


ORIGINAL

Diagnosis of the socio-economic impact of covid-19 on micro and small businesses in the commerce sector in the city of Pasto

Diagnóstico del impacto socioeconómico de la COVID-19 en las microempresas y pequeñas empresas del sector comercial de la ciudad de Pasto

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: the research problem is presented where the topic of socio-economic impact is presented, where the line of research is management and competitiveness because they focus on the study of organisations, as well as the description of the research problem which consists of investigating the consequences caused by COVID 19 where the most affected area is the commerce sector.

Method: the methodology is described where its paradigm is positivist due to the fact that the subject to develop is based on the diagnosis of the socioeconomic impact of the MSMEs of the trade sector of the city of Pasto, where its approach is quantitative so it is based on the hypothetical deductive method, also the method to apply is empirical analytical which is based on the experience and takes into account elements present within the research with the relationship to the cause and effect of the object of study, where its type of research is descriptive, analytical making relevance to the reality of people, situations, activities and events of the research study, for it was focused on a segment object of study that in this case is the sector of commercial companies, where the study population is the commercial sector such as companies that belong to the activities of trade and repair of vehicles, the sample size corresponds to 307 companies for this study 50% of them were interviewed because it belongs to a professorial project of call 2021-2022. The data collection technique used was the survey and it was applied to 154 entrepreneurs.

Results: the results of the research are presented in which the level of economic and social affectation of the MSMEs of the trade sector of Pasto is identified where different factors such as lack of knowledge of technology, lack of innovation, difficulty to make strategic alliances, lack of legal documentation to obtain resources, to reach the different conclusions the PESTEL and SWOT matrix was made by means of these some strategies that can be applied at a certain time in the MSMEs of the trade sector of Pasto were obtained.

Conclusions: as a consequence of this crisis, many of the entrepreneurs were forced to liquidate their employees due to lack of capital and difficulties in inventory turnover. The closure of the different commercial companies caused the collapse of the economy in different homes in Nariño, diminishing their quality of life. The loss of jobs caused the disintegration of many homes, generating emotional and economic instability for the families. The health crisis was a wake-up call for the preservation and care of the planet, because the world not only revolves around capitalism, but also requires social responsibility for natural resources, since resources are limited. The health situation provoked the COVID 19, incentive to learn new ways to connect with the external world, allowing fundamental strategic alliances that allowed them to adapt to globalisation.

Recommendations: it is suggested that commercial enterprises take action in the maintenance and conservation of the different virtual platforms in order to exploit them efficiently in the short, medium and long term, with the aim of maintaining and increasing the portfolio of different segments of potential clients. It is recommended to be aware of the norms and laws implemented by the different governmental entities as there was evidence of lack of knowledge

in different areas, which can serve as support and guidance for constant business growth.

Keywords: diagnosis; socioeconomic impact; COVID-19; micro-enterprises; small businesses; commercial sector.

RESUMEN

Introducción: se presenta el problema de la investigación donde se da a conocer el tema que es el impacto socioeconómico, donde su línea de investigación es gestión y competitividad porque se centran en el estudio de las organizaciones, como también la descripción del problema de investigación que consiste en investigar las consecuencias provocadas por el COVID 19 donde el área más afectada es el sector comercio.

Método: se describe la metodología donde su paradigma es positivista debido a que el tema a desarrollar se fundamenta en el diagnóstico del impacto socioeconómico de las MIPYME del sector comercio de la ciudad de Pasto, donde su enfoque es cuantitativo por lo que se fundamenta en el método hipotético deductivo, además el método aplicar es empírico analítico el cual se basa en la experiencia y toma en cuenta elementos presentes dentro de la investigación con la relación a la causa y efecto del objeto de estudio, donde su tipo de investigación es descriptiva, analítica haciendo relevancia a la realidad de las personas, situaciones, actividades y eventos del estudio de la investigación, para ello se enfocó a un segmento objeto de estudio que en este caso es el sector de las empresas comerciales, en donde su población de estudio es el sector comercial como son las empresas que pertenecen a las actividades de comercio y reparación de vehículos, el tamaño de la muestras corresponde a 307 empresas para este estudio se entrevistó un 50% de las mismas debido a que pertenece a un proyecto profesoral de convocatoria 2021-2022. La técnica de recolección de información que se utilizó fue la encuesta y se aplicó a 154 empresarios.

Resultados: se presenta los resultados de la investigación en el cual se identifica el nivel de afectación económico y social de las MIPYME del sector comercio de Pasto donde se evidencia diferentes factores como, el desconocimiento de la tecnología, la falta de innovación, dificulta para realizar alianzas estratégicas, falta de documentación legal para obtención de recursos, para llegar a las diferentes conclusiones se realizó la matriz PESTEL y DOFA por medio de estas se obtuvo algunas estrategias que se puede aplicar en un determinado momento en las MIPYME del sector comercio de Pasto.

Conclusiones: como consecuencias de esta crisis muchos de los empresarios se vieron en la obligación de liquidar a los empleados por falta de capital y dificulta para la rotación de inventarios. El cierre de las diferentes empresas comerciales provoco el colapso de la economía en diferentes hogares nariñenses disminuyendo la calidad de vida de los mismos, La pérdida de los empleos provoco la desintegración de muchos hogares, generando inestabilidad emocional, económica para las familias. La crisis sanitaria fue como un llamado de alerta a la preservación y cuidado del planeta, debido a que el mundo no solo gira en torno al capitalismo también requiere de una responsabilidad social en los recursos naturales ya que los recursos son limitados. La situación sanitaria provocada el COVID 19, incentivo al aprendizaje de nuevas formas de conectarse con el mundo externo, permitiendo alianzas estratégicas fundamentales que les permitió adaptarse a la globalización.

Recomendaciones: se sugiere a las empresas comerciales tomar acciones en el mantenimiento y conservación de las diferentes plataformas virtuales para explotarlas de forma eficiente a corto, mediano y largo plazo, con el propósito de mantener y aumentar la cartera de diferentes segmentos de clientes potenciales. Se recomienda estar al pendiente de las normas y leyes implementadas por las diferentes entidades gubernamentales ya que se evidenció desconocimiento en diferentes áreas. las cuales les pueden servir como apoyo y orientación para un crecimiento empresarial constante.

Palabras clave: diagnostico; impacto socioeconómico; COVID 19; microempresas; pequeñas empresas; sector comercial.

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic greatly impacted all economic sectors, especially micro and small businesses (MSMEs), because they don't have a lot of money or resources to deal with long crises. In Pasto, firms in the trade sector saw significant changes in their economic dynamics, which made it hard for them to stay afloat and keep going.

In light of this reality, the present study aims to analyze the socioeconomic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on MSMEs in the commerce sector in Pasto, identifying the main factors that influenced their performance and the adaptation strategies adopted to address the crisis.

The study is based on a descriptive-analytical approach and is supported by a diagnosis carried out through surveys of a representative sample of companies. This methodology provided relevant quantitative and qualitative information to understand the sector's current situation and to generate recommendations aimed at strengthening its resilience to future contingencies.

In this context, the research seeks helpful knowledge for entrepreneurs, researchers, and decision-makers, contributing to the design of policies and strategies that promote economic recovery and strengthen the local business fabric.

What has been the socioeconomic impact of COVID-19 on micro and small businesses in the commercial sector in the city of Pasto, and what strategies can be implemented to mitigate its effects?

Objective

To analyze the socioeconomic impact of COVID-19 on micro and small businesses in the commercial sector in the city of Pasto to identify adaptation and sustainability strategies in crises.

METHOD

The empirical analytical method is a study mechanism based on experience, which considers all the elements present within the research about the cause and effect of the object of study. With it, it is possible not only to investigate the research but also to deduce circumstances in a measurable and quantifiable way since it is responsible for arguing theories, identifying unknowns, and then analyzing these.

