

African Journal of Gender, Society and Development
ISSN: 2634-3614 E-ISSN: 2634-3622

Indexed by IBSS, EBSCO, COPERNICUS, ProQuest, SABINET and
J-Gate.

Volume 10 Number 3, September 2021
Pp 113-140

A Hand to Mouth Existence: Hurdles Emanating from the COVID 19 Pandemic for Women Survivalist Entrepreneurs in Johannesburg, South Africa

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31920/2634-3622/2021/v10n3a6>

Miston Mapuranga

*Centre for Entrepreneurship Rapid Incubator (CfERI)
Walter Sisulu University,
South Africa*

Eugene Tafadzwa Maziriri

*Department of Business Management
Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences
University of the Free State
Email: maziririet@ufs.ac.za*

&

Tarisai Fritz Rukuni

*Department of Business Management
Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences
University of the Free State*

Abstract

There are many women survivalist entrepreneurs in South Africa, many of whom work in the informal sector. The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic has a devastating effect on their entrepreneurial projects. While both the public and private sectors have initiated various measures to ease the blow, obstacles

continue to confront them. This study sought to examine the challenges faced by women survivalist entrepreneurs in South Africa's Johannesburg metropolitan area. The researchers gathered qualitative data using a qualitative research approach by conducting semi-structured face-to-face interviews. The data was analysed using thematic analyses. The themes that emerged from the findings include; a lack of capital for reinvestment, no government grant support, a decline in the demand for products by the market, rotting agricultural produce or stock, a battle for strategic selling points and numerous confrontations with police as a result of not meeting the regulatory rules relating to COVID-19. The present research provides theoretical implications for academics in entrepreneurship by enhancing the understanding of the hurdles that these entrepreneurs have experienced because of COVID-19. On the practitioners' side, this work offers avenues for women survivalist entrepreneurs to improve their entrepreneurial ventures and eventually eliminate the challenges they face when running their ventures. This study also offers policy implications. For example, existing government policies can be amended to make the working conditions of women survivalist entrepreneurs better or make the rules under which they operate simpler. This study contributes to entrepreneurship literature by uncovering the difficulties faced by women survivalist entrepreneurs due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It will assist other scholars in further developing this research field. As such, this research is important for women survivalist entrepreneurs because most of them endeavour to enhance entrepreneurial performance for the betterment of their lives. Governments may also use the study to develop interventions aimed at facilitating the growth and development of women survivalist entrepreneurs.

Keywords: *COVID- 19; Entrepreneurs; Entrepreneurship; Women; Survivalist*

JEL classification: M0

Introduction

Entrepreneurship has been a male-dominated phenomenon, but this has changed over time. Women are today's most inspirational entrepreneurs, even in traditionally male-dominated sectors such as construction (Vinesh, 2014). According to Chinomona and Maziriri (2015), women are increasingly turning to entrepreneurship to address the glass ceiling that seems to prevent them from reaching top managerial positions in organisations, and entrepreneurship also provides them with greater satisfaction and flexibility. Akhalwaya and Havenga (2012) explain that

women entrepreneurs in South Africa play a critical role in the economy regarding income and employment creation, as in other African countries. South African women entrepreneurs engage in survivalist activities, such as sewing co-operatives, chicken farming, candle-making, gardening, arts and crafts (Mandipaka, 2014), and their contribution to the business is mainly focused on the areas of crafts, hawking, personal services and retail sectors (Akhalwaya & Havenga, 2012).

Women-owned businesses have been recognised as vital to the overall growth of entrepreneurship, economic growth, poverty alleviation and job creation in many countries (Chirwa, 2008; Maphalla, Nieuwenhuizen & Roberts, 2009; Nmadu, 2011; Brush & Cooper, 2012; Rabbani & Chowdhury, 2013), which is why Malebana (2017) noted that policymakers are focused on how economic growth can be stimulated via entrepreneurial activity. Even though black women form the single largest segment of self-employed people in South Africa (Witbooi & Ukpere, 2011), they do not perform like their counterparts in other emerging economies (Kelley, Brush, Greene & Litovsky, 2013). In addition, although women tend to own more businesses than men in the informal sector, the proportion of female-owned businesses decreases as the business size and sophistication increases (Kelley et al., 2013).

Despite the increasing research on women entrepreneurship, it is imperative to conduct research that examines challenges confronted by women survivalist entrepreneurs and precisely how their livelihoods have been affected by COVID-19. In South Africa, previous studies have been conducted in various contexts by focusing on: (i) The challenges faced by Isi-Xhosa survivalist entrepreneurs in Butterworth (Lose & Mafini, 2019); (ii) The growth aspirations and challenges of survivalist entrepreneurs (Choto, Tengeh & Iwu, 2014); (iii) Survivalist enterprises in the Capricorn District Municipality (Chauke, 2015); (iv) The impact of business incubators on survivalist entrepreneurs in the Cape Metropolitan area (Choto, 2015); (v) The relevance and challenges of business incubators that support survivalist entrepreneurs (Tengeh & Choto, 2015); and (vi) The ability of survivalist businesses in five districts of the Free State province to generate jobs for family members and income that improves their socio-economic status (Ranyane, 2015). Deducing from the studies above, it is imperative to mention that a study centred on the hurdles emanating from the COVID- 19 pandemic for women survivalist entrepreneurs is a new area warranting some scholarly

introspection. This forms the fundamental motivation behind this investigation

This article is structured as follows: the research context, empirical literature, research design and methodology, a presentation of the results and the discussion. The last sections of the article discuss the recommendations, limitations of this study, and future research direction.

