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MEDIATING ROLE OF TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP ON COVID-19 CONTAINMENT MEASURES AND PERFORMANCE OF SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED BEVERAGE ENTERPRISES IN ACCRA, GHANA.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the mediating role of transformational leadership in the relationship between COVID-19 pandemic containment measures and performance of SMEs beverage manufacturing sector in Accra, Ghana. The research adopted cross-sectional design and an exploratory design. A quantitative research approach was used to analysis empirical data collected. The study used self-administered research questionnaires as instruments for data collection. Primary data was relied upon to obtain the requisite data for analysis. The primary data was collected from a sample consisting of one hundred (100) respondents from a population of five hundred (500) leaders and Owner/CEOs of the selected SMEs using stratified sampling and purposive sampling techniques. The data was analysed using the structural equation model (SmartPLS 3.0). The findings indicated that COVID-19 containment measures did not have a significant effect on performance of SMEs beverage manufacturing sector. COVID-19 containment measures significantly influence transformational leadership. Results showed that transformational leadership has a significant impact on performance of SMEs in beverage manufacturing. The results indicated that transformational leadership mediates the relationship between COVID-19 containment measures and performance of SMEs beverage manufacturing.

Keywords: *COVID-19 pandemic, containment measures, transformational leadership, Government of Ghana, Performance of SMEs, beverages manufacturing.*

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has substantially adverse effects on individuals, society, businesses and the entire globe (Hall, Prayag, Fyeger&, 2020). The Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) are not immune to the ravages of the COVID-19 pandemic, as they face several challenges that eventually impact the overall business performance. The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted markets, organisations and the global production and consumption of commodities and, therefore, instigated major economic shocks affecting major businesses (Ozili,

2020). Though the crisis has barely lasted a year, the magnitude of its impact has drawn the attention of many researchers, practitioners, and academics to conduct studies on its effects and responses towards economic recovery. For instance, Verma and Gustafsson (2020) studied the evolving COVID-19 trends in business and suggested that COVID-19 would catalyse changes in the conjectural and pragmatic consideration. In fact, the crisis associated with the COVID-19 pandemic has redefined global business operations, procedures, and processes and taught organisations a lot and affected GDP and FDI. Whereas business-related research on the impact of the pandemic progresses, the focus has been on macro-levels with brief mention of how the COVID-19 crisis affects SMEs, their specific employees, customers and leaders (World Economic, 2020; ILO, 2020; Park & Pierce, 2020 & Ozili, 2020). As at the time of developing this research concept, there were hardly any evidence-based statistics or studies, except for estimates and projections that were carried out on the impact of COVID-19. Aware that a number of containment measures had been implemented to curtail the spread of the disease, such measures eventually affected businesses to a large extent, considering the magnitude of business closures, employee pay-cuts, job losses, reduction in business liquidity, and decline in performance among other challenges.

Whereas several factors correlate with organizational performance, leadership has its role and place in daily business undertakings in a dynamic yet unpredictable business environment. From the COVID-19 pandemic and thereafter, the critical role of leadership during and post-pandemic crisis has been debated. Whereas various leadership styles have been researched and documented, the role of transformational leadership in business still attracts research interests. In particular, transformational leadership has played a significant role in improving business performance by embracing new ways of doing things (Verma & Gustafsson, 2020).

Transformational leadership is a style of leadership that aims at creating change, driving Mulati et al. (2022) opined that transformational leaders work hand in hand with their followers, giving them direction, presenting challenging scenarios, and motivating them towards effecting the desired change and better performance. Transformational leaders tactically employ idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, inspiration, and individualized consideration to cause their followers to behave and act in a desired manner. This is often evident in a commitment by the organization, the leader, and those they lead towards realizing progressive change and greater performance.

There has been inadequate literature on COVID-19 containment measures, mediating role of transformational leadership on beverage manufacturing performance of SMEs, yet there is various transformational leadership role that

have been undertaken to curtail the adverse effects of the pandemic to economies and business. In particular, there is hardly any scholarly literature considering the impact of COVID-19 containment measures, mediating the role of transformational leadership on beverage manufacturing performance of SMEs. Furthermore, most of the study focused on developed economies only, the findings may not perfectly be generalized to SMEs in developing and underdeveloped countries in sub-saharan Africa especially Ghana. With this gap in research and literature, it cannot be quantified with precision the extent to which transformational leadership mediate the relationship between COVID-19 containment measures and beverage manufacturing performance of SMEs in emerging countries especially Ghana. It is on this basis that this study seeks to assess; the mediating role of transformational leadership on COVID-19 containment measures and SMEs performance of beverage manufacturing using structure equation model to analysis the data. The study findings showed that COVID-19 containment measures did not have a significant effect on the performance of SMEs in beverage manufacturing. Findings also showed that COVID-19 containment measures significantly influence transformational leadership. Results showed that transformational leadership has a significant impact on the performance of SMEs in beverage manufacturing. Findings showed that transformational leadership mediates the relationship between COVID-19 containment measures and performance of SMEs beverage manufacturing.

This research contributes to the understanding of the role of transformational leadership in the context of crisis management and how it can mediate the relationship between COVID-19 containment measures and organizational performance. By examining the mediating effect of transformational leadership, this study adds to the contingency theory by exploring the influence of leadership style on the effectiveness of COVID-19 containment measures within small and medium-sized beverage enterprises. This research underscores the importance of effective leadership in driving organizational change and adaptation to crisis situations, highlighting the role of transformational leaders in facilitating the implementation of COVID-19 containment measures.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted markets, organisations, and the global production and consumption of commodities and, therefore, instigated major economic shocks affecting major businesses (Ozili, 2020). Though the crisis has barely lasted a year, the magnitude of its impact has drawn the attention of many researchers, practitioners, and academics to conduct studies on its effects and responses towards economic recovery. For instance, Verma and Gustafsson(2020) studied the evolving COVID-19 trends in business and suggested that COVID-19 would catalyse changes in the conjectural and pragmatic consideration. In fact, the crisis associated with the COVID-19 pandemic has redefined global business

operations, procedures, and processes and taught organisations a lot and affected GDP, and FDI. Whereas business-related research on the impact of the pandemic progresses, the focus has been on macro-levels with brief mention of how the COVID-19 crisis affects SMEs, their specific employees, customers and leaders (Word Economic, 2020; ILO, 2020; Park & Pierce, 2020 & Ozili, 2020). As at the time of developing this research concept, there were hardly any evidence-based statistics or studies except for estimates and projections that were carried out on the impact of COVID-19. Aware that a number of containment measures had been implemented to curtail the spread of the disease, such measures eventually affected businesses to a large extent, considering the magnitude of business closures, employee pay-cuts, job losses, reduction in business liquidity, decline in performance, among other challenges.