According to Cerezal and Fiallo, "Empirical knowledge is taken from practice, analyzed, and systematized experimentally through repeated observation and experimentation. It constitutes the first stage of knowledge, where humans obtain a reflection of the surrounding world through sensations, perceptions, and representations."

The research into the socioeconomic impact of COVID-19 on micro and small businesses in the commerce sector in the city of Pasto is guided by the empirical-analytical method, which simultaneously uses qualitative and quantitative approaches to achieve its objectives. Using these methods, critical statistical data is provided to supply accurate information and show all the characteristics implicit in the research.

Type of Research

Descriptive

Descriptive research highlights the realities of the people, situations, activities, or events under study. It consists of descriptively capturing the most important aspects of a specific event or situation. In this type of study, the researcher must define the analysis and process the study will involve.

The main objective of descriptive research is to learn the customs, attitudes, and situations that predominate in accurately describing the object of study. It is responsible for identifying the relationships between two or more variables. Researchers collect data and study and analyze it to obtain meaningful results that can contribute to knowledge. It is the study of a set of practical and logical processes. Identify the characteristics of a population, as well as the social, economic, environmental, political, or cultural process and place for plant relationships. The main objective of this research is the relationship between factors, actors, and variables.

Descriptive research is distinguished by seeking an automatic description of situations, answering the following questions: What? How? Where?

When? Who? It focuses on finding the characteristics of the object of study, formulating hypotheses, selecting the technique for data collection, and identifying the sources of information. It is usually done beforehand in expository research, where the properties of the phenomenon are described, and other issues related to the topic or object of study are explained.

On the other hand, this method is often used in psychology and the social sciences to obtain data and an overview of the subject under study.

Analytical

This research method involves breaking down a subject into its parts or elements to closely observe the causes, nature, and effects. In essence, analysis is the observation and examination of a particular fact.

The analytical method is a procedure used to study a phenomenon, problem, fact, or object. Classified as a scientific research model, the generic procedure of the analytical method combines the scientific method, a formal process, critical thinking, and the evaluation of facts to find solutions and discoveries for any problem. It is characterized by breaking down the object of study into its different parts to facilitate its investigation and help to understand the elements that comprise it in depth. This is done to draw connections between all the components and thus determine their relationship and influence within the problem. To carry out research using the analytical method, it is necessary to collect all the data available on the object of study, formulate hypotheses, and apply critical thinking and observation to proceed with validation.

This useful procedure, among other things, makes it possible to explain phenomena, discover their nature, determine the relationship between one element and another within a problem, and formulate laws that explain the phenomenon. The analytical method is considered one of humanity's greatest inventions because of its importance in science and society. Before this method, many beliefs about medicine and science were untrue, but since there was no procedure to validate them, they were believed to be true.

The research is descriptive and analytical based on the information provided in this document, which allows for a closer look at what is happening with micro and small businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is essential to mention that the prevailing customs and attitudes allowed many companies to survive this crisis, which has not been easy. However, the various difficulties allowed them to innovate and reach customers who had even been forgotten. Identifying the characteristics of a population, whether social, economic, environmental, political, or cultural, to improve relations in the short, medium, and long term meant that the companies that survived made their mark on the map of organizations that adapted to the changes by generating new and different strategies.

Population and sample

Population

According to the research, the target population is the commercial sector. Therefore, we will work with companies that belong to the economic activity of vehicle trade and repair, as shown in table 1.

Figure 1.

Municipality of Pasto. Number of merchants by economic sector. Year 2019

ACTIVIDAD ECONOMICA	PEQUEÑA		MICRO		TOTAL	
	N°	%	N°	%	N°	%
(G) Comercio y reparacion de vehiculos	3	9%	1522	44,60%	1525	44,61%

Source: Pasto Chamber of Commerce. SII database. As of December 31, 2019

Sample

Next, the statistical formula for the sample will be applied:

Calculation of sample size:

Z= Confidence level 95%

N=Population 1525

P= Probability of success 50%

q= Probability of failure 50%

e= Error 5%

n= Sample size

$$n = \frac{1525 * (1,96)^2 (0,5) (0,5)}{(1525 - 1)(0,05)^2 + (1,96)^2 (0,5) (0,5)} \quad \underline{n = 307}$$

The sample size corresponds to 307 companies. As the research is part of a faculty-level project for the 2021–2022 academic year, only 50% of the sample will be used, equivalent to 154 companies.

Information collection techniques and instruments

The information collection technique used was a survey, which was applied to 154 commercial companies in the commerce sector in San Juan de Pasto (city).

RESULTS

Level of economic and social impact on micro and small commerce companies in Pasto as a result of the pandemic.

Table 1.
Number of employees in companies before the coronavirus

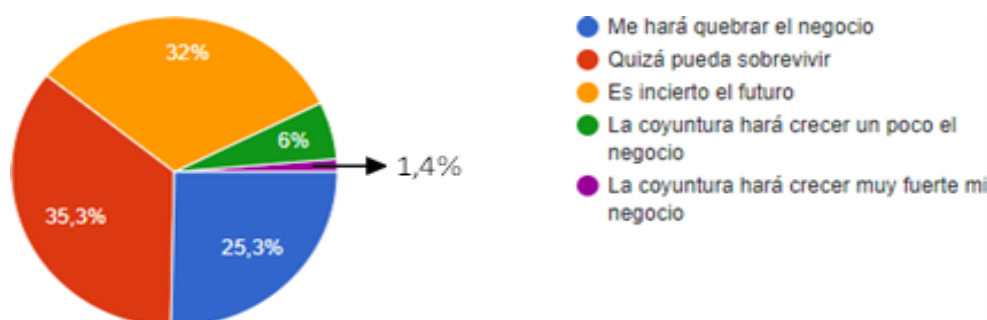
Number of employees dismissed	Frequency	Percentage
1 – 5	69	46
5 – 10	31	21
10 – 15	13	9
15 – 20	7	5
20 – 25	4	3
25 – 30	4	3

30 and older	8	5
He didn't say goodbye.	14	9
Total	150	100

After facing the catastrophic health crisis, the business owners surveyed responded that they had to lay off 46% of their employees, representing between 1 and 5 of their workforce, followed by 21% representing the departure of 5 to 10 employees, then 9% representing 10 to 15 layoffs, 5% also representing layoffs of 15 to 20 people, 3% representing the departure of 20 to 25 employees, and another 3% representing the departure of 25 to 30 employees, 5% representing the dismissal of more than 30 employees, and 9% representing companies that did not lay off any staff, which is equivalent to 100% of those surveyed.

Figure 2.

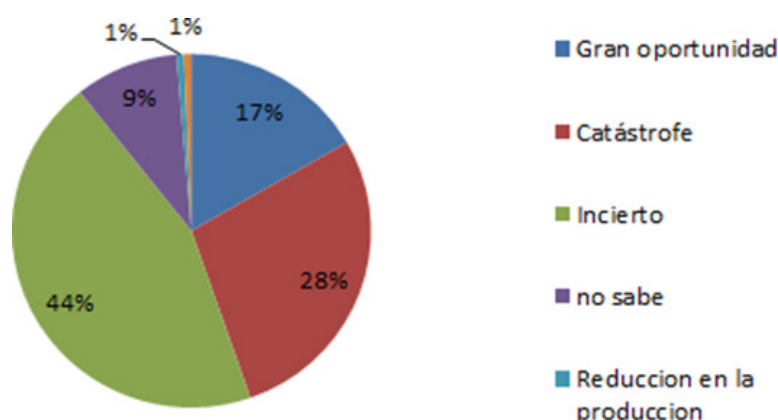
Percentage of businesses affected by the coronavirus at the moment



According to surveys, 35,3% of businesses have a chance of surviving and staying afloat after facing all the setbacks caused by the effects of COVID-19. In comparison, 32% of entrepreneurs perceive an uncertain future for the continuity of their businesses, and 25,3% feel that there is simply no hope of reviving their businesses post-pandemic. Contrary to this, 6% of the strongest companies have benefited from the situation to grow their businesses slightly. In comparison, 1,4% of entrepreneurs took advantage of various vital technological tools during the crisis.

