The toll of Covid-19 on restaurant business and the future in Zimbabwe: Case of Manicaland Province

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ABSTRACT

Covid-19 has wreaked havoc throughout the world across economies and social strati as evident from literature. Numerous employees lost their jobs including many restaurants' workers due to Covid-19. This study sought to investigate the toll of Covid-19 on restaurants business. The country is strategizing towards attaining an upper middle income economy status by year 2030 (Vision 2030) using National Development Strategy 1 (NDS) and the study noted the concerns of restaurant workers and restaurateur towards Vision 2030. Recommendations to keep in line with the dictates of NDS are given from the study. The study followed a case study approach were restaurants in Manicaland Province were used as a representative sample for the whole industry in Zimbabwe. Only Zimbabwe Tourism Authority (ZTA) registered players were considered in this study. Data was collected using questionnaires and SPSS version 21 in conjunction with the R software were used for data analysis. The researchers gathered data from restaurateurs, restaurant workers and key industry stakeholders including ZTA, Hospitality Association of Zimbabwe (HAZ) and Restaurant Association of Zimbabwe (ROAZ). The research results reflected that Covid-19 had impacted negatively on restaurant business in Zimbabwe; worker retrenchments and restaurateurs' bankruptcy. For sustainable restaurant business in the future, the paper recommended the restaurateurs to join the restaurant operators' association for engagement with government.

1. Introduction

The number of extremely poor citizens in Zimbabwe rose to 7.9 million in 2020 exacerbated by the Covid-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic according to the World Bank

economic analysis of the country (World Bank, 2021). Surveys conducted show that nearly five hundred thousand Zimbabwean household have at least one member who lost job, causing many households to fall into poverty and worsening the plight of the existing poor. Covid-19, a highly infectious disease first emerged in Wuhan, China in December 2019 and spread like wild fire worldwide. Within twenty-two months it had killed more than 4.5 million people worldwide with USA topping the death rate with more than 660 thousand deaths (WHO, 2021).

In Zimbabwe Covid-19 had killed more than 4500 people and there have been 126 000 confirmed cases (WHO, 2021). In trying to combat the effects of Covid-19 government implemented lockdowns and World Health Organisation protocols which had devastating effects to business and the tourism and hospitality industry was the hardest hit. International travel drastically declined by 76% (UNWTO, 2021) and in Zimbabwe tourism declined with 76% taking the industry 30 years back to the performance of 1991 and the economy contracted by 10% (ZTA, 2021). Many workers lost their jobs especially in the tourism and hospitality industry and of interest in the study is toll of Covid-19 on restaurateurs and restaurant workers in Zimbabwe. The restaurant business offers food and drink to customers for consumption either onsite or take away. The restaurants vary from small independent operators to large chain group restaurants. The restaurant business is the biggest component of hospitality industry.

The tourism and hospitality industry contributes 6.5% to national GDP and supports in excess of two hundred thousand employees directly (Zhou, 2018) and 13500 employees directly in the restaurant business (Zamchiya, 2021). It is estimated that Covid-19 led to unemployment of more than 2500 workers in restaurant business and more restaurant business are expected to keep reducing workers and some even closing for good if Covid-19 continues with lock down and strict business restrictions.

United Nations World Tourism Organisations (UNWTO), United Nations (UN) and the Zimbabwe government responded to the Covid-19 with economic recovery and stimulus packages directed to tourism and travel industry and other sectors of the economy but the

effects of Covid-19 remained negative with more losing jobs (Government of Zimbabwe, 2020; UNWTO, 2020; UN, 2020; ZCTU, 2021). Loss of jobs in the restaurant industry had a bearing on the attainment of prosperous and empowered upper middle-income society by 2030 “Vision 2030”.

National Development Strategy 1 (2021-2025) (NDS1) strategy outlines the strategies, policies, legal and institutional reforms and the programmes and projects that will be implemented to achieve accelerated, high, inclusive, broad based sustainable economic growth as well as economic transformation and development (Government of Zimbabwe, 2021). NDS1 key success factors include among them the pace of global economy recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic and cross cutting issues of employment creation within the economy.

Tourism is one of the drivers of key interconnected pillars that are aimed at achieving sustainable development. The toll of Covid-19on restaurant workers and restaurateurs has put in part the achievement of Vision 2030 in quandary and future of the restaurant industry requires a plan. The study followed a case study approach to investigate the toll of Covid-19 in Zimbabwe restaurant industry using case study of all restaurants registered in Manicaland Province. Questionnaires were used to collect data from restaurant workers, restaurateurs and industry key stakeholders. The data was analysed quantitatively using SPSS version 21 and R software. The study highlights the impact of Covid-19 on restaurateurs and restaurant workers and strategies to secure the future of restaurateurs and restaurant workers in Zimbabwe and to stimulate attainment of Vision 2030. Lessons can be drawn from the study for improvement of the tourism and hospitality industry and adjustments implemented in review of NDS1.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The study adopted three conceptual frameworks that seem to provide a comprehensive insight of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the restaurant industry, particularly, workers. The concepts recognised as relevant to the study are the restaurant

industry in Zimbabwe, the impact of Covid-19 on restaurant industry and strategies to empower the hospitality industry.

Restaurant Industry in Zimbabwe

Globally, the restaurant industry is a flourishing sector and it is considered a key pillar of the economy due to its capacity to generate revenue and employment (Nugroho, Oktavio, & Kartika, 2019; Woyo & Slabbert, 2021). According to Cali, Ellis & Velde (2008), half of the developing countries' Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is contributed by this services sector. Coupled with an ongoing influx of restaurant businesses in most cities and tourist resort areas (Zimtrade, 2014), the exponential growth of this industry has been leveraged by the virtue that most tourists make use of restaurant services and thereby contributing 6.5% of the country's GDP (Zhou, 2018).

However, this growth has of late been hampered by the current novel coronavirus pandemic and the recession is projected to continue due to emerging different forms of Covid-19 variants (Gossling, Scot & Hall, 2020; World Bank, 2020). Ozili & Arun (2020) and Kartika, Nugroho, & Oktavio (2019) note that hotel operations, namely, restaurants, conferences, seminars and banquets were restricted, leading to severe economic crisis, employee psychological distress compounded by chaos among workers regarding their future employability. Individuals, organisations, societies and nations across the globe were adversely affected (Montani, Leon-Perez, Giorgi, & Shoss, 2020).

