

Firm Structural Traits and Stock Performance of Consumer Goods Sector Listed in the Nigerian Exchange Group During and Post Covid-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

This study objective is to close the gap on the relationship between firm traits and stock performance in Nigeria during a time of unparalleled global upheaval. By employing quantitative analysis to empirically demonstrate the study result. Stock performance (SP) is the most active financial indicator in any firm. Thus, SP responded to the historic slowdown in economic activity brought on by COVID-19. The study used longitudinal and ex post facto research design. The population for the study consists of 20 quoted firms on the Nigerian Exchange Group. The sampled consist of 17 firms with available and accessible annual reports that covered the study period of 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023 was used, thus the study acknowledged 2020-2021 as COVID year, while 2022-2023 as post COVID year. The findings indicated MAC had a significant favorable impact on SP across both time periods, ROA significantly improved SP throughout the COVID-19 period, while FLEV had a negative impact on SP during the COVID-19 era. The study concluded that, MAC took center stage, suggesting that investor confidence in bigger, better-capitalized firms became more significant. As the market place more emphasis on stability and high valuations than on operational effectiveness or taking risks, ROA, BUR, ASS, and FAGE lost significance. It was recommended that Although Firm Size (FSIZE) was negatively impacted during the COVID-19 pandemic, this does not imply that businesses should drastically reduce their workforce.

Keywords: Firm Traits, Stock Performance, COVID-19, Consumer Goods Sector.

1. Introduction

Stock performance (SP) is the most active financial indicator in the any firms. Thus, SP responded to the historic slowdown in economic activity brought on by COVID-19 (Phan & Narayan, 2021). Understanding the elements that influence a firm's stock performance both during and after a crisis is crucial for investors, policymakers, and corporate stakeholders as businesses deal with the difficulties brought on by the epidemic. Countries responded to the COVID-19 pandemic by enforcing travel restrictions and limiting economic activity in order to stop the virus's spread, which had a negative impact on stock performance. The financial and economic performance of the financial markets was negatively impacted by the closures and restrictions placed on nations, which caused many sectors and economic activities to be disrupted, both domestically and internationally. This included cutting supply chains, closing



borders, and making it difficult to move goods and services between nations (Ramya & Baral, 2021).

The situation has drawn attention from researchers worldwide who are interested in how COVID-19 affects firm traits. Numerous accounting studies have examined the relationship between firms' structural traits and its stock performance during and after times of crisis. For example, researchers studying the COVID-19 pandemic and how it affects stock performance have come from both developed and underdeveloped nations. Al Amosh and Khatib (2023) examined the effects of COVID-19 on financial and ESG performance using data from G20 nations. This study examines how the COVID-19 epidemic affected firms' financial performance using a G20 sample and how environmental, social, and governance (ESG) performance acted as a moderator. Nenkov (2021) conducted an inquiry into the fundamentals of firms in the COVID-19 stock market. The study monitored the increase in confirmed COVID-19 cases in the US between January 22, 2020, the day of the country's first confirmed COVID-19 infection, and September 30, 2020. In 2020, the third calendar quarter ends on September 30, 2020. As COVID-19 spread across the US, this suggests that investors were putting down companies with greater leverage and those with larger total assets. On the other hand, research from underdeveloped nations revealed that Shen, et al., (2020) looked into how the COVID-19 pandemic affected workplace productivity. They used financial data from Chinese enterprises that were listed to demonstrate how COVID-19 affected business performance. Additionally, Zou et al. (2020) carried out a survey in Guangdong Province, China, to examine the effects of the COVID-19 epidemic on businesses. The investigation found that almost every facet of the world economy and society has been affected by the COVID-19 epidemic. Aifuwa et al. (2020) investigated the relationship between the performance of Nigerian enterprises and the coronavirus pandemic epidemic. To test the study's hypotheses, the researchers used linear regression. According to the study's findings, Nigerian firms' performance is adversely affected by the COVID-19 epidemic.

Research on firm structural traits and stock performance in Nigerian firms during and after the COVID-19 epidemic is lacking, despite the enormous amount of research from both industrialized and developing nations, including Nigeria. This study attempts to close this gap by employing quantitative analysis to empirically demonstrate the relationship between firm traits and stock performance in Nigeria during a time of unparalleled global upheaval. To evaluate the relationship between firm structural traits and stock performance, financial data from firms listed on the Nigerian Exchange Group (NGX) was used. Firm-specific traits during times of crisis, like the COVID-19 pandemic, receive little attention in the literature that currently exists, which mostly focuses on generic factors determining stock performance. By filling this gap in knowledge, the study hopes to offer important new perspectives on the relationship between firm structural traits and market dynamics in Nigeria both during and after the pandemic.