This depicts a lack of valuable literature on this situation, yet there are various government interventions and containment measures that have been undertaken to curtail the adverse effects of the pandemic to economies. In particular, there is hardly any scholarly literature considering the impact of COVID-19 containment measures, the moderating role of government intervention and the mediating role of transformational leadership on organizational performance of SMEs in Ghana. With this gap in research and literature, it cannot be quantified with precision the extent to which transformational leadership influenced the relationship between COVID-19 containment measures and performance of the SMEs in Ghana. It is on this basis that this study seeks to assess the mediating role of transformational leadership on organizational performance of beverage manufacturing SMEs in Ghana.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

To analyse the mediating role of transformational leadership in the relationship between COVID-19 containment measures and organizational performance of beverage manufacturing SMEs in Accra, Ghana.

RESEARCH QUESTION

To what extent does transformational leadership play a mediating role in the relationship between COVID-19 containment measures on organizational performance of beverage-manufacturing SMEs in Accra, Ghana?

JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

The focus of this study is centred on examining COVID-19 containment measures, government intervention, and transformational leadership on organizational performance of beverage manufacturing SMEs in Accra, Ghana. The study assesses how the transformational leadership theory provides insights about the challenges of COVID-19 containment measures and the success factors of the SMEs in Ghana. The findings from this study will therefore serve as a useful

knowledge base for academics, scholars, managers, and researchers in SME industry. Majorly, the study will add to the extant literature on business and leadership management. The study will also provide essential reference material for future researchers on SMEs. Future researchers in the study may use this study as a reference point for their work. The findings from the study will also provide a model /framework for SMEs and other beverage-manufacturing industries in Ghana to evaluate their responsibility activities and further inform prudent financial decisions. Additionally, the study could lead to further research into leadership and crisis management strategies that would help the SMEs cope with the contemporary challenges facing businesses. The findings of the study will demonstrate the mediating role of transformational leaders and the moderating role of the Government in SME performance. In terms of policy significance, the study will serve as a reference point for future managers, policy makers, and other practitioners in the SME policy space as it will highlight key policy considerations for making an enabling environment for SMEs to grow and thrive sustainably.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study will explore the mediating role of transformational leadership in the relationship between COVID-19 containment measures and organizational performance of beverage manufacturing SMEs in Accra, Ghana. The survey will focus on the leaders of beverage manufacturing SMEs in Accra, Ghana, and will be done over a 12-month period from January - December 2022, with a budget estimate of USD 3,000. Taking a mixed methods research design, the study focuses on purposively selected beverage-manufacturing SMEs that are formally registered in Ghana. The study will use both qualitative and quantitative approaches involving the use of both closed-ended and open-ended structured questionnaire for purposes of obtaining detailed information. A sample of 500 SME leaders will be contacted to respond to the questionnaire.

LITERATURE REVIEW

COVID-19 Containment Measures

The first case of COVID-19 infection was identified and confirmed in Wuhan City, China on 31st December, 2019. The disease then spread from Wuhan to the rest of the world at an exponential rate and threatened the global economy with seriously affecting millions of people suffered from the disease, lives were lost, businesses closed and joblessness at a supersonic rate. According to Kaimann, and Tanneberg, (2021), about 5.418 million people had been infected with the disease and over 344,742 deaths associated with the disease were recorded across 188 countries by May, 2020. As the disease continued to spread across the world, businesses of all sizes faced harsh realities of the pandemic and in particular, the micro small and medium enterprises were not spared. In order to keep the fatalities associated with the disease at bay, governments, organizations and leaders of various institutions devised various measures to limit the spread of the disease. These measures refer

to as the COVID-19 containment measures and were used to flatten the curve or rather inhibit the spread of the disease and further delay its peaking.

Some of those measures included closure of schools, bans on social gatherings, remote working covenants including work from home arrangements between employees and employers as well as imposition of curfews and lockdowns (Kaimann, & Tanneberg, 2021). Globally, countries implemented measures to interrupt the transmission of the COVID-19 and further prevent chances of overload of the health system. Developed countries such as Germany, Italy, Denmark, France, Austria, Spain, The United States of America and the United Kingdom were among the first countries to enforce restrictive regulations on travel and private movement, compulsory quarantine of the confirmed cases. Whereas there were many different measures put in place to contain the spread of the disease, studies show that some countries implemented one or a few of the measures selectively while other countries adopted a combination of various measures concurrently (Kaimann, & Tanneberg, 2021; Pleninger, Streicher, Sturm, 2022; Enesi, & Umar, 2021; Li, Anaba, Ma, & Li, 2021).

Kaimann and Tanneberg (2021) analysed the impact of COVID-19 pandemic containment measures on using a sample of 68 countries and 50 federal states of the USA, four federal states of Australia and eight federal states of Canada involving a total 6,941 daily observations. The study showed that COVID-19 containment measures were essential for regulating the spread of the disease. The study showed that school closures, nationwide curfews, closure of national borders, bans on cross-border movements, lock-downs, shut-downs, and bans on mass gatherings as well as travel restrictions into and out of high-risk areas decrease the growth rate of the infections.

Pleninger et al. (2022) studied the interplay of non-pharmaceutical measures, human behaviour, and the spread of COVID-19 in Switzerland. The finding indicated that business closures, remote working arrangements, among other non-pharmaceutical measures significantly helped to combat the spread of COVID-19 disease.