Contextualisation of the Study

Covid-19

It has been stated in the introduction section that the current COVID-19 pandemic has worsened the entrepreneurial ventures of women. In light of this reality, this section aims to provide an overview of coronavirus and its origin as background to the study. The coronavirus comprises a huge family of viruses that have not been previously identified in humans, but are domicile in animals (Chan, Yuan, & Kok, 2020). Wuhan Municipal Health Commission (2019) reported that a crossover of the coronavirus to human beings occurred leading to a respiratory disease known as COVID-19 that was first recorded in Wuhan, an industrial city in China. According to the World Health Organization (WHO) (2020), COVID-19 is a deadly infectious viral disease that causes a respiratory illness with symptoms such as fever, fatigue, persistent coughing, shortness of breath and a runny nose, which could lead to death in severe cases. COVID-19 is spread through droplets when an infected person sneezes or coughs, which might be acquired through physical human contact or touching contaminated surfaces (European Centre for Disease Prevention & Control [ECDC], 2020). Chan et al. (2020) and Li, Guan, and Wu (2020) argue that the spread of COVID-19 takes place at an exponential rate and is exacerbated by the current non-existence of any treatment or vaccination against the disease. The first case of COVID-19 occurred on 17th November 2019, and at least 266 people were placed under surveillance by the Chinese authorities (The Guardian, 2020). Allen-Ebrahimian (2020) explains that the Chinese government only reported the outbreak of the virus after several weeks following wide criticism for attempting to cover up the existence of the disease. By 04 September 2020, COVID-19 had infected 26 475 568 people around the world with 873 285 deaths (Worldometer, 2020). This is a frightening jump from 266 infections recorded in China on 17 November 2019 (The

Guardian, 2020). The United States of America (USA) had the highest number of infections by 04 September 2020, numbered 6 335 244, with 191 058 deaths. This was followed on the same date by –

- Brazil -4 046 150 infections and 124 729 deaths;
- India -3 936 747 infections and 68 569 deaths;
- Russia -1 009 995 infections and 17 528 deaths;
- Peru - 670 145 infections and 29 405 deaths;
- Colombia -641 574 infections and 20 618 deaths;
- South Africa – 633 015 infections and 14 563 and many countries around the world are also picking up at an exponential rate (Worldometer, 2020).

Turning the focus to South Africa, which is one of the heavily affected countries in the world and in the sub-Saharan region by the coronavirus (Worldometer, 2020). On 04 September 2020, South Africa was recorded as number seven among the most infected countries globally, yet its first infection was recorded on 5 March 2020 (Worldometer, 2020). Conerly (2020) states that the spread of COVID-19 has a devastating effect on the global economy, as markets around the world react negatively. The drop in stock price experienced in recent times results in the failure of businesses to raise funds in equity markets, which makes it difficult to keep operations running. Women survivalist entrepreneurs in South Africa are not immune to the current economic problems instigated by COVID-19. The lockdown measures imposed to curb the spread of COVID-19 in the country halted operations of survivalist entrepreneurs. In responding to the social and economic effects of COVID-19, the Republic of South Africa implemented interventionist policies that include the relaxation of lockdown regulations to allow women survivalist entrepreneurs to reemerge. The measures were also taken to boost economic growth activities to keep the market afloat in the centre of supply and demand triggered by the pandemic.

Theoretical Grounding

This study is grounded in the Disadvantage Theory of Business Enterprise and the Empowerment Theory. The detail of these theories will be discussed in the following section.

The disadvantage theory of business enterprise

The idea of survivalist businesses originates from the disadvantage theory of business enterprise. The disadvantage theory of business enterprise acknowledges that disadvantaged businesses can be excluded from obtaining resources in the economic mainstream (Chauke, 2015). As Miller and Miller (2017:7) indicated, "some of the essential motors of entrepreneurship come as severe life problems rather than personal advantages and capabilities or advantageous circumstances." It may also be claimed that owing to their poor condition, certain families are required to pursue alternative means of subsistence outside the formal economy. As a result, this situation has resulted in the emergence of surviving entrepreneurs, especially women. It is suggested that "women are disadvantaged compared to men due to open sexism and/or structural causes that rob them of critical tools such as business education and experience" (Fischer, 1993:151). Women were also perceived to be one of the most vulnerable, not only in terms of employment but also in terms of socialisation and value creation (Marlow & Patton, 2005).

The Economic Empowerment Theory

Economic emancipation is primarily about women's economic independence and the growing proportion of economic activity they carry out (Chen, 2012). Most women in South Africa participate in the economic sectors, which is a clear indication of women empowerment. When women are economically empowered, they can earn a living and help their households, which will also lead to an increase in society's quality of life (Kabeer, 2005). This will also produce high self-esteem, yield self-respect and other benefits. Yet, economic empowerment for women requires more than just financial security. If women are empowered, this would also improve the savings and access to financial loans, strengthening women's say in family decision making. It is seen that when women control decisions regarding credit and saving, they improve the overall welfare of the family. Nisbett, Davis, Yosef and Akhtar (2017) posit that women's income in a family is very essential because it improves the family nutritionally, educationally and economically. Governments must try to provide strategies geared towards the financial independence of women entrepreneurially. The

investment in women's economic activities will improve employment opportunities for women. So, the government in South Africa should come up with programmes to provide and initiate sustainable support to income-generating activities of women survivalist entrepreneurs.

Empirical literature

In order to address the aim of the research, it is important to establish a sound literature base upon which the study is built. This section presents a review of the literature related to the purpose of the study. The review was undertaken to eliminate duplication of what has been done and provide a clear understanding of an existing knowledge base in the problem area. Moreover, in order to present a well-rounded picture in relation to the title of the study, the researchers reviewed the literature on what an entrepreneur is, what a survivalist entrepreneur is, who women survivalist entrepreneurs are and the general challenges confronted by survivalist entrepreneurs.

An entrepreneur

The word 'entrepreneur' comes from the French *entreprendre*, which translates roughly to set about or undertake (Edelman, Manolova, Shirokova & Tsukanova, 2016). Antonites and Govindasamy (2013) elucidate that entrepreneurs are a unique group of people who assume risk, manage the business' operations, reap the rewards of their success and bear the consequences of their failure. An entrepreneur is a person who gets things done and is an economic innovator (Van der Lingen & Van Niekerk, 2015). In addition, Tehseen and Ramayah (2015) assert that an entrepreneur is an individual who develops and grows businesses through creative and innovative activities by introducing new products or services and by improving the existing methods of production or service. Dijkhuizen, Gorgievski, Van Veldhoven and Schalk (2016) describe an entrepreneur as someone who sees gaps within the market environment and takes the advantage to fill the gap; thus, it is accepted that an entrepreneur takes more risks to increase personal interest to seize available opportunities (Marino, González, López, Luján, Gordillo & Osorio, 2011). Although opinions vary on what an entrepreneur is, the word normally carries the meaning of new ideas and creative

development in the framework of large organisations (Morales, Ferie, Fonseca & Frias, 2016).

