community gatherings. Input was obtained from the key informants and women entrepreneur representatives and verified with observations on how communities were coping with the effects of the pandemic in the country.

There was also limited secondary data on COVID-19 in Zimbabwe and this compromised the data quality, and the ability of authors to triangulate the data. However the report is a living document that will be updated as the pandemic unfolds and as new data becomes available.

4. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Verbano and Venturini (2013) [10], any literature review must point out convergences and divergences from different authorities. Thus an investigation must fill the gap created by the different views (Leedy and Ormrod, 2016). [11] This section covers the literature on pandemics in general and the financial impact of COVID 19 in particular. A pandemic is an epidemic occurring worldwide, crossing international boundaries and usually affecting a large number of people (Morens et al, 2009). [1] The pandemics recorded in human history to date, considered by the authorities include Acute Hemorrhagic Conjunctivitis (AHC), HIV/AIDS, Cholera, dengue, influenza, plague, Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome(SARS), Scabies, West Nile disease and obesity. Morens et al (2009) [1] characterised pandemics with descriptives that included wide geographic extensions, disease movement, high attack rates and explosiveness, minimum population immunity, novelty, infectiousness, contagiousness and severity. Jonung and Roeger (2006) [12] found that pandemics have macroeconomic effects in terms of reduction in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as well as a decrease in economic productivity. Bell and Lewis (2004) cited in Jonung and Roeger (2006) [12] attempted to quantify the consequences of lost output and economic growth from major diseases like SARS and HIV/AIDS. Bloom et al (2018) observed that the economic risks of pandemics are not trivial. The yearly cost of the influenza pandemic was found 0.6% of the global income and in Liberia in particular GDP growth rate declined by 8 percentage points from 2013 to 2014. In Europe the two main sectors severely hit by pandemics were the Tourism sector and the trade sectors (Johung and Roeger, 2006). [12]

Grandy et al (2020) [13] observed that if gender entrepreneurship gap was eliminated, global GDP could increase up to 6% – a potential boost of 5 trillion to the global economy. Although much progress has been made in this area in the past three to five years, the impact of COVID-19 and responses to it threaten to undermine this progress (OECD, 2020). [14] Grandy et al (2020) [13] found that there is a continued need to advocate for a gender and diversity lens, to ensure inclusive recovery that benefits women and diverse entrepreneurs.

Fairlie (2020) [15] made an analysis of early impacts of the pandemic on the number of active small businesses in the United States in April 2020. The study found that a drop in business owners was the largest on record, and losses were felt across nearly all industries and even for incorporated businesses. African-American businesses experienced a 41 percent drop while female-owned businesses were disproportionately hit by 25 percent.

Nyashanu et al (2020) [16] explored the impact the of COVID-19 lockdown on self-employed women in Zambia Ndola using a qualitative approach. The study found that participants were affected by inadequate food supplies, hopelessness to revive business, poor access to health services, psychological trauma, defaulting medications, and challenges of keeping children indoors. Gourinchas (2020) cited in Nyashanu et al (2020) [16] observed that businesses for self-employed people depend on continuous buying, selling and spending of the population Thus

the national lockdowns adversely affected business by slowing down of buying and selling due to closure of economic activities (Rebmann et al, 2013). [17]

Kithia et al (2020) [18] examined the socio-economic impacts of Covid-19 in the coastal city of Mombasa, Kenya, at the time of government-imposed curfews and cessation of movement. The investigation used online interviews and found that the pandemic was not only a health crisis, but was also having serious damaging effects on societies, economies and vulnerable groups. Timely response was necessary in order to alleviate human suffering and to prevent irreversible destruction of livelihoods and the economy (Nikaido et al, 2015). [19]

5. METHODOLOGY

Research philosophy is about how the world and the processes that operate in it (realities) are viewed (Mouton, 2001) [20]. There are two paradigms of looking at the world namely positivism and anti-positivism. Positivism regards the world as being understood by an objective inquiry based on measurable variables and provable propositions. Anti-positivism or phenomenology on the other hand is premised on the fact that reality is constructed by social actors and people's perceptions of reality (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009) [21]. The general research objective was to establish the financial impact of the COVID epidemic on women entrepreneurs in Zimbabwe using a case study of Harare entrepreneurs. In light of the above the data employed in the study was both numerical and non-numerical. Thus the study adopted a mixed approach.

