
IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON SMMEs AND THE FUTURE SUSTAINABILITY MEASURES: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

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Abstract

Small Medium and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs) have made remarkable contributions to enhancing the economic growth of South Africa. The emergence of COVID-19 hindered the growth of SMMEs due to the lockdown imposed by the government on the 23rd of March, 2020. This study investigated the impact of COVID-19 on SMMEs and the future sustainability measures. To achieve the objectives of this study, a systematic review was adopted and 150 articles were downloaded and perused from various databases for the study. Findings obtained from the study revealed that several authors from different continents have made wide contributions to revive SMMEs amidst the COVID-19 disruption. The recommendations made to SMMEs include amplifying their communication networks and adopting e-commerce options, as well as Social Network Sites to reach out to their customers. Other recommendations include the adoption of transactional leadership, strategic management, employee management, financial management, and effective collaboration. The study further recommended that the government should endeavour to provide funding opportunities to SMMEs, improve the provision of infrastructure and enhance the effectiveness of the business environment. The study concludes that the SMMEs that were affected by the interruption of COVID-19 would be revived if the recommendations of this study are applied.

Keywords: SMMEs in South Africa; COVID-19 disruption; Challenges of Covid-19; Sustainability measures; Job opportunities

1. Introduction

Small, Micro, and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMMEs) are essential for the development and progress of any country. Due to their promotion of job creation, poverty reduction, equity, and innovation, particularly among young people, SMMEs are crucial to the pace of growth (Bushe, 2019). SMMEs are referred to as profit-oriented businesses,

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cooperatives, and non-governmental organisations that employ a certain number of people (Bushe, 2019). Chimucheka and Mandipaka (2015) pinpoint that SMMEs are the main forces behind South Africa's economic progress as they have made tremendous contributions toward tackling poverty and unemployment. However, numerous studies have demonstrated that various obstacles, including lack of funding and insufficient income, poor management, corruption, lack of knowledge and experience, and inadequate infrastructure, limit the expansion of SMMEs in South Africa (Cant & Wiid, 2013; Machirori & Fatoki, 2013; Bertelsmann 2016; Kagiso & Potgieter, 2018). According to Lings (2014), SMMEs in South Africa tend to have a relatively high failure rate. Estimates indicate that 40% of new SMMEs fail within their first year, 60% in their second year, and 90% in their first ten years. This low survival rate was reaffirmed in a report by the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) (2022), which noted that the survival rate for local start-up enterprises in South Africa is low by global standards. However, the problem has intensified due to the lockdown imposed by the government in March 2020 due to the outbreak of COVID-19.

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has resulted in tremendous human suffering, extensive death, and a severe economic catastrophe on a global scale (Chakraborty & Maity, 2020). The total output of the affected countries has deteriorated and the stock market has been negatively impacted by escalating uncertainty. Since the lockdown was implemented in March 2020, South Africa's previously deteriorating economy has worsened. The Reserve Bank predicts a 6.1% economic decline, 1,600 SMME closures, and 370,000 loss of formal sector jobs, all in 2020 (Roeleveld, 2020). According to Knight (2021), numerous economists and analysts predict that actual employment losses will exceed one million. Considering the 6.7 million people who are currently unemployed in the South African labour market, doubt is created in predicting the economic future of the country (Knight, 2021). Even though many of the big companies continued to pay their employees during the lockdown, many SMMEs couldn't survive the contingent situation, let alone pay their employees (Chakraborty & Maity, 2020). While funding was offered to a qualified few SMMEs, it was not enough to enhance their business activities (Nyawo, 2020). To provide revival measures for SMMEs, the president of South Africa, Cyril Ramaphosa, introduced procedures such as union support from the unemployment insurance fund (UIF), and business financial support to continue operating and maintaining employment issues (Roeleveld, 2020).

SMMEs witnessed a decrease in income and the availability of labour due to the lockdown rules imposed on them during the pandemic and this affected their total output, thus jeopardizing their chances of survival (Klein & Todesco, 2021). Also, supply networks were disrupted, resulting in a lack of essential commodities needed by the citizenry. On the demand side, a sudden and considerable drop in demand had a huge negative effect on their capacity to function, leading to severe financial limitations (Barman, Das & De, 2021). Klein and Todesco (2021) attest that many customers experienced contagion anxiety and heightened uncertainty, which contributed to a decline in spending and consumption. These effects are worsened by the layoffs of

workers and the inability of SMMEs to pay salaries. A decrease in consumer and business confidence occurred in certain areas, like tourism and transportation, which was disproportionately affected. Generally, SMMEs were probably more vulnerable to social distancing than other enterprises. In this case, the lockdown and the COVID-19 epidemic had a historically negative impact on South African SMMEs due to their vulnerability and lessened resilience concerning their size (Booyens et al., 2022). To provide insights into the current issues that most SMMEs in South Africa are facing, this study explored the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on SMMEs and the developmental support challenges they faced during the pandemic. The study further provides the sustainability strategies to revive their businesses. Investigating measures to support SMMEs during this time of economic instability is crucial because of their roles such as job creation and economic growth.

