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Perceptions and experiences of informal street traders on Covid-19 and its effect on sales and revenue in Pretoria

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WITS SCHOOL OF GOVERNANCE

A research report submitted to the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Management in Governance (Economics and Development)

September 2023

Declaration

I **Thakgalo Magauwane Maphutha (1253358)** declare that this research report titled "Exploring Perceptions and Experiences of Informal Street Traders on Covid-19 and its effect on sales and revenue in Pretoria, South Africa" is my own work. This research is submitted to the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand with for the purpose of fulfilling the partial requirements to complete the Master's in Management Governance (Economics and Development) degree.

I can vouch that this report has never been submitted to any institution before. Furthermore, I applied the correct referencing style as guided by the institution and ensured that all sources were acknowledged.

Dedication

I dedicate this to my mother Marumo Mumsy Maphutha, who has loved me and showed me enormous support that I will forever be grateful for. Ke a leboga Ngwatomosadi.

To my partner Daniel NKgape Makobe, my Jonathan. Maswi waka, I see you.

My little brother NgwamoreI Boitemogelo, My little sister Bonolo, hard work pays bana ba geshu.

Acknowledgements

I thank God, for giving me the strength and wisdom to complete this master's degree.

My supervisor, Dr John Khumalo, thank you for your patience and guidance throughout compiling this report.

I thank my mother and partner for all the support, love and continuous reassurance.

To every informal street trader that participated in my research, I appreciate all your time, thank you very much.

Abstract

The Covid-19 restrictions and strategies imposed in order to reduce the spread of the virus had dire consequences on the sales and livelihood of both the formal and informal sectors. The lockdown made it challenging for small and big businesses to operate as per normal, which included informal street traders. This study intended to find out the perceptions and views of informal street traders with the focus on their sales and revenue during Covid-19 lockdown. The research was designed as a phenomenological study as it was concerned with understanding the effects of Covid-19 through the in-depth experiences of informal street traders. The study adopted a qualitative research design, with face-to-face interviews as the primary data collection method. In addition, previously published studies were reviewed as part of the secondary literature review. This study had a sample of 30 informal street traders from Pretoria working along Church Street. A key discovery in this study is that like many sectors, informal street traders were hit very hard by the pandemic, more especially during the lockdowns. The sales and revenue of informal street traders decreased drastically, leaving the participants with challenges that will take years to overcome. Most informal street traders participate in the sector as their primary source of income due to a lack of opportunities in the country and are the main breadwinners. To many, Covid-19 added to the already existing day-to-day challenges. Regardless of the significance of informal street trading, the government failed to provide them with any assistance to curb the negative impact of the pandemic on their livelihoods.

Keywords: Covid-19; street traders; informal sector; government assistance

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List of Acronyms

COVID-19	Corona Virus Disease of 2019
HIC	High-income countries
ILO	International Labour Organization
LIC	Low-income countries
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
CBD	Central Business District

CHAPTER ONE: STUDY INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

For many years, South Africa has encountered an upsurge in the informal street trading sector. Many of the unemployed individuals have been absorbed into informal street trading as a means of survival and an entrepreneurial spirit to create a means of income. However, in the recent years there has been debates with regard to the definition and explanation of informal street trading in the economy as it has different meaning for different people (Legodi & Kanjere, 2015). According to Willemse (2011), informal street traders are unregulated, operate without formal letters of employment and they do not pay taxes which include income tax and value added tax. The informal nature of this sector means the traders do not get any formal employment benefits such as medical aid incentives, pensions and paid sick leave (Willemse, 2011).

According to Ligthelm and Van Wyk (2004), similar to most cities, informal street trading has a positive impact in both the social and economic affairs in Pretoria. There has been a notable change in how the political administration views informal street trading. The government shifted from the prosecution of the sector to an administration that supports and accommodates it. This excerpt highlights the change from primitive government into a government that makes provisions for the informal street traders to flourish (Ligthelm & Van Wyk, 2004). In South Africa, most people migrate from the rural areas into the cities with the intention to pursue better job opportunities, however, the sluggish economy often forces them to enter the informal street trading sector as a survival strategy to sustain their families. According to Masonganye (2010), not all informal street traders have the intension to stay in the informal street trading sector for a long period; most informal street traders are likely to quit the sector as soon as they are formally employed. Compared to the formal sector, informal street traders are known for offering goods and services at a reasonable price. Ligthelm and Van Wyk (2004) note that informal street traders mainly cater to disadvantaged groups and have flexible functional hours.

Furthermore, the informal street trading sector possesses certain unique characteristics which include the convenience for customers to enter and exit the trading spaces with ease, thereby exposing the trading spaces to the surrounding environment (Nkrumah-Abebrese & Schachtebeck, 2017). Willemse (2011) explains that the emergence and growth of informal street trading has been subject to various deliberations. Critics of informal street trading view the sector as a reflection of an underdeveloped economy, suggesting that it is a challenge that needs to be addressed. On the other hand, proponents of informal street trading maintain the confidence that it offers an opportunity for marginalised individuals to actively participate in the city's economy, permitting them a position in the economic food chain (Willemse, 2011). In response to the significant intensification in informal street trading after apartheid, the government has implemented by-laws that intend to better regulate and manage the growth and operations of this sector. Policymakers have taken steps to loosen by-laws with the intention to promote jobs and create income for the disadvantaged as well as those who voluntarily participate in the informal street trading sector. In recent years, these regulations prioritise the supervision of informal street trading through procedures which include registration of traders, allocation of spaces and operating charges (Mabitsela, 2017).

While informal street traders have made significant contributions to the South African economy, the sector still experiences major social, economic and political challenges. The primary reason that individuals resort to informal street trading is due to the lack of employment opportunities, with limited capital being a major challenge (Etim & Daramola, 2020). Despite the prevailing challenges, the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic resulted in a major disruption to the informal street trading sector. When the first wave of the virus hit in early 2020, the state was forced to affect a full lockdown with limitations. This led to a total shutdown of both minor and major economic activities. In line with the Covid-19 restrictions, only those classified as essential workers were given legal permission to work and move. At the time, it was unclear whether informal street traders were considered essential or not. As a result, many informal street traders operating in prominent areas had to shut down their businesses, which negatively impacted their income stream and their families.

Thus, this research aimed to explore how informal street traders in Pretoria, South Africa, perceived and experienced the impact of Covid-19 on their sales and revenue during the pandemic. The findings from this research will provide valuable insights for the government to develop effective policies that consider the perspectives and needs of informal street traders during catastrophes such as the pandemic. While there are various types of informal street traders, this study specifically focused on small-scale street traders mainly operating on pavements and usually found in groups.

1.2 Problem Statement

The global economy was profoundly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic which included South Africa. Similar to many countries, Shroder et al. (2021) explain that as a result of the pandemic, South Africa faced significant challenges. The pandemic and succeeding lockdown measures brought to light the insufficiencies in South Africa's economy and its ability to sustain its citizens which affected their employment and quality of life. The lockdown in South Africa is a period of stringent restrictions and measures implemented by the state to reduce the spread of Coid-19. The hard lockdown period began in March 2020 and ended in May 2020. This transition marked a gradual easing of restriction, permitting some economic activities while ensuring that some of the measures are still in place to prevent the spread of the virus.

Although it is argued that street traders provide crucial services to a major part of the population, this sector is mostly disregarded. In most instances, governments refuse to take notice of the benefits it has for unprivileged communities. This study acknowledges the importance of the informal sector and therefore intended to explore the effect of the pandemic on those participating in this market. In early 2020, the government had to swiftly put in place measures to lessen the spread of the pandemic. There was little time for policymakers and decision makers to engage with various stakeholders to find out the impact of the policies imposed on their respective sectors – these included the informal street traders (Dzawanda et al., 2021).

To address, prevent and fight against the spread of the Coronavirus a hard lockdown was imposed as part of the National Management Act Regulations. Some of the measures that were put in place during this time of the lockdown included people being confined to their own residences, all businesses had to cease operations excluding

those who provided essential goods and services among others, and all premises meant for the public had to close. Movement between places, either by private vehicles or public was strictly restricted (South African Government, 2020).

Some of the major essential characteristics of which informal street trading is fully dependent on includes movement of people. Informal street traders usually occupy sidewalks and city streets, especially those closer to either an economic node or transport hub (Mabitsela, 2017). With this, it was essential to explore “the experiences and perceptions of informal traders of the impact of Covid-19 on their sales and revenue” and to understand how the implementation of the lockdown regulations influenced them. These first-hand experiences and daily challenges of informal street traders can serve as valuable resources for policymakers in establishing effective strategies to alleviate economic disruptions within the informal street trading sector during future crises. Such insights are particularly essential in reducing the impact on income and the supply of crucial goods in impoverished and vulnerable communities. It is essential for the state to adopt a strategic approach in recognising sustainable and active forms of support for informal street traders in the occurrence that any of the unforeseen disasters or pandemics that may emerge in the country. Furthermore, research has indicated that the formal sector by itself does not have the capacity to employ and provide a better livelihood to all people, especially in a developing country such as South Africa. It is therefore essential that informal street trading markets are strengthened and guided to empower those willing to engage in them.

1.3 Research Purpose

The purpose of this study was to provide insights relating to the effects of Covid-19 lockdown on informal street traders with the intent to find possible solutions that could better their day-to-day experiences and mitigate any challenges faced by them during a crisis. This study sought the “informal traders’ experiences and perceptions of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and its effect on their sales and revenue” in Pretoria, South Africa. Informal street trading is increasingly common in the central business district (Nkrumah-Abebrese & Schachtebeck, 2017).

The primary objective of the study was to explore the “informal traders’ perceptions and experiences of the impact of Covid-19 and its effect on their sales and revenue” in Pretoria, South Africa.

The secondary objectives for this research were to:

- Explore the current state of informal street trading in South Africa, specifically in Pretoria's Central Business District (CBD).
- To understand the perceptions and experiences of informal street traders regarding the impacts of Covid-19 lockdown on their sales and revenue
- To gather suggestions and recommendations from informal street traders on measures to mitigate challenges that might be faced as a result of the Covid-19 lockdown period.

1.4 Research Questions

The study sought to answer the question: "What are the informal traders' experiences and perceptions of the impact of Covid-19 and its effect on their sales and revenue?"

The sub-questions that helped answer the main research questions are:

- What is the state of informal street trading in Pretoria's CBD?
- How have informal street traders perceived the impact of Covid-19 lockdown on their sales and revenue?
- What measures have informal street traders proposed to address some of the challenges that might have been encountered during the Covid-19 pandemic?

1.5 Context of the Research

The study was conducted in Pretoria's CBD which is one of the busiest parts of the city comprising corporate offices, small businesses, monuments and public transport, among others. Participants were interviewed along Helen Joseph Street (Church Street), bordered by the M18 and Du Toit Street. Pretoria, also known as Tshwane, is South Africa's capital and one of the most essential economic hubs in the country. Informal trading forms part of the economic, social and environmental characteristics of Tshwane. Just like many other cities in the state, Tshwane is currently shifting in its notion and concept of informal street trading in a sense that it is transforming from a culture of prosecution to an environment that accommodates informal street traders. Prominence is moving away from primitive law enforcement towards creating an

atmosphere that supports and allows street traders to thrive. Figure 1.1 below depicts a graphic overview of the study area.



Figure 1.1: Study area

1.6 Reason for the Research

The significance and benefits of conducting this research study are discussed in this section. The purpose of this study is to provide insights relating to the impact of Covid-19 on informal street traders with the intent to find possible solutions that could better their day-to-day experiences and mitigate any challenges they may face during a crisis.

In the commercial setting, the informal sector is characterised by the absence of taxes, regulation and acknowledgement by the government (Masonganye, 2010). This sector highlights the limitations of the conventional economy in meeting the needs of its people. Consequently, individuals get involved in informal economic practices as a means of survival. These practices are usually referred to as the secondary economy or the black market. While there is significant diversity in informal economic practices, a common factor is that informal activities are often forbidden. In other cases, it is personal preference that individuals choose to transition from the traditional economic sector to the informal sector to expand their income by avoiding taxes and enjoying greater independence and flexibility (Mbelenge, 2011).

South Africa's economy is characterised by a blend of the contemporary and industrialised. Informal economic activities include informal street traders, domestic helpers, farm labourers among others. In the early 2000s, it was projected that the informal sector generated approximately 2.3 million jobs in South Africa, contributing close to 12% of the overall Gross Domestic Product of the state. It is also observed that for every 10 people living in informal settlements, between three and seven depend on the informal economy as their main source of income, with informal street trading being the largest contributor. This highlights the significant role played by the informal sector in promoting local economic development in South Africa's urban environments (Khumalo, 2015).

It is quite clear that the informal economy, especially informal street traders, play a fundamental role in the economy of South Africa. As alluded to earlier, individuals participate in this form of trading due to various reasons, some because the state has failed to provide formal job opportunities, while others participate as a result of their entrepreneurship skills. Irrespective of the varying reasons for participating in informal trading, traders often find themselves faced with different challenges that affect their day-to-day output. This study hoped to contribute to insights on unpacking the state of the informal economy which will set a precedence in the understanding of informal street trading in the context of South Africa. Focus is also drawn to the existing legislation that supports informal trading; this in turn can help identify if effective attention and assistance is promoted in this sector.

Apart from the already existing predicaments that informal street traders find themselves in, South Africa and the global world were faced with a pandemic. The Covid-19 pandemic created a negative shift in most businesses and countries' economies were shaken. Although the current state of South Africa supports and encourages street trading through local economic development policies, in some parts of the country it is unclear if street traders receive services and are supported during crises such as the Covid-19 pandemic where there was a hard lockdown. The informal street trading market does not offer any predictable recognised job benefits such as medical aid, pension funds or funds that can be released during an unpredictable event. This research therefore examined the effect of Covid-19 on the sales and revenue of informal traders and investigated whether they had other means or sources

of income during the lockdown period. The research aimed to include case studies of other countries with reference to informal trading and past experiences of traders. It provides exhaustive primary data which builds a firm qualitative study to contribute rich knowledge on informal street traders' experiences and perceptions of the impact of Covid-19, beyond ways in which quantitative studies provide numerical objective.

Research on informal street traders continues to be the main prominent factor, especially when concentrating on the informal economy in the context of South African cities (Mabitsela, 2017; Nkrumah-Abebrese & Schachtebeck, 2017). The spatial injustices and past apartheid legacies are still deeply experienced and clear in cities, Pretoria being among them. The link between enabling and supporting informal traders in specific areas through policy and incentives and empowerment of marginalised communities is well established (Zongli et al., 2021; Willemse, 2011). As South Africa proceeds to tackle the high rate of unemployment and declining state of the economy which unmistakably affects the youth, it is mandatory for researchers to continue exploring measures and ideas that will be beneficial in the betterment of all people. It was the humble intent of this research to attempt to do just that.

South Africa is acknowledged as one of the major economic hubs in the Southern African region and Africa as a whole. Various policies and regulations established and executed in South Africa which include those on local economic and youth development can have a major effect on informal trading and set precedence on the direction of policy in the region and the African continent. With this, research and recommendations can be applied and reviewed by other African developing countries with a similar context as South Africa.

In conclusion, this research is not coincidental in terms of its timing, as the world is continuously looking for ways to counter the effects of Covid-19. One of the targets specified by the Sustainable Development Goal 8.3 for 2030, is that developing countries are encouraged to focus on development that strengthens policies that promote productivity activities, entrepreneurship, innovation and promotion of formalising micro activities in the informal sector as a measure to empower struggling economies (Amarante, 2021).

1.7 Outline of the Report

This research report has six chapters.

Chapter One introduced the study, outlining the background to the study, the problem statement and the justification for the research. Chapter One also covered the research context of the study and the methodology implemented in conducting this research.

Chapter Two embarks on a review of the literature and includes the theoretical and the empirical frameworks that focus on informal street traders and Covid-19. The context of the informal sector in relation to the economy and other related studies are further expanded and reviewed to recognise the purpose, methodology and conclusions of these studies. This chapter is then summarised by establishing a conceptual framework that assisted in guiding the research.

Chapter Three discusses the data collection methods used in this study, the tools used to acquire the data, and the analysis carried out on the collected data.

Chapter Four focuses on the presentation of the research findings from the gathered data on the “informal street traders’ experiences and perspectives of the impact of Covid-19 and its effect on their sales and revenue”.

Chapter Five deliberates and interprets the findings as outlined in Chapter Four within the framework of the conceptual framework and discoveries outlined by the literature.

Chapter Six delivers a conclusion and main recommendations garnered from the research.

1.8 Summary of Chapter One

This chapter has outlined the study background, the problem statement, objectives identified by the research and a summarised overview of the research development.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This section reviews and cross-examines the literature as part of the process of constructing a conceptual framework that would enlighten and support how the study ought to be conducted. Consequently, this chapter focuses on outlining the informal economy, explains what is meant by informal street trading, gives an overview of informal street trading globally and within the African context, then specifies the nature of informal street trading in South Africa. In addition, the chapter describes the existing challenges experienced by the informal street traders and the legislation surrounding the sector. The chapter looks at the nature and impact of Covid-19 on the economy. The theoretical framework of informal street trading is defined to understand knowledge and reputable facts pertaining to economic informality and street trading. This chapter then concludes with a conceptual framework that provides a summary for the reviewed literature.

2.2 Unpacking Informal Economy – an Overview

An economy includes the financial systems of a particular region, consisting of manufacturers, suppliers or trade and consumption of restricted goods and services within the boundaries of that specific region. In definition, an economy is the aggregate sum of all transactions of goods and services between two parties, whether it be between the state and an organisation or individual or any other way around. These transactions only transpire when all involved parties reach a consensus regarding the value or the price of the transacted product, usually expressed as a means of currency. Historically, economic activity was conceptualised to be restricted by natural resources, labour and capital. However, this belief takes for granted the significance of technology and creativity. In this modern day, theories regarding the economy are encouraged by social sciences which may contain sociology, history, anthropology and geography. This indicates that the current state of an economy has more to do with a series of processes that include its culture, morals, education, technological advances, resources, history, societal institutions, politics, official structures and

geography as the primary factors. These factors can also be referred to as the economic system that provides context, conditions and parameters to which the economy can respond to. Some economic systems generate more productive economies and perform better compared to others, producing a higher value or Growth Domestic Product (Rees, 2015).

The presence of an economy is crucial to the establishment and sustainability of a society. No society can thrive with the absence of an economy that is efficient enough to provide the fundamental necessities to its citizens. The main function of any economy is to meet the needs of its people as their circumstances shift. Therefore, the economy is an element of society, and society is the structure within which the economy operates. Therefore, every society has a unique economy (Rabie, 2016). This is an indication that every economy is a clear reflection of the needs and economic systems (as stated in the preceding paragraph) of that society, including the main traits of the evolution it which it functions.

A basic interpretation of this is indicated within the diversity and differences between the “low-income countries” (LICs) and the “high-income countries” (HICs). In most instances, HICs have a larger formal economy, which is part of the economy in which activities are largely regulated by the state more especially focusing on specific areas such as contracts and company law, taxation and labour law (Chen, 2005). As such, HICs are known to provide an environment that fosters formal employment opportunities in which clear indication of operational hours are stated, monthly wages, beneficial working circumstances and tax compensating economic activities. Contrary to HICs, LICs consist of diversified economic activities, with most of these activities consisting of what can be referred to as the “grey economy” also known as the informal economy.