Thus a pragmatic approach was used and the instruments used in the investigation included questionnaires and interview guide. The target population of 261000 of women entrepreneurs in Harare, Zimbabwe was used using 2020 records from the Ministry of Woman affairs, Community, Small and Medium Enterprises Development (MWACSMED). A non-probability sampling technique was used for this study because it was quicker, easier and cheaper (Bell, 2004). [22] Thus a judgmental sampling technique was administered on 385 sampling units generated by the Raosoft sample size calculator at 95% confidence level as shown by Figure 5.1 below.

What margin of error can you accept? 5% is a common choice	5%
What confidence level do you need? Typical choices are 90%, 95%, or 99%	95%
What is the population size? If you don't know, use 20000	2610000
What is the response distribution? Leave this as 50%	50%
Your recommended sample size is	385

FIGURE 5.1: Raosoft sample size calculator.

Regression, correlation analysis was conducted to analyse the investigation results using SPSS version 20 as well as some descriptive statistics. Theme analysis was administered on qualitative variables to ascertain the most dominant themes from the respondents.

Hypothesis testing was also applied to test some predictions about the financial impact of COVID 19 on women entrepreneurs. Bryman and Bell (2018) [23] defined a research hypothesis as a statement about the relationship between two or more variables. A hypothesis has to be a specific and testable prediction of what the investigation expects (Cooper et al, 2003). [24] According to Wegner (2013), [25] hypotheses are claims that are made about specific population parameters. Blumberg et al (2011) [26] went on to describe hypothesis testing as a process of validating a claim about the true value of the population parameter. Normally two statements are stated, the null hypothesis and the alternative hypothesis (Cameron and Molina-Arizona, 2011). [27] The hypothesis however in the investigation were stated in null form. The level of significance

is also used to measure the likelihood of rejecting a true hypothesis (Onwuegbuzie, 2011). [28] The investigation adopted a 5% level of significance. Based on the analysis of the literature on the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic, the investigation formulated the following hypotheses for testing.

Hypotheses

The following investigation hypotheses are state in null form:

- H1. Financial impact of COVID 19 is independent of the nature of women businesses.
- H2. Financial losses are independent to the nature of women businesses.
- H3. Financial losses from COVID 19 were independent to the COVID 19 funding used.
- H4 The nature of business was independent to the nature of the financial operations affected.
- H5. Financial impact of COVID 19 was independent to the mitigation measures by women entrepreneurs.
- H6. The financial impact of COVID 19 was independent to the revenue generations of women entrepreneurs.

6. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

6.1. Response Rate

Response rate	Frequency	Percentage
Returned	320	83%
Unreturned	65	17%
Total	385	100%

TABLE 6.1: Response Rate.

A total of 385 questionnaires were randomly distributed to women entrepreneurs in Harare, the provincial capital of Zimbabwe. The response rate results from the study indicated that the majority of the questionnaires (83%) were returned compared to 17% that were not returned as illustrated by Table 1 below. The high response rate of 83% was an indication of interest by the respondents on the problem being investigated. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) [29], a response rate of 50% is adequate for analysis and reporting; a rate of 60% is good and a response rate of 70% and over is excellent. Willimack (2002) cited by Snijkers (2008) [30] suggested that response rate in the range of 50-65% is considered credible for analysis. Baruch (1999) [31] however advanced that there are no agreed norms as to what may be considered reasonable response rate (RR). The response rate was considered credible for further statistical analysis as it was above the minimum threshold of 60% recommended by Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) [15] and Willimack (2002) cited by Snijkers (2008 [30].

6.2. Demographic Characteristics of Women Entrepreneurs in Zimbabwe

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	.21-30	16	5.0	5.0	5.0
	31-40	54	16.9	16.9	21.9
	41-50	149	46.6	46.6	68.4
	More than 51	101	31.6	31.6	100.0
Total		320	100.0	100.0	

TABLE 6.2: Age of Respondents.

The majority of the respondents were women entrepreneurs between 41-50 years constituting 46.6% of the respondents followed by women entrepreneurs over 51 years as shown by Table

6.2 above. However the age group between 21-30 years constituted the lowest proportion of the respondents.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0-5 years	170	53.1	53.1	53.1
	6-10 years	50	15.6	15.6	68.8
	More than 10 years	100	31.3	31.3	100.0
	Total	320	100.0	100.0	

TABLE 6.3: Duration of business.

According to Table 6.3 above, the majority of the women entrepreneurs had a lifespan of less than five years, followed by those entrepreneurs that are more than 10 years. Most of the women entrepreneurs are in their infancy while others have matured.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1-10	238	74.4	74.4	74.4
	11-20	33	10.3	10.3	84.7
	51-100	49	15.3	15.3	100.0
	Total	320	100.0	100.0	

TABLE 6.4: Number of employees.