2. Financial Gap theory

This theory placed a high value on the conviction that numerous enterprises require legal funding from the government and can make good use of the funds, however, they were unable to obtain such funds due to failure to meet the financial system's requirements (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2006). However, a study on the financial gap theory conducted by Chimucheka and Mandipaka (2015) revealed that the inability of SMMEs to understand the prerequisites for external sources of funds is due to a lack of knowledge about business formalities. Esho and Verhoef (2018) offer two official approaches to defining the funding gap, which is the positive and normative approaches. In the positive approach, it is defined as "an equilibrium, in which the volume of lending is below that which would emerge in a competitive capital market with costless and complete contracting, no private information and rational expectation" (Esho & Verhoef, 2018:5). Their normative approach, defines the funding gap as the follows: "market failure and the appropriate policy response to which is an increase in the volume of lending" (Esho & Verhoef, 2018:5). Consequently, a financial gap occurs when there is a mismatch between capital supply and demand because of persistent market failures. The funding gap is the discrepancy between the sum of money that businesses should operate on and the amount of money that they receive (Younus, A.M., 2021).

The Organization for Economic Development and Co-operation (2006) specifies that many SMMEs without access to funding would be able to employ those funds effectively if they were accessible. However, the formal financial system does not offer funds to such organizations owing to structural features. The OECD (2006) further note that in developing nations, such as those in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), the funding shortfall for SMMEs is particularly acute. Small and medium companies in South Africa have a particularly tough time obtaining bank loans and other forms of institutional funding (Akinsola & Ikhida, 2019). In Bushe's view (2019), the paucity of bank funding in South Africa is due to a combination of poor financial infrastructure and macroeconomic

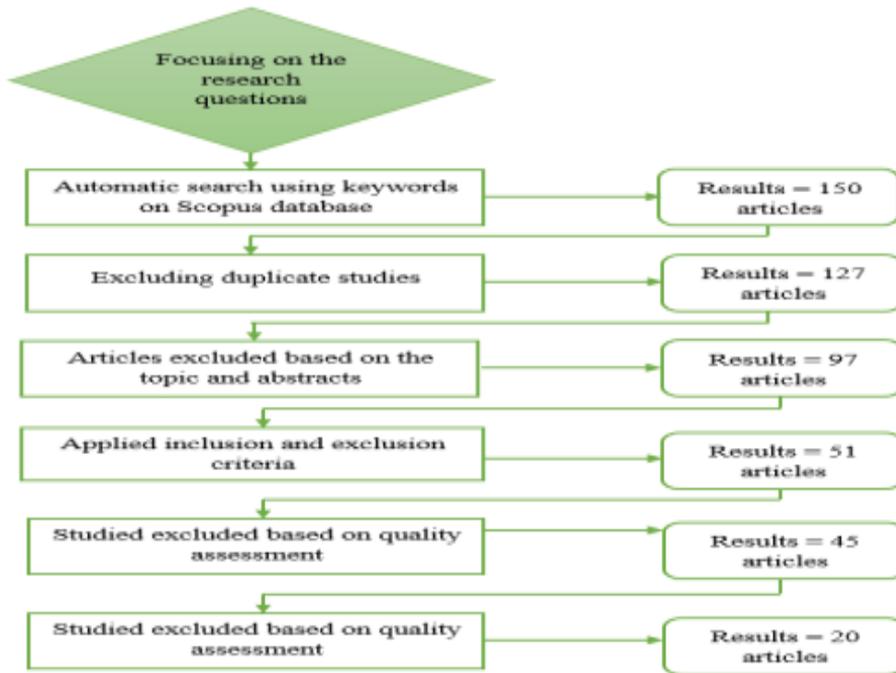
reasons. Thus, when SMMEs require external finance, they typically do not have access to conventional capital markets, except to banking institutions and as a result, they are more vulnerable to the effects of any financing deficit (Rupeika-Apoga & Saksonova, 2018). This implies that the finance gap refers to a shortage of financial sector capital accessible to SMMEs (IMF 2020). The financial gap theory states that SMMEs would be successful in their business engagements if the government entities, banking sector, financial institutions, and the private sector would fund them to guarantee that the financial gap is closed.