Defining survivalist entrepreneurs

Survivalist entrepreneurs are described as individuals who run and manage enterprises due to lack of employment in the formal sector, and thus have to find alternative ways to survive (Choto, Tengeh & Iwu, 2014). These individuals are not employed formally; their income levels are generally below the minimum poverty lines; the business ventures they run require minimal capital, and lack training and experience (Choto, Tengeh & Iwu, 2014). Fisher's (2011) description of survivalist entrepreneurs is that of people who see going into business as merely a means of economic survival; they depend on the profits of the business from one day to the next and they keep very little long-term wealth. Fisher (2011) gave examples of survivalist entrepreneurs: basket sellers, sunglass sellers, and people selling flags in the streets. Berner et al. (2008) defined survivalist entrepreneurs as entrepreneurs who start their business due to lack of employment and not by choice and attempt to increase security and smoothen consumption rather than maximising profit. The authors further indicate that these survivalist entrepreneurs find it difficult to accumulate capital. According to Lener and Schoar (2010), survivalist entrepreneurship is a micro-business that does not grow beyond employing the owner and/or family. Therefore, they provide limited employment opportunities. Serviere (2010) describes survivalist entrepreneurs as entrepreneurs pushed into entrepreneurship by factors that include unemployment, low-income jobs, low educational levels, and social marginalisation. In line with Ligthelm (2008), this paper defines a survivalist entrepreneur as an informal entrepreneur with three clearly distinguishable characteristics: non-compliance with economic regulations; operating on a very small scale; and some dealing in forbidden activities such as smuggling and reselling stolen goods.

Women survivalist entrepreneurs

Rani and Natarajan (2020) are of the view that women entrepreneurs are often described as 'survivalists' as they have low skills, low capital and often manage informal and micro businesses. In many societies, people are pushed into the survivalist sector by unfavourable conditions (such as

economic downturns) and tend to return to the formal economy when conditions improve. However, South Africa is unique in that most survivalist entrepreneurs (notably women) have been engaged in the sector for their entire working life (Chauke, 2015). According to Jung, Dalton and Willis (2018), women's involvement in the informal market economy is clearly motivated by push factors such as poverty, starvation and survival, rather than pull factors such as job security, or increased freedom and independence. The fear of not having money to buy food for the family forces desperate women, especially mothers, to enter the informal economy (Jung, Dalton & Willis 2018).

General challenges confronted by survivalist entrepreneurs

Choto, et al. (2014) identified challenges faced by survivalist entrepreneurs, among which are poor management skills, which arise from insufficient training and education in entrepreneurship (Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, 2013). In addition, the GEM Report (2013) hypothesised that an individual's ability to react to start-up opportunities is influenced by business conditions and the entrepreneurial framework in which they operate. These entrepreneurial conditions affecting decision making and the rate of response to opportunities include access to finance, education and training, government regulations, legal and financial infrastructure, research and development among others. (Choto, et al., 2014). Figure 1 below summarises the challenges that survivalist entrepreneurs face in running their business ventures, as identified by Choto (2015).

Figure 1: Challenges faced by survivalist entrepreneurs in their business ventures



Source: Choto, et al., (2014)

Although there are several challenges that usually confront survivalist entrepreneurs, within the context of COVID-19, little is known about how women survivalist entrepreneurs have been affected by this pandemic. This gap deserves further academic scholarly introspection.

Research Methods and Design

Research paradigm

According to Sefotho (2015), qualitative research is fundamentally phenomenological and is referred to as interpretive phenomenological research. Hammond, Howarth and Keat (1991:1) refer to phenomenology as the ‘description of things as one experiences them, or of one’s experiences of things. Phenomenology aims to bring out the ‘essences’ of experiences or appearances (phenomena), to describe their underlying ‘reason’ (Pivcevic, 1970). Phenomena are fundamentally important for qualitative researchers (Sale, Lohfeld & Brazil, 2002). They must consider an understanding of people’s life experiences as phenomena of inquiry (Sefotho, 2015). Therefore, in this study, the

researchers identified phenomenology as the suitable research paradigm for the study. It seeks to bring out the barriers encountered by women survivalist entrepreneurs during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Method of investigation and research design

The researchers embraced an exploratory qualitative approach. The rationale for implementing qualitative methodology emanates from the need to understand the hurdles of COVID- 19 for women survivalist entrepreneurs in Johannesburg, South Africa. De Villiers, Dumay and Maroun (2019) assert that the researcher builds a dynamic, realistic image through a qualitative analysis paradigm; analyses words; presents accurate opinions of the participants; and performs the research in a natural setting. Additionally, Aspers and Corte (2019) explain that the method of qualitative research is appropriate when the researcher attempts to understand a new phenomenon in a particular situation rather than attempting to establish a relationship between two or more variables. The qualitative interview aims to explain the environment from the interviewee's viewpoint; the respondents should recite their tale in their own terms and gain sense and understanding through their experience (Kaae & Traulsen, 2020). Qualitative research has a characteristic of exploration where knowledge is generated to some extent (Hunter & Howes, 2020). The research design for this study was basically of an exploratory kind. In this case, the exploratory approach provided an opportunity to unravel the hurdles of COVID- 19 for women survivalist entrepreneurs in Johannesburg, South Africa. Essentially, and in line with the approach mentioned above, participants, precisely women survivalist entrepreneurs, were given the opportunity during the interviews to describe the hurdles brought by COVID- 19.

Ethical considerations

Permission was conceded by the administration of the Johannesburg City Council. The researchers acquired the letter which permitted them to gather information from women survivalist entrepreneurs within the Johannesburg Central Business District. Ethical clearance was affirmed genuinely, and this study acted as per the ethical benchmarks of scholastic research, which incorporate, in addition to other things,

protecting the respondents' identities and guaranteeing secrecy of data given by the participants.