Figure 3.

Assessment of the effects of coronavirus on business



COVID-19 has caused short-, medium-, and long-term effects on supply and demand. These microeconomic effects will also be vital, influencing confidence in suppliers and merchants. Forty-four percent of business owners view the future of business as uncertain. COVID-19 will cause the most significant economic and social crisis in Latin America in decades, adversely affecting employment and the region's economy. According to the latest estimates, an average regional contraction of -5,3% is expected for 2020, as measures such as social isolation imply sharp drops in income for companies, and regardless of their size, they face significant difficulties in accessing credit and an increased likelihood of insolvency. Among the activities most affected are wholesale and retail trade in medium-sized and small enterprises. Affirming that small and medium-sized enterprises account for a high share of job creation (more than 50% of formal employment).

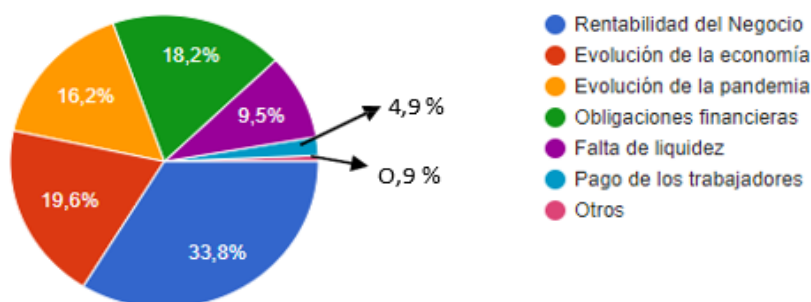
Table 2.
Opinions on the COVID-19 situation in relation to business

Description	Frequency	Percentage
Devastating	62	41,33
Regular	33	22,00
Progress	32	21,33
Persevering	17	11,33
Uncertainty	3	2,00
He doesn't know	3	2,00
Total	150	100,00

Business owners stated that this situation caused by the difficult health situation was devastating for 41,33%, moderate for 22,00%, while others showed slight progress at 21,33%. The perseverance of business owners was evident in 11,33% of cases, while for some business owners, uncertainty was at 2. Each of them diversified their activities, and others ultimately closed down. It is essential to mention that it was an excellent opportunity for some business owners to grow in specific areas, such as supermarkets, as demand increased exorbitantly. It was a positive and motivating moment in exceptional cases, such as for supermarkets. The COVID-19 crisis has caused a contraction in the production and consumption of various products. The inevitable decline in trade and production will have painful consequences for households and businesses, apart from the human suffering caused by the disease. To revive the investments we will need, it will be essential to keep markets open and predictable and foster a more favorable business environment. 39

Figure 4.

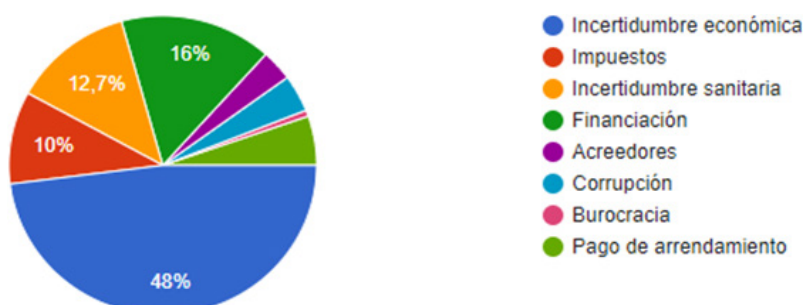
Traders' outlook for the coming months



To gain a deeper understanding of merchants' perspectives, mentioning that the situation is not very encouraging and presents various concerns is essential. According to surveys, one of the most significant concerns is business profitability, followed by economic developments that directly and indirectly affect them, leading to an inevitable decline in trade and production with terrible consequences for businesses and households in Nariño. This cannot be conceived from a post-pandemic perspective but rather in a context of pandemics that involves other dimensions and protocols to contain the virus and maintain the health of human beings with direct and indirect interaction with and between workers, suppliers and customers, among others. Implement emergency plans for abnormal situations, purchase preventive equipment, and provide training on personal hygiene awareness and biosafety protocols.

Figure 5.

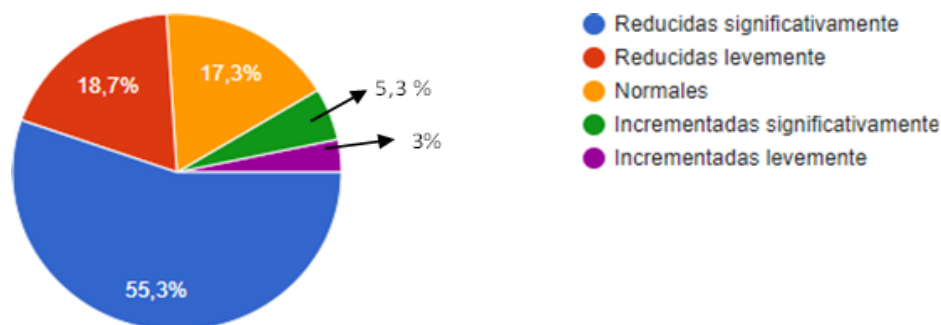
Main business threats in the coming months



Microentrepreneurs from different areas have included the following on their list of potential threats: the rise or fall of gross domestic product (GDP) and how this could positively or negatively affect the country's economic policy in the coming years. According to the results of the surveys, 48% of entrepreneurs see this possibility as a recovery or definitive collapse of their commercial activities, accompanied by 16% of entrepreneurs who are also concerned about financing as an essential contribution to their recovery. Many economic activities are affected, such as tourism, commerce, restaurants, hotels, manufacturing, and construction, among others, causing vulnerability in the workforce since the vast majority do not have social security, either public or private, coupled with the fact that a large number of companies may lose the knowledge and skills that their workers have accumulated over the years, which would affect the business fabric and the chances of a quick economic recovery.

Figure 6.

Degree of impact on business operations due to the coronavirus



Operational activities in companies were severely affected, mainly by the closure of borders and the total paralysis of domestic and international flights, which led to a stagnation in marketing and, consequently, in production in companies operating at the local, national, and international levels, directly and indirectly affecting hundreds of families who were left adrift due to the cessation of activities. Confidence in global suppliers will deteriorate. This will lead to smaller production batches and loss of economies of scale, scope, and learning. All of this will hurt employment, wages, and income distribution. Regardless of size, all companies are affected, particularly in the aviation, tourism, and service sectors such as trade. Many are already facing a significant decline in revenue, increased insolvency, and job losses in specific sectors, which will have a marked impact on the labor market.

Figure 7.

Percentage of arrears in the payment of obligations acquired by entrepreneurs

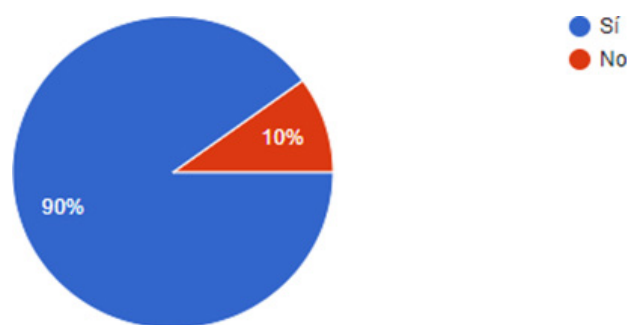
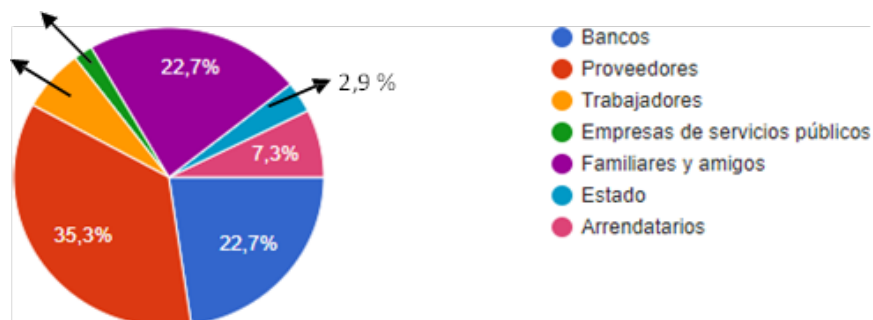


Figure 8.