3. Research Methodology

This study adopts a systematic literature review to find solutions to the problem of the study. According to Munn *et al.* (2018), a systematic literature review identifies, picks, and critically evaluates a study in an attempt to address a clearly stated subject. Here, 150 articles were downloaded and perused to critically identify the sustainability measures for SMMEs after the COVID-19 pandemic. The eligibility criteria focused on only peer-reviewed articles that are written in English and focused on the sustainability of SMMEs after the COVID-19 pandemic. Only articles published from 2018 to 2022 were accepted for this study. Keywords such as SMME, sustainability measures/strategies, and COVID-19 were used to search for the resources needed for this study. The articles (150) downloaded for the study were reduced to 20 articles after considering the inclusion criteria as stated above and other factors such as duplication of articles, and articles that did not focus on the focus of the aim of the study. A descriptive qualitative research method was applied and the researcher searched the general sustainability measures recommended by diverse authors from different parts of the world to revive SMMEs amidst COVID-19. The effects of COVID-19 on SMMEs were explored through a non-empirical approach. The study explored further by reading through the included articles and documents, all the relevant recommendations by the authors that would be relevant to other SMMEs in the South African context to revive their business ventures. The results were discussed to proffer provide a robust discourse in an endeavour to find solutions to the problem of the study. Finally, recommendations were made based on the meta-analysis of the study and these serve as mitigating factors to revive the SMMEs in the South African context and other countries, which must have been affected by the outbreak of COVID-19. Figure 1 presents a flowchart of the articles included in the study.

Figure 1 depicts that 150 articles were downloaded for the study, which was eventually reduced to 20 articles after considering the inclusion criteria of the study.

Figure 1: Flowchart of the articles included in the study



Source: Author representation, 2022

4. Impact of Covid-19 on SMMEs in South Africa

The lockdown imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic has led to a loss of income for SMMEs in South Africa and other countries (Tripath *et al.*, 2021). However, large businesses have greater access to reserved earnings from earlier proceeds, and it is also easier for them to access loan facilities from financial institutions (Bateman, 2019). They can obtain supplementary capital from existing or potential investors to survive after the COVID-19 period. The IMF World Economic Outlook Report of April 6th, 2020 emphasized that the cash flow of SMMEs across the globe witnessed significant losses due to the COVID-19 lockdown, as well as the loss of clients and income, which had led to the closure of many SMMEs around the globe (IMF 2020). However, as side jobs are lost and friends and families experience financial difficulties, SMMEs, which depend on friends and family for funding or side hustles, face a huge dilemma (Tsoetsi, 2020). If the essential solutions are not put in place, this loss of revenue might eventually result in a permanent loss of income for millions of households in South Africa, where 2.44 million SMMEs employ one (the entrepreneur) to three people (SEDA, 2020).

The cash flow issue is another challenge faced by South African SMMEs during the COVID-19 pandemic (Sucheran, 2022). Ramli and Yekini (2022) state that some

businesses have taken advantage of the crisis to prolong payment periods and request charge reductions from small businesses. For small enterprises, this is just not feasible. Paying SME suppliers in 30 days is one of the critical levers for an SMME's survival, according to Corporate South Africa (Sucheran, 2022). In this regard, Nyawo (2020) confirms that Business for South Africa (B4SA), the SA SMME Fund, and Business Leadership South Africa (BLSA) spearheaded the #PayIn30 effort, which is supported by Business Unity South Africa (BUSU), the Small Business Institute (SBI), and the Black Business Council, among others (BBC), among others. Therefore, the recession and pandemic have wreaked havoc on the approximately 2.5 million SMMEs, which account for the employment of 10.8 million employments (Bruwer, Hattingh & Perold, 2020). According to Transunion data, 6.4% of formal SMMEs filed for bankruptcy (up 50% over the last year), resulting in the loss of 260,000 employees and the threat of another 240,000 (BIZCommunity, 2020).

According to the International Trade Centre (ITC) (2020), governments of many countries, including that of South Africa, adopted a lockdown policy to curb the spread of COVID-19. This includes a clampdown on economic and business activities. As a consequence, trade flows were disrupted and merchandise trade declined globally, particularly in 2020 (Mutula, 2020). To this end, the decline accelerated sharply during the pandemic, which caused exports to drop steeply in the first few months of 2020 (ITC, 2020). According to Mutula (2020), the impact precipitated by the COVID-19 lockdown forced SMMEs to close their business in South Africa just like many other countries around the world. One of the immediate impacts and subsequent results is the reduction in the working capital of most of these businesses (Zimon & Tarighi, 2021). This is due to the fact that most of these SMMEs, who are defined and identified in the country by their possession of certain criteria, are financially handicapped in facing the consequences of staying out of business due to the lockdown.

While arguing the fact that there is a reduction in the working capital of most SMMEs in the country, Mutula (2020) further noted that this situation may not be drastically alleviated despite relief funds provided by the government. In the same view, Tarkom (2022) pinpoints that many SMMEs are either repaying huge loans from financial institutions that partner with the government or lack collateral to access such funds. Consequently, Chen *et al.* (2022) affirm that most of these SMMEs are automatically disqualified to obtain funding from government entities, financial institutions, and banks due to their inability to meet up with the scoring system. It will simply imply that these SMMEs would continue to experience diminishing working capital, not only as caused by the effects of the COVID-19 lockdown, but also the consequences of low patronage across the country for the same reason (Chetty *et al.*, 2020).