Sampling frame

According to Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2016), a sampling frame is a complete list of all the eligible sampling elements from which a sample can be drawn. No sampling frame could be identified for this research owing to the absence of an established list of the entire population of survivalist women entrepreneurs.

Unit of analysis

Ritella, Rajala and Renshaw (2020) describe a unit of analysis as the principal entity being examined in a sample. In this study, the unit of analysis is the women survivalist entrepreneur.

Population of relevance

In research, population refers to the sum of all the units valid for an investigation (Majid, 2018). Abutabenjeh and Jaradat (2018) define a population as a group of entities with a standard set of characteristics. In this study, the population of relevance consisted of survivalist women entrepreneurs within the Johannesburg metropolitan area.

Sample size

A sample is defined as a fraction of a larger population (Dube, Roberts-Lombard & Van Tonder 2015). Shonhiwa (2019) defines sample size as the number of factors that are involved in the study. A sample size greater than 30 and less than 500 is optimal for most studies according to Choto et al., (2014). Therefore, 35 participants were included in this research study.

Sampling technique

Sarstedt, Bengart, Shaltoni, and Lehmann (2018) state that two sampling techniques exist, namely; probability and non-probability sampling. Probability sampling is used where each case, individual or element has

an equal chance of being selected, whereas nonprobability is used in situations where a complete sample frame cannot be compiled (Hackett, 2019). In the present study, non-probability sampling was used for its convenient strength (Malhotra, 2010). Non-probability sampling techniques comprise convenience samples, quota samples, judgement samples, and snowball sampling (Bell, Bryman, & Harley, 2018). This is because there was no register of women survivalist entrepreneurs in Johannesburg. The current research utilised the snowball sampling procedure. This necessitated a decision for employing the snowball sampling procedure. Snowballing sampling is a non-probability sampling method in which the researcher approaches one member and the member in turn refers the researcher to another member (Choto et al., 2014). Likewise, Iacobucci and Churchill (2010:287) state that “when referrals are made, there is a great chance of attaining unique characteristics and/or sample elements that are not easily identified”. Moreover, the snowball sampling method was the most appropriate method for this study. The researchers had a few individuals to participate in the study who helped identify other participants who best matched the research.

Data Collection

Semi-structured face-to-face interviews

During level 3 of lockdown, data collection was done when other sectors of the economy were opened. Precisely, data was obtained using semi-structured face-to-face interviews for this study. According to Csillag, Csizmadia, Hidegh and Szászvári (2019), interviewing in qualitative analysis is the prevalent style of data collection. Semi-structured face-to-face interviews were held at the Central Business District of Johannesburg City in Gauteng, South Africa, with the women survivalist entrepreneurs. It is imperative to note that during the time of data collection, the researchers maintained social distancing as one of the recommended regulatory measures against COVID-19. Semi-structured interviews are described as interviews organised around areas of particular interest, while allowing for considerable scope and depth flexibility (McGrath, Palmgren & Liljedahl, 2019). Moreover, Maziriri and Madinga (2015) indicated that such interviews combine specific questions (to get the foreknown information) and open-ended questions

(to provoke unanticipated types of information). The semi-structured model often helps the investigator to engage with additional questions if necessary. It is also imperative to state that a tape recorder was used for the purpose of data collection. Precisely, a tape recorder was used to record the conversation. The researchers then wrote everything down listening to the tape recorder, including pauses.

Data Analysis

All interviews were recorded for analysis and transcribed. Using the process suggested by Corbin and Strauss (1990), the researchers analysed all the records of the face-to-face interviews after a verbatim transcription of the interviews. In the data analysis, the authors considered the use of the following procedures:

- **Open coding:** “open coding is the process of breaking data, analysing, associating, conceptualising and categorising data” (Corbin & Strauss, 1990:15).
- **Axial coding:** According to Muposhi and Dhurup (2016), axial coding entails reading the transcribed notes to identify the connections that emerged from open coding between the themes.
- **Selecting coding:** Selective coding is a technique for choosing the main category, systematically comparing it to certain categories, validating such relationships and filling the categories that require more refining and development (Corbin & Strauss 1990). This process will be performed to identify the main themes related to this research (Cresswell, 2014) and make conclusions on the themes that have emerged.

Research findings

The discussion in this study was based on the concepts arising from the transcripts of the face-to-face interviews. The thematic analysis was utilised, which is described as a careful process in which themes arising from a qualitative sample are established, evaluated and recorded (Hunter & Howes, 2020). Bandara, Fernando and Akter (2020) regard Thematic Analysis as a basic form of qualitative research. The main advantage of the Thematic Analysis is that it is a logical process that allows the researcher to comprehensively scrutinise interview transcripts and glean all possible themes (Glesne, 2011). The following framework indicates

the main themes identified in the data sources. Each theme will be discussed individually, followed by substantiating quotes. Interpreted data will be compared with existing literature.

Theme 1: Lack of capital for reinvestment

Lack of capital for reinvestment emerged as one of the most important themes during interviews. The women survivalist entrepreneurs indicated that due to the COVID-19 lockdown they could not generate sales and as a result, they ended up using the money which they had to buy food in order for them to survive. Thus, lack of capital now hinders them from succeeding in their entrepreneurial businesses. Here are some comments they made:

For me to survive I had to use my capital to buy basic needs like food for consumption and I no longer have enough money to buy new stock to sell

COVID-19 has negatively impacted my business as I survive from hand to mouth, I no longer have the funds to buy the next stock

Theme 2: No government grant support for unregistered businesses

Another recurring theme that emerged from interviews was that no government grant support was/is given to unregistered businesses. Here are some of the comments they made:

Because my business is not registered, I do not qualify to get financial support from the government, so I do not really know where I will get capital to reinvest in my entrepreneurial venture

The government has not recognised us but those owning taxi has been given money, but they want our votes

Surely, it is so bad no support has been offered to us. We are planning to talk with our counsellor to go and talk with the minister of small and medium enterprises maybe they can offer something financially. If they can help us, I will be able to boost my business

Theme 3: Decline in the product demands on the market

The other theme that emerged from the study is a decline in the demands for products on the market.