Regina et al (2022) analyze the relationship between non-pharmaceutical containment measures, the spread of COVID-19, and public behavior in Switzerland. They found that containment measures were effective in reducing the spread of COVID-19.

Kosfeld et al. (2021) reviewed the literature on the impact of non-pharmaceutical interventions to curb infectious diseases, with a special focus on COVID-19 studies. The authors found that containment measures have been effective in reducing the spread of COVID-19.

Chong et al. (2023) examined predictors of changing patterns of adherence to containment measures during the early stage of the COVID-19 pandemic. The authors found that increased self-efficacy, stronger perceived susceptibility to COVID-19 infection, and better treatment outcome predict higher adherence to containment measures.

Although the study presents important information about the approaches used to contain the spread of the disease, it hardly demonstrates the implications of these measures towards resilience and continuity of SME during and after the pandemic period. Also, the study did not reveal whether there were specific containment measures that were enforced by the enterprises and how such measures influence the recovery and performance of these enterprises. Furthermore, most of the studies focused on developed economies only, hence the findings may not perfectly be generalized to SMEs in developing and underdeveloped countries in sub-saharan Africa. This research will survey the performance of SMEs in beverage manufacturing, considering the mediating role of transformational leadership style in COVID-19 containment measures and SMEs' performance of beverage manufacturing.

COVID-19 Containment Measures and SME Performance

Baumüller et al. (2021) found that food and beverage measures to contain the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic affected manufacturing firms in Africa. The study also found that firms implemented various measures to adapt to the pandemic, such as increasing hygiene measures and implementing remote work. The study found that the pandemic had a negative impact on the firms' operations, including reduced sales, supply chain disruptions, and increased costs.

Alsamhi et al. (2022) study aimed to examine the impact of the pandemic (Covid-19) on the financial performance of some of the selected Indian sectors. The study used a quantitative research method, and the findings revealed the pandemic had a negative impact on the financial performance of the selected Indian sectors.

A study by Mwangi et al. (2022) investigated the impact of COVID-19 containment measures on the financial performance of SMEs in Nairobi, Kenya. The study found that COVID-19 containment measures, such as lockdowns and travel restrictions, had a negative impact on SME financial performance.

A study by Wang and Zhang (2022) investigated the impact of COVID-19 on SMEs' sustainable performance. The study found that COVID-19 had a significant negative influence on the level of sustainable performance achieved by small businesses.

While there is no direct evidence that examines the impact of COVID-19 containment measures on performance of SMEs beverage manufacturing, the studies show that COVID-19 containment measures have affected the food and beverage manufacturing sector as a whole.

Most academic scholarly works hardly addressed how COVID-19 containment measures aided in combatting the spread of the disease and its effect on SMEs performance specifically SMEs beverages manufacturing. This study seeks to unearth the relationship between the containment measures and performance of small and medium beverage-manufacturing enterprises in Accra, Ghana.

The proposed research hypothesis is stated as:

H1: COVID-19 containment measures have a significant effect on the performance of SMEs in beverage manufacturing.

COVID-19 Containment Measures and Transformational Leadership

McCombs and Williams (2021) found that COVID-19 anxiety weakened the influence of transformational leadership style on well-being, and this was only the case for employees with high anxiety levels. Santoso et al. (2022) suggest that transformational leaders who promote employee engagement through spiritual values ensure the organization's sustainability during the crisis. However, Kohet al. (2022) found that remote working has a significant impact on employee performance.

The proposed research hypothesis is stated as:

H2: COVID-19 containment measures have a significant effect on transformational leadership

Transformational Leadership and Performance of SMEs

Transformational leadership is credited with inspiration, mentorship and influence of members to perceive work as something of value, change their attitudes to work and other people, and encourage creativity and innovation in order for the organization to achieve beyond normal expectations (Farnsworth, et al.,2020; Muliati et al.,2022; Hulu, 2022). In a study by Manzoor et al. (2019), transformational leadership was found to be the main factor in improving the performance of SMEs.

Thanh, Nhung, Nghiem, and Phat (2022) analysed the impact of transformational leadership on the performance of small and medium enterprises in Can Tho city, Vietnam. The study involved a survey of 214 SMEs supplemented with expert opinion and a review of existing literature. The data was analyzed using a structural equation model and multi-group structural analysis, and the results

showed that individualized influence significantly instills organizational learning and knowledge transfer as functions of individualized consideration.

Mathende and Yousefi (2021) analysed the role of transformational leadership and on work performance under volatile, uncertain complex and ambiguous environment. The study focused on beverages manufacturing companies listed on the Zimbabwe Stock Exchange and adopted a quantitative research design in a survey that involved a sample of 369 employees who were selected using probability sampling. The research questionnaire was self-administered to collect data, which was analysed inferentially. The findings of the study revealed there was a relationship between transformational leadership and performance beverages manufacturing companies.

Okyere (2018) investigated the influence of leadership styles on firm performance in SMEs in Lesotho. Using a qualitative approach, it collected data from 10 SME managers in Maseru, Lesotho. The findings revealed a positive correlation between leadership style and performance of SMEs in Lesotho. Sattayaraksa and Boonitt (2018) conducted a study to examine the relationship between transformational leadership and organizational performance in manufacturing firms. The study collected data through a questionnaire survey from 300 full-time employees in the manufacturing industry in Thailand. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation coefficients. The findings of the study indicated that transformational leadership was positively associated with organizational performance.

The proposed research hypothesis is stated as:

H3: Transformational Leadership has a significant influence on the performance of SMEs beverage manufacturing

Mediating role of transformational leadership on COVID-19 containment measures and SME performance.

A study by Liu et al. (2022) investigated the mediating role of management innovation and organizational resilience in the relationship between COVID-19 pandemic and SMEs performance decline. The study found that COVID-19 containment measures had a negative impact on SMEs' performance, and management innovation and organizational resilience played a mediating role in mitigating this impact. A study by Javed et al. (2020) found that leadership styles mediate the relationship between the COVID-19 pandemic and organizational performance in Pakistani SMEs. The study revealed that the transformational leadership style had a positive impact on organizational performance, while the transactional leadership style has a negative impact. The study also found that the pandemic had a negative impact on organizational performance.

