



# **Local restaurant business performance during pandemic covid-19: a case of Nias Island, Indonesia**

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this study is to encourage entrepreneurs who are motivated to make deliberate decisions to follow their dreams. This study aims to determine the factors that motivate and hinder restaurant entrepreneurs from maintaining their businesses during the Covid-19 pandemic. This study used a qualitative method with a single case study approach. Data were collected through interviews and observations. This study involved five informants who owned a pork restaurant business in Nias Island, Indonesia. The data analysis was performed using the GIOIA method. The results showed that three factors motivated entrepreneurs to keep running their businesses during the pandemic: socio-economic factors, self-fulfillment and family business longevity, and customer trust and loyalty. The findings also revealed barriers related to the sustainability of pork restaurants in the local area. This study identified four main barriers during the Covid-19 pandemic such: decreasing number of customers, scarcity of raw materials, lack of knowledge in business strategy, and limitations in fund resources. This study develops a solution to sustain pork restaurants in local areas during pandemic.

**Keywords:** local business performance, motivation factors, barriers to business performance, covid-19 pandemic

## **1. Introduction**

Indonesia is one of the countries that continue to grow economically. Indonesia is one of the world's largest archipelagic countries with 17,508 islands. Indonesia has various local restaurants that serve traditional food, and have grown and established a foothold in people's hearts and minds. According to the Central Statistics Agency, the number of restaurants in North Sumatra Province has increased annually, reaching 168 outlets in 2011. In Indonesia, each restaurant earns an average of 3.5 billion rupiah, with 2.8 billion rupiah in North Sumatra Province. Consequently, the success of the restaurant industry has impacted the country's economy. However, this study also reveals that the restaurant industry in Indonesia continues to face numerous challenges and difficulties that have harmed the overall success of these businesses (Sessu et al., 2020).

A restaurant company offers food products and services. The key focus of a restaurant is not only on the centre of food but also on service (Long, 2004; Sahban, 2019). Workforce plays an essential role in this process. Consumers would use employee efficiency as a yardstick for positive reviews. Frontline employees, in

particular, have direct contact with customers and therefore, need to ensure that customers have fast and efficient service, fulfil necessities, and provide a friendly experience (Kartika & Mohyi, 2019).

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on health problems, but it also has an impact on the food sector. markets, commerce, and access to food supplies are disrupted by sanctions and quarantines (Rahmawati, 2020). Based on observations, researchers found that approximately 20 restaurants remained open during the pandemic. A new issue arose at the start of 2020, which must be addressed by the culinary industry and local restaurant owners, with the Covid-19 pandemic being one of the factors influencing the decline in restaurant companies. Although it is impossible to predict when the pandemic will end in Indonesia, the macroeconomy has been significantly impacted, resulting in a decrease in income, rising unemployment levels, and rising value of loans. The decline in consumption and export output triggered an economic slowdown on the demand side, whereas the slowdown in the manufacturing, trade, and agriculture sectors affected the supply side (Rahmi et al., 2020).

The main goal of this study is to identify the factors that influence business success, particularly in pork restaurants in Nias. It addressed the strategy used by pork restaurants to survive in response to the government's Covid-19 policy. This study aims to define the factors influencing sustainable local business performance in Nias Island, Indonesia, by investigating the entrepreneurial factors that motivate pork restaurant owners to establish their restaurants and the ways in which they sustain their businesses. A qualitative method using a single-case study approach was used in this study. Focusing on five pork restaurant owners on Nias Island as informants, this study analyzed the data gathered through interviews and observations using the Miles and Huberman method.

## **2. Literature review**

### **2.1 Business Performance**

Business performance refers to a company's ability to respond to changes in the business climate such as consumers, rivals, and other influential forces that may alter how the business operates. Entrepreneurial ability to create a balance between external and internal organizations is critical to a successful strategy (Rekarti & Doktoralina, 2017). Organizations try to balance their strategy with changes in innovative methods and marketing mix (location, product, promotion, and price) to realize their strategy, according to Haghghinasab et al. (2013). These factors, on the other hand, can aid in the planning and implementation of the overall business strategy (related to growth and marketing). Characteristics are traits that help influence organizational actions and success while being primarily cognitive and attitudinal. It has the characteristics of an opportunity seeker, intelligent, strategic, and leader, which means that aggressiveness, awareness, innovation, and ambitions are at the forefront, potentially causing significant business changes (Supawan & Deebhijarn, 2020).

