

**STRATEGIES FOR ORGANIZATIONAL RESILIENCE DURING  
PANDEMICS IN SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES IN UASIN  
GISHU COUNTY, KENYA**

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## DECLARATION

### Student's Declaration

I Amos Kipkogei declare that this MBA research project titled “Strategies for organizational resilience during pandemics: A case study of small and medium enterprises in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya” is my noble work and has never been presented for a degree in any other university.

Signed:  \_\_\_\_\_ Date: 09/09/2022

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### Supervisor's Approval

This research project was prepared by Amos Kipkogei titled “Strategies for organizational resilience during pandemics: A case study of small and medium enterprises in Uasin Gishu County” has been handed in for examination with my consent as the University Supervisor.

Signed:  \_\_\_\_\_ Date: 13.11.2022

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this research study to my parents Peter and Susan, my wife Valentine and my son Dylan.

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## ABSTRACT

It is worth noting that availability of a strategy alone is not enough but effective implementation of resilience strategies is paramount. Establishment of strategies is not enough but proper implementation according to the set planned priorities is very important. Not long ago, majority of SMEs in the country have been faced with a number of pandemics ranging from, Covid-19, locust, floods, terrorism as well as the war in Ukraine. This has led to a number of SMEs going under. It is worth noting that resilience strategies are the main action plans that either propel or diminish the overall performance of the SMEs. These strategies should be embedded in the overall strategies of the organization and aligned to the mission and vision of the SMEs. This has brought to the fore a number of queries: could these SMEs be suffering from poor strategic partner's management? Could there be inadequate ICT deployment among the SMEs? Could there be lack of staff training? Or could it be there is ineffective customer relationship? Upon this premise, the study sought to pursue to determine the influence strategy for organizational resilience during pandemics in SMEs in Uasin Gishu County. Study objectives are: to determine the influence of strategic partner's management during pandemic in Small and Medium Enterprises in Uasin Gishu County; to examine the influence ICT deployment during pandemics in Small and Medium Enterprises in Uasin Gishu County; to assess the influence of customer relationship during pandemics in Small and Medium Enterprises in Uasin Gishu County; and to determine the influence of capacity building during pandemics in Small and Medium Enterprises in Uasin Gishu County. Theories that anchored this research were: contingency theory; dynamic capability theory and Kurt Lewin's theory. This research adopts a case study research design. Target population comprises registered SMEs in Uasin Gishu totaling to 272 respondents with a sample of 162. Questionnaires were used to collect data before being analyzed using SPSS software. The questionnaire response rate was 90.1%. The study concluded based on the findings that strategies for resilience during pandemic are very important in ensuring continuity of the business. It can further be concluded that even though capacity building has been very important in ensuring that the staff in SMEs get the required knowledge and skills, it has not had a great impact when done during pandemics. The study further concludes that strategic partner's management has a relationship with pandemics. The study also concludes that customer relationship during pandemics affect the level of output of the organization. The study also concluded that partners have not been very helpful in supporting SMEs to increase their capacity building during pandemics. Many of the partners are very busy strategizing on how they can wade through the pandemic. It further concludes that external relations have an impact on SMEs during pandemics. Finally, a conclusion is made based on the findings that resilience strategies determines organizational resilience of SMEs during pandemics.

## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

<b>CRM:</b>	Customer Relationship Management
<b>GDP:</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>ICT:</b>	Information Communication Technology
<b>KCB:</b>	Kenya Commercial Bank
<b>MSE:</b>	Micro And Small Enterprises
<b>MSMEs:</b>	Micro Small And Medium Enterprises
<b>NSSF:</b>	National Social Security Fund
<b>SACCO:</b>	Savings And Credit Cooperative Society
<b>SMEs:</b>	Small And Medium, Enterprises
<b>SPSS:</b>	Statistical Packages For Social Science
<b>UNCTAD:</b>	United Nation Conference On Trade And Development

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the study

Organizations have been known to have various strategies to enable them implement various plans in the business environment. With the ever environmental changes that organizations operate under, there is need for conformity to suit the prevailing changes not only in Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) but also large firms (Gathongo & Convera, 2015). Any organization that wants to continuously satisfy customers' needs especially during pandemics, strategic resilience modifications are required in order to align the firm to the frequent changes in their needs, preferences as well as tastes (Mathooko & Ogutu, 2014). It is worth noting that availability of a strategy alone is not enough but effective implementation of resilience strategies is paramount. Establishment of strategies is not enough but proper implementation according to the set planned priorities is very important. Not long ago, majority of SMEs in the country have been faced with a number of pandemics ranging from, Covid-19, locust, floods, terrorism as well as the war in Ukraine. This has led to a number of SMEs going under. The 2016 Micro Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) survey revealed a high mortality among Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs) where about 2.2 million MSEs closed down within five years while some 46% did not make it past the first year in operation (Sessional Paper No 5 of 2020).

Contingency theory, dynamic capability theory as well as Kurt Lewin's theory will underpin this study. According to Galbraith (1973), he stated that in the contingency theory, there isn't any best way that an organization can be organized neither is there any is there any particular one way that effective organizing can be realized. The theory has pointed to the fact that environment is a very critical component that determines survival

of the organization and hence it is a matter that even SMEs cannot under-estimate. Putting competent plans in place to face the unforeseen harsh economic times is inevitable. Dynamic theory on the other hand states the importance of competencies reconfiguration by a company in order to match turbulent prevailing situation. Further, it intimates managerial strategies can come in handy for the organization so that it can create a viable competitive advantage promoting better competencies above the competition (Gathungu & Mwangi, 2012). Reorganizing a firm's resource, capacity building as well as reinventing business systems to match the business environment enables the organization to adjust to prevailing harsh business environment. Kurt Lewins theory is a model that has three steps used by organizations to build interventions that bring about change. It is a three phase change process with unfreezing as the first step, second being changing and lastly the third being freezing (Lewin, 2010). Strategic response is entails bringing on board interventions that will matches the prevalent turbulent environment caused by the pandemic.

SMEs have become a major economic block for most African countries and in fact it is a major source of income for many people in the country. MSEs plays a significant part in the economy since they are a very rich source of employment for many people, their contribution towards investment and the fact that they contribute towards meeting various household needs of many coupled by the fact that they contribute about 24% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the country. Chepkwony (2011) studied strategic responses in the petroleum industry in Kenya and the challenges of increased industry competition while Gichumbi (2008) studies strategic responses employed by National Social Security Fund (NSSF) to mitigate the challenges. Kiptugen (2013) conducted a study in a case study of Kenya Commercial Bank (KCB) where he studied strategic responses to changing

competitive environment whereas Kombo (2010) in a case of franchised motor vehicle dealers studied strategic responses by companies that are faced with environmental conditions. This is a strong indication that strategy for resilience in during pandemics has not been fully exhausted as far as research is concerned thereby creating a gap for this research study.