SMMEs in South Africa lost their customers during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown and Dangol, Chitrakar, and Yoo (2020) aver that it is one of the devastating consequences of the lockdown on the SMMEs in the country. Shrestha (2020) noted that SMME demand and supply have both been impacted by the epidemic as the situation

increased low patronage and enhanced poor turnover. As consumers' focus shifted to primary healthcare and safety, their confidence declined, and their spending continued to decline due to low income (Dangol, Chitrakar & Yoo, 2020). It signifies that SMMEs struggled to meet consumer demand and maintain the supply chain because of poor logistical management (Chowdhury *et al.*, 2021). IMF (2020) claims that this has a substantial impact on the cash flow of SMMEs, as well as, the loss of customers and income, and can eventually result in the liquidation of the business.

The ITC (2020) notes that the COVID-19 pandemic struck at a period when global trade was already in shambles, with global trade falling in all four quarters of 2019 compared to the previous year. The decline was attributed partially to various trade wars, notably those between the US and China as well as the Covid-19 pandemic (Gruszczynski, 2020). Accordingly, business and merchandise dropped considerably leading to low patronage and poor turnover in most SMMEs in South Africa (Dayour, 2020). According to the ITC (2020), the effect of lockdown in the major areas resulted in a poor distribution of goods and services, thereby contributing to low patronage and the increasing of poor turnover in South Africa. The COVID-19 outbreak has caused significant obstacles for global supply networks (Shrestha, 2020). Manufacturers face disruptions because of several nationwide lockdowns that continue to restrict, if not fully stop, the flow of raw materials and finished goods (Cai & Luo, 2020). Some interruptions are brought on by corporate internal problems, such as equipment failures, product recalls, or management changes. Other systemic hazards include outside factors like a power outage or telecommunication issues (Lu *et al.*, 2021).

5. The developmental support challenges faced by SMMEs during COVID-19

SMMEs in South Africa and other countries faced several challenges due to the lockdown as a result of fear to contract the deadly disease (Chiloane-Phetla & Mathipa, 2021). In the view of Odeku (2021), the level of socio-economic issues experienced by black-owned South African SMMEs was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown. The imposed lockdown prevented most SMMEs from operating, while allowing big businesses to operate in malls (Odeku, 2021). This situation intensified the financial problems of SMMEs because most of them lack the financial means and support to start big businesses (Bimha & Primrose, 2021). SMMEs perhaps lack access to financial support because most of them are located in rural and semi-urban areas where access to financial support programmes provided by the government is beyond their reach (Bhorat, *et al.*, 2020). According to Coega Development Corporation (2021), access to funding is a major stumbling block, it is noteworthy to mention that only six percent (6%) of SMMEs received funding from the government during the pandemic. The highest three sources of government funding were government grants (21%), the Department of Trade and Industry (17%), and the National Youth Development Agency (16%) (COEGA, 2021). In effect, many SMEs were financially incapable of meeting their obligations, and to develop or expand beyond certain levels due to a lack of access to funding.

Gopaul and Manley (2015) state that SMMEs operate in an era of increasing doubt concerning worldwide economic and political stability, fast technological development, new rules and regulations, all of which provide challenges for new enterprises to overcome. The support offered by national and local governments is to increase the rate of SMME success and Kambwale, Chisoro and Karodia (2015) affirm that SMMEs perform poorly due to their lack of awareness of existing support programmes. Often, Bhorat *et al.* (2018) pinpoint that poor information dissemination prompted by a lack of modern technology increases their woes of ignorance in this regard. In South Africa, the government has prioritized bridging any gap that exists between rural micro-enterprises and wealthy high-end enterprises by cultivating an environment that allows both to thrive (Bhorat *et al.*, 2018). As a result, SEDA was established in 2004 with the mission of developing, supporting, and promoting small businesses to ensure growth and sustainability (SEDA, 2013; Lose & Khuzwayo, 2021). This is to improve innovation, customer service, and ethical behavior among all SMMEs affiliated with it but Lose and Khuzwayo (2021) aver that despite the move to ensure the economic sustenance and restoration of SMMEs during the pandemic in South Africa, SEDA has not recorded many positive results in this regard. However, Ouma-Mugabe, Chan and Marais (2021) further explain that although organizations such as Khula Enterprise Finance, the Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA), the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC), and the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA) are dedicated to assisting with funding, many entrepreneurs are unaware of their existence. Many SMMEs could not access funds from these agencies even when financial support was made available during the COVID-19 pandemic (Ouma-Mugabe, Chan & Marais, 2021). In this regard, Fatoki, (2021) stresses the need for the government to raise awareness and inform SMMEs about the resources accessible to them.