### **2.2 Motivation Factor**

Motivation comes from discussing “Movere” claims, which implies inspiration or motivation, according to Robbins (Farida & Widayanti, 2015). Motivation is defined as the desire to achieve organizational goals. Motivation is the driving force for an individual to accomplish or achieve a goal (Germak & Robinson, 2014; Prayetno & Ali, 2020). As the main motivation for becoming an entrepreneur is the entrepreneur’s mindset, motivation is one of the factors that drive a company’s performance. Motivation involves making deliberate decisions to follow an entrepreneur’s dream. Motivation can be described as an increase in energy plants and the conditions under which they guide and maintain work-related behaviors; expertise in directing subordinates to effectively initiate and direct behavior; and an increase in energy plants and the conditions under which they direct and maintain work-related behaviors (Machmud & Sidharta, 2016). For example, the simple desire to support oneself or one’s family may explain why some people start businesses, even though these businesses can only pay salaries and do not result in significant financial benefits or economic growth (Germak & Robinson, 2014).

### **2.3 Entrepreneurial motivation for successful business performance**

This study identified four factors for business success: self-fulfillment and family business longevity; customer trust and loyalty; economic factors as a livelihood for the family; and social factors for developing children's hobbies and education. The entrepreneurial ability of a company’s founders is another factor influencing its success (Shane et al., 2003). The motivation to fulfill necessary goals or tasks can be categorized as self-fulfillment. According to Gay-Perret & Mainali (2012) customer loyalty is an important factor in gaining competitive advantage by providing services that consider buyers' intentions to convince them to make purchases again. Building a further relationship, while trust is defined as the general expectation held by an individual that the words of another can be relied on and the confidence that one party has towards the other due to their honesty and results towards the other partner (Leninkumar, 2017).

## **3. Research Method**

### **3.1 Research Design**

This study used qualitative case studies and research field methods to describe and explain social phenomena that occur in real life. According to Creswell & Poth (2016), qualitative research intends to understand the phenomena experienced by the research subject, such as behavior, perception, motivation, action, etc., holistically, and by means of descriptions in the form of words and language. in a specific natural context using various methods. A case study is conducted by using a case to provide an overview of an issue (Gustafsson, 2017). In refining research, qualitative researchers focus on determining the focus more directly at the level of the newness of information to be obtained from social situations (in the field). This study employed a single case study to identify cases caused by a single issue in Nias Island, Indonesia. This study investigates the factors affecting the business performance of local restaurants and barriers faced during the pandemic Covid-19.

### **3.2 Sampling Design**

For the sampling technique, we used informant determination techniques such as purposive and snowball sampling. One or two individuals were selected to determine the sample size. However, if two people did not feel complete about the data provided, the researchers looked for the other people provided by the previous two (Creswell, 2016). The research subjects can be groups, individuals, institutions, or communities. The key informants were entrepreneurs who managed pork restaurants. Based on the results of the field survey, it was difficult for researchers to find open pork restaurants. Furthermore, the researchers selected two restaurants that were open to business. Then, two owners from each restaurant suggested other restaurants. The researchers chose restaurants on the basis of several criteria. First, every pork restaurant in Nias has experienced complex problems during pandemic. Restaurant owners have been running businesses for more than ten years. Finally, the uniqueness of this sample relates to the development of pork restaurants based on human resources and their economic potential to support the region's natural resources.

