



**THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: SMALL ENTERPRISES
RESILIENCE**

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates Covid-19 Pandemic and small business resilience. Three small businesses were investigated in Nigeria; Nuel Pharmaceuticals, Bake and Swallow, and Freedom secondary school. The research aims at acquiring insight into business resilience and how the pandemic has affected the ability of SMEs to build resilience. SMEs are among the largest contributors to the economy of any country. They are also largest employers of labor across the globe. However, the pandemic significantly distorted their activities, and many SMEs were forced to close as they lack the financial capacity and necessary talent to ensure their continuous survival during the pandemic. SMEs that were able to remain active during the pandemic achieved this by building strong resilience into their system. This research thus investigates how SMEs were able to build resilience before, during and after the pandemic. The research adopts the qualitative research methodology, using interviews as the main instrument for data collection. Overall, data was collected from six participants from three small businesses (two each). The research discovered that small businesses that were able to survive during the pandemic achieved this by relying on their core capabilities in creating a resilience to change. The study also found that technology was a very important component in building resilience among SMEs and it became increasingly useful during the pandemic where lockdown measures were implemented. Based on the findings of the research, it is recommended that small businesses should implement strategies that can improve the preparedness of the business ahead of uncertainties and future disasters, while also identifying opportunities in such situations.

Keywords: *Covid-19, Resilience, SMEs*

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

COVID-19 - Coronavirus Disease 2019

EO - Entrepreneurial Orientation

SMEs - Small and Medium Enterprises

MNCs -Multinational Corporations

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

This research explores the impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on the resilience of small businesses with specific focus on three small businesses; Nuel Pharmaceuticals, Bake and Swallow, and Freedom Secondary School. The research is motivated by the widespread impact of COVID-19 Pandemic in SMEs across the globe which forced many businesses to temporarily shut down. The Pandemic affected the global economy and financial markets in dynamic ways. Some of the most common effects of the pandemic include increased rates of unemployment, drop in income, and disruption in manufacturing activities, transportation services, and supply chain (Belghitar, Moro and Radić, 2021; Brown, Rocha, and Cowling, 2020; Ratten, 2020a). Papadopoulos, Baltas and Balta (2020) observed that the COVID-19 Pandemic resulted in critical disruption in the flow of products and services, and this went on to affect the overall performance of small businesses. This situation threatened the survival of many SMEs across the globe, and many even went bankrupt.

SMEs remains the point of focus in this study because of they are constantly confronted by various environmental factors, economic conditions, adaptive capabilities, and business nature, and due to their size, they find it difficult to survive (Hossain, Akhter, and Sultana, 2022). Garengo, Biazzo and Bititci (2005) argue that SMEs are characterised by series of limitations that are often associated with human and financial resources, knowledge management and knowledge specialisation, and this places such businesses at a disadvantage when compared by larger organisations. Therefore, SMEs that intends to survive crisis must be able to seize opportunities, thus building resilience. Ratten (2020b) defines resilience as a business's ability to resist change or develop method of adaptability towards this change. It also involves that ability of the business

to overcome, survive and adapt to hindrances that arise because of uncertainty. The rise of the COVID-19 Pandemic increased the level of attention which the term has received among researcher (International Trade Centre, 2020). Scholars like Sussan and Acs (2017) have argued that many SMEs were able to identify and convert opportunities during the pandemic due to their level of resilience and management. This further reinforces the importance of business resilience in time of crisis. The International Trade Centre (2020) noted that businesses that adopt the retreat in time of crisis are usually undermined, and this affects the business over the long run, while businesses that attempt to develop resilience in time of crisis gradually learns to adapt to the new circumstance.

The effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic have been economically reflected in different businesses regardless of their size, and most of these businesses have been compelled to change their methods of operations and their business models in response to the challenges presented by the pandemic. de Brito, Lenz, and Pacheco (2022) argues that the survival of any business is dependent on its ability to respond to crisis. Hence, it is crucial to acquire knowledge on how businesses have been affected by the COVID-19 Pandemic to understand how the virus has changed the global business landscape.

At the peak of the COVID-19 Pandemic, the resilience of many businesses around the globe was tested. Diedrich *et al.*, (2021) observed that many businesses were able to survive the pandemic, thus proving their resilience, while others failed to be resilience during this global crisis. During this period, many businesses had to change their business model to address the changing business environment. This presented such businesses with many challenges as well as opportunities. The pandemic exposed weakness in the business model of many organizations, especially those that

were unable to survive the impacts of the virus. It is against this backdrop that this study will attempt to investigate business resilience during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

1.2 Statement of the Research Problem

Thorgren and Williams (2020) observed that SMEs make up about 90% of total firms globally, thus making SMEs very essential to the economic development of a country. SMEs are also the largest employers of labor globally. The important role of SMEs within the global economy makes it essential to ensure the protection of such businesses in time of disasters. As a result of their size and financial strength, SMEs are among the most easily affected businesses, thus SMEs with poor resilience strategies are easily affected by crisis.

As earlier observed, the pandemic caused various economic crisis across the globe, as governments across the globe implemented various lockdown strategies to curtail the spread of the virus. The lockdown measure caused the closure of various markets, business organizations, public offices, places of worship and events. Ozili and Arun (2020) observed that the rapid spread of the pandemic caused serious uncertainties among customers and investors that they became more conscious with the aim of making safer consumptions or investments. The Central Bank of Nigeria (2020) observed that because of the lockdown measures implemented by the Nigerian government, consumer purchasing rates was significantly reduced, as the percentage dropped from 59.2% in January 2020 to 41.1% in June 2020, and this affects the productivity of SMEs in the country. At the same time, the pandemic caused an upward trend in unemployment in the country as it rose from 23.1% in 2019 to 33.5% in 2020, thus making the total unemployed population 39.5 million people (National Bureau of Statistics, 2020). Andam *et al.*, (2020) also observed that the rate of poverty in Nigeria also increased by 8.7% during the pandemic.

Farrell and Wheat (2016) observed that in situations where there is the problem of cash flow, many SMEs are unable to survive for more than a month, thus during the pandemic there was the closure of many SMEs in Nigeria (Schrank *et al.*, 2012). In fact, many SMEs during the pandemic were compelled to lay off some staff, while others reduced the number of working hours (Edgecliffe-Johnson, 2020). Since SMEs remains one of the largest contributors of the employment and economic prosperity in Nigeria, the unavoidable impact of the pandemic was experiences in all sectors of the economy. This situation necessitated this study that aims at investigating COVID-19 Pandemic and small business resilience.

1.3 Research Structure

Chapter One: In this chapter, the background of the study will be discussed. This means that the main elements of the research will be contained in the study. This study investigates the impact of the pandemic on small business resilience. The study is motivated by the far-reaching global impact of the pandemic which led to the closure of many businesses around the globe. Some of the essential component of the chapter includes: introduction, statement of the problem, research questions, research objectives, scope of the study, and significance of the study.

Chapter Two: Chapter two of this research covers a comprehensive review of literatures. In this chapter, the researcher will critically explore, interrogate, and criticize scholarly documents that are related to the current research objectives. The chapter will conceptually and contextually explore the existing body of knowledge, therefore focusing on the research objectives.

Chapter Three: Chapter three contains the research methodology which offers a step-by-step guideline to the process of data collection and analysis. The chapter will be structured under the following headings: introduction, research philosophy, research approach, research strategy,

research choice, time horizon, population and sample size, method of data analysis, validating research instrument, ethical consideration, and limitation of the methodology.

Chapter Four: This chapter offers the data analysis and presentation; this will be done based on the data collected from interviews from staff of three small businesses in Nigeria. The chapter follows a thematic presentation data, which present the findings of the study under various themes discovered in the study.

Chapter Five: This chapter provides the summary, conclusion, and recommendations of the study. In the chapter, the major findings of the study will be revisiting, thus providing a comprehensive link between the research objective, methodology and findings of the research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The literature review will be taken from the broad perspective of covid-19 pandemic and its lessons. This will then be followed by a focus on small enterprises resilience. Key concepts such as COVID-19, pandemic, small business, and resilience will be examined. Building on this will be a review of the small enterprises in Nigeria who are the target audience of this study.

2.2 Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)

Research into SMEs has been influenced by their growth and importance to economy of nations, Daniel (2022) expressed that SMEs were usually companies with low a threshold of employees usually between 50 and 500. They were mainly characterized by their sole or partnership ownership structure and limited sphere of operations (Ramirez *et al.*, 2021; Gupta and Gregoriou, 2018). Defining SMEs has not yielded much importance to academic enquiry; however, the value of SMEs has attracted significant academic debates. Ramirez *et al.*, (2021), note that due to their high potential for growth and service delivery, they were essential to economy growth and job creation in both developing and developed nations. For Instance, ONS (2022), notes that the UK had 5.5 million number of SMEs contributing to 34.1% to the economy. SMEs in the UK had further risen due to greater suitable business environment and relative ease in setting up SMEs. Tajeddini (2016), also notes that SMEs were essential to value creation and customer satisfaction, this is because since they had fewer customers, they often had more effective ways of managing customers and offering value to customers. They were higher on customer engagement, loyalty, and retention. This was in sharp contrast to larger firms which faced challenges of effectively engaging customers and keeping up with customer retention. Furthermore, since big corporations

had larger number of customers, they had to constantly develop technological strategies to keep up with customer trends, desires, and satisfaction, this presented a daunting challenge for businesses. SMEs, however, have recorded to be higher in customer satisfaction and customer retention.

Since, SMES were also essential to the business environment, research has further sought to understand their constraints to expansion, and indeed SMEs faced challenges to expansion. Carter (2021) notes that SMEs, had a higher chance of business failure with just 20% failing in the first year, 30% after the first two years and 50% after the first five years. Mabula and Ping (2018), also note that while SMEs were engines of economic growth not all succeed but had a high percentage of business failure. Thus, SMEs were faced with several constrains that needed to be explored to provide beneficial solutions.

Amongst the daunting challenges of SMEs was the rising cost of operations, RSA (2022), analysis not that one million businesses agreed that rising cost was a significant challenge to growth and expansion of SMEs, this is due to inflation, insurance cost, raw materials, low demand of products and services and further general business cost. Roswell (2022), also discussing, the impact of cost on SMEs notes that 46% of SMEs had a pessimistic outlook concerning success in the UK environment, while 41% have noted that the current business environment in the UK was unstable and may result to business closure due to several rising cost challenges including plus fuel and energy price increases, inflation and hiring new workers. These challenges could significantly cripple the performance of SMEs further making them less competitive. The pandemic further contributed to the rising cost of SMES, lockdowns, changes in business operations, and need to meet customers on offline settings were challenges that significantly affected SMEs. Mahto *et al.*, (2018), also note that challenges as skill shortages, managing customers, gaining employees, and

managing employees were challenges which constrained the growth and expansion of SMEs. These challenges further needed academic solutions; therefore, research was necessary in assessing the magnitude of such challenges and further developing sufficient strategies for tackling them.

2.3 Entrepreneurial Capabilities

Capabilities were certain distinct factors which businesses had that enhanced their performance and competitive advantage, Michell (2011), expresses that capability was a generic potential and ability of businesses which may be seen in the overall operations or just a section or part of the business. Nevertheless, capabilities were necessary for management and developing a strong service-oriented architecture. Koryak *et al.*, (2015), evidence from reveals that with business capabilities companies' performance can be thoroughly enhanced. Therefore, businesses sought to gain capabilities that were Valuable, Rare, Less imitable and can be integrated into companies Operations. Thus, the VRIO framework.

The essential need for business capabilities has created several research into the types of capabilities businesses could have, one of which is entrepreneurial capability. Studies on entrepreneurial capability have yield two basic discourses. Firstly, from the works of Xie and Haung (2014) and Ge and Zhao (2021), entrepreneurial capability is manifested in special experiences and skills with entrepreneurs possessed that enabled them lead entrepreneurial teams, seize business opportunities and further create business value. In essence entrepreneurial capability was personal or codified to specific individuals, therefore making them provide the right value to organizations. Given this view, Abdelgawad *et al.*, (2013) note that entrepreneurs were business heads and a significant key to business breakthroughs as with their skills they can pivot the affairs of businesses achieving greater success and expansion. The second view of entrepreneurial

capability sees it as a resource in an organization, thus, Lans *et al.*, (2010), note that entrepreneurial capability was manifested in strategic ability of organizations, objective indicators and leadership growth and development. This view also corresponds to Staniewski *et al.*, (2016) analysis, that reveals organizations with entrepreneurial capabilities were able to transform employees, instilling leadership qualities, therefore enhancing coordination, skills, and potentials. Both views are accurate as successful entrepreneurs had internal skills which enabled them to succeed. Furthermore, businesses needed adequate entrepreneurship development programme therefore ensuring that such resources were not scarce in organization but constantly present.