From the Table 6.4 above most women entrepreneurs are employing between 1-10 people. The numbers show that women entrepreneurs are classified as Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). However a sizeable number of women entrepreneurs (15.3%) employed between 51 and 100 employees.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Manufacturing	57	17.8	17.8	17.8
	Agriculture	50	15.6	15.6	33.4
	ICT and Stationery	25	7.8	7.8	41.3
	Education	25	7.8	7.8	49.1
	Clothing	105	32.8	32.8	81.9
	Tourism	25	7.8	7.8	89.7
	Fashion, arts and entertainment	8	2.5	2.5	92.2
	Catering and Food retailing	25	7.8	7.8	100.0
	Total	320	100.0	100.0	

TABLE 6.5: Nature of business.

The Table 6.5 above shows the cross-section of the various sectors from which the women entrepreneurs came from. The majority were in the clothing sector as reflected by 105 respondents, followed by manufacturing sector constituting 17.8% of the respondents. Women entrepreneurs from the Fashion, Arts and Entertainment sector constituted the least of represented. The sector was the hardest hit by the pandemic.

		Financial impact on operations		
Nature of business	Descriptives	Positive	Negative	Total
Manufacturing	Count	0	57	57
	% within nature of business	0.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% within financial impact on operations	0.0%	24.6%	17.8%
Agriculture	Count	0	50	50
	% within nature of business	0.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% within financial impact on operations	0.0%	21.6%	15.6%
ICT & Stationery	Count	0	25	25
	% within nature of business	0.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% within financial impact on operations	0.0%	10.8%	7.8%
Education	Count	8	17	25
	% within nature of business	32.0%	68.0%	100.0%
	% within financial impact on operations	9.1%	7.3%	7.8%
Clothing	Count	55	50	105
	% within nature of business	52.4%	47.6%	100.0%
	% within financial impact on operations	62.5%	21.6%	32.8%
Tourism	Count	0	25	25
	% within nature of business	0.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% within financial impact on operations	0.0%	10.8%	7.8%
Fashion, arts and entertainment	Count	0	8	8
	% within nature of business	0.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% within financial impact on operations	0.0%	3.4%	2.5%
Catering and food retailing	Count	25	0	25
	% within nature of business	100.0%	0	100.0%
	% within financial impact on operations	28.4%	0.0%	7.8%
Total	Count	88	232	320
	% within nature of business	27.5%	72.5%	100.0%
	% within financial impact on operations	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

TABLE 6.6: Cross tabulation of the nature of business and financial impact on operations.

Table 6.6 above shows the cross tabulation of the nature of business and the financial impact of COVID 19 on the operations of enterprises run by women entrepreneurs in Harare. The sectors that were negatively affected by the COVID 19 pandemic included the manufacturing sector, Agriculture, ICT and Stationery, Tourism, Fashion, arts and entertainment shown by the result of

100% within the nature of the business. Borders and airports were closed and most airlines suspended their flights during the pandemic peak for most parts of 2020 and early 2021. This suffocated supplies for most of the women enterprises. Entrepreneurs in the Tourism sector were the hardest hit by the closure of borders and airports as well as the suspension of flights. The sector could not be exempted during the 2020 and 2021 national lockdowns. The investigation results also showed that the Education sector, ICT and Stationery were affected by the closure of schools during the national lockdowns. Catering and food retailing were not affected much by the pandemic as most were allowed to open and serve non-sitting clients during the national lockdowns. Jonung and Roeger (2006) [12] identified Tourism as one sector which is very sensitive to pandemics.

		Value	Asymp. Std. Error ^a	Approx. T ^b	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by	Phi	1.445			.000
Nominal	Cramer's V	.834			.000
	Contingency Coefficient	.822			.000
Interval by Interval	Pearson's R	.153	.043	2.753	.006 ^c
Ordinal by Ordinal	Spearman Correlation	.141	.051	2.536	.012 ^c
N of Valid Cases		320			

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.
b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.
c. Based on normal approximation.

TABLE 6.7: Cross tabulation of the nature of business and operations most affected.

The results from Table 6.7 shows statistics from the cross tabulation of the nature of the business and the business operations most affected by the COVID 19 pandemic. The probability value of 0.000 results in the rejection of the null hypothesis of the independence of the two random variables. COVID 19 affected almost all the facets of the operations of business run by business operations. The results were confirmed by Ayele (2020) [32] who observed that the COVID 19 induced national lockdowns had a severe impact on Zimbabwe's informal economy. The women entrepreneurs were the most affected across the globe (United Nations, 2020). [33] Ribeiro (2020) [34] also found that women enterprises were the most vulnerable from the effects of the COVID 19 pandemic.