Lee and Kim (2021) investigated the impact of government intervention and transformational leadership on the relationship between COVID-19 containment measures and organizational performance in South Korean beverage-manufacturing SMEs in South Korea. The researchers collected survey data from 200 South Korean beverage-manufacturing SMEs and used regression analysis to examine the moderated mediation effect. The study found that government intervention and transformational leadership positively mediated the relationship between COVID-19 containment measures and organizational performance.

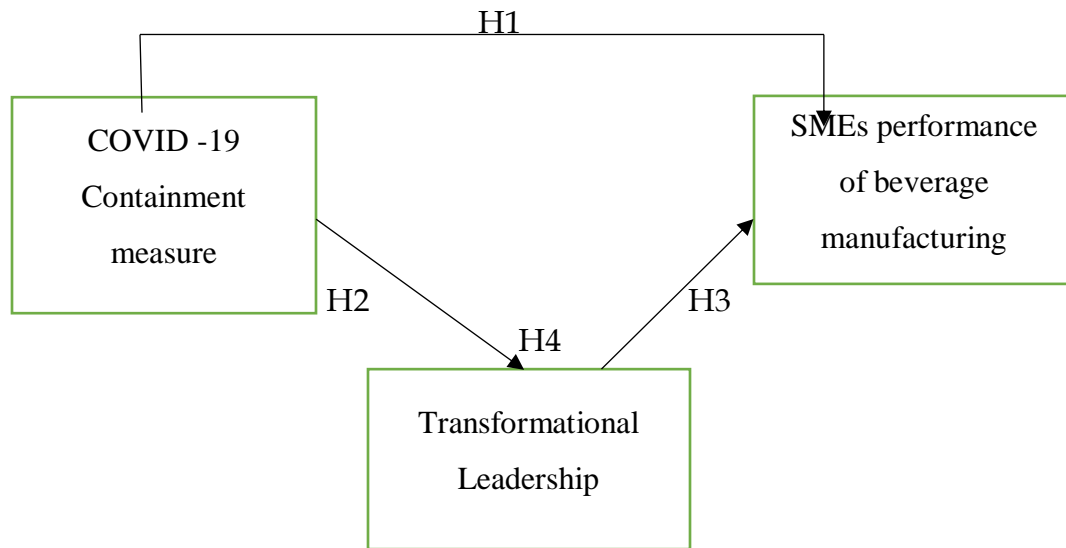
The present study made use of primary data to determine the statistical effect of the mediating role of transformational leadership on COVID-19 containment measures and performance of SMEs beverage manufacturing as a limited contextual and empirical study has been conducted in emerging countries, specifically in Ghana.

The proposed research hypothesis is stated as:

H4: Transformational leadership significantly mediates the relationship between COVID-19 containment measures and organizational performance of beverage-manufacturing SMEs.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This shows the diagram of the study variables. Figure 1 shows the diagram



This section presents the operationalisation of the variables of this study as shown in Table 1. The variables include COVID-19 Containment measures as the independent variable, transformational leadership as a mediating variable, while SMEs' performance of beverage manufacturing is the dependent variable. Table 2 shows the detailed operationalization of the study variables.

METHODOLOGY

Research approach

The quantitative strategy was employed. producing numerical data for the analysis, this aids in identifying study variables and hypotheses for cause-and-effect relationships (Geoffrey, 2019). A quantitative approach was used for this study as researchers use population-based surveys, and these studies are relatively faster and inexpensive (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). The quantitative approach is sufficient to predict the outcome with some accuracy (Saunders et al., 2017).

Research design

This study adopted a cross-sectional and explanatory design. The choice of the cross-sectional design was effective in handling sizable samples, and an investigator can suggest many questions and provide substantial resilience to the study. In addition, explanatory design was used to help the researcher understand the mediating role of transformational leadership on the relationship between COVID-19 containment measures, transformational leadership and SMEs' performance in beverages manufacturing.

Research population

The population study is employees in Ghanaian SMEs beverage manufacturing. The target population was 600 top managers/leaders and owner/CEO's from selected registered 100 SMEs in Accra.

Sampling technique and sample size

The study used purposive and stratified sampling techniques. The researcher purposively selected one hundred (100) SMEs beverage manufacturing in the greater Accra region. The greater Accra region selected for the study was the region where SMEs in beverage manufacturing are widely spread and highly dominated. Stratified sampling technique was used to select five hundred (500) top managers/leaders and one hundred (100) owners/CEOs from each of the 100 beverage manufacturing SMEs selected for the study. The researcher was interested in selecting managers/leaders and owners/CEO's who have leadership experience and skills in each department. Based on the target population, the strata for sampling are as follows:

1. Stratum 1: 500 Top managers/leaders from 100 SMEs beverage manufacturing in Accra.
2. Stratum 2: 100 Owner/ CEO's from the same 100 SMEs beverage manufacturing in Accra.

To show the strata for sampling from the target population of 600 top managers/leaders and owner CEOs from selected registered 100 SMEs beverage manufacturing in Accra, the study considered stratifying the population based on

certain characteristics or criteria. By stratifying the population into these strata, one can ensure representation from different categories within the target population. This helps to increase the diversity of the sample and allows for more accurate generalizations and insights.

Sample size

A total sample size of 500 was obtained for data analysis. According to Keyworth et al., (2020). A sample may be in the system of a category that can be taken by the investigator to explain what the absolute population is like and to which investigation results can therefore be generalised. Numerous theories have been propounded on the "best" methods for selecting the appropriate sample size for a scientific study (Carrión et al., (2017); Saunders and Townsend(2018);Ganesh and Marathe (2018);Rose and Johnson ,2020). Carrión et al., (2017) suggested that sample size of 300 is adequate for the data analysis. From Carrión et al., (2017) suggestion, 500 sample size used in this study was enough for data analysis.