2. Literature Review

Firm traits are defined by Egbunike and Okerekeoti (2018) as a firm's managerial and demographic variable that includes groups inside the firm's domain. It is impossible to overestimate the importance of these traits in influencing a company's stock success. In order to represent the firm's attributes, seven independent variables were selected: firm size, profitability, returns on assets, firm liquidity, firm age, earnings per share, and financial leverage. They were further separated into three groups: performance variables, like profitability and liquidity; monitoring variables, like returns on assets and earnings per share;

and structure variables, like firm size and financial leverage (Adebayo et al., 2022; Shehu, 2012). Firm structural traits include age, liquidity, sales growth, size, institutional shareholding, board composition, and leverage, are largely within the control of management (Dioha et al., 2018). Structure, market, and performance variables are the three categories into which Fathi (2013) divides traits that explain the quality of disclosure about firms' attributes. On the other hand, SP describes how well a specific stock or group of stocks has done over a specified time period. It is a crucial component of investing, and investors use it to assess the profitability and possible returns of their capital (Aminah, 2021). A number of variables, such as market conditions, company financials, industry developments, and investor attitude, affect the idea of stock performance (Djamil et al., 2013). According to Mazur et al. (2021) stock performance indicates how stock has performed over a given time period. This implies that the overall performance of stock determines the return on investment the firm is required to possess.

2.1. Profitability on Stock Performance During and Post COVID-19 Pandemic

According to Al-Lozi and Obeidat (2016) and Budi and Davianti (2022), one of the most powerful firm attributes in relation to stock performance is profitability. When a company's profit is rising, it indicates that its stock is doing well on the stock exchange. According to Budi and Davianti (2022), it was determined that net profit would eventually have a favorable effect on stock performance since it influences profitability ratios such as return on assets. Many firms encountered difficulties during the COVID-19 pandemic, including supply chain interruptions, lockdowns, lower consumer spending, and a decline in demand for specific goods and services. These elements had a direct impact on businesses' profitability, which caused changes in stock prices. According to Amalia et al. (2020) in post-pandemic, as economies recover and businesses adjust to the new normal, profitability will continue to be a key factor in stock performance. Firms that can successfully control expenses, innovate, and seize new opportunities are likely to see an increase in profitability and, as a result, draw in investors. Given the foregoing, the research hypothesis is shown below:

H₀₁: ROA has no significant effect on stock performance of Nigerian firms during and post covid-19 pandemic.

2.2. Firm Size on Stock Performance During and Post COVID-19 Pandemic

A firm's size may indicate that it is growing, which will have a positive impact on the market. As a company's overall assets and sales rise, so does its size or scope. A corporation with a larger firm size may have a higher market value and perform better financially than smaller companies (Sudrajat & Daud, 2020). However, research on the impact of business size has yielded a variety of results; some have found little to no impact, while others have confirmed that debt negatively mediates the relationship between financial performance and firm size. Adebayo et al. (2022) posited that firm size has been widely considered as one of the most significant variables in empirical literature. The COVID-19 pandemic has produced a mismatch between the old and new surroundings by increasing market turbulence in most organizational structure. The COVID-19 pandemic was a trying time for firms and the world market at large. Given the circumstance and turbulence cause by COVID-19 on stock performance, the study hypothesis as shown below:

H₀₂: Firm size has no significant effect on stock performance of Nigerian firms during and post covid-19 pandemic

2.3. Financial Leverage on Stock Performance during and post COVID-19 Pandemic

Financial leverage is an investing strategy that involves borrowing money, more precisely using different financial instruments or borrowed cash to boost an investment's potential return. The quantity of debt that a business utilizes to finance its assets is another term for leverage. Depending on the financial leverage and debt management skills, the impact on stock performance differed for different industries and companies (Boyarchenko et al., 2022). This was further supported by the Legacy (2021), which found that different industries and businesses experienced different effects of financial leverage on stock performance during the COVID-19 epidemic. Regardless of their level of financial debt, industries including retail, hospitality, and airlines that were severely impacted by lockdowns, travel restrictions, and decreased consumer spending faced formidable obstacles. Nonetheless, businesses with stronger balance sheets and lower debt levels were typically more resilient and better equipped to withstand the economic crisis. Additionally, according to Farre-Mensa et al. (2018), financial leverage significantly influenced stock performance during the COVID-19 pandemic, while post pandemic financial leverage affected stock performance, and this trend is predicted to continue, while it could also be impacted by other aspects of the corporate climate. The study therefore hypothesis as shown below:

H₀₃: Financial leverage has no significant effect on stock performance of Nigerian firms during and post covid-19 pandemic

2.4. Business Risk on Stock Performance during and post COVID-19 Pandemic

Business risk is possible for a variety of internal and external factors to adversely affect a firms operations or competitive position (Dvorsky et al., 2021). Thus, in order to reduce business risk for enhanced stock performance there should be a diversification operating in many markets or the industries can assist mitigate the influence of business risk on stock performance (Kassi et al., 2019). Globally, companies and financial markets have been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic (Wu et al., 2022). Particularly during this period, there has been a great deal of uncertainty and volatility in the stock market (Wu et al., 2022). All things considered, business risks have significantly influenced how stocks have performed both during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Firm valuations and investor sentiment have been impacted by operational, financial, market, reputational, and regulatory concerns. Businesses aiming to strengthen their resilience and investors hoping to make wise choices in a changing economic environment must both understand these risks. Base on the above, the study therefore hypothesis as follows:

H₀₄: Business risk has no significant effect on stock performance of Nigerian firms during and post covid-19 pandemic

2.5. Asset Structure on Stock Performance During and Post COVID-19 Pandemic

According to Temuhale and Ighoroje (2021), asset structure describes the makeup of a company's assets, encompassing both tangible and intangible assets. The asset structure of a company has a significant impact on how well its stock performs (Setiadharmha & Machali, 2017). A thorough assessment of the connection between asset structure and stock performance requires careful consideration of the assets' composition, allocation, consequences for the debt-to-equity ratio, industry dynamics, and investor views (Al-Ani, 2014). Asset structure has a significant impact on how stocks perform both during and after the COVID-19 outbreak. Strong asset structures help businesses weather economic crises and

seize growth opportunities when the economy recovers (Basri et al., 2023). Companies with weaker asset structures, on the other hand, might have a difficult time getting back on track. When making investment decisions, investors should carefully consider the asset structure of enterprises in light of the pandemic's effects. Nevertheless, the study we anticipate that business risk has no significant effect on stock performance. Hence, we hypothesize:

H₀₅: Asset structure no significant effect on stock performance of Nigerian firms during and post covid-19 pandemic

2.6. Firm Age on Stock Performance during and post COVID-19 Pandemic

The term "firm age" describes how long a business has been in existence since its founding. It is a metric for evaluating a firm's experience and maturity. A firm's age might reveal information about its stability, room for expansion, and general success (Rwakihembo et al., 2023). When assessing a company's profitability and sustainability, firm age is a crucial consideration. It is frequently employed as a gauge of a company's capacity to endure economic downturns, adjust to shifting market conditions, and preserve client loyalty (Rane et al., 2023). During and after the pandemic, the impact of firm age on stock performance is one topic of interest. The purpose of this literature review is to examine the body of research on the connection between stock performance during and after the COVID-19 epidemic and firm age. Numerous research has looked at how company age affected stock performance during the COVID-19 epidemic. Nenkov (2021) examined the stock returns of companies in various age groups during the early stages of the pandemic. According to the results, newer companies saw larger stock price drops than older, more established companies. This might be because of things like having more debt, having fewer financial resources, and being more vulnerable to market fluctuations. Neukirchen et al. (2022) looked into the connection between stock market responses to COVID-19 news announcements and business age. According to the findings, older businesses were more resilient than younger ones when it came to how their stock prices responded to news about the epidemic. Their capacity to quickly adjust to shifting market conditions and their experience managing crises may be the reasons for this resilience. We therefore hypothesis as follows:

H₀₆: Firm age has no significant effect on stock performance of Nigerian firms during and post covid-19 pandemic