6.3. COVID 19 Induced Financial Performance of Women Entrepreneurs

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Positive	88	27.5	27.5	27.5
	Negative	232	72.5	72.5	100.0
	Total	320	100.0	100.0	

TABLE 6.8: Financial Impact of COVID 19.

According to the results shown in Table 6.8, 72.5% of the respondents were of the opinion that their operations were affected negatively by the COVID pandemic and the remainder thought otherwise. This was confirmed by Figure 6.1 below.

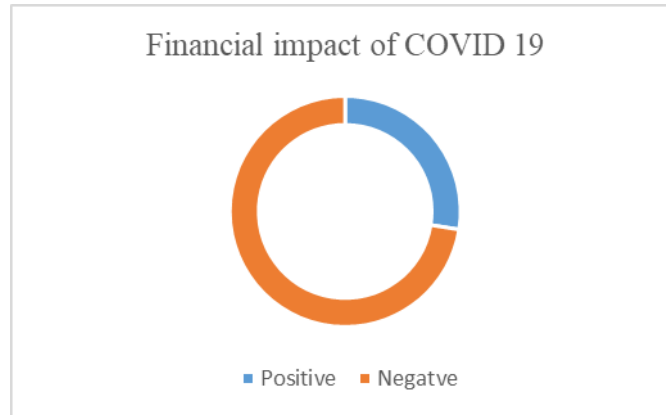


FIGURE 6.1: Financial impact of COVID 19.

These results were confirmed by Pangestu (2020) [9] who observed a lot of economic disruptions on women entrepreneurs as a results of the pandemic. Most women lost their jobs and their means of living resulting from the disruptions caused by the COVID 19.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Decreased revenue	138	43.1	43.1	43.1
	Increased cost of production	49	15.3	15.3	58.4
	Client base of the business decreased	75	23.4	23.4	81.9
	Equity value of the business decreased	58	18.1	18.1	100.0
	Total	320	100.0	100.0	

TABLE 6.9: Financial Operations most affected.

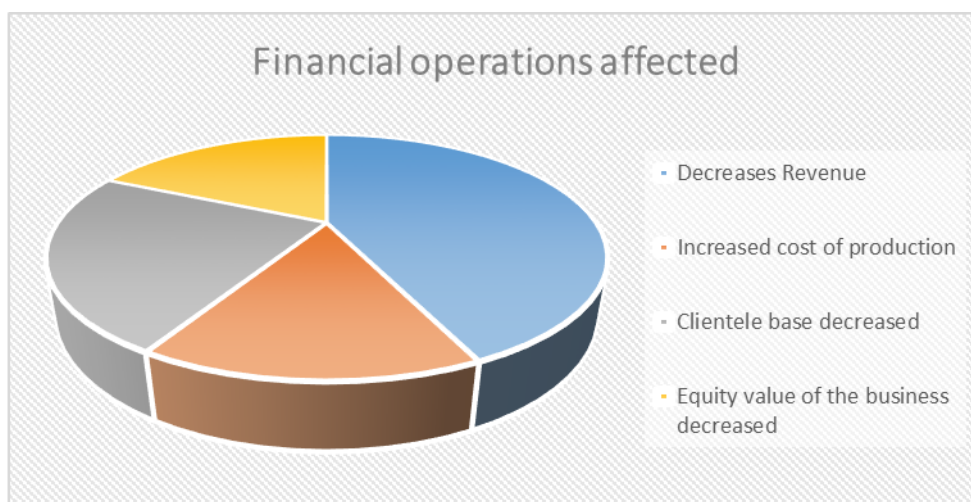


FIGURE 6.2: Financial operations affected.

The results from the Table 6.9 and Figure 6.2 above showed the COVID 19 pandemic depressed the revenues of most women entrepreneurs. This part of the operations was the most affected as

43.21% of the respondents confirmed that. This was caused mainly by the clientele base which dwindled over the lock down periods. Results also showed that 18% of women enterprises reported a decrease in the equity in their businesses owing to the pandemic. Decreased clientele base increased stocks held hence the equity of the business could not be significantly affected for most of the women entrepreneurs in Zimbabwe. According to the report by Tarinda (2020) [8], over 1,300 women SME owners across 30 African countries revealed that most women-led SMEs are at risk of permanent business shutdown as a result of the COVID 19 pandemic.