My son, demand for product had gone down. Most of our customers have lost their jobs and have been absorbed by the informal sector. They are also now selling similar products. If you look at all those selling there were not there before

Yeah neh[sic], I have tried to diversify but still the demand is low, but at least one or two things can be bought but I am struggling

Only you know, I have been having this stock since last week. No one is buying, there is no money

Theme 4: Rotting of agricultural produce /stock

This is one of the dominant themes that emerged in the study. The participants who are engaged in trading agricultural produce attested that their stocks were rotting before they are sold off. This is as a result of high the perishability of agricultural produce.

This is one of the statements:

Agricultural produce is perishable, so if there is no one buying, it's a big loss

All my stock has rotten, I have never experienced such since inception. Yesterday I threw away vegetables (lettuce and tomatoes). I do not know what to do and where to access money for restocking

Oh! [sic], I was lucky enough I stocked eggs last time, all those who have vegetables ran loss ...they all rot before they were sold out

Theme 5: Battle of strategic selling points

Street vendors are usually fighting amongst themselves for strategic open selling points. A battle of strategic selling points emerged as a theme. Only a few women using trucks indicated that they move from one shopping centre to the other seeking potential buyers for their products.

This view is aptly encapsulated in the following comments:

Ummm! [sic], Since I am a foreigner, we are always removed from our selling point by local women. It is hard, we just move and look for another selling point

As you can see, this is a new place. I was removed and I had to occupy here. I am not so sure I might be moved again. Mind you, we are mixed tribes here

Soon after we opened after closing down due to COVID-19, there was a rush in occupying selling points. People do not know that selling high-quality products is important than fighting for a place

Theme 6: Numerous confrontations with police as a result of not meeting regulatory rules of COVID-19.

The last but not the least theme to emerge from the interview transcripts is endless confrontation with the police as a result of not meeting the regulatory rules of COVID-19 such as social distancing, wearing masks, and use of sanitisers. Participants claimed that police officers were hunting them down, to arrest them because they did not have COVID-19 prevention materials such as masks.

This is reflected in the following excerpts:

We would like to be law-abiding citizens; however, we do not have money to buy sanitisers to sanitise the customers

Oh! [sic], Yeah police and security forces are a challenge. Last week I ended up at the police station because I was seen selling my products without wearing a face mask

Eish! [sic], Had it not been another officer who was merciful, I should have paid fine; they are strict these days with COVID-19 health regulations

Discussion of results

The findings revealed that a lack of capital for reinvestment in the business impeded women survivalist entrepreneurs. These findings are consistent with those of Pretorius and Shaw (2004) and Atieno (2009),

who found that access to start-up finance is a substantial barrier to starting a new business. Furthermore, these findings support Mwangi's (2013) assertion that the fundamental challenge faced by survivalist entrepreneurs is a lack of start-up capital. The outcomes of this study further confirm that unregistered enterprises are not eligible for government grants. These findings support what Chimucheka and Mandipaka (2015) discovered in their study that some entrepreneurs do not receive government assistance because their enterprises are unregistered. The findings of this investigation also revealed that product demand in the market has decreased. On the demand side, a sudden and dramatic drop in demand and revenue for entrepreneurial projects significantly impacts their ability to operate and/or produce serious financial constraints (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2020). This study's findings demonstrated that due to panic caused by the COVID-19 crisis, women survivalist businesses lost a substantial number of clients and sales volume. These findings mirror the works of Meyer, Prescott, and Sheng (2020) who pointed out that, demand appears to have taken a bigger hit, as those emergency shutdowns have also left households shuttered in their homes, consumer spending has fallen dramatically, and business investment spending has dried up.

Furthermore, the results of this study also revealed that the participants who are engaged in trading agricultural produce attested that their stocks were rotting before they are sold off. These findings are in line with Chazovachii (2020), who conducted a study to understand the strategies for resilient livelihoods by Masvingo urban's vulnerable groups during the Covid-19 pandemic in Zimbabwe. Chazovachii's findings exposed that the dreams of some women and the elderly entrepreneurs in Masvingo's dreams were shattered on the 25th of April 2020 as 35 tonnes of tomatoes and 21 tonnes of avocados pears got rotten as the Masvingo Fruit and Vegetables Market remained closed to trade to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Furthermore, inferring from the study's findings, it is also important to note that, women survivalist entrepreneurs explained that they usually fight amongst themselves for strategic open selling points to generate revenue for their entrepreneurial ventures. This means they are unable to operate their firms due to a lack of formal business premises.

Moreover, the participants also revealed that they had numerous confrontations with police due to not meeting the regulatory rules of

COVID-19. Not having face masks and sanitisers, for example. The results obtained in the current study are also not without empirical support. The impact of the COVID-19 crisis on SMEs was also studied by Lu, Peng and Lu (2020) whose aim was to evaluate issues regarding work recovery and corresponding political demands. Their research sample consisted of 4807 SMEs in the Sichuan Province, using surveys and online interviews as their research method. Most SMEs were unable to continue operating due to the shortage of epidemic mitigation materials.

Recommendations

Based on the findings discussed in this study, the following recommendations are put forward to women survivalist entrepreneurs and the government of South Africa:

- Personal protective equipment for COVID-19, such as face masks and hand sanitisers should be freely supplied by the government to women survivalist entrepreneurs.
- The local government should build local marketplaces for women survivalist entrepreneurs.
- The government should formalise the informal sectors by registering them in their municipalities of residence. This could possibly broaden tax payments for the government.
- Financial support should be given to women survivalist entrepreneurs to boost their business thereby improving their livelihoods.
- The South African government should strive to capacitate women survivalist on business management skills.
- There is a need for the government to allocate more financial resources to survivalist women entrepreneurs to empower them. In addition, the South African government should come up with a considerable dedicated fund for survivalist women entrepreneur's this could go a long way towards women empowerment.