### **1.1.1 Strategies For Organizational Resilience**

Organizations that responds effectively to the changing environmental forces especially during situations and pandemics may be said to be more resilient. Having strategies for organizational resilience is therefore very critical as survival measures for the SMEs. Resilience strategies are just strategic responses to abrupt environmental changes that have acute effect on the business entity (Kortler, 2010). According to Johnson and Scholes (2010), strategic responses are the conventions of decisions as well as actions that arise in the formulation and implementation of organizational actions meant to achieve organization's objectives. These responses may prove to be resilience only if they make the organization survive beyond the pandemic. Porter and Miller (2010) distinguished that resilience strategies encompass variations in the company's strategic behaviours to guarantee attainment in transforming imminent situation. Pearce and Robinson (2007) defined strategic responses as the set of resilience decisions as well as actions resulting formalization and implementation of plans aimed at achieving a firm's long term goals. Resilience strategies usually involves thing which are done to ensure that the business venture stay afloat even in the event of abrupt environmental changes. Okello *et al* (2017) conducted a research on the relations between access to finance and growth of SMEs in developing economy where their findings showed that most businesses are not keen on

grafting strategies that can enable them have continuity no wonder most SMEs don't make it beyond six years due to financial constraints. Bunagan and Sison (2019) in their studies where they researched on the culture being used by entrepreneurs and the orientations of SMEs owners in Bahrain. The study results showed that most of the SMEs don't have tangible strategies and hence they operate on the basis of tackling situations as they arise. It is worth noting that resilience strategies are the main action plans that either propel or diminish the overall performance of the SMEs. These strategies should be embedded in the overall strategies of the organization and aligned to the mission and vision of the SMEs. Having strategies alone is not enough but proper implementation is equally very important. Nevertheless, how the SMEs manages strategic partners because this will ensure that the partners are always put within the confines of reach for the business entity for assistance. ICT deployment is also very crucial in ensuring that the SMEs are resilient. Having a competent staff ensures that the organization is able to mitigate through the turbulent times during pandemics. Kortler (2010) noted that customer relationship is very important in maintaining and retaining the prospective and existing customer bases.

### **1.1.2 Pandemics**

Pandemic has been defined by Epidemiology dictionary as epidemic that occurs worldwide or even over a wide area usually crossing international boundaries and normally affect a large group of people (Pedauga, Saez, Blanca & Marquez, 2022). Pandemics have been defined majorly in the context of medicine or diseases but a general meaning hasn't been finalized (Dheer & Salamzadeh, 2022). There have been many pandemics that have been recorded in the history of mankind and they have caused a lot of negative effect in the affected areas (UNCTAD, 2020). Pandemics have been known to weaken the health system

of the area, cost the lives of many people due to deaths and pose a high risk to the economy. This in effect has spilled to the security where it compromises the security of the affected area.

Pandemics have had adverse effect on business globally. Kenya has not been left out and so is Uasin Gishu County. Some of the pandemics that Kenya is prone to or have affected Kenya in the recent past include: election related violence, floods, and diseases such as Covid-19 as well as locust infestation. In Uasin Gishu, Covid-19 has taken a toll on many SMEs and some went under while others sought alternative ventures in order to stay in business. There is hardly study done on how pandemics affect the business environment though there are studies conducted on pandemics in relation to diseases.

### **1.1.3 Small and Medium Enterprises**

Small and micro enterprise (SMEs) is defined as an enterprise independently owned and operated, and not dominant in its field of operation (Carree & Klum 2016). They can be owned by one person or several people. It can also be defined in terms of sales volume and by the number of employees in the business. Bunagan, and Sison, (2019) opined that these are just un-subsidiary, independent ventures employing at a certain number. SMEs are the major employers in the country. In fact they provide employment opportunity to the youth, women, persons with disability most of whom are insufficiently skilled. SMEs has been identified as one of the major pillars for vision 2030 and part of the big four agenda in the country.

The SMEs under study are spread across the county. They include: service firms, mobile and phone accessories shops, general shops, boutiques, saloon and barber shops, hardware, banking agencies, hotels and restaurants, electronic shops, agriculture and veterinary

dealers, guest houses and bars, SACCOs, supermarkets among others. Many of these SMEs have suffered immensely as a due to the recent Corona pandemic. Many have gone under due to factors such as inadequate financial access, poor financial management, lack of versatility during environmental situations as well as lack of strategy to cope with the fluctuations in the business environment. There are a good number of SMEs that are doing business online and using information technology to spur growth. Others have ensured that there is a good customer and strategic partner's relations coupled with adequate staff straining to improve employee capacity. The study underscores the fact that there is differential strategies as far as those doing well and the struggling SMEs are concerned. This has prompted the research to determine the strategy for resilience for SMEs during pandemics.

## **1.2 Research Problem**

Pandemics have become a great challenge to SMEs not only in Kenya but worldwide. Pandemics have brought about changes in demand, patterns of consumption, distribution of products as well as changes in consumer behavior where there are shifts in tastes and preferences. These in deed affect not only performance but also survival of the business entity. The manner in which the SME relates with the customers, capacity building (staff training), deployment of information and communication technology as well as managing involvement with strategic partners.

There has been an increase in the number pandemics that have befall many business organizations in the country. Some businesses have been affected by floods, heavy rains, locust, Covid-19 among others. Covid-19 has been the latest pandemic that has affected many business establishment across the Country. With the effects of Covid-19 and the war



in Ukraine being the latest, there have been challenges affecting SMEs in the country. Many SMEs have found it very difficult to cope up with the effects of the pandemics (Sheth, 2020). It has been worse for start-ups SMEs some of which have gone under barely six months since inception. These coupled by the factors such as access to the market, infrastructural inadequacy, legal and regulatory constraints as well as financial inabilities as the main challenges that have proven to be the main limitation of the SMEs. Many of the SMEs have not adopted strategic response driven strategies for resilience during pandemics. This has actually hampered their performance and survival especially during the Covid-19 pandemic. That notwithstanding, a good number of SMEs have started adopting resilience strategies in order to continue operating.

Several other researches have likewise been done on strategic response as well as challenges during pandemics. Dheer *et al* (2022) studied pandemic threats and the effect they have on SMEs and how best the SMEs are able to react positively to the challenges from an international crisis. Consequently, Pedauga *et al* (2022) conducted a study on macro-economic lockdown and SMEs where they determined the impacts of Covid-19 in Spain. The findings indicated that majority of the SMEs are affected severely by the pandemics especially the recent Covid-19. This has brought to the fore a number of queries: could these SMEs be suffering from poor strategic partner's management? Could there be inadequate ICT deployment among the SMEs? Could there be lack of staff training? Or could it be there is ineffective customer relationship? Or could it be that strategy for resilience during pandemics have been lacking? Upon this premise, the study is pursuing to determine the influence strategy for organizational resilience during pandemics in SMEs in Uasin Gishu County.

### **1.3 Research Objectives**

To determine the strategies for organizational resilience during pandemics in Small and Medium Enterprises in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya.

### **1.4 Value Of The Study**

SMEs management will benefit greatly subsequently, this will offer them with valuable insights on survival tactics during major pandemics. This will make them come up with resilience strategies that will enable them stay in the business and wade of competition despite the ravaging effect of pandemics.

The research will equally be of utmost use to the government as well as private sectors in general. As well as policy makers in the area of SMEs. The policy makers will also benefit a great deal by the study. This is so because they will be able to acquire some insightful data on strategic responses that can be applied when SMEs are faced with challenges during pandemics. It will eventually help them in formulating various policies meant to improve SMEs performance during pandemics.

Those undertaking research and those in the academics will benefit greatly because this study work will provide a new knowledge which in turn will advance further studies particularly in strategies for resilience in SMEs during pandemics. This study will further produce a very opulent foundation for imminent studies by becoming substantial to the current theories by supporting or challenging such studies by use of the results of the study. The existing literature on strategies for resilience for SMEs during pandemics will be expanded.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Introduction**

Literature review, theoretical review as well as empirical review are the main focus of this chapter that been looked at. Consequently, research gaps have also been looked at in this section.

### **2.2 Theoretical Foundation**

Theories anchoring this research will be: contingency theory; dynamic capability theory and Kurt Lewin's theory.

#### **2.2.1 Contingency Theory**

Contingency theory was crafted by Galbraith in 1973 and it postulates that organizations operate in an ever changing environment. Galbraith (1973) was of the view that there cannot be one best system that a firm can be organized neither is there any particular organization that is said to be equally effective. Every situation requires a different organization and approach. Chandler (1962) said when he conducted a study on four large companies that enterprises will naturally evolve so that they can meet their strategical needs. He opined that business entities will naturally act in a rational and sequential manner in line with the erupting situations in the environment and that management ability would determine the effectiveness of the business to adapt to the changes arising. The term "contingency" was coined by Lawrence and Lorsch (1967) and they argued that environmental rate and amount of change have impact on how internal characteristics of the venture is developed.