Failure to comply with obligations acquired by employers

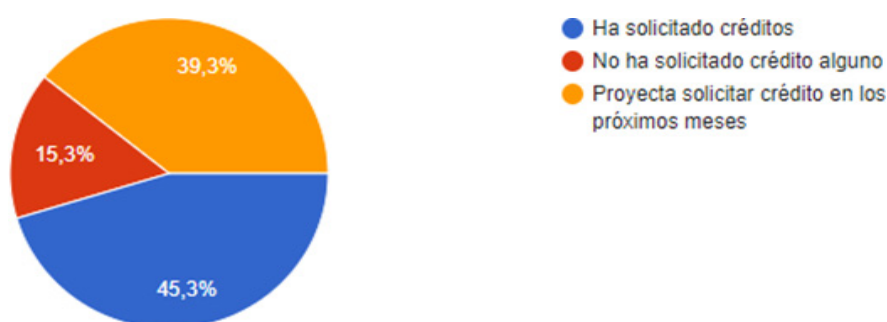


The significant reduction in commercial activities stimulated illiquidity among most entrepreneurs, causing defaults on obligations acquired internally, such as payroll and services, and externally with banks, suppliers, customers, and tax obligations, among others, causing mistrust. According to the survey, 90% of microentrepreneurs agree with the above. The commercial sector has shown negative results for a long time, and it is expected that some businesses will be unable to resume normal operations and meet their obligations. The economic crisis has an uncertain outcome, both for investors and consumers. A person who has lost their job, even temporarily, will adjust their consumption for fear that their income will not return to its previous level. Entrepreneurs who see no demand for their products will not be motivated to expand factories or incorporate new technologies into their production processes, and the consequences for society are clear.

The survey results allow us to analyze that the reduction in income caused by COVID-19 led to disruptions in the payment of obligations. In this case, the default highlights non-compliance with suppliers (35,3%), family and friends (22,7%), and banks (22,7%), among others. In this context, the regional business sector accelerated some structural changes, such as increased virtualization of economic and social relations, the prevalence of teleworking, and the digitization of communication processes at a faster pace, confirming that the most technologically advanced companies are increasing their advantages over those that are lagging behind.⁴⁴ Strategies for returning to or maintaining secure employment in companies in the commercial sector.

Figure 9.

Financial measures to maintain business operations

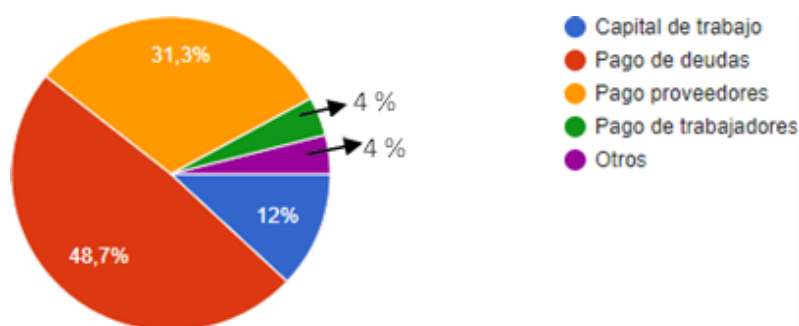
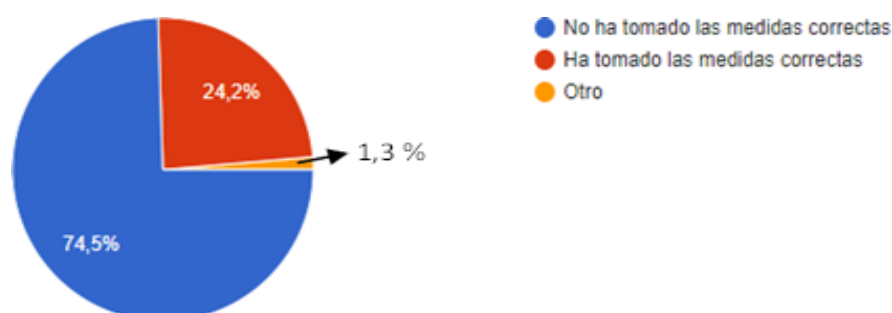


Faced with the crisis and lack of demand, business owners were forced to apply for loans from various banks to maintain their commercial activities. However, some business owners did not apply for loans because their activities are developing positively, albeit with difficulties, but are still ongoing—a significant percentage plan to apply for loans in the future if urgent.

According to the Bancolombia group, “13,5 trillion pesos will be made available to support customers whose economic activity has been affected. Similarly, an additional 100 billion pesos will be allocated to customers who cannot access credit due to their current situation. This amount is in addition to the more than 14 trillion pesos that Bancolombia disbursed to 91 000 SMEs and independent workers in 2020, as well as grace periods and extensions for a balance of 3,5 trillion pesos.” 000 SMEs and independent workers in 2020, in addition to grace periods and extensions for a balance of \$3,5 trillion.”

The purpose is to reactivate small and medium-sized enterprises, bearing in mind that SMEs represent 99% of the country’s business fabric and contribute a large part of Colombia’s GDP. The aim is to help activate the economy. Central banks administer monetary policy in line with the economy’s liquidity needs. This policy aims to reduce interest rates and apply instruments that allow them to lower the cost of resources for financial institutions and pass on this effect to businesses and households.

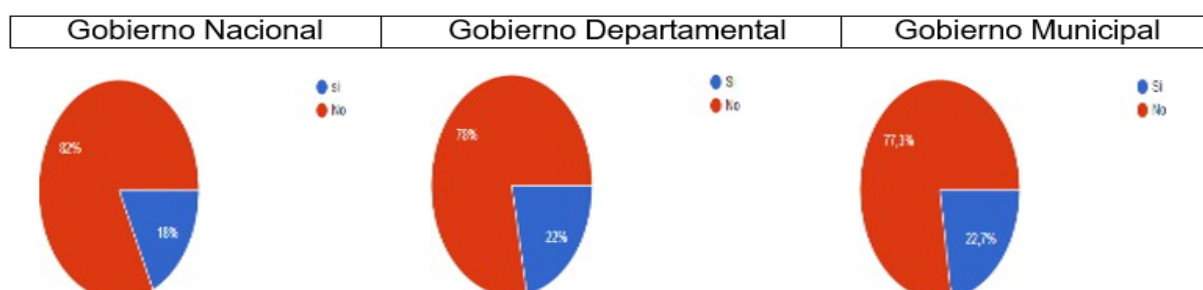
Given that the crisis did not originate in the financial sector, temporary measures can be taken to relax market regulations, such as reducing reserve requirements and provisions, lowering and relaxing capital adequacy requirements, relaxing requirements for online transactions (use of digital signatures), providing remote access to credit, and increasing limits on online transactions. To improve the flow of resources, it is suggested that guarantees on loans that are part of government debt programs be increased and that the approval process for these loans be simplified and accelerated. Government-backed corporate debt allows small and medium-sized enterprises to reduce risk and costs, suspend principal payments, expand credit lines, and provide low-interest or interest-free loans. Many business owners use financing from different banks to pay debts, and one of their main concerns is to meet commitments and mitigate the pressure this generates. This was followed by the second priority for business owners, which was paying suppliers, to whom they gave priority. A smaller percentage chose to meet their obligations with working capital. As can be seen, in Colombia, the pandemic brings challenges and uncertainty, as in all Latin American countries, with efforts being made to strengthen the national health system alongside multiple efforts to keep the economy active to minimize social repercussions that undermine the family and social well-being that has been achieved.