Since, the necessity of entrepreneurial skills has been established in earlier section, a core finding amongst literature is the specific skills that entrepreneurs displayed. Several empirical research has revealed the skills which entrepreneurs should possessed that made them an essential capability. Walker (2022) research based on 17,000 adults reveals that the most essential skills for entrepreneurs were persuasion, leadership, personal accountability, goal orientation and interpersonal skills. Indeed, these skills were relevant Jain and Yadav (2017), notes that entrepreneurs were mainly business individuals thus, they needed skills for persuasion thus striking good deals for their companies, furthermore, since entrepreneurs worked in a team, they needed strong leadership skills which was manifested in communication, interpersonal skills, motivation, inspiration, decision making and Grit.

Beqiri (2021) notes that entrepreneurs needed the skills in the figure below for adequate business performance and responsibilities.

Figure 1. Entrepreneurial Skill for business Performance



Source: Beqiri (2021)

The above skills were important for entrepreneurs as it enabled them in marketing, networking, selling, negotiations, communication, and management which are essential for workplace success. Entrepreneurs also needed to imbibe hard work, which was key to enabling career progression (Jain and Yadav 2017). Research on entrepreneurial skills is in exhaustive given the fact that each entrepreneur had essential factors which made them successful. Jain and Yadav (2017) research which empirically discovered skills that made CEOs successfully concludes by noting that entrepreneurial and leadership skills were based on the context and unit of analysis, suggesting that the necessary skills for entrepreneurs that made them an essential capability should be analyzed by considering specific context, or case studies. Thus, it was prudent to study the relevance of entrepreneurship to SMEs, therefore understanding the significant skills which entrepreneurs possessed that enabled them to manage SMEs thoroughly for success.

2.4 Entrepreneurs and SME Growth

Scarcity of research exist that thoroughly investigate the link between entrepreneurs and growth of SMEs, majority of literature focus their attention on entrepreneurship and SME growth. Entrepreneurship was the process, while entrepreneur is the person, though there may be a link between the two as an entrepreneur needed the skills of entrepreneurship thus driving success, most literature did not discuss how entrepreneurs led to SMEs growth. However, certain research as Navid (2016) notes that since entrepreneurs were key to economic growth, certain skills which they possessed was essential to SME growth, for instance, entrepreneurs displayed a high skill for risk-taking. Risk-taking was the ability of individuals to see past business uncertainty further utilizing opportunities. Adequate risk-taking was central measures of risk assessment thus reducing the negative impact of risk was an essential trait entrepreneurs possessed to enhance success of SMEs. Ekmekçioğlu (2013), note that risk taking was essential for innovation, growth, and profits.

Another essential skill which was essential to entrepreneurship and the growth of SMEs was competitiveness. Staniewski *et al.*, (2016), research reveal that successful entrepreneurs were competitive, having a desire to growth, innovative and expand beyond current locations. This is significant as a key reason why businesses expand was the need to exploit newer markets further gaining more profits. Entrepreneurial research by Abdelgawad *et al.*, (2013) note that entrepreneurs significantly adjusted to changes, market conditions, innovated and increased efficiency to gain and overcome competition. Given the rise of globalization, entrepreneurs constantly were faced with competition, entrepreneurs further had to innovate to make products quality, and offering value to customers (Ge and Zhao, 2021). Xie and Haung (2014), also note that this skill was termed “learning entrepreneurship”. Innovation and creativity to overcome

competition enhanced the growth of SMEs, through creating better methods and products for customers and efficient business operations.

Another skill discovered from literature which enhanced entrepreneurial success especially in relation to SMEs was strategic decision making. Strategy involved developing processes and procedures to achieve business goals (Koryak *et al.*, 2015). Entrepreneurs were constantly developing greater strategies to ensure that goals on profits, markets and customers were achieved. The necessity of strategic decision making by entrepreneurs was proven by Navid (2016), who notes that majority of entrepreneurs displayed strategic decision making and considered it as an essential factor driving business growth. Omini and Beshigim (2021) note that entrepreneurs adopted several strategies including entering joint venture, partnership, and franchising to meet business goals. Strategic decision making was further determined by the nature of business challenges and trends. Thus, Koryak *et al.*, (2015) note that successful business entrepreneurship evolved strategies to benefit from the business environment while limiting the cost. For instance, during the COVID-19, there was the strong need for businesses to re-model their business operations to the internet space, entrepreneurs that took the opportunity significantly gained in profits and customers, while those who did not, significantly lost. Carter (2021) notes that the 54% of SMEs closure during the COVID-19 was failure to remodel their business to suit changing business patterns.

From the above, it is evident that entrepreneurs were essential to SMEs and further needed skills in risk-taking, competitiveness and strategic decision making. Therefore, this research investigates if these skills were essential for businesses in navigating the COVID-19 pandemic.

2.5 Dynamic Capabilities

As established in previous section, capabilities involve the unique and distinct factors which businesses possessed which was key to their performance. Given, the importance of capabilities to business performance, the concept of dynamic capabilities becomes necessary. There seems to be a consensus of what dynamic capabilities entail with slight discrepancies based on context, this insinuates that dynamic capabilities concerns the way organizations were able to rapidly change to meet customer demands. This corresponds to Aas and Breunig (2017), who note that dynamic capabilities are rooted to change routines, thus product changes, investment changes, service changes and operational changes. Dynamic capabilities were further entrepreneurial actions which was essential to achieving constant business performance and entering newer markets. The speed and degree through which organizations changed, aligned, and realigned their resources to meet requirements and opportunities within the business environment is considered a dynamic capability as it ensured that businesses were constantly improving, innovating, and achieving their business goals in relation to customer and marketplace (Wilden *et al.*, 2013).

The importance of dynamic capabilities has influenced research into what constitutes dynamic capabilities, therefore understanding what dynamic capability is and what it entailed. Interestingly Tega (2017), note that dynamic capabilities were built and not bought. Thus, companies must take conscious steps in developing such capabilities. Ability to build dynamic capabilities was essential for businesses to sense and seize opportunities further transforming business practices to meet demands of the environment. Wilden *et al.*, (2016), note that building dynamic capabilities integrated the desire for constant change in organizational culture, this enabled companies to sustain their transformational capabilities, thus maintaining long-term profitability.

Dynamic capabilities have also been connected to achieving significant change and aligning organizations with constantly evolving trends of the environment. Tallman (2015), notes that given such dynamic environment, organizations needed to be dynamic also, therefore enhancing their ability to cope, persist and adjust to challenge. Aas and Breunig (2017) further note that adjusting to dynamic challenges was significant to business thriving, as some challenges such as the COVID-19 totally changed business processes. Thus, companies that failed to adjust to such business challenges ended up shutting down. Also, Wilden *et al.*, (2013), making a more critical analysis on dynamic capabilities explains that they were essential for business to make sense of opportunities, seize opportunities, shape opportunities into required business operations and redeploy or reconfigure business opportunities. Thus, adding to their resource base (Teece, 2007).

It was further essential for businesses to develop dynamic capabilities, as part from developing resilience and persisting through a dynamic environment (Tega, 2017). Dynamic capabilities also enabled the internal processes of businesses. Wilden *et al.*, (2016), note that businesses constantly needed to reshape and remodel their internal processes, further enabling meet customer demands. While customer demands were basically an external factor, without internal modifications, customer satisfaction cannot be achieved. Thus, Tega (2017) notes that companies should constantly re-evaluate their existing and emerging capabilities, further increasing their relevant designs, investment, and technologies. Therefore, making sure their internal operations was sustainable. Reconfiguring the resource base of the organization as it constantly grew was also another strategy for ensuring that a company remained dynamic (Teece, 2007). Companies with a constantly changing technological resource base had higher value than those without.

This section has discussed the need for dynamic capabilities in businesses. It was necessary for businesses to have dynamic capabilities as it enhanced the ability of companies to change both

internal and external process further navigating the external environment. Furthermore, it enabled the transformation of internal processes to meet up with customer demands. Therefore, in integrating aspects of dynamic capabilities, this research will evaluate if SMEs in Nigeria had sufficient dynamic capabilities.

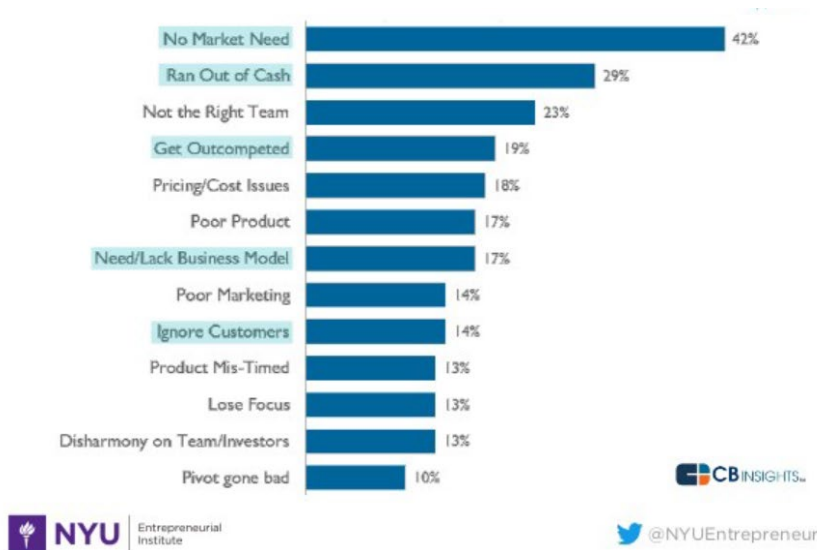
2.5.1 Resilience Capability

Developing a model for business resilience is as essential as the company. This is because the nature of the business environment compels businesses to strive and adapt therefore sustaining competitiveness within unknown environments (Evenseth, Sydnes and Gausdal, 2022). Resilience was therefore a key and essential capability for businesses. Heredia *et al.*, (2022), note that businesses constantly experienced discontinuities and disruptions. Disruptions posed a severe threat to organizational continuation. Therefore, businesses must develop sophisticated resilience models. Research on business resilience resulted in series of multifaceted processes which most times were rarely achievable by most organizations (Evenseth *et al.*, 2022). Thus, Hong, Zhang and Ding (2018), contend that developing a resilient organization is not synonymous to developing a multi-faceted or multi-dynamic business. Businesses that incorporated several resilience models often paid less attention to the most essential areas. Thus, Horak, Arya and Ismail (2018) note that basically businesses should develop resilience in material and immaterial activities. Material activities included human resource development, supply chain management, innovation, and technology. Immaterial activities include planning and forecasting, decision making and policy formulation. Fundamentally, therefore resilience considered the ability of businesses to return to stability after undergoing some heated disruptions or turbulence. Dushie (2014) notes that organizations with good resilience models were able to resume, bounce back and positively resume their activities. Thus, a resilient business had strong capabilities of overcoming and withstanding

challenges. According to Markovic, Farooq and Markovic (2017); Gorjian Khanzad and Gooyabadi (2021), small businesses develop resilience in various dynamic ways, though employing technology has been recognized as a prevalent method for small businesses to enhance resilience.

Literature further notes that the sustainability of a business was in its resilience capacity. Therefore, Engert and Baumgartner (2016) note that business turbulence and discontinuities are significant evaluators of a company’s resilience capacity. Alterfind (2022), notes that business disruptions in the US cost businesses \$700 billion annually, it was further responsible for 54% of business loss and closure. Also, Wiener (2018), notes that business disruptions were significant reasons why businesses fail (Figure that is linked to business models). Businesses, therefore had to develop strong, systematic, and significant business models which were essential to withstanding discontinuities.

Figure 2. Reasons for business failures



Source: Weiner, 2018

Scholars such as Heredia *et al.*, (2022) and Hong *et al.*, (2018) have further developed several frameworks which companies needed to focus on as they attempt to develop an efficient resilient strategy. Horak *et al.*, (2018) note that these frameworks tried to merge the internal and external environment of businesses therefore ensuring that businesses were well equipped to withstand discontinuities that came from within business operations or in relation to business external operations. Oraide *et al.*, (2021), further note that building a resilience framework needs to be placed in successive stages. This allowed business to develop a resilience framework which was aligned to reactive actions (past events), concurrent actions (current issues) and anticipatory actions that is future actions). These frameworks therefore allowed a company to develop a comprehensive model for reacting to negative and complex issues. These frameworks include:

Anticipation Framework: Ability to anticipate is closely linked how businesses developed strategies for preventing negative disturbances (Engert and Baumgartner, 2016). Evenseth *et al.*, (2022) note that it is the ability of businesses to detect, observe and identify critical developments within the internal and external environment and act accordingly. While businesses could not stop the occurrence of disruptions and disturbances, businesses could ensure that they were not significantly impacted by such disruptions. Therefore, businesses need to develop methods and models to anticipate future business disruptions and tactically prepare for them.

Coping Framework: Linnenluecke (2017), discusses that resilience and coping were similar, as coping as associated with dangers, unwanted situations, and other events that became manifest overtime. Dushie (2014) notes that in its rudimentary form coping may considered as dealing with unwanted, unknown, and hazardous circumstances. Thus, in a more comprehensive explanation, it considered how businesses productively reacted to its external environment, thus formulating, designing, and implementing positive behaviors which matched immediate events and situations

(Engert and Baumgartner, 2016). Coping had to do with how business integrated external challenges into existing business models further designing sophisticated frameworks to mitigate several business challenges.

