Managing COVID- 19 Crisis in Nigeria: Impact on Informal Small and Medium Scale Enterprises in Anambra State.

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Abstract: **The outbreak of COVID-19 Pandemic disrupted the Nigerian economy and brought the global economy to a standstill. The crisis led to a drop in production volumes and severe market circumstances as the epidemic continued to wreak havoc on the country, SMEs in the informal sector are battling to survive. This study examines the effect of COVID-19 government palliative on informal Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Anambra State, Nigeria. The researcher used purposive sampling technique and selected all informal enterprises in public places using questionnaire as an instrument for data collection which were distributed to 200 SMEs owners in Anambra State. Three commercial areas were selected namely Awka, Onitsha and Nnewi, 180 out of 200 questionnaires were viable. From the Research conducted, COVID-19 Pandemic was found to have a negative impact on volume of sales, revenue, and non-payment of wage during the Crisis. The finding also showed that most SMEs did not receive government palliative which would have help them in boosting the SMEs during the Pandemic, this make most of them to shutdown their business. Lastly, SMEs adopted some strategies like cutting the salaries of their staff during Covid 19 and laying off of workers (with no plan to recall them), and ensuring business continuity. This research recommends that government should support SMEs in informal sector in meeting their operational expenses as this will assist them in reviving and boosting their business which will help them increase their income as well as recoup revenue lost during the pandemic.**

Key Words: **Covid-19, Informal sector, Pandemic, Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs)**

JEL Codes: **I1, E2, H84, L32**

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

COVID-19 Pandemic is a serious disease that kept the world economy on a standstill. The pandemic was initially detected in Wuhan, China, in December 2019, and has since spread to almost every country on the planet (World Health Organization, 2020). In early 2020, COVID-19 global pandemic spread rapidly through North America, Europe, and East Asia, Europe and later it started affecting most countries in Latin America and Africa. As at February, 2021,112,209,815 were the total number of cases that were confirmed worldwide while the total number of confirmed deaths were 2,490,776 (WHO, 2021). Through trade and long standing travel links between Africa and the rest of the world, the disease known as COVID –19 entered Nigeria. On February 27, 2020, Nigeria recorded the first case through an Italian citizen who works in Nigeria and returned from Milan, Italy to Lagos Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), (2020). This pandemic has spread throughout Nigeria's 36 states, and we are now in the second phase of the outbreak. COVID - 19 pandemic is one of the most recent events in world history according to the World Health Organization (WHO), (2020). The spread of the Corona virus is extremely concerning, posing challenges to world leaders, economists, and policymakers, as well as disrupting the worldwide workforce (WHO 2020). COVID -19 pandemic is ongoing, rising and creating tension on the citizens, Anambra state was not protected to the pandemic's spread.

On April 11th, 2020, the first Covid-19 index case was reported, and as of February 26th, 2021, Anambra state has 1,641 confirmed cases, 1,415 discharged cases, and 19 death cases (NCDC, 2021). In many developing countries, informal SME's are the backbone of the economy. According to estimates, 93 percent of all employment in Nigeria is informal (International Labour Organization (ILO), 2018). Approximately half of informal workers are self-employed, while the other half work for an employer, typically in small or medium-sized businesses (ILO, 2020). Some workers in informal SMEs work in hopeless conditions, with little or no access to occupational safety and health or social protection, and rely on a daily wage to feed their families. The crisis of COVID-19 has further worsened their situation with ongoing restrictions on inter-state travel and movements within borders of the state and the inability to engage in economic activities. Throughout the crisis SMEs suffered most and they lack continuity plan as they are not prepared like other big companies. Having effective business continuity planning, according to Turner and Akinremi (2020), will assist offset any negative effects on business during a pandemic.

Globally, SMEs have faced severe challenges created by COVID-19. COVID -19 has a number of negative consequences, including cash flow issues, failure to meet

delivery deadlines, reduced demand for imported goods and services, disruption in supply chain, and greater risk aversion in financial markets (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2020). The Nigerian economy has been devastated by COVID-19, which has resulted in a drop in revenue, a steep reduction in prices of oil, debtors' inability to pay back loans, interruption of the worldwide supply chain, and investor departure from the Nigerian stock market (Ozili, 2020). Since Federal government imposed restriction to contain Covid-19 spread such as lockdown and movement of people, social distance etc. SMEs' in informal sector became incapacitated, their revenue dropped, some of the workers were layed off which led to increase in unemployment rate, and also non movement of people led to a rise in the prices of goods. According to Tucker (2020), many industries will likely go bankrupt as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak, as economies were shut down and consumers stay at home.