This theory has actually alluded to the significance of the environment and the fact that its parameters cannot be wished away bay any business entity that wants to survive including

SMEs. This theory applies to this study since it touches on the environment and how variations in it affects organizational plans and strategies as well as how effective they can respond to such situations during pandemics for survival reasons as well as becoming profitable and competitive.

### **2.2.2 Dynamic Capability Theory**

This theory was coined by Teece *et al* in 1997. Dynamic theory on the other hand states the importance of competencies reconfiguration by a company in order to match turbulent prevailing situation. Further, it intimates managerial strategies can come in handy for the organization so that it can create a viable competitive advantage promoting better competencies above the competition (Gathungu & Mwangi, 2012). Reorganizing a firm's resource, capacity building as well as reinventing business systems to match the business environment enables the organization to adjust to prevailing harsh business environment. It has an assumption that those ventures that possess smaller dynamic capabilities will naturally be outshined by those with superior dynamic abilities (Sethuraman & Suresh, 2014). These capabilities that are mentioned are equated to being just first order capabilities due to the fact they are meant to bring on board changes in products, production processes, scaling level in addition to multiple markets served by the enterprise (Sifuna, 2012).

These are stable learned patterns of organizational traditional activities which are usually systematically generated to reform doing of things within the organization in addition to making it more effective (Scott, 2014). Sethuraman and Suresh (2014) noted that firms that are able to not only create but also re-configure and create integration between its internal and external capabilities to match the dynamic business situation is said to possess dynamic

capabilities. This theory is appropriate to this research due to the fact that it provides for assessment of the dynamic environment in relation to the SMEs performance and sustainability during pandemic (Mathooko & Ogutu, 2014). It integrates resilience strategies and organizational dynamics in addition to organization performance.

### **2.2.3 Kurt Lewin's Theory**

Kurt Lewin's theory of change was advanced in the 1940s and is a three steps model. The first stage in this theory is the unfreezing step. It involves preparation of the organization to accept change and its consequences that entail dismantling the current ways before establishing new way of functioning. Before a change is applied it must undergo the first stage of unfreezing such as challenging the existing beliefs, values, attitudes, behaviors and organization customs. During unfreezing step, personnel in addition to structures in the organization must be sensibly scrutinized to portray the importance of creating or maintaining a competitive advantage in the market place even during pandemics.

The second step is the changing step. Once people become unfrozen they are expected to move into new state of being or enter into a transition period without delay. This leads to quicker adaptation and avoidance of going back into old habits and rituals. In this step the change becomes a reality whereby most people struggle with strong emotion such as denial, impatience, doubts as well as fear, accordingly making it the most difficult step to overcome.

The final step of this theory was called by Lewin as change freezing step even though other people call it refreezing step since it symbolizes and solidifies the new state of change. The changes brought about on the structure, personnel, goals or even processes are accepted and refrozen as the new ways of doing things. This theory can be used by the SMEs to

enhance their performance by bringing on board all the staff involved for successful implementation of the changes initiated by the management during pandemics. By using this theory, the SMEs are able to minimize resistance to change while expectations are adequately managed early in the change process and ensure resilience to changes brought about by pandemic.

### **2.3 Strategies for organizational resilience during pandemics**

Pandemic increase uncertainty which was more worsen by various regulations that government brought about. Lockdown is one of the methods that the many governments used to inhibit the spread of the Corona virus. Even though pandemics and disasters in general bring about challenges, they also provide opportunities (Eggers (2020)). Dheer *et al* opined that the most effective ways for SMEs to respond and maintain a good performance during pandemics are by managing strategic partners well, using adequate information communication technology during the crisis, ensuring that the employees are well informed and properly developed and effective and efficient customer relationship management.

Murphy and Sashi (2018) carried a study on communication interactivity and satisfaction in business to business relationships where they noted that creating good communication channels with the strategic partners will improve organizational performance during disasters. Strategic partners have been very helpful during pandemic.

Information and communication technology has been identified as a key ingredient in ensuring that the organization increases market as well as maintaining the performance. He, Zhang and Li (2020) established in their study on information technology (IT) solutions, challenges as well suggestions for tackling COVID-19 pandemic that the use of

web-based technology as well as digital technology improved not only sales but also good customer relationship.

Sheth (2020) carried a study on business of business management during the COVID-19 crunch and the results showed that capacity building during such crisis is very vital in ensuring that the organization copes with the ever changing business environment. Employees with adequate skills and knowledge will enable the organization rapidly conform to the acute change of environment brought about by the pandemic or disaster.

Customer relationship has been identified as another key component of resilience strategy that SMEs can utilize to cope up with the pandemic of any kind. Wang, Hong, Li and Gao (2020) did a study among Chinese firms on response towards Covid-19 in which they wanted to determine the marketing innovations during global crisis. The study found out that customer relationships management actually improved the sales people's relationship with the customers which in turn led to improved sales. Good customer relationship has led to the use of remote and flexible working during pandemic and hence resilience to the abrupt change in environment (Kiptugen, 2013).

#### **2.4 Empirical Review and Research Gaps**

Strategic partners' management is one of the ways that if well utilized by the firm, then resilience during abrupt business environmental change will be easily handled. Coming up with coping strategies is very crucial during uncertainty especially during pandemics and disasters (Hoekstra & Leeftang, 2020). They determined in their study carried out on marketing in the period of Corona virus in Italian firms that there is need to consolidate the existing customers and attract new customers as well even during hardship created by pandemics.

Bettiol, Capestro and Micelli (2021) in their study where they wanted to determine the reaction that organizations did during Corona epidemic by digital connectivity among customers amongst the Italian SMEs noted that there was need to re-strategize the organizational plans so that the organization can be more resilient to the adverse effect of the corona pandemic. Strategic partners' management is a very critical component of managing responses during pandemics as well as ensuring resilience of the organization (Nenenon & Storbacka, 2020).

ICT deployment is very vital in ensuring that organization continue operations even during times that the environment makes it impossible to have face to face interaction among the employees as well as the customers (Donthu & Gustafsson, 2020), Wu, Wu and Si (2016). He, Zhang and Li (2020) in their study on challenges, solutions and suggestions of the information technology for tackling Covid-19 established that pandemics have pushed organization to the use of technology since it was very useful in not only ensuring the organization to redefine business process but also to ensure good customer relationship as well as ensure organizational resilience. This was aligned with the research done by Bettiol *et al* (2021) where they studied responding to the Corona epidemic through digital connectivity with customers among the Italian firms.

Capacity building is one of the most important human capital development techniques that organizations may use which will eventually have positive effect on the company in the long run especially during disasters (Michael & Zaid, 2014). The various capacity building elements include coaching, mentoring and training and development. Oh and Tak (2016) conducted a research to assess the consequences of managerial coaching on performance of the organization then found out that managers have a direct link to individual performance



which in effect translates to overall organizational performance. The managers actions in relation to coaching is meant to boost employee, skills, learning, effectiveness, efficiency as well as performance (Eisenhardt, 2010). This helps even during unforeseen abrupt business environment changes caused by pandemics. Kim, Egan, Kim and Kim (2013) noted that the manager communicates the anticipations to the employees, defines their roles in the company, provision of response that will improve their performance and better remuneration for them. A study conducted by Weiner (2015) revealed that it is the responsibility of the coach to ensure that the expectations are set accordingly. The manager will therefore act as a facilitator, motivator and an advisor to the employees under his/her jurisdiction. This is possible when the manger enacts specific behavior on the employees that will enable them to learn and utilize the skills for the benefit of the organization (Michael & Zaid, 2014).

