

# **COVID-19 AND THE SOCIOECONOMIC IMPACT ON SELF-EMPLOYMENT IN SABAH**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The movement control order (MCO) and restrictions in economic activities issued in response to the COVID-19 outbreak has caused significant disruptions in employment. The impact of the pandemic has been greater for self-employed persons than for employed workers, as self-employed persons usually experience substantial obstacles in keeping their businesses alive. Studies on self-employment are thus very important for the nation since they are related to attempts to lessen the detrimental impact of covid-19 on self-employment. Entrepreneurs have overcome numerous challenges within the self-employment. This article investigates the Covid-19 impact on self-employment and small business income and sales. The paper also identify the salient beliefs that policymakers could target to reduce the problem faced by self-employed and small businesses. An online survey was conducted to see on how the self-employed are faring in the crisis covering their work patterns, earnings, concerns and expectations for the future. 185 respondents were collected. This paper suggest that policymakers can start thinking about self-employment policies for a post-COVID-19 economy now, because there is a need for more targeted measures to help disadvantaged self-employed persons stay in business.

**Keywords:** Self-employment, Covid-19, small businesses, policymakers

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

The COVID-19 pandemic has followed by social distancing, and the lock-down has smashed the business market so rigid. Even the well-recognized ones need to re-look how they achieve and function their commercial to retain the financial wheel rotating (Panchal, 2020). Entrepreneurs are people who distinguish and act on chances to endorse positive social change. The pandemic facilitated completely new groups of business, some subsequent in commercial creation completely. Organizations that choice to exploit on circumstantial changes will succeed, and the ones that don't will get interrupted (Kordestani, 2020).

COVID-19 and the subsequent lockdowns and work-from-home orders have forced industries and workers to reconsideration current working styles. In Europe, the percentage of teleworkers improved from 5% in 2019 to 40% in 2020. Even though many nations are now vaccinating against COVID-19, the world is improbable to return to normal rapidly. As such, telecommuting for numerous middle- and high-skilled labors will possibly persevere as share of the future's hybrid work mode (Nikolova, 2021).

Even though we did not ask straight roughly access to the support payment, mutual with the evidence defined above, this presents compelling indication that self-isolating denotes a real cost to self-employed employees and naturally, many workforces do not follow the guidance (Blundell and Venture, 2021a).

Up to a threshold, this scheme delivers a transfer equaling a great share of past incomes to qualified self-employed employees, with no dependence on the amount that self-employed employees have lost as a result of the crisis (Blundell and Venture, 2020a). In US states where commercial circumstances were hardest-hit by COVID-19 (states with 25% or more of industries temporarily shut for one day or more), 13.9% of self-employed workforces received free groceries or a free meal throughout the last seven days from sources for example food banks, religious organizations, community programs, or family, friends or neighbors (Klee, Laughin and Munk, 2020).

In the smallest-affected states (those where 10% or fewer industries temporarily locked for one day or more), there was no statistical alteration by self-employment status in the rate of those getting free groceries or a free meal. It also offers detailed information about small business-specific initiatives, for instance the Paycheck Protection Program. The proportion of commerce in each state that temporarily locked a location, our measure of commercial circumstances, comes from the Small Business Pulse Survey (Klee, Laughin and Munk, 2020).

Some new-born businesspersons and start-ups have been extra opportunistic during the covid-19, turning their industries through some kind of "repurposing" and redirecting current knowledge, skills, persons and networks to new desires that have emerged. From start-ups and persons creating and selling face masks and shields to their local societies to local taxi start-ups turning into grocery delivery businesses, the nature of innovation is repeatedly incremental nonetheless, all at once, vital for survival and adjusting to our "new normal" (Cuyper, Kucukkeles, Reuben, 2020).

Entrepreneurship has turn into more and more related with stereotypical advanced start-ups and entrepreneurs, frequently based in certain geographical areas and fertile environments across the world. While the achievements of these young businesses are certainly vital for the progression of our societies, some force argue that entrepreneurship has grown into a game for the happy few, for those with admission to the precise type of education, funding and systems (Dvorkin, 2020).