With this situation, Several SME's only lasted for one month due to cash flow issues (Farrel and Wheat, 2016). According to Schrank et al (2013), SMEs while unable to operate were at a significant risk of permanent closure following large-scale disasters, in part because they are unable to pay their bills. This unique virus has wreaked havoc on the economy and corporate sector as a whole. Many markets were closed, and some were permitted only one or two days to reopen in a week, causing massive disruptions in trade and commerce in many economic sectors. Companies are impacted in a variety of ways as a result of these interruptions, and many are struggling financially (OECD, 2020). Because of the Pandemic's severe global socio-economic disruption, many events such as sporting, religious, political, and cultural events were canceled or postponed, and supplies were scarce (Turner and Akinremi, 2020). Federal government of Nigeria in an attempt to curtail Covid-19 mapped out measures and strategies such as use of face mask in public places, washing of hands regularly, social distancing, keeping good hygiene through the authorization of the use of hydroxychloroquine, hand sanitizers, and other drugs to fight the virus (Aifuwa et al., 2020)

The Nigerian government has put in place various palliative measures to ensure economic stability. On March 16, 2020, the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) announced certain palliative steps to safeguard the economy's stability, there was a decrease on interest rates on all CBN intervention loans from 9% to 5% per year; a one-year moratorium on all principal repayments on CBN facilities has been extended and effective from March 1, 2020, Nigeria Incentive-Based Risk Sharing for Agricultural Lending (NISTRAL) also offered N50 billion ($129.5 million) credit facility for household SMEs. Deposit money institutions also considered a temporary and time-limited reorganization of the tenure and loan terms for consumers and businesses (DMRs), even pharmaceutical companies that want to expand or start manufacture of drugs in Nigeria were offered $100 billion credit line. It was also extended to healthcare providers who want to establish or expand world-class health facilities. The

federal government also issued a three-month repayment moratorium under the COVID-19 Regulation 2020, for all market money loans trader money, and farmer money, giving out food or cash to low-income families, and also to boost local production and manufacturing in key sectors of the economy, N1 trillion was set aside for loans. Government of Nigeria were doing all it could at achieving a balance between public health and economic objectives, the lockdown as a measure that lasted for several weeks to curtail the pandemic brought frustrations expressed by the citizens (Adebukola, 2020). This is because enforcing stay-at-home orders was a difficult option for an economy with a huge informal sector. Those on informal business do their activity on a daily basis hence 'stay-at-home' order means that citizens expect some relief from the government. Although during the lockdown, palliatives were provided to households, but it caused a lot of controversy, with allegations of diversion of benefit and in several cases, there was report of non-receipt of benefits (Adebukola, 2020). Despite the efforts of the government, SMEs were in deplorable condition and they were still struggling to survive. Based on this we want to:

[1] Examine the impact of Covid-19 on SMEs in informal sector
[2] Investigate the effect of government palliatives on informal small and medium scale enterprises during the pandemic
[3] Find out the strategies employed by SMEs in the informal sector to deal with Covid-19's impact on their enterprises.

1.2 Contribution to knowledge

Most literature that studied COVID-19 and SMEs such as (Olufemi, A (2020), Ukata and Kalagbor (2020) examined the impact of covid 19 pandemic on SME's. The Study found that COVID-19 has an adverse impact on SMEs in the Informal sector. This study therefore will add to literature as it deviates from the existing studies to examine if SMEs in informal sector in Anambra state, Nigeria received government palliative and the effect of the palliative in boosting the SMEs during the Pandemic.

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Theoretical Literature

This study employs the Prospect Theory, which focuses on decision-making in the face of uncertainty (Tversky & Kahneman, 1986), making it appropriate for scenarios such as pandemics. In the event of a pandemic, prospect theory can help predict how a manager will react during crisis. Prospect theory is founded on the idea that the decisions made by individuals or people is being affected by the way a situation is framed. Tversky and Kahneman (1986) conducted a highly important experiment in which subjects were asked to select between two alternative policies for combating a new disease. According to Craighead, Ketchen, and Darby 2020, a word is characterized preferably to suit a situation positively rather than negative terms which will lead to making risk decisions.