Research Instrument

The structured questionnaires were used. The purpose of the questionnaire is the collect primary data on the business information of the respondent, COVID-19 containment measures, and leadership transformational, performance of SMEs in beverage manufacturing. The study designed and structured the six hundred (600) questionnaires to contain closed-ended questions, which limits the choice of answers from the respondents. A questionnaire was used to collect data from top leaders/ managers, and owner CEOs who were directly involved in decision-making because as company executives, they have a good understanding of their businesses and play a vital role in taking strategic decisions. The researcher distributed 600 questionnaires to these respondents. The respondents had to select the answers from a five-point Likert scale. Prior to distribution, the questionnaires underwent both face validity and content validity checks to ensure their appropriateness and relevance for the study before piloting using sixty (60) leaders/managers from other SMEs beverage manufacturing in Accra. The study used the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient to determine the validity and reliability of the questionnaires.

Data Collection Procedure

Primary data was employed in this research. The primary data is the administration of questionnaires to select 600 staff. Research assistants were recruited for the distribution of questionnaires. A letter of introduction was presented to the selected 100 SMEs in beverage manufacturing to seek permission to administer the instrument for the participants. The questionnaire was hand-delivered to the managers/leaders and owners/CEOs in their various offices with the help of the trained assistants and researcher. According to Schönbrodt and Wagenmakers (2018), data collection is a process of finding information pertinent

to the research employing a good data collection instrument. Secondary sources that were used include journals, policy documents, and published articles (Creswell et al., 2017)

Data Analysis Procedure

The data collected was screened before being entered into SPSS software. The study analysed data collection using the structural equation model (SmartPLS 3.0).

Measurement of variables

As depicted in Table 1, measurement variables used in the study were derived from previous research, with necessary adjustments made to align with the present study.

Table 1: Measurement of variables

| COVID -19 Containment Measure-Construct indicators | code | Source |
|---|-------------|------------------------------------|
| Nation-wide curfews | CM 1 | Kaimann, & Tanneberg (2021) |
| Restricted movements | CM2 | |
| Remote-working pacts | CM3 | |
| Transformational Leadership construct | | Thanh, Nhung, Nghiem & Phat (2022) |
| Indicators | | |
| Source of inspiration | TL1 | |
| Personal/Institutional values | TL2 | |
| Vision articulation | TL3 | |
| Mentoring and coaching | TL 4 | |
| Performance of SMEs beverage manufacturing | | (Abubakari, Abdulai, & Adam, 2022) |
| Indicators | | |
| Profitability | ONPF 1 | |
| Efficiency operations | ONPF 2 | |
| Customer Services Value | ONPF3 | |
| Work Environment | ONPF 4 | |

Data Analysis

This section presents data analysis. Statistical evaluations were done for the study, including measurement and structural models. This study used a structural equation model (Smart-PLS 3.3 version) to test hypotheses.

Measurement model

The quality of the constructs in the study is assessed based on the evaluation of the measurement model. Factor loadings (FL), Cronbach's Alpha (α), Composite Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) were used for validation and reliability of the dataset. The result in Table 2 shows that the measurement items are reliable and have achieved convergent validity as the values of FL, CA (α), CR, and AVE are above the recommended threshold of 0.5, 0.7, 0.7, and 0.5, respectively (Hair et al,2016; Sarstedt et al., 2017).

Factor loading

The factor loading refers to the “extent to which each item in the correlation matrix correlates with the given principal component. The factor loading is presented in Table 2. It is possible to keep an indicator with a factor loading equal to 0.5(Hair et al., 2014) when the AVE is above 0.5. If the AVE is high, it shows that the latent variable explains a substantial amount of variance in the indicators, even if some individual factor loadings are relatively low. However, factor loadings, profitability (ONPF 1), and source of inspiration (TL 1) were deleted.

Reliability Analysis

The findings for CA and CR are presented in Table 2. The CA, and CR, values are higher than the advised standards of 0.7 and 0.7, respectively, demonstrating the measuring items are reliable and valid (Sarstedt et al., 2017).

Convergent validity

According to Hair (2016), when the AVE values surpass the suggested cut-off point of 0.5, it shows convergent validity and reliability of the measurement items. AVE results displayed in Table 2 show that the measuring items are accurate because their values are greater than 0.5.

Table 2: Measurement model

| Construct | Code | Factor Loading | CA(α) | CR | AVE |
|-----------------------------------|------|----------------|----------------|-------|-------|
| COVID-19 containment measure | | | 0.825 | 0.805 | 0.586 |
| | CM1 | 0.586 | | | |
| | CM2 | 0.910 | | | |
| | CM3 | 0.766 | | | |
| Transformational Leadership style | | | 0.858 | 0.785 | 0.551 |
| | TL 2 | 0.650 | | | |
| | TL3 | 0.816 | | | |

| Construct | Code | Factor Loading | CA(α) | CR | AVE |
|--|--------|----------------|----------------|-------|-------|
| | TL4 | 0.751 | | | |
| Performance of SMEs Beverage manufacturing | | | 0.732 | 0.758 | 0.551 |
| | ONFP 2 | 0.653 | | | |
| | ONFP 3 | 0.815 | | | |
| | ONFP 4 | 0.750 | | | |

Indicator multicollinearity

The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) statistic is used to assess multicollinearity in the indicators (Fornell and Bookstein, 1982). According to Hair et al. (2016), multicollinearity is not a severe issue if VIF values are below 5. Table 3 presents the VIF values for the indicators in the study and reveals that the VIF for each indicator is below the recommended value.

Table 3: Indicator multi co-linearity

| | VIF |
|-------|-------|
| CM1 | 1.301 |
| CM2 | 1.497 |
| CM3 | 1.284 |
| ONFP2 | 1.127 |
| ONFP3 | 1.311 |
| ONFP4 | 1.233 |
| TL2 | 1.124 |
| TL3 | 1.327 |
| TL4 | 1.241 |

Discriminant Validity-Fornell-Larcker Criterion

This study shows good discriminant validity when the construct's square root of AVE was higher than its association with other constructs (Fornell & Bookstein, 1982). Table 4 presents the outcomes of discriminant validity.