Studies such as Hong *et al.*, (2018) prove that coping is a short-term strategy that aided business to effectively manage and handle unexpected events, therefore minimizing the occurrence of dangers. Prayag *et al.*, (2020), for instance notes that businesses identified challenges and further accepted that such challenges were significant and could affect their business operations. Businesses, therefore, drafted short-term measures to ensure that it responds effectively to such unexpected events. Coping was therefore done after a challenge, disruption or disturbance has occurred. Unlike anticipation which was carried out before a negative business event.

Adaptation Framework: Adaptation was the final stage for businesses to developing a comprehensive resilience strategy. Heredia *et al.*, (2022) note that without systems or ability to adapt to challenges, resilience was not complete. As businesses had to critically make sense of existing disruptions further developing strategies for adapting to them. Adaptation therefore considers business ability and capacity to adjust to crisis situations, thus adaptation unlike coping was not targeted at minimizing the damages done by disruptions but was aimed at making improvements (Jain *et al.*, 2020). Adaptation was an outcome of long-term learning process. While coping was in the short-term, adaptation was in the long-term. Niemimaa *et al.*, (2019), further links adaptation to strategies for anticipation, noting that as business anticipated dangers, through predicting and forecasting it made certain changes based on feedback. These changes were then integrated into the organizational process, thus enhancing the adaptation ability of businesses.

SMEs were usually the most effected in terms of business disruptions and disturbances, for instance the COVID-19 led to a closure of 1.9 million SMEs (BusinessDay, 2023). Similarly, the war in Ukraine affected 1000 of SMEs and previous economic crises as the 2010 financial downturn affected 170,000 SMEs. Therefore, SMEs needed to develop resilience capability, through anticipating, coping, and adapting. Therefore, this research will investigate how SMEs in Nigeria have developed such frameworks.

2.6 Liminality and the Entrepreneurial Firm

The phrase "being neither here nor there" or "betwixt and amongst" is occasionally used to describe the liminal, a condition of transition (Garsten, 1999; Kupers, 2011). Ambiguity and confusion are characteristics of liminality (Garsten, 1999; Henfridsson and Yoo, 2013). Entrepreneurship is typically viewed as a different development or stage compared to other business disciplines. (Shane and Venkataraman, 2000; Low, 2001). Recognizing that "entre" alludes to a space in between, Steyaert (2005) contends that entrepreneurship should be seen as a border-zone rather than a restricted area. He sees this border-zone as a "fertile middle area, a heterotopic region for different thinking," echoing conceptions of creativity inherent in liminality (Steyaert, 2005: p. 7). Despite the connections between entrepreneurship and liminality, the idea of liminality has only been heavily utilised in a small number of entrepreneurial studies. The phrase is used in several works more as a descriptive than methodological or theoretical framework.

For example, Jeremiah *et al.*, (2020), uses liminality to characterize the innovative performance of entrepreneurship. He portrays entrepreneurs as "living in that half-way home of becoming" (p. 597) in that they are not established and must acquire the trust and participation of potential stakeholders by providing a vision of their future firm. This hints at entrepreneurial impression

management concepts (Nagy *et al.*, 2012; Überbacher, 2014). Our objective is to increase our understanding of how firm practises change in this "borderland between past events and the possible future" (Henfridsson and Yoo, 2013, p. 933), how staff members cope with radical changes and uncertainty collectively, how liminality is perceived, and how change is handled within the entrepreneurial firm. In the context of organisational and personal learning, Tempest and Starkey (2004, p. 507) explore liminality "within a setting where the old constraints of organisation are being redefined while new forms of organising throw up their own learning obstacles."

Entrepreneurial firms frequently face liminality or chaos, and how they cope with it defines them as entrepreneurial (for example innovative and resilient). Liminality can be caused by both internal (lack of managerial skills, EO, and network change) and external factors (shocks to the environment).

2.6.1 Internal Factors Related to Liminality

For resilience, the physical and financial capital of a company's internal characteristics is crucial (Wedawatta *et al.*, 2010). Even though this might be challenging for SMEs, the ability of small and medium-sized firms (SMEs) to access external finance is essential to their resilience. According to Tognazzo *et al.*, (2016), larger, fewer resource-intensive, and adequately funded small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) are more resilient to economic downturns. Like this, McGuinness, and Johnson (2014) contend that a small and medium-sized enterprise's (SME) financial status prior to an economic downturn is more important than the company's age or size in determining how the crisis would affect the SME. Financially troubled SMEs are discovered to

be increasingly dependent on trade lending as an alternative for bank financing in times of economic slump to preserve their businesses.

In many nations, most small and medium-sized enterprises lacked access to credit services due to collateral-related issues (Tognazzo *et al.*, 2016). Biggs *et al.*, (2015) assert that a significant impediment to business expansion is a lack of availability of capital. But according to Page and Soderbom (2015), accessibility to finance might not be enough to improve a company's resilience. This summary demonstrates the ongoing and unresolved debate on the contribution of financial capital and financial capital resources to a company's longevity. Small businesses can outperform larger ones because they typically have less bureaucracy, the ability for quick decision-making and communication, and shorter processes, according to Sullivan-Taylor and Branicki (2011), who studied the impact of the sector, geographic location, and industry on organisational resilience. Organisational vulnerabilities may vary depending on the type of industry.

Entrepreneur's management skills

Biggs *et al.*, (2015) identified the possession of the necessary skills and experience as a crucial factor in the development of enterprise resilience. These elements are thought to improve an entrepreneur's ability to manage amid fluctuations. (Pal *et al.*, 2014). An entrepreneur with better managerial abilities has a higher chance of capitalising on an appealing chance and doing so in a way that leads to commercial success. (Davidsson and Honig, 2003). According to Page and Soderbom (2015), a company with great management produces superior business outcomes. Like this, corporate resilience was highly evaluated in organizations with high staff engagement even in the face of tumultuous conditions. (Lampel *et al.*, 2014). However, there is not yet clear knowledge about how an entrepreneur affects business success. Biggs *et al.*, (2015) found a

positive correlation between business owners' and enterprise resilience; nevertheless, Nichter and Goldmark (2009) research cast doubt on the HC influence on a company's performance.

- **Entrepreneurial orientation (EO)**

The importance of EO in the growth of a resilient SME is discussed by Ates and Bititci (2011); the entrepreneurial mindset (EO) represents the strategic elements of entrepreneurship, including entrepreneurial behaviors, procedures, tactics, decision-making techniques, and activities engaged in when managing enterprises. (Wiklund *et al.*, 2009). The success of firms is largely dependent on the EO aspects, which include being creative, forward-thinking, and risk-taking, according to (Wiklund *et al.*, 2009). Wiklund's conclusions have been questioned by other author (such as Wales *et al.*, 2013). These studies concluded that the business environment, in addition to EO, influences the association between EO and firm success. Wales *et al.*, (2013) found, based on their evaluation of EO research, that the relationship between EO and economic success requires additional testing in diverse scenarios. They emphasized that the majority of EO research to date has focused on wealthy nations, and as a result, only a small amount of work has been conducted in developing nations. In fact, this demonstrates the need for additional evidence about the impact of EO in the development of SME resilience across a variety of environments, including resource-constrained and challenging business circumstances, in developing nations.

- **Networks and relationship**

The extent to which a company is resilience to shocks and obstacles is determined by how successfully it builds and uses its networks (Torres *et al.*, 2018). Network consists of entrepreneurs' relationships with other individuals, groups, or institutions (Chiesi, 2014). These

networks are essentially built on reliability, cooperation, and shared norms, claim Nichter and Goldmark (2009). According to several academics, social networks provide SMEs with a defense against hardship. (Biggs *et al.*, 2015; Gunasekaran *et al.*, 2011). Additionally, they offer avenues for increased information gathering and transfer as well as the encouragement of creative endeavors, all of which increase the resilience of businesses. (Demmer *et al.*, 2011) Collaboration with government organizations in a networked setting also expands the resources available, the ability to learn from them, and the power to overcome challenges. (Chiesi, 2014; Pal *et al.*, 2014). According to Chiesi's (2014) study, social networks play a crucial role in the resilience of immigrant entrepreneurs in Italy. Chiesi's study also found that organizations that strategically worked with different social networks were able to mobilize more credit, which was crucial for business resilience during the global financial crisis in 2008/2009.

2.6.2 External Factors Related to Liminality

Business environment factors

The business environment encompasses a host of socioeconomic, cultural, and political circumstances (Wedawatta and Ingirige, 2016). The business environment may be conducive to the resilience of a company, or it may be unfavorable and disruptive (Zanten & Tulder, 2021) For instance, good macroeconomic and regulatory conditions create growth prospects for businesses (Ates and Bititci, 2011). However, some business environments are unattractive and adversarial-rife with complex and evolving disruptions, such as infrastructure-related obstacles, organizational gaps, stringent governmental regulations, constrained free trade, and advancements that inhibit business progress (Tengeh, 2016). Other dangers include persistent political turbulence, conflicts, drought, and policy uncertainty (Branzei and Abdelnour, 2010; Sabatino, 2016). According to Tengeh (2016), the business climate in developing countries, which is dominated by more

aggressive and emerging crises, makes SME failures more likely than in industrialized regions. This sort of corporate environment is characterized as continuously chaotic, volatile, susceptible, and resource scarce. Interestingly, in the middle of such ostensibly precarious conditions, some SMEs have been found to be expanding rapidly and even thriving (Tengeh, 2016).

2.7 Liminality in Covid -19 and Resilience-Building in SMEs

Uncontrollable outside factors, like the COvid-19 epidemic, which struck during a transitory period for the SME, have put entrepreneurial skills, notably resilience, to the test. Insufficient research has been done on small enterprises' capacity to survive during a disaster they were unaware of, like as the current Covid-19 outbreak. The COVID-19's effects on small businesses require them to reevaluate and strategize their viable business models, reexamine their core capabilities, and look for opportunities. This study aims to comprehend how COVID-19's impact on small businesses. When faced with a disaster like the COVID-19 pandemic, small business owners have two options for boosting resilience: either they adopt new ways to approach issues, or they wait for times of prosperity to come back. In contrast to the latter, which involves merely accepting things and hoping for the best, the former entails proactive resilience, constructive adaptation, and modifying the process when the situation calls for it (Sarkar and Clegg, 2021). Sarkar and Clegg (2021) contend that the former is the preferable option because the pandemic quickly turned into a crisis that jeopardized firms' ability to thrive. Kemp (2017); Sands (2015); and Li *et al.*, (2023), observed that building resilience for small businesses is essential to the overall survival of the business.

In their study surveyed 5,800 small businesses and discovered that about 43% had to temporarily close, and nearly all these closures were because of the Covid-19 pandemic. The study found that

the major reason behind the closure was due to the drop in demands and health concerns of the employees, Furthermore, the disruption of supply chain also contributed to the closure of these businesses (Bartik *et al.*, 2020). Using proactive (forward-thinking) crisis management, small businesses can anticipate and get ready for future crises, according to a study by Fleming (2021) that focuses on the insights and experiences of small businesses during the COVID-19 epidemic. Additionally, they can manage crises, act quickly when they arise, and recover successfully. By strengthening organizational resilience, the study found that small businesses were better able to handle the COVID-19 issue and meet or surpass the expectations of their current consumers. They also looked for creative ways to offer services to both existing and prospective customers.

These times see a rapid increase in technology use. The importance of economic health is equal to that of public health, as the COVID-19 epidemic has clearly demonstrated. Even if the financially secure and privileged minority may place a higher value on the latter aspect than the former, market conditions show that business operations must continue for most people to keep their jobs and exist. However, prior to the pandemic, the adoption of technology, which is crucial to economic growth and development, was one of the most significant issues facing economies and civilizations all over the world since change can be challenging and results in resistance. However, the pandemic may have expanded use of technology (and related social behaviors, such as online or remotely living, studying, and working), as seen by e-commerce, mobile food delivery purchases, educational management systems, and teleconference or video-conferencing tools).

2.8 Research Gaps

The chapter identifies a variety of research shortcomings. The first benefit is that it increases our understanding of resilience and crisis management, two areas that are just beginning to scratch the

foundations of a field in desperate need of more concrete evidence (Hällgren *et al.*, 2018, p. 112). This research will contribute to the body of knowledge expanding in the field of crises research in disruptive conditions, which is still in its nascent stages in comparison to advancements in crisis and risky contexts (Hallgren *et al.*, 2018). Second, the study advances methodologically in the examination of crises other than the frequently occurring significant catastrophic events in industry (Roux-Dufort, 2007). Third, there is little study on highly destabilizing events in the context of small businesses (Sydnor *et al.*, 2017). Finally, by offering managerial perspectives into how they could activate adaptive resilience, the findings may aid small businesses in understanding, navigating, and recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic. Some business owners are effectively adjusting to the new environment and running successful businesses despite the global epidemic.