2.7. Market Capitalization and Stock Performance during and post COVID-19 Pandemic

According to Luther (2023), MAC is used to divide equities into classes such as large-cap, mid-cap, and small-cap, which aid investors in evaluating risk and possible returns according to their investing preferences. According to Permata and Alkaf (2020), a firm's market capitalization can be influenced by a number of things. A firm's market capitalization is directly impacted by its sales, earnings, and profitability, as indicated by its financial performance. A rise in market capitalization is frequently the result of strong financial performance. Thus, stocks with higher market capitalizations may draw more institutional investors because of their perceived stability and liquidity, which could affect their performance. On the other hand, smaller companies with lower market capitalizations may have more room to grow and, if they are successful in implementing their business plans, may see higher stock performance (Kumar & Kumara, 2021). In the early stages of the pandemic, stock markets around the world saw steep drops as investors sold off their stocks in response to growing uncertainty about the virus's economic impact; travel, hospitality, and retail were among the hardest-hit sectors, resulting in notable drops in market capitalization for businesses in these sectors (Bradley & Stumpner, 2021; Ji et al., 2024). As economic activity

restarted after COVID-19, the stock market began to show indications of recovery, with several companies restoring lost market value. Many businesses now have a more optimistic perspective as a result of government stimulus packages and immunization campaigns that have boosted market mood (Kuvshinov & Zimmermann, 2022). We therefore hypothesis, as shown below:

H₀₇: Market capitalization has no significant effect on stock performance of Nigerian firms during and post covid-19 pandemic.

3. Methods

To achieve this, the study to adopted the longitudinal and ex post facto research design. The population of this study consist of all quoted consumer goods firms on the floor of the Nigerian Exchange Group (NGX). There are 20 quoted firms on the Nigerian Exchange Group as at 31st December, 2023 (NGX, 2023). The sampled consist 17 firms with available and accessible annual reports that covered the study period of 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023 was used, thus the study acknowledged 2020-2021 as covid year, while 2022-2023 as post covid year.

3.1. Model Specification

The study will employ a panel data regression model to analyze the link between firm structural traits and stock performance during and post covid-19. The model can be specified as follows:

$$\begin{aligned}
 SP_1 &= \beta_0 + \beta_1ROA_1 + \beta_2FSize_1 + \beta_3FLev_1 + \beta_4Bur_1 + \beta_5Ass_1 + \beta_6Fage_1 + \beta_7Mac_1 + \varepsilon \\
 &\dots\dots\dots\text{During COVID-19} \qquad \qquad \qquad \text{Model 1} \\
 SP_2 &= \beta_0 + \beta_1ROA_2 + \beta_2FSize_2 + \beta_3FLev_2 + \beta_4Bur_2 + \beta_5Ass_2 + \beta_6Fage_2 + \beta_7Mac_2 + \varepsilon \\
 &\dots\dots\dots\text{Post COVID-19} \qquad \qquad \qquad \text{Model 2}
 \end{aligned}$$

Where:

- SP = Stock Performance
- ROA = Return on Asset
- FSize = Firm Size
- FLev = Financial Leverage
- Bur = Business Risk
- Ass = Asset Structure
- Fage = Firm Age
- Mac = Market Capitalization
- β_0 to β_7 = Constant term and regression coefficients
- ε = error term

3.2. Measurement of Variables

Table 1. Measurement of Variables

Variables	Definition	Measurement	Source	Aproari sign
SP	Stock Performance	Represents the dependent variable, measured by changes in stock prices.	Bello et al. (2022).	
ROA	Return of Asset	Profits, profit before tax-to-total asset	Diokno (2022)	+

Fsize	Firm Size	Firms' total asset	An and Guo (2022)	±
Flev	Financial Leverage	Firm's debt-to-equity ratio	Ishak et al. (2018)	±
Bur	Business Risk	Firm's efficiency in generating profits from its assets (Efficiency ratio; expenses/revenue)	Merková and Drábek (2015)	-
Ass	Asset Structure	Firm's ability to meet its short-term obligations with its short-term assets.	Shi (2021); Temuhale and Ighoroje (2021)	+
Fage	Firm Age	Number of years since a firm's establishment.	Olowokure et al. (2016)	+
Mac	Market Capitalization	Firm total cost of market capitalization	Dias (2013); Permata and Alkaf (2020).	-

4. Results and Discussion

The result of the study is displayed below:

Table 2. Summary of Descriptive Statistics

Covid-19 Consumer Goods Sector						Post Covid-19 Consumer Goods Sector					
Variable	Mean	Max	Min	Std. Dev.	Obs	Variable	Mean	Max	Min	Std. Dev.	Obs
SP1	121.5210	870.0000	3.220000	238.6185	104	SP2	122.5670	870.0000	3.400000	239.5850	104
ROA1	0.067166	0.347591	0.002286	0.074042	104	ROA2	0.092740	0.780896	0.000952	0.124128	104
FSIZE1	17.90676	22.67170	11.56270	2.439102	104	L(FSIZE2)	18.34708	22.42028	11.59687	2.376444	104
FLEV1	1.703526	13.51190	0.305564	1.867643	104	FLEV2	2.630615	12.99678	0.372473	2.501715	104
ASS1	2.27E+08	5.41E+09	98017.00	8.27E+08	104	ASS2	3.24E+08	4.26E+09	97904.00	9.64E+08	104
BUR1	0.392658	8.414657	0.017763	1.224947	104	BUR2	0.494830	23.37450	0.002772	2.328888	104
FAGE1	53.50000	98.00000	15.00000	21.84011	104	FAGE2	55.49515	100.0000	17.00000	21.99326	104
MAC1	6.85E+11	7.11E+12	2.19E+09	1.87E+12	104	MAC2	6.90E+11	7.11E+12	2.19E+09	1.88E+12	104

Note: 1 denote Covid-19 Pandemic and 2 denotes Post Covid-19 Pandemic.

Source: Authors' Computation (2024)

From the result in table 1 above, it was revealed in the study that consumer goods firms stock performance during the COVID-19 pandemic was extremely volatile, with a mean of 121.52 for SP1 and 122.57 for SP2, respectively, and high standard deviations of 238.62 and 239.59. This implies that even though stock performance has slightly improved, there is still uncertainty in the industry. During the pandemic, ROA1 had a low average of 0.0672, indicating difficult circumstances. However, after the pandemic, ROA1 improved to 0.0927, indicating improved efficiency. With a minor increase in FSIZE2, firm size stayed constant, suggesting that market positions haven't changed much. A minor increase in financial leverage from 1.70 (FLEV1) to 2.63 (FLEV2) suggests that businesses took on more debt during the recovery, which suggests both more financial risk and potential. Although the significant variability indicates continued financial uncertainty, the asset structure showed a little increase, suggesting reinvestment and potential expansion. Following the pandemic, business risk rose from 0.39 (BUR1) to 0.49 (BUR2), indicating ongoing difficulties such as changes in consumer behavior and supply chain problems. With a mean firm age of 53.5 years, which

increased little to 55.50, the consumer goods industry was largely made up of well-established businesses, indicating stability but a dearth of new competitors. With a mean of 6.85E+11 for MAC1 and 6.90E+11 for MAC2, market capitalization was steady, suggesting that big businesses were still in control but that stock performance was still erratic.

Table 3. Correlation Analysis: Consumer Goods Sector

Covariance Analysis: Spearman rank-order								
Date: 11/18/24 Time: 19:41								
Sample: 2020Q1 2021Q4								
Included observations: 104								
Correlation								
Obs.	SP1	ROA1	FSIZE1	FLEV1	ASS1	BUR1	FAGE1	MAC1
SP1	1.000000							
ROA1	0.181430	1.000000						
FLEV1	0.303582	0.163510	1.000000					
FSIZE1	0.262613	0.116302	0.261637	1.000000				
ASS1	0.201715	0.105102	0.295872	0.916975	1.000000			
BUR1	-0.535521	0.085323	-0.306619	-0.332983	-0.352653	1.000000		
FAGE1	-0.207451	-0.365909	-0.195171	0.128436	0.024901	0.269357	1.000000	
MAC1	0.762079	0.216543	0.273366	0.582756	0.550078	-0.587361	-0.089990	1.000000