Subsequently, the Zimbabwe's economy experienced sustained recession in 2019 and 2020, with GDP estimated to have contracted by -6% and -4% respectively (NDS1). Ramelli & Wagner (2020) reiterate that the world had not experienced an economic crisis as bad as during this current coronavirus pandemic. According to Montani, Leon-Perez, Giorgi & Shoss (2020), economic crisis includes unemployment, financial and job insecurity which ultimately exacerbates employee stress, anxiety, depression, turnover and absenteeism. As such, a number of studies report the amount of researches being conducted on Covid-19 and measures to curtail it (Karsavuran, 2021). However, hardly any study has been done to

establish the toll of this pandemic on restaurant workers and restaurateurs, particularly in Manicaland, a resort province in Zimbabwe.

Corollary to the above, the Zimbabwean restaurant industry is regarded as mature and fragmented to the extent that it runs parallel to the changes in the GDP of the national economy (Porter, 2008; Du Plessis & Saayman, 2017). Chaora (2020) submits that 90% of these businesses are in the informal sector and it is anticipated that restrictions on trading of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) for several months since the end of March 2020 due to coronavirus induced lockdowns disproportionately impacted the productivity of these enterprises including restaurants, cafes, pubs, bars, catering, hotels and camp sites (Gössling, Scott, & Hall, 2020). Restrictions ranged from national lockdowns, forced closures, limits on opening and closing hours to the number of workers reporting for duty (Karsavuran, 2021). Ultimately, these restrictions increased the vulnerability of households, restaurant workers and restaurateurs in Zimbabwe.

Particularly noteworthy in this respect, is that SMEs in Zimbabwe account for 80% to 90% of the country's work-force whilst contributing at least 60% to Zimbabwe's GDP (Magaisa & Matipira, 2017; Medina & Schneider, 2018). The International Trade Centre (2020) cited in Chaora (2020) also notes in its special report on Covid-19 and its impact on SMEs, that one in five SMEs face the possibility of going bankrupt and shutting down completely due to induced Covid-19 lockdowns. Bartik, Cullen, Bertrand, Glaeser, Luca, & Stanton (2020) reiterate that the vulnerability and the probability of survival of restaurant entrepreneurs decreased from 72% to 15% due to the prolonged coronavirus crisis. This paper, therefore, serves as a prelude to literature on the toll of Covid-19 and presents valuable insight for future crises and restaurant workers in Zimbabwe.

Generally, there are three major types of restaurants in Zimbawe, namely, full service, limited service as well as informal restaurant businesses (Stewart, Blisard, Bhuyan, & Nayga, 2004). According to Swimberghe & Wooldridge (2014), limited services are the most common type of restaurants in Zimbabwe, comprising fast food restaurants and coffee shops which usually operate on a take away basis (Freeman, 2007). The common examples

of fast foods are pizzas, chicken and sandwiches (Bender & Bender, 1995). According to Rohman & Pang (2015), apart from beverages, coffee shops, a key example of limited service restaurants also serve as meeting areas where patrons can socialise.

Another common type of restaurant is the full service restaurant business comprising casual, fine and ethnic dining restaurants. Stewart, Blisard, Bhuyan, & Nayga (2004) add that full service restaurant is a sit-down eatery where food is served directly to customers' tables. Lastly, the most common form of restaurant business in Zimbabwe is the informal restaurant. According to Zimtrade (2016), these restaurants in the form of pop up restaurants and food trucks are not formally registered but highly prevalent. Schindler (2015) notes that these businesses operate in street corners, abandoned buildings, residential areas and even open spaces. This study, however, focuses only on restaurants registered by ZTA.

All these three major types of restaurants employ different categories of workers including supervisors and non-supervisory employees, namely, cooks, servers, bartenders, hosts, kitchen assistants, dishwashers who are employed on permanent, temporary or casual employment contracts (Lundberg, Gudmundson, & Anderson, 2009; Dickson & Huyton, 2008). There is, however, relatively low job satisfaction in the restaurant industry (Heimerl, Haid, Benedikt, & Scholl-Grissemann, 2020) culminating to unprecedented worker turnover, mainly as a result of stress, low net earnings as well as work overload due to the rapid growth of this industry (Pranoto, 2011; Arasli & Aric, 2019; Ann & Blum, 2020). Tembo (2020) points out that the novel coronavirus compounded an already bad situation in developing countries, severely affecting the psychological, economic and social health of tourism employees (UN, 2021)

The Impact of Covid-19 on Restaurant Industry

Many companies failed to survive the pressures posed by the coronavirus (Karsavuran, 2021). The infectious disease disrupted economic growth across the globe, particularly the hospitality industry. Like any other businesses in the service sector, Khan, Niazi, Nasir, Hussain, & Khan (2021:2) reiterate that "the hospitality industry is at halt, hotels

and restaurants are not allowed to entertain guests and closed for dine-ins, workers are being retrenched, laid off and the remaining employees are under threat of non-employability."

NDS1 (2020-2025:34) augments that "the tourism industry has been one of the worst-hit sectors by Covid-19 pandemic, with hotels, restaurants and operators experiencing reduced business owing to restrictions on tourism movement during the lockdown period." This all had a direct impact on restaurateurs and restaurant workers' wellbeing (Montani, Leon-Perez, Giorgi, & Shoss, 2020). Khan, Niaz, Nasir, Hussain, & Khan (2021) points out the devastating effects on both workers and restaurateurs are still being felt today. Being the worst-hit industry, a sense of insecurity among workers drastically increased and their perception of being unemployed adversely affected their psychological and social health (Giorgi, Lecca, Alessio, Finstad, Bondanini, & Lulli, 2020).

Gallie (2019) emphasises that this pandemic adversely affects the mental health of people, leading to stress and depression, particularly front line workers. Measures to manage the outbreak and its effects created panic and triggered psychological issues (UN, 2021). In an effort to stem the aggravating effects of the virus, government's lockdowns worsened the situation as fear of job losses (job insecurity) and financial insecurities increased.

Ipso facto, Armstrong-Stassen (2002) defined job insecurity as the fear that one will not be able to retain his/her job and eventually loses it. Prior studies proved that job insecurity leads to serious implications, namely, lack of employee commitment, engagement, increase in psychiatric cases, low job satisfaction and compromised organisational citizenship behaviour (Khan, Niaz, Nasir, Hussain, & Khan, 2021; Giorgi, Lecca, Alessio, Finstad, Bondanini, & Lulli, 2020). Stress Theory (1960) augments that individuals handle stress in varied ways, thus workers tend to panic because of the fear of losing their employment, and being non-employable. Employability is the set of working skills that would help employees to find a new job (Aneshensel, 1992).