This section examines a summary of the found research gaps. This chapter has indicated the following specific research gaps that need to be filled in future studies in addition to the previously mentioned factors.

2.8.1 Contextual gap

SME-focused resilience research in Nigeria should be prioritized in future research since it aids in confirming the idea of organizational resilience and studying its linkages with identified antecedent elements. Furthermore, the suggested dynamic model of organizational resilience can be explored in the context of small and medium-sized firms (SMEs), because certain contextual and structural level elements associated with SMEs are distinct and distinct from larger organizations (Pal *et al.*, 2014). As a result, it will be essential to investigate the process through which SMEs might build higher degrees of dynamic resilience capabilities.

That is, an interview-based strategy will be used to produce more generally applicable empirical findings. This will aid in the clarification of ambiguous issues such as development of strategic vision and contextual understanding. A very limited amount of literature has addressed practical strategies that may improve the resilience of SMEs. Thus, this research will focus on discovering issues relating to entrepreneurship skills and management of SMEs during the COVID-19.

2.8.2 Methodological gap

Resilience research with a clear SME focus is relatively new, further research is yet possible. Qualitative research adds value as it is used to understand the emotions and thoughts of individuals, providing valuable insights that may inform future research endeavors. By focusing on individuals' experiences and perceptions, qualitative research can provide a rich and detailed understanding of a particular phenomenon, which can then inform the design and implementation of subsequent research. Its primary purpose is to provide insights into human behavior, beliefs, and attitudes through the collection of non-numerical data. By conducting qualitative research, researchers can gain a more nuanced understanding of the complexities of human experience, which can ultimately inform more effective interventions, policies, and programs.

Empirical studies on resilience are required; there is a lack of empirical study on the resilience of SMEs. This is novel given the recent crises' survival-testing nature for firms (and especially for the more vulnerable SMEs) and the crucial role that smaller companies play in economies. Small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) continue to play a significant role in the economies of many nations despite complicated and escalating economic upheavals. Kantur and Say (2015) claim that theories of crisis and disaster (usually focusing on discrete conditions) have dominated the resilience of organizations studies in the business and management area.

2.8.3 Conceptual gap

Despite rising and complex economic disruptions, small and medium-sized firms (SMEs) play an important part in many countries' economies. Understanding their resilience is turning into a priority for maximizing these businesses' efforts to boost the economies of the nations. (Chowdhury *et al.*, 2022). Resilience is a characteristic that business organizations must possess to face the increasing complexity of situations (Kantur and Say, 2015). Even though research on small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) and general management has frequently used the notion of resilience, nothing has been done to establish the concept's veracity. Prior studies on business resilience have tended to concentrate on large enterprises, with the understanding that results will probably be applicable to the SME setting (Ates and Bititci, 2011). A high priority has been placed on organizational resilience in prior research due to the discrete nature of shocks in the developed world. Although the food and beverage industry, pharmaceutical industry, and telecommunication industry are recognized as being particularly sensitive industries in which to operate a business of a SME size, little research has been done on the company's resilience in the face of numerous and repeated challenges. The environment's resource constraints have also made many SMEs more susceptible to disturbances (Page and Söderbom, 2015). According to Branzei and Abdelnour (2010), while some SMEs are quite robust in their surroundings, the majority only function at a survival level and usually fail.

2.9 Research Question

The following are the research questions for this study:

- a. How did the pandemic affect entrepreneurial SMEs?
- b. How did SMEs go about resilience -building before and during the pandemic?

- c. What core capabilities did entrepreneurial SMEs rely on during this period of liminality?
- d. What factors or core capabilities helped Entrepreneurial SMEs to return to a stable state after the pandemic?

2.9.1 Research Aim and Objectives

The aim of this research is to investigate the impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on small business resilience. Other specific objectives of the study include:

- a. **To investigate the impact of the pandemic on entrepreneurial SMEs:** COVID-19 pandemic caused a critical disruption in the operation of SMEs around the world. In fact, many SMEs were forced to shut down because of the poor flow of finances. Thus, this study will explore some of the ways which the pandemic has affected the entrepreneurial SMEs.
- b. **To explore how SMEs went about liminality resilience before and during the pandemic:** SMEs that were able to survive during the pandemic did do by building a resilience culture. Such businesses were able to adapt to the new business environment, which presented them with numerous opportunities over the long run. Understanding the importance of resilience to business survival, this research investigates how SMEs were able to build resilience before and during the pandemic.
- c. **To critically analyze the core capabilities which entrepreneurial SMEs rely on during this period of liminality:** Building resilience in SMEs is dependent on the core capabilities of the business. There are no generally acceptable core capabilities as every business has

its own unique capabilities. Therefore, this research explores some of the most common core capabilities that entrepreneurial SMEs relied on during the pandemic.

- d. **To investigate the factors or core capabilities that helped Entrepreneurial SMEs to return to a stable state after the pandemic:** The Post-Covid periods have seen many businesses return to a stable state with many international observers predicting a return to the normal state of operations. There is no doubt that the pandemic resulted in some changes among businesses. Thus, this study will explore the core capabilities which SMEs relied on to return to a state of normal after the pandemic.

2.9.2 Scope of the Research

This research investigates COVID-19 pandemic and small business resilience. The study explores how small businesses were affected by the pandemic and how they went about building resilience before, during, and after the pandemic. This study adopts qualitative research methodology and makes use of interviews as the main tool for data collection. A total of six interviews are conducted among three small businesses in Lagos Nigeria (see chapter three for details). These interviews are semi-structured, thus giving room for the discovery of new phenomena while remaining focused on the research objectives. Seeing that the researcher resides in the Ireland, Microsoft Teams was used to conduct the interview.

2.9.3 Significance of the Study

The result of this research will be useful in a variety of ways. Firstly, the findings of the study will aid governments and policy makers in developing public policies that would assist in responding to crisis within the business environment. Furthermore, the findings would be useful to business owners as it would keep them better informed on the development of capacities like resilience

building and skill building among employees for recovery. Although there has been a bulk of studies that sought to investigate the impact of disaster on SMEs and the strategies developed by the SMEs to cope with these disasters, most of these existing studies have only focused on natural disasters like flood and earthquakes. However, this study focuses on the COVID-19 pandemic and the disruptions associated with it. This current crisis is worth studying because of its global impact on the global economy and its unpredictable nature of implications.

2.10 Summary

Researchers acknowledge the significance of SME's entrepreneurial capabilities for external events like the COVID-19 crisis, which happened at a time of liminality for the SME. The first section focused on small businesses. According to the theoretical study of small business operations, the owners, clients, and staff are the most important stakeholders in every organization, regardless of size. Customer acquisition and retention are crucial factors in always defining an organization's resilience, but especially as small businesses are confronted by crisis events and occurrences (Hawkins and Hoon, 2020). Also, it highlighted CB Insight's list of causes for small business failure.

Dynamic capabilities like innovation, bricolage, and resilience are important for external events like the COVID-19 crisis, which happened during a period of liminality for the SME; entrepreneurial capabilities such as entrepreneurial reflexivity, entrepreneurial intent, and entrepreneurial performance became the second step in the literature review.

The third step in the literature study was to understand how liminality affects entrepreneurial firms and how they might become resilient. Liminality can be induced by both internal (lack of managerial skills, EO, and network change) and external reasons (shocks to the environment like

economic, political, and social shocks). Evaluating the interaction impacts of numerous factors and resources for bolstering business resilience is crucial (Lengnick-Hall *et al.*, 2011; Tognazzo *et al.*, 2016). Few researchers (Gunasekaran *et al.*, 2011) have examined the interaction impacts of several factors on the resilience of SMEs. A few academics have investigated the interplay between EO and other company resources and their effects on business success (Rauch *et al.*, 2009; Donbesuur, Boso and Hultman, 2020). While EO can influence the financial success of a company directly, other resources strengthen the association between EO and business success (Wales *et al.*, 2013). While small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that perform effectively due to the interaction effects of resources in one setting may not be resilient in other circumstances, Chu (2015) emphasizes the necessity to study interaction effect.

The COVID-19 crisis, which struck when the SME was in a transitional state and is the focus of the literature review, put entrepreneurial abilities, notably resilience, to the test. As a result, SMEs must understand liminality in Covid-19 and the importance of resilience-building. There hasn't been much research on how resilient small businesses are to calamities like the current COVID-19 outbreak. Fostering a short-term opportunistic competitive advantage strategy rather than a long-term strategic advantage strategy, as well as a reactive rather than proactive attitude to the external environment (Westhead *et al.*, 2011).

CHAPTER THREE

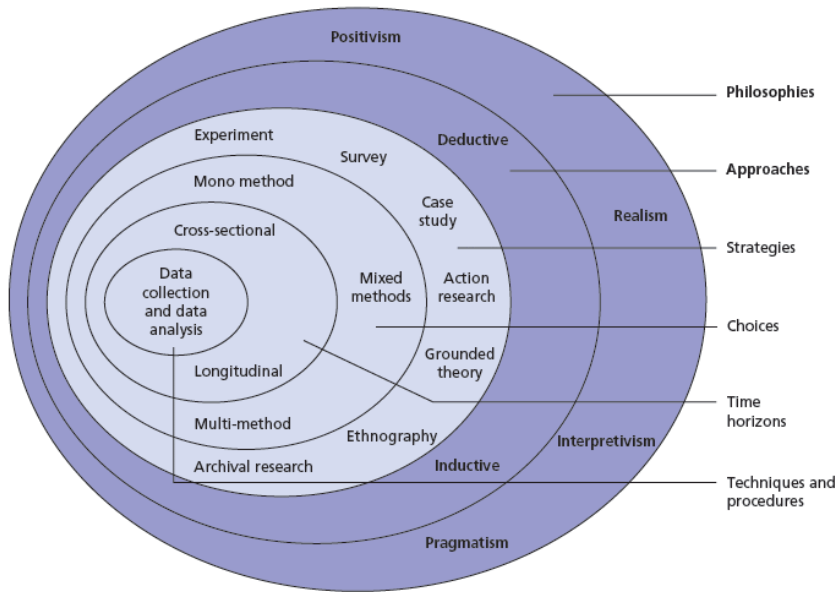
METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The methodology of a research study refers to the complete process and techniques that are utilized by the researcher to achieve the objectives of the study. It encompasses all aspects of the research process, including the frameworks and approaches used to collect and analyze data. The selection of an appropriate methodology is crucial for ensuring that the research is reliable and generally accepted within the academic community. A well-designed methodology provides a systematic and rigorous approach to conducting research. It outlines the procedures and techniques that will be used to collect and analyze data and ensures that the research is conducted in a systematic and logical manner. By following an appropriate methodology, researchers can ensure that their research is accurate and unbiased, and that the results are reliable and valid.

The methodology of a research study plays a critical role in the success and credibility of the research. It provides a framework for conducting the study in a systematic and rigorous manner and ensures that the results are reliable and authentic. A research methodology, according to Newing (2011), is concerned with the approaches that will be used to accomplish goals and formulated research questions. Using qualitative methods of data gathering, this study explores The Covid-19 Pandemic: Small Enterprise Resilience. This chapter will cover the philosophy, approach, strategy, choice, time horizon, data collection and data analysis. The methodology was drafted using Saunders *et al.*, (2013) research onion.

Figure 3. Saunders Research Onion



3.2 Research Philosophy

Research philosophy can be defined as the fundamental beliefs and assumptions that underlie a researcher's approach to a particular study. As noted by Saunders (2009), research philosophy is crucial because it shapes the way in which a researcher approaches the development of knowledge and the nature of knowledge itself. In essence, research philosophy provides the foundation upon which the research is built. Having a clear research philosophy is essential for conducting academic research as it helps to guide the researcher's approach and methodology. By defining their beliefs and assumptions, researchers are better able to design their study and make informed decisions about the methods and techniques they will use to collect and analyze data.

Research philosophy also plays a vital role in shaping the interpretation of research findings. By being transparent about their philosophical stance, researchers can provide a context for their results, which enhances the credibility and validity of their findings. Research philosophy is a crucial element of academic research. It serves as the foundation upon which the study is built, guiding the researcher's approach and methodology. By defining their beliefs and assumptions,

researchers can ensure that their study is well-designed and that their findings are credible and valid. Without credible research philosophy, the research findings will be highly disputed. However, an adequate research philosophy enhances the credibility of the research findings, further enhancing their logic and cohesion with the research objectives. Therefore, adopting a research philosophy for this research is essential to critically adopt frameworks for achieving the research objectives. The research philosophy enhanced the credibility of the research, ensuring that the researcher achieved the research objectives that is studying how SMEs in Nigeria sufficiently navigated the COVID-19 pandemic further how entrepreneurship played a central role in aiding SMEs navigate the disruptive effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, and Lowe (2002), noted that there three reasons for adopting a research philosophy which are; to help understand and choose a relevant methodology which will be essential in gathering data to answer the research questions, secondly, to enable the researcher in comparing different types of methodologies, hence picking that which is appropriate for his/her research, and limiting the probability of using an unrelated and inappropriate methodology for his/her study. Finally, a good knowledge of research philosophies enables a researcher to be creative and exploratory in their research thereby contributing to knowledge more academically.