It is believed that British anthropologist Keith Hart first learnt about the informal economy in Africa in the beginning of the 1970s. During this time, an economic study was conducted on Ghanaian rural migrants in Accra. The study’s findings concluded that although there were external challenges and a capitalist majority, most migrants participated in informal activities that indicated autonomous capabilities to produce income. In addition, during this era, the first International Labour Organization mission

was held in Kenya and showed that the traditional sector had not only survived, but had grown to include profitable and resourceful businesses, including marginal activity. The International Labour Organization mission together with Keith Hart's findings recognised that efficiency, creativity and resilience shown in the informal sector was remarkable. However, the theory received mixed responses in the developmental circles. Most held that the informal economy in developing nations was external and not related to the formal economy and contemporary capitalist development (Chen & Carre, 2020; Hart, 1973; ILO, 1972).

As a response to the combination of economic policies and resources and the efforts of poor conventional economies trying to transform into dynamic contemporary economies, the initial phases regarding informal economies believed that the traditional economy could absorb insignificant traders, small manufacturers and informal jobs into the contemporary capitalist's economy and later disappear. This notion was reinforced by the prosperous redevelopment of Europe and Japan after World War II, including the bulk production in Europe and North America. However, the optimism about the success of economic development in Africa's most developing countries began to create constant concern in the early 1970 when issues such as unemployment increased tremendously (Chen, 2005).

Although explanatory dispute hindered early discussions of economic informality in the 1970s and 1980s, it is generally agreed that the most definitional discussions of the subject occurred over the previous two decades. The predominant definition across most disciplines and theories is that the informal economy represents income-producing activities that manage beyond the regulatory framework of the government. During the 1990s, arguments moved away from conceptual debates of whether there is an evident distinguishable border between formality and informality. Arguments about operational explanations have tried to refine the understanding of informality, however, the abovementioned definition of informality has not been challenged. It was around the year 2002 when the definition of informality was amended and this was part of the measures to ensure that informality was not restricted to firms and their employees, but also focused on the term the "informal sector". The modern definition of the informal economy includes "the generation and employment of unregistered firms". Its emphasis is on informal job creation which is concerned about the

employment of individuals which excludes labour support regulations of a particular group, which makes them more vulnerable and at risk of market interior and exterior factors (Kate, 2013; Yu et al., 2022).

It is suggested that the African economy is currently significantly heterogeneous in nature, varying from a minimum of “20–25% in Mauritius, South Africa and Namibia to a maximum of 50–65% in Benin, Tanzania and Nigeria” (Medina et al., 2016, n.p.). The presence and contribution of informal economic activities in sub-Saharan Africa is still among the biggest globally, however, this share seems to be weakening in other countries around the world. Evidence also suggests that generally, informality seems to be more dependent on income and the ability of governments to provide incentives that are mainly driven towards the formalisation of existing informalities. It is through factors such as these that sub-Saharan Africa experiences enormous informality as the informal economy measures an average 40% of the economy between the continent’s “low-income nations and 35% for middle income countries” (Medina et al., 2016, n.p.).

2.3 The Informal Economy in South Africa

On the other hand, the South African economy can be viewed as having a combination of dualistic socioeconomic structures both geographically and legally which also divide the formal and informal settings. The informal economy is regularly identified with underprivileged countries. Saunders and Loots (2005) and Ligthelm (2006) outline a detailed description of the numerous possibilities for measuring the informal economy. In most instances, studies aimed at quantifying the size of the informal economy emphasise the number of participants in the economy, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and the informal markets (Ligthelm, 2006; Saunders & Loots, 2005).

Undeniably, in 2017, it was estimated that the informal economy employed over 13% of the overall population, this meant that at minimum, 2.4 million individuals participated in the informal economy while also impacting the livelihood of approximately 4.4 million individuals (Charman et al., 2015). By 2012, the informal economy contributed approximately 28% of South Africa’s GDP (Saunders, 2005).

The South African economy is understood to be relatively small, nonetheless it is long term in characteristics (Charman et al., 2015). Features that contribute to the longevity of the South African informal economy includes that, in most cases, participants usually have lower educational qualifications that those operating in the formal economy. Heintz and Posel (2008, p. 28) argue that “the lack of educational qualifications restricts the ability of informal street traders to evolve into the formal economy and forms part of the reasons for individuals to typically remain in the informal economy for a long term”. Focusing on the racial aspect of informality in South Africa, the markets seem to be identified as a fallback option or momentary from a White perspective, while Black Africans commonly participate in the informal economy for more extensive periods (McKeever, 2007; Saunders, 2005). In addition, activities pertaining to the informal economy are unequally distributed in the various provinces of South Africa (Blaauw, 2017).

Informal small enterprises could assist in mitigating some of South Africa’s core issues pertaining to the creation of employment and enhancement of economic development in poor communities (Neves & Du Toit, 2012). The informal economy contributes to job creation in marginalised societies by production of businesses and the transfer of skills and knowledge for the participants. South Africa’s formal economy has proved to be restrictive and excluding for many, indicated by the enormous inequalities; in addition, it does not include most of the African population experiencing enormous levels of poverty and unemployment. Challenges such as these birthed the informal economy as people had to come up with entrepreneurial strategies to face these issues, which some may also view as a survivalist approach (Masuku & Nzewi, 2021).

2.4 Understanding the Concept of Informal Street Trading

Informal street traders are a crucial aspect of city economies across the globe, providing laidback entry to various affordable goods in public spaces. The roots of the current world's informal economy can be traced back to the idea of informal street trading. All over the world, informal street trading has been recognised as a main economic contributor and employment opportunity especially in developing countries (Khumalo, 2015). In its simplest form, the term “informal street trading” refers to business operations conducted out by proprietors selling authorised goods and

services in an area that is typically largely designated as public property, major transport nodes and construction sites to name a few. Although the concept is generally identified as informal, these activities dismiss selling of illegal goods (Ukukhula Business Solutions, 2003). With this, studies have observed that informal street traders, also known as street vendors, are not recorded and do not pay taxes and are mostly individuals or communities of households whose businesses are based on street trading or vending, with no limitations on the quantity of goods and services (Olgu et al., 2015).

Globally, urban policies and local economic development strategies seldom highlight the importance of ensuring that the livelihood of informal street traders is secure and prioritised (Skinner et al., 2018). It is through measures such as urban rejuvenation projects, infrastructure development programmes and high-level events that the welfare and prosperity of this group of people is threatened. This is because informal street traders find themselves displaced from the natural markets, relocated and left susceptible without a place to work efficiently (Carre, 2014). There is clear evidence indicating that informal street trading, like other informal economy activities, have been helpful in urban economies and urban management. Informal street traders are usually clustered and a very noticeable workforce in the urban realm (Carre, 2014; Roever & Skinner, 2016). Due to the active movement involved with the business of street trading, these spaces are more likely to curb some of the core urban challenges such as crime and maintenance (Roever & Skinner, 2016). Most advanced cities have been successful in collaborating with informal street traders to formulate pioneering policies, programmes and practices that promote and enhance traders to find suitable outlets, prompting cities to be more inclusive (Kumar, 2012).

Studies conducted in Asian developing countries, specifically Bangladesh and Nepal, show that informal street trading has increased over the years. The growth in the sector is primarily correlated with changes in the economy. As many citizens find themselves with less skills, unemployed and living in hostile conditions in rural areas, informal street trading in cities seems to be a solution to many (Recchi, 2020). These countries experience severe economic challenges that result in the closure of many industries, rendering thousands of the population out of work. Irrespective of the benefits that the informal street trading market has brought to people, it is unfortunate

that governments in these countries give less recognition of the sector (Adhikari, 2018). Governments' view this as an irritation in the development of cities and therefore fail to provide policies that legalise informal street trading. It is quite disappointing that in Vietnam and Cambodia, the governments are merely focused and ideologically devoted to the interests of the working class. Due to this, informal street traders experience frequent evictions and limited revenue production (Adhikari, 2018; Islam, 2019).

"Asian tigers" particularly, Thailand, Singapore and Philippines have also shown a rapid growth in informal street traders, specifically after the financial crisis that occurred in 1998 (Bhowmik, 2005; ILO, 2006). Unlike the above countries, these countries have policies that regulate and support informal street trading. Malaysia appears to be genuine in the implementation of these policies. Malaysia is identified as one of the very few countries where informal street traders are provided with licenses. Licensed informal street traders can access trading facilities and credit from the formal financial institutions (Racaud et al., 2018). Although Singapore does not seem to have enough informal street trading policies, the country appears to have integrated informal street trading into the wider urban environment through proper stalls and maintaining proper hygiene in operating spaces (Rukayah & Malik, 2013). These countries have further provided security facilities to protect participants in the markets. A challenge expressed in these developing Asian countries is that unionisation is very limited and as a result, informal street traders are often unaware of their rights. Unions are often able to penetrate the system and allow the voices of informal street traders to be heard by the local authorities (Schurman & Andrienne, 2013).

In Africa, informal street trading is often viewed as an economic activity for unskilled individuals. This is contrary in Latin American states, as their cities adjust positively to the extension of informal trading and local authorities implement laws and regulations that encourage street trading; allocate suitable operational spaces thus allowing informal street traders to thrive. In most instances, African street traders usually locate themselves in strategical areas that have high pedestrian movement with no official allocation from the government. Mitullah's (2003) study argues that Kenya, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana and Zimbabwe share a similar history relating to the origins of informal

traders. It further stipulates that the colonial laws intended to govern indigenous people formed the basis for the inability of these countries to adopt to the modern liberal African context. Hence, informal street trading continues to be viewed as an error and a challenge to development in Africa. Nevertheless, informal street trading should be applauded for sustaining and maintaining countless African households in an ever-challenged Africa. Nigeria is one of the states which acknowledges the functionality and necessity of informal street trading in Africa and is a key contributor to the economy, accounting for a large proportion of the country's GDP and job creation. The International Monetary Fund (IMF, 2017) indicated that the informal sector contributed close to 65% of Nigeria's 2017 GDP, of which the main contributor was the informal street traders (Dell'Anno & Adu, 2020).

2.5 The South African Context of Informal Street Trading

Within the context of South Africa, the informal economy is the largest contributor of employment. Informal street traders are spread around different areas of South Africa's towns and cities and the sector is dominated by individuals aged 25–49, with women generally being older than male traders. A common feature among the traders is that they fall under the working age group as specified by the South African legislature (Davies & Thurlow, 2010). Most females participate in informal street trading despite the systemic social-economic, cultural and political challenges they face regarding their involvement in entrepreneurial activities. Female informal street traders are often noted by their inter-generational poverty. This sector allows its participants to continuously adjust their situations and survive. The flexible and self-employed nature of the informal street trading sector further allows women to produce income while also performing their socio-cultural roles (Sassen et al., 2018; Roever, 2016).

Street traders mainly operate in strategic locations which predominantly include high foot traffic areas close to key arterial routes and public transport amenities (Sello, 2012). The Johannesburg Development Agency interprets CBDs as situated in central locations of towns in which numerous businesses and retail centres operate, city centres and private households, and recreational and public transport areas which are identified as core features. These features or spatial characteristics of the inner city

are the leading attractions and conventional areas where informal street traders thrive within the South African setting. Similar to many countries, informal street trading in South Africa encounters restrictions when it comes to the legalisation of the sector in some areas and access to safe and secure operational spaces, with most municipalities providing what is considered to be mostly short-term prospects for income creation among the unfortunate (Nkrumah-Abebrese & Schachtebeck, 2017).

There are unwarranted stereotypes about those participating in informal trading; for example, that the sector is filled with survivalists who are desperate which influences their participation. Ligthelm and Van Wyk (2004) further suggest that informal street traders are underprivileged and unskilful, that trading areas in South Africa are criminal hotspots, and the industry is disorganised and has limited economic capabilities. Reversely, the average income of a street trader in other cases can be higher, sometimes as much as five times greater than the minimum permitted wage in South Africa. It is factors such as these that entice individuals to contemplate informal trading instead of seeking formal employment (McKeever, 2006).

There are multiple other reasons why informal street traders choose to participate in informal street trading as their first option for income creation. Informal street trading is known for its flexibility; traders can choose and select their operation hours to suit and meet their day-to-day socioeconomic and cultural obligations. The informal street trading sector allows participants to strengthen their entrepreneurial abilities and further allows them a sense of independence from the conventional formal markets. Informal street traders can adjust their businesses according to their needs and decide how they would like their operations to run (Gamieldien & Van Niekerk, 2017; Motala, 2002).

The City of Tshwane is the administrative capital of South Africa and Gauteng's major municipality in terms of land area. The main economic contributors in this municipality include public services and government, then the finance sector and manufacturing. Irrespective of this, poverty is a major predicament faced by the municipality, with an unemployment rate of over 24% and over 33% unemployment among the youth. Informal street trading plays a pivotal role in highly dense areas of the municipality, the inner city being at the top. Informal street trading creates income opportunities and

continues to help recover the livelihoods of disadvantaged households (Mudau, 2021; Wegerif, 2021). Certainly, the socioeconomic rights of South Africa confirm that informal street trading has a crucial role to play in eradicating issues such as unemployment and poverty (Socio-Economic Rights Institute of South Africa, 2018).

2.6 Covid-19 Pandemic

Early March 2020, the spread of the Coronavirus was pronounced as a worldwide public health emergency as recognised by the World Health Organization. The Coronavirus, mostly known as Covid-19, caused the greatest unanticipated social, political and economic interruptions and shocks all over the world. About three million people lost their lives due to the virus and this shattered national economies around the globe, leading to ripple effects with chances of causing global susceptibilities.

On the 23rd of March 2020, the President of South Africa declared a national lockdown active as of midnight on 26 March 2020. It was thought that the virus spread through droplets of saliva and sneezing discharges. With this, Covid-19 was proclaimed a state disaster and all people were encouraged to stay home, with the exception of essential workers. Essential workers included those in health care (nurses, medical doctors), police and food stores. The implementation of the national lockdown intended to restrain the spread of the virus through social and physical distancing. As the responsiveness concerning the spread and dangers of Covid-19 increased, economic activities were forced to abruptly shut down (Webb et al., 2020). The hard lockdown in South Africa ended on the 1st of May 20220 when the country moved to lockdown level 4. The move from level 5 to 4 allowed some of the economic activities to resume, including informal street traders. This allowed them to gradually return to trading activities with subject to strict health and safety protocol.

Most states introduced lockdown measures which led to job losses and led to various other global market uncertainties. Seventy-one per cent of the documented job losses were mainly due to low economic movement as opposed to unemployment itself. A comparative study that was conducted by the ILO (2021) for America, Europe and Asia, recorded that during the year 2020 alone, over 115 million people lost their jobs because of the pandemic. The study observed that most of the job losses were in America while Europe and Asia experienced lower losses due to the implementation

of systems that encouraged work-reduction programmes in cases of national shutdowns. These programmes differed and included government unemployed insurance funds, salary securities and social grants that aided workers when they were unable to work. However, it did not go unnoticed that these schemes and programmes were only applicable and beneficial to those working in formal jobs. As a result, this caused further discrimination of people working within the informal economic sector. It is because of reasons such as these that the marginalised experience cyclical and continuous poverty.

Like many other countries, South African officials have been exposed to believe in a modern paradigm that considers corporate-owned companies that have high-scale supply chains as more attractive and more hygienic. These ideas are supported by the companies' up-market advertising campaigns and lobbying. During the lockdown, households still required food supplies, which meant that there was some risk and danger of people being infected with the virus regardless of the type of retail place they chose to purchase from. With this, there was no motivation to conclude that high-end retail stores were safer than the informal sector traders. Although stores introduced various hygiene measures, they were still viewed as high spots for Covid-19 to spread. Evans (2020) raised a valid point in that informal street traders could have created the required healthy environments and had other added benefits that lessened the necessity to travel and the overcrowding of larger retail shops. This could have been enhanced through the support of the government.

In terms of the legislation passed under the Disaster Management Act, 2002 (Republic of South Africa, 2002), spaza shops were permitted to operate as food was considered an essential basic human need. This was based on the condition that only South African owned spaza shops could operate during this time. However, misunderstandings regarding the different permit systems hindered many small shops from operating. During the hard lockdown, a major challenge for small businesses was said to be law enforcement officers that tried to extract bribes. It was quite unclear as to whether informal street traders selling food and non-food products were permitted to do so during this time. This was mainly due to the lack of formal permits for these types of businesses.

The Covid-19 pandemic significantly impacted the informal economy, with food security and employment losses being the main challenge across the globe. In the early stages of the pandemic, the South African authorities halted all informal trading activities. However, due to public pressure, they later understood the significance of spaza shops as well as informal street traders as essential workers. During this time, informal street traders selling cooked meals were still not allowed to operate as per the regulations (Skinner & Watson, 2020). The demand for goods sold by street traders had decreased despite the easing of the lockdown regulations. This was a result of limited travel and a decrease in foot movement (Dzawanda et al., 2021).

The Covid-19 lockdown challenged the demographic dynamics that exist in modern-day South Africa. These included income production for many households and the ability of the state to meet the needs of the people during the lockdowns. Chirisa et al. (2020) stipulate that the regulation of the lockdowns in developing nations such as South Africa could have potentially resulted in the emergence of other diseases with malnutrition being the largest challenge as most people relied on regular manual labour to generate revenue to support their homes (Chirisa et al., 2020). The impact of Covid-19 in struggling economies is still being felt in various sectors as the pandemic with its destructive nature weakened socioeconomic ties. Valensisi (2020) argues that the number of households surviving beneath the poverty mark was deemed to increase further due to the pandemic. The emergence of Covid-19 shows that the world is more likely to experience regression when facing a crisis which hinders the determination to meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). A major concern raised by Diop and Asongu (2020) was that African countries are perceived to have borne the most poverty burden as a result of Covid-19. In addition, predictions indicate that 65% of the emerging poverty cases were instigated by the Covid-19 lockdown. Schwettmann (2020) cautions that the negative effects of the lockdown on the informal economy affected more than those in that sector as it included those who were beneficiaries of social grants. Covid-19 coupled with the already existing socioeconomic challenges in Africa were predicted to lead to severe food insecurity similar to those that were encountered during the 1980s as indicated by the United Nations Development Programme (2020). The association between increased informality and Covid-19 in the African setting, according to Schwettmann

(2020), is adequate to explain the rise in Covid-19-associated poverty levels seen in the majority of developing states. As a result, emerging nations like Cameroon and Lesotho established measures to protect those trapped in poverty by the informal economy. Millions of South African citizens that depend on the informal economy as a livelihood strategy failed to sustain the lives of the people close to them as a result of the pandemic. The CBDs, towns and various other spaces of economic activity stopped during the Covid-19 lockdown. This meant that with the already existing lack of job opportunities, limited stability of income, inadequate income, wealth disparities and the Covid-19 shutdown, it was expected that the poor, marginalised, and vulnerable groups would have to change their way of life with fewer or no new sources of income. Developing countries such as Bangkok and Thailand showed evidence that approximately 82% of individuals participating in the informal economy testified to a decrease in household income due to the lockdown. The intensity of job losses was plain and realised, especially when focusing on the skyrocketing prices of food recorded globally. As most of the population are unable to save money monthly, this ultimately resulted in most households falling prey to poverty.

Informal street traders are presumed to have experienced a reduction and loss of their capital, with some encountering an extended loss of shelter. Consequently, some of the informal traders were forced to return to rural areas due to the lack of resources and the decrease in income, while others were left with no choice but to take loans in order to afford basic necessities which included food and shelter. The implementation of lockdown regulations and social distancing measure further worsened the poverty and disempowerment faced by informal traders (Kudzai & Chikoko, 2021). Moreover, the pandemic exposed the current weaknesses and limitations of South Africa's unequal society systems (The Center for Development and Enterprise, 2020).