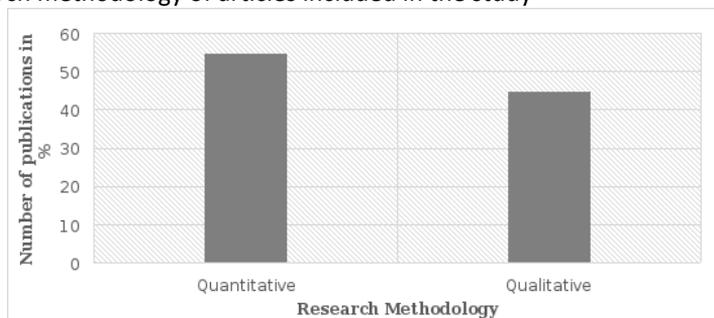
Small and medium-sized businesses (SMMEs) are largely regarded as a cure for economic growth and the government of South Africa has provided developmental support to assist in their survival (Abisuga-Oyekunle, Patra & Muchie, 2020). There are documented support service programmes provided by the government of South Africa. These programmes, according to Madzimure and Tau (2021) include the Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA) and the Khula Finance Enterprise (Khula). However, while such services are accessible, Ikwegbue *et al.* (2021) affirm that their availability in the country is restricted, especially during the pandemic. With the continued restricted spread of these programmes across the country, Makhalemele (2020) suggests that SMMEs would continue to face serious business challenges such as absence or restricted access to funding, and retarded growth and development. In the same view, Ikwegbue *et al.* (2021) note that SMMEs underperformed in job creation during the pandemic because there was no serious commitment on the part of the government of South Africa toward the sustainability of SMMEs. Bushe (2019) notes that SMMEs are frequently ignored in policy discussions in the country. As a result, small businesses must simply accept and adhere to onerous industry-wide agreements, which are sometimes to their detriment (Ikwegbue *et al.*, 2021).

The study by Rajagopaul, Magwentshu and Kalidas (2020) state that a lack of training among SMMEs is among the challenges facing this economic sector. This study further asserts that lack of training will have a negative influence on the post-Covid-19 survival of SMMEs in the country, thus emphasizing that there is an urgent need for the government to provide these requisite training supports which would enable them to continue running their businesses. According to Mutula (2020), the lack of advanced technology to aid SMMEs in their various business operations was felt during COVID-19. Mutula (2020) notes that most SMMEs were unable to reach their customers during the lockdown because they lacked the technological capacity to do so and this led to a poor turnover and low patronage. According to Phago (2020), some SMMEs located in rural areas experienced connectivity challenges due to the poor maintenance culture. Shrestha (2020) argues that inadequate business-related public infrastructure has forced many SMMEs to lay off more than half of their workforce. In some cases, some SMMEs wind up while others struggle to face their business challenges. Rajagopaul, Magwentshu, and Kalidas (2020) suggest that this situation can be alleviated by leveraging new technologies and social media network sites to reach new customers. SMMEs may expand their reach and efficiency at reduced costs by employing digital technologies. The creation of a Virtual Private Network (VPN) could enable SMMEs to quickly transit their call centres to remote operations, which will enhance quick access to their customers, especially those in rural areas (Rajagopaul, Magwentshu & Kalidas, 2020).

6. Presentation of research results

This section presents the results obtained from the study based on the research objectives. This section presents the research methods used by different authors in their studies and this was followed by the continents or origin of the articles. The authors further traced the trend of publication of articles that focused on the sustainability of SMMEs after the Covid-19 pandemic. Finally, a meta-analysis was presented which was based on the recommendations of authors on the sustainability measures to revive SMMEs. Figure 2 presents the research methodology adopted by the articles included in the study.

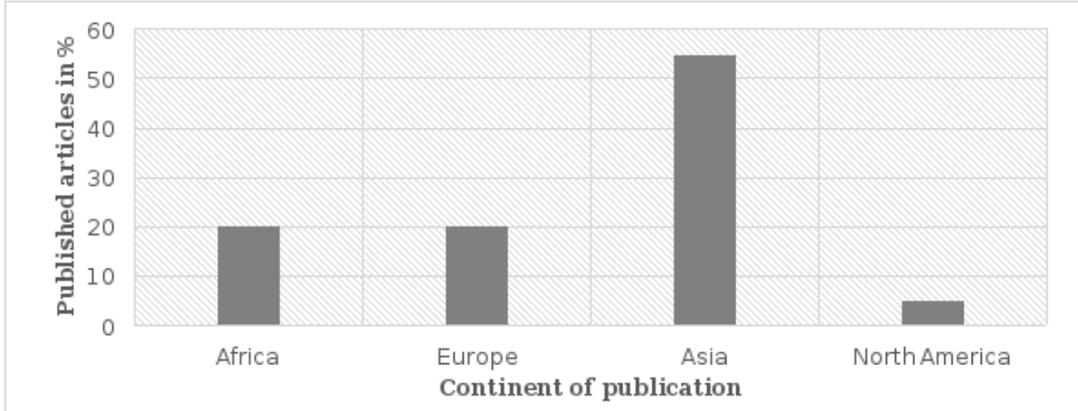
Figure 2: Research methodology of articles included in the study



Source: Author representation, 2022

Out of the 150 articles downloaded for the study, only 20 articles made the final selection due to the consideration of the inclusion criteria. According to Figure 2, it is observable that more authors adopted the quantitative study (55%) than the qualitative study (45%). The next section presents the region of publication.