In contrast, interpretivism also utilizes empirical data, but it allows for a greater degree of subjectivity in analysis. This is because interpretivism seeks to understand intangible and unobservable phenomena, such as opinions, emotions, consciousness, and language. As noted by Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2002), interpretivism emphasizes the importance of human experiences and interests in the research process. Since human experiences are complex and subject to change, the interpretive approach provides more flexibility in incorporating subjective factors into the study of a phenomenon.

The primary distinction between these two research philosophies is that positivism is primarily used in natural sciences, whereas interpretivism is predominantly used in behavioral and management sciences.

To conduct this study, the research philosophy of interpretivism is being employed. This decision is because, as Penny (2014) explains, interpretivism is particularly effective in examining variables related to human behavior in the management and behavioral sciences. Despite its benefits, Bryman and Bell (2015), criticizes the interpretivist philosophy for not establishing causality. Indeed, the interpretivist methodology cannot establish a cause-and-effect relationship due to its data collection and sampling approach and processes. However, Collins and Hussey (2014) note that the interpretivist philosophy does not seek to establish causality, however, it does seek to explain variables in an in-depth and detailed format. The Interpretivist philosophy basically seeks to answer questions as “how and where, when and why?”.

Interpretivism suits this study as it focuses on “SMEs, entrepreneurship capabilities, business resilience and dynamic capabilities” allowing the researcher to understand engaging in the gathering of qualitative data. Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2002) noted that data gathered from interpretivism allows the researcher to understand the phenomena studied in a greater level of depth. All conceptual touch points in this study (SMEs, entrepreneurship capabilities, business resilience and dynamic capabilities) will thus be studied at great depths using the interpretivism philosophy. The Interpretivist philosophy studies not so tangible and observable phenomenon including opinions, consciousness, sentiments, and languages. This is essential to this study, since this study seeks to understand the opinions of entrepreneurs and their efforts at aiding their specific SMEs achieve dynamism, innovation, and bricolage especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, the research integrates aspects of human understanding and interest.

Interpretivist studies consider the dynamism of humans and thus provides flexibility to allow for more subjective approach towards understanding human phenomenon. Therefore, adopting an interpretivist philosophy is useful to this study, as the research seeks to understand SMEs within the context of human interactions, therefore explaining how entrepreneurs enabled their businesses to navigate and achieve resilience despite the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, since the data collected from interpretivism is better suited as it gathered information and data through in-depth and detail techniques (Blaxter, Hughes and Tight, 2010). This research, thus uses interpretivism to ensure that a study on SMEs and COVID-19 was carried out in the most reliable framework, therefore enhancing the overall authenticity of the research.

3.3 Research Approach

The research approach considers the frameworks for integrating the elements of the research into a simplified whole (Collins and Hussey, 2014). It focuses on how the researcher merges the questions, data collection and data analysis, thus the research approach is basically how the researcher interprets data (Creswell, 2014). The research approach answers questions, as “what do I gain from data?” “What is data telling me?” “How do I make sense of these data”. Based on these three forms of research approach exist that is deductive, inductive, and abductive. The deductive data considers general data and moves to specific conclusions that is general data to specific conclusions. Inductive considers specific data and gives general conclusions that is specific to general. Furthermore, the abductive approach merges both inductive and deductive, providing a balance between both.

This research however adopts the inductive approach. Creswell (2014), notes that the inductive approach is mostly used with Interpretivist studies, therefore providing more in-depth and detailed

evaluations of research phenomenon. Since, this research seeks to provide a more in-depth and detailed explanation of the role of entrepreneurship in SMEs dynamic and resilience during the COVID-19. Inductive approach is suitable for the study. Denscombe (2014), also note that inductive approach studies specific insights and makes general conclusions about the variable. This research studies specific insights including entrepreneurship skill, dynamic capabilities, bricolage, and liminality. Analyzing them with specific relationships to SMEs and further making general conclusions on the impact of these variables on SMEs survival during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The inductive approach has also been criticized in line with the Interpretivist philosophy. Alvesson and Skoldberg (2000), note that it was not ideal for establishing cause and effect relationship which should be the focus of academic studies. Furthermore, Blaxter, Hughes and Tight (2010) note that most inductive seek to create theories, however in general most inductive studies never create theories however only confirm existing theories. Reacting to this, Bryman, and Bell (2015) note that inductive approach seeks to establish patterns of relationship and not necessarily develop theories. Patterns of relationship provides explanation of associations between variables which is sufficient for academic inquiries (Collins and Hussey, 2014). Thus, this research adopts inductive approach to study the patterns of relationship that exist between entrepreneurship and SMEs survival during the COVID-19 pandemic.

3.4 Research Strategy

The research strategy is a methodical approach that ensures the research is conducted systematically and produces high-quality results that are suitable for academic purposes. It is a step-by-step plan that incorporates both the research philosophy and research design, as Beach and

Rasmus (2016) point out, and sets the research process in motion. The research strategy is thus a crucial aspect of completing the research process. It outlines the approach to data collection and specifies the type of data and procedure to be utilized in gathering information for the research, according to Collins and Hussey (2014).

By nature, the interpretivist philosophy argues for the collection of subjective, non-numerical and qualitative data. These data are collected through explanatory and narrative forms (Creswell, 2014). Non-numerical data is generally collected through interviews, focused-group discussion (FGD) or printed documents. For this, research interviews are used to collect opinions of entrepreneurs, therefore understanding specific skills which was essential in aiding them navigate the challenges of COVID-19.

According to Beach and Ramus (2016), the selection of a research strategy is based on determining the most appropriate approach to answering the research questions, which is derived from the research philosophy and research design. In this study, the interpretivism research philosophy and the descriptive research design support the gathering of primary data. To understand the specific skills that were crucial in helping entrepreneurs overcome the challenges posed by COVID-19, interviews - a primary source of data - were utilized.

The research strategy also considers, where data will be collected from. This include Case study research about SMEs in Nigeria, Denscombe (2014) notes that case study is either a group, organization, population, or a country. Thus, single case study and multiple case study. This research adopts multiple case study, as the data will be collected from several entrepreneurs, therefore understanding specific qualities and capabilities that enabled their impact in navigating challenges of the COVID-19. Multiple case study enhances collection of data from multiple areas,

therefore enabling researchers collect different data, which enables compare of data. Thus, this is essential to this study as it enhanced the researcher's knowledge on how entrepreneurs enhanced the survival of SMEs, by comparing the opinions of several entrepreneurs.

Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2002), notes that interpretivism supports more qualitative studies. Therefore, for this study, the qualitative method will be used. Qualitative technique relies on descriptive, narrative, and explanatory accounts and mainly collects data from interviews. The diagram below reveals an explanation of qualitative (the techniques used, its purpose, and subjects that can be studied using qualitative techniques).

3.5 Research choices

Numerical data (numbers) and non-numeric data (words, images, video clips and other similar material) are the main differences between quantitative and qualitative research methodologies (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). Numerical data is produced using a questionnaire, a method for collecting data, and graphs, a method for analyzing data for quantitative purposes. Non-numerical data is produced using interviews as a data collection method and data analysis methods including classifying data graphs. Either quantitative research or qualitative research or both can be used. Methodological choices and related strategies will also have an impact on the choice of time frame. The mono-qualitative method is part of the study design that has been implemented into this investigation's peripheral. The choice of mono-qualitative methods has been influenced specifically by the inclusion of interview approach in the research. The mono method involves using just one data collection technique, which is semi structured interviews for this research. With the use of interviews, the mono-qualitative design has been able to provide reliable information regarding small business resilience to shocks like COVID-19.

3.6 Time Horizon

Cross-sectional and longitudinal time horizons are two types of time horizons that are used in research, and they both primarily determine the time horizon for the study (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). The research question determines the time horizon. A cross-sectional time horizon is established for the study because interviews are for a short period of time. A flexible data activity plan was created for the study to successfully collaborate with all participants.

Cross-sectional studies are used to describe the occurrence of an event or to explain how factors interact in several organizations. Thus, cross-sectional studies provide specific information about what happens to a population by understanding what happens at a specific time. Thus, understanding the prevailing characteristics of variables on specific population. Using the cross-sectional study, the researcher was able to understand entrepreneurship capability within specific context.

A total of six online interviews were carried out and recorded, each lasting between 20 to 40 minutes. The interviews followed a one-on-one format between the researcher and the interviewee, where questions were asked, and answers were documented. The interview questions were designed based on the outcomes of the literature review, thus encompassing both contextual and theoretical aspects of SMEs, entrepreneurship capabilities, business resilience, and dynamic capabilities. The interview schedule used for the study is included in Appendix A and was created in accordance with existing literature.

3.7 Population and Sample Size

The population of this research includes where the data is collected from. Creswell (2014), notes that data should be collected from individuals who have direct interaction with the variables, thus

gaining accurate and adequate knowledge of the research variables. Denscombe, (2014), also notes that only those with direct interaction with research variables can give credible opinions and perspectives, thus ensuring that data collected was credible and reliable. Thus, since this research seeks to understand how entrepreneurship enhanced the survival of SMEs. The population of the study includes entrepreneurs who have SMEs, and a convenience sampling method was used. They were essential in providing adequate information concerning specific skills they used in navigating their SMEs through difficult and disruptive situations of the COVID-19. Entrepreneurs also provided knowledge concerning specific capabilities and dynamic factors needed for SMEs resilience. A total of 6 entrepreneurs were interviewed (see table below).

Table 1: Interview participants

S/N	PARTICIPANTS	ORGANISATION	DURATION	CHANNEL
1.	Participant One	Nuel Pharmaceuticals	26 minutes	MS Teams
2.	Participant Two	Nuel Pharmaceuticals	22 minutes	MS Teams
3.	Participant Three	Bake and Swallow	38 minutes	MS Teams
4.	Participant Four	Bake and Swallow	24 minutes	MS Teams
5.	Participant Five	Freedom secondary school	26 minutes	MS Teams
6.	Participant Six	Freedom secondary school	20 minutes	MS Teams

The sampling technique used was the convenience and judgemental sampling. Convenience and judgmental sample enable the sampling of people with direct relationship to the rich, further increasing the richness and credibility of data. This was essential as through the convenient and judgmental sampling the researcher was able to gain sufficient knowledge concerning SMEs, and entrepreneurship. Furthermore, Denscombe (2014) note that using convenience and judgemental sampling reduced issues of compelling participants to join the research, this enhanced the right treatment of participants. Thus, using the convenient and judgemental sampling the researcher did not compel any participant to join the research, but participants joined the research based on their free will. Appendix A contains the signed consent form by the participants.

3.8 Method of Data Analysis

Data analysis involves providing critical interpretations to data. Thus, gaining answers to the research questions and achieving the research objectives. The data analysis method for this research is the thematic approach. This is mainly used to interpret interviews (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2000). This research adapts the following specific steps. These include:

- Carrying out the interview via Microsoft Teams.
- Transcribing interviews, thus writing interviews to understand data.
- Coding interviews via the conceptual framework or popular responses
- Developing themes based on popular responses.
- Synthesizing themes with secondary literature, further comparing research findings with existing literature.
- Discussing themes under the relevant research objectives, therefore showing how themes achieved the research objectives.

The above methods were used in the analysis of the research data, the thematic approach ensured that data adequately was a product of interviews, this limits the criticism of the interviews which notes that data was easily manipulated.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

The observance of research ethics is crucial in any study as it determines the permissible and impermissible conduct during the research process, while also promoting the dependability and credibility of the research. The current study recognizes the significance of research ethics, as evidenced by the utilization of a written and signed consent form and information sheet. Prior to the interview, participants were sent consent forms via email, and signed copies were collected after the interview. Additionally, the study acknowledged the potential emotional impact on participants due to discussions around promoting resilience during the pandemic. To address this concern, the interview guide and questioning techniques were modified. Some ethics that were adhered to are;

1. The safety and voluntary participation of the interviewees were given utmost priority, as they were asked for their consent before being included in the study, and they were also informed that they could withdraw from the study at any point.
2. The researcher tried to minimize any personal prejudices or feelings that might have affected the study's outcome to maintain objectivity.
3. By correctly citing and crediting all used sources, the study would promote respect for intellectual property.

4. Adequate handling of data by ensuring that information is only gathered and kept for academic reasons.

3.10 Limitation of the Methodology

The research philosophy and, by extension, the data gathering tool, constitute a noteworthy technique limitation. The philosophy of interpretivism, which emphasizes subjectivity and flexibility, was used in this study. Subjectivity, however, prevents the accurate scientific measurement of a phenomenon.