2.7 Research Context

Similar to many other countries, South Africa found itself in a losing battle, and this time the rival was the Covid-19 pandemic. During the widespread of the virus, the only feasible measure that the South African Government could present was to moderate the effect on the population through a hard lockdown (Arndt et al., 2020). The lockdown was intended to minimise contagion through breaking prevailing social and economic

ways of interactions. Such measures enforced an intense negative shock to the economy as a whole which was unexpected and led to short-term and long-term challenges (Arndt et al., 2020; Wills et al., 2020).

Prior to the pandemic, the South African economy was already shaky. In 2019, the country experienced two successive periods of negative GDP growth within the third and fourth quarters. By the beginning of 2020, the negative growth in GDP insinuated that the economy was moving into a technical recession. Various reasons such as the high unemployment rate, unstable electricity supply, the alterations pertaining to departmental funds to redeem government-owned enterprises and limited structural reforms highlight South Africa's current challenges. As a result, Covid-19 and its related restrictions on economic movements caused further pressure on an already struggling economy. These primary reasons for the poor performance of the economy before the pandemic should questionably have been solved in the short term but were possibly going to affect the country's ability to pull through after the Covid-19-related economic shocks (Adebiyi et al., 2021; Asmal & Christopher, 2021).

The Covid-19 pandemic changed our way of living and affected how people live and earn a living in many developing countries, including South Africa. The mobility, travel and trade restrictions imposed to curb the spread of the virus led to severe disruptions to economic activity, causing adverse socioeconomic challenges. These included loss of livelihoods and sources of income. This intensified occurring social injustices and caused further inequality through aggressively pushing the less privileged into extensive poverty. In many provinces, much of the population experienced an increase in food insecurity, especially those who relied on income produced daily, which included those participating in the informal economy (Department of Small Business Development, 2021).

Particularly in emerging nations, the informal sector is a critical factor in the creation of jobs, the generation of money and economic growth. Focusing on issues of food security in the African continent, the informal sector has been the foundation for access thriving in urban unprivileged households. In South Africa alone, approximately 70% of low-income households purchase most of their food from the informal sector.

It is further assumed that South Africa's informal sector records over 40–50% of the food sales and revenue annually (Arias, 2019; Rwafa-Ponela et al., 2022).

Empirical evidence indicates the significance of this sector to developing countries, yet it is undermined. Informal workers make up a large percentage of the working underprivileged around the world, nonetheless, the state measures which included travel bans, stay-home commands, temporary shutdowns of public spaces and trading meant that informal street traders endured the burden of state regulations to curb the spread of the pandemic (Women in Informal Employment: Globalising and Organising, 2021). The regulations affected the efficiency of the informal street trading sector. Informal street traders are a dominant category of traders who depend on daily engagements with various inner-city residents and have a unique role within the spatial and cultural aspects of cities. The primary role of informal street traders is to provide income and jobs to those participating in this space, regardless of the reasons for choosing to participate. By virtue of providing a means of income to the participants, this sector naturally reduces unemployment in South Africa (Mathe & Ndlovu, 2021; Rwafa-Ponela et al., 2022).

Despite the significance of informal street traders, it is seldom reflected in responsive measures for economic growth. While most of the attention on policy response in South Africa and worldwide is on assisting small businesses and providing aid to retrenched workers, there has been a slow increase in the desire to assist informal workers, who largely include informal street traders. This is a clear indication that the importance of this sector is taken for granted. In addition, informal street traders experienced various daily challenges before Covid-19. These challenges were economic instability, sociocultural issues, opposing political interference and legislation and other functioning issues (Hamann et al., 2020; Thulare & Moyo, 2021).

In a nutshell, taking for granted the impact of policy on sectors such as informal street trading could potentially mean that years of progress in human development is threatened. Equally, estimations at the inception of the state response to the pandemic in South Africa advised that the degree of intense poverty among households depending on informal street trading, projected to be roughly 21 million households, would raise from 10% to 26% under the lack of direct income provision. This picture painted a 75% loss of informal earnings as a result of the restrictions implemented through the Covid-19 lockdown regulations. If not implemented efficiently, the loss of informal earning could potentially have had an unbalanced impact on poverty rates

and the severity of the lockdown would have imposed a heavy financial burden on approximately one third of the country's population.

Therefore, it is in the state's best interest to understand the current nature of informal street trading, the effect of Covid-19 on the sales and revenue of informal street traders and how they were sustained through the pandemic. This will further assist in implementing efficient and highly effective policies that will respond to the needs of informal street trading based on factual evidence.

2.8 Previous Studies on Informal Street Trading

2.8.1 Limitations on and critics of informal street trading before Covid-19

Although informal street trading has been acknowledged to be of great value to both the participants and society in economically struggling countries, it is essential to note the challenges that are experienced by these sectors regardless of the positivity that it brings. In most cases, informal street traders encounter four main challenges which can be classified as political or legislative issues, financial impediments, socio cultural issues and operative impediments (Gamieldien & Van Niekerk, 2017; Tambunan, 2009; Willemse, 2011).

Politics has a major influence on the rules and regulations of countries. Just like any other sector, the performance and activity of informal street traders can be largely dependent on a ruling party due to the regulations put in play. Similar to many countries, in South Africa, the informal street trading markets have evolved from the apartheid days to modern-day South Africa. The post-apartheid government established key measures to deregulate informal street trading and eliminate operational barriers within this sector. Nevertheless, regardless of the measures and by-laws implemented, some policies and practices by the government still appear to hinder the vitality and flexibility of the informal street traders in other areas (Bhowmik, 2005). Concurrently, the presence of other by-laws creates a problem as they are not easily found and are very hard to comprehend. Nonetheless, it is assumed that informal traders know the requirements and enabling factors stated in these by-laws (Ntuli, 2020; Zogli & Dlamini, 2021). To understand the fundamentals of creating effective and feasible enabling policies, core factors need to be considered. Common profiles of informal traders are often informative and instructive. In most instances,

participants are of a working age, the main family breadwinner and operate their business as their main source of income production. Factors such as these can widen the impact of restrictive policies as they have a major detrimental effect on the livelihood of many households dependent on this income stream (Bhowmik, 2005; Skinner, 1999; Skinner et al., 2018). Government should put in place policies and legislation that reflect the correct state and impact of informal street trading and avoid abstract limitations that result in sacrificial loss of income rather than the enhancement of their microenterprises.

To many, economical constraints are the primary obstacles to positively enter into informal street trading. Developing countries such as South Africa experience enormous economic challenges, with unemployment being at its peak. Most people have no other option but to resort to informal street trading due to challenges such as these or have been exposed to low income and unfavourable conditions of the formal sector (Legodi & Kanjere, 2015). However, even with the efforts for income production in the informal trading sector, restricted access to finances is problematic, especially to those less privileged. Most people participating in informal trading cannot provide collateral to access loans from banks or any other formal institution with the core function of providing credit (Masuku & Nzewi, 2021). Consequently, they have to find alternative ways to raise capital to participate in informal street trading. Capital sourcing in most forms stems from either previous savings or lending money from family or informal sources, usually referred to as loan sharks. This comes at a high interest rate, which often results in increased debt for informal street traders. The main economic challenge experienced by informal street traders is exploring their entrepreneurial skills; this is because financial institutions often have policies that promote barriers in accessing capital (Nuru & Devi, 2016). In addition, due to inflation and other factors that result in price stability, informal street traders often find themselves in competition with the formal markets. They are consistently compelled to maintain cheap costs in order to draw more clients and drive out competitors. (Gamieldien & Van Niekerk, 2017; Rogerson, 2015). Ultimately, these financial challenges often make it a challenge for informal street traders to function as a collective and reduce the chances to eventually grow and in some instances have a sustainable income (Suryadarma et al., 2010; Tambunan, 2009).

Informal street traders experience major operational constraints. Operational spaces are often considered to be illegal due to reasons that informal traders have not been formally allocated for trading purposes. In occurrences where they are formally allocated, trading spaces are usually considered short-term, and eviction can occur at any given time according to the municipal officials. This usually leads to differences between informal street traders, the public sector and urban developers. In addition, informal street traders usually find themselves threatened with economic challenges as formal businesses appeal that informal street traders occupy their private land against their will. In addition, storage space is another challenge to the day-to-day operations of informal street traders. Due to limited storage space, every working day, traders are required to set up displays of the items they plan to trade and pack stock up at the end of the day as a result. This also raises the challenge of the necessity of adequate transport to and from work daily (Zongli et al., 2021).

Informal street traders typically work in open areas that are in some instances unsuited for the products being sold. This can lead to environmental damage and loss of income. Harmful weather conditions and climate change can harm the goods and lead to unsellable items. In addition, most areas demarcated for informal street trading activities have not been provided with basic necessities such as clean water and sanitation facilities, compelling them to rely on neighbouring markets and consumption of unsafe water (Fundie & Karodia, 2015).

2.8.2 The impact of Covid-19 to small random businesses worldwide.

The International Labour Organisation (2020), indicates that the Covid-19 pandemic has had a shattering impact on the economy worldwide, this resulted in a widespread of job losses, reduced economic activity, and interruptions in distributions and supply chains. Informal businesses have specifically been exposed to these challenges, as they usually have limited resources and support networks. The reduced demand and movement restrictions led to disproportioned effect to informal businesses.

A major challenge experienced by informal businesses during the pandemic has been the loss of customers which led to reduced revenue. With the lockdown and social distancing regulations placed in many countries, businesses depending on in-person interactions experienced a huge drop in sales. According to the World Bank (2020),

these business closures have not only negatively impacted the economy but has also led to a major decrease in income for many informal traders, making it hard for them to make ends meet. The United Nations Development Programme (2020), also emphasised the impact of the pandemic on the informal economy, especially with a focus on developing countries. Informal businesses in these states have been hit particularly hard by the pandemic, these is because they lack access to basic mechanism such as government assistance programs. Most informal businesses were left struggling to survive, with others facing the prospect of long term closure.

The impact of the pandemic on informal businesses has also been exaggerated by the lack of financial support. In most cases, informal businesses are less likely to receive any sort of formal support and access to financial services from banks in forms of loans and credit. As a result, informal traders are unable to secure financing they require to survive the lockdown, leaving many with financial ruin.

In line with these challenges the World Health Organisation (2020), highlighted the health risks experienced by informal traders as a result of the pandemic. Many informal businesses operate in overly crowded and unhygienic spaces. Traders in these businesses are at high risks of being exposed to the virus.

2.8.3 Measures taken by authorities to support or ensure the traders were catered for and where revenues in sales.

In response of these challenges, governments and international organisations have tried to come up with ways to assist informal businesses during the pandemic. One of the examples that can be highlighted is the World Bank's effort to provide funding support to small and medium businesses in low income countries, which include the informal sector. On the other side, the International Labour Organisation also called for ways to protect the rights of informal workers and emphasised the importance of ensuring access to social aid and protection.

Regardless of these efforts, the challenges experienced by the informal sector during the pandemic has been very significant. This sector requires a targeted support and assistance to survive the challenges and recover the post pandemic period. Coordinated effort from the governments, the private sector and international

organisations is important to address the needs of informal businesses and assist this group as the impact of the sector cannot be ignored. This was highlighted in a report conducted by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), (2020).

2.8.4 Is locality important to informal street traders?

The CBD of Pretoria has a collection of commerce that varies in scale; this includes the combination of both the formal and informal sectors. It is a place in which retail and ethnic territories overlap. The CBD represents a clear picture of centralised and condensed activities in which the sectors work together to provide a living for individuals from various backgrounds in Pretoria (Motala, 2002).

When it comes to informal street trading, the importance of location cannot be underestimated. The spatial mapping of informal street traders is crucial in CBDs as it creates a visual demonstration of locations in which informal street trading is prominent as well as isolated areas. A location's physical and economic characteristics might be inferred from the volume of informal street vendors there. Nonetheless, it is crucial to consider that location is often not a choice for street traders. Local authorities usually instruct a specified trader association at which location trading is allowed (Heerden, 2011; Skinner, 2000).

2.8.5 Informal Street trading policies and regulations South Africa

South Africa has various national and local legislatives that stipulate and promote informal street trading because of previous indications of positive contributions of this sector for most of the population. Section 22 of the Constitution of South Africa, which is the highest supreme law in South Africa, focuses on freedom of trade, occupation and profession (Republic of South Africa, 1996). It states that all people have the right to choose any job or work that is regulated by the law of the country. This freedom emphasised by Section 22 is extended to informal street traders. In addition, a few main issues stressed by the Local Government Municipal Act 32 of 2000 (Republic of South Africa, 2000) includes informal street trading and identifies ways in which the sector can be integrated with the developmental visions of local governments in the country. The South African Constitution further emphasises that local governments must enable economic development at a municipal level, of which the informal street

trading sector is one of the strategies to stimulate social and economic development. The City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality is one of many municipalities that address informal street trading through by-laws. Some limitations of the municipality have been previously scrutinised by Masonganye (2010). Masonganye (2010) argues that the municipality failed to include informal street trading in the Tshwane Spatial Development Framework, which is essential in ensuring that informal street traders are provided with strategic operational spaces that will allow them to be efficient and maximise profit. Previously, informal street trading was not given spatial recognition due to the stigmas attached to the sector. These include narrations that insinuate that informal street trading reduces the aesthetics of the city, damages the city character, is not permitted by zoning of the area and is linked to crime (Mudau & Kona, 2021).

Nevertheless, the significance of informal street trading has gradually been observed by the government which includes Tshwane Municipality. The municipality appears to understand its fundamental role in establishing a supportive and facilitative policy environment for informal street traders to continue to thrive and allowing them the opportunity to expand under desirable conditions.

Sub-headings should be included for the theories considered in literature review. Also show clearly which theory resonates more wit the study. Under the conceptual framework, the candidate should add a diagram showing clearly what was considered as the dependent variable and the selected explanatory variables for the study.

2.9 Theoretical Framework

Historical context of Informal Street Trading in South Africa (Neo- liberalism, structuralism, and Dependency)

The emergence of informal street trading in South Africa's borders is alleged to be a result of the apartheid regime which led to the economic and political segregation of Black people. The sector reflects the entrepreneurial spirit of the Black people during that difficult time. Strict and limited regulations on movement and property ownership rights for Black people led to one-sided urban development, giving birth to the informal economy (Broadway, 2017; Rogerson, 2000). Local governments under the apartheid

law enforced severe legislation on informal street traders, which included the “move on” policy. This policy required informal street traders to move from their spaces of trading within intervals of 30 minutes to avoid law enforcement harassments. However, it is during the 1980s that the apartheid government’s regulation over the movements of Black people began to decline. This change gave rise to the transformation of informal street trading regulations in the country (Kgatla, 2013, Motala, 2002). This formed part of the broader determination to liberalise and empower Black people. One of the primary legislations that was introduced included the presentation of the Business Act of 1991 (Kgatla, 2013; Sello, 2012). Measures such as this and decriminalisation of policies such as the “move on” policy reduced the barriers for informal street traders to operate freely. The political and legislative changes that happened in the early 1990s resulted in a major influx of labour into the cities which led to an overwhelmed formal economy. As a response to this, the informal street trading markets boomed like never before, including various individuals such as young unemployed people, unskilled workers and pensioners (Goldman, 2003; Motala, 2002). The growth of informal street trading activities indicated a need for supervision. In the early 2000s, various municipal-owned entities implemented measures to manage and regulate informal street trading in ways that ensured balance in the economic development of their communities. These entities initiated partnerships with informal street traders, encouraged them to register on their databases and provided the registered traders with trading stalls (Matjomane, 2013).

Previously, theories that focused on neo-liberalism, structuralism and dependency formed an integral description of the origins of and necessities for informal street trading globally. They emphasise demonstrating the persistent and expanding nature of informality especially in emerging countries. Neo-liberalism is a philosophy that is dedicated to economic freedom and empowerment. This point of view is in favour of economic measures that boost the private sector while curtailing government involvement. It pursues the transfer of economic power from the state to the private sector in the hope that it will make a more valuable state and enhance the state of the economy (Fourie, 2022; Jessop, 2012). De Soto (1989), a reformist from Peru, claimed that unnecessary government restrictions were the cause of the emergence of the informal sector. De Soto argues that participants in the informal economy, whom he

refers to as courageous micro-capitalists, volunteered to enter the informal markets with the intention to escape costs, time and efforts related to formal employment (Chen, 2012). Informal traders are viewed as revolutionaries who courageously challenge government regulations with the intention to provide for their households. In contrast, structuralists argue that the emergence of informal street trading is not because of the excess of labour supply or unwarranted regulations, but rather serves as a substitute form of labour that preserves exploitation (Yusuff, 2011).

Sustainable livelihood approach and De Soto's ideology

This study adopted the sustainable livelihood approach as the key rationalised framework to help achieve the research objectives and purpose. The sustainable livelihoods approach is a philosophy concerned with the objectives, motives and priorities for developmental accomplishments (Tanusha & Ringson, 2022; Serrat, 2017). The framework places a major focus on informal traders especially in understanding the motives for operating and participating in the sector. The framework understands the survivalist approach as the driving force for most informal traders. It further emphasises that through the efforts of informal street traders in establishing themselves, the Government of South Africa is able to intervene through the implementation of policies in which the sustainable livelihoods framework is immensely involved. This framework is intensively concerned about the less fortunate and therefore it is in constant pursuit of developing policies and strategies to better their socioeconomic standing (Smyth & Vanclay, 2017). In strengthening and empowering the lives of people, the sustainability livelihood framework focuses on approaches used by individuals and communities to confront and overcome challenging times, thus improving their current and future lives through various strategies. Serrat (2017) highlights that the sustainability livelihood framework provides all these strategies while ensuring that scarce natural resources and the lives and skills of the vulnerable are not exploited (Serrat, 2017).

Concurrently, reformist De Soto's ideology recognises that street trading is crucial in reducing poverty and driving social justice. Therefore, premised on the preceding conceptualisation of De Soto's philosophy and the sustainability livelihood framework, this study sought to explore the effect of Covid-19 on informal street traders' sales and

revenue, especially during the hard lockdown period. The informal trading sector is characterised by individuals who adapt easily and who in many instances are considered as not having the ability to fit into the formal sector (Makhetha, 2010). The informal economy and sustainable livelihoods concepts are in consensus with the reformists who view informal street trading as an essential factor for the development and expansion of South Africa. With the possibility of new pandemics, income production and additional livelihood prospects cannot be seen in the setting of the so-called formal sector alone. In addition, the formal sector on its own will only narrow down job creation and sustainable livelihood development. Individuals need to be stimulated and empowered to partake in a range of livelihood activities to generate revenue and job opportunities (Hovsha & Meyer, 2015).