Similarly, the Uncertainty Management Theory (1987) cited in Giorgi, Lecca, Alessio, Finstad, Bondanini & Lulli (2020) reiterates that perceived non-employability by employees during uncertain times result in workers becoming sensitive and vulnerable. This thought of not getting another job adversely impacts the psychological health of workers leading to health related problems such as depression and even self-harm (Montani, Leon-Perez, Giorgi, & Shoss, 2020).

According to Lundberg, Gudmundson, & Anderson (2009), Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (1959) adds that job security is one of the hygiene factors or dissatisfies that do not yield positive satisfaction in the long run but their absence leads to disengagement and dissatisfaction. This assumes that lack of job security (hygiene factors) results in dissatisfied employees, who can perform less and likely to leave an organization (Giorgi, Lecca, Alessio, Finstad, Bondanini, & Lulli, 2020).

Moreover, empirical studies showcase the effects of Covid-19 pandemic on restaurateurs, restaurant establishments/workplaces, work itself as well as workers (Gorgenyi-Hegyes, Eva, Nathan & Fekete, 2021). Karsavuran (2021) points out that workplaces are being redesigned, work is being reimagined in response to the current health challenge impacting businesses world over. For instance, it can be clearly seen that organisations especially from service sector such as technology, financial and legal sectors remained productive during this Covid-19 period as they redesigned their jobs to allow employees to work from home, that is, teleworking (Li, Tang, Ma, Zhang & Zhang, 2021).

This is in line with the Flexibility Model (1987) which states that organisations require increased plasticity in a fluctuating, unpredictable, volatile and uncertain business environment by promoting flexible work schedules (Guest, 2017). The Model recommends the use of different forms of flexibility (that is, teleworking, distancing, financial, numerical and labour market) to optimise the use of the firm's valuable human resources in times of uncertainties. Particularly noteworthy in this respect, is teleworking which is an arrangement in which an organisation offers its employees an opportunity to work from home (Belzunegui-Eraso & Erro-Garcés, 2020).

However, this is currently not the case in the restaurant industry as the nature of business disallows the transition to home office (Nguyen, 2021). Guest (2017) also argues that flexibilities in firms can only be achieved if workers display high commitment, engagement, trust and high levels of intrinsic motivation. Restaurants are presently incapable of meeting these conditions (Belzunegui-Eraso & Erro-Garcés, 2020).

Employees in this industry are thus directly affected as restaurant firms continue cutting labour costs by firing, laying off and retrenching employees (Montani, Leon-Perez, Giorgi, & Shoss, 2020). The pandemic resulted in widespread job losses and substantial reductions of income for employees as hundreds and thousands jobs were made redundant (Karsavuran, 2021). Of those still employed in the industry, Covid-19 had an impact on weekly hours worked (Li, Zhang, & Wang, 2021). Ultimately, this triggered a sense of job insecurity and employability among employees.

Review of literature, therefore, provides evidence that shows a negative relationship between perceived job security and employability (Gorgenyi-Hegyes, Nathan, & Fekete-Farkas, 2021; Giorgi, Lecca, Alessio, Finstad, Bondanini, & Lulli, 2020). However, the present research seeks to address a dearth in literature on the effects of Covid-19 on businesses in Zimbabwe, specifically focusing on establishing the toll of Covid-19 on restaurant workers in Manicaland Province, Zimbabwe.

Strategies to Empower the Hospitality Industry

Sustainable socio-economic growth has become a topical issue of policy decision making (UN, 2021) both at global and national level and in particular, the service sector in Zimbabwe - NDS1 (Government of Zimbabwe, 2021). Nevertheless, according to NDS1, national economic growth in the hospitality industry is enhanced through prioritising employee health and wellbeing issues. Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3 also reiterates the need for good health condition and wellbeing of the population and this is indirectly connected to SDG 8 which advocates for decent work and economic growth, through healthy, satisfied, loyal and engaged workforce (Stoian, Monterroso, & Current,

2019). Strategies to absorb the external shock caused by Covid-19 and any other related infectious diseases are therefore urgently required to empower and safeguard the future of the hospitality industry.

While pursuing the 'new normal', efforts to avoid consuming dine-in services are being made to minimise risk and uncertainty caused by physical contact with potentially infected customers and workers. This strategy concurs with the Uncertainty Reduction Theory (Berger & Calabrese, 1975) which states that due to uncertainty about safety and fear of infection, customers are reluctant to dine out and instead try to engage in alternatives to reduce risk uncertainty. Pressman, Naidu, & Clemens (2020) augment that contactless services (increased delivery services) are being championed to safeguard health safety throughout the food consumption process.

Luan (2020) cited in Kim, Kim, & Wang (2021) recommends that restaurateurs can only maximise these new opportunities and consumption patterns by extensively investing in customer risk reduction strategies that also in turn help to future external shocks induced by such related pandemics. Restaurants are also allowed to remain open for take away as an alternative for customers (Bartik, Cullen, Bertrand, Glaeser, Luca, & Stanton, 2020). While this is key in mitigating the spread of the infectious disease, few restaurant workers are needed to serve the decreased customer base, directly affecting employment in restaurants and other related businesses (Kim, Kim, & Wang, 2021).

Protecting workers in the workplace to minimise the direct effects of the corona virus is a necessity within an organization (Montani, Leon-Perez, Giorgi, & Shoss, 2020; Nzonzo & du Plessis, 2020; Kim, Kim, & Wang, 2021). As such, several studies are being conducted on mitigating the deadly effects of Covid-19. As guided by the WHO standards, the Government of Zimbabwe took a plethora of steps to counter the effects of the pandemic, including extensive awareness about the virus, information about precautionary measures, lockdowns and vaccination of its population.

In its endeavour to promote occupational health, the World Health Organisation (WHO) emphasises that it is not only the work that affects the physical and mental health of

workers but also the health of workers affects the business and its performance (Pressman, Naidu, & Clemens, 2020; Karsavuran, 2021). Given that restaurants were allowed to operate on 'take away' basis, all frontline workers, including restaurant workers were mandated to be vaccinated against this infectious disease (UN, 2021). The Ministry of Health and Child Care (2020; 2021) also made calls for compulsory Covid-19 temperature tests, wearing masks, social distancing, self-isolation and other necessary self-preventative measures were recommended. This ensures a sense of security on employees throughout the organization (WHO, 2020).

The employer's effort to promote workplace health and wellbeing has greatly impacted employee's wellbeing, satisfaction, loyalty to the employer and organisational citizenship behaviour (Gorgenyi-Hegyes, Nathan, & Fekete-Farkas, 2021; Nzonzo & Du Plessis, 2020). A healthy employee can turn into an engaged employee and subsequently lower labour turnover, enhanced employee productivity and restaurant's competitiveness. Kim, Kim, & Wang, (2021) maintain that the risk induced by Covid-19 and the extent to which workers contract the deadly virus is very high in restaurants.