Note: 2 denote Post Covid-19 pandemic

Covariance Analysis: Spearman rank-order								
Date: 11/18/24 Time: 19:48								
Sample: 2022Q1 2023Q4								
Included observations: 103								
Balance sample (listwise missing value deletion)								
Correlation								
Obs.	SP2	ROA2	FSIZE2	FLEV2	BUR2	ASS2	FAGE1	MAC2
SP2	1.000000							
ROA2	0.119638	1.000000						
FSIZE2	0.243436	-0.014333	1.000000					
FLEV2	0.194821	-0.004272	0.484034	1.000000				
BUR2	0.529500	0.101325	0.267493	-0.252077	1.000000			
ASS2	0.268276	0.001208	0.928409	0.463727	0.282408	1.000000		
FAGE2	-0.257730	0.162378	0.092908	0.092456	0.280702	0.022904	1.000000	
MAC2	0.805602	0.069686	0.574308	0.342852	-0.592669	0.556353	0.093201	1.000000

Source: Authors Analysis Computation (2024)

The correlation analysis between the COVID-19 and post-COVID-19 periods was shown in Table 2. The outcome demonstrates notable changes in the ways that several factors impact SP. Profitability by itself did not matter as much after COVID, since ROA had a slight beneficial impact on SP during the pandemic (0.1814) but lost significance during the recovery phase (0.1196).

The influence of Firm Size (FSIZE) on SP remained positive, but it was little weaker after the pandemic (0.2434 versus 0.2626). This suggests that larger businesses kept doing well, while the impact was not as great as it was during the pandemic. Additionally, FLEV's relationship with SP decreased following the pandemic (0.1948 versus 0.3036), indicating that reliance on debt was less advantageous during the recovery phase. Throughout both eras, BUR continued to be a significant negative factor for SP (-0.5355 during COVID and -0.5295 post-COVID). This demonstrates that businesses with higher BUR kept performing poorly, highlighting the necessity of effective risk management techniques. With a very strong association with both FSIZE (0.9284) and MAC (0.5564), ASS—which measures the proportion of a firm's assets in fixed assets—became an even more significant factor, indicating that larger enterprises with more physical assets typically perform better.

In comparison to the pandemic period (-0.2075), FAGE had a bigger negative relationship with SP after COVID (-0.2577), indicating that older enterprises had more challenges when the market recovered. MAC is a crucial indicator for forecasting SP because it lastly had the largest positive connection with SP, which was even greater following COVID (0.8056 compared to 0.7621). Practically speaking, investors should give preference to firms with low business risk (-0.5295) and high MAC (0.8056), as these variables now have the most effects on SP post COVID. Firms that have a solid ASS (0.9284) are likewise more likely to succeed.

Table 4. Regression Analysis on Consumer Goods Sector

Covid-19 Consumer Goods Sector					Post Covid-19 Consumer Goods Sector				
Dependent Variable: SP1					Dependent Variable: SP2				
Method: Panel Generalized Method of Moments					Method: Panel Generalized Method of Moments				
Date: 11/22/24 Time: 18:12					Date: 11/22/24 Time: 18:15				
Sample: 2020Q1 2021Q4					Sample: 2020Q1 2021Q4				
Periods included: 8					Periods included: 8				
Cross-sections included: 11					Cross-sections included: 11				
Total panel (balanced) observations: 88					Total panel (balanced) observations: 88				
2SLS instrument weighting matrix					2SLS instrument weighting matrix				
Instrument specification: C ROA1 LFSIZE1 FLEV1 BUR1 ASS1 FAGE1 MAC1					Instrument specification: C ROA2 FSIZE2 FLEV2 BUR2 ASS2 FAGE2 MAC2				
Constant added to instrument list					Constant added to instrument list				
Variable	Coefficien t	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.	Variable	Coefficien t	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
C	-182.9340	133.3200	-1.372142	0.1739	C	-572.7979	149.1189	-3.841215	0.0002
ROA1	222.0335	53.58927	4.143246	0.0001	ROA2	138.1652	78.45478	1.761081	0.0820
FSIZE1	-174.7933	56.20122	-3.110134	0.0026	FSIZE2	-95.08926	71.68691	-1.326452	0.1885
FLEV1	-68.00768	9.904217	-6.866537	0.0000	FLEV2	0.020364	0.073320	0.277746	0.7819
BUR1	149.9565	50.00034	2.999108	0.0036	BUR2	41.91476	65.97132	0.635348	0.5270
ASS1	62.39288	22.09175	2.824261	0.0060	ASS2	33.43827	29.29660	1.141370	0.2571
FAGE1	-4.065148	0.759636	-5.351442	0.0000	FAGE2	-2.196920	0.805125	-2.728669	0.0078
MAC1	30.00676	4.984799	6.019653	0.0000	MAC2	36.40469	7.074845	5.145652	0.0000
R-squared	0.663179	Mean dependent var	74.67818		R-squared	0.388736	Mean dependent var	74.57364	
Adj R-squared	0.633707	S.D. dependent var	134.1877		Adj R-squared	0.335251	S.D. dependent var	134.2264	
S.E. of regression	81.21328	Sum squared resid	527647.8		S.E. of regression	109.4377	Sum squared resid	958128.1	
Durbin-W stat	0.512773	J-statistic	9.51E-18		Durbin-W stat	0.064489	J-statistic	4.62E-18	