When all conceivable outcomes involve losses, experimental studies from prospect theory show that supply chain managers will seek risk and order more than the optimal amount (Schweitzer and Cachon, 2000). According to Tokar, Aloysius, and Waller (2012), organizations typically use a variety of risk-adjustment techniques to account for these risk preferences, in their ordering, replenishment, and inventory management operations, firms typically employ a variety of "checks" and interventions. Using loss frames to motivate managers to take the forceful efforts required to counteract a pandemic's devastating impacts may be crucial during a pandemic

Public Choice Theory

Public choice theory was propounded by James Buchanan in the fifties and received widespread public attention in 1986, when he was awarded the Nobel Prize in economics with his colleague Gordon Tullock. Buchanan started the Center for Study of Public Choice at George Mason University, and it remains the best-known locus of public choice research. Public choice theory is a branch of economics that developed from the study of taxation and public spending. It explains government decision-making as a result of the actions of individual, self-interested public policy actors, who make decisions as civil servants or elected officials and it make use of economic tools to deal with traditional problems of political science. It is also the ways in which elected officials, bureaucrats and other government agents can be influenced by their own perceived self-interest when making decisions in their official roles.

Buchanan, the mainstream theory assumes that people are essentially insane. They are self-interested in their economic lives, but they suddenly become other-interested and consider the broader social or public interest in efficiency and equity when they turn to the government in their political lives. People do not change their stripes; they remain self-interested in their political lives as well. They turn to the government only because they cannot get what they want for themselves in the marketplace, and they view the government as just another venue for seeking their own objectives. This is seen during COVID-19, people turn to Government for assistance which some get from government as palliatives. Buchanan refers to individuals' interactions with the government as fiscal exchanges to mirror the self-interested motivations of standard market exchanges. Using the government in the pursuit of self-interest is viewed as entirely appropriate and legitimate.

2.2 Management Practices of COVID-19 in Nigeria.

World Health Organization listed Nigeria among other 13 African countries identified as high risk for the spread of the virus on the 3Ist of January, 2020. On the 27th of February 2020, Nigeria recorded the first case of COVID-19 while it recorded the first death on the 23rd March 2020. Since then, Nigeria has gone ahead to record over 20,000 cases, with over 7000 recoveries, recording over 500 deaths. The virus has almost spread throughout the federation with Lagos State having the highest number of confirmed and active cases.

Nigerian government put in place a lot of management practices to curtail the further spread of COVID-19 and they: lockdown orders which included closure of schools and workplaces, bans on religious and social gatherings, cancellation of public events, curfews, restrictions on movement, and cessation of interstate and international travel; social distancing, encouraging personal hygiene by washing of hands with sanitizer, stay-at-home order, and wearing of face mask. All these had a grave effect on the livelihood of most Nigerians, particularly those who live by the daily bread as commercial activities have been limited, food prices have gone so high, the economy is getting paralyzed as 96% of Nigeria's businesses, which comprise 37 million small and medium enterprises (SMEs), are all handicapped (Corona Virus Pandemic in Nigeria 2020). There is decline in oil price and this is of great disadvantage to Nigeria as sale from petroleum is a major source of income for the country. On March 16, 2020, the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) announced certain palliative steps to safeguard the economy's stability, and they are: decrease on interest rates on all CBN intervention loans from 9% to 5% per year; a one-year moratorium on all principal repayments on CBN facilities has been extended and effective from March 1, 2020, Nigeria Incentive-Based Risk Sharing for Agricultural Lending (NISTRAL) also offered N50 billion ($129.5 million) credit facility for household SMEs. Deposit money institutions also considered a temporary and time-limited reorganization of the tenure and loan terms for consumers and businesses (DMRs), even pharmaceutical companies that want to expand or start manufacture of drugs in Nigeria were offered $100 billion credit line. The federal government also issued a three-month repayment moratorium under the COVID-19 Regulation 2020, for all market money loans trader money, and farmer money, giving out food or cash to low-income families, and also to boost local production and manufacturing in key sectors of the economy and N1 trillion was set aside for loans (Adebukola, 2020)

2.3 Empirical Literature

COVID-19 is a new phenomenon. Globally, literature regarding its impact on other economic variables are ongoing. This study therefore made an effort to present an empirical review of recent studies regarding this virus.