It is against this backdrop that the GoZ and restaurateurs in particular are calling for distinctive behavioural changes such as self-preventive practices, for example social distancing, which is deemed vital in flattening the infection curve in restaurant businesses. Even though restaurants were exempted to operate as essential services, authorities from the Ministry of Health and Child Care (2020, 2021) also recommended to maintain a space of at least 1 meter in restaurants.

However, such practice resulted in limited restaurants' operational capacity and ultimately compromised financial performance, directly affecting the capacity of restaurateurs to hire new staff and maintain the existing staffs' complements (Chaora, 2020). Resultantly, perceived sense of job insecurity as well as non-employability emerged as key determinants of compromised mental wellbeing of restaurant workers (Kim, Kim, & Wang, 2021; Karsavuran, 2021; Giorgi, 2020). Mental health of restaurant workers cannot be ignored

because it directly affects the performance of organisations, that is, service delivery in service sector.

Research Objectives and Hypotheses

The main objective of the study was to establish the toll of Covid-19 on restaurant business in Manicaland Province in Zimbabwe. It is important to note that the hypotheses were framed guided by the key concepts in the research and also screwed on research data collection instrument used (Questionnaire). The research successfully managed to test and proved hypotheses using structural equation modelling. The following hypotheses were generated linking concepts in the research:

H_1: There is a significant relationship between Restaurant establishment (Rst) and Business Actions (BUS).

H_2: There is a significant relationship between Restaurateurs (Rs) and Business Actions (BUS).

H_3: There is a significant relationship between Restaurateurs (Rs) and Workers (R_W) and Business Actions (BUS).

H_4: There is a significant relationship between Restaurant establishment (Rst) and Workers Actions (W_A).

H_5: There is a significant relationship between Restaurateurs (Rs) and Workers Actions (W_A).

H_6: There is a significant relationship between Restaurateurs and Workers (R_W) and Workers Actions (W_A).

H_7: Perceived job insecurity has a significant negative impact on restaurant workers' psychological health in Manicaland Province in Zimbabwe.

H_8: Covid-19 has a significant negative impact on service delivery of restaurants in Manicaland Province in Zimbabwe.

From the studies presented above, it can be noted that there is a deficiency of research on the nexus between Covid-19 and its impact on the hospitality industry, particularly in the Zimbabwean context. While, there exist vast studies related to the current research, the findings are difficult to generalise in the Zimbabwean setting specifically in the face of Covid-19 pandemic which brought about a paradigm shift in restaurant operations. Moreover, the above previous studies were conducted in external dominions possessing dissimilar demographic, social, political, economic and legal trends. As such, this study sought to establish the toll of Covid-19 on restaurant workers and restaurateurs in Manicaland Province in Zimbabwe.

3. METHODOLOGY

A positivist research design was followed as found in natural sciences which seek to test the validity and reliability of data and certain occurrences which can be quantified to comprehend differences among humans in their role as societal actors (Saunders, Thornhill, & Bristow, 2019.). Across Manicaland Province, in Zimbabwe, there is a population of 76 restaurants and 702 workers employed by the restaurants.

The study used quantitative data collected from 81 fully completed questionnaires with responses from 7 key industry stakeholders, 16 restaurateurs and 58 workers. Workers were randomly selected while restaurateurs and industry stakeholders (Zimbabwe Tourism Authority, Restaurant Operators and Tourism Business Council representatives) were purposively selected. Saunders, Thornhill and Bristow (2019) argue that more than 10 percent of a population can be a good sample representative when the data is difficult to get due to circumstances and more than ten percent of workers were considered in the study and all key stakeholders were considered due to their importance in the study and only 7 restaurateurs were accessible and willing to take part in the study. The bulk of the questionnaires was circulated via email due to Covid-19 lockdowns which restricted travel outside districts while some were administered in person to participants in the city of Mutare.

Apart from convenience, Manicaland Province was chosen since it is one of the biggest provinces of Zimbabwe, hosting the third biggest city in the country and gateway to bordering Mozambique, notwithstanding the fact that all other smaller towns dotted around the province are resort destinations (Chimanimani, Nyanga, Chipinge, Rusape) which imply rich restaurant business in the province.

A total of 100 questionnaires were administered through email and also in person to a purposively chosen sample of restaurateurs, hotel workers and other key stakeholders in the hotel industry. Only 81 questionnaires were considered for data analysis after some questionnaires were not returned and others were disregarded as they were less than 50% completed. Questionnaires were pre-coded and post-coded for input into the statistical applications. Data were analyzed using the IBM SPSS Statistics Version 21 and R software to gain a deeper understanding of the data overcoming IBM SPSS Statistics Version 21. Questionnaires were pre-coded and post-coded for input into the statistical applications. With the use of IBM SPSS Statistics Version 21, the researcher can properly analyze the activities and views of people in an analytical method (Gogoi, 2020).

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results were shown and discussed as descriptive statistics, frequency tables and inferential statistics in order to provide insights into the set research objectives.

An Analysis by Gender, Age, Qualification, Designation of Respondent and Location of Restaurants

Out of 81 respondents surveyed, 52 (64.2 %) were females whilst 29 (35.8%) were males. A frequency distribution by age group revealed that the majority of respondents came from the age groups 21-30 years (46.9%). A frequency distribution by qualification of respondents revealed that the majority of respondents surveyed are high school holders (38.4%) and diploma holders (33.3%) with a cumulative figure of 71.6%, whilst a cumulative

percentage figure of 28.6% are degree and postgraduate degree holders. A frequency analysis by designation of respondents revealed that the majority of respondents were workers (69.1%), whilst 19.8% were restaurateurs and lastly 8.6% were classified as key industry stakeholders. A demographic distribution by location of restaurant revealed that the majority of them are situated in the Mutare urban (46.9%), Nyanga (9.9%) and Vumba area (8.9%). Table 1 shows the demographic distribution by age, gender, qualifications, designation of respondents and location of restaurants.