### **3.3 Data Collection**

Observations, interviews, and documentation were used for data collection. Observation is a technique that is carried out directly and an automated recording of the phenomenon being investigated. The author also used participatory observation, in which the researcher came to the research site but was not involved in activities at the site itself. This method was used to obtain data or information on the performance of pork restaurant business. We used semi-structured interviews (appendix), this type of interview is included in the in-depth interview category, where in practice it is rather more free and casual when compared to structured interviews. The purpose of this type of interview was to determine the cause of the problem more openly, and interviewees were asked for their opinions. When conducting interviews, researchers must listen carefully and take notes on what informants say. The appointment of informants was based on recommendations from the first restaurant to the second restaurant. Documentation is a record of events that have passed. The documentation method strengthens and supports information obtained from the observations and interviews. This study used the documentation of figures relating to existence of pork restaurants in Nias. After data collected, we combined them with triangulation to emphasize the results in terms of meaning rather than generalization. Triangulation was used to test data validity. Triangulation is defined as a data collection technique that combines various existing data sources.

### **3.4 Data Analysis**

Data analysis is the process of systematically searching for and organizing interviews, field notes and other materials that have been collected or compiled by researchers after carrying out the process of collecting data from the field Creswell & Poht (2016) This data analysis activity is carried out by examining the data, organizing it, dividing it into units for manageability in order to find the real meaning with the predetermined problem formulations. Data analysis is performed

interactively and occurs continuously until completion; thus, the data are saturated. Data analysis includes data reduction, display, and conclusion drawing/verification (Miles & Huberman, 2002). We conducted descriptive model analysis using simple coding. Data were collected to determine whether motivational factors and obstacles affect pork restaurant business performance. The data were used to examine the process of identifying the motivational and inhibitory factors for pork restaurant business performance. Finally, the data processed by integrating and filtering categories so that all developed categories could try the most variations in the behavior patterns. This study analyses the interaction between components and the formation of the concept of motivation and barriers in the pork restaurant business.

## **4. Result and Discussion**

### **4.1 Case's Profile: Growth of Pork Restaurant Business in Nias Island, Indonesia**

This study focuses on the city of the Gunung Sitoli sub-district and its surroundings: Kota Gunung Sitoli, Moawo, Miga, and Awa'ai. The Nias Regency is one of the regencies within the provinces of North Sumatra and West Sumatra, approximately 86 nautical miles away from the Central Tapanuli Regency. Accessibility to this area is classified as difficult because it can only be achieved by air and sea transportation, with a limited frequency of travel. The Nias Islands contributed to the economic growth of the North Sumatra Province from 200 to 2012. However, the Nias economy has experienced significant economic fluctuations. The Nias District and the city of Gunung Sitoli have always exceeded the growth of the province of North Sumatra, but in 2012, the growth fell to the lowest level compared to the last five years. Economic growth can be seen in economic sector data based on business fields, including the agricultural sector, mining and quarrying sector, manufacturing industry sector, electricity, gas and clean water sector, construction sector, industrial sector trade, hotels and restaurants, transportation and communication, financial sector, leasing and corporate services and other service sectors.

This study focuses on the problems faced by pork restaurants in Nias. Covid-19, which has lasted more than 1.5 years in Indonesia, has devastated the national economic sector, including micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs). Based on the data, the impact of Covid-19 has made 4 out of five pork restaurants in Nias experiencing a decrease in demand and two out of three pork restaurants experiencing a decrease in income. In addition, most pork restaurants in Nias have difficulty in their supply chains and distributing their products. Therefore, this study focuses on the motivational and inhibiting factors of how local restaurants manage their business performance.

### **4.2 Informant Profiles**

Various businesses have operated for more than 30 years and some have only started their businesses for approximately five years. In field research, the researcher found 20 pork restaurants; however, only five pork restaurants were

willing to participate in this study. Each informant had similar stories about the decline in business performance during the Covid-19 pandemic. Four of the five restaurants stated that they had issues during the pandemic such as lower income/revenue, a decreasing number of customers, and a lack of funds and raw materials. The five restaurants selected for this study are listed in Table 1.