Customer relationship have been overlooked by many SMEs simply because they have not known the importance that it has in ensuring that the prospective and existing customers are maintained(Chepkwong, 2011). Pedauga, Saez, Blanca and Marquez (2022) conducted a study on macroeconomic lockdown and SMEs where they wanted to determine the impact of Covid-19 pandemic in Spanish economy while Siggelkow and Terwiesch (2019) studied connected strategy where they emphasized on building of continuous customer relationship that offer competitive advantage. Customer relationship management has been considered to be a more all-inclusive methodology to managing and maintain customer relations in order to generate a considerate value for shareholder (Drew, 2003). When customers feel appreciated then it makes them feel part and parcel of the business. Customer relationship and technology go hand in hand during pandemics since in most

pandemics since it's difficult for customers and the sales people to have face to face interaction however, they are able to gain value for the organization and the customers as well in the short time (Nderitu, 2009).

## **CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction**

Research methodology entailed design, population targeted and sample, method of data collection as well as analysis of the data are contained in the chapter.

### **3.2 Research Design**

Research design is planned structure for actions that functions as a channel between research questions in addition to implementation of the research (Durrheim, 2006). It is a perceived investigative plan and structure helpful in not only obtaining and answering research questions (Kerlinger, 1986). In order to effectively answer research questions, appropriate research design is needed (Asenahabi, 2019).

This research adopted a survey research design. This is information collection method through questionnaire or interview administered to individuals (Orodho, 2003). The ability of this design to answer questions such as what, who, when, where or even how a variable is necessitated its use. It is suitable in obtaining relevant information about the existing status of the phenomena and attempts to describe the existing conditions with respect to variables.

### **3.3 Population of the Study**

Uasin Gishu has several SMEs from various sectors. The study only studied SMEs registered with the department of trade and industrialization of the county government of Uasin Gishu. They were as follows: 20 supermarkets and wholesalers, 40 service firms, 56 mobile and phone accessories, 35 boutiques, 24 salons and barber shops, 37 hardware, 11 banking agencies, 23 hotels, 8 veterinary and agriculture enterprises, 15 chemists and 3 SACCOS. This totals to 272 respondents.

### **3.4 Sample design**

According to Gay (2009), sampling technique is the process by which a number of people are selected for the study from a larger group in a manner that the individuals selected are representation of the larger group is called sampling. The study applied Yamane (1967) sample size determination formulae to obtain the sample size of the study. This is because the method was suitable in determining the sample size for proportions and stratified population. The study sample size based on 95% significance level is computed as follows;-

Where  $n$ =the sample size

$N$ = the size of population

$e$  =the error of 5 percent (level of precision)

$N=272$ , and  $e =0.05$  therefore, sample size  $n=161.9$  when rounded to the nearest digit, it gave a sample size of 162 which was obtained from the target population using stratified simple random technique proportionately.

### **3.5 Data Collection**

The study collected quantitative primary data through structured questionnaires. Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) notes that combining both questionnaires and interviews in one particular research study carries collectively the advantages of extensiveness and deepness related with the two respective methods. Sounders, Lewis and Thornhill (2007) suggest questionnaires as resourceful instrument of collecting that equips researcher with the ability to know the requirement and how the variable concerned will be measured.

A letter was sought from both University of Nairobi and National Commission of Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) which enabled respondents give consent to collect data from them. Questionnaires used were close ended and they were designed in such a way that respondents chose among the choices provided. Anonymity of the questionnaires was highly observed so that confidentiality of respondents was adhered to while answering questions.

### **3.6 Data Analysis**

Collected data was prepared before analysis through editing where errors and omission were detected in order to ensure accuracy and consistency of the facts gathered. Thereafter, coding and classification was done where data with common traits were grouped together. Descriptive statistical (mean, standard deviation and percentage) was applied. To establish the degree of influence of strategies for organizational resilience during pandemic in SMEs, inferential analysis using correlation and regression analysis was carried out.

Regression analysis was equally used to determine the influence of strategies for organizational resilience during pandemics in SMEs in Uasin Gishu County using  $R^2$ . It showed the % effects of one variable on another.

Regression model was as follows:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 SP + \beta_2 ID + \beta_3 CB + \beta_4 CR + e$$

Where:

Y = Pandemics

$\beta_0$  = Constant (Y-intercept)

$\beta_{(1-4)}$  = Coefficient of independent variables

SP = Strategic partners management

ID =ICT deployment  
CB =Capacity building  
CR =Customer relationship  
e = Error term

## CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS, RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### 4.1 Introduction

The analysis of the data was based on the objective of the study which was to determine the strategies for organizational resilience during pandemics in Small and Medium Enterprises in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya.

#### 4.1.1 Questionnaire Response Rate

Questionnaires issued to the respondents were 162 and a total of 146 questionnaires were returned. This gives a questionnaire response rate of 90.1 %. This gives a sufficient response on strategies for organizational resilience during pandemic among SMEs in Uasin Gishu County. The high response rate witnessed in this research is supported by the argument by Mugenda, (2003) higher rate of response is the best system of obtaining unbiased estimates.

### 4.2 Background Information

Background information was very in providing information on the respondents as well as gauging their understanding of the subject under review. This information includes the age, gender, experience, education as well the life span of the business.

**Table 4.1 Background information**

Categories		Frequency	%	Valid%	Cumulative %
Gender	Male	97	66.4	66.4	66.4
	Female	49	33.6	33.6	100.0
Total		146	100.0	100.0	

Age bracket	18- 25	2	1.3	1.3	1.3
	26-30	6	4.1	4.1	5.4
	31-35	14	9.6	9.6	15.0
	36-40	35	24.0	24.0	39.0
	41-45	40	27.4	27.4	66.4
	46& above	49	33.6	33.6	100.0
	Total	146	100.0	100.0	
Years of experience with SMEs	0-5 years	29	19.9	19.9	19.9
	6-10 years	53	36.3	36.3	56.2
	11-15 years	46	31.5	31.5	87.7
	16 & above	18	12.3	12.3	100.0
	Total	146	100.0	100.0	
Years business in operations	0-5	41	28.0	28.0	28.0
	6-10	49	33.6	33.6	61.6
	11-15	24	16.4	16.4	78.0
	Over 15	32	22.0	22.0	100.0
	Total	146	100.0	100.0	
Advance level of education	Postgraduate	9	6.2	6.2	6.2
	Graduate	38	26.0	26.0	32.2
	Diploma/Certificate	57	39.0	39.0	71.2
	Secondary	32	21.9	21.9	93.1



	Primary	10	6.9	6.9	100.0
	Total	146	100.0	100.0	
Best	Strategic partners	33	22.6	22.6	22.6
reliance	management				
strategy	ICT deployment	61	41.8	41.8	64.4
	Customer	33	22.6	22.6	87.0
	relationship				
	Capacity building	19	13.0	13.0	100.0
	Total	146	100.0	100.0	

(Source; researcher 2022)

#### 4.2.1 Gender

The male respondents were 97(66.4%) while the female were 49(33.6%). This showed that the SMEs are male dominated.

#### 4.2.2 Age bracket

The respondents that are aged between 18- 25 were 2(1.3%) while the ones aged 26-30 were 6(4.1%). The results also showed that 14(9.6%) were aged between 31-35 whereas the ones who are in the age bracket of 36-40 were 35(24.0%). The study further revealed that 40(27.4%) were of the age of 41-45 while those aged above 46 were 49(33.6%). The findings indicated that majority of the respondents were aged above 46 years closely followed by those aged between 36 and 40. On the other hand, those aged below 25 years were the minority. With the majority being aged above 36 year, it shows that most of the

owners and senior managers are mature and old enough to understand the SMEs and the challenges related to doing business especially small and micro-enterprises.