Adoption of the Sustainable livelihood approach

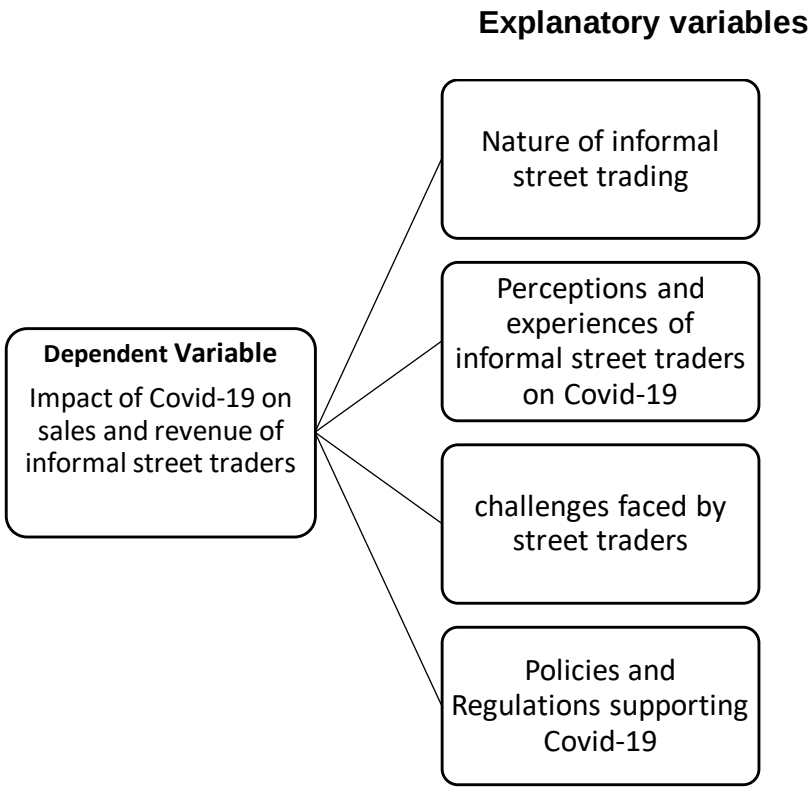
Among the theories mentioned above, the sustainable livelihood approach resonates most to this study. This theory focuses on understanding the objectives, motives, and importance for developmental achievements, putting more significance on the survival approaches of informal street traders. The framework takes into account the challenges experienced by the vulnerable population, which includes informal street traders, and exploring ways to improve them through the development of policies and regulations. By adopting this framework, this study intends to explore the impact of Covid-19 lockdown on informal street traders especially with the focus on sales and revenue. This will assist in understand policy interventions to assist informal street traders.

2.10 Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework can be explained as an established sequence of theories or concepts that are reasonably organised to provide direction to the research procedures. It is concerned with the establishment of the research structure and provides ways to comprehend the research problem, purpose, methods and tools deployed and ways to analyse the collected data (Green, 2014; Straughair, 2019). This chapter's primary goal was to perform a review of the relevant literature, from which the study was able to draw a conclusion in the form of a conceptual framework. With this, the chapter unpacked what is meant by the informal economy and provided

a clear overview of the nature and size of informal street trading globally and within the African context and then narrowed it down to the South African context. The chapter also focused on the challenges faced by informal street traders and what critics of this sector say about it and investigated factual data pertaining to the significance of informal street trading. The review of previous and current studies on informal street traders indicated the knowledge gap in exploring the views and experiences of informal street traders of Covid-19 and how it impacted their sales and revenue.

Overall, the below conceptual framework emphasises the enormous effect that Covid-19 had on informal street traders, given the already challenged and vulnerable nature of their business. This highlights the importance of state intervention through policies that promote support of informal street trading and values the role that the sector plays in society and the overall livelihoods of informal street traders themselves.



CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to provide insights relating to the effects of Covid-19 on informal street traders, with the intent to find possible solutions that could better their day-to-day experiences faced by this group of individuals during disasters, if any challenges occurred. This study focused on participants along Helen Joseph Street (Church Street), bordered by the M18 and Du Toit Street. Pretoria, also known as Tshwane, is South Africa's capital and one of the most essential economic nodes in the country. The researcher believed that a more in-depth understanding of the day-to-day operations of informal street traders and how the pandemic affected them could assist in future functionalities of the sector and government interventions where required. In an attempt to respond to the research purpose and objectives, this study pursued the following questions: (1) What is the state of informal street trading in Pretoria's CBD? (2) How have informal street traders perceived the impact of Covid-19 lockdown on their sales and revenue? (3) What measures have informal street traders proposed to address some of the challenges that might have been encountered during the Covid-19 pandemic?

This chapter defines the methodology employed in conducting the research and contains the subsequent sections: (a) justification for applying a qualitative approach; (b) explanation of the research design; (c) the type of sampling that was employed and the sample that was involved in the research; (d) outlining how the data was gathered; (e) description of how the gathered data was analysed and interpreted; (f) matters pertaining to trustworthiness; and (g) limitations and constraints regarding the study. In conclusion, this chapter will focus on the ethical considerations of the research and a summary of the chapter.

3.2 Justification for Applying a Qualitative Research Approach

The rationale for the research approach is well-versed by the paradigm in which this study was positioned. The purpose of this study was to recognise the experiences and views of informal street traders regarding the effects of Covid-19 and the impact on

their sales and revenue. This study adopted a constructivist paradigm as it focused on understanding the experiences (lived realities) of informal street traders as they understand them. The data collected in this study was dependent on several realities which then informed the analysis and the outcomes of the study. Constructivists vary from other philosophical ideologies as it is grounded in the belief that an individual's reality is sound and that knowledge is not just imaginary but is established through the lived realities (Golder, 2018; Leavy, 2017; Wagner et al., 2012).

In contrast to quantitative studies that focus on measuring relations between variables through the implementation of numerical data and instruments (Creswell, 2003; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015), this study adopted a qualitative research methodology. Qualitative research studies are identified by characteristics that include deeper understandings, interpretations and compound perceptions which ensure that the appropriate instruments are adopted to produce findings that are in line with the purpose of the study (Busetto et al., 2020; Chilisa, 2012; Sahu & Singh, 2016). This research methodology allowed the study to accomplish an understanding of exclusive experiences in a similar setting which assisted in the success of reaching the research purpose (Wagner et al., 2012). This study adhered to the qualitative approach as the researcher was the key source of collecting information at every phase of the study. This study reviewed various documentation and research (see Chapter Two) that was previously compiled to have an in-depth understanding of informal street traders and the Covid-19 pandemic.

The qualitative research approach provides the required instruments for demonstration of social encounters, events, actions and reactions of individuals through various lived circumstances (Bryman, 2014; Bryman & Bell, 2019). Embracing the qualitative research methodology, an explorative approach was stimulated in that the researcher was able to identify suitable research methods and instruments. Explorative research instruments provide an opportunity to explore, reflect and deliver descriptions of narratives of experiences in the lives of research participants in relation to the study (Chilisa, 2012). The use of interviews with open-ended questions was the primary research instrument used which is a primary characteristic the qualitative research method. With this, the research objectives and the purpose were delivered by this study through the implementation of the method mentioned above which was

successful by exploring the numerous views and experiences of participants paired with reviews of previously published reports. Recommendations and findings concluded by this research will add value to the present knowledge that will permit others to gain a deeper understanding of the effect of Covid-19 on informal street traders and how their challenges can be addressed for future experienced crises.

3.3 Phenomenology Research Design

The rationale for the research design is in line with the purpose, the setting of the study and the procedures adopted. The phenomenology approach was adopted, considering that the study intended to understand the experiences and views of informal street traders by engaging with participants individually. Phenomenology is the leading research design approach that is mainly concerned with exploring the views and experiences of individuals (Neubauer et al., 2019; Wagner et al., 2012). The adoption of this design is with the understanding that the phenomenological design initiates its findings through the analysis of persons' experiences who are uniquely placed in a particular context, then proceeds to describe the meaning derived from a chosen sample who have shared or common experiences. Phenomenology intends on providing clarification on what participants have in common as they encounter the same situation (Gill, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Phenomenology follows participants that have a full understanding of a study's context and are interested in sharing their deeper views and feelings about a certain phenomenon (Victoria & Braun, 2013; Wagner et al., 2012). In these instances, phenomenology intends to explore the experiences of informal street traders of Covid-19 and the effects it had on their sales and revenue. Each participant had their individual reality and reality in this case was subjective. How Covid-19 affected one informal trader might not be how it affected the others – for example, it might be positively or negatively. Phenomenology allowed the study to focus on all differing experiences and therefore draw conclusions based on the commonalities of the participants (Polkinghorne, 1989). This research design encouraged the researcher to use data collection methods that involved face-to-face interactions with participants. With this, participants could share their views in a detailed manner which was beneficial in drawing reliable findings (Neubauer et al., 2019). The merits of the phenomenological research design lay in its capability to

explore the concepts and outcomes that played a crucial role in providing further understanding into research on informal street trading and crises such as Covid-19.

3.4 Sampling

Sampling can be defined as an organised method of selection (Chilisa, 2012). Social science studies refer to sampling as handpicking subjects to be studied (Leavy, 2017; Maree, 2017). By nature, qualitative studies are not prescriptive, and procedures are in most cases different for each research study and context. In contrast to quantitative studies that are often guided by rules and measures, qualitative studies are not restrictive when it comes to sampling size. Generally, in-depth qualitative studies tend to have smaller sample sizes (DePoy & Gitlin, 2015). This is because studies such as this one that explored the views and experiences of informal street traders regarding the effect of Covid-19, look for a deeper and more descriptive data collection method. Sample size is therefore informed by data collection methodology and consideration of the period that would be feasible to collect in-depth data from the said sample. However, Wagner et al. (2012) caution that qualitative researchers should avoid sampling sizes that are too small as this would affect reaching data saturation. Data saturation is also known as data adequacy. Morse and Doberneck (1995) suggest that an average of 30–50 participants should be considered when focusing on interviews. This recommendation is based on studies that intend to generalise results to a broader population.

Conducting qualitative research does not insinuate that the research has to use non-probability sampling (Leavy, 2017) and this study used probability sampling. Probability sampling involves a random process in that everyone within a population has a similar chance of being involved in the sample. This study had access to all street traders and then randomly selected participants, therefore, simple random sampling was adopted in this study. The rationale for adopting simple random sampling was that the study intended to generalise the data collected from informal street traders in Pretoria CBD along Church Street to the wider population. Simple random sampling is acknowledged for its simplicity and lack of biases (Marshall, 1996). However, this sampling method has been criticised as a list of the entire population in a study is often not available to compare to the selected sample size

(Hennink & Kaiser, 2022; Marshall, 1996). In this study, 30 research participants were selected for interviews. This sampling size was subject to the researcher's judgement and was based on restricted time and travelling costs for the researcher. Findings from this study could assist those that are concerned with the effect that Covid-19 had on informal street traders. These could be individuals looking to operate as informal street traders and/or the government looking for interventions and ways to assist informal street traders.

3.5 Data Collection Methods

With qualitative research studies, data can be collected in multiple ways and forms. These include using forms of observations and interviews (Chilisa, 2012; Creswell, 2003) which would be used under various circumstances. For instance, observations are usually adopted in studies that are concerned with how people interact in a certain circumstance, what seems to be important to people in a particular context and observing what people prioritise (Busetto et al., 2020). In most instances, deciding on the data collection method largely depends on the research purpose which has a huge impact on whether the sample size should be focused on an individual basis or a group (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

In person interviews were the main data-gathering method for this study. Face-to-face interviews are a way to acquire in-depth and comprehensive data and are a more useful and common method in collecting qualitative data (Chilisa, 2012). In order to react to the research aims and questions, it involved the researcher and participants having a purposeful dialogue in which the researcher inquired about the participants' opinions and experiences regarding Covid-19. The interviews were conducted in the natural setting of the participants. This process increased the validity of the research as the researcher got to understand the lived realities of the participants firsthand (Bryman, 2014; Bryman & Bell, 2019). The adoption of this qualitative data collection method further allowed the researcher to take control of the participants' responses to the questions by clearing up any misunderstandings (Daniel, 2016; Rahman, 2017).

This research aimed to provide rich descriptive data that might assist in viewing life from the eyes of informal street traders affected by Covid-19 in Pretoria's CBD. The interview data collection method entailed the use of both open-ended and closed-ended questions. Open-ended questions are advantageous in that they permit the participants to fully narrate their experiences and clarify where necessary. On the other hand, closed-ended questions are beneficial in responding to questions that require data comparison through numbers during the data analysis process (Baburajan et al., 2021; Hyman & Sierra, 2016). These included questions relating to the whether the revenue of informal traders increased or decreased during Covid-19. The researcher took into consideration the limitations of interviews. Interviews are known to be time-consuming, and the researcher planned and ensured that enough time was allocated for data collection. Moreover, Bloomberg and Volpe (2016) stipulate that some of the shortcomings associated with interviews include participants that are uncooperative, share information that is irrelevant and differ in degrees of articulation. Through the process of ethical considerations, the researcher was able to guarantee that participation was voluntary and anonymous in that respondents did not have to disclose their identity. Secondary data was also collected through the literature review process.

3.6 Data Analysis

In qualitative research, data analysis is informed by the research purpose and theoretical framework relating to the study. Understanding the significance of the data through identification and analysis of themes is a common technique in most qualitative studies (Flick, 2014). Reporting on the processes used to analyse data makes it easier to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of the research findings. This process can be done by preparing and organising the gathered data to create comprehensive collective meaning and insights of the collected data to come to clear conclusions and make recommendations (Akiyode & Khan, 2018; Ngulube, 2015). This process is popularly known as data analysis. Data analysis is a process that allows the researcher to concurrently gather and analyse as opposed to collecting data then later analysing it (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). With this data, it was in the best interest of the researcher to practice comparative analysis during the interviews with

informal street traders to ensure that information was narrowed down and the study focus built up relative to the emerging data.

This study further used thematic analysis as the main analytic approach. Thematic analysis is a primary approach to analysing qualitative data that includes identification of themes or patterns (Ibrahim, 2012; Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). The researcher needed to understand the effect of Covid-19 on informal street traders by interviewing each participant regarding their experiences. Thematic analysis is helpful in analysing each participant's situation. It allows the researcher to code in multiple phases to establish insightful patterns (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). This method focuses on discovering and describing the hidden and obvious ideas mentioned in the interviews rather than simply counting words or phrases from the data. Analysing data through themes allowed the researcher to link and compare multiple insights from the interviews with previous studies focused on a similar concept (Vaismoradi et al., 2013; Victoria & Braun, 2013).

The execution of thematic analysis was enforced through various steps. These included the researcher familiarising themselves with the data by transcribing recordings and carefully reviewing the transcripts to spot any emerging trends. The succeeding steps involved the researcher generating the first codes by reducing the data and classifying and labelling the data (Busetto et al., 2020; Dawadi, 2020). The researcher then searched for themes within the identified codes; this phase provided clarity regarding the meaning of themes and identified any missing concepts in the study. The next phase entailed the reviewing of themes which ensured that the themes that emerged supported the study's theoretical framework. The researcher at that point defined and named the theme. In conclusion, findings with meaningful insights were compiled (King, 2004; Nowell et al., 2017).

Furthermore, this study adopted the use of data visualisation through graphs and charts to ensure that data was easier to read where possible. Data visualisation makes it simpler to identify reoccurring themes and patterns. This research leveraged Nvivo as data analytic tool. This tool is widely used in qualitative studies for data organisation, analysis and help in virtualisations. Below is the steps and process that the researcher followed using Nvivo:

Step 1: the researcher created a new project on Nvivo and imported qualitative interview transcripts in the project.

Step 2: Reviewed and familiarised myself with the content of data sources and used these to understand the context and themes of the research.

Step 3: created codes based on the themes that were created and applied the codes on relevant sections of the text in the data sources using Nvivo's coding tools

Step 4: Organised the codes into categories and created a hierarchy structure that shows the relationships between the themes.

Step 5: Explored relationships between themes using Nvivo's nodes and identified patterns, connections and differences in the data by analysing how different themes intersect.

Step 6: used Nvivo's query tools to conduct searches, by running text searches to find specific keywords.

Step 7: Analysed coded data in themes by identifying repeating patterns, trends or any new themes.

Step 8: Wrote memos to document my thoughts when analysing the data. Used memos to also track analysis and captured data interpretations.

Step 9: Used qualitative data using Nvivo's tools using words and graphs. This was helpful in communicating key insights.

Step 10: Interpreted my findings based on themes and insights gathered from data.

3.7 Trustworthiness

In order to achieve credibility and efficacy, both qualitative and quantitative research employ a variety of concepts and techniques. Concepts of reliability and validity are applied in quantitative research. Reliability refers to the measure in which data gathering instruments and the results can be replicated to achieve the same outcome, whereas validity focuses on whether the envisioned research purpose and objective are achieved through the data collection procedure applied (Noble & Smith, 2015;

Nowell et al., 2017). In this qualitative study, the researcher considered “credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability” as the criteria to ensure that the level of data trustworthiness was enhanced.

In qualitative studies, credibility is similar to internal validity which is mostly adopted by quantitative studies and tries to confirm that the study measures or tests what it precisely intended to do. Credibility refers to the truthfulness of the research findings. It achieves this by testing the validity of the research assumptions through evaluating the rationality of the research methodology and design employed with reference to the research purpose (Adhikari, 2018; Cope, 2014). It further assesses the logic and consistency between the analysis of the data and the presentation of the findings. The implementation of the constructivist paradigm enlightened the data gathering methods and analysis and allowed the study to rely on multiple realities through the adoption of interviews as the primary data collection method and the review of previous documents as the secondary data method. In addition, adoption of triangulation of the mentioned data sources was further enriched to guarantee credibility of the findings. This gave the study a robust foundation to fully understand and contextualise the views and perceptions of each participant informal street trader (Cypress, 2017; Leung, 2015; Stahl & King, 2020).

Dependability is a reliability measure accomplished through triangulation of methods and delivering an assessment trail (Leung, 2015). The availability of the assessment trail demonstrates that the translations of data from multiple sources is accurate, and further offers the ability to confirm the confirmability of the findings. This means emphasising the processes that the study followed. With this, dependability allows for the reconstruction of events and procedures that result in the decisions of the study. This study attested to reliability through the evident adoption of a questionnaire used during the interviews to allow re-evaluations of responses provided by participants. This ensured the consistency of the raw data and that the research adhered to the notion of dependability. Furthermore, the researcher ensured that key themes evolved and clear patterns of repetition between participants were noted and conferred with other participants to strengthen the dependability and reliability of the study. The researcher further noted data discrepancies where they were evident.

The data collection methods and the literature reviewed was observed as justification of confirmability of the research. This trustworthiness construct ensures that the findings of a study are grounded and therefore gauges the emergence of any biases by the researcher (Korstjens & Moser, 2017; Nowell et al., 2017). The findings of this study were not subjected to the opinions of the researcher and were derived from the data collected from the research participants and literature pertaining to the matter under question.

Transferability is often considered to be generalisability, which can be explained as the magnitude at which the findings of a research can be used to generalise a phenomenon to accommodate a larger population (Korstjens & Moser, 2017; Schloemen & Schroder-Back, 2018). It is the basis for creating similarities in judgements which can be maintained through the preservation of all versions of the data in its authentic form and the interpretation of in-depth descriptions (Rodon, 2008). This study adopted phenomenology as the main research design which is mainly concerned with collecting data regarding perceptions and experiences from multiple sources. It was adopted for its ability to generalise the experiences of participants in an accurate manner while also providing a richer understanding of the views of informal street traders of Covid-19.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

Ethics are an essential matter that should be taken seriously at every phase of the research design and the execution of the study (Chilisa, 2012; Creswell & Poth, 2017). Concerning the ethics involved in the report writing phase, the researcher adopted the APA 7th referencing style as guided by the university and ensured that the research was compiled honestly, avoiding plagiarism by citing all sources referenced.