Limitations and future research

Although the findings offer valuable insights into the hurdles faced by women survivalist entrepreneurs, the study is prone to limitations that offer avenues for future research. First, the current study used a

qualitative research design in semi-structured interviews that employed a small sample size of 35 participants. This limits the generalisability of the research findings. Thus, rigorous research comprising a bigger sample is recommended. Second, future research may seek to enhance external validity through the use of a quantitative research design that employs a large sample size. In addition, this study has its limitation as participants are restricted to women survivalist entrepreneurs within the Johannesburg metropolitan area of South Africa. Therefore, future research could be done with a large sample size to understand the barriers better. Perhaps if data gathering is extended to consider other regions and provinces of South Africa, findings might be more insightful. Therefore, future studies should consider this recommended research direction because the study results were limited as the study was conducted at a specific segment (women survivalist entrepreneurs within the Johannesburg metropolitan area of South Africa). Moreover, a quantitative study or a mixed approach might be necessary to determine the exact hurdles and problems these women survivalist entrepreneurs face.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the hurdles emanating from the COVID- 19 pandemic among women survivalist entrepreneurs in Johannesburg, South Africa. This study has looked at the keywords; survivalist entrepreneurs, women survivalist entrepreneurs, COVID- 19 and the study's objectives. An extensive literature review has been conducted to have an overview or to gain an in-depth understanding of what an entrepreneur is, what is a survivalist entrepreneur, what are women survivalist entrepreneurs and the general challenges confronted by survivalist entrepreneurs. In addition, the literature review also provided a rich theoretical base by giving an overview of the various common challenges that survivalist entrepreneurs confront. A qualitative methodology was used with the use of semi-structured face-to-face interviews. The study analysed the responses of the women survivalist entrepreneurs and identified the hurdles emanating from the COVID- 19 pandemic. Most respondents stressed that the hurdles they are facing as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic currently hinder the survival and growth of their ventures. Moreover, it was found that women survivalist entrepreneurs have faced barriers such as lack of capital for reinvestment,

lack of government grant support due to unregistered businesses, a decline in the demand of products on the market, higher perishability of stock at the selling points, battle of strategic selling points and numerous confrontations with police as a result of not meeting the regulatory rules of COVID-19.

References

- Abutabenjeh, S., & Jaradat, R. (2018). Clarification of research design, research methods, and research methodology: A guide for public administration researchers and practitioners. *Teaching Public Administration*, 36(3), 237-258.
- Akhalwaya, A., & Havenga, W. (2012). The Barriers that hinder the success of Women Entrepreneurs in Gauteng; South Africa. *International Journal of Sustainable Development*, 3(5), 11-22.
- Allen-Ebrahimian, B. 2020. "Timeline: The Early Days of China's Coronavirus Outbreak and Cover-up." Accessed March 21, 2020. <https://www.axios.com/timeline-the-early-days-of-chinas-coronavirus-outbreak-and-cover-up-ee65211a-afb6-4641-97b8-353718a5faab.html>
- Antonites, A. & Govindasamy, T., 2013, 'Critical success factors of Indian entrepreneurs', *The Southern African Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business Management Journal* 6(1), 116-133. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/sajesbm.v6i1.36>
- Aspers, P., & Corte, U. (2019). What is qualitative in qualitative research. *Qualitative Sociology*, 42(2), 139-160. 20.
- Atieno, R., 2009, 'Linkages, access to finance and the performance of small-scale', Research paper, Institute for Development Studies, The University of Nairobi, Nairobi.
- Bandara, R., Fernando, M., & Akter, S. (2020). Explicating the privacy paradox: A qualitative inquiry of online shopping consumers. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 52, 101947.
- Bell, B., Bryman, A. & Harley, B. (2018). *Business Research Methods*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Berner E, Gomez G.M, Knorringa P. (2008). "Helping a large number of people become a little less poor": The logic of survival entrepreneurs. Paper presented at the Institute of socialStudies, The Netherlands. Acc

essedfrom<http://campus.iss.nl/~gomez/SurvivalPaper%20Wider.pdf>

- Brush, CG & Cooper, SY, 2012. Female entrepreneurship and economic development: An international perspective. *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development* 24(1–2), 1–6.
- Chan, J. F., S. Yuan, and K. H. Kok. 2020. “A Familial Cluster of Pneumonia Associated with the 2019 Novel Coronavirus Indicating Person-to-person Transmission: A Study of a Family Cluster.” *The Lancet* 395 (10223): 514–523.
- Chauke, P. K. (2015). An assessment of survivalist enterprises in the Capricorn District Municipality. *Development Southern Africa*, 32(5), 613–622.
- Chazovachii, B. (2020). Understanding Strategies for Resilient Livelihoods by Masvingo Urban’s Vulnerable Groups During the Covid-19 Pandemic in Zimbabwe. *African Journal of Governance & Development*, 9(1), 139–159.
- Chen, M.A., 2012. *The informal economy: Definitions, theories and policies* (Vol. 1, No. 26, pp. 90141–4). WIEGO working Paper.
- Chimucheka, T. & Mandipaka, F., 2015, ‘Challenges faced by small, medium and micro enterprises in the Nkonkobe Municipality’, *International Business & Economics Research Journal* 14(2), 309–316. <http://dx.doi.org/10.19030/iber.v14i2.9114>
- Chinomona, E., & Maziriri, E. T. (2015). Women in action: Challenges facing women entrepreneurs in the Gauteng Province of South Africa. *International Business & Economics Research Journal (IBER)*, 14(6), 835–850.
- Chirwa, EW, 2008. Effects of gender on the performance of micro and small enterprises in Malawi. *Development Southern Africa* 25(3), 347–62.
- Choto, P. (2015). The impact of business incubators on survivalist entrepreneurs in the Cape Metropolitan area (Doctoral dissertation, Cape Peninsula University of Technology).
- Choto, P., Tengeh, R.K. & Iwu, C.G. (2014). ‘Daring to survive or to grow? The growth aspirations and challenges of survivalist entrepreneurs in South Africa’, *Environmental Economics*, 5(4), 93–101.
- Corbin, J. M., & Strauss, A. (1990). Grounded theory research: Procedures, canons, and evaluative criteria. *Qualitative sociology*, 13(1), 3–21