Table 1. Demographic Distribution by Age, Gender, Qualifications, Designation of Respondents and Location of Restaurants

Age		**Frequency**	**Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
Valid	20 years and below	12	14.8	14.8
	21-30 years	38	46.9	61.7
	31-40 years	16	19.8	81.5
	41-50 years	12	14.8	96.3
	51 and above	3	3.7	100.0
	Total	**81**	**100.0**	
Gender		**Frequency**	**Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
Valid	Male	29	35.8	35.8
	Female	52	64.2	100.0
	Total	**81**	**100.0**	
Qualifications		**Frequency**	**Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
Valid	High School	31	38.3	38.3
	Diploma	27	33.3	71.6
	Bachelor degree	18	22.2	93.8
	Postgraduate degree	5	6.2	100.0
	Total	**81**	**100.0**	
Designation		**Frequency**	**Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
Valid	Restaurateur	16	19.8	19.8
	Worker	58	71.6	91.4
	Key industry stakeholder	7	8.6	100.0
	Total	**81**	**100.0**	

The demographic distributions of results also reveal that participation in hotel and restaurant activities cuts across gender and nearly all age groups. The majority of employees in the restaurants are between the ages of 21-30 years (46.9%) and majority of the employees are female (64.2%). Demographic distribution of results reveal that majority of participants in the restaurants business are only high school level educated (38.3%) and those with post graduate studies are very few (6.2%). 71.6 of the study participants were the workers.

The results confirm to other studies from international and regional surveys which also indicated that restaurants employ averagely young and middle aged workers with low educational qualifications as founded by Elkhwesky, Salem and Barakat (2018) and Kruger, Wessels and Saayman (2014) importance of age diversity management practices. Table 2 shows demographic distribution by location of restaurants.

Table 2. Demographic Distribution by Location of Restaurants

Location of Restaurants		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Birchenough	4	4.9	4.9
	Chimanimani	5	6.2	11.1
	Chipinge	3	3.7	14.8
	Hot Springs	4	4.9	19.8
	La Rochelle	1	1.2	21.0
	Mutare	40	49.4	67.9
	Musangano	1	1.2	69.1
	Nyanga	8	9.9	79.0
	Penhalonga	3	3.7	82.7
	Rusape	5	6.2	88.9
	Vhumba	7	8.6	100
	Total	**81**	**100.0**	

A demographic distribution of location of hotels and restaurants has revealed that they are nearly across all districts of Manicaland Province though the majorities are based in Mutare urban (49.4%) and other nearer areas such as Nyanga, Vhumba, Chimanimani, Hot Springs and Birchenough areas. The location is attributed mainly because of vicinity to most tourists' sites in Eastern Highlands, close to provincial city and centrality to other areas of potential visited areas.

Impact of Covid-19 on Restaurant Operations and Employment.

Analysis of Multiple Response question analysis on description of restaurant business was performed. A frequency analysis of the best description of business to the respondents allowed respondents to tick all that applied. The study results revealed that the majority of the respondents are into hotel or lodging restaurant business (40.7%) and quick service and fast casual restaurant business (33.3%). The two groups yield a cumulative

percentage contribution of 74%. Table 3 shows multiple response frequencies on description of restaurant businesses.

Table 3. Multiple Response Frequencies on Designation of Business

Restaurant Business Description	Responses		Percent of Cases
	N	Percent	
Fine dining full restaurant service	12	13.0%	14.8%
Casual dining full restaurant service	17	18.5%	21.0%
Quick service and fast casual restaurant	27	29.3%	33.3%
Hotel or lodging restaurant	33	35.9%	40.7%
Other specify	3	3.3%	3.7%
Total	**92**	**100.0%**	**113.6%**

Retrenchment Statistics

On the number of workers who were retrenched it is observed that about 59 of them were reported as having been affected. The number above is based on the figures given by the respondents, it could actually be more given that some restaurants could have been left out or respondents surveyed may have failed to recall accurately such numbers. The numbers reveal that some were greatly affected as hotel and restaurant owners responded to the Covid-19 induced shock changes. The results reflect towards the report presented by the Zimbabwe Restaurant Operators Association estimating that more than 2500 workers were left jobless due to Covid-19 in the restaurant industry (Zamchiya, 2021). Table 4 below shows frequency responses on action taken by restaurateurs towards workers' retrenchment and its ultimate impact on workers in response to Covid-19 pandemic.

Table 4. Statistics on Action Taken by Restaurateurs towards Workers Retrenchment

	Frequency responses: Agree to Strongly agree	
Observed Variable	**Number**	**Percentage**
Restaurateurs decreased retrenchment	24	29.6
Restaurateurs increased retrenchments	26	35.1
Restaurant workers positively affected	56	69.1
Restaurant workers negatively affected	8	9.9
	Frequency responses: Disagree to Strongly disagree	
Restaurateurs decreased retrenchment	55	67.9
Restaurateurs increased retrenchments	51	63
Restaurant workers positively affected	16	19.8
Restaurant workers negatively affected	68	84.0

General Actions Taken by Restaurant Establishments and Restaurateurs in Response to Covid-19 Pandemic

An analysis was done on actions taken by restaurant establishment, restaurateurs in response to Covid-19 pandemic. Majority of the respondents agree that restaurant establishments temporarily closed with plans to reopen (69.1%) as shown in table 5 below. In the same study on actions taken by restaurant establishments it was noted that majority of respondents disagree that restaurant establishments continued operating with few workers (67.9%) and also disagreed that restaurant establishments continued operations but retrenched employees (63%).

Table 5. General Actions Taken by Restaurant Establishments in Response to Covid-19 Pandemic

	Frequency responses: Agree to Strongly agree	
Observed Variable	**Number**	**Percentage**
Continued operation with take out or delivery only	24	29.6
Continued operation with essential staff or vulnerable population only	26	35.1
Temporarily closed and have reopening plans	56	69.1
Permanently closed and no reopening plans	8	9.9
	Frequency responses: Disagree to Strongly disagree	
Continued operation with take out or delivery only	55	67.9
Continued operation with essential staff or vulnerable population only	51	63
Temporarily closed and have reopening plans	16	19.8
Permanently closed and no reopening plans	68	84.0

Statistical analysis on actions taken by restaurateurs in response to Covid-19 pandemic revealed that a couple discontinued operations and opted for retrenchment (50.6%), majority continued operating with full time workers having retrenched temporary and casual workers (66.7%), a handful temporarily closed and put workers on unpaid leave (55.6%), a few others temporarily closed doors with workers on full pay (78.8%) and last minority category permanently closed (84%). In summary it shows that restaurateurs were not entirely in agreement to such actions but were in between. On the questions of whether restaurateurs increased/decreased retrenchments and on whether workers were positively/negatively affected it produced mixed responses. The study revealed that that a

majority of respondents disagree that restaurateurs decreased retrenchments (67.9%) and in the same study it was revealed that majority of restaurateurs increased retrenchments on workers (63%).

Respondents also varied on their responses on whether workers were positively or negatively affected by the pandemic, with a majority agreeing that restaurant workers were positively affected (69.1%), on the other hand 84% of the respondents disagree that restaurant workers were negatively affected. The results showed that the actions taken by restaurant establishments and restaurateurs in response to Covid-19 pandemic are the same with those taken by restaurants elsewhere as also highlighted by Khan, Niaz, Nasir, Hussain. & Khan (2021), and Giorgi, et al., (2020). Table 6 shows frequency of responses on action taken by restaurateurs in response to Covid-19 Pandemic.