Table 1. I. Key Informants of Local Restaurant in Nias Island

Details	Informant A	Informant B	Informant C	Informant D	Informant E
Code	I.A	I.B	I.C	I.D	I.E
Firm Age	12	30	25	15	5
Current Location	Moawo	Kota Gunung sitoli	Kota Gunung sitoli	Moawo	Awa'ai
Sales revenue/month (Rupiah) during Pandemic-Covid 19	±1,5 Million	±1,5 Million	±2 Million	±1,5 Million	±2 Million
Position in business	Owner	Owner	Owner	Owner	Owner
Latest education	High School	Elementary School	Elementary School	High School	High School

### **4.3 Factors that motivate local entrepreneurs towards successful business performance**

#### 4.3.1 Enhancing socioeconomic status

Entrepreneurs need to invest money in building their business. However, I.A mentioned that she did not need to invest a lot of money because she wanted to continue her brother's restaurant. On the other hand, I.B, I.C, I.D, and I.E, plan to open a restaurant because they have financial difficulties. According to I.B, I.C, I.D, and I. E., there were several opportunities to open restaurants in Nias. such as inexpensive local resources. lot of natural ingredients and high demand.

#### 4.3.2 Self-Fulfilment

I.A said that she wanted to be an entrepreneur because if her brother closed the restaurant, I.A would lose everything. Customers' favourite restaurants were closed. I.A claimed that she and her husband would continue to run the restaurant. As my husband had previously worked as a contractor, money was saved and used to renovate the restaurant, making it more appealing to customers and increasing the level of service provided, resulting in customer loyalty. I.A and I.C, on the other hand, faced the same difficulties in dealing with the pandemic. In this situation, I only surrendered to God because he felt that God would help him get through the tough times he was experiencing.

I.B reasons for becoming a restaurant owner is self-fulfillment. Operating the restaurant for 30 years, his inspiration has always been to send all his children to college. She was motivated to pursue this goal, and all IB's children achieved their goals, making I.B overjoyed. Meanwhile, I.D and I.C decided to become entrepreneurs because they believed that cooking good food could earn money and that there were opportunities to open a restaurant, which inspired I.D and I.C I. C.do so. Fortunately, the I.D family owns a pig farm; therefore, their main business ingredients are readily available. I.D noted that she did not worry about finding the key ingredients during the pandemic, so the restaurant remained open. As previously mentioned, I.E. started a local restaurant when she resigned as an elementary schoolteacher so she needed to borrow funds from the bank. I.E., on the other hand, said that it is not easy, but that nothing is impossible if one believes that anything is achievable and continues to build a restaurant with a good service.

#### 4.3.3 Customer trust and loyalty

Based on the interview results, the average local business owner decided to open pork restaurant. This occurred because the average Nias citizen has a culture that always requires pork as its main ingredient. For example, during family events, traditional events (weddings). Therefore, restaurant entrepreneurs have a high chance of seeing consistent profits from such a high demand. Therefore, most restaurants in Nias have served pork as the main course. According to I. A, the restaurant business continued because her brother had opened a new branch in another city. Another explanation is that pork restaurants have loyal customers. According to some respondents, they wanted to open a restaurant because they saw a great opportunity since the average Nias people still used pork as the main course in any event and even at banquets.

### **4.4 Barriers factors for successful business performance during Covid-19 pandemic**

#### 4.4.1 The Scarcity of main raw materials or substitute materials

Based on the interview results, the restaurant owners stated that it was difficult to find the main raw materials or substitutes for other ingredients. I. A said Covid 19, and swine flu made it difficult to find fresh and healthy pork. (I.A). I.E also agree that Covid 19 has a great impact in terms of material demands and customers, especially ever since the swine flu, it is currently difficult to find healthy and fresh pork. I.B stated the same. This finding also indicates that the price of the main material increased because of the inflation. This statement is supported by an article in Indozone. id (2020). Indonesian statistics for Gunung Sitoli City recorded an inflation rate of 1.00 percent for commodities in September 2020. The consumer price index (CPI) increase from 103.92 in August 2020 to 104.96 September 2020. for commodities that contributed to the highest inflation in Gunung Sitoli City in September 2020 was pork with a CPI value of 0.8975.