- Creswell, J. W. (2014). A concise introduction to mixed methods research. SAGE publications.
- Csillag, S., Csizmadia, P., Hidegh, A. L., & Szászvári, K. (2019). What makes small beautiful? Learning and development in small firms. *Human Resource Development International*, 22(5), 453-476.
- De Villiers, C., Dumay, J., & Maroun, W. (2019). Qualitative accounting research: dispelling myths and developing a new research agenda. *Accounting & Finance*, 59(3), 1459-1487.
- Deere, C.D. and De Leal, M.L., 2014. *Empowering women: Land and property rights in Latin America*. University of Pittsburgh Pre.
- DezanShira&Assocoiates., 2020. The Social & Economic Impact of Covid-19 On South Africa. <https://www.silkroadbriefing.com/news/2020/04/16/social-economic-impact-covid-19-south-africa/>
- Dijkhuizen, J., Gorgievski, M., Van Veldhoven, M. & Schalk, R., 2016, 'Feeling successful as an entrepreneur: A job demands-resources approach', *International Entrepreneurship and Management Journal* 12(2), 555–573. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11365-014-0354-z>
- Dube, B., Roberts-Lombard, M. & van Tonder, E., (2015). 'Management guidelines for universal quality challenges across the focus group research process', *Journal of Applied Business Research*, 31(1), 239–247.
- Edelman, L.F., Manolova, T., Shirokova, G. & Tsukanova, T., 2016, 'The impact of family supports on young entrepreneurs' start-up activities', *Journal of Business Venturing* 31(4), 428–448.
- Fischer, E. M., Reuber, A. R., & Dyke, L. S. (1993). A theoretical overview and extension of research on sex, gender, and entrepreneurship. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 8(2), 151-168.
- Fisher, G. (2011). Which type of entrepreneur are you, available at: <http://www.entrepreneurmag.co.za/advice/growing-a-business/performance-and-growth/which-type-of-entrepreneur-are-you/> [May 22, 2020].
- GEM (2013). South African Report: Twenty Years of Democracy. Cape Town: University of Cape Town, Available: <http://www.gemconsortium.org/docs/3336/gem-south-africa-2013-report> [May 10, 20].
- Glesne, C. (2011). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction*, 4th edn., Pearson Education, Boston, MA.
- Hackett, P. (2019). *Quantitative research methods in consumer psychology: Contemporary and Data Driven Approaches*. London: Taylor & Francis.

- Hammond, M., Howarth, J. & Keat, R., 1991, Understanding phenomenology, Basil Blackwell, Oxford.
- Hunter, D. J. & Howes, D. (2020). Defining exploratory-descriptive qualitative (edq) research and considering its application to healthcare. *GSTF Journal of Nursing and Health Care (JNHC)*, 4(1), DOI: 10.5176/2345-7198_4.1.202
- Iacobucci, D. & Churchill, Jr. G.A. 2010. Marketing research: methodological foundations. 10th ed. Mason, Ohio: Cengage Learning.
- Jung, K., Dalton, B., & Willis, J. (2018, May). From patriarchal socialism to grassroots capitalism: The role of female entrepreneurs in the transition of North Korea. In *Women's Studies International Forum* (Vol. 68, pp. 19-27). Pergamon.
- Kaae, S. & Traulsen, J. M. (2020). Qualitative methods in pharmacy practice research. In *Pharmacy Practice Research Methods*, 31-54). Springer, Singapore.
- Kabeer, N., 2005. Gender equality and women's empowerment: A critical analysis of the third millennium development goal 1. *Gender & Development*, 13(1), pp.13-24.
- Kelley, DJ, Brush, CG, Greene, P & Litovsky, Y, 2013. Global entrepreneurship monitor 2012 women's report. Babson College, Boston, MA.
- Khambule, I., 2020. The effects of covid-19 on the south african informal economy: limits and pitfalls of government's response. *Loyola Journal of Social Sciences*, 34(1).
- Lerner J., Schoar A (2010). International differences in Entrepreneurship. University of Chicago Press Ltd London. Published 2010 in the US
- Li, Q., X. Guan, X., and P. Wu. 2020. "Early Transmission Dynamics in Wuhan, China, of Novel Coronavirus-infected Pneumonia." *The New England Journal of Medicine*. (2020 Jan 29), 10.1056/NEJMoa2001316
- Ligthelm, AA, 2008. A targeted approach to informal business development: The entrepreneurial route. *Development Southern Africa* 25(4), 367-82.
- Lu, Y., Wu, J., Peng, J., & Lu, L. (2020). The perceived impact of the Covid-19 epidemic: evidence from a sample of 4807 SMEs in Sichuan Province, China, *Environmental Hazards*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17477891.2020.1763902>

- Majid, U. (2018). Research fundamentals: Study design, population, and sample size. *Undergraduate Research in Natural and Clinical Science and Technology Journal*, 2, 1-7.
- Malebana, MJ, 2017. Knowledge of entrepreneurial support and entrepreneurial intention in the rural provinces of South Africa. *Development Southern Africa* 34(1), 74–89.
- Malhotra (2010). *Marketing research: an applied orientation*, 6th ed, Upper Saddle River, N.J: Pearson Education
- Mandipaka F., (2014). Overview of Women Entrepreneurs in South Africa. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*. 5(9) 127-130
- Maphalla, ST, Nieuwenhuizen, C & Roberts, R, 2009. Perceived barriers experienced by township small-, micro-, and medium enterprise entrepreneurs in Mamelodi. Doctoral dissertation, University of Johannesburg, Johannesburg.
- Nmadu, TM, 2011. Enhancing women's participation in formal and informal sectors of Nigeria's economy through entrepreneurship literacy. *Journal of Business Diversity* 11(1), 87–98.
- Marino, E., González, J., López, J., Luján, J., Gordillo, M. & Osorio, C., 2011, 'Science, technology and society: A conceptual approximation', *Notebooks of Latin America* 1(1), 10–25.
- Marlow, S., & Patton, D. (2005). All credit to men? Entrepreneurship, finance, and gender. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 29(6), 717-735.
- Maziriri, E.T. & Madinga, N.W. (2015). 'The effect of buyer's remorse on consumer's repeat-purchase intention: Experiences of generation y apparel student consumers within the Vaal Triangle', *International Journal of Research in Business Studies and Management*, 29(5), 24–31.
- McGrath, C., Palmgren, P. J. & Liljedahl, M. (2019). Twelve tips for conducting qualitative research interviews. *Medical teacher*, 41(9), 1002-1006.
- Meyer, R., B. Prescott, and X. S. Sheng. (2020). "The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Business Expectations." Atlanta Fed Working Paper Available from: <https://ideas.repec.org/p/gwc/wpaper/2020-006.html> [Assessed 28 May 2021].
- Miller, J. (2008). The ongoing legitimacy project: corporate philanthropy as protective strategy. *European Management Review*, 5(3), 151-164.
- Morales, T.C.P., Ferie, C.P., Fonseca, F. & Frias, R., 2016, 'The entrepreneurship of the young population in the Ecuadorian context, showing the approach of the science, technology, and society', *Journal*