The adoption of ethical considerations is mainly done so that participants are not physically or emotionally harmed and strengthens the values required for collaborative work which include mutual respect and fairness. Because the study involved people, the researcher was required to get ethical approval as per the University of the Witwatersrand ethics rules and regulations. To further understand the concept of ethics, the researcher attended an ethical short course at the university. The researcher obtained ethics clearance certificates from both processes. During the data collection process, participation was voluntary. The researcher ensured that participants were willing to be part of the study without any reciprocity, power dynamics or social injustice. With this process, the researcher ensured that participants understood that they had the right to renounce their participation at any moment during the interview process. This was confirmed using consent forms (see Appendix B). Consent forms stipulate every participant's right to consent to be part of the study after fully understanding the research purpose, what it intends to achieve, the research processes and whether there are any consequences attached to participation. Furthermore, this study valued anonymity and confidentiality. The researcher was careful to omit any personal identifying data of the participants. While fictitious names can be very helpful in hiding identities of participant, direct words shared by individuals can serve as a source for identification. Hence, it was essential for the researcher to pay attention to the descriptions and quotes from the participants to increase confidentiality during the data analysis process. The researcher had sole access to the data. As per university regulations, the gathered data is to be stored safely for a minimum of five years.

3.9 Summing up the Research Methodology

This chapter outlined the comprehensive research methodology adopted in the execution of this study. A qualitative phenomenology study was deployed to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of informal street traders in Pretoria's CBD of Covid-19 and how it impacted their sales and revenue, especially during the lockdown. Adopting this methodology allowed the researcher to focus on interviews as the main data collecting tool. The interviews consisted of both closed-ended and open-ended questions. In addition, previously published articles were also acknowledged as secondary data. The reviewed literature guided the conceptual framework which directed the research design and data collection method. The sample included 30 participants which were randomly selected in Pretoria's CBD along Church Street for the purposes of this study. Thematic analysis was the primary approach to analysing data in this study. Where closed-ended questions were concerned, participants provided detailed explanations which the researcher was able to incorporate into the thematic analysis. Trustworthiness of this study was enhanced through the application of tools such as dependability, reliability, credibility and transferability. Ethics were considered at every step of the research. The researcher adhered to the ethical considerations as stated by the university and further ensured that participants understood the research purpose and guaranteed that participation was voluntarily. Despite the inputs from critics of informal street trading, the sector has undoubtedly proved to be beneficial within poorer communities of many developing countries, with South Africa being included. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to provide insights relating to the effects of Covid-19 on informal street traders, with the intent to find possible solutions to challenges that affect their day-to-day experiences and mitigate challenges faced by this group of individuals during crises such as Covid-19.

CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

To execute the purpose and objectives of this study, the researcher conducted interviews with informal street traders in Pretoria CBD, along Church Street. As a result, this chapter presents the findings of the gathered data. Chapter Three above goes into detail regarding the methodologies and design implemented in the study. The purpose of this study is to provide insights relating to effects of Covid-19 on informal street traders, with the intents to find possible solutions that could better the day-to-day experiences of informal street traders and mitigate challenges faced by this group of individuals during disasters, if any challenges occurred. This study seeks the experiences and perceptions informal traders regarding the Covid-19 pandemic and its effect on their sales and revenue during the pandemic. The emerging and established issues stemming from the study, deepen the importance of responding to the knowledge gap and limitation currently faced by this group of the society. In addition, findings derived from this study can be useful and functional in executing government strategies intended for local economic development, inner-city rejuvenation as well as non-governmental organisations (NGOs) aimed to assist informal street traders. This chapter presents findings from 30 informal street traders. The chapter focuses on the biography information of the participants, the challenges faced by the participants, the effects of Covid-19 lockdown as well as in-depth descriptions of how the participants would like to be assisted by the government if required. This section further presents emerging themes arising from the data.

The rate at which participants were welcoming and had a positive response to this study was encouraging. Access to the informal street trading was easy and relaxed and the researcher did not experience gatekeeping. However, there was reluctance from some of the traders that hinted their exhaustion to participating to academic research as it does not benefit to their profit.

4.2 Sample

4.2.1 Biographical data

The first part of the questionnaire was related to the biographical information of the participants. To understand the nature of informal street trading in South Africa, it was essential to know the age of the participants, their gender, educational level, the number of dependants, whether they were the main income contributor in their household, their nationality and the reasons why they were informal street traders. With this information, the detailed explanations of their experiences and views on how Covid-19 affected their revenue and lifestyle could be substantiated.

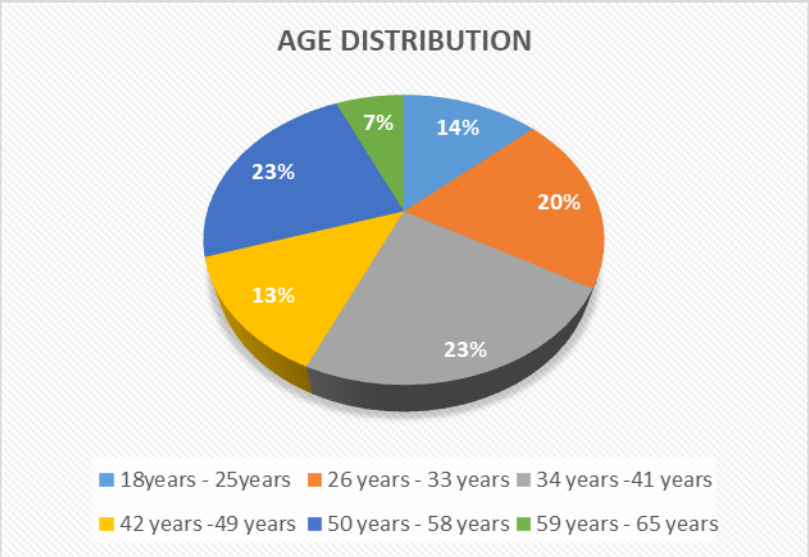


Figure 4.1: Age distribution

As presented in Figure 4.1 above, informal street traders in Pretoria's CBD were mainly between the ages of 34–41 and 50–58 years. Informal street traders between the ages of 59–65 was the minority. In addition, none of the participants were above the age of 65 years. This showed that informal street trading is dominated by the working age group as stipulated by South African employment laws.

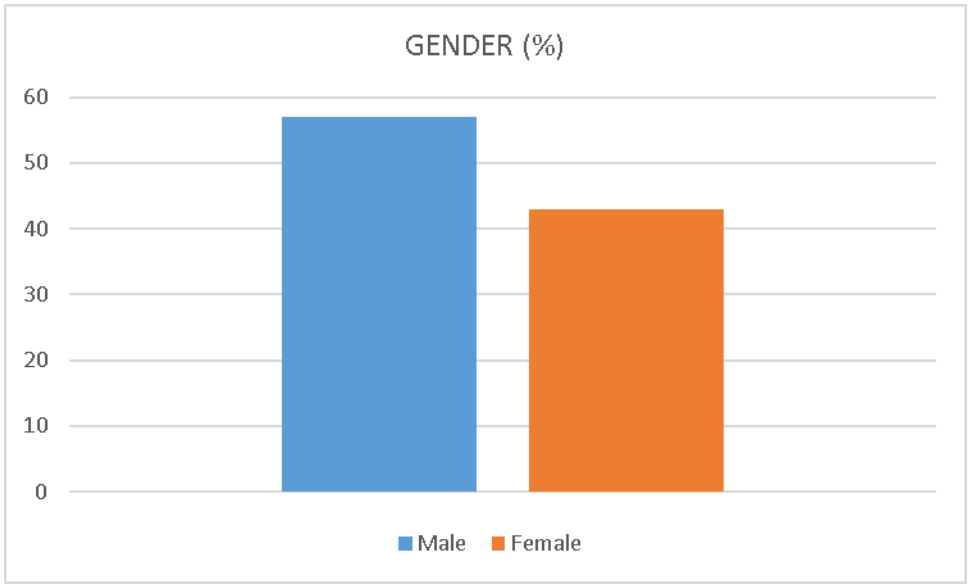


Figure 4.2: Gender

Gender is an essential consideration in any concept that pertains to development and brings change in societies. It indicates ways in which social norms and power structures influence the lives and opportunities accessible to various groups of people. As shown in Figure 4.2, the data collected for this study showed that 57% of the informal street trader participants were male. At this point, the reasons for the male dominance and participation in trading was unclear, as gender equality was not stressed in the study's objectives and goals.

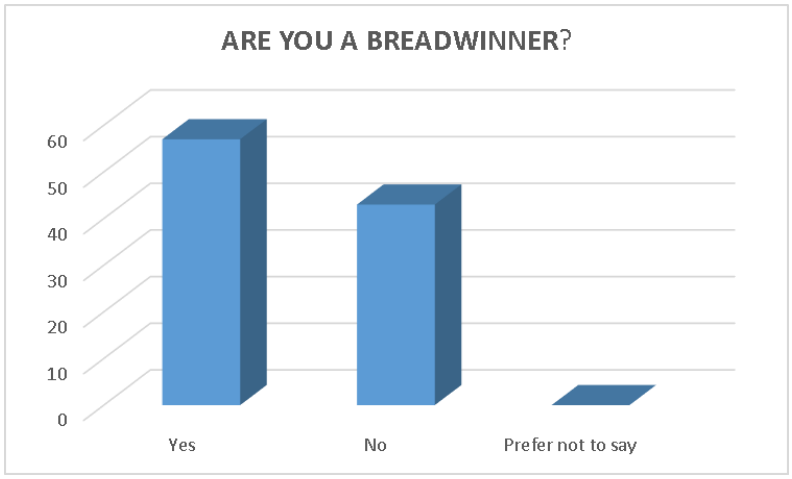


Figure 4.3: Breadwinner

As shown in Figure 4.3, the number of participants who were breadwinners was 46% and those who were not was 43%.

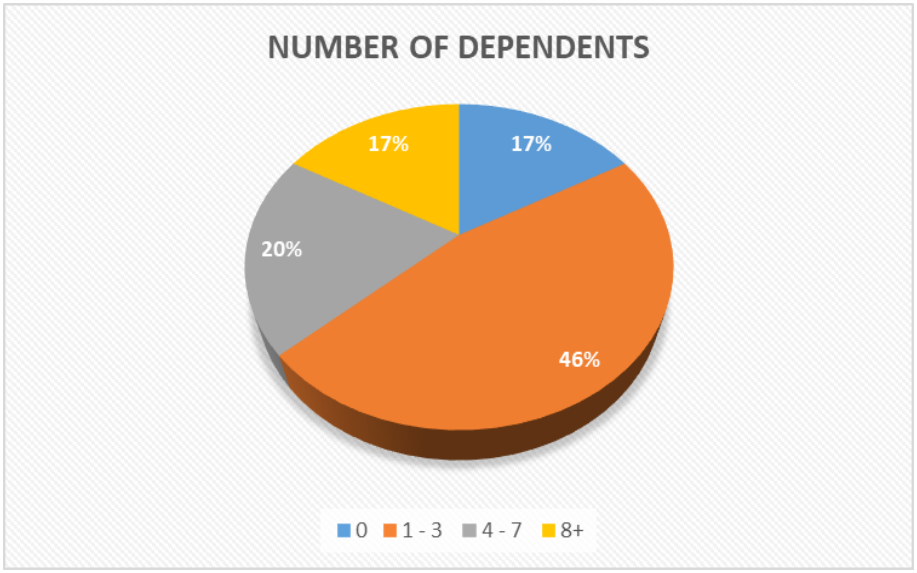


Figure 4.4: Number of dependents

Figure 4.4 shows that most of the participants (46%) were responsible for between one–three dependents, with 20% of the participants indicating they had four–seven, and 17% who had none and eight and above respectively.

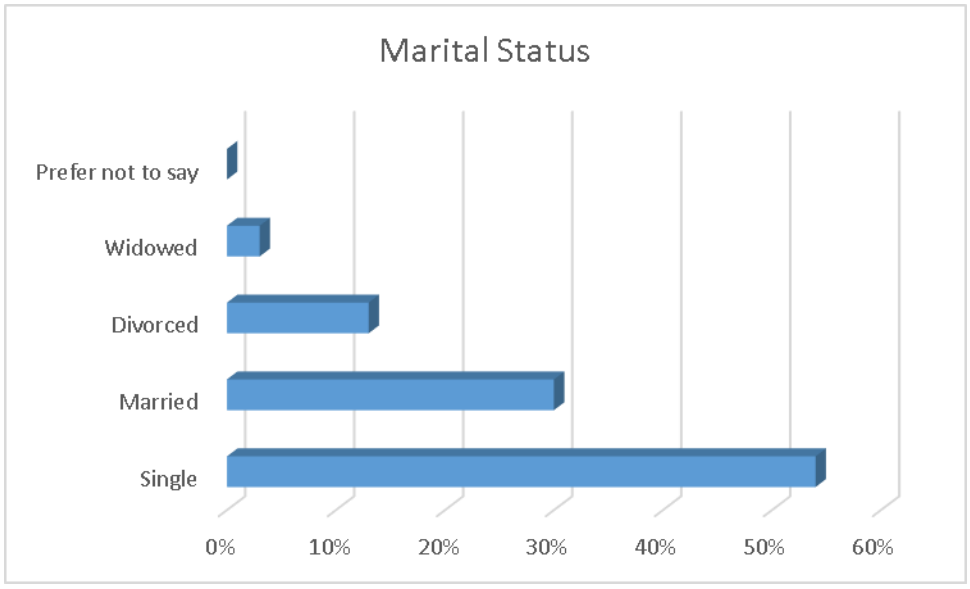


Figure 4.5: Marital status

As presented in Figure 4.5, more than 50% of the participants were single, with the lowest ratio of 3% being widowed participants.

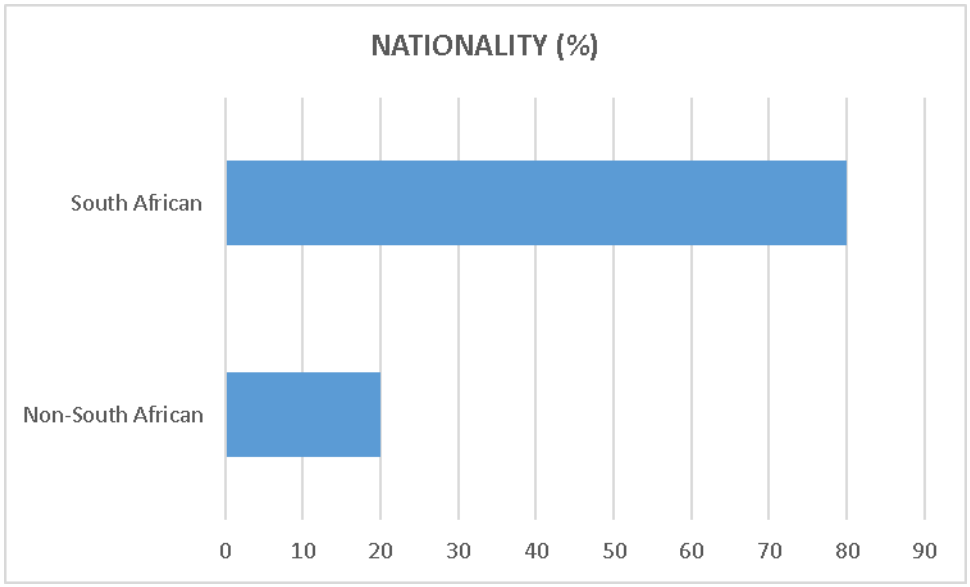


Figure 4.6: Nationality

In social studies such as this, understanding the size and nature of citizenship status can be essential, especially when focusing on implementable strategies and interventions that could assist in operations of people when required. As shown in Figure 4.6, 80% of the participants in this study were South African, while 20% were non-South African. In addition, the common factor among the non-South African participants was that they all came from African countries.

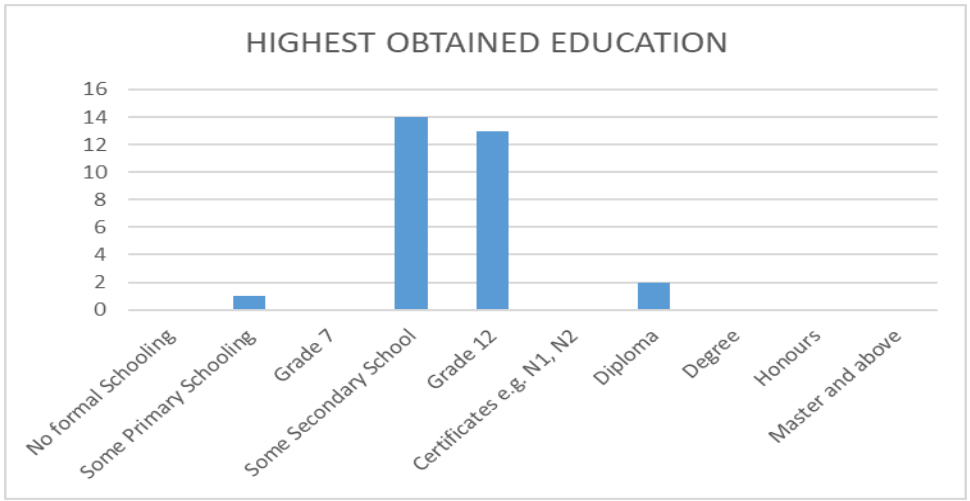


Figure 4.7: Highest obtained education

Education provides knowledge and enhances personal development especially concerning career prospects. It prepares individuals with skills that are beneficial for the wider community while also allowing the person to change their difficult life circumstances. This study considered the importance of education and therefore evaluated the extent of the participants' studies. Figure 4.7 below indicates the highest qualifications obtained by the participants. This was essential in interpreting the findings of the study, particularly when focusing on the reasons for participating in trading. Figure 4.7 shows that the highest qualification attained for one of the participants was "some primary school". This indicates that due to unforeseen circumstances, not covered by this study, the educational career for this individual did not go above Grade 7. Fourteen of the participants had "some secondary schooling" and 13 participants were able to pass Grade 12. The data on education further stipulates that only two participants were able to further their studies above Grade 12. These two participants indicated that "Diploma" was the highest obtained qualification at the time of the interviews.

4.2.2 Reasons for participating in informal street trading

Now that the study has presented the biographical information pertaining to the participants it is essential to understand the reasons that led to the participants becoming informal street traders as an income-creating stream. Furthermore, the data presented could help identify if there is any relationship between the biographical information and the reason for participating in the sector. As gathered in Chapter Two of this study, informal street trading has been a solution for many South Africans faced with the challenges of poverty and unemployment today. Table 4.1 below seemed to agree with the literature as 80% of the participants selected "Primary source of income due to lack of opportunities" as the reason for participating in informal street trading. On the other hand, 20% of the participants indicated that their reason for participating in the sector was because informal street trading is their primary source of income by choice. As shown by the figure, none of the participants selected "secondary source of income" as the reason being part of the sector.

Table 4.1: Reasons for participating in street trading

Reasons for participating in street trading	Frequency	%
Primary source of income due to lack of opportunities	24	80
Primary source of income by choice	6	20
Secondary source of income (extra income)	-	-
Other, please specify	-	-

In addition to the above question, the participants were asked if they had any other sources of income. As shown in Table 4.2 below, only two had other means of income which was the government social grant. Twenty-eight of the participants indicated that income accumulated from informal street trading was their only source of living. These further stresses the importance of this study. Published data relating to Covid-19 indicates that many economies and households were left devastated as a result of the pandemic; it was therefore crucial to explore how those depending on informal street trading were affected. Information such as this can be beneficial in strengthening local communities and inner cities and ensuring that the government caters to the needs of the people where necessary.