#### **4.2.3 Years of experience**

Respondents who had worked in the SMEs for less than 5 years were 29(19.9%) and those who had worked for 6-10 years were 53(36.3%). Another 46(31.5%) had worked in the SMEs industry for 11-15 years whereas those who had worked for 16 years and above were 18(12.3%). The least are the respondents who have been in the SMEs for more than 46 years. Majority of the respondents had worked in the SMEs for over 6 years. Six years is adequate time for one to understand the challenges and opportunities in the SMEs especially during crisis. This therefore means that majority of the respondents are well experienced to handle challenges accruing from crisis specifically Covid-19. Pandemics are very destructive and those who don't have experience on dealing with pandemic might find it difficult to pass through such crises.

#### **4.2.4 Most advanced level of education**

Respondents with postgraduate degrees were 9(6.2%) and those with graduate degrees were 38(26.0%). Those who possess diploma/certificate were 57(39.0%). These are the majority who run the SMEs in Uasin Gishu. It further shows that they have requisite education that can make them get an understanding of the crisis brought about by the pandemics and crafting mitigation measures. The findings also indicated that secondary school certificate holders were 32(21.9%) while primary school drop outs were 10(6.9%). Interestingly, respondents with postgraduate degrees are almost the same with those running SMEs but only possess primary school certificate.

#### **4.2.5 Years business has been in operation**

It was important to determine the duration that the businesses have been in operation so that an understanding concerning whether they have met challenges related to pandemic or even acute crises in the past. Finding showed that 41(28.0%) had been in operation for less than 5 years. It further revealed that businesses that have been in operation for between 6-10 years were 49(33.6%). On the other hand, some companies that had been in operation for between 11-15 years were 24(16.4%) while 32(22.0%) had operated for over 15 years. Most businesses having been in operation for more than 6 years is an indication that they have stabilized because they have been in operation for a longer period of time making them a little bit resistant to crises. Interestingly, a good number of businesses have equally operated for less than 5 years.

#### **4.2.6 Best resilient strategy**

Respondents were asked to state the most appealing resilient strategies that they feel are more appropriate for SMEs during pandemics. Those with the view that strategic partner's management is the best resilient strategy for SMEs during pandemics were 33(22.6%). This is because of the thinking that partners are very instrumental in giving a helping hand during hard times. ICT deployment was the best resilient strategy according to 61(41.8%) of the respondents. This could be attributed to the fact we are in information technology revolution coupled with knowledge revolution. ICT is very helpful in disseminating information, gathering information as well as analyzing the information useful for the business.

There were also respondents who felt that customer relationship was the best resilient strategy suitable for SMEs as represented by 33(22.6%) of the respondents while some had

the feeling that capacity building as represented by 19(13.0%) was the best resilient strategy suitable to mitigate pressure during pandemics. Majority of the respondents opined that ICT deployment is the best resilient strategy that helps during pandemics while

### 4.3 Strategic partnership

**Table 4.2: Strategic partners management and pandemics**

Statement	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Commitment to integration influences survival during pandemics	146	4.7210	.69537
Common goals have improved performance during pandemics	146	3.0402	.61312
Open communication is vital for survival during pandemics	146	3.6701	.74699
Mutual support from stakeholders makes the organization resilient	146	4.8422	.54219s
Strategic partnership has improved business during pandemics	146	4.3332	.79788

(Source: Researcher, 2022)

Respondents were asked to state their level of agreement on statements that are related to strategic partner's management and pandemics. From the results of the study as shown in table 4.2, it can be stated that commitment to integration influences survival during pandemics as was attributed by a mean of 4.7210 and standard deviation of .69537. This could be due to the feeling by the respondents that buyers and customers play a critical role in helping one another during crises especially pandemic. The findings are in tandem with results of the study by Wu *et al* (2016) that collaborations with the stakeholders are very beneficial for business especially during hard times.

The study results also indicated that common goals have not improved performance during pandemics as represented by a mean of 3.0402 and standard deviation of .61312. This is so because goals could be common but that should not be construed to mean that mechanisms for achievement of such goals are the same by the parties involved. There are other dimensions that needs to be addressed for the goals to be fully implemented. Wang et al (2020) noted that having goals is not enough but effective implementations will bring about the difference between successful and struggling organizations.

Majority of the respondents also noted that open communication is averagely vital for survival during pandemics as represented by a mean of 3.6701 and standard deviation of .74699. This could be due to the reason that share information is sometimes helpful in preventing or sorting an issue which one might have not been aware of. This contradicts results from the study carried out by Kim *et al* (2013) on coaching. They reasoned that communication is vital in ensuring crises are held and that it should be open and honest communication.

The findings further showed that mutual support from stakeholders makes the organization resilient as supported by a mean of 4.8422 and standard deviation of .54219. Support from the financers, buyers, suppliers as well as agents from authorities are important in ensuring survival during pandemics. This is in agreement with the study by Siggelkow and Terwiesch (2019) that stakeholders should not be disregarded because they are part and parcel of the system in the organization. It should be noted that pandemic affects everyone and mutual support from the key stakeholders will lead to mutual benefits for all.

In conclusion, the results showed that strategic partnership has improved business during pandemics. This was supported by a mean of 4.3332 and standard deviation of .79788.

SMEs with strong ties with their strategic partners are bound to have shoulders to lean on due to mutual benefits and the need to continue partnering and eventual prosperity. Chepkwony and Klum (2016) also noted in their findings that strategic partnering is very essential in responding to matters that abruptly affect the business without notice.

**Table 4.3 symmetric measures**

		Value	Asymp. Std. Error <sup>a</sup>	Approx. T <sup>b</sup>	Approx. Sig.
Interval by Interval	Pearson's R	.882	.028	13.464	.000 <sup>c</sup>
Ordinal by Ordinal	Spearman Correlation	.796	.036	12.422	.000 <sup>c</sup>
N of Valid Cases		146			

(Source: Researcher, 2022)

Where:

- a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.
- b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.
- c. Based on normal approximation.

The results from table 4.2 showed a close relationship between strategic partners management during pandemics in SMEs. The results showed a spearman correlation value of 0.796 which is adequate in determining the relationship between two variables. The

results are supported by findings from the study carried out by Chepkwony and Klum (2016) that strategic partners are very important and they are useful in responding to situations that have befallen the business and has adverse effect on its operations.

#### 4.4 ICT deployment during pandemic

**Table 4.4 ICT deployment and pandemic**

<b>Category</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
The use of WhatsApp with clients has helped me during pandemics	146	3.2062	.80709
Internet has made me reach many customers during lockdown	146	4.4488	.81982
Communicational channels used are very effective	146	3.2763	.78146
Mobile technology helps in transaction during pandemics	146	4.7468	.84143
ICT has improved business during pandemics	146	4.8733	.96499

(Source: Researcher, 2022)

Respondents were asked about matters related to ICT and how they affect SMEs during pandemics. Table 4.4 showed the findings of the study. With the use of mobile phones in doing communications as well as transactions, the study found out that the use of WhatsApp with clients has not been very helpful to SMEs during pandemics as represented by a mean of 3.2062 and standard deviation of .80709. This is due to the fact WhatsApp is

only useful for communication and that there are other alternatives that can be used by the business for the purpose of communication.

The internet has made many SMEs reach many customers during lockdown. This was evidenced by a mean of 4.4488 and standard of .81982. When movement of people are restricted then it will be easy to use internet to carry out business transactions. This is also very easy since the business can be handled when the distance is miles apart from each other. The use of WhatsApp, Facebook as well as online business transactions. The results are in agreement with findings of Sheth (2020) on business of business during Corona Virus pandemic.

Communicational channels used by SMEs are actually not very effective. Majority of the respondents as supported by a mean of 3.2763 and standard deviation of .78146 believed that most of the SMEs have not taken seriously communication systems and that the effectiveness of the communication channels are not effective. Pedauga *et al* (2022) noted in his study that most SMEs are not very keen in ensuring structured communication systems and that's why most of them don't have reliable customers who engage in regular repeat purchase.