Employing interpretivism as the research philosophy for this study poses a significant limitation, as it is a flexible philosophy that accommodates subjectivity, which does not allow for precise scientific measurement of phenomena. Consequently, the use of this philosophy may not enable the researcher to obtain scientific data on SMEs, entrepreneurship capabilities, business resilience, and dynamic capabilities. Nonetheless, the research acknowledges this potential limitation and will take necessary measures to ensure the reliability and validity of the data collected.

3.11 Summary

As the basis of the investigation, the researcher used interpretivism research philosophy, an inductive research approach, and an interview strategy. In addition, a mono qualitative design has been developed to obtain facts in the research. On the other hand, the performance of the online interview has been substantial in minimizing the quotient of bias from the research. The study used a deductive approach as it is related to humanities and emphasizes the value of subjective perceptions.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This section of the research presents, analyze, and discusses the findings of the research that was gathered from the staffs of Nuel Pharmaceuticals, Bake and Swallow, and Freedom Secondary School. Overall, the researcher interviewed six participants (two from each organization), asking them questions that brought the study closer to achieving its objectives. Participants were selected based on judgmental and convenience sampling, thus allowing the selection of participants with tangible knowledge on the topic. The researcher will keep the identity of participants anonymous to protect the privacy of the participants.

The researcher transcribed, collated, and synthesized the interviews based on the relevance of the response provided by the participants. For the sake of organization, the researcher will present the relevant responses in themes. Upon analysis of the interviews, some themes were discovered, and these themes would be discussed in detail below. Generally, the study focused on the impact of Covid-19 on small business resilience.

4.2 Theme One: Effects of Covid-19 on Small Business Resilience

Covid-19 pandemic dealt a huge blow on all business across the globe. Perhaps, it could be argued that SMEs were the most affected as many of them lost their competitive capacity and were unable to stay afloat through the period. The pandemic affected several aspects of small businesses including finances, operations, productivity and so forth. Results from the interviews discovered four major impacts of the pandemic on small business resilience. These includes financial

constraint, drop in productivity, transportation issues, and the disruption of organizational activities.

Findings One: Financial Constraint

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the global economy, and small businesses in Nigeria have not been spared. Many of these small businesses have been forced to shut down or reduce their operations due to the pandemic's effects, which have had far-reaching implications for their financial performance. Carter (2021) notes that the 54% of SMEs closure during the COVID-19 was failure to remodel their business to suit changing business patterns. Regardless of the reason behind the closure of SMEs during the pandemic, there is no doubt that it had much impact on SMEs compared to larger multinational corporations (MNCs) that possessed the financial capabilities and skill necessary for building resilience. In similar vein, Aas and Breunig (2017) observed that adjusting to dynamic challenges was significant to business thriving, as some challenges such as the COVID-19 totally changed business processes. Thus, companies that failed to adjust to such business challenges ended up shutting down. Also, many SMEs could not bear the financial constraints presented by the pandemic, hence their closure. The study investigated the financial constraints SMEs encountered during the pandemic, and the respondents noted that:

“I believe it really affected here in the sense that our sales dropped, the revenue as well dropped because people did not have access to drugs anymore, they could not come to purchase their drugs from the pharmacy regularly due to the restriction in movement generally as a whole” –

Respondent One – Nuel Pharmaceuticals

In the second case study, it was discovered that:

“Our flours come from perishable foods like plantain. Up to 70-80% perished so this constraint dealt a lot with the factory because even we coming to work was an issue, we could not get to work on time and we could not go home, this was at the beginning of the pandemic. So, all the raw materials we used for production perished at the beginning of the pandemic, that affected the company a lot” – **Respondent Three – Bake and Swallow**

The information gathered shows that COVID-19 pandemic resulted to a massive drop in sales of Nuel Pharmaceuticals, and this had a far-reaching effect on the revenue generation capabilities of the company, as the lockdown measure hindered them from visiting the pharmacy to purchase drugs. This situation further threatens the resilience of the business, as Wedawatta *et al.*, (2010) observed that the physical and financial capital of a company’s internal characteristics is crucial in building organizational resilience. Contrary to this, respondents from Freedom secondary school observed that despite the closure of schools during the pandemic, there was still demand for their services, as parents wanted the continuous education of their children. This indicates that the COVID-19 pandemic did not necessarily result in a drop in the demand of services for all industries. In fact, some industries like the pharmaceuticals had higher demands for their products or services as observed by respondent two, but the core constraint was developing a channel for the successful supply of these products and services. Hence, the lack of a fully functional method of service delivery resulted in the poor financial performance exhibited by these small businesses.

Regardless of the argument above, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the demand for products and services cannot be overlooked, as the respondents from both Nuel Pharmaceuticals and Bake and Swallow observed a drop in the demand of their products. Some of the respondents stated that the drop in the demands for products can be attributed to the restrictions on movement, and this affected the financial performance of the organizations.

As a result of the poor financial performance which these small businesses faced during the pandemic, some of the businesses were unable to provide workers with full pay, hence requested that some workers remained at home. Contrary to this, the interview revealed that the businesses in this study attempted to ease the impact of the pandemic for their staffs by providing full pay for employees that stayed at home. This further incurred more financial strain for the participating organizations. All these extra expenses caused some of the business to look toward increasing the price of their products or services. This is observed in Freedom secondary schools where respondent six observed that:

“I know there would be the backend of it where parents are asked to make some form of payment for the logistics that has to come going online and holding classes online because we need data for the number of hours the person is going to teach” – **Respondent Six – Freedom Secondary School**

This discovery is synonymous to the argument raised by RSA (2022) that one million businesses agreed that rising cost was a significant challenge to growth and expansion of SMEs, this is due to inflation, insurance cost, raw materials, low demand of products and services and further general business cost. Aside the increased cost of operations and drop in demands, Respondent three and four from Bake and Swallow offered another way which small businesses were financially impacted by the pandemic. According to them, the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in the loss of raw materials due to reduced demands of products. Bake and Swallow makes use of perishable materials in the creation of its products, therefore, at the beginning of the pandemic, many of its raw materials had to go to waste. Respondent three observed that about 70-80% of its available raw materials went to waste. This experience made the business reduce the quantity of raw materials it purchased at a time.

Respondents five and six also provided another way which the pandemic affected the finances of small businesses. They observed that Freedom Secondary School took up the initiative to continue its operations during the pandemic via various social media platforms. This resulted in extra expenses for the school management who had to provide extra allowance for data subscription and acquisition of technological tools. Respondent six noted that the use of these technologies required additional cost on the school management, which most probably extended the cost to the parents via fee increment.

The financial impact of the pandemic on small business cannot be overemphasized. SMEs were usually the most effected in terms of business disruptions and disturbances, for instance the COVID-19 led to a closure of 1.9 million SMEs (BusinessDay, 2023). McGuinness and Johnson (2014) argue that the financial situation of a small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) before to an economic downturn is more significant than the company's age or size in assessing the impact of the crisis on the SME. In times of economic depression, financially challenged SMEs are found to increasingly rely on trade credit as a replacement for bank financing to maintain their enterprises. Hence, there is no doubt that the pandemic dealt a significant blow to the financial performance small business across the globe and the shockwaves are still felt even long after the pandemic.

Findings Two: Drop in Productivity

The interviews revealed that another impact of the pandemic on small business was a drop in productivity. As a result of the restriction in movement, the supply chain of many businesses was placed on an indefinite halt. Many small businesses significantly relied on imports for raw materials and finished goods, however with the closure of borders and decreased trade among

nations, small businesses were unable to acquire materials and technologies needed to boost their production. Data gathered from respondents at Nuel Pharmaceuticals and Bake and Swallow shows a serious dependence on importation of raw materials. Respondent two from Nuel Pharmaceutical emphasized that the international restriction limited the business's ability to access materials, hence hindering its production capabilities.

“Most of the materials we use are being imported and during the pandemic the countries were facing restriction and it was not easy to get most of the materials we needed and that affected production which led to us reducing our volume of production” – Respondent Two – Nuel Pharmaceuticals

Also, respondent from Bake and Swallow observed that:

“Moreover, we were mostly going to the open market to buy our raw materials then go back and produce, there was no storage because our foods are meant to be fresh. That is how it affected us” – Respondent Three – Bake and Swallow

The researcher deduced that the restriction of movement imposed across the globe during the pandemic hindered the supply chain of small businesses. They could no longer had access to imported materials for production, neither were the local markets opened for them to get raw materials needed for production and this significantly affected their production rate. Steyaert (2005) contends that entrepreneurship should be seen as a border-zone rather than a restricted area. He sees this border-zone as a "fertile middle area, a heterotopic region for different thinking". Hence, the restrictions places on SMEs during the pandemic had serious impacts on their productivity. In addition to the lack of access to raw materials, the productivity of small business during the COVID-19 pandemic was further decreased because of a decline in demand for goods

and services since many consumers reduced their spending due to the economic uncertainty caused by the pandemic.

Evidence from the interviews also showed that a major reason behind the decreased productivity of businesses during the pandemic was the disruption experienced within the workforce. As earlier observed, many businesses had to reduce the number of workers that were physically present in a bid to adhere to the social distancing regulation suggested by the government and World Health Organization (WHO). This was the case in Nuel Pharmaceuticals and Bake and Swallow. Because of the risk associated with contact, and to adhere to the regulations implemented by the government, these businesses had to cut down the number of staff that was physically present at work. However, a different scenario was observed at Freedom Secondary School, as respondent five stated that the school needed more workers to help manage the number of students. In fact, he mentioned that the school had to call back teachers that had earlier resigned. This was done with the intention of reducing the number of children allocated to one teacher, hence maintaining a less congested classroom.

“Even those who submitted their resignation letter even before then, they were now called back because this pandemic was very crazy, you know people had planned to resign from school before then, but at that point in time, even people working with the state government were called back”.

Respondent Five- Freedom Secondary School

The findings of the study present contrasting views. On the one hand, it is seen that by cutting down the workforce to limit the spread of the virus, small businesses were able to reduce the risk of contamination and virus spread, however such businesses had to suffer a deficiency in their level of production. However, on the other hand, it is seen that by increasing the number of

workers, Freedom Secondary School was able to reduce the chances of contamination, while also enhance productivity. It is against this backdrop that the research concludes that the impact of workers on productivity of small businesses was dependent on the context which the organization operated.

Globally, the pandemic required many workers to stay at home. COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted the productivity of small businesses.

Findings Three: Transportation

Transportation is very essential to every business as it enables the maximization of transaction and procedures. This means that through effective transportation, businesses can acquire and sell more product while decreasing the cost per unit. Evidence drawn from the interviews show transportation as another key constraint that small businesses had to endure during the pandemic.

“In as much as some staffs are staying closer to the company some still needed to enter transportation to come to work” – Respondent Two – Nuel Pharmaceuticals

Similarly, respondent four observed that:

“So, the pandemic has its own toll on us, it was really hard because we deal on perishables and most of our raw materials got spoilt due to lack of transportation for our workers to come to work and start production ... I did mention that our workers do not stay close to our facility, so they had to transport themselves from their various houses to come to work and movement was restricted. So, them getting transport was very difficult because there was restriction on movement that is one” - Respondent Four

From the above, it is seen that Nuel Pharmaceuticals and Bake and Swallow had issues with transportation. They observed that the proximity between their workplace and their homes was quite a distance, and the business had to make provisions for accommodating core staff very close to the place of operation. The transportation issues during the pandemic were evident in diverse ways. First, the lack of transportation disrupted the supply chain at Nuel Pharmaceuticals, and Bake and Swallow, thus leading to extra cost for the businesses. This increases the cumulative cost of production over the long run, hence leading to a rise in the price of goods and services. Finally, the most evident impact of transportation on small businesses during the pandemic was the difficulty workers faced in reaching workplace:

“Workers are the most essential tools in the production” – **Respondent Two – Nuel Pharmaceuticals**

The inability of workers to reach their workplace limited the overall performance of the businesses. However, the staff of Freedom Secondary School was not restricted by transportation as they resided close to the school. This issue of transportation was not captured in the review of literature, as many existing literatures focused on the financial impact of the pandemic. This makes the transportation effect of the pandemic a new discovery.

Findings Four: Disruption of Organizational Activities

Heredia *et al.*, (2022) note that businesses constantly experienced discontinuities and disruptions. Disruptions posed a severe threat to organizational continuation. Furthermore, Wiener (2018) notes that business disruptions were significant reasons why businesses fail. Although all businesses within this study were able to operate during the pandemic, there is no doubt that their mode of operations was optimized to suit the new reality they found themselves. Respondent five

emphasized on how the outbreak of the virus disrupted the school calendar of Freedom Secondary School.

“We had to lockdown our activities. That period, I think we were about to write our exams in school...The students were still preparing for their exams when the outbreak over here in Lagos was very terrible, so instruction from the government was like we had to vacate the school” –

Respondent Five – Freedom Secondary School

While the academic calendar was often designed at the start of the term, the school found it difficult to adhere to the calendar due to the outbreak of the pandemic. Several events were rescheduled, and some students found themselves taking longer time to complete their academic activities. He cited an instance where graduating students had to wait some extra months to complete their academic session. He further mentioned that the school still feels the impact of this disruption despite being in the post-pandemic era, as the school calendar is yet to be balanced. In the case of Nuel Pharmaceuticals, and Bake and Swallow, the major disruption observed as in their mode of operations and reduced staff capacity, especially since the businesses had to adopt the use of technologies.