Table 4.2: Other means of income

Do you have other means of income?	
Yes	2
No	28

4.2.3 Number of years involved in street trading and daily operational hours

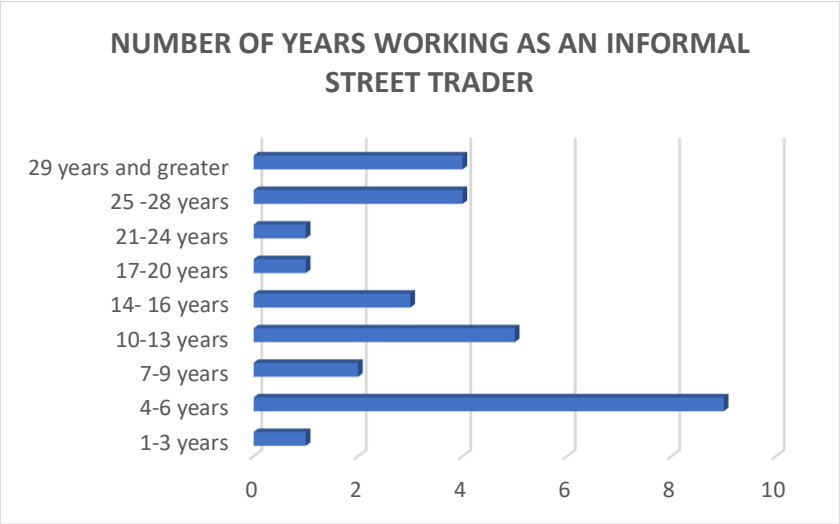


Figure 4.8: Number of years working as an informal street trader

To understand the day-to-day operations of informal street traders, the researcher also asked the participants the number of years they had been participating in the business which is indicated in Figure 4.8 above. Most participants had been involved with informal street trading for 4–6 years. Those who had been working as informal street traders for 1–3 years, 17–20 years and 21–24 years were equal. An outlier identified within the participants, was a participant who had been working for 50 years as a trader.

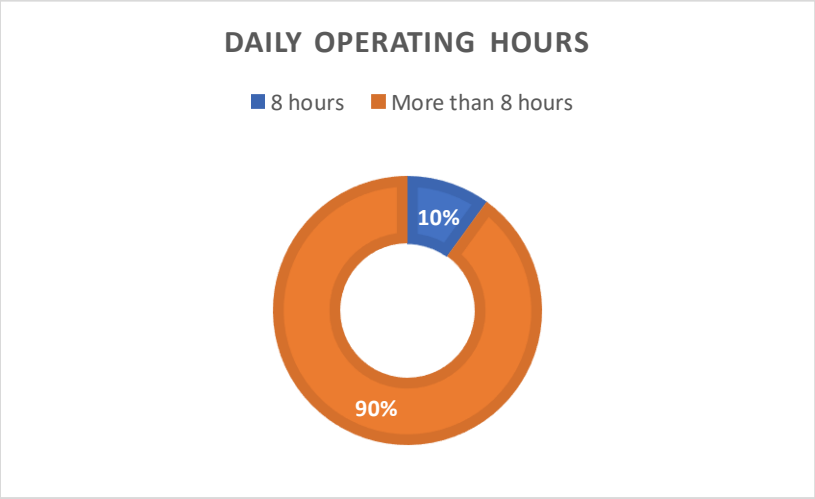


Figure 4.9: Daily operating hours

Along with the question of number of years, the researcher asked participants to indicate their daily operating hours. Figure 4.9 above indicates the daily operating hours of the research participants. Ninety per cent of the participants pointed that they operated for more than eight hours daily, while 3% operated within eight hours.

The following section discusses the emerging themes that resulted from the data: All informal street traders face challenges and Covid-19 threatened the livelihood of informal street traders.

4.3 Theme 1: All Informal Street Traders Face Challenges

The question was asked of the participants whether they have any challenges that they experience as informal street traders. This question was asked in order to understand the day-to-day operations of informal street traders, and to further understand the issues that they constantly have to deal with. With this, no participants voiced that they had no challenges. Some participants indicated that the issues they face daily are too many to mention, however, they talked about those that they could think of at the time.

4.3.1 Services challenges (sanitation, water, shelter and crime)

Participant A, Participant R, Participant Y and Participant EF alluded that the core issues affecting their businesses daily include having no toilet, no water and no shelter which ultimately means that they are exposed to all types of weather changes which include heavy rains as well as crime. Participant A further explained that these challenges result in stress. For Participant W, the only issue encountered was *"no toilet"*.

Similar to Participant A, Participant B mentioned the lack of shelter that exposes them to bad weather conditions and no safety as major challenges. In the same light, Participant J, Participant P and Participant T explained that the major challenge they experience in their day-to-day operations is not having adequate shelter which becomes more unbearable especially when it is raining.

"Bad weather, theft and strikes" were the foremost issues faced by Participant H, Participant G, Participant U and Participant S.

4.3.2 Government and law enforcement

Participant C noted that *"We pay a government for rent and have no benefits"*. Similar to Participant C, Participant F and Participant P explained that in addition to the crime they often have to deal with, they struggle to pay the rent – even though business is slow, the government does not offer them any incentives even with the rent contributions that they make. Participant F further mentioned that the Tshwane Metropolitan Police forcefully take their rent when rent is not paid.

On the other hand, Participant L raised a rather controversial point that the government gives some informal street traders preference over others through the provision of incentives. She mentioned that she has never received any incentives, but knows of others who have.

4.3.3 Lack of customers

In the words of participant D: *"Most of the time I sell and the only money I have is for transport. I cannot even afford lunch and I have to stock again*". Participant E mentioned that his major challenge is not having consistent business. Comparable to Participant E, Participant I, Participant M and Participant Z indicated that the primary issues that they face include financial problems due to the slow business.

Participant L mentioned that, often, business can be too slow which makes life tough. Participant N, Participant S and Participant GH indicated that the slowness of the business regularly forces them to give away their stock because it gets rotten. Participant N further explained that this is a huge issue as markets are expensive. Participant CD shared the same experience with participant N, in that he mentioned that sometimes prices are too high at the markets.

4.3.4 Other challenges

Unlike the other participants, Participant K and Participant IJ referred to the strikes that occasionally occur as the primary challenge that they encounter. This is because the informal street traders operate close to government buildings.

Participant L also indicated that due to the large increase in foreigners, there are too many informal trading businesses which affect their business. In addition to the response of challenges faced as an informal trader, Participant P and Participant R added that the streets are crowded with foreigners. Participant P then added that foreigners do not pay rent, while the locals are forced to pay rent.

Participant AB mentioned that jealousy among informal street traders is a major challenge. He further declared that the jealousy that happens hurts him. In contrast to all other participants, Participant Q alluded that he did not experience any challenges in day-to-day day operations as an informal street trader.

4.4 Theme 2: Covid-19 Threatened the Livelihood of Informal Street Traders

During the interviews, participants were asked the following closed-ended question "How were sales and revenue during the Covid-19 lockdown compared to pre-Covid-19?" Participants were provided three options to answer this question: increased, remained the same or decreased. It is unfortunate that all informal street traders experienced the similar impact of sales and revenue being "decreased". It might not have been by equal amounts as the informal traders' monthly income varies and the researcher felt it would be invading their privacy if they were expected to provide their income. Covid-19 added onto the already existing challenges experienced and noted by informal street traders in Pretoria.

4.4.1 The effect of Covid-19 on their businesses

Participant A mentioned that Covid-19 was horrible for their business. In addition, *"the Local Economic Department required rent for their stalls during the lockdown period. It was so hard; we were not working but did not have to pay rent"* (Participant A)**.** Related to how Covid-19 affected Participant A, Participant F mentioned that it was a difficult period in which they did not have customers, but the rent had to be paid. She further explained that the government promised incentives but did not deliver, even during the hard lockdown.

Other participants noted similar hardships. Participant B said that *"we could not open and I had no income to provide for my family".* In the same light, Participant J explained that he could not work at all, he stayed indoors without any income.

Participant C mentioned that during the lockdown period, she did not have anyone to lend her money – she struggled a lot as she depended on trading for income. Similar to Participant C, Participant D and Participant AB explained that during the Covid-19 lockdown there was no business; they spent days without eating and could not provide for their children. Participant T, Participant AB, Participant E and Participant IJF also gave the same response; however, they did not mention any dependents.

"Very bad" was a response provided by Participant H, Participant M, Participant N and Participant P when asked how Covid-19 lockdown affected their business. Participant N further said: *"We were sitting at home, no source of income, it was tough"*, while Participant P added that she was not able to recover. In line with these responses, *"We did not sell anything"* was the response provided by Participant U. Participant O noted that it was *"bad, no income, no incentives but some got it. I am registered but the government offered me no help".*

In addition, Participant K mentioned that lockdown had many people working from home, which meant that there were less customers and people in the city. This informal trader sells lipsticks and he further mentioned that after the lockdown his business was still greatly affected as people were no longer interested in his products due to wearing face masks. Similar to Participant K, Participant Z mentioned that Covid-19 resulted in slow business and it felt like he had not done anything over those two years. *"Prices go up; people do not buy because they do not have jobs. Things have changed*" – these are the words of Participant CD when asked about the effects of Covid-19 on his sales and revenue. In line with this, Participant S mentioned that Covid-19 destroyed everything; things were expensive and people reduced the things they bought.

Although Participant Q mentioned that he did not experience any challenges when asked about the effects of Covid-19 on his sales and revenue, the participant indicated that the pandemic was very bad and led to business being very slow. Participant W and Participant GH had a similar response to Participant Q. However, Participant W

noted *"no toilet"* as the only challenge. Participant Y did not comment on the effect of Covid-19 on their sales and revenue.

4.4.2 Sales and revenue before and during Covid-19

The figures below explain the change in sales and revenue made by informal street traders before and during Covid-19. The first figure of this section indicates the monthly revenue produced by the participants before Covid-19. Eighty-seven per cent of the participants specified that they could make more than R1 000 monthly. Some continued to explain that they could produce more than R10 000 in any given month. Seven per cent of the participants said that they were able to make between R600 and R1 000 per month, while 3% of the participants showed that they were only able to make between R50 and R500 per month. The differences in monthly revenue can be explained by the difference in products sold by the traders. However, 3% of the participants indicated that the preferred not to give the approximations of the monthly amounts they made before Covid-19.

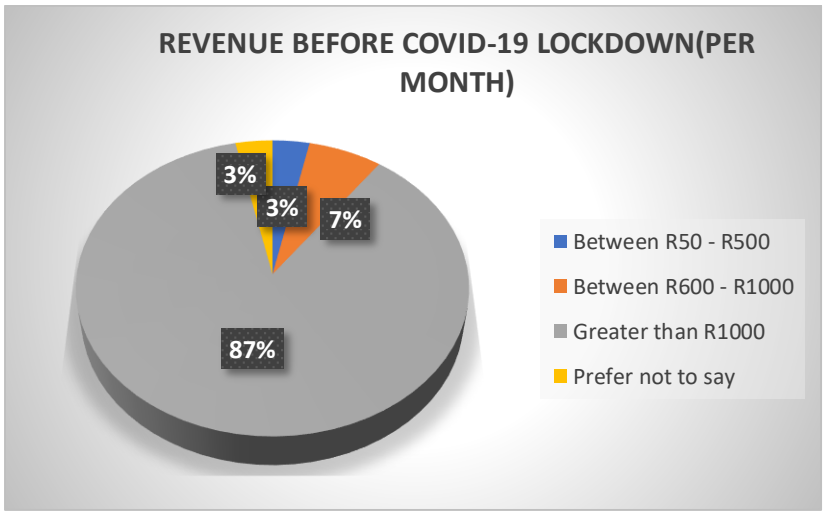


Figure 4.10: Revenue before Covid-19 lockdown (per month)

In contrast to the above figure, Figure 4.11 below shows the amount of revenue that the participants made during the Covid-19 pandemic. Seventy per cent of the participants indicated that they made revenue of between R50–R500 per month, 23% said they made between R600–R1 000 per month while only 7% made revenue greater than R1 000 per month.

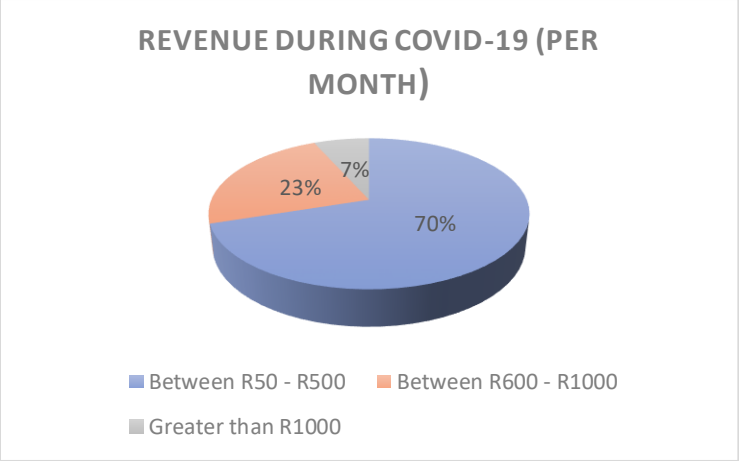


Figure 4.11: Revenue during Covid-19 (per month)

The differences in the revenue produced by informal street traders before and during the Covid-19 lockdown period is quite alarming.

4.4.3 Government support during the pandemic

In totality, 25 of the participants (above 80%) indicated that they did not receive any form of assistance from the government during the Covid-19 pandemic, which included the lockdown period. On the other hand, five participants (above 16%) admitted to getting some assistance from the government. Four of the five participants further explained that the assistance was in the form of the relief fund. Three of the four participants that received relief funds noted that it was the R350 social relief or distress fund which they qualified for due to being unemployed and part of the working age during the pandemic. One participant discussed that the government provided assistance in the form of food parcels. Figure 4.12 below demonstrates both the number of participants assisted by the government during the lockdown and those that did not receive any form of assistance. Figure 4.13 below shows the type of support provided to those that received assistance during the lockdown.

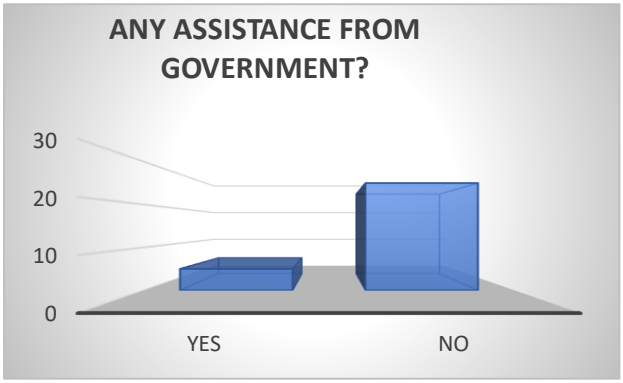


Figure 4.12: Assistance from government

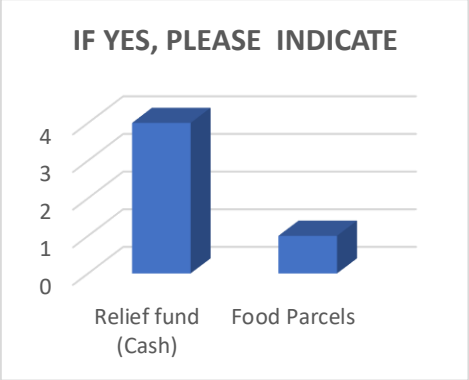


Figure 4.13: Type of assistance

In addition, participants were asked if they are registered with any informal trading organisation or society. Twenty-one of the participants demonstrated that they were not registered with any informal street trading organisation while nine said they were registered. However, eight of those that said they were registered indicated that the society/organisations that they are registered under failed to provide them with any means of assistance or relief during the lockdown, while one of them said the organisation provided relief funds during the lockdown period. This information is further shown in Figure 4.14 and Figure 4.15 below.



Figure 4.14: Organisation registration

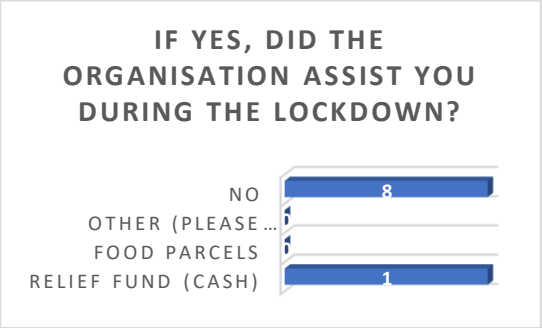


Figure 4.15: Assistance from organisation

4.4.4 Suggestions for the government to assist informal street traders

On the interview schedule, the closing question for the informal street traders was directed at getting participant suggestions, in their own words, how the government could assist them as informal street traders, if there was any assistance required.

Participant A said that she would like the government to assist them with shelter that can protect them and their products during rainy seasons and toilets. She further insinuated that the government provided hampers to other informal street traders, but that she was excluded. *"Apparently hampers were out but they never came to us, we must be assisted monthly because we pay rent to LED. The government can also provide us with funding"* (Participant A). Participant D agreed with Participant A when it came to the suggestion that the government should provide the informal street traders with support through funding. Participant B explained that *"they should assist us with shelter and safety".* In line with the first two responses, Participant K suggested that the government can provide them with permanent shelter, boost their businesses with capital and also assist with the provision of basic services such as water and toilets. Participant C noted a different issue:

> *Government must clean the town. Those who do not have licenses must go. We lose because those who do not have trading licenses sell cheaper as they do not have to pay for rent. Foreigners do not have licenses. Foreigners are disrespectful. Where is the rental that we are paying? Where is it going? Government gave us tables, but they do not bring new tables if broken.*

Similar to Participant C, Participant J suggested that the government could assist them by cleaning the environment they work in daily, providing them with rubbish bins and supplying them with tents or shelter. Participant EF's suggestions seem to be similar to those of Participant C, Participant J, Participant G and Participant T as she mentioned that the government could assist them through the provision of shelter and toilets. She added that the government must buy them stock.

In addition, Participant G further suggested that removing illegal foreign street traders could help them as informal street traders. In line with Participant C's suggestion that those without licenses must go, Participant N suggested that by regulating the informal street trading sector through the provision of some kind of certificate or license this could assist them with their businesses. He added that those that are not rightfully traders should be sued.

"Give us good shelter to sell in, give us toilets. Remove foreigners to stop selling" Participant R suggested. This response is in line with what other participants such as Participant C, Participant W and Participant S suggested. Participant CD responded in a similar manner as these participants.

Participant E mentioned that due to the challenges that they experienced and continue to face as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, the government should provide informal street traders with food or money to support their families.

> *We need financial support in our business and our children needs help for going to school. We also need assistance for them, this could be in a form of grant. If the government can help our children with grant, it will be appreciated.*

In answer to the closing question, Participant F said that informal street traders should be given incentives after crime. She further added: *"I would like to also stop paying for rent because I do not understand why I have to pay it".* Similar to Participant F, Participant L suggested that part of the assistance informal street traders require from the government is to be sponsored with incentives to boost their stock as the food often becomes rotten. She further said: "*We need to be able to survive and feed our children".* On the same point about incentives, Participant O said they should *"help with incentives, and transport to stock from the farms".* He further added that *"I wish the government can help me buy a van to be able to buy my own stock from the farms".*

Participant M and Participant X suggested that the government should *"provide better job opportunities for all of us".* Similarly, Participant P said: "*I have seven grandchildren and they all finished school (Grade 12) and no one is working. The government should support my children and their children with grant money".* She also suggested that the government should provide them with sanitation and water and incentives to be able to buy and recover rotten stock. This was a similar point raised by other participants above.

On the other hand, when asked the closing question, Participant H, Participant U and Participant IJ responded with *"nothing".* In line with Participant H and Participant U, Participant Q responded with the following words: "*Nothing, I would like to do everything myself"*". In addition, Participant Z's response to the question was: *"I do not*

know". When the questions were put to him, Participant AB alluded that he is not sure what he wants from the government and Participant Y did not provide any suggestions.