The government, public health and economic responses are extremely dissimilar if you are an entrepreneur based in USA or in Europe. Entrepreneurs have to face a new reality: that it is not only an enormous sanitary and health crisis affecting million or even billion people in entirely over the world. This is also an unprecedented recession on the worldwide economy. For example, France has gone 6 GDP points in 15 days and 10 million persons in USA have been jobless. This discloses the instability of our economies and its essentials (Derderian, 2020). Governments must and will request to be self-determining and independent with critical medical supplies and medicines but not only would they like to decrease upcoming vulnerabilities (Derderian, 2020).

More than 2.2 million Californians, explaining for 11.7% of entire national employment, were self-employed. In Californians who depend on self-determining contracting, freelancing, or gig-

economy effort as their key source of revenue. These 1.6 million workforces account for around two-thirds of all self-employment; the rest are business owners (Bohn, Mejia and Lafortune, 2020). The present conditions of self-employed Californians vary importantly across sectors. In excess of one-quarter of labors in the "other services" sector are independent contractors, freelancers, and gig workers, one of the three hardest hit sectors in excess of the past two months. This sector comprise 93,000 employed in beauty and nail salons and barber shops and 95,000 in private households (cooks, maids, and landscapers). Numerous of these industries will be among the last to revive because of the trouble of upholding social distancing (Bohn, Mejia and Lafortune, 2020).

Location, region, or geography was described as a challenge by more than twice the share of businesspersons with a new commercial, from 17% formerly to 39% during the covid-19. The amount that stated presence based on race, ethnicity, gender, income, or other factors as a challenge increased from 17% to 28% (Looze and Desai, 2020).

With the unexpected alteration in the market because of COVID-19, the businesses wanted to alteration their perspective on entrepreneurship. Whereas approximately trades have come to a standstill, there are insufficient chances that have knocked our entrances. Stakeholders are display interest in funding possible COVID-19 solutions and also in businesses that could thrive in the post-pandemic universal (Panchal, 2020).

Younger entrepreneurs with a newer commercial were more likely than individuals with an older commercial to report that possible obstacles were an encounter during the covid-19. Get into startup and growing funding through pandemic circumstances was a superior challenge for entrepreneurs with a new commercial less than 1 year old, related to entrepreneurs with a young or mature commercial (Looze and Desai, 2020).

The general objective of this study is to determine the Covid-19, economic impacts of selected variables on self-employed and small businesses. The specific objectives are to investigate the Covid19 impact on self-employment and small business income and sales. To identify the salient beliefs that policymakers could target to reduce the problem faced by self-employed and small businesses. To address the research goal, the paper commences with a literature review to provide display place of the study. The methodology section describes the data cohort and analysis. Once deliberates the obtained from the survey, the study provides a discussion section. In conclusion, it presents a conclusion section with the future research agenda.

## **2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW**

A review by Goetz, Flemming and Rupasingha (2012) shows that self-employment is on the rise and is likely to stay, thus policymakers should pay attention to this new labour reality. The ability of social entrepreneurship projects to offer new solutions to social and environmental challenges is what attracts people to them. This capacity is even more critical in times of global catastrophes, such as the one caused by COVID-19. In times of significant socioeconomic crises and severe uncertainty, such as those induced by COVID-19, social entrepreneurial intention declines (Rosa et al, 2020).

Further development in developing nations like Vietnam will need diversification of rural household income while sustaining agricultural production, which as a result, can achieve economic growth, food security, and poverty reduction (Duong et al, 2020). The findings of Duong et al (2020) suggest that the Vietnamese government should pursue policies that increase rural households' options for off-farm jobs in order to improve their well-being.