4.3 Theme Two: Core Capabilities of Small Businesses during the Pandemic

Koryak, et al (2015) reveals that business capabilities can result in companies' performance being thoroughly enhanced. Therefore, businesses that sought to gain capabilities that were valuable, rare, less imitable, and can be integrated into company's operations. It is important to note that there are no generally accepted core capabilities and every business has its distinctive capabilities. Each of the small business that participated in this study had its core capabilities.

“like I said we are health care oriented so we have always practiced good manufacturing process which are things like having to do with cleanliness, sanitizing of the hands, washing of the hands before you go into the work premises, so this culture has already been imbedded in majority of our staffs and during work you always put on your PBE that is your protective body equipment which also constitute of the nose mask and the google itself, so it gave us a better chance like we were even prepared before the pandemic because our work procedure had to do with things that needed you to be careful during the COVID-19” – Respondent One – Nuel Pharmaceuticals

The core capabilities of Nuel Pharmaceutical are summarized into the company’s health and safety orientation, and that the ability of employees to quickly adapt to the new reality further enhanced the operations of the business during the pandemic. A corporation with superior management achieves superior business results (Page and Soderbom, 2015). Similarly, in organizations with a high level of employee participation, company resilience was rated well despite the presence of chaotic circumstances (Lampel *et al.*, 2014). This indicates the importance of employees in resilience building as they give the business a competitive advantage within the global market. The respondents from Nuel Pharmaceuticals observed that the management had tremendous impact on developing their safety consciousness.

On the other hand, the core capabilities at Bake and Swallow were different from what was obtainable at Nuel Pharmaceuticals. The respondents from this business observed that their core capability was found in their product.

“Our core capability is producing throughout without any form of preservatives, as in all our products are natural and were produced using natural preservative methods and no chemical or any form of external preservative is added. So, what you buy is a naturally preserved product that

is 100% healthy for the body and does not give out all these cancerous toxins that are common in the society today” – Respondent Three – Bake and Swallow

As a business, Bake and Swallow was able to provide products that were natural and shunned chemical preservations. Respondent three argues that this unique feature of the business made it stand out among other competitors. Respondent four added that another core capability of the company is its continuous interest in developing its facilities, citing that the company improved its storage facility during the pandemic to aid production.

Finally, the core capabilities identified in Freedom Secondary School includes dogged management, and its ability to embrace change.

“I think we have very good and dogged management because we know some schools that had to like close down or the Lagos state government had to close down that period because they weren’t able to meet up with the expectations of what you have to comply with in order to survive the pandemic and the current situation...because we were able to switch very quickly from our conventional style of being in person to learn to them, should I call it the modernized way of learning now.” Respondent Five – Freedom Secondary School

Participants from Freedom secondary school noted that they were able to remain open because of a well coordinate management team that ensured the adherence to government regulation. Also, he observed that the school has developed a system that was expectant of change and willing to adapt to it quickly. Upon review of the core capabilities of each business, results further confirms the argument of Michell (2011) who expressed that capability was a generic potential and ability of businesses which may be seen in the overall operations or just a section or part of the business. Regardless of the differences in the core capabilities of businesses, each business core capabilities

were useful in building resilience during the pandemic. In the case of Nuel Pharmaceuticals, the business's emphasis on health and safety throughout the process of production proved useful in ensuring adherence during the pandemic. Since staffs were already trained in sanitary protocols, keeping up with the COVID-19 safety guidelines became an easy task for employees and this made the business more resistant during the pandemic. At Bake and Swallow, the unique product offering and zeal to improve production facilities allowed the business to stand out from its competitors while also easing the stress of production through improved equipment. This unique feature of the business created more demand for its products, thus ensuring the continuous survival of the business during the pandemic. Finally, through proactive management, Freedom secondary school was able to build resilience during the pandemic by always making plans for unforeseen circumstances. The management has always prepared for uncertainties within its business environment, thus when COVID-19 struck, the school was able to implement strategies that kept the business running while others were forced to shut down. The result also shows that these capabilities can improve the business level of preparedness and ability to adapt to new conditions.

The researcher however argues that business core capabilities might not be enough to build resilience. There is a need to ensure that employees are adequately motivated as a huge chunk of the business prosperity rests on their performance and dedication to the business. The respondents revealed that their organizations made provision for incentives and palliatives during the pandemic, and this was able to motivate them to perform better. At Freedom secondary school, the management provided data subscription to staff since lectures were conducted online. They also made increments to the salaries as a way of appreciating the workers for their efforts. Participants collectively agreed that this form of welfare by the business further improved their dedication to the business.

4.4 Theme Three: Role of Technologies in Mitigating the Effect of Covid-19 on Small Businesses

Covid-19 pandemic has affected almost every small business in the world, as many continue to struggle to stay afloat due to a decrease in demand, disruption of supply chain, and widespread lockdown. However, many businesses managed to survive the pandemic with the aid of technology, thus helping them adapt to the changing circumstance and reaching new customers across the globe. The interviews provide significant evidence in the impact of technology on small businesses.

Nuel Pharmaceuticals made use of technology in a variety of ways. First, the company used technology to modify its operations, thus reducing the number of workers physically needed for production.

“non-contact system (NCS) which in this production line does not need personnel or rather it requires little staffs where we use to have 10-20 staffs work we had to reduce to 2-3 staffs just to operate the equipment from the PLC that’s the program logic control button” – Respondent One – Nuel Pharmaceuticals

It was also noted that:

“The issue of technology before the pandemic most of the meetings were done physically but during the pandemic, it became impossible for us to be having some physical meetings, so we now made use of online meetings; zoom, to communicate with one another. We were able to utilize that aspect of ICT. It really helped us to think of improving our ICT unit” – Respondent Two – Nuel Pharmaceuticals. The interviews show the development of a system known as the ‘non-contact system (NCS) which was able to reduce the number of workers by almost 80%. Through this

system, the business requires less employee presence, yet operations were conducted smoothly. Furthermore, Nuel Pharmaceuticals was able to use technologically aided platforms to conduct staff meetings. Hence, all operations were conducted, only through different methods. While customer demands were basically an external factor, without internal modifications, customer satisfaction cannot be achieved. Thus, Tega (2017) notes that companies should constantly re-evaluate their existing and emerging capabilities, further increasing their relevant designs, investment, and technologies. Nuel Pharmaceutical's use of technology served as a solution to the challenges that would have otherwise been presented by the pandemic. Thus, Nuel Pharmaceuticals as well as other small businesses were able to build resilience during the pandemic by using technology to continue their operations.

Bake and Swallow's use of technology was not farfetched from what was obtainable at Nuel Pharmaceuticals and Freedom secondary school. At Bake and Swallow, the business was able to utilize technology in improving its efficiency.

“Ok, let me quickly use an example of the dryer, we had a five trays dryer before which the capacity was increased to ten trays, we had the same space but with the local fabricators the engineers were able to increase it from five trays to ten trays because now like I said earlier our production increased.” – Respondent Three – Bake and Swallow

Respondent four also mentioned that:

“Our machines like our industrial dryer used to be five trays we called our engineer to increase it to 10 trays, if we were producing 100kg per day before it increased to 200kg per day. This was as a result of technology... We found out that using this storage method the plantains last up to a week and we are 100% sure that we can exhaust them” – Respondent Four

The respondents revealed that during the pandemic, the business upgraded most of its equipment and this improved its production capacity. Thus, the reduction in the number of physical staff did not affect the productivity of the business. This is synonymous to the argument raised by Teece (2007) who noted that reconfiguring the resource base of the organization as it constantly grew was also another strategy for ensuring that a company remained dynamic. There is no doubt that technology played a huge role in ensuring the continuity of businesses during the pandemic. The results of this study further buttressed the popular claim the technology is a useful tool for improving productivity in organizations.

Technology was also useful at Freedom secondary school. The respondent observed that the school was able to utilize technology in conducting online classes. Therefore, the pandemic did not halt the learning process.

“We were able to embrace technology, so it was quite easy now passing down this knowledge and lecturing and teaching students from their homes.” – **Respondent Five – Freedom Secondary School**

The school made use of WhatsApp platform to provide learning resources to students while holding live class through zoom or other video aided platforms. This use of technology placed Freedom secondary school ahead of many competitors that had to shut down during the pandemic. Freedom secondary school use of technology to communicate with students, parents, and teachers. The increased usage of these tools has further motivated the increased development of more technologically aided communication tools. Nowadays, People can stay connected in innovative ways without the need for physical contact. Despite the importance of technology in Freedom secondary school, respondent five noted that the management would have shown better innovation

by developing a platform dedicated to online learning for the school, rather than using third party applications like WhatsApp that puts the school, students, and teachers at risk of data loss. He also noted that the use of technology in learning process has continued even in the post-COVID periods, and the school can adopt a mix of both physical and online learning. This shows that lasting effects on technology on businesses and the importance of adaptability in building resilience in small businesses.

Aside the impact technology had on the businesses reviewed in this research, studies have also show that technology served as a useful tool for businesses to reach their customers during the pandemic. While many physical stores were required to close or reduce capacity due to restrictions placed by government, small businesses were still able to adopt online sales as a lifeline to stay afloat. While many small businesses were reliant on in-person sales, the pandemic saw many businesses develop online stores to ensure that they continue to operate. Furthermore, while the respondents identified that supply chain disruption was among the biggest constraint they encountered during the pandemic, especially Nuel Pharmaceuticals that imported raw materials, the business was able to develop new ways of managing their inventory and sourcing through the aid of technology. They were also able to remain connected with various social media and communication applications like Facebook, WhatsApp, Zoom, Google Meet and so forth. These allowed the business stay connected with staffs and customers, while also allowing the promotion of products and services, and building relationship with customers, despite the closure of physical stores.

4.5 Theme Four: Opportunities Presented by Covid-19 for Small Businesses

From the responses collated, the research found that despite the negative impact of Covid-19 on small businesses, it has also presented businesses with opportunities of expansion and growth. The

change in the dynamics of operations has caused businesses to explore new ways of conducting their businesses.

The respondents from Nuel Pharmaceuticals noted that some of the opportunities presented to the company by the outbreak of Covid-19 include the exposure to new business ideas and increased levels of preparedness.

“During the pandemic we were tasked with providing parenteral solutions like infusions, daily use in treating the patient, we did not look in that direction before it was during the pandemic we started the parenteral infusion session and it was worth trying as it is a fully automated production system from get-go, from input of production material to output of production material and Nuel pharma is investing heavily in it, we have not lunched it yet but we are hoping very soon as time will appeal to us we would because we are taking our time.” – **Respondent One – Nuel Pharmaceuticals**

“Definitely there were business opportunities because during the pandemic we started off on a new product which is hand sanitizers because that was what people needed at that time and we had the materials to produce it, so we got approvals from the regulatory bodies, and we were able to make use of the opportunity during the pandemic – **Respondent Two – Nuel Pharmaceuticals**

The respondents observed that the pandemic opened the opportunity for Nuel Pharmaceuticals to look towards a fully automated system that would cut down the time of production and enhance efficiency. Furthermore, respondent two pointed out that the pandemic allowed Nuel Pharmaceuticals to enter the production of hand sanitizers which further improved the company’s profitability. It also makes the company more prepared for future uncertainties.

Bake and Swallow also identified that the pandemic opened some opportunities for the business, especially in facility improvement.

“Actually, as a supervisor I will say is just the opportunity of improving our facilities and learning new ways of storing our raw materials, if not for the pandemic we would not have come up with such ways. This are the ways I can speak of” – Respondent Three

Respondent four also mentioned that:

“The National Agency for Food and Drug Control in Nigeria NAFDAC gave opportunity to small and micro scale companies or businesses like us to be able to register more products with their supervision. So, we were able to register more products thereby increasing our products from 2-3 products to five products which are doing very well in the market and with the COVID-19 we were able to know that we can also sell directly aside from taking to the stores. We were also able to on a very small-scale export some of our products to places like the U.S, Saudi Arabia, so I think the business opportunity that COVID-19 created for us is quite ok and we are still working on how to move forward” – Respondent Four

During the pandemic, the business was able to improve its facilities to combat the effects of the pandemic. Respondent three noted that the pandemic allowed Bake and Swallow to device new methods of operations. Respondent four added that the business has been able to increase its product portfolio add new range of products to its existing catalog. This presented the business with the opportunity for expansion even in the post-covid periods.

Respondents from Freedom secondary school stated that the pandemic provided the school with the opportunity of adapting to a new method of operations. Respondent five tagged this as the ‘hybrid’ method of learning, where the school combines both the conventional method of

delivering lessons with online method. This eases stress for the teachers and inculcate technological knowledge in the children from a young age. Furthermore, this new system of learning improved the business level of preparedness for similar disasters in the future.