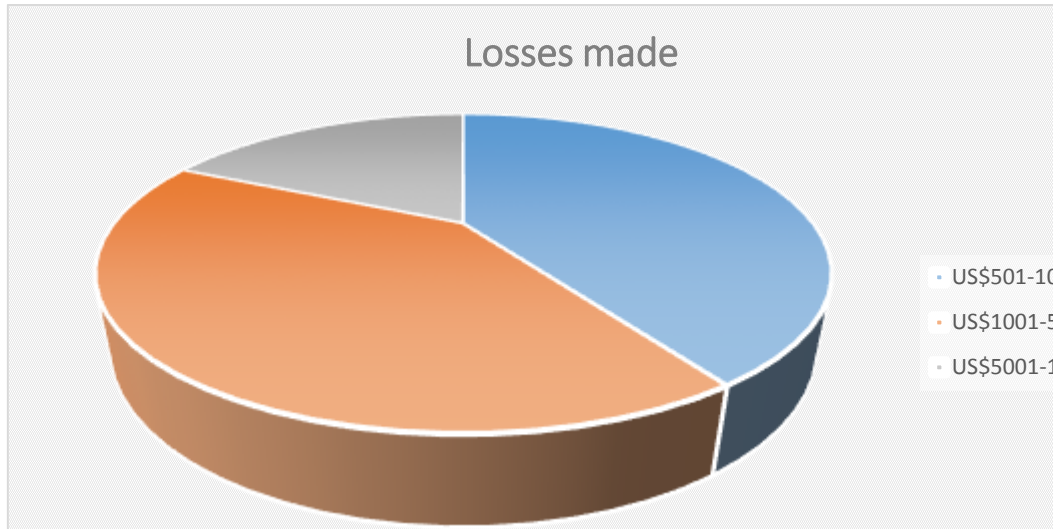


FIGURE 6.3: Losses made.

Figure 6.3 above indicates that generally women entrepreneurs made losses in the region between US\$501-1000 and US\$1001-5000. Each range had 41% of the respondents confirming. 18% of the respondents made losses in the region of USD\$5001-10000. Fairlie (2020) [15] made an analysis of early impacts of the pandemic on the number of active small businesses in the United States in April 2020 and found that the drop in business the largest on record, and losses were felt across nearly all industries and even for incorporated businesses. The investigation found that African-American businesses experienced a 41 percent drop while female-owned businesses were disproportionately hit by 25 percent drop in business.