#### 4.4.2 Customer buying interest decreases

Even though the restaurant's business was running well, the arrival of swine flu and Covid-19 made it difficult for I.A to find fresh raw materials for the main menu

items. The biggest challenges are the loss of customers and decrease in income. Despite this, I.A said that the restaurant must always be open, because she always believes that loyal customers will come to that restaurant. I.B, I.C, I.D, and I.E also informed that they face the same difficulties and further supported the validity of I.A's statement that it is difficult to find fresh food ingredients. I.B mentioned that sometimes fresh food always runs out quickly in the market, so I.B decided to make a new menu. I.C manages to keep the restaurant open by serving a new menu, so that income can be used as capital to buy fresh ingredients. Because of the high price of raw materials even if the main menu is replaced by chicken, the price in the market is also high, forcing I.C to keep making a new menu to maintain the restaurant operations. I. D. stated that it is easy to find fresh raw materials because I.D family has a pig farm in cooperation and is approved by the public health office. Despite this, I. D. still admits that half of their customers have gone. On the other hand, I.E also try to make a new menu open, and know that it will be a difficult long road ahead.

#### 4.4.3 Lack of Business Knowledge

Lack of knowledge about marketing strategy is one of the barriers faced by I.A, I.B, I.C, I.D, who lack deeper knowledge of marketing strategy. I.A stated before running this business that the restaurant already had loyal customers. I.A said she even joined seminars about marketing strategy, but it was only learning through theory. I. A said that she still did not develop an important marketing strategy. On the other hand, I.B academic background never passed beyond elementary school graduates. This happened because I.B parents do not have money to pay tuition fees to continue junior high school. I.B loved cooking, to the point where I.B and I.B husbands opened a restaurant in the middle of the town for strategic positioning. However, the restaurant business operated well for 30 years. I.B said she did not understand what marketing strategy meant, so during the pandemic, I.B realized that she still did not know how to keep customers eating at the restaurant.

Lack of business knowledge is one of the major barriers faced by entrepreneurs in Indonesia. In this case, I.C said the educational background was very influential, only graduating from elementary school with only money and cooking skills when faced with this pandemic. I.C had problems with its marketing strategies. I.D also added that when the business began, she admitted not knowing anything besides cooking and making menus. When the pandemic came, I.D said she did not know how to increase the number of customers, the biggest challenge she faced, or how to reduce the number of customers. Initially, I said that he had no prior knowledge on how to run a business or marketing strategy. After I.E and I.E wife were running their restaurants, the IE knew that a good strategy was required. I.E said he tried to provide good service to the customer but during the pandemic, IE still lost half of the customers, and I.E said he always stayed enthusiastic and was trying to create a new menu.

#### 4.4.4 The limitation of the fund resources

Previously, most restaurant businesses in Nias had run well. However, they also face financial problems. Raw material prices began to increase, and I.A was forced to lay off two employees. I. B. performed the same task. I.A had to consider the

needs of children who attended schools outside the area. According to I. A, she tries her best, and leaving the rest to God is the best way. According to I.B, he is not concerned with money because he has children who cannot afford the capital. In another case, I.C said that adding a new menu is the safest way to deal with a pandemic or swine flu. I.C attempted to use the community at a workplace. However, funds are insufficient to meet the community's needs.

I.D mentioned that she did not experience any difficulties in I.D case and mentioned that he was still opening the restaurant. I.D has a few working capital restrictions, but they are not very influential because I.D does not waste I.D's money on purchasing raw materials since I. D's family owns a pig farm. One of the challenges that I.E faced was a lack of funding and resources. I. E is aware that raw materials are rising in price, I.E decided to add a new menu of low-cost raw materials during the pandemic.

#### **4.5 Discussion**

According to Suparyanto (2010), socioeconomic status is a place or a person's role in society, a picture of a person's or society's economic condition, with explanations such as the type of employment and level of education. Economic factors influence people's attitudes, particularly business decisions. This economic factor is indistinguishable from a person's income level or economic circumstances; therefore, these economic factors as well as other factors that affect a company's efficiency, such as entrepreneurial ability alone, would have an impact on the size of business capital. Consequently, this effect implies that entrepreneurship activities in villages contribute to economic growth (Dhewanto et al., 2020). Pork, a revered animal slaughtered at traditional festivals, is the main menu for all activities in the Nias culture. As a result, almost all of the main menus of Nias restaurants or their main ingredients are pork (Zaluchu, 2020). Furthermore, the self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1997) of Najib et al. (2020) contends that learning from prior experience is the most significant element in establishing higher beliefs in one's own abilities. Thus, the more an entrepreneur increases their human capital by acquiring education and experience, the more confident they are in their ability to successfully manage their business (Lee, Hallak, & Sardeshmukh, 2016).