For instance during the current COVID-19 crises in Nigeria, Olufemi, A (2020), explored the impact and survival strategies for SMEs. Questionnaires and quantitative research techniques were used by the researcher and the study found out that COVID-19 impacted negatively on small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs). Ganale and Zafar (2020) investigated the impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) on Pakistani SMEs. The study found out that COVID-19 caused a reduction in supply chain interruption, operations, and financial crisis for the majority of the SMEs studied. Whereas, in the minority of the country's SME's, COVID-19 caused loss in exports order and workers were laid off. Aderemi; Ojo; Okohand Efunbajo, (2020) examined the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on small and medium enterprises in Sango-Ota

industrial area of Ogun state, Nigeria. The researcher collected data using structured questionnaires and findings showed that SMEs experienced moderate reduction in production and sales during the lockdown. Ukata and Kalagbor (2020) used descriptive research design to investigate how COVID - 19 pandemic affected micro, small and medium enterprises in Nigeria. The researchers combined qualitative and quantitative data and the study showed that COVID-19 pandemic has a negative impact on MSMEs.

Furthermore, Nnabuife, Okoli and Anugwu (2020), studied the impact of covid 19 on the economic prospects of the informal sector of Nigeria and proposes various strategies to sustain the sector. They applied a descriptive analysis of what is accessible and from that, they highlighted those factors such as unsafe working conditions, institutional adequacies, poor enforcement, and non-participation of informal entrepreneurs in decision-making were the major problems of informal sector in Nigeria. Pitoyo, Adtiya and Amin (2020) using online survey data reviewed the effects of Covid 19 on the informal economy coupled with empirical evidence based on surveys conducted in Indonesia. They discovered that the informal sector is like an alternative sector that offers business flexibility, and not as if it is a hero.

Similarly, Badjassilona, Ayenagbo, and Dieng (2021) using descriptive statistical analysis examined the impact of the pandemic on private firms and informal sector units in Togo. The variables were analyzed using SPSS software and data from the Togo General Office of Work database. The study found that about 96.80 percent of the unit were impacted by the crisis and 1105 jobs were lost in some unit. Mohsin, Junrong and Wenju (2020) using online questionnaire to collect data from 184 Pakistani SMEs investigated the impact of COVID-19 on Pakistan SMEs using a descriptive statistics. The findings revealed that the majority of SMEs have been severely impacted with supply chain, finance, profit loss, demand, and sales. In Nigeria, Abioye, Ogunniyi, and Olagunju (2020) investigated the impact of COVID-19 and lockout measures on small and medium-sized businesses. The researchers gathered electronic data and utilized a linear probability model to estimate the pandemic's impact on entrepreneurs, as well as a multivariate probit model to predict the elements that influence coping techniques. The study also found that most entrepreneurs have been impacted by COVID-19 pandemics due to lockdown which is partial or total. Many works have been done in this aspect but non has looked at Anambra State.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The study carried out a descriptive survey. A descriptive survey requires presentation of data and an orderly collection of data to give a clear representation of a definite situation (Eboh, 2009).

3.2 Instrument/Procedure for Data Collection

This study is a qualitative study making use of primary data. The researcher selected all informal enterprises in public places using a well-structured questionnaire as an instrument for data collection to understand the impact of COVID -19. Informal sector are those who do not contribute to the GDP of a country through taxation which means they are not registered. The study used quota sampling to select the towns, Nnewi, Onitsha and Awka because they are the major business areas in Anambra State. The questionnaire was also designed to obtain fact by Small and medium businesses in the informal sector of the economy on the various commitment and efforts made by government to provide palliatives such as Food stuffs, infrastructural support, Support in meeting operational expense etc, during the pandemic and to find out the strategies SMEs used to manage the effect of Covid-19 on their businesses.

3.3. Location of Study, Target Population and Sampling Technique

The population of this study is Anambra State, Anambra State is in the South-Eastern Nigeria with an estimated population of 4,177,821 as at last 2006 census. It has a total Land size of 4,865km^2 and its capital is in Awka. It has boundaries to the west with Delta State, to the South with Imo State, to the east with Enugu State, and to the North with Kogi State. It is a veritable industrial State in Nigeria, and there are twenty-one (21) Local Government in the state. The indigenous ethnic groups are Igbo 98% and Igala 2%. Purposive sampling was used as the sampling technique and sample frame for this study includes Awka, Onitsha, and Nnewi. The three local government was chosen based on the fact that they have the highest number of market-oriented people, and that Anambra State is one of the states in Nigeria with the largest number of SMEs, and was one of the states that the federal government of Nigeria completely shut down due to the COVID-19 pandemic (NCDC, 2020). The questionnaire was delivered to the informal businesses (SMEs) in three Anambra State commercial districts. The total number of Two hundred (200) questionnaire were issued to all the informal enterprises in public places like tradesmen/ women, restaurant owners, salon, fashion designers, street vendors, barbers etc, and out of these, 180 were properly filled and collected.