- of Service Science and Management* 9(1), 28-35. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4236/jssm.2016.91004>
- Munoz, L. (2010). Forced to entrepreneurship: Modeling the factors behind necessity entrepreneurship. Serviere, Laura (2010), "Forced to Entrepreneurship: Modeling the Factors Behind Necessity Entrepreneurship," *Journal of Business and Entrepreneurship*, 22(1), 37-53.
- Muposhi, A. & Dhurup, M. (2016). A qualitative inquiry of generation Y consumers' selection attributes in the case of organic products. *International Business & Economics Research Journal (IBER)*, 15(1), 1-14.
- Mwangi, M.W., 2013, 'Factors that affect the success of physically challenged entrepreneurs in their business activities: A survey of Thika municipality – Kiambu County, Kenya Margaret Wanjiku Mwangi', *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences* 3(1), 280–289.
- National Planning Commission. 2012. National Development Plan: Vision for 2030. Pretoria: The Presidency.
- Nisbett, N., Davis, P., Yosef, S. and Akhtar, N., 2017. Bangladesh's story of change in nutrition: Strong improvements in basic and underlying determinants with an unfinished agenda for direct community level support. *Global food security*, 13, pp.21-29.
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2020). Coronavirus (COVID-19): SME policy responses. <https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/coronavirus-covid-19-sme-policy-responses-04440101/> Assessed date 27/05/2021
- Pivcevic, E., 1970, Husserl and phenomenology, Hutchinson University Library, London
- Pretorius, R. & Shaw, G., 2004, 'Business plan in bank-decision making when financing new businesses', *South Africa Journal of Economic and Management Sciences* 7(2), 221–241.
- Rani, G., & Natarajan, C. (2020). Women Entrepreneurship in India. *Studies in Indian Place Names*, 40(12), 2115-2121.
- Ranyane, K. A. (2015). Survivalist entrepreneurship: An income generating alternative for the unemployed populace. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 6(4), 301.
- Ritella, G., Rajala, A. & Renshaw, P. (2020). Using chronotope to research the space-time relations of learning and education: Dimensions of the unit of analysis. *Learning, Culture and Social Interaction*, DOI:/10.1016/j.lcsi.2020.100381

- Sale, J., Lohfeld, L & Brazil, K., 2002, 'Revisiting the quantitative-qualitative debate: Implications for mixed methods', *Quality and Quantity* 36(1), 43–53. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1023/A:1014301607592>
- Sarstedt, M., Bengart, P., Shaltoni, A. M. & Lehmann, S. (2018). The use of sampling methods in advertising research: A gap between theory and practice. *International Journal of Advertising*, 37(4), 650-663.
- Saunders, M., Lewis, P. & Thornhill, A. (2016). Research methods for business students. 7th ed. Harlow, England: Pearson Education.
- Sefotho, M.M., 2015, 'A researcher's Dilemma: Philosophy in crafting dissertations and theses', *Journal of Social Sciences* 42(1), 23–36.
- Shonhiwa, W. (2019). 'The impact of using technology through cooperative learning on learners' performance on grade 11 circle geometry. Masters. Thesis. Cape Town: University of the Western Cape.
- Tehseen, S. & Ramayah, T., 2015, 'Entrepreneurial competencies and SMEs business success: The Contingent role of external integration', *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences* 6(1), 50–61. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5901/mjss.2015.v6n1p50002E>
- Tengeh, R. K., & Choto, P. (2015). The relevance and challenges of business incubators that support survivalist entrepreneurs. *Investment Management and Financial Innovations*, (12, Iss. 2 (contin.)), 150-161.
- The Guardian. 2020. "The First COVID-19 Case Happened in November, China Government Records Show – Report." Accessed March 21, 2020. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/13/first-covid-19-case-happened-in-november-china-government-records-show-report>
- Thobekani, L & Mafini, C. (2019). Challenges Faced by Isi-Xhosa Survivalist Entrepreneurs in Butterworth, South Africa. Korea Distribution Science Association. 2019 *International Conference on Business and Economics* (ICBE 2019), pp, 119-124. Kumari & Singh, 2019
- Van der Lingen, E. & Van Niekerk, G., 2015, 'Entrepreneurship Traits of Science, Engineering and Technology (SET) Students', *The Southern African Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business Management* 7(1), 117–144. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/sajesbm.v7i1.1>
- Vinesh, L. (2014). Role of women entrepreneurs in India. *Global Journal of Finance and Management*. 6(5) 473-480.
- WHO (World Health Organization) 2020. Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19): Situation Report no. 52. Available online on:

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/situation-reports>, Accessed March 21, 2020.

Witbooi, M &Ukpere, W, 2011. Indigenous female entrepreneurship: Analytical study on access to finance for women entrepreneurs in South Africa. *African Journal of Business Management* 5 (14), 5646–57.

Wuhan Municipal Health Commission. 2019. “Report of Clustering Pneumonia of Unknown Etiology in Wuhan City.” Accessed March 18, 2020. <http://wjw.wuhan.gov.cn/front/web/showDetail/2019123108989>