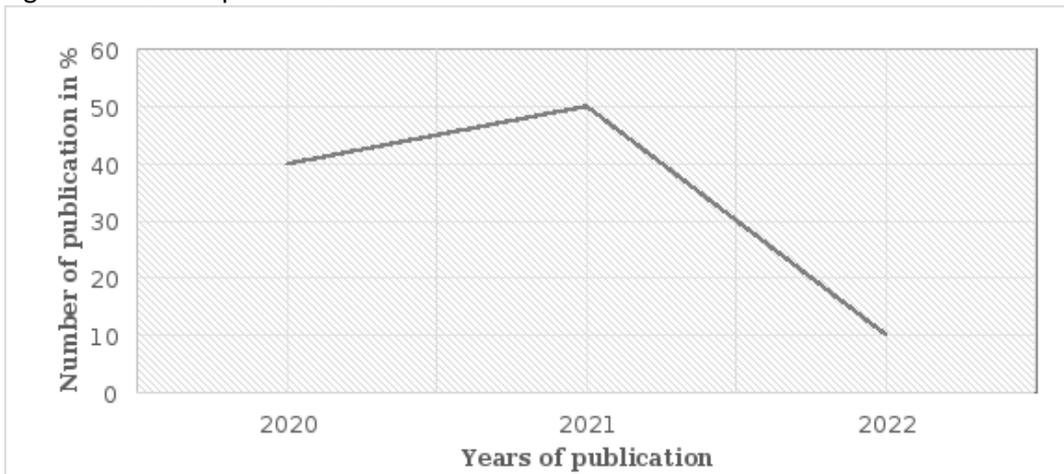
Figure 3: Continent of publications



Source: Author representation, 2022

Figure 3 presents the continents of publication and it portrays that more articles were published in Asia (55%) than in other countries. This was followed by Africa (20%), Europe (20%), and North America. The next section presents the trend of publication.

Figure 4: Trend in publication



Source: Author representation, 2022

Figure 4 presents the trend of publication during and after the COVID-19 outbreak. The trend of publication portrays that more articles were published in 2021 than in other years. This signifies that the authors were concerned to recommend sustainability

measures to SMMEs immediately after COVID-19. The next section presents a meta-analysis of this study.

6. Meta-analysis of the study

This section presents a meta-analysis of the study. According to the methodology section, the meta-analysis was conducted by exploring different views of the authors on the sustainability measures to revive SMMEs after the COVID-19 pandemic. To ensure the credibility of the findings, the names of the authors and titles of their studies were documented. Table 1 presents a meta-analysis of this study.

Table 1: SMME revival measures for sustainability

No	Name of Authors	Title of the study	Sustainability measures
1	Rakshit, Islam, Mondal, & Paul (2021)	Mobile apps for SMME business sustainability during COVID-19 and onwards	SMEs should improve their mobile app-based business networks to ensure success in their business process. Using instrumental variable analysis, it was discovered that increased mobile app usage significantly improves SMMEs' long-term efficiency
2	Bai, Quayson & Sarkis (2021)	The COVID-19 pandemic digitization lessons for sustainable development of micro-and small-enterprises. Sustainable production and consumption,	The study recommended that SMMEs should improve their business strategies, incorporating crisis scenarios and business continuity plans to sustain customers virtually.
3	Zutshi, Mendy, Sharma, Thomas & Sarker (2021)	From challenges to creativity: enhancing SMEs' resilience in the context of COVID-19.	The study recommended that SMMEs should ensure collaboration, openness, taking advantage of opportunities/victories, durability, and creativity.
4	Hu & Kee (2021)	Fostering sustainability: reinventing SME strategy in the new normal.	The study proposed that SMMEs should be dynamic, forward-looking, and transformational in capturing the regional and global markets' opportunities. Also, enhance their internal competencies and realign their effective business strategies in seizing the vast opportunities in the International markets.
5	Fitriasari (2020)	How do Small and Medium Enterprises	Prescripts from the study indicated that the right digitalization strategy is needed