Table 6. Frequency of Responses on Action Taken by Restaurateurs in Response to Covid-19 Pandemic

	Frequency responses: Agree to Strongly agree	
Observed variable	**Number**	**Percentage**
Continued operation with few workers only	37	45.7
Continued operation but retrenched employees	31	38.3
Continued operation only retrenched temporary and casual employees	21	25.9
Tempoarirly closed and put workers on unpaid leave	31	38.3
Temporarily closed and workers on full pay	29	35.8
Permanently closed (no reopening plans and employees given packages)	8	9.8
	Frequency responses: Disagree to Strongly disagree	
Continued operation with few workers only	50	49.4
Continued operation but retrenched employees	41	50.6
Continued operation only retrenched temporary and casual employees	54	66.7
Temporarily closed and put workers on unpaid leave	45	55.6
Temporarily closed and workers on full pay	71	78.9
Permanently closed (no reopening plans and employees given packages)	68	84

Frequency Analysis on Strategies to Deal with Impact Posed by Pandemic on Restaurateurs and Restaurant Workers

A frequency analysis on measures taken by business to deal with Covid-19 pandemic revealed that the majority of respondents were in agreement to measures in question. Of the

respondents' majority closed some restaurant sections (65.4%), retrenched some staff (71.6%), cut down salaries (69.1%). Increased sanitation (93.8%), checked employee temperature at start of shift (92.6%), checked guest temperature at check in (92.6%). Adopting and adhering to measures these strategies reveals that majority of restaurant owners wanted to remain in business as much as possible besides conforming to laid out standards enforced by World Health Organization (W.H.O) and the government. In the same study majority of restaurant workers responded that they wore protective clothing such as gloves and masks (96.3%) and adhered to Covid-19 health protocols at work (95.1%). It is interesting to observe that about 47% of the respondents of the workers started business to supplement income. Table 7 shows frequency of responses of measures taken by business in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Table 7. Frequency of Responses of Measures Taken by Business in Response to Covid-19 Pandemic

	Frequency responses: Agree to Strongly agree	
Observed variable	**Number**	**Percentage**
Closed some restaurant sections	53	65.4
Retrenched some staff	58	71.6
Cut down salaries	56	69.1
Increased sanitation	76	93.8
Provided gloves and masks	76	93.8
Checking employee temp at start of shift	75	92.6
Checking guests temp at check in	75	92.6
Change physical layout to promote physical distancing	77	95.1
Online ordering	60	74.1
Phone ordering	60	74.1
Door to door food deliveries	46	56.8
Partnering with other business eg grocery retail	40	49.4
Vaccinating all workers against Covid-19	71	87.7
	Frequency responses: Disagree to Strongly disagree	
Closed some restaurants sections	24	29.6
Retrenched some staff	18	22.2
Cut down salaries	21	25.9
Online ordering	17	21.0
Door to door deliveries	31	38.3
Partnering with other businesses	30	37.0

The respondents agree to strongly agree to vaccinate all workers against Covid-19 in line with Government of Zimbabwe and World Health Organisations requirements for the

restaurants to operate (UN, 2020). Respondents also disagree to strongly disagree to have embarked on online ordering and door to deliveries showed lack of innovation by some restaurant businesses in Zimbabwe.

Table 8. Frequency of Responses on Action Taken by Restaurant Workers Establishments in Response to Covid-19 Pandemic

	Frequency responses: Agree to Strongly agree	
Observed Variable	**Number**	**Percentage**
Took unpaid leave	32	39.5
Started other business to supplement income	38	46.9
Negotiated for salary cut to remain on job	27	33.3
Wear protective clothes at work	78	96.3
Adhered to Covid-19 health protocols at work	77	95.1
	Frequency responses: Disagree to Strongly disagree	
Took unpaid leave	37	45.7
Started other business to supplement income	25	30.9
Negotiated for salary cut to remain on job	44	54.3

Workers adhered to Covid-19 health protocols and wear protective clothes at work. Fear and job insecurity among restaurant workers increased as some negotiated for salary cut to remain on job and 46.9% started other business to supplement income. Workers were working less hours and days per week during the volatile and uncertain business environment as noted by Guest (2017) thus flexible work schedules permitted the workers to engage on business to supplement income.

Structural Equation Modeling

The Structural Equation Model (SEM) analysis was done in R4.0.3 for sections B (Impact of Covid-19 on restaurant operations and workers) and C (Strategies to deal with the impact posed by Covid-19 on restaurateurs and restaurant workers) of the questionnaire questions. The structural equation modeling consists of the measurement model and the structural model.

The toll of Covid-19 on restaurant workers and the future in Zimbabwe has five constructs namely Restaurant Establishment (Rst), Restaurateurs (Rs), Restaurateurs and Workers (R_W), Business Actions (BUS) and Workers Action (W_A). The initial

hypothesised model hypothesise that both the first three factors; Restaurant establishment, Restaurateurs, and Workers influence Business Actions and Workers Actions. The initial hypothesised model has five constructs with four, six, four, thirteen and five observed variables respectively;

H_1: There is a significant relationship between Restaurant establishment and Business Actions.

H_2: There is a significant relationship between Restaurateurs and Business Actions.

H_3: There is a significant relationship between Restaurateurs and Workers (R_W) and Business Actions.

H_4: There is a significant relationship between Restaurant establishment and Workers Actions.

H_5: There is a significant relationship between Restaurateurs and Workers Actions.

H_6: There is a significant relationship between Restaurateurs and Workers (R_W) and Workers Actions.

The Measurement Model for the Initial Hypothesized Model

An analysis of the measurement model mostly focuses on the loadings/correlations between the latent variables and observed (manifest) variables. The analysis will also take a possible look at model refinement through removal of manifest variables that cross-load with other latent variables (a variable cross loads with another latent variable if its loading is less than another factor it does not belong to). Such variables need to be dropped. It can therefore be concluded from the outer model that the latent variable restaurateur variable has observable variables with higher loadings. It important to however, note that that the construct Workers Actions has the smallest observed factor loadings and may have contributed to the moderate fit model. Table 9 shows summary measurement for the measurement model.