The COVID-19 pandemic's development has accelerated, posing a serious threat to Indonesia's socioeconomic mobility (Prawoto, Purnomo & Az Zahra, 2020). According to Prawoto Purnomo and Az Zahra, negative correlations were seen in the recreation, supermarket, and pharmacy industries, as well as parks, transportation stations, and workplaces in Indonesia. The researchers also noted that the pandemic however, have a positive association with the residential sector, implying that the higher the rate of spread, the more individuals who stayed at home. As a result, in order to mitigate the economic shrinkage, proper policies are required. Prawoto, Purnomo and Az Zahra (2020) proposed fiscal and monetary policies that are expansive in the long run are essential. Additionally recovery measures, which normally include monetary and fiscal stimulation, must become the focus of macroeconomic policy.

According to Grigorescu et al. (2019), unemployment is an effective inclusion tool for some vulnerable groups but ineffective for others. Employee-based self-employment has a lower diversification, showing a strong risk aversion and a poor start-up effect. The labour market has a unidirectional flexibility effect in general. Self-employment policies for a post-COVID-19 economy can already be anticipated by policymakers, which can create new chances for economic growth presented by digitalisation and green entrepreneurship, and the self-employed may require both financial and help to explore these chances (OECD, 2020). According to OECD (2020), the Netherlands is an example of an approach that has tightened the qualifying standards in each consecutive support package, reducing the number of applications and beneficiaries. In 2021, the Netherlands intends to shift its attention from keeping enterprises afloat to reorienting self-employed people toward more sustainable and higher-value-added operations (OECD, 2020).

People with a lower socioeconomic status may have a harder time gaining social protection against COVID-19 in developing or low-income nations than those with a higher socioeconomic status (Oh, Choi & Song, 2021). The findings of Oh, Choi and Song (2021) revealed that in those with lower socioeconomic status in South Korea, implementing an effective medical delivery system and suitable resource distribution can be crucial. Furthermore, because all hospital costs were covered for COVID-19 patients in South Korea, socioeconomic status was not linked to in-hospital mortality in these patients.

COVID-19 has had a disproportionate impact on all sectors of the Indian economy, and even within a sector, there has been a disproportionate loss causing job losses, mental illness, increased domestic violence, and other societal consequences (Aneja & Ahuja, 2020). Aneja and Ahuja (2020) reports that the government and the Reserve Bank of India have adopted and declared several fiscal and monetary policy actions, but notable economists believe that the government has to spend more, regardless of the GDP numbers and budget deficit. The researchers also asserted that more attention is needed for the most vulnerable members of society and sectors, particularly the poor and small businesses.

According to Himani et al (2020), equity investments plummeted in the aftermath of the COVID-19 virus, resulting in a 60 percent drop in total investment raised year over year between quarter one in 2019 and quarter one in 2020. In response to the potential detrimental effects of the COVID-19 situation on British start-ups, the UK government established a Future Fund with a budget of \$250 million to provide investment of between \$250,000 and \$5 million to GB start-ups (Himani et al, 2020). Although many people are encouraged by the UK government's recently announced roadmap to normalcy; nevertheless, policymakers still have room to make policy reforms, such as increasing support for self-isolating workers and loosening qualifying conditions (Blundell, Machin & Ventura, 2021).

### **3.0 METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Questionnaire and Data Collection**

As the purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of COVID-19 to self-employed and small businesses, a few methodologies was explored to conduct the analysis. A univariate analysis will be performed in identifying the predictor variables with great association to income and sales of self-employment and small businesses during the movement control order. Whereas, the chi-square test of independence will be applied to determine if there is a significant relationship between categorical variables (such as demographic variables). Subsequently the data will be analysed through descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation. Additional analysis will be conducted depending on whether enough data is collected to enable such analysis. Discussion in this research was divided into three parts. First part is look at the sentiment and demographic information of the companies, such as the numbers of employees, the location of supplier and customers and the industry sector to which the company belongs. Second part is examines and investigate the Covid19 impact on self-employment and small business income and sales. The fieldwork to collect primary data will be done through online questionnaire survey method or face to face interview method. An online survey was conducted to find the usage of the socioeconomic impact of COVID-19 on self-employed in Sabah. Out of 200 survey distribution there are 185 respondents were collected. The link for the online questionnaire is sent to the self-employed respondents in Sabah. The response rate is less than 92.5 percent