6.4. Impact of COVID 19 on Financial Performance on Women Entrepreneurs

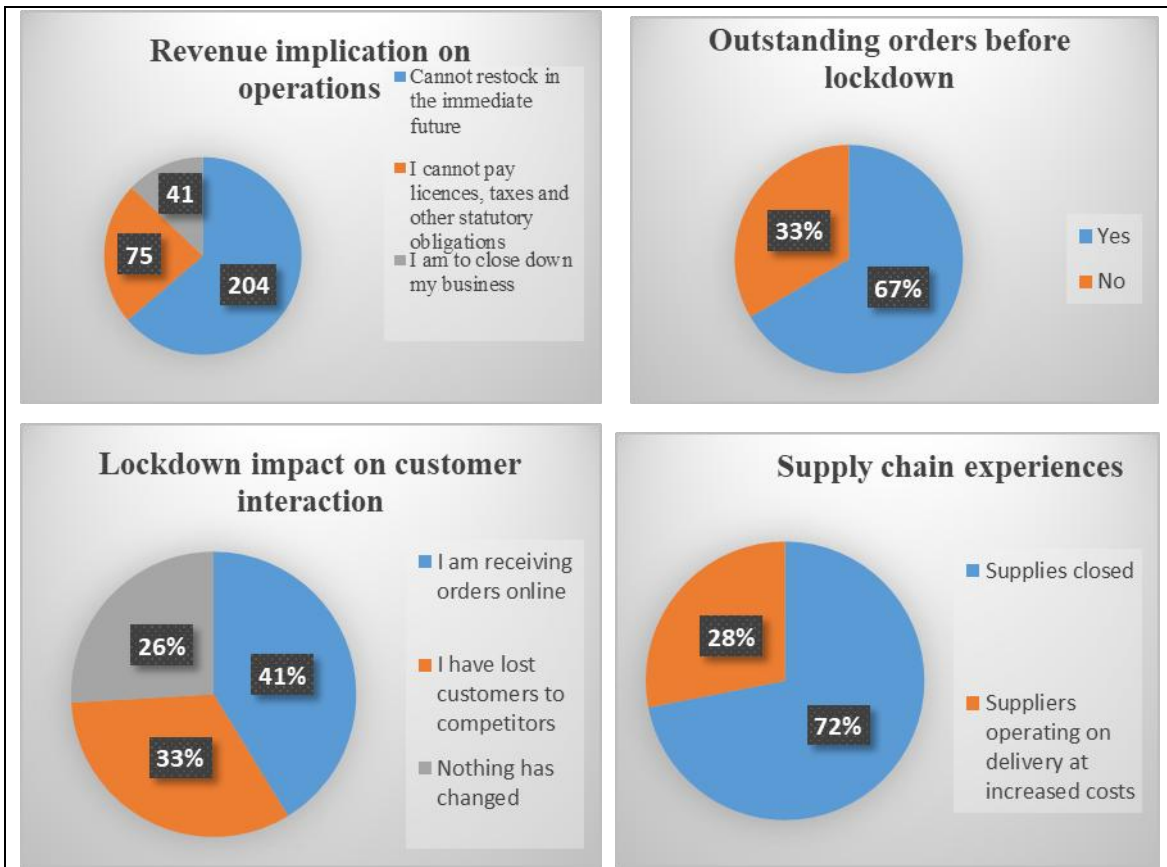


FIGURE 6.4: Impact of COVID 19 on financial performance.

The descriptive statistics in the above Figure 6.4 show the impact of COVID 19 on the various areas of operations of women entrepreneurs. Out of the 320 respondents used in the investigation, 204 confirmed that they were not able to restock due to the devastating effects of the pandemic. 33% of the respondents had outstanding orders on the onset of the lockdown measures and this affected the resumption of operations. Resulting from the complications of the national lockdown, 41% of the women entrepreneurs were now receiving orders online while 26% were still locked in their old way of conducting business. Although the majority were still stuck with their suppliers, 72% of the respondents confirmed that suppliers were now operating on delivery at increased costs. Due to the COVID-19 crisis, women entrepreneurs around the world are suffering large setbacks. Although new data about the disproportionate effects of lockdown measures on women-led SMEs is still emerging, in several Sub-Saharan countries, about 60% of women-led small businesses have lost their sources of income, three times more than men-led businesses. Globally, women-owned SMEs are about 6 percentage points more likely to close their business than male-owned businesses (World Bank Research, 2020 cited in the Ministry of Health and Child Welfare report, 2020) [3].

		Value	Asymp. Std. Error ^a	Approx. T ^b	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by	Phi	.091			.270
Nominal	Cramer's V	.091			.270
	Contingency Coefficient	.090			.270
Interval by Interval	Pearson's R	.006	.054	.115	.909 ^c
Ordinal by Ordinal	Spearman Correlation	.003	.055	.058	.954 ^c
N of Valid Cases		320			

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.
b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.
c. Based on normal approximation.

TABLE 6.10: Cross tabulation of financial impact and revenue implications on operations.

The results from Table 6.10 above shows the cross tabulation of the financial impact of COVID 19 pandemic and the implications thereof on the revenue generation of women entrepreneurs. There was a weak positive association between the two random variables as shown by Cramer V coefficient of 0.91. However the probability value of 0.270 resulted in the non-rejection of the null hypothesis of independence between COVID 19 impact and the implication on revenue. The two random variables showed that they were dependent on each other which confirmed that COVID 19 affected the revenues of women entrepreneurs. Ukala and Dassanou (2020) [35] reported that 80% of the women entrepreneurs temporarily shut down due national lockdowns and this affected their revenue streams. The results confirmed findings of James and Sarget (2006) [36] on their study on the economic effects of an Influenza pandemic in Europe. Sangem (2020) [37] analysed the challenges of women entrepreneurs in the wake of COVID 19 pandemic and found that the pandemic affected their reach to customers. COVID pandemic could not provide women entrepreneurs adequate time to adopt to online selling (UNCT Zimbabwe, 2020). [38]

		Value	Asymp. Std. Error ^a	Approx. T ^b	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by	Phi	1.108			.000
Nominal	Cramer's V	.783			.000
Interval by Interval	Pearson's R	-.320	.051	-6.027	.000 ^c
Ordinal by Ordinal	Spearman Correlation	-.308	.058	-5.769	.000 ^c
N of Valid Cases		320			

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.
b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.
c. Based on normal approximation.

TABLE 6.11: Cross tabulation of losses and the nature of business.