4.5 Chapter Summary and Conclusions

The aim of this chapter was to present findings from the interview questions that were posed to the participants. This was done with the intention to explore the main findings of the study. Through the process of interpreting findings, a pattern of emerging themes was identified from the data. As the purpose of the study was exploring the views and experiences of informal street traders about Covid-19 and how the pandemic affected their sales and revenue, this chapter had to include the direct quotes from the participants. This was with the hopes of conveying the information in their own words. The rationale for this was informed by the qualitative nature of the study. However, in most cases, figures, charts and tables were used as a form of summarising the raw data gathered from participants in the form of closed-ended questions.

The key finding for this study is that the Covid-19 pandemic caused devastating impacts on the livelihoods and businesses of informal street traders in Pretoria. The pandemic, most especially the regulations that were imposed on the informal street trading sector, augmented the already existing challenges faced by this group of people. Informal street traders in Pretoria voiced that the lack of basic services, such as clean drinking water, toilets, operating shelters and safety in the area were their main concerns before the pandemic. This finding is further indicated in the responses that were provided by all participants, in that all participants indicated that they experienced a decrease in their sales and revenue during the pandemic, especially the lockdown period. Before the pandemic, 87% of the participants specified that they could make more than R1 000 monthly. During the pandemic, 70% of the participants could only make between R50 to R500 per month.

Almost all participants indicated that the main reason that they participated in the informal street trading sector is because of the lack of job opportunities in the country. Twenty-eight of the 30 participants demonstrated that the income produced from informal street trading was their primary source of income. In addition to this, 57% of the participants indicated that they were family breadwinners, meaning that the

reduced monthly income did not only threaten their livelihood but everyone in their households. Informal street traders mentioned that the pandemic reduced the amount of people visiting the inner city making it hard for them to make ends meet. Some participants mentioned that there were days in which they had to go to bed hungry. The participants also alluded that they were not able to bounce back as the country's overall economy is in a distressing condition; people are struggling and the demand for their products has reduced.

The government failed to provide support to the informal street trading sector, regardless of their significance in reducing the current socioeconomic crisis in the country. Twenty-five of the participants, which was just above 80%, indicated that they did not receive any form of assistance from the government during the Covid-19 pandemic, which included the lockdown period. Only five of the participants admitted having received some sort of assistance from the government, of which three of the participants indicated the assistance was in the form of the R350 social relief distress fund intended for the unemployed.

The participants suggested various ways in which the government could offer assistance. Among others these included permanent operating shelter, provision of basic services such as water and toilets and a relief fund to be able to restock and boost their businesses. In some instances, participants said the government should provide them with job opportunities.

CHAPTER FIVE: INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the views and experiences of informal street traders regarding the Covid-19 pandemic and its effect on their sales and revenue. A sample of 30 informal street traders in Pretoria CBD along Church Street was randomly selected for interviews. The interview schedule included both closed-ended and open-ended questions. There are many studies indicating how various other sectors experienced the pandemic. It is because of this gap that this study intended to gain a deeper understanding of the perceptions of informal street traders. This was executed through deploying a qualitative approach. This study is grounded in the constructivist paradigm as it wanted to comprehend the views and experiences of informal street traders. Information collected by this study was subject to context and informed by multiple realities.

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the perceptions and experiences of informal street traders regarding Covid-19 and how it affected their sales and revenue. The preceding chapter (Chapter Four) presented the findings of the study and extracted the key emerging themes from the data analysis. These findings stem from the research questions and were channelled by the conceptual framework as presented in Chapter Two. This chapter therefore aims to interpret the findings through a critical combination of the multiple realities gathered from the participants. This chapter intends to synthesise the findings with the reviewed literature and explore any similarities and differences.

5.2 Demographics and Profiles of Informal Street Traders

The opening section for the interview schedule of this study focused on asking participants questions on their biographical information. This involved age, gender, marital status, nationality and highest qualification completed by the participants. The reason for this was to offer valuable insights regarding the demographics and characteristics of informal street traders in Pretoria. Information such as this is

essential in assisting policymakers to comprehend issues faced by this group of people by not taking for granted their personal attributes. It further helps in pinpointing socioeconomic circumstances of the participants and how these circumstances affect their livelihood and growth prospects.

The first biographical attribute to be discussed will be age. Understanding the average age of the informal street trading population in a location can provide guidance when tailoring interventions aimed at eradicating their daily challenges. All participants were within the working age group. However, participants between the ages of 59–65 years were much less than the other age groups. In combining the age differences to examine the number of youths participating in informal street trading, 57% of the participants were between the ages of 18 and 41. A finding such as this suggests that youth-driven initiatives and programmes should be highly prioritised when providing support to informal street traders.

Similar to age, gender is another important demographic factor to be considered in studies that are concerned with understanding the experiences and perceptions of informal street traders during Covid-19. As indicated in Chapter Four, 57% of the participants were men. These findings are not in line with most previous studies. However, there are various reasons that could justify this finding. In South Africa and many other countries, there are social, economic and cultural norms that in most cases approve of males taking part in entrepreneurial activities. As 43% of the participants were female, this is evident that despite the systemic social, economic and cultural challenges, women resort to street trading as a productive means of income (Sassen et al., 2018; Roever, 2016). Fifty-seven per cent of participants were found to be breadwinners. This means that they were the main income providers and earners in their households and were responsible for the wellbeing and livelihood of their families through income earned from informal street trading. In addition, 83% of the participants admitted to having dependents, with 17% of the 83% saying that they had eight and more dependents. This is a strong justification that informal street trading is beneficial to many people. Eight per cent of the participants were South African citizens, while the rest came from other African countries.

According to the findings of this study, most participants had very low levels of completed education. Only two of the 30 participants had “Diploma” as the highest achieved qualification and twelve participants completed Grade 12. In a study to identify barriers to formalisation by the International Labour Organisation (ILO, 2021), it was found that approximetely two thirds of informal street traders had some level of secondary education as the highest grade passed. It further noted that less than 5% of the informal street traders completed higher education (ILO, 2021) This is in line with the findings of this study. Although educational levels of informal street traders are suggested to be less all over the world, it is critical to consider that formal education alone cannot be the only determining factor that leads to individual success.

Research indicates that to many, informal street trading is a response to the economical challenges faced by countries (Blaauw, 2017; Khumalo, 2015). In agreement with this literature, 80% of the participants selected “Primary source of income due to lack of opportunities” as the reason for participating in informal street trading. Informal street traders are entrepreneurs who identified challenges in their lives which included the lack of formal employment and therefore resorted to trading for survival. On the other hand, 20% of the participants indicated that their reason for participating in the sector was because informal street trading was their primary source of income by choice. Chapter Two indicated the views of Motala (2002) and Gamieldien and Van Niekerk (2017), that some informal street traders chose to participate in trading due to its flexibility, the ability to strengthen their enterprenural skills and make important decisions for their businesses while fully independent. Views such as these are important to help policy makers realise that the emergence and continous growth of the informal street trading sector is not only a response to the negative challenges faced by economies but also the enterprenueral spirit that the informal street traders have within them.

Only two of the 30 participants stated they had a secondary means of income which was the social grant from the government. This is understandable considering the other factors identified in this study. The lack of and limited levels of completed education of informal street traders makes it harder for them to compete when it comes to other means of income or employment opportunities. Ninety per cent of the participants noted that they operated for more than eight hours daily. This can be very

exhausting and makes it almost impossible for them to have second forms of income. Informal street traders depend highly on the availability of customers and on foot traffic. The operational spaces of informal street traders in this context is closer to taxis. High foot traffic is usually before and after work. Competition is also a challenge among informal street traders; this can cause them to work longer hours to ensure that they meet a larger base of customers daily. Some of the products sold force informal street traders to work for longer in order to avoid having to throw away spoilt stock. These are all reasons that justify the long working hours and the inability to have multiple streams of income. Although working longer hours could be beneficial in meeting the daily profit targets of informal street traders, it is important to consider that operating beyond the normal hours could have adverse consequesces on the their health. This could also potentially lead to disagreements with the local authorities regarding permited operating hours in certain locations.

In closing, intepreting the findings on the demographic information regarding the participants, this research emphasises the significance of comprehending information such as this in social sciences and qualitative studies that involve the lives and experiences of people especially when dealing with disasters such as Covid-19. The pandemic affected many people and it was therefore essential to understand the nature and diversity of the participants. It helped to expose their vulnerabilities and some pre-existing conditions they faced. This study considered the demographic imformation of informal street traders in Pretoria as a significant phase in understanding the various experiences and perceptions of the traders during Covid-19. As such, this might be helpful in producing effective and inclusive interventions that could help with recovery and resilience during disasters such as the pandemic.

The following themes that emerged are now discussed: all informal street traders face challenges and Covid-19 threatened the livelihood of informal street traders.

5.3 Theme 1: Challenges Experienced by Informal Street Traders in Pretoria

As indicated in Chapter Four, informal street traders in Pretoria's CBD experience various operational challenges daily. Some of these stated challenges will be explored in conjunction with the findings from the literature review (see Chapter Two).

5.3.1 Services challenges (Sanitation, water, shelter and crime)

The findings of this study are not different from numerious other studies that focused on informal street traders. Before the emergence of Covid-19, the informal street traders experienced various challenges that dominated during the pandemic. One can argue that the unregulated state of the informal street trading sector is the reason for the lack of service provision experienced by this group of people. However, the significance of the sector has been noted by the government and this is indicated by the implementation of policies that allow trading in specific areas and the rental fee charged to the traders. Regardless of the significance, participants noted that water, shelter, adequate operating shelter and crime were more prominent in this area. As part of this, participants alluded that the absence of shelter for their businesses led to their products being exposed to various weather conditions and being more vulnerable to crime. Services such as water, shelter and sanitation are basic human needs; the provision of these will not only enhance the dignity of informal street traders but will also contribute to the wellbeing of street traders. In addition, these services are essential to improving the quality of the products which will then lead to high customer attraction and increased sales and revenue.

Safety and security were also noted by multiple participants. Strikes and blatant theft were the major causes of this challenge. This was the main trading threat along the operating spaces as it has an impact on customers. Places often known to have high criminal activity are likely to discourage customers from visiting the market places. Enhancing safety and security in informal street trading spaces has numerous advantages which include more customers and higher income production that can lead to local economical advantages and the promotion of social cohesion between the traders and the wider environment.

5.3.2 Government and law enforcement

Some informal street traders mentioned that they pay rent to the Local Economic Development Department within the City of Tshwane. Participants indicated that even though they experienced slow business due to Covid-19 and sometimes crime, they were still forced to pay rent. According to the participants, the government does not provide them with any form of incentive even when faced with greater challenges and

they have to deal with forceful law enforcement officials regardless of their issues. They further added that they have no idea why they are paying rent as they do not gain any benefits and services from the government. The issue between law enforcement and the informal economy can be quite complex in most cases. As informal street traders are not regulated, it is essential that law enforcement officials continously audit their stock to check the products being sold by the traders. This promotes safety and stabilises the markets into operating legally. However, in doing so, it is essential that law enforcement officials promote an environment that creates balance between supporting the businesses of informal street traders and ensuring that these businesses operate within the relevant laws and legislation. This could be executed through facilitated engagements with informal streeet traders to help understand their day-to-day challenges, their needs as well as being in constant partnerships to resolve challenges faced by both parties.

5.3.3 Lack of customers

Participants mentioned that the Covid-19 pandemic led to a great decrease in the number of customers coming to their businesses. Some mentioned that most days, business was so slow that they were only able to make transport money, were unable to afford lunch and were forced to restock. Participants explained that the lack of customers leads to spoiled products which means that they have to give away their products for free. Participants added that this results in serious financial challenges that negatively impact the livelihoods of their households as the market prices are quite high. As a result of the pandemic, most people avoided crowds and the number of people coming into the inner city declined drastically. Other challenges expressed by informal street traders in this regard included jealousy and overcrowding caused by foreign informal street traders. Issues such as these lead to competition which potentially results in conflicts.

5.4 Theme 2: Covid-19 Threatened the Livelihood of Informal Street Traders

5.4.1 The effect of Covid-19 on their businesses

When asked “how did the pandemic affect your sales and revenue?”, all participants responded with the answer “decrease”. Participants were later provided with an

opportunity to further elaborate regarding the effects of the pandemic on their sales and revenue.

Participants mentioned that it was tough, difficult and that things were very bad. Those were most of the opening responses from the participants. Most of them were filled with sorrow and did not want to elaborate further on this question. Participants indicated that they could not work from home like other individuals working in the formal sector, which meant that there was no source of income. Despite this, they still had to pay rent to the Local Economic Development Department.

Shortly after they were given permission to operate as per the lockdown regulations, participants alluded that they had very limited customers and it was still very difficult to provide for their families. Some participants added that there were several days when they went to sleep hungry because of the pandemic. Participants said that the government had promised to provide them with some incentives, however, they never received any, even during the hard lockdown.

Participants also discussed that life after Covid-19 has not been the same; their businesses have not been able to bounce back as many people have lost their jobs. They added that the number of customers has therefore decreased and the number of products being sold has declined dramatically.

5.4.2 Sales and revenue before and during Covid-19

Most of the participants noted that before Covid-19, they were able to make over R1 000 per month. Some further stipulated that they were able to make more than R10 000 in just one month. The differences in the revenues produced by informal street traders before and during the Covid-19 lockdown period is quite alarming. The percentage of participants that made more than R1 000 per month shifted from 87% to 7% while those who made between R50 to R500 per month increased from 3% to 70%. The response of the government to the Covid-19 pandemic undermined some of the opportunities within the informal economy as they imposed strict lockdown conditions. The implementation of these conditions was intended to curb the spread of the pandemic. Jobs, parks and other public spaces had to be temporarily closed. Only those classified as essential were given permission and the duty to move and

serve during the Covid-19 lockdown. During this time, it was quite unclear as to whether informal street trading was classified as essential or not. As a result, informal street traders were not allowed to operate.

The lockdown regulations were later relaxed to accommodate informal street trading. The number of customers in the inner city was very low and the demand for most products declined. This was due to numerous factors. The public and formal sector employees were working from home and customers could not spend much on goods. The pandemic led to the loss of jobs for many and a decline in income for others.

The economic shock and disruption caused by the pandemic led to sky rocketing increases in prices. Manufacturers and suppliers increased the cost of products. This meant that informal street traders had to spend more on stock. In addition, the economic shutdown increased competition from the formal markets to the informal street traders. There are many other factors that might have resulted in reduced revenue for informal street traders caused by the pandemic.

5.4.3 Government support during the pandemic

This study established that more that 80% of the participants did not receive any assistance from the government during the Covid-19 pandemic including the lockdown period. Only five out of the 30 participants confirmed they had received support from the government. However, of the five participants, four explained that the assistance was in the form of the R350 social relief distress and one participant was given food parcels. As mentioned above, the implementation of the Covid-19 lockdown regulations involved the shutting down of many informal traders' businesses. Although the implementation of these challenges was a health concern, this had a major economic effect on informal street traders who depend on day-to-day sales to sustain their households. The lack or restricted ability of the government to assist informal street traders could be because of numerous factors. Data on informal workers is usually limited. Informal street traders are unregistered; therefore, the lack of documentation might make it challenging for the government to provide assistance for this group of people. The South African Government faces administration issues, in a way that the execution of government programmes is often poor. These include issues relating to the delivery, beneficiary confirmations and dispensation of applications.

Lastly, government programmes are often driven by political agendas. Politics might have had a major impact on the types and magnitude of programmes that were rolled out during the pandemic.

One form of assistance was the R350 relief Covid-19 relief fund that the South African Government implemented. The fund was intended to assist unemployed individuals living in deprived conditions during the pandemic. It focused on citizens that could not attain any source of income from either the formal or informal sectors in South Africa. The purpose of the fund was to lessen some of the major economic challenges. Four of the participants confirmed they had received the relief fund as a form of government assistance during the pandemic. Informal street traders were part of the individuals eligible for this fund. It can be argued that the R350 relief amount was a temporary solution to a major challenge. Regardless of this, most of the participants confirmed they had not received the funds. This might have been caused by some of the issues aligned with state programmes which include corruption, fraud and administrative issues. Besides the provision failure, the fund was also insufficient to cater for basic human needs. As indicated, the majority of informal street traders in this study were breadwinners with dependents. It is essential that during economic and natural crises such as the pandemic, the government provide permanent solutions with a long-term focus to assist in addressing the challenges that arise.

5.4.4 Suggestions for the government to assist informal street traders

5.4.4.1 Registration with organisation/society

Participants not registered with any organisation or society dominated informal street trading. As indicated in the above discussion, most informal street trader participants are in the sector as a survivalist approach because of the economic challenges resulting in a lack of job opportunities. This could potentially be one of the major reasons for the participants to not register with any society or organisation. Registering with a society might mean that members have to contribute a certain amount by a given period. In addition, the minority who indicated that they had registered with an organisation or society further indicated that these organisations did not provide any source of assistance during the pandemic. The lack of representation and benefits therefore limits the interests of informal street traders to become members of these

organisations. Only one participant admitted to having received some sort of funding from an organisation.

5.4.4.2 Sanitation and water

The absence of clean water and sanitation was strongly noted as a major challenge faced by the informal street traders before and during the Covid-19 pandemic. Almost all participants suggested that the government should provide sanitation and water to ensure the smooth operation of their businesses. During the pandemic, the provision of these services was crucial in numerous ways. Most importantly, water and adequate sanitation enhance hygiene. Access to these services could have potentially led to the reduced spread of the Covid-19 pandemic while ensuring that informal street traders still operated their businesses safely. It is important that to note that the provision of water and sanitation is not only required or helpful during a pandemic – they are basic human needs and can be beneficial in promoting the wellbeing of informal street traders and their customers.

5.4.4.3 Permanent operating structures

Participants indicated that they are continuously faced with preserving their products under various weather and environmental challenges because of the lack of adequate operating structures. Provision of adequate operating stalls can ensure that informal street traders are able to survive and sustain their livelihood under all conditions. In addition, in terms of the pandemic, informal street traders would have been able to practice safe distancing and promote controlled safe spaces for themselves, their products and their customers. This would be beneficial for informal street trading businesses as it would allow participants to generate an income even during the most difficult times.

5.4.4.4 Funding

Participants stipulated the lack of capital to buy stock and products being spoiled due to the various factors which include environmental concerns and few customers as a challenge. Participants suggested that the government should have provided them with funding support during and after the pandemic. Some participants further indicated that they pay rent to the City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality

Department of Local Economic Development; because of this, they expect funding assistance to curb the financial challenges that the pandemic caused. Participants expressed their concerns about paying rent – they added that they did not understand what it is being used for as they are not provided with basic services. The facilitation of funding or grants to informal street traders will not only validate and rationalise their significance in society and the overall contribution of the sector, but it will also motivate others to join the sector and gain the ability to provide for themselves. Funding can be used as an adaptation strategy that helps informal street traders invest in their businesses. This could be seen as a local economic development measure to promote resilience and longevity of the sector, while ensuring that traders are able to cater for their household needs.

5.4.4.5 Food parcels

The devastating impact of the pandemic led to some participants not being able to sustain themselves and those around them. Further to this, participants indicated that they were not able to adapt and bounce back after the pandemic, most especially after the hard lockdown. In line with this, some participants suggested that the government should have provided them with food parcels to contribute to the livelihood of their households. Food parcels would have assisted them in catering to their needs and those of their families. In addition, food parcels could be essential in relieving the financial obstacles of informal street traders during a future crisis.