Table 9: Summary Measurement for the Measurement Model

Observed Variable	Estimate	p-value	Std.lv	Std.all
Q7a	1.297	0.00	1.297	0.845
Q7b	1.261	0.00	1.261	0.836
Q7c	-0.552	0.00	-0.552	-0.4515
Q7d	02.93	0.00	02.93	0.27
Q8a	1.430	0.00	1.430	0.925
Q8b	1.122	0.00	1.122	0.795
Q8c	0.932	0.00	0.932	0.685
Q8d	-0.489	0.005	-0.489	-0.315
Q8e	-0.314	0.075	-0.314	-0.204
Q8f	0.151	0.229	0.151	0.139
Q10a	0.487	0.00	0.487	0.595
Q10b	-0.673	0.00	-0.673	-0.663
Q10c	0.967	0.00	0.967	0.839
Q10d	-0.637	0.00	-0.637	-0.729
Q12d	0.317	0.00	0.317	0.496
Q12e	0.368	0.00	0.368	0.724
Q12f	0.441	0.00	0.441	0.751
Q12g	0.430	0.00	0.430	0.772
Q12h	0.487	0.00	0.487	0.876
Q12i	0.519	0.00	0.519	0.487
Q12j	0.381	0.00	0.381	0.359
Q12m	0.314	0.00	0.314	0.417

The Structural Model for Initial Hypothesized Model

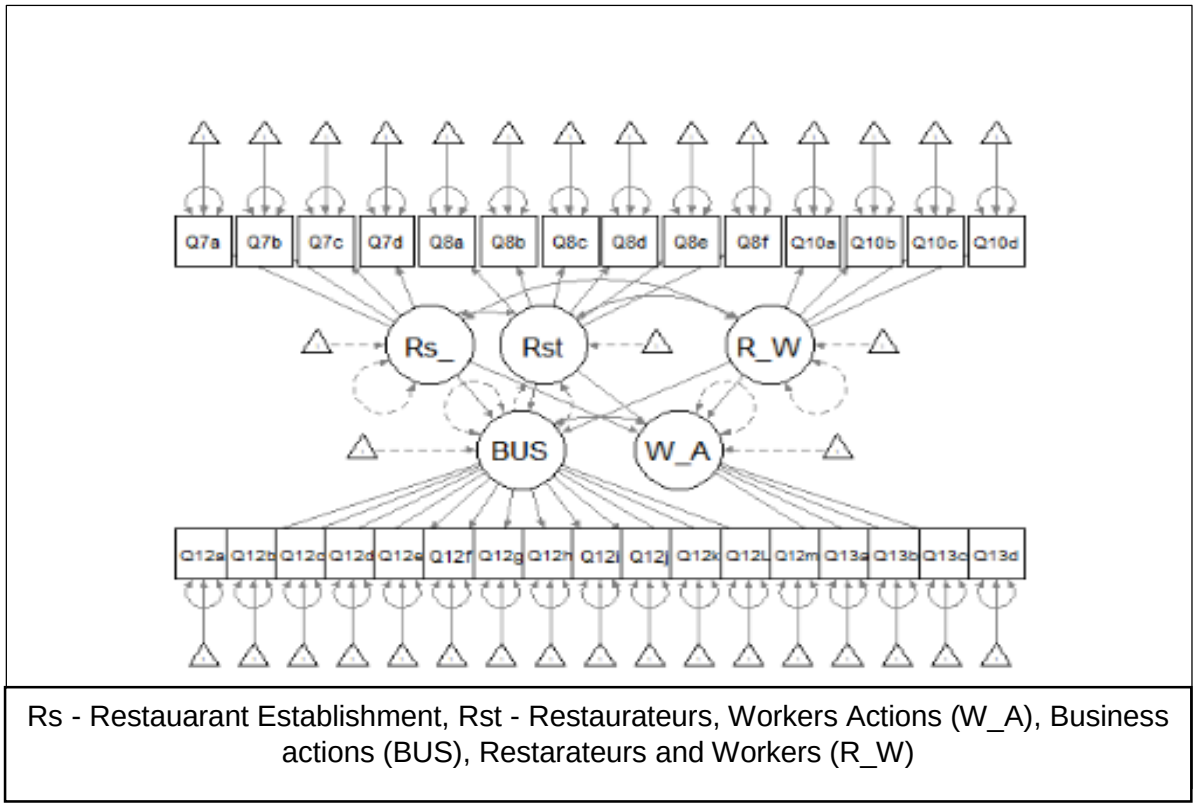
The structural (inner) model is meant to test the relationships between the latent variables**.** Basically there are six hypotheses to test for each of the three latent variables having an influence on Business Actions and Workers Actions. A statistically significant relationship (either positive or negative) exists if there is a high coefficient between two latent variables and the p-value is <0.05 at 5% level of significance.

From the structural model analysis only Restaurateurs and Workers Latent have a negative and significance influence on Business Actions where parameter is -0.457 and p-value=0.005 <0.05. A negative value indicates that Restaurateurs and Workers combined have a negative impact on business actions. The failure by Restaurateurs or Workers latent variables alone to have an influence on Business Actions implies that the response of business actions in response to Covid-19 pandemic is dual. As pointed in the measurement model the possible source of moderate factor loading could probably be from the workers latent variable. It needs to be dropped from the analysis and subsequent structural relationship thereby be dropped also.

In summary on Business Actions as Dependent Latent variable the hypotheses H1 and H2 are rejected since p-values are more than 0.05 at 5% level of significance. Only H3 is accepted at 5% level of significance since p-value<0.05. Though the H1 and H2 are rejected at 5% level of significance, they are acceptable at 10% level implying that Restaurant establishment and Restaurateurs partially influence Business Actions in response to Covid-19 pandemic. The hypothesis H4-H6 are rejected at 5% level of significance since p-values are all more than 0.05. This shows that each of the constructs has no influence on workers' actions individually or in their combined form. Table 10 show the structural model for initial hypothesised model.

Table 10. Structural Model for Initial Hypothesized Model

	Estimate	Standard Error	p-Value	Significance (Yes/No)
Restaurant_est → Bsiness_Action	0.883	0.526	0.093	No
Restaurateur → Business Action	-0.960	0.513	0.061	No
Rest_Work → Business Action	-0.548	0.195	0.005	Yes
Restaurant_est → Workers Action	-0.664	0.542	0.220	No
Restaurateur → Workers Action	0.649	0.527	0.218	No
Rest_Work → Workers Action	0.321	0.237	0.175	No



Rs - Restauarant Establishment, Rst - Restaurateurs, Workers Actions (W_A), Business actions (BUS), Restarateurs and Workers (R_W)

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of Initial Hypothesized Model

Modified Model Analysis

The initial hypothesized model found out that some observed variables had factor loadings which were very small. Consequently, observed variables with small coefficients of less than 0.4 in magnitude were dropped in the modified model framework. The hypotheses to be tested are reduced since the construct Workers Actions has been dropped because of low factor loadings. Only the first three hypotheses are tested. On the measurement model (outer model) the factor loadings are high and significant at 5% since the p-values are less than 0.05.