With their skills and tools, many entrepreneurs and businesses are becoming more creative, inventive, and new as the economy becomes more competitive. Most entrepreneurs already have business capital and expertise, such as venture capital awareness and experience in successfully operating and expanding their business. On the other hand, this has a negative effect on small business owners, as the majority of them have insufficient knowledge and capital to expand their operations (Ogi, Tulung, & Raintung, 2018; Anggadwita et al., 2021). Every entrepreneur, according to (Lalang, Sya'ban, & Penpada, 2021), must build and enhance efficiency in order to achieve effectiveness, and everyone must be able to find opportunities to compete. However, the restaurant industry faces numerous obstacles, including fierce competition, low barriers to entry, price-conscious customers, rising food prices, government regulations, and high labor costs. Therefore, local restaurant owners usually start small businesses with minimal capital. Capital is another impediment to the growth of established sectors. As capital is scarce, it is difficult for businesses to grow and innovate (Nasution, 2018).

This study discovered four factors that hinder business success: The scarcity of raw materials (pork) or substitute materials, decrease in customer buying intention, lack of knowledge in business, and the limitation of fund resources. Raw materials comprise most finished products and those processed by manufacturing companies can be obtained from local purchases, imports or the results of their processing. The production factor that affects the smooth running of a company is determined by inventory. because it affects a company's profits. Through optimal inventory control, a company can meet customer needs on time and minimize inventory costs, thereby achieving its goals (Lahu & Sumarauw, 2017). Customer satisfaction is a feeling of pleasure or disappointment arising from the comparison of perceived performance with expectations. Customer satisfaction is a feeling of happiness, disappointment or even somewhere in between. This can be attributed to a performance comparison based on expectations. If they do not meet expectations, they are not satisfied. Purchasing decisions are activities carried out by individuals, and can be directly or indirectly influenced by feelings when making decisions to purchase a product offered by a seller.

Small independent restaurants can lack resources, such as high-quality produce and professionally qualified chefs, as well as formal, well-structured innovation processes. However, our understanding of how creativity influences success in small- and medium-sized restaurants is severely lacking (Lee et al., 2016). The restaurant industry is unquestionably lucrative if properly handled as beneficiaries include not only entrepreneurs but also the local community. As previously mentioned, strong capital management skills and entrepreneurial spirit are needed to support promising business opportunities. In principle, their ability to market and handle ideas is a determining factor for their success. This requires a combination of expertise, experience, initiative, and intelligence. Traders' abilities also include the ability to carefully handle their finances, specifically working capital and profits, as well as the ability to sell their goods (Ogi, Tulung, & Raintung, 2018).

## **5. Conclusion and Implications**

This study identifies three entrepreneurial factors that motivate business owners develop local restaurants: self-fulfillment, family business longevity, socioeconomic status, and customer trust and loyalty. These three factors inspired local restaurant owners to continue running their businesses during the pandemic. The researcher discovered four barriers to business performance during the pandemic. Most restaurant owners are hampered by lack of financial resources. Three of the five informants faced this barrier: they lacked knowledge of marketing strategies, had limitations in product innovation, and had limited funding resources. They had no idea how to manage it, but they introduced a new menu for the development of restaurants during the pandemic. To overcome the other four barriers, local restaurant businesses need special intervention from other stakeholders such as local governments, businesses, and academics. The researcher recommends that local governments develop public policies such as financial and economic support to drive business activities during the COVID-19 pandemic in Nias. Local restaurants must collaborate with businesses and academics to improve their business knowledge and marketing strategy. This local restaurant business can renew their strategies to improve business performance. Researchers have

discovered solutions to this problem by adding new products and improving the taste and cooking techniques. Improving service quality with self-service, responsiveness, and hospitality. This solution is viable for overcoming barriers to the decline in public buying interest.

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