#### **3.2 Analysis**

Table 1 lists the demographic sales and income of all respondents. The responses were collected from interviewees residing in the West Coast, Kudat, Sandakan, Tawau and Interior Sabah, with most living in rural areas. The interviewees are males and females with ages ranging from more than 15 until those above the age of 65. The data also recorded the employment status of the respondents' respective spouses in which majority are employed while few are working in the essential industry. Additionally, the table also mentioned the respondent's respective educational backgrounds, with most having SPM qualifications and least having SRPs. The interviewees consist from various ethnicity, with most being Bajau and least being Rungus, Cocos and Kedayan. Other than that, the majority of the respondents are married while the minority are widowed.

The data showed that the number of children age below 6 years were found to be the highest, with lowest being number of children of age 6 years. Most respondents were found to be earning less than RM18,000 before the MCO, while the least earning RM72,012-RM108,000 of income. However, during the MCO, majority earn less than RM1,500 of income while minority earn more than RM9,001. For the sales before MCO there are 24.9 percent earn less RM1500 and during MCO it peak to 51.4 percent and it reduce slightly to 43.8 percent during RMCO.

**Table 1:** Demographic, Sales and Income

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Total</b>
Location	Beaufort	3	1.6	185
	Beluran	1	.5	
	Keningau	3	1.6	
	Kota Belud	9	4.9	
	Kota Kinabalu	11	5.9	
	Kota Marudu	5	2.7	
	Kuala Penyu	2	1.1	
	Kudat	6	3.2	
	Kunak	2	1.1	
	Lahad Datu	89	48.1	
	Nabawan	1	.5	
	Papar	11	5.9	
	Pitas	2	1.1	
	Putatan	5	2.7	
	Ranau	4	2.2	
	Sandakan	14	7.6	
	Semporna	1	.5	
Sipitang	2	1.1		
Tawau	5	2.7		
Gender	Female	124	67.0	185
	Male	52	28.1	
Age	16-29 years old	83	44.9	185
	30-44 years old	62	33.5	
	45-54 years old	22	11.9	
	55-64 years old	7	3.8	
	65 and above	2	1.1	
Ethnic	Bajau	35	18.9	185
	Bisaya	2	1.1	
	Brunei	12	6.5	
	Bugis	29	15.7	
	Chinese	20	10.8	
	Cocos	1	.5	
	Dusun	13	7.0	
	Idahan	3	1.6	
	Jawa	1	.5	
	Kadayan	1	.5	
	Kadazandusun	9	4.9	
Malay	2	1.1		

	Murut	26	14.1	
	Rungus	1	.5	
	Sino Malay	1	.5	
	Suluk	6	3.2	
	Sungai	9	4.9	
	Timur	4	2.2	
Marital Status	Divorced	8	4.3	185
	Married	88	47.6	
	Single	75	40.5	
	Windowed	5	2.7	
Spouse Employment	Employed	69	37.3	185
	Essential Industry	4	2.2	
	Banking, Electricity, etc)			
	Remote Job	15	8.1	
	Unemployed	39	21.1	
No of Children Age below 6 years	0	26	14.1	70
	1	25	13.5	
	2	7	3.8	
	3	8	4.3	
	4	4	2.2	
No of Children Age 6 years	0	24	13.0	37
	1	13	7.0	
No of Children Age 6-12 years	0	18	9.7	60
	1	24	13.0	
	2	14	7.6	
	3	4	2.2	
No of Children Age 13 to 17 years	0	19	10.3	45
	1	11	5.9	
	2	11	5.9	
	3	3	1.6	
	4	1	.5	
No of Children Age 18 and above	0	15	8.1	56
	1	3	1.6	
	2	16	8.6	
	3	16	8.6	
	4	5	2.7	
	5	1	.5	
Living Strata	Rural	130	70.3	185
	Urban	46	24.9	
Education	Bachelor's Degree	50	27.0	185
	Master	2	1.1	
	PMR	5	2.7	
	SPM	69	37.3	
	SRP	1	.5	