Table 4: Discriminant Validity

| | CM | TL | PERF |
|------|-------|-------|-------|
| CM | 0.766 | | |
| TL | 0.248 | 0.742 | |
| PERF | 0.253 | 0.702 | 0.742 |

To ensure the discriminant validity, the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) criterion was also adopted. When all the diagonal values of latent constructs are less than 0.90; hence, the discriminant validity is good. Table 5 shows that all the values are less than 0.90.

Table 5: Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

| | CM | PERF | TL |
|------|-------|-------|----|
| CM | | | |
| PERF | 0.341 | | |
| TL | 0.337 | 0.439 | |

MODEL FIT Analysis

The current study employed the Standardized root mean square (SRMR) technique as suggested by (Henseler et al., 2014) for model fit analysis. It is described as the differences between the observed and expected correlations. SRMR value should be within 0 to 1, and the value near to 0, known as the model, fits perfectly. Table 6 represents the Model Fit Summary showing SRMR value 0.104, nearer to 0 offerings acceptable range. In addition, Smart PLS also provides another criterion NFI to ensure the model fits a path model. A value closer to 1 is better to fit. Table 6 highlights that the model is perfectly fit.

Table 6: Model Fit Summary

| | Estimated Model |
|------|-----------------|
| SRMR | 0.104 |
| NFI | 0.998 |

Structural Model

To substantiate the proposed hypothesis, a structural model was employed to evaluate the hypothesized relationships. The study proposed different hypotheses to evaluate the relationship of predictors to the outcome.

The proposal hypothesis is:

H1: COVID-19 containment measures (CM) have a significant effect on the performance of SMEs in beverage manufacturing (PERF).

H2: COVID-19 containment measures have a significant effect on transformational leadership.

H3: Transformational leadership (TL) has a significant influence on the performance of SMEs in beverage manufacturing

H4: Transformational leadership significantly mediates the relationship between COVID-19 containment measures and performance of SMEs beverage-manufacturing.

Hypothesis testing- Direct

The research presents the findings of the hypothesised structural relationships in table 7. The study tested four hypotheses. The first hypothesis evaluates whether COVID-19 containment measures significantly impact the performance of SMEs in beverage manufacturing. The result shows that COVID-19 containment measures had a positive coefficient but did not have a significant impact on the performance of SMEs' beverage manufacturing ($\beta = 0.005$, $t = 0.976$, $p > .001$), hence, hypothesis 1 was not supported. The study concludes that COVID-19 containment measures did not affect the performance of SMEs' beverage manufacturing. The second hypothesis evaluates whether COVID-19 containment measures have a significant effect on transformational leadership. The result shows that COVID-19 containment measures had a positive coefficient and statistically significant effect on transformational leadership ($\beta = 0.248$, $t = 5.897$, $p < .001$). Hence, the H2 was supported. The result also reveals that transformational leadership had a positive coefficient and significant impact on the performance of SMEs' beverage manufacturing ($\beta = 0.997$, $t = 379.320$, $p < .001$). Therefore, the H3 was supported. The study concludes that transformational leadership improves the performance of SMEs in beverage manufacturing.

Hypothesis testing -Mediation effects

Mediation analysis was performed to assess the mediating role of transformational leadership on the relationship between COVID-19 Containment measures and the performance of SMEs in beverage manufacturing. The results reveal that the transformational leadership exhibits statistically significant partial mediating effects between COVID-19 Containment measures and performance of SMEs beverage manufacturing ($\beta = 0.253$, $t = 5.894$, $p < .001$). $(0.248 \times 0.997) = 25\%$. The H4 was supported as shown in Table 7. The study concludes that transformational leadership improves COVID-19 Containment measures and performance of SMEs in beverage manufacturing. The results (see Table 7) reveal that the effect of COVID-19 Containment Measures on the performance of SMEs' beverage manufacturing was not significant (H1: $\beta = 0.005$, $t = 0.976$, $p > .001$). Including the mediating variables (TL), the impact of COVID-19 Containment Measures on the performance of SMEs beverage manufacturing became significant H4: $\beta = 0.253$, $t = 5.894$, $p < .001$). This shows that the relationship between CM and PERF is mediated by TL. The study concludes that transformational leadership plays an important role in COVID-19 Containment measures and performance of SMEs in beverage manufacturing.

Table 7: Structural model. Source: own research.

Hypothesis testing-Direct effect

| Hypotheses | Variables | Direct Hypothesized paths | Beta | T/Stat | P values | Decision |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|-------|---------|--------------|---------------|
| H1 | COVID-19 Containment Measures | CM ----->SMEs PERF | 0.005 | 0.976 | 0.329 | Not Supported |
| H2 | COVID-19 Containment Measures | CM -----> TL | 0.248 | 5.897 | 0.000 | Supported |
| H3 | Transformational leadership | TL-----> SMEs PERF | 0.997 | 379.320 | 0.000 | Supported |
| <i>Mediating effect</i> | | | | | | |
| <i>Structural Relations</i> | | | | | | |
| H4 | | CM--->TL--->SMEs PERF | 0.253 | 5.894 | 0.000 | Supported |