		(SMMEs) survive the COVID-19 outbreak?	in achieving business goals and developing SMME products or services to be more competitive. In the process of digital transformation, the correct digital infrastructure testing is required. By using the appropriate technology for system resilience, a business can conduct its digital transformation and create digital resilience.
6	Ngutsav & Ijirshar (2020)	SMEs as drivers of economic recovery and sustainability during COVID-19 and in NIGERIA	The study recommended the granting of soft loans with a temporary moratorium of the loan or assisting the SMMEs with grants, granting the SMME payroll support program and granting relief programs. Also, improved innovativeness and managerial capabilities of SMMEs that are focused on less finance and more innovation-based routes are recommended.
7	Seah (2021)	COVID-19 and its effects on attitudes toward Opportunity-Motivated Entrepreneurship: Before and after Lockdown	These findings indicate that entrepreneurship should be promoted as a way to achieve both agentic-type and prosocial goals to increase subsequent entrepreneurship rates.
8	Andriyani, Nailufar, Yurina, Ratna & Rahmah (2021).	Analyzing the Sustainability of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises during COVID-19 Pandemic in Bireuen Regency, Indonesia	The results concluded that product innovation and compliance in Muamalah greatly affected business sustainability. Whilst changes in sales method, technology mastery, and market share expansion had a positive and significant effect on the sustainability of SMMEs in food products.
9	Sulistyo (2021)	Strategy for creating sustainable business during COVID-19 toward the new normal era based on marketing mix perspective.	Although all SMMEs can aspire to expand their business internationally, those with strong leadership, entrepreneurial and technical competence, and innovativeness stand a better chance of achieving success. SMMEs must reinvent their business strategies for business recovery and growth, strengthen their

			business resilience, enhance competitive advantages, equip the leadership and senior operational team with global skills to accelerate digital technology adoption
10	Irawan (2020)	Challenges and opportunities for small and medium enterprises in eastern Indonesia in facing the COVID-19 pandemic and the new normal era.	The study recommended that SMMEs should enhance product hygiene and environmental sanitation as the determining factors for the existence of SMMEs in eastern Indonesia.
11	Patma, Wardana, Wibowo, Narmaditya & Akbarina (2021)	The impact of social media marketing for Indonesian SME sustainability: Lesson from Covid-19 pandemic	This study suggests that the adoption of internet/e-business technology and social media marketing successfully explains the mediating role between variables.
12	Singh, Chamola, Kumar, Verma & Makkar (2022)	Explaining the revival strategies of Indian MSMEs to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 outbreak	The results show that the financial and non-financial revival measures such as firm revival, marketing training, and customer relationship management (CRM), financial incentives and firm support, extending worker social security and financial access and price control positively impact SMMEs' business sustainability
13	Roper & Turner (2020)	R&D and innovation after COVID-19: What can we expect? A review of prior research and data trends after the great financial crisis	Some additional financial support for innovation was proposed for sustainability. Whether this will be sufficient to sustain SMME levels of innovative activity, however, remains to be seen.
14	Savitri & Naili (2020)	Henry Mintzberg's Business Management Strategy Post-Pandemic COVID-19	Furthermore, regarding social learning approaches, Ali Murah Shop Madinah required to have good knowledge management and absorptive capacity.
15	Obrenovic, Du, Godinic, Tsoy,	Sustaining enterprise operations and	Prosperous organizations leverage Internet and Communication Technology

	Khan & Jakhongirov (2020)	productivity during the COVID-19 pandemic: "Enterprise Effectiveness and Sustainability Model".	(ICT) and integrate Intranet, social media, and online communication platforms into their daily business routines, which helps to establish trust and build bonds with employees, stakeholders, and customers during and post-crisis. Also, financial contingency plans sustain business operations during a pandemic.
16	Msomi & Olarewaju (2021)	Effects of Budgeting and Financial Awareness on Sustainability of Small and Medium Enterprises in South Africa during the COVID-19 Era	There is also a significant effect of budgeting and financial awareness on sustainability. Budgeting plays an important role in SMME sustainability more than financial awareness as budgeting uniquely accounts for the largest proportion of the variance in the regression model.
17	Ahmed, Kilika & Gakenia (2021)	SME resilience to COVID-19: Insights from non-essential service providers in Nairobi.	The study affirmed that business diversification, slack finance, intra-stakeholder collaboration, self-reinvention, positive psychology, technology leverage, and cost management as precursory resilience agents within Kenyan SMEs
18	Fubah & Moos (2022)	Exploring COVID-19 Challenges and Coping Mechanisms for SMEs in the South African Entrepreneurial Ecosystem	The findings revealed that the coping mechanisms used by the SMEs have a positive entrepreneurial mindset followed by reduced service prices and the retrenchment of employees. Practically, it is recommended that during crises, businesses should network with one another to remain operational and, owing to e-commerce, they are encouraged to have an online presence.
19	Teresienė, Keliuotytė-Staniulėnienė, and Kanapickienė (2021)	Sustainable economic growth support through credit transmission channel and financial stability: in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic	Furthermore, after analysing the Euro area banking sector, we found that liquidity increased. Hence, it means that banks have enough funds to support sustainable economic growth; on the other hand, commercial banks do not want to take credit risk because of their risk tolerance