From the structural model analysis only Restaurateurs and Workers Latent have a negative and significance influence on Business Actions where parameter is -0.478 and p-value=0.009 <0.05. A negative value indicates that Restaurateurs and Workers combined have a negative impact on business actions. The failure by Restaurateurs or Workers latent variables alone to have an influence on Business Actions implies that the response of business actions in response to Covid-19 pandemic is dual. In summary on Business Actions as Dependent Latent variable the hypotheses H1 and H2 are rejected since p-values are more than 0.05 at 5% level of significance. Only H3 is accepted at 5% level of significance since p-value<0.05. Though the H2 is rejected at 5% level of significance, it is acceptable at 10% level implying that Restaurateurs partially influence Business Actions in response to Covid-19 pandemic.

H_1: There is a significant relationship between Restaurant establishment and Business Actions.

H_2: There is a significant relationship between Restaurateurs and Business Actions.

H_3: There is a significant relationship between Restaurant establishment and Workers and Business Actions.

Table 11. Summary Measurement for the Measurement Model

Observed Variable	Estimate	p-value	Std.lv	Std.all
Q7a	1.30	0.00	1.30	0.847
Q7b	1.229	0.00	1.229	0.815
Q7c	-0.558	0.00	-0.558	-0.420
Q8a	1.403	0.00	1.403	0.847

Observed Variable	Estimate	p-value	Std.lv	Std.all
Q8b	1.129	0.00	1.129	0.815
Q8c	0.964	0.00	0.964	0.708
Q10a	0.481	0.00	0.481	0.588
Q10b	-0.674	0.00	-0.674	-0.664
Q10c	0.960	0.00	0.960	0.839
Q10d	-0.642	0.00	-0.642	-0.734
Q12d	0.310	0.00	0.310	0.498
Q12e	0.354	0.00	0.354	0.714
Q12f	0.429	0.00	0.429	0.781
Q12g	0.424	0.00	0.424	0.783
Q12h	0.478	0.00	0.478	0.883
Q12i	0.487	0.00	0.487	0.410
Q12j	0.357	0.004	0.357	0.345
Q12m	0.310	0.00	0.310	0.423

Table 12. Structural Model of the Modified Model

	Estimate	Standard Error	p-Value	Signifcance (Yes/No)
Restaurant_est → Business Action	1.158	0.737	0.116	No
Restaurateur → Business Action	-1.205	0.720	0.094	No
Rest_Work → Business Action	-0.589	0.227	0.009	Yes

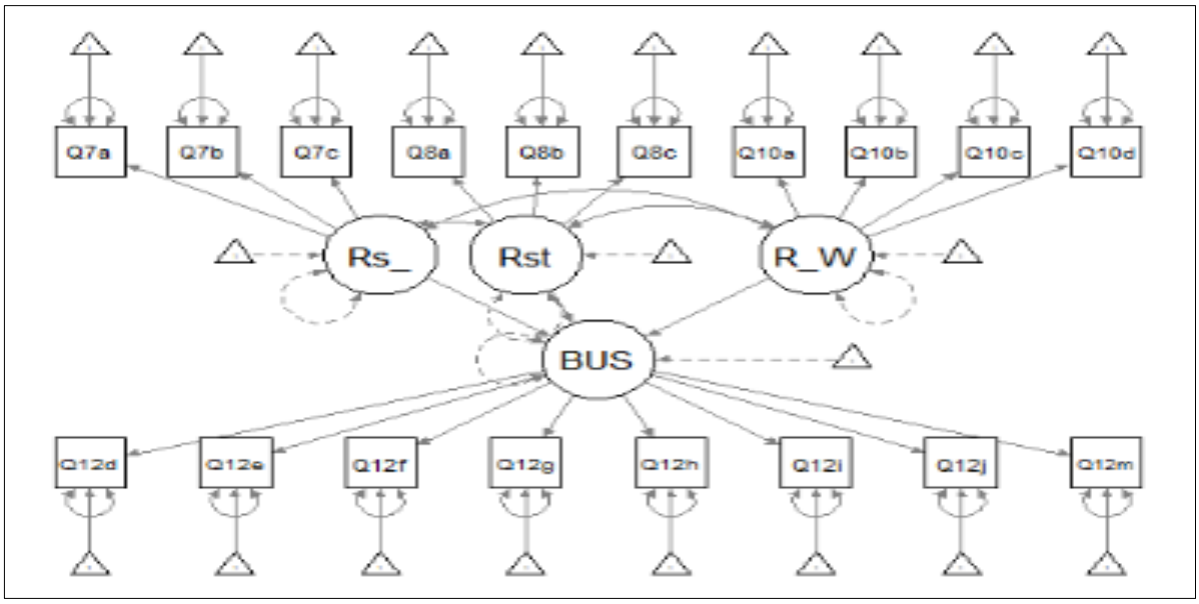


Figure 2. Conceptual Framework of Modified Hypothesized Model

5. CONCLUSION

The research results reflected that Covid-19 had impacted negatively on restaurant business in Zimbabwe; worker retrenchments, restaurateurs' bankruptcy and ultimately

erosion to national GDP. Restaurants adhered to Covid-19 WHO protocols in order to sustain their operations including mandatory vaccination of workers. From the structural modeling analysis, stakeholder actions showed that only restaurateurs and workers have a negative and significant influence on business actions. However, all the variables have a direct and indirect impact in the restaurant business at different significance levels.

For realisation of Vision 2030 guided by NDS1 implementation the study recommends formalisation of restaurant business as majority of them are informal and are small to medium enterprises. When the restaurants are formal they can access industry specific government Covid-19 financial recovery packages on offer. Through the Restaurant Operators Association of Zimbabwe, if the restaurants are formal they can add their voice in the formulation, implementation and review of National Development Strategy.

The Covid-19 pandemic presented a new normal placing demands restaurateurs to redesign, rethink and reinvigorate their operations to adapt to the changing business face. How do they achieve this? Other have taken their products to the customer's door step (home delivery), reengineering of machine layout and flow to reduce human interaction, online business and reduced dining capacity among other strategies. Restaurateurs need to seriously consider employment insurance to cater for their workers as hedging against such other unforeseen pandemics while the government continues to play its role of strengthening social safety nets to its citizenry. The study used a case study approach in data collection and in the future, other studies may increase sample size and also to investigate restaurant workers' psychological health, worker survival syndrome, and quality of service delivery during pandemics.

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