The correlation statistics in Table 6.11 above show that there was a positive significant correlation between the financial losses that were made by the business and the nature of the business as indicated by the Cramer V of 0.783. The probability value of 0.000 which is less than the level of significance of 0.05 resulted in the rejection of independence between the nature of the business and the financial losses made. The two variables were dependent on each other. COVID 19 financial impact was blind about the nature of the business although the degrees of impacts varied across businesses. Masomera and Chigwanda (2020) [4] reported that the measures

taken by the Zimbabwean government to contain and reduce the spread of coronavirus, have had several negative financial impacts on businesses, especially on marginalised groups including women entrepreneurs who were hit hard across all sectors of the economy. These results were also confirmed by Castro and Zermeno (2020). [39]

		Value	Asymp. Std. Error ^a	Approx. T ^b	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by	Phi	.710			.000
Nominal	Cramer's V	.710			.000
	Contingency Coefficient	.579			.000
Interval by Interval	Pearson's R	-.532	.034	-11.192	.000 ^c
Ordinal by Ordinal	Spearman Correlation	-.488	.037	-9.964	.000 ^c
N of Valid Cases		320			
a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.					
b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.					
c. Based on normal approximation.					

TABLE 6.12: Financial impact and the nature of the business.

The statistics from Table 6.12 above indicate the cross tabulation of the nature of the business and the financial impact of COVID 19. The correlation coefficient measured by the Cramer V indicated a strong positive association between these variables. According to McKibbin and Sidorenko (2006), [40] the general impact of pandemics is felt across all the economic sectors from manufacturing to service industries in various proportions. The government of Zimbabwe (2020), [41] in its stimulus package noted that the COVID pandemic affected almost every facet of the economy with the vulnerable the most affected. The probability value of 0.000 which less than the level of significance of 0.05 resulted in the rejection of the null hypothesis of independence between the two random variables. Brainerd and Siegler (2003), [42] from their study found that pandemics generally affect all the sectors of the income indiscriminately.

		Value	Asymp. Std. Error ^a	Approx. T ^b	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by	Phi	.698			.000
Nominal	Cramer's V	.698			.000
Interval by Interval	Pearson's R	.611	.028	13.752	.000 ^c
Ordinal by Ordinal	Spearman Correlation	.641	.030	14.910	.000 ^c
N of Valid Cases		320			
a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.					
b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.					
c. Based on normal approximation.					

TABLE 6.13: Cross tabulation of financial losses and the COVID 19 funding.

The Table 6.13 above shows the cross tabulation of the financial losses and the funding used by women entrepreneurs for COVID 19 compliance. There was a significant positive association between the two random variables shown by the Cramer V of 0.698. The probability value of 0.000 also indicated that the two variables were dependent on each other. The losses reported

during the lockdown were traceable to the funding of COVID 19 compliance by women entrepreneurs in Zimbabwe. Kithia et al (2020) [18] who examined the socio-economic impacts of Covid-19 in the coastal city of Mombasa, Kenya, at the time of government-imposed curfews and cessation of movement and found that the pandemic was not only a health crisis, but was also having serious damaging effects on societies, economies and vulnerable groups particularly women. The majority of the women entrepreneurs were using their personal savings for funding equipment required for COVID compliance (Chawla et al, 2020). [43]

6.5. Mitigating Measures by Women Entrepreneurs



FIGURE 6.5: Mitigating Initiatives.

The national lockdown measures have ushered in a new trajectory in the manner in which women entrepreneurs are conducting their business. According to Figure 6.5 above, 51% of the respondents confirmed that they has changed the way they do their business. Only 33% have maintained the status quo while 16% have introduced new services and new product lines. Gourinchas (2020) cited in Nyashanu et al (2020) [16] observed that businesses for self-employed people that depended on continuous buying, selling and spending of the population were adversely affected by the national lockdowns due to closure of economic activities and it was imperative that new ways of doing business needed proffering. Foss et al (2020) [44] argued that most women entrepreneurs seemed keen to be part of the new business trajectory. The view was also shared by OECD (2020). [14]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficient	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.180	.165		13.251	.000
	Financial impact on operations	.104	.092	.063	1.125	.262

a. Dependent Variable: Diversification initiatives

TABLE 6.14: Regression coefficients for the financial impact and mitigation initiatives.

The regression coefficients in the Table 6.14 above show that the financial impact of COVID 19 only explains 6.3% of the mitigation measures that women entrepreneurs were putting in place, although the probability value of 0.262 showed the disconnection between the financial impact

and diversification initiatives by the women entrepreneurs. Women entrepreneurs have developed new survival strategies owing to the devastating effects of the pandemic (Monolova et al, 2020). [45] Block et al (2015) [46] observed that throughout human economic history, challenges like pandemics are a catalyst for entrepreneurship, innovation and competitive advantage. Zimmermann and Zeitz (2002) [47] advocated that building and growing legitimate ventures was the panacea for economic survival. Post pandemic, innovative entrepreneurs are expected to drive economies (OECD/European Union, 2019). [48].