Figure 10.*Main destinations of financing***Figure 11.***Government response to Covid-19*

According to surveys conducted among various business leaders, the government has not taken the proper measures to revive the economy of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). However, a minority of companies benefited from the measures taken by the government to mitigate the economic difficulties caused by COVID-19. It is essential to mention that the two lines of guarantees implemented by the government are aimed at micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises with sales of up to 51 951 billion pesos from all sectors of the economy.

Guarantee for payroll payments: a quota for this guarantee worth 12 trillion pesos, which will cover 90% and back the disbursements made by financial institutions to finance the value of monthly payrolls, up to a total of 2 billion pesos per company, with a term of up to 36 months and a minimum grace period of six months.

Working capital guarantee: a quota for this guarantee worth 3 trillion pesos. The amount guaranteed under this line will be up to 2,4 billion pesos per company, with 80% coverage, a term of up to 36 months, and a minimum grace period of 4 months.

Figure 12.*Government support to businesses to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 health situation*

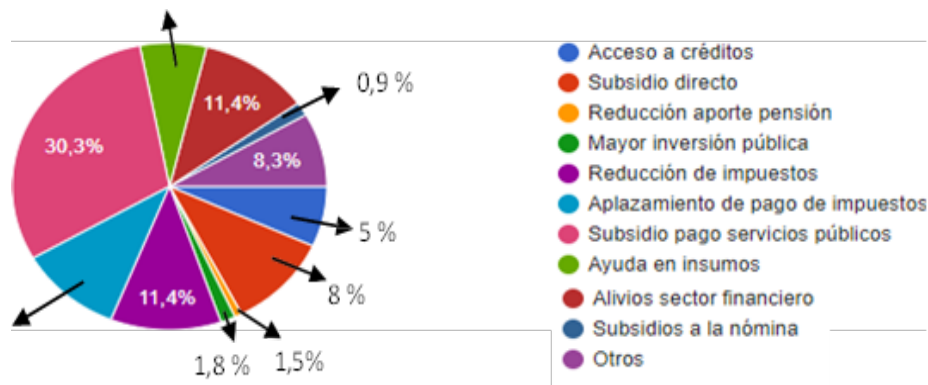
According to ECLAC. A large segment of entrepreneurs say in surveys that the national, departmental, and municipal governments didn't give them the support they needed to deal with the situation caused by COVID-19. However, a minority of companies got support from different entities that were aware of these difficulties.

According to ECLAC, small and medium-sized enterprises are characterized by greater credit access restrictions due

to their position in the market, which, in many cases, makes it impossible to obtain loans or makes resources more expensive. Policies have focused on helping companies obtain credit to improve their cash flow in the short term, designing schemes to enable repayment after the crisis, supporting productive investment through subsidies, and strengthening digital payment systems. The channels for transmitting these policies also need support, especially from financial institutions serving minor productive units.

Figure 13.

Type of support received from the government by entrepreneurs



One of the pillars of support that the State extended to entrepreneurs to mitigate various economic and logistical difficulties includes subsidies for public services, followed by taxes and financial relief reductions, generating positive results for the economic recovery of micro and small businesses in Pasto Nariño.

The government launched the “Unidos por Colombia” program last April through the National Guarantee Fund (FNG) to support MSMEs in Colombia that have been affected by the coronavirus crisis.

Thanks to a \$12 billion fund, the initiative seeks to prevent liquidity problems and mass layoffs and keep businesses afloat.

In the ‘Unidos por Colombia’ program, the national government will cover 50% of the commissions charged by the FNG for issuing guarantees (normally paid by the entrepreneur) on this occasion.

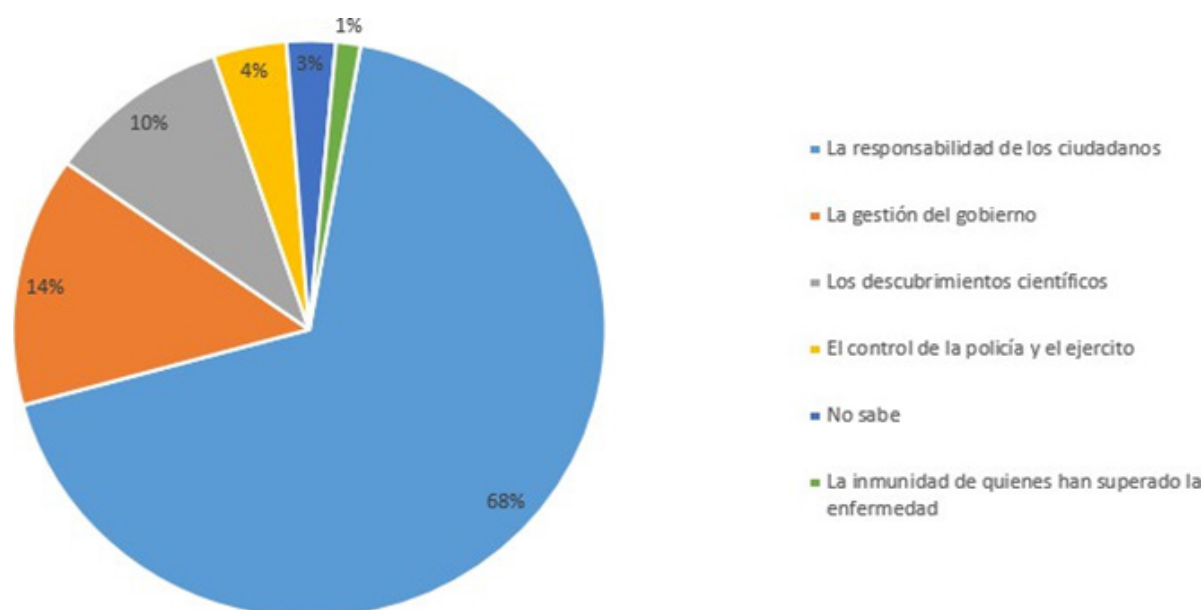
This program will cover 60% of the loan’s value, with the national government, through the FNG, committing to back 60% of the loan’s value, facilitating access to the required liquidity. Companies (individuals or legal entities) with sales of up to \$51 951 billion are eligible for this scheme.

Under this scheme, entrepreneurs may apply to the financial sector for loans guaranteed by the FNG for up to \$3316 billion. The loans will have a grace period of four months and a term of between 12 and 36 months.

Strategies implemented by commercial companies to mitigate the economic and social impact of COVID-19.

Figure 14.

Aspects to consider in order to overcome the health crisis in micro and small enterprises in Pasto, Nariño

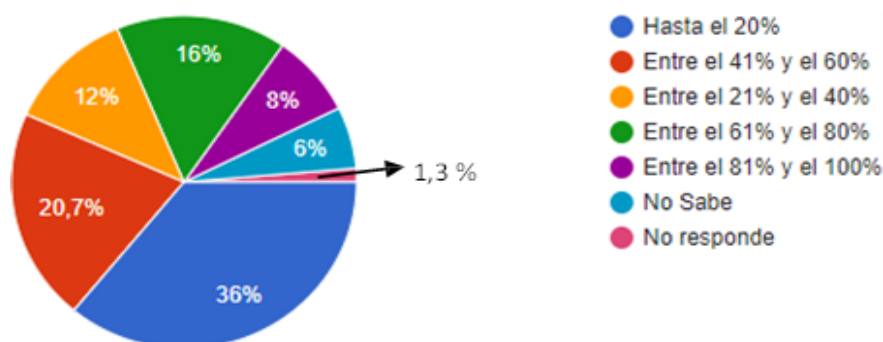


Business leaders in the commercial sector identify citizen responsibility as the first measure to be taken into account in order to overcome the health crisis. 68% of those surveyed refer to citizen responsibility, followed by 14% of business leaders who trust the government's management to overcome the crisis. However, scientific research ranks 10% in popularity in this vital sector, without neglecting the importance of public awareness as an essential contribution to mitigating the spread of the virus and reviving local and regional economic activities.