Mobile telephone has been used since the advent of mobile telephone. Respondents were asked to give their view on mobile phones technology and the role it plays during pandemics. Majority of the respondents were of the opinion that mobile technology helps in transaction during pandemics as evidenced with a mean of 4.7468 and standard deviation of .84143. The findings are in agreement with results of the study by Eggers (2020) that mobile telephone phone technology has been very helpful in ensuring that many



transactions by SMEs are carried out effectively and efficiently. This will be very important during pandemics.

ICT has improved business of SMEs during pandemics. This was evidenced by a mean of 4.8733 and standard deviation of .96499. This can be related to the fact that during Covid-19, the movement of people were restricted and there was lockdown which hindered movement of business people especially small business enterprises. Nderitu (2009) in a study on strategic responses noted that ICT has been very helpful in not only innovation but also marketing of services by both large and small institutions.

#### 4.4.1 Relationship between ICT deployment and pandemics

The study sought to determine whether there exists a relationship between ICT deployment and pandemics. Correlation analysis was done to ascertain the relationship between ICT deployment and pandemics.

**Table 4.5 symmetric measures**

#### Symmetric Measures

		Value	Asymp. Std. Error <sup>a</sup>	Approx. T <sup>b</sup>	Approx. Sig.
Interval by	Pearson's R	.874	.023	17.057	.000 <sup>c</sup>
Interval					
Ordinal by	Spearman Correlation	.861	.024	17.360	.000 <sup>c</sup>
Ordinal					
N of Valid Cases		146			

(Source: Researcher, 2022)

- a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.
- b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.
- c. Based on normal approximation.

Correlation analysis was done and the findings produced a spearman correlation value of 0.861 which showed that there is relationship between the two variables (ICT deployment and pandemics). The study results conforms with that of Wang *et al* (2020) that internet has been very helpful in carrying out myriad of services during global crisis since many business people are not able to travel as frequently as possible yet the business has to continue operations.

#### 4.5 Customer relationship

**Table 4.6 Customer relationship**

<b>Statements</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
Customers are satisfied with the services offered	146	4.0353	.76403
There are mechanisms to address complaints from customers	146	4.1608	.87303
There is maintenance of good customer relationship	146	3.0821	.68221
We respond to the to the feedbacks promptly	146	3.6272	.87726
There is repeat purchase based on customer relationship	146	4.0322	.52238

(Source: Researcher, 2022)

Relationship with customers is about the working relations that exists between the business and the buyer for the benefit of all in terms of doing business. Results are shown in table 4.6. Respondents indicated that customers were satisfied with the services offered by the SMEs as supported by a mean of 4.0353 and standard deviation of .76403. It was very difficult for the business owners/managers to state that customers are not satisfied with their services. This is because of general belief by managers/owners of business that if the customers were not satisfied then they would have winded up the business. Customer satisfaction always leads to repeat purchase and this will be very beneficial when there is crisis since the customer can make orders and pay even under difficult circumstances like it was during Covid-19. Customers who are happy about the services or goods being offered by the organization will influence others through referrals and increase business output for the firm (Mathooko & Ogutu, 2014).

Majority of the SMEs noted that in their businesses, there are mechanisms to address complaints from customers. This was evidenced by a mean of 4.1608 and standard deviation of .87303. Handling customer complaints is very crucial in maintain existing customers as well as encouraging potential customers to purchase. This will also lead to loyalty by the customers because of the confidence they have on the firm (Hoekstra & Leeftang, 2020).

Many of respondents did not agree that there is maintenance of good customer relationship as supported by a mean of 3.0821 and standard deviation of .68221. This could be the case because of the meager resources that many of the SMEs could be having that makes it difficult to have structure on customer relationship management. However, most of the respondents noted that there firms respond to the feedbacks promptly as this was supported

by a mean of 3.6272 and standard deviation of .87726. Resources have been the biggest hindrance for SMEs to put up structures that can strengthen customer relationship management. On the contrary, the findings showed that there is repeat purchase based on customer relationship as supported by a mean of 4.0322 and standard deviation of .52238. This could mean that most of the SMEs are not even aware that they have built a good customer relationship with the buyers prompting repeat purchases. The findings are in line with the results of the research conducted by Gichumbi (2008) that customer relationship helps in maintaining the existing customers as well as attracting potential customers to the firm.

**Table 4.7 Symmetric measures**

		<b>Value</b>	<b>Asymp. Std. Error<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>Approx. T<sup>b</sup></b>	<b>Approx. Sig.</b>
Interval by					
Interval	Pearson's R	.801	.020	13.124	.000 <sup>c</sup>
Ordinal by					
Ordinal	Spearman Correlation	.789	.042	12.622	.000 <sup>c</sup>
N of Valid Cases		146			

(Source: Researcher, 2022)

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.

b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

c. Based on normal approximation.

Based on table 4.7, findings showed that a spearman correlation value of 0.789 was realized which statistically proves the relationship between customer relationship and pandemics. This means that SMEs with good customer relationships are more likely to retain loyal customers during pandemics that those that have not been keen on effective customer relationship strategies. It is worth noting that good customer relationship leads to loyalty and eventual trust that will exist between the two parties for the benefit of business operations of the parties.

#### 4.6 Capacity building and pandemic

**Table 4.8 Capacity building and pandemics**

Statements	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Shared institutional development is helpful during pandemics	146	3.8876	.63463
Workforce development makes the staff very versatile	146	4.4826	.56731
Financial capacity determines survival during pandemics	146	4.4233	.87862
Partners have helped my organization increase capacity during pandemics	146	2.2165	.84964
Capacity building of our organization has made us very resilient	146	3.9722	.58228

(Source: Researcher, 2022)

Capacity building is about equipping the staff with the knowledge and skills that are needed in order to effectively handle business matters especially during pandemics. Table 4.9 showed the findings. Majority of respondents were of the opinion that shared institutional

development is averagely helpful during pandemics as this was by a mean of 3.8876 a standard deviation of .63463. Respondents further believed that workforce development makes the staff very versatile during pandemics as this was supported by a mean of 4.4826 and standard deviation of .56731.

Consequently, the findings showed that financial capacity determines survival during pandemics. This statement was supported by a mean of 4.4233 and standard deviation of .87862. Stable SMEs and other firms finds it very easy to wade through pandemics since they have stable resources that can take them through during pandemics. Okello *et al* (2017) noted that financial strength of the firm will determine the level of finance that they can access. This helps SMEs during pandemic or after the aftermath of pandemic to obtain financial resources since there has been depleted financial base occasioned by the aftermath of the pandemic.

Statement was put across to determine whether partners have helped the organization increase capacity during pandemics. The study found out as supported by a mean of 2.2165 and STD of .84964 that partners have not been very helpful in supporting SMEs to increase their capacity building during pandemics. These could be as a result of the cash crunch that was brought about by the pandemics in all sectors to the extent that even the partners are strained financially.

Even with little resources available, many of the firms have engaged in some kind of capacity building. The findings showed that most of the businesses stated that capacity building of their organization has made them very resilient during pandemic as this was supported by a mean of 3.9722 and standard deviation of .58228. These findings are in line with study by Pedauga *et al* (2020) who stated that capacity building among organizations

were very helpful during pandemics in Spain since most of these organizations had trained staff to ensure they are equipped with necessary skills that enables them to be versatile.

**Table 4.9 Symmetric measures**

		Value	Asymp. Std. Error <sup>a</sup>	Approx. T <sup>b</sup>	Approx. Sig.
Interval by					
Interval	Pearson's R	.822	.026	13.332	.000 <sup>c</sup>
Ordinal by					
Ordinal	Spearman Correlation	.774	.046	12.625	.000 <sup>c</sup>
N of Valid Cases		146			

(Source: Researcher, 2022)

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.

b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

c. Based on normal approximation.

Based on table 4.9 findings it shows that a spearman correlation value of 0.774 which statistically proves the relationship between capacity building and pandemics. This is a clear indication that organizations that have invested in capacity building are more likely to survive during pandemics since their staff may possess skills and knowledge that helps them during pandemics.