5.4.4.6 Inner-city regeneration

Participants suggested inner-city regeneration as a way in which the government could have assisted them during the pandemic. Participants recommended that the government provides them with bins and deploys personnel to ensure that the inner city is cleaned daily. Improving the state of the inner city is deemed to be an investment in numerous ways. Clean operating spaces can promote healthy environments for the traders and their products, further attracting more customers. The overall initiative to clean the city would be beneficial in supporting the businesses of traders. This could foster an inner-city environment that is functional and resilient and promotes inclusiveness while dignifying the businesses of informal street traders.

5.4.4.7 Informal Street traders should be licensed

Informal street traders suggested that all traders involved in informal street trading should be registered and furnished with licenses or documentation that could set them apart from others. They alluded that in the current state only those registered were forced to pay rent, while there were others that reaped the benefits of operating on the streets, unregistered and not paying any rent. They further argued that this strategy would curb the influx of illegal foreigners operating as informal street traders.

5.4.4.8 Creation of better job opportunities

Two of the 30 participants suggested that the government should create better job opportunities for them to reduce the negative effects that the pandemic had on their sales and livelihoods which they were still feeling. This is also in line with the responses that were provided above regarding the reasons for the participants to operate as informal street traders. Most of the participants noted “Primary source of income due to lack of better opportunities”. The suggestion for government to create better jobs could be influenced by various factors considering the adverse impacts of Covid-19.

Formal employment has numerous benefits and provides income security. Although most formal employees experienced salary cuts during Covid-19, most people still had access to some income security. Furthermore, the ability of the formal sector to provide benefits such as unemployment relief funds, pension funds and medical aid means that it is more appealing during difficult times such as the pandemic.

Informal street traders expressed that they operated under poor working conditions in spaces with restricted and/or a lack of basic services which included clean water and toilets. The need for better opportunities could be spurred on by these conditions. In most instances, the formal sector promotes working environments that are not hazardous to the health of their employees through provision of basic services and adequate infrastructure.

5.4.4.9 No assistance required from government

In contrast to the above suggestion, three of the 30 participants noted that they did not require any form of assistance during the pandemic. This was perplexing considering

that all participants indicated that the pandemic had led to a major decrease in their sales and income. In addition, they had also noted experiencing poor working conditions. This response could be because of their hopelessness that the government would do anything to assist as they had not helped them during the pandemic – they could also have the desire to be self-reliant.

5.5 Chapter Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to discuss and analyse the perceptions and experiences of informal street traders regarding Covid-19 and its impact on their sales and revenue in Pretoria's CBD, South Africa. Overall, the discussion above exposed and cemented the catastrophic effects that the pandemic had on informal street traders. It is also quite evident that informal street trading forms part of the answer to eradicating some of the socioeconomic challenges in South Africa today. This includes provision of jobs as informal street trading is evidently seen as a way to create income for some of those that cannot find employment in the formal markets. The government, including policy makers, failed to make provisions for this group of people during the Covid-19 lockdown.

The motive for this study is based on numerous factors. Informal street trading is the main contributor of opportunities within the informal economy. This sector contributes largely to the livelihood of many South Africans. The rationale for analysing the experiences and perceptions of multiple informal street traders was to develop and enrich the understanding of how the sector viewed the pandemic. The pandemic led to economic shocks, employment losses and a reduction in salaries for many all over the world. Exploring the perceptions and experiences of informal street traders is therefore essential for pinpointing methods that the government can adopt to assist this group of people. The analysis of the findings can further inform policy makers on the necessity of supporting and safeguarding informal street traders during disastrous events such as the pandemic or through any other challenges that they face, whether large or small.

The main theme identified from the data was that informal street traders were alarmed at the effect that Covid-19 had on both their businesses and livelihood. As a result of the lockdown regulations, the amount of people coming into the city reduced, therefore

leading to a decrease in the demand of their products. This further led to an overall reduction of sales and revenue which threatened the livelihoods of traders and their households. Adding to this, informal street traders expressed their concerns regarding the lack of government interventions pertaining to their challenges. These included the inability of the government to provide basic services such as clean water, toilets and permanent shelters and failure to provide financial relief or food parcels, specifically for this sector.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

6.1 Summary of Study's Findings

The purpose of this study was to provide insights into the effects of Covid-19 on informal street traders with the intent to find possible solutions that could better their day-to-day experiences and mitigate any challenges they might face during disasters such as Covid-19. This study focused on the experiences and perceptions of informal traders in Pretoria's CBD of the effect of Covid-19 pandemic and its impact on their sales and revenue. It is quite clear that the informal economy, especially informal street traders, play a pivotal role in the economy of South Africa. The emergence and need for this study were founded on the chaos caused by the pandemic and the impact it had on various sectors. It was essential to understand how informal street trading that serves as one of the main contributors of income production in ordinary South African households was affected by the pandemic. A qualitative research methodology was adopted by the study with interviews being the data collection tool. The study focused on a sample of 30 informal street traders located in Pretoria's CBD along Church Street.

The conclusions of this study are based on the research questions that were set out in Chapter One. This is to ensure that the study responded to what it initially intended. In addition, the conclusions are also drawn from the themes that emerged from the findings. The study intended to respond to the following questions:

- What is the state of informal street trading in Pretoria's CBD, South Africa?
- What are the perceptions of informal street traders regarding the changes brought about by Covid-19?
- What are the measures suggested by informal street traders to mitigate any challenges they might have experienced during Covid-19 lockdown?

In concluding the research, this chapter will focus on responding to the above research questions and discuss the emerged themes, outline the recommendations for improving the current state of informal street traders and how public policy can support informal street traders.

6.1.1 What is the state of informal street trading in Pretoria's CBD, South Africa?

Over the years, street traders in Pretoria have been faced with numerous challenges that have affected their day-to-day operations. To name a few, these challenges include lack of basic services and shelter and long daily operating periods. However, it is very unfortunate that informal street traders along Church Street trade are without the provisions of clean water and toilets. This poses a huge health hazard to both the sellers and the buyers. In addition, informal street traders in the study area were provided with tents as temporary structures for trading. The temporary structures were never upgraded to more permanent structures. As a result, informal street traders find themselves battling with various weather conditions such as heavy rains and harsh sunny days that damage their products. Informal street traders experience high rates of crime; this makes them feel unsafe and leads to reduced operating hours.

In addition to the already existing daily challenges faced by informal street traders, the Covid-19 pandemic had a negative impact on the businesses and livelihood of informal street traders in Pretoria. The lockdown regulations imposed a sudden shut down for informal street traders and other markets and movement was restricted. As soon as the lockdown regulations for informal street traders were relaxed, street movement and the number of customers in public spaces were significantly low. This led to a further reduction in sales and revenue of informal street trading products and a further reduction of income. In addition, informal street traders selling perishable goods such as fruits and vegetables were forced to give their products away or even throw them away during this period.

Through all these challenges, informal street traders had no means of assistance from the government. During this time, many depended on assistance from relatives and some were lucky to receive the R350 incentive for unemployed individuals. Both of

these ways were not enough to sustain their households as informal street trading was the main source of income for many.

6.1.2 What are the perceptions of informal street traders regarding the changes brought about by Covid-19?

Informal street traders were rather concerned about the impact that the Covid-19 pandemic had on both their sales and livelihoods. As a result of the lockdown regulations, informal street traders experienced a significant decrease in sales and revenue as they could not operate as per normal. Unlike most people that worked in the formal sector, informal street traders could not work from home. The unregulated nature of the sector meant that traders could not access any of the financial grants provided to workers during the pandemic. Informal street traders felt unseen and insignificant in an economy that was shaken as the government indicated no signs of assistance. During this time, informal street traders required any means of assistance from the government, which could have included financial aid or food parcels. Without the state intervention for informal street traders, it is very unfortunate that the result of the Covid-19 lockdown will be beard and carried for a long time.

6.1.3 What are the measures suggested by informal street traders to mitigate any challenges they experienced during Covid-19 lockdown?

The Covid-19 pandemic negatively disrupted the livelihood of informal street traders globally and as a sector was hard hit. Traders had difficulties adjusting to sustain their operations resulting in huge financial losses. Although it was crucial to observe social distancing regulations to curb the spread of the virus, it was equally important to find innovative ways to support informal traders through these challenging times. Guided by the findings of this study, the next section aims to provide recommendations. These recommendations are geared towards assisting informal street traders through disasters such as Covid-19 that could lessen the likelihood of greatly endangering their lives.

Informal street traders indicated the provision of water and sanitation as the most necessity for their daily operations as this allows them adequate hygiene for their personal wellbeing as well as prevention of spread of diseases. In addition, water and

sanitation promote food safety, increases customer trust and satisfaction and also provides informal street traders with dignity for their businesses.

The recommendation to provide adequate shelter is encouraged with reasons that shelter provides safety and security. This lessens the chances of informal street traders being victims to day-to-day crime and protection form extreme weather conditions. Similar to water and sanitation, shelter promotes health and hygiene. Providing shelter offers street traders business stability and sustainability through attraction of regular customers. This recommendation further improves the overall improvement of the urban environment, promotes local economic development and fosters social inclusivity.

The recommendation to encourage all informal street traders to get licensed is rooted on the basis that the illegal traders would be easily identified and this would allow appropriate regulation of the sector. In addition, the initiative would allow the registered informal street traders easy access to incentives or food parcels during pandemics or any national shutdowns.

6.2 Study Takeaways

In agreement with previous studies, this research suggests a shift or adjustment of public policies to accommodate and improve the daily operations of informal street trading. This study does not take for granted that in contrast to the formal sector, informal street trading is unregulated and untaxed. Nevertheless, this sector has proved to reduce some of the socioeconomic challenges that the state has not been able to overcome. The Covid-19 lockdown period further exposed the intensity with which the state's public policies identified corporate-owned enterprises or stores as more deserving of attention. This view is supported by the enormous taxes paid by these corporates. Instead of imposing lockdown regulations on street traders during the pandemic, it would have been better to provide ways to improve hygiene and safe distance protocols in areas where informal street trading was prominent. During lockdown, many people had to use public transport to access supermarkets for basic food supplies which could have been easily accessed from informal street traders. This proves that providing hygiene measures in informal street trading areas could have potentially reduced the need to travel long distances in public transport,

overcrowding and over-purchasing and further reduced the risks of transmission. Public policy is meant to support the public's interests and respond to the socioeconomic context of a country. In this regard, public policy should encourage small-scale entrepreneurs such as informal street traders to thrive in spaces where they are authorised to participate. Ensuring hygiene in these places means implementing policies that encourage municipalities to provide easy access to clean water and sanitation and improving the spaces and infrastructure where these informal street traders operate. Furthermore, public policy should encourage and promote good administration and governance in rolling out government programmes aimed at alleviating the lives of marginalised groups such as informal street traders.

The provision of basic services for informal street traders can further be supported by the state's legal framework. This legal framework has to be deep rooted and supportive of the street traders and their importance in society. In addition, the legal framework needs to ensure that informal street trading is recognised as a legitimate form of income provision. By doing this, the government can ensure that spaces that have been demarcated for trading are furnished with structures that can make trading feasible under all conditions, offer special legal protection for informal street traders and provide water and sanitation. The legal framework can further assist with the Unemployment Insurance Fund contributions to informal street traders.

During the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown, it appeared as though there was not enough attention provided to marginalised groups which included the informal street traders. To reduce systemic challenges that were experienced by informal street traders, the government should forge and strengthen partnerships between informal street trading organisations and the Unemployment Insurance Fund to ensure that this group of people can more easily apply and access funds compared to those in the formal sector.

Informal street traders alluded that one of the assistances that could have helped improve their livelihoods during Covid-19 includes the provision of financial assistance. The government could put in place policies that encourage financial support to informal street traders who lose their income during disasters such as the pandemic. This can be implemented through various methodologies such as direct cash transfers, grants

or even limited loans which would help them keep their businesses and households in order. Most of the informal street traders were the breadwinners in their families; with this, the government could also look into assisting them with food parcels as a temporary solution if another disaster occurs.

The data in this study showed that the majority of the informal trader participants in Pretoria's CBD are of working age, with younger ages dominating. With the current global shift towards the use of digital platforms and technology continuously increasing, it is important for the government to explore skills development training for the youth in informal trading and invest in this sector. This could be the initial step into formalising the sector and increasing youth development. Digital platforms will allow informal street traders access to a wider customer base through marketing and promotion of their products while also giving them the ability to sell online. Investing in digital platforms for informal street traders will not only improve their day-to-day operations but could also reduce the transmission of viruses such as the Coronavirus. This would also give the traders the opportunity to access information and resources and strengthen their ability to be resilient during disasters such as the pandemic. The implementation of this can be rolled out in phases. In partnership with the private sector and NGOs, the government could experiment with a small sample size and encourage skills training related to this measure.

6.3 Research Limitations

This phenomenological study focused on a sample size of 30 participants. This study might not be able to generalise the findings to the broader population as the findings are subject to the location or the participants themselves. As a result, the experiences and perceptions of informal street traders concluded by this study do not embody the experiences and perceptions of all informal street traders regarding the effects of Covid-19. There needs to be caution in the use of phenomenology studies as they depend mostly on the subjective experiences and interpretations of participants. With this, the issues of data accuracy and consistency have to be considered. In addition, the qualitative nature of this study opened the door for potential biases from the researcher. This is because the researcher was the main instrument for both the collection and the analysis of the data. However, the researcher was purely objective

as this study was fully intended for academic purposes and the researcher was not involved in informal street trading. Another caution that should be considered is that the understanding of the data could lead to various conclusions among different researchers.

6.4 Recommendations for Future Research

As much as Covid-19 led to countless, enormous challenges, it also opened up a door to many possibilities in many areas. These included the possibility that people could work from home and further exposed the importance of artificial intelligence in the new world. In line with this, an area that should be considered for future research could be exploring ways to equip informal street traders with skills within the artificial intelligence and innovative technology fields to ensure that they can operate during periods such as lockdowns. In addition, other areas that could be studied further pertaining to this would be comparing how informal street traders selling different types of products were impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. This could help understand if there was a change in the demand and supply of different goods and services.

6.5 Conclusion

It is important to note that the measures that this research has suggested are not an exhaustive list of all that can be done for informal street traders. This is why research such as this is important. It allows those that do not have a voice to be heard and their concerns and questions hopefully answered. It is equally significant to note that informal street traders themselves get publicly involved in the implementation of any strategy that will assist them.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Ethics Clearance

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

SCHOOL OF GOVERNANCE ETHICS COMMITTEE

CONSTITUTED UNDER THE UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	**PROTOCOL NUMBER: WSG-2022-42**
PROJECT TITLE	**Exploring perceptions and experiences of informal street traders on Covid-19 and its effect on sales in Pretoria, South Africa**
INVESTIGATOR	Thakgalo Maphutha
SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT OF INVESTIGATOR	School of Governance
DATE CONSIDERED	22 August 2022
DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE	Approved unconditionally
RISK LEVEL	Low Risk
EXPIRY DATE	Date of submission of the project Research Report

ISSUE DATE OF CERTIFICATE 26 August 2022 **CHAIRPERSON** Rekgotsofetse Chikane

Rekgotsofetse Chikane

cc: Supervisor:

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR

To be completed in duplicate and **ONE COPY** returned to the Chairperson of the School/Department ethics committee.

I fully understand the conditions under which I am are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee.

Signature **Date** 20/01/2023

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER ON ALL ENQUIRIES

Appendix B: Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

Views and perceptions of informal street traders on Covid-19 and its impact on sales in Pretoria.

Name of researcher : Thakgalo Magauwane Maphutha

I, ……., agree to participate in this research project.

I agree to the following:

(Please circle the relevant options below)

The research study was explained to me. I understand what this study is about.	YES	NO
I understand that I can volunteer to take part in the study	YES	NO
I agree that the interview/focus group/other activity may be audio recorded	YES	NO
I agree that direct quotations from my interview may be used by the researcher in their research report.	YES	NO
I agree that my participation will remain anonymous (my name will not be used by the researcher in their research report.	YES	NO
I agree that other researchers may use the information I provide in my interviewdepending on their own ethics clearance being obtained) but my name and any personal information will not be used or passed on	YES	NO

…… (signature)
…… (name of participant)
…… (date)



…… (signature)
Thakgalo Magauwane Maphutha (name of researcher/person seeking consent)
19/04/2022

Appendix C: Interview Questions

ANNEXURE A:

1. SEMI-STRUCTURED QUESTIONNAIRE

The aim of this semi-structured questionnaire is to obtain information that will enable the researcher, Thakgalo Maphutha, to provide answers to the research questions and objectives as stated in chapter 1. The outcomes of the questionnaire will only be used in the research module for the Master of Management Governance (Development and Economics) degree for student: Thakgalo Maphutha (1253358) Wits University. The researcher will ensure that participants confidentiality and anonymity is highly prioritised, and that the information collected will only be used for the research study.

BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

Age:

18 years - 25 years	
26 years – 33 years	
34 years – 41 years	
42 years – 49 years	
50 years – 58 years	
59 years – 65 years	
65 years +	

Gender:

Male	
Female	
Other/Prefer not to say	

Marital status

Single	
Married	
Divorced	
Widowed	
Prefer not to say/other	

Nationality:

South African	
Non- South African	

Highest academic qualification:

No formal schooling	
Some Primary Schooling	
Grade 7	
Some Secondary School	
Grade 12	
Certificates e.g. N1,N2	
Diploma	
Degree	
Honours	
Masters and above	

FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS

1. How many dependents do you have?

0	
1-3	
4-7	
8+	

2. Are you a sole breadwinner in your family?

Yes	
No	
Prefer not to say	

3. How long have you been involved in street trading?

……..

4. How many hours do you operate per day?

……..

5. Please indicate reasons for you to participate in street trading.

Primary source of income due to lack of job opportunities	
Primary source of income by choice	
Secondary source of income (extra income)	
Other, please specify	

6. Do you have any other means of income other than trading?

Yes	
No	
If yes, please specify	

7. What challenges do you experience as a street trader?

……
……

8. How did the Covid-19 lockdown affect your business?

……

……..

9. How were your sales during the Covid-19 lockdown as compared to pre-Covid-19?

Increased	
Decreased	
Remained the same	

10. How much revenue did you make per month during the Covid-19 lockdown?

Between R50 – R500	
Between R600- R1000	
Greater than R1000	

11. How much revenue did you make per month before the Covid-19 lockdown?

Between R50- R500	
Between R600 -R1000	
Greater than R1000	

12. Are you registered to any of the informal trading organisations/society?

13. If yes, how did the organisation/society assist you during the Covid-19 lockdown?

Relief fund (Cash)	
Food Parcels	
Other (Please specify)	

14. Did the government provide any support during the Covid-19 lockdown?

15. If yes, please indicate the type of support that you received/ still receive:

Relief fund (Cash)	

Food Parcels	
Other (Please specify)	

16. In your own words, please suggest ways in which the government could assist you and other street traders (if any assistance is required).

.....
.....
.....
.....

Appendix D: Certificate of Research Competence



CERTIFICATE OF COMPETENCE IN RESEARCH ETHICS

Name: Thakgalo M Maphutha

Student/Staff No: 1253358

Date of Certification: 13 July 2022 - 12 July 2025 (This certificate is valid for a period of three years)

TRAINED BY:

PROFESSOR JASPER KNIGHT
(RESEARCH ETHICS)

SIGNATURE

UNIVERSITY OF THE
WITWATERSRAND,
JOHANNESBURG

ISSUED BY:

DR ROBIN DRENNAN
(DIRECTOR: RESEARCH
OFFICE)

SIGNATURE

This certificate is confirmation of successful completion of a training course in Research Ethics for Non-Medical human research, based upon achieving a minimum level of competence in different assessment tasks.