Businesses have had to close their establishments and partially or totally cease their commercial activities. Some establishments have found ways to continue their activities, such as working from home, shift work, or continuous working hours. In addition, companies have also found help in technological tools, while home delivery has been a significant option for activities such as cafes and restaurants. In 61% of cases, business activities have been partially restricted, and 10% of establishments have paused their activity. A small percentage have invested in technology or applied for loans to capitalize on their businesses. Other measures that have been taken include investing in employee resources or adjusting business models to cope with the current economic situation.

Figure 15.

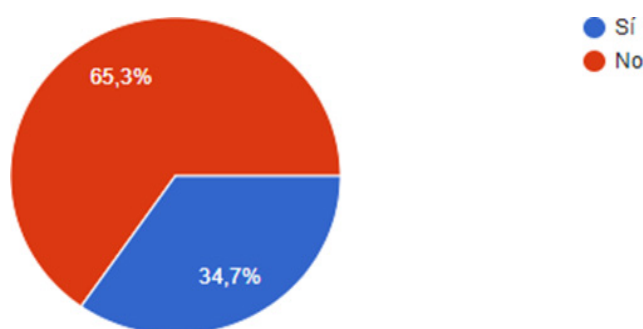
Percentage compliance with government-imposed biosecurity measures to control the pandemic



Currently, most business owners surveyed believe that 36% of the population of the municipality of Pasto complies with the measures imposed by the national government. Similarly, 20,7% comply with biosafety protocols, followed by 16% who abide by the protocols. Twelve percent of the business owners surveyed said they comply with the measures. A minority of business owners, equivalent to 8%, complied with the regulations imposed. It is essential to mention that 6% are unaware of the instructions required by the national government, and 1,3% are unaware of this health situation and the effects that the virus can cause due to non-compliance with biosafety protocols, thus generating a high risk of continued paralysis of commercial activities.

Figure 16.

Percentage of work carried out at home



The results obtained showed that 65,3% of employees did not transfer their activities to their homes; however, 34,7% were forced to carry out their various work activities from home.

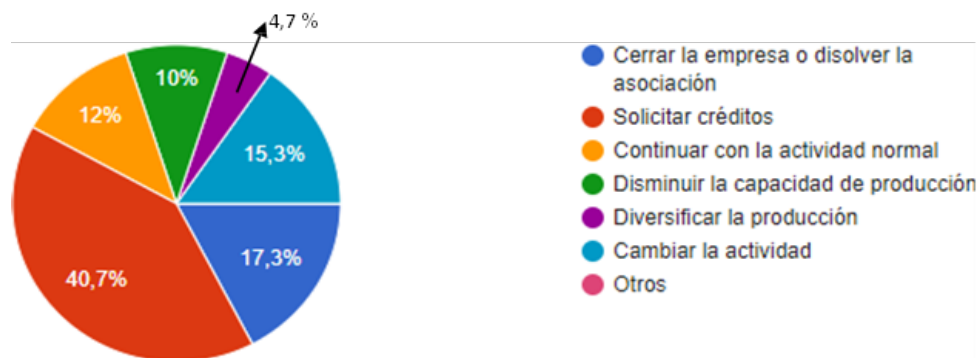
Although teleworking was not new in Colombia, as it had been gradually implemented in various companies, the arrival of COVID-19 and mobility restrictions boosted this modality, resulting in 2020

Two hundred nine thousand one hundred seventy-three employees became teleworkers, representing a 71% increase compared to 2018 when there were only 122 278.

This was revealed in the fifth study on Teleworking Penetration and Perception presented on Wednesday by the Deputy Minister of Digital Transformation of the Ministry of ICT, Iván Durán.

Figure 17.

Measures to be implemented in businesses if the health crisis continues

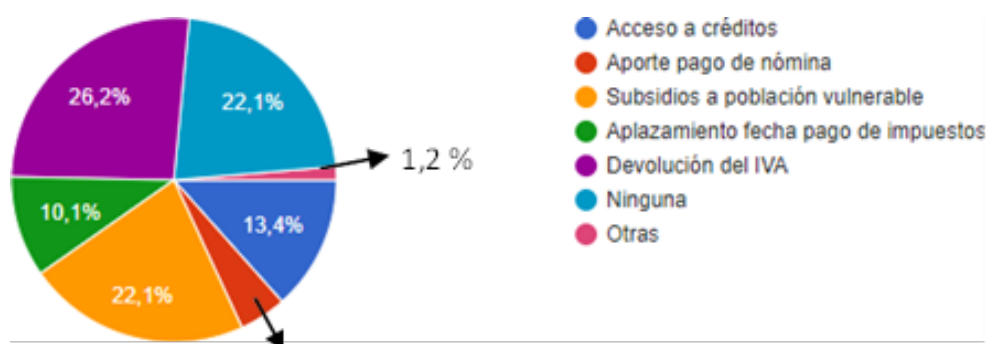


According to ACOPI and FAEDPYME53, government measures related to helping businesses adapt to the new reality and stimulating demand, financial measures, digital transformation, and the adoption of biosafety protocols that seek to ensure business operations, as well as measures aimed at increasing science, technology, innovation, and research activities, improving state management, and controlling informal business practices are highly valued by those consulted, highlighting that all topics were rated above 4,0, validating the importance of each measure in a comprehensive and complementary manner.

The measures to address the difficulties brought about by COVID-19 are vital, as the reactivation and functioning of various economic activities depend on their implementation. One of the most important measures to be implemented by MSMEs is the application for loans, followed by a change of activity and, as a final measure, the liquidation of such businesses.

Figure 18.

Awareness of government support for entrepreneurs to mitigate the impact of COVID-19



Some business owners consider the measures taken by the national government, including VAT refunds, tax deferrals, and access to credit, to be the right steps to mitigate the effects of COVID-19. However, it is worth noting that only some commercial enterprises received this support, as the government only considered large companies, leaving some small business owners feeling abandoned by the relevant authorities.

Table 3.

Key measures that the government should put in place to help MSMEs in relation to the COVID-19 crisis

Description	Frequency	Percentage
Subsidies	85	56,67
Tax reduction	29	19,33
He doesn't know.	6	4,00
Loans	25	16,67
Improvement of access roads	3	2,00
Investment in small businesses	2	1,33
Total	150	100,00

According to Ontaneda, the government is taking action to provide liquidity to productive sectors with loans totaling \$1,15 billion from multilateral organizations. This support is aimed at companies and economic activities that have managed to maintain sources of employment during social isolation, seeking to reach the entire productive fabric, mainly small and medium-sized enterprises.

Government support made a significant and fundamental difference to the economic recovery of MSMEs. Key measures implemented by the government included subsidies (56,67%), tax reductions (19,33%), and loans (16,67%), which were essential for economic recovery. Small businesses received a capital injection of 1,33%, and to complement the rapid economic recovery, a contribution of 2,00% was allocated to improving access roads. A minority of businesses, equivalent to 4,00%, were unaware of government aid when it was available.

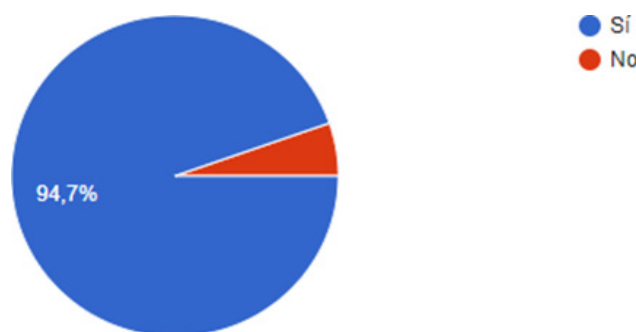
Given that companies' revenues have fallen in recent weeks due to the crisis, the national government, through the National Guarantee Fund, will back loans obtained by micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises from the financial system to pay their payrolls and working capital. It will also offer a guarantee for self-employed workers.