H₀: ROA has no significant effect on stock performance of Nigerian firms during and post-COVID-19 pandemic:

Regression analysis results show that ROA significantly improved SP throughout the COVID-19 period (coefficient = 222.0335, p = 0.0001), underscoring the significance of operational effectiveness in times of crisis. The effect of ROA remained positive post COVID-19, but it lost significance (coefficient = 138.1652, p = 0.0820). According to this study, operational effectiveness was crucial during the pandemic but lost significance when market conditions stabilized. Therefore, because of its decreased significance, HO1 is accepted post COVID-19 but rejected throughout the COVID-19 period.

H₀₂: Firm size has no significant effect on stock performance of Nigerian firms during and post-COVID-19 pandemic:

FSIZE had a negative effect on SP throughout the COVID-19 era (coefficient = -174.7933, $p = 0.0026$), suggesting that larger firms had difficulty being agile during the pandemic. This effect, however, diminished considerably post COVID-19 (coefficient = -95.08926, $p = 0.1885$), indicating that FSIZE lost significance throughout the recovery period. Accordingly, H₀₂ is accepted post COVID-19 and rejected during COVID-19.

H₀₃: Financial leverage has no significant effect on stock performance of Nigerian firms during and post-COVID-19 pandemic:

FLEV had a negative impact on SP during the COVID-19 era (coefficient = -68.00768, $p = 0.0000$), most likely as a result of growing debt anxiety during an uncertain period. However, once the market steadied, its impact was minimal following the pandemic (coefficient = 0.020364, $p = 0.7819$), indicating a decreased sensitivity to leverage. H₀₃ is therefore rejected during the COVID-19 pandemic and accepted once it has passed.

H₀₄: Business risk has no significant effect on stock performance of Nigerian firms during and post-COVID-19 pandemic:

BUR had a positive effect on SP during the COVID-19 era (coefficient = 149.9565, $p = 0.0036$), indicating that taking more calculated risks paid off during the crisis. Its influence, however, diminished considerably post COVID-19 (coefficient = 41.91476, $p = 0.5270$), suggesting that investors' attention shifted away from taking risks throughout the recovery period. Therefore, H₀₄ is accepted post COVID-19 but rejected during COVID-19.

H₀₅: Asset structure has no significant effect on stock performance of Nigerian firms during and post-COVID-19 pandemic:

During the COVID-19 era, ASS had a positive impact on SP (coefficient = 62.39288, $p = 0.0060$), demonstrating the value of having strong physical assets in case of emergency. Its influence, however, diminished post COVID-19 (coefficient = 33.43827, $p = 0.2571$), indicating that as the market stabilized, the asset arrangement lost significance. Consequently, H₀₅ is accepted post COVID-19 and rejected during COVID-19.

H₀₆: Firm age has no significant effect on stock performance of Nigerian firms during and post-COVID-19 pandemic:

FAGE continuously had a negative impact on SP, although the effect was greater during the COVID-19 period (coefficient = -4.065148, $p = 0.0000$) than it was post the COVID-19 period (coefficient = -2.196920, $p = 0.0078$). This suggests that it was harder for older firms to adjust to changes in the market. H₀₆ is thus rejected in both periods.

H₀₇: Market capitalization has no significant effect on stock performance of Nigerian firms during and post-COVID-19 pandemic:

MAC had a significant favorable impact on SP across both time periods. The coefficient of MAC was 30.00676 ($p = 0.0000$) during COVID-19, and it increased (coefficient = 36.40469, $p = 0.0000$) post COVID-19. This suggests that MAC remained a significant factor in SP, particularly during the recovery phase following COVID-19. Thus, in both periods, H₀₇ is rejected.