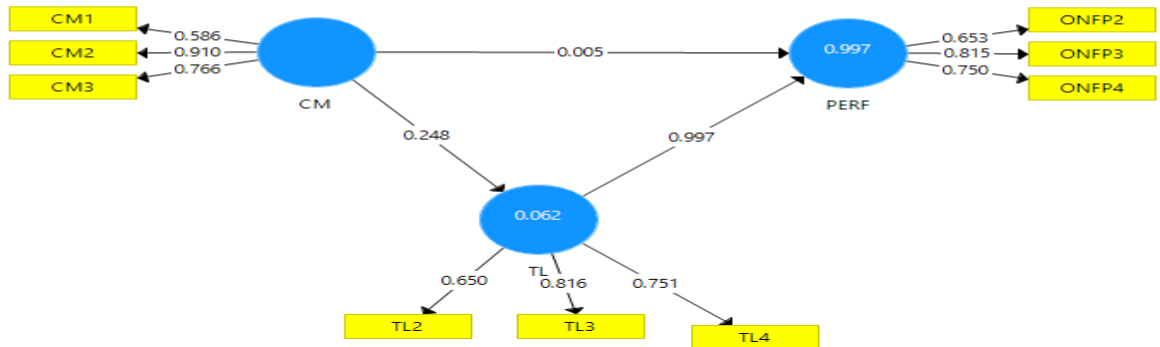


Figure 1: Measurement Model

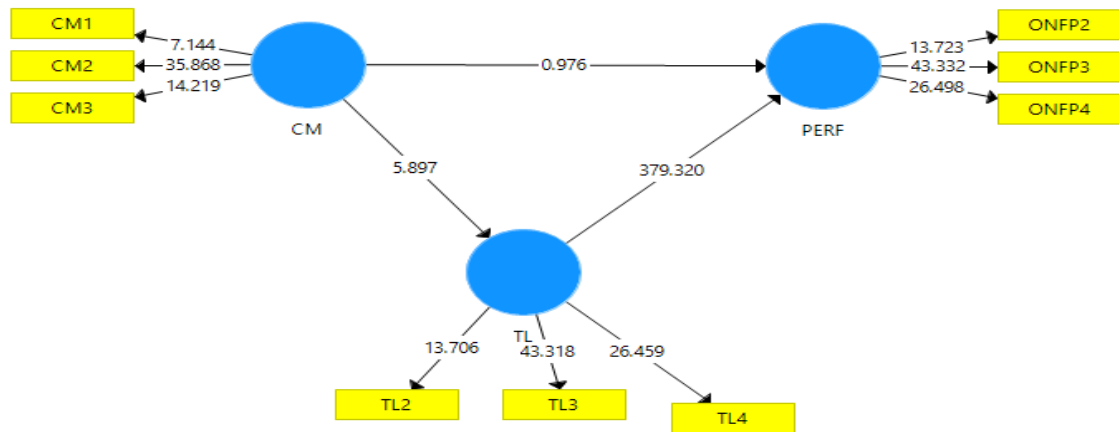


Figure 2: Structure Model Analysis Result

DISCUSSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The current study draws a conceptual framework and hypothesized relationships based on the literature review. It examines how transformational leadership mediates the relationship between COVID-19 containment measures and the performance of SMEs beverage manufacturing. Four hypotheses were postulated and examined which unfold mixed results.

The result of H1 establishes that COVID-19 containment measures had a positive beta coefficient but a statistically insignificant influence on the performance of SMEs in beverage manufacturing.

Studies by Mwangi et al. (2022); Baumüller et al. (2021); Wang and Zhang (2022); Alsamhi et al. (2022) found that COVID-19 containment measures, such as lockdowns and travel restrictions, had a negative impact on SME performance. The results contradict this present study. The results contradict earlier studies carried out by Ma, Liu, and Gao (2021). According to Ma, Liu, and Gao (2021), the profitability of the SMEs as a result of COVID-19 reduced the market for goods and services due to the directives put in place by the government to contain the pandemic. The results contradict Juergensen, Guimón, and Narula (2020). Juergensen, Guimón and Narula (2020) analysed the COVID-19 policy responses and the associated effects on SMEs in Europe. The findings indicated that lockdowns instituted as a control measure of the pandemic have severely affected the SMEs. Khatatbeh (2020) conducted a study showing that curfews imposed

reduced the operating hours of the business, which in turn affected performance. Khatatbeh finding contradicts this present finding.

Implications for finding one

Beverage manufacturing may have been classified as an essential business during the pandemic, allowing them to continue operations with minimal disruptions. This classification would have helped SMEs in the industry to maintain their production and distribution activities relatively unaffected by the containment measures.

Unlike some industries that heavily rely on physical presence and face-to-face interactions, beverage manufacturing may have been able to adapt to remote work arrangements for certain administrative and managerial functions. This flexibility would have allowed SMEs to continue their operations efficiently, even with implementing containment measures.

The demand for beverages may not have significantly declined during the pandemic. People consume beverages regularly, regardless of the situation, and sometimes, beverage consumption may have increased even as individuals spent more time at home. Therefore, SMEs in the beverage manufacturing industry may have experienced consistent or even growing demand, offsetting any negative impact of the containment measures.

SMEs in the beverage manufacturing sector may have established resilient and diversified supply chains, reducing their vulnerability to disruptions caused by containment measures. By having alternative suppliers and contingency plans in place, these businesses could have effectively managed any disruptions and maintained a steady flow of raw materials and ingredients.

SMEs in the beverage manufacturing industry might have quickly adapted to the changing market conditions and implemented innovative strategies to mitigate the impact of the containment measures. For example, they might have shifted their focus to online sales channels, introduced new products suitable for the home-consumption market, or implemented cost-saving measures to maintain profitability.

The result of H2 showed that COVID-19 containment measures have a direct significant effect on transformational leadership. This result aligns with the prior literature studies by Santoso et al. (2022); Kohet et al. (2022). However, McCombs, & Williams (2021) contradicted the finding. McCombs, & Williams (2021) found that COVID-19 anxiety weakened the influence of transformational leadership style on well-being.

Implications for finding two

The challenges posed by the pandemic may have provided an opportunity for leaders to show their transformational qualities, resulting in a positive coefficient for transformational leadership. In response to the pandemic, leaders may have exhibited transformational behaviours such as encouraging new ideas, promoting flexible work arrangements, and fostering a culture of continuous improvement. This emphasis on transformational leadership could have led to a statistically significant effect on transformational leadership during the pandemic.

Support and empowerment during uncertainty:

By offering a clear vision, providing emotional support, and involving employees in decision-making processes, transformational leaders can help employees navigate uncertainty and perform at their best. The positive coefficient on transformational leadership may reflect the impact of leaders who effectively supported and empowered their teams during the COVID-19 crisis.

During the pandemic, leaders who showed strong communication and transparency may have positively influenced their followers' perception of their transformational leadership qualities, leading to a statistically significant effect on transformational leadership.

During the pandemic, leaders who focused on supporting employee well-being, fostering resilience, and promoting work-life balance may have positively influenced their teams' perception of their transformational leadership. This positive impact on employee well-being and resilience could explain the statistically significant effect on transformational leadership during the COVID-19 containment measures.