		STPM/Diploma	46	24.9	
WFH RMCO		No Change	23	12.4	185
		No	93	50.3	
		Yes	51	27.6	
Income covid	before	Less than RM18,000	77	41.6	185
		More than RM108,012	21	11.4	
		RM18,012- RM36,000	39	21.1	
		RM36,012- RM72,000	22	11.9	
		RM72,012- RM108,000	16	8.6	
Income MCO	during	Less than RM1,500	92	49.7	185
		More than RM9,001	3	1.6	
		RM1,501- RM3,000	37	20.0	
		RM3,001- RM6,000	28	15.1	
		RM6,001- RM9,000	14	7.6	
Income CMCO	during	Less than RM1,500	77	41.6	185
		More than RM9,001	12	6.5	
		RM1,501- RM3,000	44	23.8	
		RM3,001- RM6,000	31	16.8	
		RM6,001- RM9,000	12	6.5	
Income Same Last Year		Yes	66	35.7	185
		No	109	58.9	
Income Affected		Yes	140	75.7	185
		No	33	17.8	
Sales Before MCO		Less than RM1,500	46	24.9	185
		More than RM9,001	31	16.8	
		RM1,501- RM3,000	45	24.3	
		RM3,001- RM6,000	34	18.4	
		RM6,001- RM9,000	20	10.8	



Sales during MCO & CMCO	Less than 95	51.4	185
	RM1,500		
	More than 5	2.7	
	RM9,001		
	RM1,501-39	21.1	
Sales during RMCO	RM3,000-23	12.4	185
	RM6,000-14	7.6	
	RM6,001-81	43.8	
	RM9,000		
	Less than 15	8.1	
Sales during RMCO	RM1,501-33	17.8	185
	RM3,000-32	17.3	
	RM6,000-14	7.6	
	RM6,001-81	43.8	
	RM9,000		

The mean and standard deviation values for the study variables are presented in Table 2. The descriptive analysis of variables including No of Children Age below 6 years, No of Children Age 6 years, No of Children Age 6-12 years, No of Children Age 13 to 17 years, No of Children Age 18 and above were analyzed using SPSS to compute average mean and standard deviation values.

Results show that the mean scores for No of Children Age below 6 years, No of Children Age 6 years, No of Children Age 6-12 years, No of Children Age 13 to 17 years, No of Children Age 18 and above varied from 0.3 to 2.0. The standard deviation ranges from 0.4 to 1.4, with 185 as the total number of samples.

From the table, the children with age below 6 years has a mean value of 1.130 with a standard deviation of 1.203. Meanwhile, children of age 6 years has a mean value of 0.350 , with a standard deviation of 0.484. Next, children of age 6-12 years has a mean value of 1.070 with standard deviation of 0.899. Moreover, children of the age of 13-17 years has a mean value of 1.020 and a standard deviation of 1.076, while children aged 18 and above has a mean value at 1.930, with a standard deviation of 1.399.

**Table 2:** Descriptive Analysis

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
No of Children below 6 years	1.130	1.203
No of Children Age 6 years	0.350	0.484
No of Children Age 6-12 years	1.070	0.899
No of Children Age 13 to 17 years	1.020	1.076
No of Children Age 18 and above	1.930	1.399

## 4.0 CONCLUSION

This study has number of limitations. The data for this research was gathered from, which may make it difficult to generalize all type of employment status such as worker, employee. It is recommended that further research be undertaken in the following areas: Further investigations are needed to estimate not only in Sabah but in the whole Malaysia. Others limitation consists of the fact that the result was mainly focusing in Sabah, while the self-employment from different states of Malaysia could have been selected. As always in other then self-employment limitations open avenues for future research. One motivating avenue would comprise carrying out a large-scale survey. The purpose is to generate insights and derive lessons on important critical success factors of salient beliefs that policymakers could target to ease the problem faced by self-employed and small businesses.

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