IV. PRESENTATION OF RESULT

Table 1: Demography of participants

Characteristics	N	%
How old are you?	N	%
18-25	20	11.1
26-35	60	33.3
36-45	35	19.4
46-50	25	13.9
51 and above	40	22.3
Total	180	100
What is your gender	N	%

Male	100	55.6
Female	80	44.4
Total	**180**	**100**
What type of trade or work do you engage in?	**N**	**%**
Shoe maker	10	5.6
Tradesmen/women	60	33.3
Street vendor	19	10.6
Fashion designers	35	19.4
Restaurant owners	50	27.8
Others	6	3.3
Total	**180**	**100**
How long have you been in the business?	**N**	**%**
1-5years	80	44.4
6-10years	30	16.7
11-15years	30	16.7
16-20year	25	13.9
20years and above	15	8.3
Total	**180**	**100**

Source: Authors, 2021, n = number of observations, %= percentages

Table 1 shows the demography of the participants. It shows that 20(11.1%) participants are within the age bracket of 18-25 years, 60(33.3%) are between 26-35years, 35 (19.4%) are between 36-45, 25 (13.9%) are between 46-50 and 40 (22.3%) are between51years and above. The table also reveals that 100 (55.6%) participants are male while 80 (44.4%) participants are female. The participants were also requested to indicate interest. The Table reveals that 10(5.6%) participants are shoe maker, 60 (33.3%) are tradesmen/women, 19 (10.6%) are street vendor, 35(19.4%) are Fashion designers, 50 (27.8%) are restaurant owners while 6(3.3%) indicated others. Furthermore, the Table also shows that 80(44.4%) participants indicated that they have been into business for 1-5years, 30(16.7%) participants were in business for 6-10years, 30(16.7%) have been in business for 11-15years, 25(13.9%) have been in business for16-20years and 15(8.3%) participants have been in business for 20years and above.

Table 2: Participants responses on the impact of Covid-19 on SMEs in informal sector

s/n	statement	Responses	N	%
6	Have you noticed a drop in sales or activity as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak?	Yes	168	93.3
		No	12	6.7
		Total	180	100
7	Do you lay off staff or worker during covid-19	Yes	86	47.8
		No	94	52.2
		Total	180	100
8	Were you giving full salary to your staff during lockdown	Yes	26	14.4
		No	154	85.6
		Total	180	100

Source: Authors, 2021, n = number of observations, %= percentages

Table 2 shows the responses by the participants on the impact of COVID-19 on SMEs in informal sector. From the table, It shows that the pandemic has had an impact on the SME's in the informal sectors in Anambra State. This is reflected by the participants' responses on the impact of COVID -19 on SMEs. On the item "Do you experience reduction in sales or work activity due to the COVID-19 outbreak" the 168 participants indicated yes and 12 indicated no. On the items "Do you lay off staff or worker during covid-19" 86(47.8%) indicated yes and 94 (52.2%) indicated no. On the item "were you giving full salary to your staff during lockdown" 26(14.4%) indicated yes and 154(85.6%) participant indicated no. Evidence from the Table shows that COVID- 19 has affected SMEs because it led to a reduction in sales volume and work activity. Moreover, SME laid off their staff during the COVID-19. Lastly, SMEs were forced to cut the salaries of their staff during COVID- 19. Overall it can be concluded that COVID- 19 had affected SMEs in the informal sector in Anambra.