20	Bruce, Shurong, Egala, Amoah, Ying, Rui, Lyu (2022)	Social Media Usage and SME Firms' Sustainability: An Introspective Analysis from Ghana.	The results showed a significant effect of social media usage value creation, business connections, and opportunities on SMMEs' sustainability. This study contributes to knowledge of social media usage and sustainability from a developing country's perspective. This study offers several implications for theory and practice
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Source: Author synthesis, 2022

Table 1 presents several authors' views on the SMME revival measures for sustainability. It could be observed that several factors were compiled which could help revive SMMEs in South Africa and other countries in the aftermath of the COVID-19 disruption. According to Table 1, factors such as communication strategic management, finance, transactional leadership, financial management, and collaboration were mentioned.

7. Conclusion of the study

This study investigated the impact of COVID-19 on the success of SMMEs and the revival measures to enhance sustainability. This study further explored the developmental support challenges faced by SMMEs during COVID-19. A systematic literature review was adopted to find answers to the problems of the study. The study revealed that the impact of COVID-19 on SMMEs includes loss of clients, sales decline, and resulted in cash flow issues due to the imposition of the lockdown. The developmental support challenges faced by SMMEs during COVID-19 include the inability to access loan facilities, infrastructural and technological issues, and lack of training. Furthermore, the articles included in this study after due consideration of the inclusion criteria revealed several recommendations from authors from different continents on the revival measures for SMMEs. The study concludes that SMMEs in South Africa could be revived if the sustainability measures recommended by the authors are applied.

This study made recommendations to the SMMEs and the South African government.

7.1. Recommendations for SMMEs

The recommendations for SMMEs are as follows:

Communication network: SMMEs should enhance their communication network to ensure that they reach out to their clients, customers, and the government. This will help increase their sales and create awareness of their existing products. It will also assist in linking with the government and knowing the necessary offers of assistance by different agencies.

Financial management: Due to the disruption of COVID-19, there was a decline in the total revenue of SMMEs. In this regard, this study recommends that SMMEs should

employ effective financial management in their businesses to guarantee that their finances would be adequately managed. Pathways for achieving goals and objectives are provided by financial management in an organization. The application of efficient financial management will assist in effective resource allocation, acquisition, and management. It will offer direction for financial planning and facilitate the obtaining of funds from several sources.

Strategic management: For an organization to achieve its goals and objectives, it must continuously plan, monitor, analyse, and assess all of its requirements. SMMEs must continually evaluate their success methods due to changing business circumstances in their business environments.

Creativity and innovation: To be creative, SMMEs should be involved in innovation to ensure that they alter their old ways of doing things. Regarding the communication options, SMMEs should incorporate e-commerce as a means of doing business, also social network sites should be utilised to create awareness of existing products.

Good leadership qualities: SMMEs should possess good leadership qualities such as visionary, strategic thinking, emotional intelligence, and transactional and transformational leadership. This will assist them in diagnosing the internal and external environments, thus creating the desired change within the organisational system to stabilise the functionality of their businesses.

Business environment: This refers to the totality of all forces, factors, and institutions outside of and beyond the control of a single corporate entity but has a substantial impact on how that enterprise operates and expands. SMMEs must study and understand their business environment to ensure that they would understand the strengths of their competitors and when to invest in specific projects.

Employee management: This entails the process of assisting the employees in achieving their tasks in daily job specifications. This study recommends that SMMEs should engage in employee management to achieve their objectives. An employee management system provides managers with information about their staff and aids in better planning and management work schedules for easy labour cost control and productivity growth.

Collaboration: SMMEs should seek collaboration with government entities to attract different forms of support to enhance growth. This support could be in the form of financial aid, training, and workshops.

7.2. Recommendations to the government

The following recommendations are made to the government

Funding of SMMEs: Funding of SMMEs is very essential to enhance their business operations. As noted in the introduction of the study, several SMMEs wind up due to the inability to secure funding from the government. This study recommends that the government should provide adequate funding to SMMEs, even in rural areas, to

enhance sustainability. Sector-specific support, where the government should target funding for a particular sector to enhance success, should be facilitated. The government, through the SEDA and other entities, should enhance funding opportunities for all SMMEs who are qualified to receive financial support

Improve infrastructural provision: The government should ensure that infrastructure such as roads, communication networks, power supply, and low-cost shops are available to enhance the business success of SMMEs.

Conduciveness of the business environment: The government should ensure the provision of a conducive business environment for all SMMEs. The legal requirements and processes for starting up a business enterprise should be simple, also the environmental laws should be friendly to accommodate SMMEs.

Non-financial support: These refer to all support other than the financial support given to SMMEs. To enhance SMME's sustainability, the study recommends that the government of South Africa should provide training support through seminars and workshops to educate SMMEs on the dynamics of handling a business enterprise.

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