#### 4.7 Organizational pandemics

**Table 4.10 Organizational pandemics**

<b>Statement</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
Wars have affected the operations of the SMEs	146	2.7548	.86734
External relations have an impact on SMEs during pandemics	146	4.2754	1.03263
Productivity is affected by changes brought by pandemics.	146	4.4446	.65368
Diseases affect organizational performance during pandemic	146	4.0117	1.08480
Resilience strategies determines organizational resilience of SMEs during pandemics	146	4.7787	.87742



(Source: Researcher, 2022)

The results are shown in table 4.10. The results showed that wars have not affected the operations of the SMEs in Uasin Gishu County as this was supported by a mean of 2.7548 and standard deviation of .86734. This could be attributed to the fact that most of the SMEs have not operated under the rein of war and hence they are not able to tell whether their businesses have been affected by war crisis. But generally speaking, Eggers (2020) noted that crisis makes handling business operations very hard and this could lead to closure of many businesses especially the small and medium enterprises.

On the other hand, respondents stated that external relations have an impact on SMEs during pandemics as supported by a mean of 4.2754 and standard deviation of 1.03263. External relations shows to the world or the outside of who you are and what you are doing in addition to what you are capable of doing. This in effect will give the potential and existing customers the preview of the organization. Okello *et al* (2017) opined that good external relations is beneficial since the information available to the public may determine access to finance.

Correspondingly, respondents stated that productivity is affected by changes brought by pandemics. This was evidenced in table 4.10 by a mean of 4.4446 and standard deviation of .65368. Whenever there is pandemics, the customers are also reduced and so does the output of the organization. In some cases, there is total struggle by everyone included the supposed customers who are supposed to buy from the businesses. Wang *et al* (2020) noted that there is need to ensure that marketing innovations are put in place during pandemics so that the firms can mitigate the crisis without winding up.

Diseases which come as pandemics are very detrimental to business operations and they may have adverse effect on the health of the owners, staff as well as the customers (Hoekstar & Leeflang, 2020). Respondents stated as shown in table 4.10 that diseases affect organizational performance during pandemic as this statement was supported by a mean of 4.0117 and standard deviation of 1.08480. Covid-19 struck everywhere and everybody leaving a lot of destructive strays behind in which in some cases the staff and the SMEs owners were wiped out by the pandemic. This lead to closure of some enterprises.

Finally, majority of the respondents stated that resilience strategies determines organizational resilience of SMEs during pandemics as this was supported by a mean of 4.7787 and standard deviation of .87742. Response strategies could be the cornerstone of ensuring resilience by the many firms that have been affected by crisis especially Covid-19 (Pedauga *et al* (2022)). Resilient strategies such as strategic partner’s management, ICT deployment, customer relationship as well as capacity building have been identified to be very critical during pandemic in SMEs.

#### 4.8 Regression Model Summary

**Table 4.11 Regression model**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				Durbin-Watson	
					R Change	F Change	df1	df2		Sig. F Change
1	.720 <sup>a</sup>	.518	.494	.43344	.518	58.320	8	138	.000	2.031

a. Predictors: (Constant), strategic partners , ICT deployment , Capacity building

b. Dependent Variable: Pandemics

To examine if the regression model significantly fitted in forecasting the results over the usage of the mean, analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used as presented in Table 4.11.

**Table 4.12: ANOVA for Combined Effect of Independent Variables on organization pandemics**

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Regression	56.755	8	11.153	58.320	.000 <sup>b</sup>
1	Residual	54.119	138	.188		
	Total	110.874	146			

a. Dependent Variable: pandemics

b. Predictors: (Constant), strategic partnership, ICT deployment, Customer relationship, capacity building

The F- ratio represents the proportion of improvement in prediction that results from fitting the regression model, relative to the imprecision that exists in the model. The F- ratio got was 59.310 which was coincidental and was significant ( $P < .05$ ). The model considerably improved the ability to predict the degree of pandemics in SMEs in Uasin Gishu County.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 Overview**

This chapter was divided into three major sections; summary, conclusions and recommendations.

### **5.2 Summary of the study**

This gives a questionnaire response rate of 90.1 %. Which gave sufficient response on strategies for organizational resilience during pandemic among SMEs in Uasin Gishu County. The findings were based on the main objective which was to determine the strategies for organizational resilience during pandemics in Small and Medium Enterprises in Uasin Gishu County. The variables of the study were strategic partner's management, ICT deployment, customer relationship and capacity building.

The male respondents were 66.4% while the female were 33.6%. This showed that the SMEs were male dominated. Majority of the respondents had worked in the SMEs for over 6 years. Six years is adequate time for one to understand the challenges and opportunities in the SMEs especially during crisis. This therefore means that majority of the respondents are well experienced to handle challenges accruing from crisis specifically Covid-19. This also shows that the businesses have been stable. The findings indicated that majority of the respondents were aged above 46 years closely followed by those aged between 36 and 40. On the other hand, those aged below 25 years were the minority. With the majority being aged above 36 year, it shows that most of the owners and senior managers are mature and old enough to understand the SMEs and the challenges related to doing business especially small and micro-enterprises.

Concerning education of the respondents, respondents with who possess diploma/certificate were the majority who run the SMEs in Uasin Gishu. This shows that they have requisite education that can make them get an understanding of the crisis brought about by the pandemics and crafting mitigation measures. Interestingly, respondents with postgraduate degrees are almost the same with those running SMEs but only possess primary school certificate.

Most businesses having been in operation for more than 6 years is an indication that they have stabilized because they have been in operation for a longer period of time making them a little bit resistant to crises. Interestingly, a good number of businesses have equally operated for less than 5 years.

This could be attributed to the fact we are in information technology revolution coupled with knowledge revolution. ICT is very helpful in disseminating information, gathering information as well as analyzing the information useful for the business. Those who stated that strategic partner's management was the best resilient strategy were actually equal to the ones who stated that customer relationship is the best resilient strategy. Capacity building on the other side was not proposed as the best resilient strategy as it only receives a paltry 13% of rating.

From the results of the study as shown in table 4.2, it can be stated that commitment to integration influences survival during pandemics. This could be due to the feeling by the respondents that buyers and customers play a critical role in helping one another during crises especially pandemic. The study results also indicated that common goals have not improved performance during pandemics. This is so because goals could be common but that should not be construed to mean that mechanisms for achievement of such goals are

the same by the parties involved. Majority of the respondents also noted that open communication is averagely vital for survival during pandemics. This could be due to the reason that share information is sometimes helpful in preventing or sorting an issue which one might have not been aware of.

The findings further showed that mutual support from stakeholders makes the organization resilient. Support from the financiers, buyers, suppliers as well as agents from authorities are important in ensuring survival during pandemics. The findings further indicated that there is close relationship between strategic partner's management and pandemics. The results showed that strategic partnership has improved business during pandemics. SMEs with strong ties with their strategic partners are bound to have shoulders to lean on due to mutual benefits and the need to continue partnering and eventual prosperity.

WhatsApp with clients has not been very helpful to SMEs during pandemics. This is due to the fact WhatsApp is only useful for communication and that there are other alternatives that can be used by the business for the purpose of communication. The internet has made many SMEs reach many customers during lockdown. When movement of people are restricted then it will be easy to use internet to carry out business transactions.

Communicational channels used by SMEs are actually not very effective. Majority of the respondents believed that most of the SMEs have not taken seriously communication systems and that the effectiveness of the communication channels are not effective. Majority of the respondents were of the opinion that mobile technology helps in transaction during pandemics. ICT has improved business of SMEs during pandemics. This can be related to the fact that during Covid-19, the movement of people were restricted and there was lockdown which hindered movement of business people especially small business

enterprises. Correlation analysis was done and the findings produced a spearman correlation value of 0.861 which showed that there is relationship between the two variables (ICT deployment and pandemics).