Table 3: Statement on the reception of palliative by the small and medium scale business (SMEs) in the informal sector

	Statement	Response	N	%
12	Do you receive government palliative during Covid-19 lockdown?	Yes	24	13.3
		No	156	86.7
		Total	180	100
13	If yes what did you receive?		6	3.3
		Infrastructural support	2	1.1
		Support in meeting operational expenses	4	2.2
		Food stuff	12	6.7
		None	156	86.7
		Total	180	100
14	Do you believe the government has gone far enough to combat the Covid-19 Pandemic?	Yes	16	8.9
		No	164	91.1
		Total	180	100

Source: Authors, 2021, n = number of observations, %= percentages

Table 3 shows the participants' responses on the reception of palliative by the small and medium scale business (SMEs) in the informal sector in Anambra State. The Table reveals that 24(13.3%) participants indicated yes and 156(86.7%) indicated no to "Do you receive government palliative during Covid-19 lockdown?" Participants were asked to indicate the support they received from the government during the COVID-19. two (1.1%) of the participants indicated infrastructural support, 4(2.2%) indicated, "Support in meeting operational expenses", 12(6.7%) participants indicated foodstuff and 156(86.7%) indicated that they did not receive any palliatives from the government. Most of the

SMEs received palliatives but it was inadequate to go round the majority of SMEs and this make most of them to shutdown their business and some of them obtained loan from friends and relatives. Furthermore, on the item "Do you think the government has done enough to curtail Covid-19 Pandemic?" 16(8.9%) indicated yes and 164(91.1%) indicated no. Overall, it can be seen that a large proportion of the participants are of the view that they did not receive palliative during the covid-19 lockdown and government has not done enough to curtail the pandemic.

Table 4: Participants responses on the strategies used by the SMEs in the informal sector to manage the effect of Covid-19 on their businesses

s/n	Statement	Response	n	%
7	Did you lay off staff or worker during covid-19	Yes	86	47.8
		No	94	52.2
		Total	180	100
8	Were you paying full salary to your staff during lockdown	Yes	26	14.4
		No	154	85.6
		Total	180	100
9	Do you plan to recall back the sacked staff if your business improves	Yes	76	42.2
		No	104	57.8
		Total	180	100
10	Can you continue with your current business line after corona virus outbreak	Yes	148	82.2
		No	32	17.8
		Total	180	100

Source: Authors, 2021, n = number of observations, %= percentages

Table 4 shows the Participants responses on the strategies used by the SMEs in the informal sector to manage the cause of Covid-19 pandemic on their businesses. The Table reveals that 86(47.8%) participants indicated yes and 94(52.2%) noted no to the items "Did you lay off staff or worker during covid-19", 26(14.4%) indicated yes and 154(85.6%) indicated no to the item "Were you paying full salary to your staff during lockdown". Also, 76(42.2%) indicated yes and 104(57.8%) indicated no the item "Do you plan to recall staff you sacked if business improves". Lastly, on the item "Can you continue in your line of business after corona virus outbreak" evidence from the Table reveals that 148(82.2%) participants indicated yes and 32(17.8%) indicated no. Evidence from the table reveals that the strategies that SME's adopted during the Covid 19 pandemic included laying off of workers (with no plan to recall them), cutting off of salary and ensuring business continuity.

V. CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATION

One of the most prominent concerns regarding the emerging virus, COVID -19 Pandemic, is its economic impact. The impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on informal small and medium companies in Anambra State, Nigeria is revealed in the findings of this study. It was found that COVID-19 has a negative impact on Small and Medium enterprises in Anambra state. Since most SMEs did not receive government palliative which would have help them in boosting the SMEs during the Pandemic, this make most of them to shutdown their business. The population of Anambra, which is noted for its high-level commercial profile, was evenly distributed throughout three market places. To acquire a broad view of the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak, the SMEs firms surveyed a wide range of industries. The most prevalent response of SMEs to the Pandemic was a drop in revenue, showing that COVID-19 had a negative impact on SMEs in general. Many businesses did not pay their employees their full salaries throughout the shutdown, according to the findings. However, the findings show that SMEs are generally flexible. The vast majority of respondents agreed to continue in their area of work, while the majority of them opposed closing their firm as a result of the Pandemic. The majority of the respondents disagreed with the government's lockdown and restriction measures, and they were unlikely to change their business practices as a result of the Pandemic. Furthermore, the majority of them thought that the government was not doing enough to stop the Covid-19 pandemic.

We make our recommendation based on the findings of this investigation:

Having found that most of the palliatives received during the pandemic was food, it will be necessary for the government to support SMEs in meeting their operational expenses as this will assist them in reviving and boosting their business which will help them increase their income as well as recoup revenue lost during the pandemic. Also, the use of palliatives that will help sustain SMEs should be focused towards individuals in the informal sector to ease its effect.

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