Furthermore, transformational leadership was found to have a direct significant impact on the performance of SMEs in beverage manufacturing, as shown in H3. This result aligns with the prior literature by Thanh, Nhung, Nghiem and Phat (2022); Sattayaraksa and Boonitt (2018); Manzoor et al. (2019); Mathende and Yousefi (2021) who found that transformational leadership had a significantly positive impact on the performance of SMEs beverage manufacturing.

Implications for finding three

In the context of SMEs in the beverage manufacturing industry, transformational leaders may have effectively communicated a compelling vision, set high-performance expectations, and inspired employees to achieve their goals. This motivation and inspiration provided by transformational leaders can lead to improved performance among employees and contribute to the overall success of the SMEs.

By involving employees in decision-making processes, providing autonomy and empowerment, and creating a supportive work environment, transformational leaders can enhance employee satisfaction and loyalty. In the beverage manufacturing industry in Ghana, transformational leaders who prioritise employee engagement may have created a positive work culture, leading to improved performance and productivity among employees.

In the beverage manufacturing industry, innovation plays a vital role in developing new products, improving processes, and staying competitive in the market. Transformational leaders who stimulate and support innovative thinking can inspire employees to generate new ideas, explore new opportunities, and contribute to the growth and performance of SMEs in the industry.

By providing training, coaching, mentorship, and opportunities for skill enhancement, transformational leaders can improve the capabilities and performance of their teams. In the beverage manufacturing industry, SMEs led by transformational leaders who invest in employee development may have a more skilled and capable workforce, leading to improved performance and competitiveness.

In the context of SMEs in the beverage manufacturing industry, transformational leaders who facilitate effective communication and teamwork may contribute to enhanced coordination, efficiency, and ultimately, improved performance.

Last, it was revealed that transformational leadership mediates the relationship between COVID-19 containment measures and performance of SMEs beverage manufacturing. This result aligns with the prior studies by Javed et al. 2020 and Lee and Kim 2021, whose studies found that transformational leadership mediates the relationship between COVID-19 containment measures and performance of SMEs. Yücel (2021) found that transformational leadership can reduce turnover intentions during the pandemic by mediating the role of employee performance. All these are in consistence with the present study findings.

Theoretical Implications for finding four

Faced with the pandemic, transformational leaders may have played a crucial role in helping SMEs in Ghana's beverage manufacturing industry adapt their strategies, processes, and business models to mitigate the impact of the containment measures. Their ability to inspire, motivate, and encourage innovative thinking could have facilitated the development of effective strategies and solutions to overcome challenges, leading to improved performance.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought about increased uncertainty and anxiety among employees. Transformational leaders are known for their ability to create a

positive work environment, build strong relationships, and foster employee engagement and commitment. By effectively communicating with employees, providing emotional support, and involving them in decision-making processes, transformational leaders may have boosted employee morale, instilled a sense of purpose, and increased their commitment to the organization's goals. This heightened employee morale and commitment could have positively impacted the performance of SMEs in the beverage manufacturing industry.

In the context of SMEs in the beverage manufacturing industry, transformational leaders who fostered a culture of collaboration and encouraged open communication may have facilitated effective coordination and synergy within their teams. During the pandemic, this cohesion and collaboration would have been crucial in ensuring efficient and coordinated responses to the challenges posed by COVID-19 containment measures. The resulting teamwork and coordination could have positively influenced the performance of SMEs beverages manufacturing.

Transformational leaders prioritize the well-being and development of their employees. In the face of the pandemic, these leaders may have taken proactive measures to support the physical and mental well-being of their teams. By demonstrating empathy, providing resources for self-care, and promoting work-life balance, transformational leaders could have helped alleviate stress and enhance employee motivation. Employees who feel supported and valued are more likely to be productive and perform at their best, contributing to the overall performance of SMEs in the beverage manufacturing industry.

Transformational leaders are known for their ability to articulate a clear vision for the future and develop strategic plans to achieve that vision. During the pandemic, transformational leaders may have provided a sense of direction and stability to SMEs in the beverage manufacturing industry. Their long-term vision and strategic planning skills would have guided decision-making, resource allocation, and goal-setting, ultimately influencing the performance of the SMEs. The mediating effect of transformational leadership in this context could be attributed to the leaders' ability to align the actions and efforts towards achieving desired outcomes.

Policy makers can provide support to small and medium-sized beverage enterprises by offering resources, guidelines, and policies that promote transformational leadership practices during crises. This can include funding for leadership training programs, providing access to expert advice, and creating platforms for knowledge sharing and collaboration. Governments and regulatory bodies can play a role in facilitating the implementation of COVID-19 containment

measures by providing clear guidelines, ensuring the availability of necessary resources, and offering incentives for compliance within the beverage industry.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the mediating role of transformational leadership on COVID-19 containment measures and the performance of small and medium-sized beverage enterprises in Ghana holds significant implications. The findings suggest that transformational leadership acts as a crucial mediator, influencing the relationship between COVID-19 containment measures and organizational performance outcomes. By adopting transformational leadership behaviours, leaders can inspire and motivate employees, foster a sense of purpose and resilience, and enhance the effectiveness of containment measures in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

LIMITATIONS

The findings may be context-specific to the beverage industry in Ghana, and caution should be exercised when applying them to other sectors, countries, or regions. The study's findings may be subject to limitations associated with the research methodology employed, such as sample size, data collection methods, or statistical techniques used. The study relied on cross-sectional data, making it challenging to establish causality definitively. Future research could benefit from longitudinal or experimental designs to explore the causal relationships between variables more robustly.

FUTURE SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- a) Longitudinal studies will be conducted to examine the long-term impact of transformational leadership on the performance of beverage enterprises during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.
- b) Future research will compare the mediating role of transformational leadership across different industries or regions to identify potential variations and industry-specific challenges.
- c) Future study will employ qualitative research methods, such as interviews or focus groups, to gain deeper insights into the experiences and perceptions of leaders and employees regarding the role of transformational leadership during crises.
- d) The future study will investigate the multilevel dynamics of transformational leadership, considering individual, team, and organizational factors to explore how they interact and influence COVID-19 containment measures and performance outcomes

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