Respondents indicated that customers were satisfied with the services offered by the SMEs. It was very difficult for the business owners/managers to state that customers are not satisfied with their services. Majority of the SMEs noted that in their businesses, there are mechanisms to address complaints from customers. Handling customer complaints is very crucial in maintain existing customers as well as encouraging potential customers to purchase.

Many of respondents did not agree that there is maintenance of good customer relationship. This could be the case because of the meager resources that many of the SMEs could be having that makes it difficult to have structure on customer relationship management. However, most of the respondents noted that there firms respond to the feedbacks promptly. Resources have been the biggest hindrance for SMEs to put up structures that can strengthen customer relationship management.

The findings on the contrary showed that there is repeat purchase based on customer relationship. This could mean that most of the SMEs are not even aware that they have built a good customer relationship with the buyers prompting repeat purchases. Findings showed that a spearman correlation value of 0.789 was realized which statistically proves the relationship between customer relationship and pandemics. This means that customer relationship has effect on pandemics.

Majority of respondents were of the opinion that shared institutional development is averagely helpful during pandemics. Respondents further were of the opinion that

workforce development makes the staff very versatile during pandemics. Accordingly, the findings showed that financial capacity determines survival during pandemics. Stable SMEs and other firms find it very easy to wade through pandemics since they have stable resources that can take them through during pandemics.

The study found out that partners have not been very helpful in supporting SMEs to increase their capacity building during pandemics. These could be as a result of the cash crunch that was brought about by the pandemics in all sectors to the extent that even the partners are strained financially. Even with little resources available, many of the firms have engaged in some kind of capacity building. The findings showed that most of the businesses stated that capacity building of their organization has made them very resilient during pandemic. Findings finally produced a spearman correlation value of 0.774 which statistically proves the relationship between capacity building and pandemics. It therefore, means that capacity building has significant effect on pandemics in SMEs.

The results showed that wars have not affected the operations of the SMEs in Uasin Gishu County. On the other hand, respondents stated that external relations have an impact on SMEs during pandemics. External relations shows to the world or the outside of who you are and what you are doing in addition to what you are capable of doing. Correspondingly, respondents stated that productivity is affected by changes brought by pandemics. Whenever there is pandemics, the customers are also reduced and so does the output of the organization.

Respondents stated as shown in table 4.10 that diseases affect organizational performance during pandemic. Covid-19 struck everywhere and everybody leaving a lot of destructive strays behind in which in some cases the staff and the SMEs owners were wiped out by the



pandemic. This lead to closure of some enterprises. Finally, majority of the respondents stated that resilience strategies determines organizational resilience of SMEs during pandemics.

### **5.3 Conclusion of the study**

The study concluded based on the findings that strategies for resilience during pandemic are very important in ensuring continuity of the business. In particular, ICT has been the best resilience strategy that has helped many SMEs during crisis like the Covid-19 pandemic. It can further be concluded that even though capacity building has been very important in ensuring that the staff in SMEs get the required knowledge and skills, it has not had a great impact when done during pandemics.

The study further concludes that strategic partner's management has a relationship with pandemics. This makes conclusion that strategic partner's management affect SMEs during pandemics. Organizations that practice strategic partner's management will more likely reduce the impact of pandemic whenever faced with such crisis. In particular, integration and support from stakeholders is very crucial during pandemics.

The study also concludes that customer relationship during pandemics affect the level of output of the organization. The study found out that good relationship with the customers is beneficial to the business especially during hardship and crisis. A lot of emphasis should be channeled towards making sure that the customers are satisfied so that there is repeat purchases. The business should also ensure proper systems are put in place to ensure customer complaints are handled well.

The findings showed that most of the businesses stated that capacity building of their organization has made them very resilient during pandemic. These knowledge and skills

had been acquired prior to the pandemics. It is concluded that capacity building being done in the middle of a pandemic will not give the desired results for the organization. The study also concluded that partners have not been very helpful in supporting SMEs to increase their capacity building during pandemics. Many of the partners are very busy strategizing on how they can wade through the pandemic.

It further concludes that external relations have an impact on SMEs during pandemics. External relations shows to the world or the outside of who you are and what you are doing in addition to what you are capable of doing. Finally, a conclusion is made based on the findings that resilience strategies determines organizational resilience of SMEs during pandemics.

#### **5.4 Recommendations for further studies**

Researcher recommends a strategic response strategy by SMEs during crisis. Study can further be carried on the effect of strategic partners on performance of SMEs during pandemics. Another study could be carried out to determine the factors that determine SMEs performance during pandemics.

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**APPENDIX I: QUESTIONNAIRE**

**Answer the questions with the right answers in the given boxes**

**SECTION A: BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 1. Gender: Male ( ) Female ( )
- 2. Age: 18 – 25 ( ) 26 – 30 ( ) 30-35 ( ) 36 – 40 ( ) 40-45 ( ) 46 & above ( )
- 3. Years of experience with the SMEs?  
1 – 5 ( ) 6 – 10 ( ) 11 – 15 ( ) 16 and above ( )
- 4. The most advanced level of education: Postgrad ( ) Graduate ( ) Diploma ( )  
Secondary ( ) Primary ( )  
others.....
- 5. The years the business has been in operation: 0 – 5 ( ) 6 – 10 ( ) 11 – 15 ( )  
16 and above ( )
- 6. The best resilience strategy that has helped the organization  
Strategic partners’ management ( ) ICT Deployment ( )  
Customer relationship ( ) Capacity building ( )

**SECTION B: STRATEGIC PARTNERS’ MANAGEMENT**

The purpose of this part is to examine the impact of various strategic management actions.

From the below statements, which one best describes your company?

- 5: Very Large Extent      4: Large Extent      3: Moderate Extent      2: Less Extent**
- 1: Not at All**



Statement	1	2	3	4	5
Commitment to integration influences survival during pandemics					
Common goals have improved performance during pandemics					
Open communication is vital for survival during pandemics					
Mutual support from stakeholders makes the organization resilient					
Strategic partnership has improved business during pandemics					

### **SECTION C: ICT DEPLOYMENT**

In your organization, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statement about ICT deployment?

**5:** Very Large Extent   **4:** Large Extent      **3:** Moderate Extent    **2:** Less Extent

**1:** Not at All

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
The use of WhatsApp with clients has helped me during pandemics					
Internet has made me reach many customers during lockdown					
Communicational channels used are very effective					
Mobile technology helps in transaction during pandemics					
ICT has improved business during pandemics					

**SECTION D: CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP**

In your organization, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statement about customer relationship?

**5: Very Large Extent 4: Large Extent 3: Moderate Extent 2: Less Extent**

**1: Not at All**

<b>Statement</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
Customers are satisfied with the services offered					
There are mechanisms to address complaints from customers					
The is maintenance of good customer relationship					
We respond to the to the feedbacks promptly					
There is repeat purchase based on customer relationship					

**SECTION E: CAPACITY BUILDING**

When it comes to capacity building in your company, do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

**5: Very Large Extent 4: Large Extent 3: Moderate Extent 2: Less Extent 1: Not at**

**All**

<b>Statement</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
Shared institutional development is helpful during pandemics					
Workforce development makes the staff very versatile					
Financial capacity determines survival during pandemics					
Partners have helped my organization increase capacity during pandemics					
Capacity building of our organization has made us very resilient					

**SECTION F: ORGANIZATIONAL PANDEMICS**

Which of the following statements about your organizational pandemics do you agree with or disagree with?

**5:** Very Large Extent   **4:** Large Extent      **3:** Moderate Extent   **2:** Less Extent

**1:** Not at All

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
Wars have affected the operations of the SMEs					
External relations have an impact on SMEs during pandemics					
Productivity is affected by changes brought by pandemics.					
Diseases affect organizational performance during pandemic					
Resilience strategies determines organizational resilience during pandemics					

Any other comments:

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END