In the overall consideration in connection with the result revealed, during the COVID-19 pandemic, operational efficiency, risk leveraging, and ASS were crucial, while elements like ROA, FLEV, and BUR were more important. Bigger firms suffered, but those with a high MAC and prudent risk-taking profits. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, MAC became the primary driver of SP, with investor trust in larger firms playing a significant role. The impact of ROA and BUR decreased, while the correlations between SP and FSIZE and ASS weakened. FLEV's influence disappeared post COVID, which further reflected the market's transition to stability.

The results of the study thus demonstrate the changing dynamics of SP in Nigerian firms, indicating that whereas certain factors (such as MAC) remained important, others (such as FSIZE, FLEV, and ASS) lost part of their sway post epidemic era.

The findings of the result have significant implications for stakeholders, investors, managers, and policymakers. The emphasis on managers is that, MAC should be enhanced, since it emerges as the prime driver of SP post-COVID-19. Managers should inject in the firm new ideas to boost investor confidence through effective communication, that will demonstrate firm's resilience and adaptability of economic challenges. Again, operational efficiency and prudent risk management should be the hallmark of the firm's managers because this factors are crucial during the pandemic. Thus, a robust risk management frameworks and regularly review operational processes will enable the firm navigate future crises. Thus, the decreased influence of FLEV and FSIZE post-pandemic, managers are expected to reassess their leverage and asset size strategies to ensure a balance between growth and stability. Managers are expected to reducing large leverage by focusing more on sustainable growth that can enhance firm flexibility. In consideration for policymakers, the study highlights the need for the development of supportive regulatory environments that encourages firm flexibility and stability. This may include offering financial incentives, easing regulations, and providing guidance on best practices for investor relations and risk management. Policies that promote digital transformation, innovation, and efficient resource management can enhance operational efficiency across industries. Regulatory authorities should provide guidelines on optimal leverage ratios and encourage firms to adopt practices that promote financial stability

Practically, investors' confidence should be maintained by the firms through regular and transparent communication. This can be enhanced through the creation of relational team, leveraging digital platforms for effective communication that will further build investors trust. Firms innovative and adaptable to the changing market conditions, and should investing in research and development (R&D) to create a base for new opportunities during economic disruptions. Through the effective considering these, firms and policymakers can better navigate future crises and enhance their flexibility performance.

5. Conclusion

The study focused on Nigerian firms listed on the NGX. The sample size may not be a complete representative of all firms in Nigeria, since the smaller and unlisted firms were not taking into account. This study does not account for sectoral variations, which may influence the relationship between firm traits and stock performance of Nigerian firms listed in the NGX. Thus, different sectors may experience varying impacts during and after any pandemic. It is also necessary to also explore the long-term effects and recovery patterns, as this may require further investigation. Also, the study does not account for other external factors (such as, government policies, global economic conditions) that could influence SP. Future researchers are encouraged to explore sectoral variations in the relationship between firm traits and SP. In analyzing how sector-specific impacts can provide a more degree of understanding on how different industries responded to the pandemic. While, other studies can also, explore more firms, particularly unlisted and smaller firms, as this could provide a more comprehensive view of the SP dynamics in Nigeria. Again, conducting a longitudinal analysis to examine the long-term effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on firm traits and SP will add value to future research in this domain. This could help identify the recovery patterns and market dynamic changes. More studies should can also dwell on comparative analysis, and

exploring additional variables, such as corporate governance practices, digital transformation efforts, and innovation capabilities, to further understand their impact on stock performance during crises. These limitations can be explored by future studies which can build upon the findings of our study which will be providing deeper insights into the dynamics of SP in the Nigerian firms during and after crises.

The study recommended swift operational efficiency, financial flexibility and asset diversification for firms. It is also necessary for firms to invest in technological innovation and reduce reliance on a single asset type to remain stable during time of crisis. Firms should maintain adaptability and dexterity in their response to crisis period, while caution is expected to be maintained in the request for FLEV their having a agility to lower their quest for debt financing thereby ensuring for stronger debt-to-equity ratios. The firm are expected to keep a track with a robust continuity plan with the intent to identify risk and quickly respond to crisis period and expected external challenges. Finally, MAC emerged as a key driver post-pandemic on SP, thereby emphasizing the need for a transparent governance, strong investor relations, and long-term value creation. These strategies collectively enhance firm's resilience, adaptability, and performance in uncertain times.

6. References

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