Model		Financial impact on operations	
1	Correlations	Financial impact on operations	1.000
	Co-variances	Financial impact on operations	.009

a. Dependent Variable: Diversification initiatives

TABLE 6.15: Correlation Coefficients.

The covariance matrix in Table 6.15 above shows the relationship between diversification initiatives and the financial impact of COVID 19 on business operations of women entrepreneurs. The covariance statistic of 0.009 shows a significant association between these two random variables. This confirmed the clarion call by Grandy et al (2020) [9] who found that there was a continued need of advocacy for gender and diversity lens, to ensure inclusive recovery that benefits women and diverse marginalised entrepreneurs. The views are also shared by Kuckerts et al (2020) [49] and De Vries et al (2019). [50] Strategic decision are necessary to prepare for the new trajectory (Zhu and Weyant, 2003). [51].

Hypothesis	Hypothesis description	Result
H1	Financial impact of COVID 19 is independent of the nature of women businesses.	Not supported
H2	Financial losses are independent to the nature of women businesses.	Not supported
H3	Financial losses from COVID 19 were independent to the COVID 19 funding used.	Not supported
H4	The nature of business was independent to the nature of the financial operations affected.	Supported
H5	Financial impact of COVID 19 was independent to the mitigation measures by women entrepreneurs.	Not supported
H6	The financial impact of COVID 19 was independent to the revenue generations of women entrepreneurs	Supported

TABLE 6.16: Conclusions on the hypotheses.

The summary of the conclusions on the hypotheses tested is shown in Table 6.16 above.

7. IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

Based on the research findings the study recommended a cocktail of measures that can be implemented by the policy makers and the women entrepreneurs. These measures could go a long way in ameliorating the devastating effects of the COVID 19 pandemic.

Governments should have Gender Stimulus Packages (GSP) which must be designed and disbursed from a gender lens perspective. This will ensure that women-led entrepreneurs can benefit directly instead of global packages. Such packages can be achieved by specifying a percentage allocation for women-led SMEs or the government can design and structure separate stimulus packages specifically for women-led SMEs. These packages may include concessional

loans or grants, tax debts condonation, rental and utilities subsidies or moratoria as well as concessional access to inputs and equipment for sectors such as agriculture. Although a number of packages have been developed by governments and development partners, most of these packages were not targeted towards women entrepreneurs. The government can promulgate a policy instrument that ring-fence women funding and also collaborate with women organisations and financiers in the private sector to set aside a certain proportion of their loanable funds for women entrepreneurs.

Findings showed that most entrepreneurs were rarely using loans to resuscitate their operations or for restocking, it was imperative for the relaxation of collateral requirements. Financial institutions should not make it mandatory for women-led businesses to provide such to cushion them against the effects of the pandemic. Banks should consider using businesses assets or other forms of financial options such as government guarantees as sole collateral for women entrepreneurs to access credit.

The majority of women entrepreneurs were procuring their supplies at an increased cost and governments should implement principles of affirmative procurement for goods and services related to the COVID-19 response by business run by women. The goods and services should also range from food provisioning, to masks or other protective equipment. Sourcing these goods and services for women-led SMEs could provide a needed lifeline to the segment in the short term while long term intervention strategies would be worked out.

One of the policy intervention is to involve women in the COVID 19 recovery strategies being promulgated by the majority of African countries. Women should be involved in Africa's economic recovery policy formulation processes, especially those that impact women SMEs. Women business associations should participate significantly to such initiatives so as to promote targeted interventions that address the unique challenges that women entrepreneurs face during and after the COVID 19 pandemic.

Most of the women trades were conducted online particularly on customers. There could be need for investment in technology, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in particular. Financial resources needed to be provided and allocated to allow non-technology enabled women SMEs to be transformed to technology-enabled women businesses. This could significantly ameliorate the gender technology gap in most African countries. Apart from bridging the gender technology gap, it would allow women-led SMEs to scale up production, participate in e-commerce, and adapt to the post-COVID global village.

In order to promote gender sensitive commerce, African governments should offer tax breaks for individuals that invest in women-led SMEs. Such practice would encourage private sector participation in bridging the gender financing. The tax break should also be extended to women entrepreneurs affected by the COVID pandemic.

Capital deployed by institutional investors and governments to women-led SMEs should be ring-fenced and treated as patient capital as most women-led businesses would have been significantly disrupted by COVID-19. Most women businesses have experienced significant disruptions in their operations and would thus require some time to re-strategise to reach their economic potential. The patient capital could then be used to nurse these women entrepreneurs on their sick beds towards financial recovery.

8. REFERENCES

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