Guarantee for payroll payments: a quota for this guarantee worth 12 trillion pesos. This guarantee will cover 90% of the back disbursements made by financial institutions to finance the value of monthly payrolls, up to 2 billion pesos per company. The term may be up to 36 months with a minimum grace period of six months.

Working capital guarantee: a quota for this guarantee worth 3 trillion pesos. The amount to be guaranteed under this line will be up to 2,4 billion pesos per company, with 80% coverage, a term of up to 36 months, and a minimum grace period of four months.

Figure 19.

Knowledge of biosafety protocols for returning to normal productive activities



One relevant topic discussed was biosafety protocols for returning to business activities. According to the information gathered, 94,7% are aware of and apply the measures imposed as biosafety measures; however, 5,3% of microentrepreneurs are not aware of these measures.

In this "new normal," applying biosafety protocols for businesses is vital to protecting all members of your organization and promoting well-being and health. With the gradual economic recovery, many companies welcome back their employees while others prepare to do so. In times of pandemic, this requires protecting everyone's health through a series of biosafety measures in companies that did not exist before.

1. Hand washing is the main way to take care of ourselves. Your company must have all the necessary supplies for this process: soap, clean water, and disposable towels. Make alcohol-based hand sanitizer with a minimum of 60% and a maximum of 95% alcohol available to your employees.
2. Hands should be washed every 3 hours.
3. Social distancing: Workstations must be separated by 2 meters. Workers should not be crowded in common areas. A minimum distance must be guaranteed at all meetings.
4. A new era for personal protective equipment: The company must define the PPE for the organization, which may require different items depending on the sector. Regardless of the above, all must comply with the provision of face masks and their mandatory use in crowded areas. The employer must provide and ensure that these are replaced. Gloves are recommended for cleaning and waste-handling tasks. PPE is for work activities, not for activities outside of work.
5. Cleaning and disinfection of the workplace: Your company must have a permanent cleaning and disinfection protocol, paying special attention to floors, walls, doors, windows, furniture, and all items in constant contact.
6. The cleaning and disinfection procedure must be done daily before employees arrive and close. It is the responsibility of the company to train general services personnel.

According to business owners, MSMEs tend to have limited financial resources, many of whom do not have the necessary resources to implement the biosafety protocols recommended by the government. However, 72% of

business owners implemented the protocols, but 28% said they did not have the resources to do so. Despite the economic difficulties, they expressed a desire to restart their businesses.

Figure 20.

Resources available to entrepreneurs to implement biosafety protocols and return to productive activities

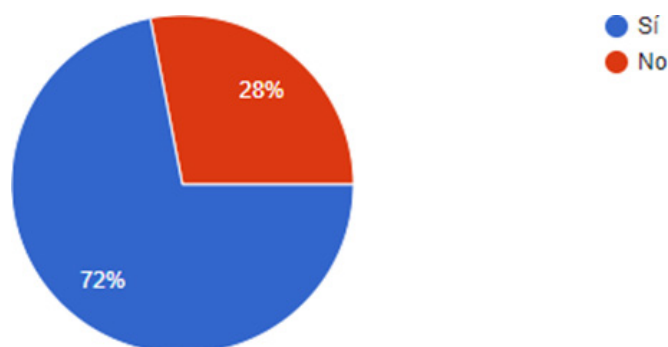
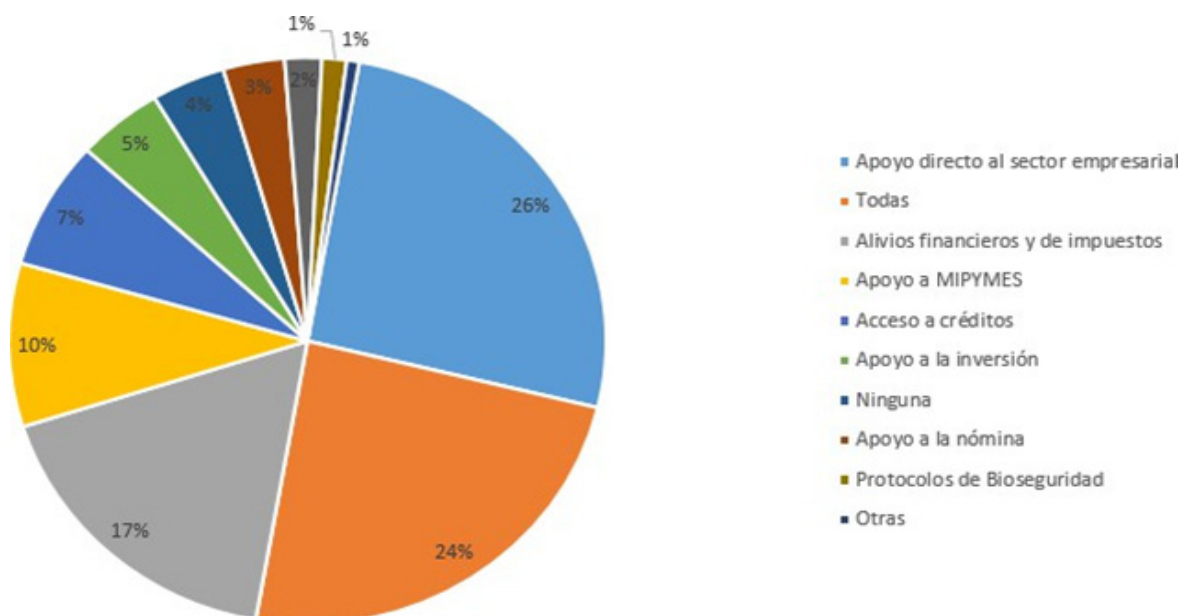


Figure 21.

Government support measures known to MSMEs



The various measures implemented by some entities in response to the crisis caused by COVID-19 in MSMEs were very helpful in mitigating some of the difficulties they faced, which forced many companies to close their establishments. Others are working hard to recover and reappear on the map of commercial companies in the department of Nariño that are registered with the Pasto Chamber of Commerce. However, some exceptional companies grew and are even more prosperous than before the pandemic.

The National MSME System, created by Article 3 of Law 905 of 2004, amending Article 3 of Law 590 of 2000, is a support tool for micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises, which is made up of:

1. The Higher Council for Microenterprises: This Council's current internal statutes were issued through Agreement 001 of 2012 and Agreement 002 of 2013.
2. The Higher Council for Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises: the internal statutes of this Council were issued through Agreement 001 of 2012 and Agreement 002 of 2013
3. The Regional Councils, regulated by Resolution 3205 of 2008 of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Tourism. By Law 590 of 2000, the Regional Councils for MSMEs in each department have the following objectives.

To promote market research and sectoral and regional export plans. To encourage the creation of financing systems and access to capital. Technology and knowledge management for MSMEs. To enable support and advice for MSMEs. The Regional MSME Councils are composed of The Governor of the department or his delegate. A representative of the Regional Autonomous Corporation. The Director of Departmental Planning. The Regional Director of the National

Learning Service, SENA.

A representative of the Colombian Association of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises, ACOPI. A representative of the Federation of Merchants, Fenalco. A representative of the Chamber of Commerce. If there are two or more chambers of commerce in the same region, the representative will be chosen from among them. A representative of the municipal mayors of each department shall be elected from among themselves—a representative of the SME Associations of the region. The governor appointed two (2) SME entrepreneurs from the area, and others were deemed relevant by the governor—two (2) representatives of the Microenterprise Associations.

To analyze companies' current situation regarding external and internal conditions that may affect them in the short, medium, and long term, the DOFA matrix clearly shows us the threats, weaknesses, opportunities, and strengths. These elements, when clear, allow us to have a global and comprehensive view of the actual situation.