There is no doubt that small businesses were tremendously affected by the impact of the pandemic, and these businesses had to adjust to the new trends to maintain their operations. However, these businesses were presented with new business ideas, opportunities of expansion and new techniques of operations as evident in the case studies above. Hence, business resilience is very vital in the growth of every small business.

4.6 Overall Discussion

The research made some interesting discoveries concerning the impact of COVID-19 on small businesses. Some of the findings in the study were new, while others were supported arguments in existing literatures. Overall, the findings of this study agreed with existing arguments in the literature review. While the literature review argued that the pandemic affected small businesses in dynamic ways, this study discovered that some of the most common impact of the pandemic on small businesses includes financial constraint, drop in productivity, transportation, and disruption in operations. These findings were supported by literature such as Abdelgawad *et al.*, (2013) and Xie and Haung (2014). They argued that the pandemic limited the efficiency of small businesses which had to develop new ways to cope with the new business landscape.

Another essential discovery which this study made was that during the pandemic, small businesses were able to improve their productivity and efficiency with technology. The role of technology during the pandemic cannot be overemphasized. In fact, it can be argued that without technology, many small businesses would have been forced to shut down. However, technological tools like

social media, IoT, AI etc. made it possible for small businesses to continue operations in the phase of the pandemic. Finally, the study discovered that the pandemic created new business opportunities for small businesses to expand their product offerings and increase their reach to customers.

Overall, it can be concluded that despite the effects of the pandemic on small businesses, it still presented businesses with opportunities of growth and expansion.

4.7 Summary of the Research Findings

The research findings are briefly highlighted below:

- i. There was a general disruption in the operation of small businesses across the globe. This is because many businesses were not prepared for the pandemic and did not know how to react disaster. However, many small businesses have been able to identify the importance of resilience and preparation for unforeseen events.
- ii. The pandemic limited the productivity of small businesses, which impacted their financial performance over the long run.
- iii. The pandemic presented small businesses with the opportunity to develop their entrepreneurial capabilities and be more innovative.
- iv. Due to the restrictions placed on movement, small businesses found it difficult to transport their staff to work and product to the market. In fact, some businesses had to provide accommodation for workers at the workplace.
- v. Many small businesses were able to build resilience through their core capabilities. Some of the core capabilities identified in the study includes dodged management, adaptability to change, continuous improvements and so forth.

- vi. Technologies presented small businesses with the opportunity to improve their productivity during the pandemic.
- vii. Businesses that were able to develop resilience prior to the COVID-19 pandemic were able to survive without stress.
- viii. The pandemic created new opportunities for small businesses to expand.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

5.1 Implications of the Research Findings on the Research Objective

This research aimed at investigating the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the resilience of small businesses. The study focused on two small businesses on Nigeria; Nuel Pharmaceuticals and Bake and Swallow. In December 2019, there was the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic in Wuhan, China, and this soon spread across Asia until it was declared a global pandemic in March 2020. Governments across the globe soon implemented lockdown measure with the intentions of mitigating the spread of the virus. These measures affected businesses across the globe. In fact, the finding from Bartik *et al.*, (2020) study is like what was obtained in the current study, as many small businesses in Nigeria were forced to shut down due to the pandemic, while those that remained open had to contend with these challenges, thus further strengthening their resilience. Despite the decline in demand and sales, the businesses used in this study remained opened through the pandemic, thus displaying their resilience. Therefore, this research sought to investigate how covid-19 pandemic impacted the resilience of small businesses in Nigeria.

Objective One: To explore why resilience is important to small business enterprises survival during a disaster, like the recent Covid-19 pandemic.

This objective was drafted based on the argument raised by Kemp (2017); Sands (2015); and Li *et al.*, (2023), who observed that building resilience for small businesses is essential to the overall survival of the business. Hence, this this research objective sought to identify the importance of building resilience in small businesses, thus ensuring their survival during disasters like the Covid-19 pandemic. The research found that the pandemic had several effects on small businesses ranging from financial constraint to drop in productivity to transportation issues and disruption of supply

chains. Businesses that were not adequately resilient ended up shutting down during the pandemic. However, businesses like Nuel Pharmaceuticals, and Bake and Swallow were able to withstand these setbacks to remain operational during the pandemic and this opened new business opportunities for them. What then is the implication of this research finding? Resilience is an important component for businesses that intends to survive and gain competitive advantage. Of course, businesses continually encounter series of challenges, however, it is the ability of these businesses to navigate through these challenges that makes them successful. Due the pandemic, there were demands for food and drugs across Nigeria, but Nigerians could not access these necessities due to restrictions and closure of businesses. On the other hand, surviving businesses could not meet up with the demands of the customers because of issues relating to supply chain, shortage of workers and transportation. This research reveals that by building a resilient culture, small business can survive disasters while also capitalizing on new business opportunities.

Research Objective Two: To examine how resilience was built during the pandemic.

Markovic, Farooq and Markovic (2017); Gorjian Khanzad and Gooyabadi (2021), motivated this research question. According to them, small businesses build resilience in dynamic ways, however, the use to technology by small businesses have been identified as one of the most common ways to build resilience among small businesses. This research sought to investigate the ways which Nuel Pharmaceuticals and Bake and Swallow were able to build resilience during the pandemic. The study found that Nuel Pharmaceuticals was able to build resilience during the pandemic by cutting down expenses, staff, and production. Furthermore, the business ensured that they maintained the acceptable safety standards to ensure employee safety. Lastly, the use of technology within the organization was able to allow the business to maintain its production despite the cutting down the number of onsite staff. The study found that through the adoption of technologies like

the Non-Contact System Nuel Pharmaceuticals was able to cut down some processes and make the business more effective. This business model is synonymous to the Lean Manufacturing strategy that advocates for the elimination of waste and continuous process of improvement. Similarly, Bake and Swallow added that technology was able to improve their resilience as they were able to increase their production capacity. Another way which Bake and Swallow developed their resilience was by providing accommodation for workers close to the work place, hence bypassing the issue of transportation as earlier observed. Overall, small businesses faced significant threat during the pandemic, and those that survived were able to do so through various resilience techniques. Hence, to overcome future disasters, there is the need for small businesses around the globe to develop workable resilience techniques.

Research Objective Three: To explore how small businesses were inspired by Covid-19 to re-evaluate their core strengths, look for new prospects, and take steps to redefine their business models.

This research objective was formulated following the argument of Guckenbiehl and Corral de Zubielqui (2022), who observed that many small businesses were forced into changing their business models because of the pandemic. They also observed that the pandemic presented these businesses with challenges as well as opportunities for expansion. This was further buttressed by the discoveries made in this research. Information gathered from respondents indicated that the Covid-19 Pandemic forced small businesses to adopt the work-from-home model, while also allowing the use of technologies to mitigate the impact of the pandemic. Respondents also outlined that the pandemic opened new opportunities for them to invest into new product offerings. These small businesses were able to capitalize on their core capabilities to build resilience during the

pandemic. The study also discovered that by developing entrepreneurial capacity, small businesses can improve their level of resilience during disasters.

Overall, the research findings imply that the Covid-19 pandemic have been able to improve the resilience of small businesses that were able to capitalize on their core strengths and technology to mitigate the effects of the pandemic.

5.2 Contributions of the Study

Every research aims at contributing to knowledge by either improving the existing knowledge or developing a new knowledge. The current study has been able to achieve both. Firstly, the research contributed to the body of research by elaborating the impacts of Covid-19 pandemic on the small businesses. Furthermore, the research contributed to existing knowledge by exploring the role of technology during the pandemic. On the other hand, the research developed new knowledge by outline some of the core competence of small business and outlining how small businesses can develop resilience in organizations. Finally, the study authenticates the core capabilities strategy that suggests the reduction of waste and unnecessary processes for the improvement of organization efficiency and profitability.

5.3 Limitations of the Study

The basic limitation of the study is in the adopted methodology. This research adopted the use of qualitative research strategy, using interviews as the main source of data collection. While interviews are perfect for collecting in-depth and detailed data, it fails to gather broad data, hence generalization cannot be obtained with this strategy. Furthermore, the research findings may vary if broader or more in-depth investigations are undertaken, especially when utilizing a more

representative sample, because the lack of a representative population restricts the research findings to a certain context, case study, or era.

Additionally, the researcher's geographical constraints prevented her from visiting Nigeria to collect data, so she had to conduct interviews through Microsoft Teams. Once more, this had an impact on the research since the researcher was unable to interact physically with the subjects and so collect more reliable data.

It is important to note that none of the aforementioned factors had an impact on the study's findings because it was empirical in nature.

5.4 Recommendations for Practice

Based on the research findings, the following is recommended:

- i. Small businesses should consider adopting technology in their production, marketing, and communication processes. This presents them with the opportunity to not only improve their efficiency, but also their sales and relationship with customers.
- ii. Small businesses should always be prepared to identify new business opportunities during disasters. Thus, strongly investing ahead of recovery from disasters offers small businesses better opportunity to improve performance after the disaster.
- iii. The business environment is filled with uncertainties and is constantly changing; hence small businesses should implement strategies that can improve the preparedness of the business ahead of uncertainties and future disasters.
- iv. Small businesses should consider the adoption of core capability strategies. This would help them improve efficiency, productivity, and profitability by eliminating irrelevant processes and waste.

5.5 Recommendations for Future Research

The following suggestions for further research are based on the limitations of this study.

Future researchers should use representative samples while conducting quantitative analysis. Quantitative studies gather data that is more reliable and comprehensive, which is crucial for establishing generalizations. As a result, researchers that employ quantitative technique would be able to draw useful conclusions about disasters and small-business resilience.

Future researcher should also consider investigating business models that can develop the resilience of small businesses. It will be beneficial for future researchers to examine the validity of this research by determining whether the assertions stated are true.

5.6 Overall Conclusion and Reflection

The Covid-19 pandemic significantly affected many small businesses across the globe. Many small businesses that were unable to withstand the impact of the pandemic were forced to shut down. However, those that remained in business were able to do so because of their resilience. Technology has proven to be a very useful tool in developing resilience in small businesses, and businesses that are able to develop their core capabilities stands higher chances of improving their resilience to disasters.

By conducting this investigation, the researcher gained more insights. The researcher previously lacked the technical proficiency and understanding necessary to properly combine pertinent tools and data to develop an advanced study. This has changed because the researcher now has substantial expertise of study methods. The researcher also faced a few obstacles, particularly when collecting the data, but these obstacles were quickly overcome with the assistance of a professional supervisor.

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APPENDICES

CONSENT FORM

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: SMALL ENTERPRISES RESILIENCE

Consent to take part in research

- I.....voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.
- I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.
- I understand that I can withdraw permission to use data from my interview within two weeks after the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.
- I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.
- I understand that participation involves answering questions, sharing experience, and providing recommendation.
- I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.
- I agree to my interview being audio-recorded.
- I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially.
- I understand that in any report on the results of this research my identity will remain anonymous. This will be done by changing my name and disguising any details of my interview which may reveal my identity or the identity of people I speak about.
- I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in dissertation.
- I understand that if I inform the researcher that myself or someone else is at risk of harm, they may have to report this to the relevant authorities - they will discuss this with me first but may be required to report with or without my permission.
- I understand that signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be retained in National College of Ireland, Dublin, information was accessible to the researcher until 30th of September 2023.

- I understand that a transcript of my interview in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained for two years that is till 31st of August 2025.
- I understand that under freedom of information legalization I am entitled to access the information I have provided at any time while it is in storage as specified above.
- I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information.

Name: Chinenye Uchechukwu Maduekwe

Degree: Msc in International Business

Affiliations: National College of Ireland, Dublin, Ireland.

Contact details of the researcher: x21174962@student.ncirl.ie

Signature of research participant

.....

Signature of participant

.....

Date

Signature of researcher

I believe the participant is giving informed consent to participate in this study.

CHINENYE UCHECHUKWU MADUEKWE

30/4/2023

Signature of researcher

Date

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Tell me about the history of the company. How did the pandemic chaos affect your company?
2. What constraints did your company face during the pandemic? How did your company cope with these constraints? Give me an example of coping.
3. What are the most important capabilities of your company? How did your company go about building resilience before the pandemic? What about during the pandemic? What was the most important change here?
4. What core capabilities did your company rely on during the pandemic? What factors or core capabilities helped your company to return to a state of 'normal' after the pandemic?
5. How did your company utilize technology to cope with the changes the pandemic brought? In which areas do you think your company was most innovative? In which area least innovative?
6. How did your company take care of your employee's wellbeing during the pandemic? How did you help them to overcome the challenges and build resilience? Can you give an example?
7. What lasting effects did the changes during the pandemic have on your business? Do you think your business has become more now resilient to challenges going forward? What new business opportunities has the pandemic opened for you, if any?
8. How did your business finance their survival and resilience building during the pandemic?
9. What are the most important lessons your company learned from the pandemic?
10. What is next for your business? What new market opportunities are on the horizon? How are you planning to build on your core strengths?
11. Do you have any further information to share?