Table 4.
DOFA Matrix Commercial companies in the city of Pasto

Threats	Opportunities
A1. Increase in inflation	O1. Tax breaks for certain commercial enterprises.
A2. Increase in the cost of imported products.	O2. Trade alliances.
A3. Economic instability	O3. 40% payroll subsidies.
A4. Decrease in customer income	O4. New market segments.
Weaknesses	Strengths
D1. Lack of technology	F1. Increased demand for employment (skilled human talent)
D2. Lack of financing	F2. Implementation of home delivery services
D3. Inventory deficiencies	F3. Ease of changing company names
D4. Lack of training	F4. Digital platforms (digital marketing)

Table 5.
DOFA Matrix Strategies

FA STRATEGY	STRATEGY DO
F4-A1. Make internal adjustments to obtain support from different government entities.	D1-O1. Implementation of a virtual portfolio through business platforms.
F3-A2. Commercial companies should obtain low-interest loans to purchase raw materials.	D2-O2. Invite new investors to participate in the company with reasonable capital.
F2-A3. Enter into agreements with educational institutions to request interns.	D3-O2. Contact different suppliers to obtain the necessary quantity of merchandise at affordable prices.
F1-A4. Issue calls for applications to find personnel to perform various specialized functions.	D4-O1-O4. Implement strategies to train staff in customer service focused on all market segments.
FO STRATEGIES	DA STRATEGIES
F1-O4. Hire human talent trained in customer loyalty.	D2-A1-A3. Identify payment agreements to reduce taxes.
F3-O3. Implement a home delivery service to achieve wide coverage.	D4-A4. Train internal staff in customer service.

Table 6.
PESTEL matrix for the commerce sector

PESTEL Analysis of the Trade Sector

Analysis matrix for economic activities of MSMEs in the trade sector

Factor	Detail	Deadline			Impact
		Short term (1 month or less)	Medium Term (1 to 3 years)	Long term (more than 3 years)	
Political	Political instability	Public and social disturbances, roadblocks, protests on various roads in Nariño	x		Negative

	Development plan	Planning and guiding departmental, regional, and municipal administrative actions throughout the government's term to create more competitive environments.	x	Positive
	Restrictive measures	Implementation of restrictive measures on the free movement of persons due to the spread of new strains of COVID-19	x	Negative
Economical	Market fluctuations	Constant changes in the activities of the trade sector.	x	Negative
	Increase in inflation	Increase in product prices due to imbalance between supply and demand.	x	Positive
	Decrease in deflation	Encourage investment and promote the use of productive resources.	x	Negative
	Financial aid provided by the government	Various measures adopted by the national government for different economic sectors	x	Positive
	Reactivation	Reactivation process for different sectors, including the trade sector, following biosafety measures and protocols.	x	Positive
	Unemployment	Rising unemployment figures due to financial difficulties faced by companies.	x	Negative
Social	Vaccination of the population	Progress of the national vaccination plan	x	Positive
	Income level	Decrease in household income levels	x	Negative
	Increased awareness of self-care	Due to the risk of COVID-19 infection, there has been a rise in self-awareness regarding self-care.	x	Positive
Technology	Digitization	Use of technology to enter other markets	x	Positive
	Digital network investment	Improve customer service and response times through virtual services.	x	Positive
	Application development	Apps that help monitor workers' health and report potential symptoms in a timely manner. Apps for developing marketing strategies and promoting customer service.	x	Positive
	Speed of technological change	At the forefront of virtual innovations	x	Positive
	Marketing digital	Social media management, for the purpose of maintaining contact with customers, suppliers, or employees.	x	Positive
Environmental	Non-biodegradable waste	Treatment of non-biodegradable waste such as plastics due to high household demand	x	Negative
	Paper waste and air pollution	Due to the mobility restrictions and quarantine measures implemented by the national government, air pollution and paper consumption in the company were reduced.	x	Positive

	Biological Waste	Treatment of biological waste such as personal protective equipment	x	Negative
Law	Biosafety protocol in public spaces	Comply with Resolution 1513 of 2020.	x	Positive
	Compliance with general biosafety protocol	Comply with Resolution 666 of 2020.	x	Positive

PESTEL Matrix Analysis

The PESTEL matrix describes the external factors that affect economic activities in the trade sector, facilitating the analysis of the main drivers of change and whether these may be positive or negative, highlighting the main consequences of the influence of the environment. It describes the specific characteristics of the factors that make up the PESTEL analysis, which are:

- **Political factor:** this is defined as the extent to which legislation and government actions positively and negatively affect MSMEs. Based on this concept, factors such as political instability and restrictive measures were identified as having adverse effects. In contrast, the departmental and municipal development plan was identified as having a positive impact. The consequences of these factors will become apparent in the medium term, within a range of 1 to 3 years.
- **Economic factor:** this factor analyzed aspects focused on financial impact, identifying market fluctuations, rising inflation, and growing unemployment figures as negative factors. Likewise, factors such as economic recovery, government aid, and declining inflation were identified as factors that could have a positive impact.
- **Social Factor:** this factor analyzed social aspects that identified current societal trends in response to the pandemic, namely vaccination of the population and increased awareness of self-care, contributing to positive societal development. Meanwhile, income levels are negatively impacted, as this factor declined exponentially due to the pandemic. The consequences of these factors will be seen in the medium term, within a range of 1 to 3 years.
- **Technological factor:** the development of this factor took into account the capacity for advancing new technologies and the influence and change they may bring in the future.
- Factors such as digitization, application development, the speed of technological change and digital marketing, and investment in digital networks positively impact organizations in the short term, no more than one month.
- **Environmental factor:** this factor is based on analyzing changes made in environmental and ecological matters. Factors such as the low level of non-biodegradable and biological waste treatment have hurt the environment, which may be greater in the medium term, between one and three years. A positive factor is reduced paper use and air pollution due to the national government's restrictive measures and quarantine periods.
- **Legal factor:** we analyze the different changes in legal regulations related to companies in the service sector and COVID-19. Regulations such as Resolution 1513 of 2020, Resolution 666 of 2020, and Decree 003 of 2020 immediately positively impacted organizations.

CONCLUSIONS

According to the results obtained through the surveys, commercial companies encountered countless obstacles that hindered their business growth, mainly affecting their financial strength and the quality of life of their employees. Many MSMEs were forced to change or modify their business name and, in many other extreme and radical cases, to liquidate their companies.

Some of the strategies implemented for the survival and economic recovery of different commercial companies included creating virtual portfolios through catalogs that allowed them to reach new customers.

For the economic development of commercial companies, entrepreneurs opted to access low-interest loans to meet their obligations and remain in the market.

Some of the companies' strategies to mitigate the economic impact included using technology on a large scale to offer different products through different channels.

One of the strategies implemented by the companies was home delivery, which was implemented as a strategic alliance to reach more potential customers from different segments.

Some of the entrepreneurs stated that government agencies provided very little support and that the companies in question were not legally regulated.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is suggested that commercial companies take action to maintain and conserve the various virtual platforms so that they can exploit them efficiently in the short, medium, and long term, aiming to preserve and increase their portfolio

of different segments of potential customers.

It is recommended to stay abreast of the rules and laws implemented by the various government entities, as there was evidence of a lack of knowledge in different areas. These can serve as support and guidance for steady business growth.

It is essential to continue with home delivery services because they are another way to generate income and position commercial companies in the market, focusing on potential customers in remote areas.

Train human talent in areas such as digital marketing, multilevel marketing, and customer service to maintain or retain different segments and build customer loyalty.

Form strategic alliances that allow them to fill the economic gaps that arose due to the crisis, strengthen their positions, and remain in business over time.

As a recommendation, long-term savings should be implemented as insurance to face different crises that may arise, giving them strength and capabilities in other areas.

Form short, medium, and long-term partnerships that allow them to complete and diversify different activities with a common goal.

As a relevant recommendation, keep all paperwork and taxes required by law in order and register adequately to demonstrate the company's solvency.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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