

Access to Markets Sites and Socio- Economic Empowerment of Street Vendors in Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Street vending plays a colossal role in providing goods and services in most cities especially in the global south. They hawk good / offer services to the general public on the street, pavement, sidewalk or any other public space. Multiple causal factors have aggravated the situation especially in the urban areas and this has resulted in the expansion of street vending in most urban areas in the south. The main purpose of this study is to examine the the effect of vendors' accessibility to Market Sites on Socio- economic empowerment of urban dwellers in Kenya's urbanising economic sector. This study adopted a descriptive cross-sectional survey research design. A sample size of 384 street vendors from three urban cities was settled for. Multistage sampling was employed. Primary data was collected using face to face questionnaire survey, interview guide, and observation guide. Data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics with the help of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).It was revealed that accessibility to the market sites specifically availability of customers positively influences the street vendors' socio-economic empowerment. The study recommended the need for policy makers to have an inclusive view on street vending by offering necessary support through supportive accommodative policies.

Keywords: Street vendors, access to markets sites, socio-economic empowerment, urban dwellers, Kenya.

INTRODUCTION

Street vendors (SV) an 'omnipresent' feature of the urban landscape in most developing economies. Globally, street vending activities have existed for centuries globally and especially in developing countries. These existed as far back as 1820 by the Jewish and Europe immigrants who sold food in push carts in the streets of New York City (World Bank, 2013). The great depression in the 1920s which began as an American crisis had great effect on the worldwide economy. Many people, mainly native citizens lost their jobs, and ended up vending in the streets selling different commodities, for survival (Onyanta; 2020). Mramba (2015) reiterated that in the ancient times, street vendors were selling their merchandise in towns, moving from house to house and were tolerated and treated with dignity unlike vendors of the present day.

Vendors have become one of the most significant service providers for the busy urban lifestyle in Africa. Microenterprises provide the second source of livelihood, after farming (Ahad, 2016). Street vending is the most manifest microenterprise. One major significant characteristic of SV is that it takes place primarily in public space (Woldeamanuel, Abebe & Supangkat ,2023; Mazhambe, 2017).They occupy public streets and traditional markets in most urban cities where they exist.

The reliance on public space renders street vendors particularly vulnerable because the 'spaces, subjects and

practices of street work' are considered a threat to 'an envisaged socio-spatial order and as a priority for intervention' (Onyanta; 2020; Mitullah, 2003).

Various researches on this phenomenon have revealed numerous reasons driving this form of microenterprises among others include; unemployment, low-income consumption, low productivity in agriculture and the need to migrate to the urban to search for employment has forced millions in developing countries to engage in street vending (Mramba, 2015; Adhikari, 2012; Forkuor; 2017). Subsequently, although the role of street vending varies across countries and within cities, communities are embracing the activity more and more as manifested on most of the streets in the cities across the world (Mitullah, 2003; IMF, 2017).

Street vending businesses are owned by either individuals or a family unit (Mramba, 2015; Mitulla 2005; Forkuor; 2017). Street vendors are persons offering merchandise and ventures available to be purchased to the general population without a lasting developed structure yet with transitory static structure (Alebachew, 2017). Street vending is the smallest units of business of microenterprise (Martínez, Short, & Estrada, 2018; Alebachew 2017). It is an integral part of the economy. Street vending Micro enterprises play an important role in ensuring the survival of poor household, building skills and socio-economic status of the poor. Microenterprises mainly focus on developing and utilizing the entrepreneurial skills and potential of the poor especially those below poverty line to meet local needs (IMF, 2017).

The contributions of street vending to the overall economic growth cannot be underestimated. Street vending contributes directly through provision of goods and services to the public, generation of income to the owners and the government through fees and taxes (Onyanta, 2020; Mitulla, 2003). It is an entrepreneurial activity that citizens choose as an occupation to engage in. It provides entrepreneurial opportunities to people who cannot afford to buy or rent fixed premises. It is a vital bottom rung in the ladder of upward economic mobility, and some street vendors go on to build successful off-street businesses. Street vending micro enterprises is important for surviving or escaping poverty (Ahad, 2016; Mitullah, 2003). This is because it provides employment, income, relative cheap price products, and a variety of new products to the public (Adhikari, 2012).

The activities involved are perceived as a non-criminal commercial activity dependent on access to public space, including market trade, trade from fixed locations and hawking (Roever; 2014; Njaya, 2014). It is also identified as unregistered activities by the law. These activities of individuals engaged in the sectors should not always be classified as illegal. This is because it is their choice not to formalize their business (Zhong & Di, 2017)). The activity is vital for escaping poverty in most cities of the developing economies. According to Njaya (2014), street vendors are those who squat in public places such as pavements, parks, or other such places, and those that are mobile as they move from place to place in search of customers conducting temporary business.

In the context of a rapid urbanization due to internal conflicts, low skilled workers find a last resort for income generation through street vending micro enterprises (Acevedo & Martinez, 2018; Chile & Haule, 2020; Njaya, 2014). Street food vending employs an average 37.8 percent of the labor force and contributes about 38 percent to total gross domestic product in Africa (Njaya, 2014). The activity provides a cheap and effective avenue for the distribution of small items. Delays are minimized and sales raised as the traders take the goods right to the consumers' doorstep. Street activities includes a variety of commodities stretching from food stuff to traditional herbs, craft/artwork/pottery, kitchen ware, plastic products, hardware, electrical appliances and general merchandise such as office stationery, school supplies, books, sweets, brooms, tobacco and newspapers among others (Mitullah, 2003; Roever & Skinner, 2016).

The activity is under economy, which ranges from under 30 percent in South Africa to about 60 percent in Nigeria, Tanzania and Zimbabwe in terms of percentages of gross national income (Onyanta, 2020; Njaya,

2014). The size and contributions of the sector in the economy increase during economic recessions and periods of economic adjustment and transition (Chile & Haule, 2020; Njaya, 2014). City-level data for Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam show that street vendors form 11 per cent of total non-agricultural employment, with a higher share among women than men in Asia (Roever & Skinner, 2016).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Zhong & Di, (2017) noted that micro enterprises face one of the biggest constraints in urban areas, which is the lack of access to a suitable workspace to conduct business. Babere (2013) agrees that street traders take the role of providing for their household as the circumstances require, which makes them for any means possible for meeting the family daily needs (Babere, 2013; Deng & Raven; 2013). Street vending micro enterprise activities take place in open spaces or in locations with heavy traffic (Alebachew 2017; Onyango, Olima & Onyango ,2012). The most common Street vending activities is usually carried out on city sidewalks, pedestrian bridges and other unofficial spaces (Mitullah 2003,Ahad, 2016). Most of the street vendors work on the streets for the survival of their dependent family members).

By their presence and activities, street vendors in different parts of the developing countries have been in confrontation with city authorities or regulators over space for business. According to Forkuor (2017), the locations where vendors set up are often seen by municipal authorities as eyesores, hosting undesirable, dirty activities that disturb or conflict with the formal sectors. Onyango et.al, (2012) reported that Street vendors take their market sites at random. This makes city authority's view street vending activities as disorganized activity giving bad image to the town (Alebachew, 2017; Babere, 2013).

In many cases, city authorities have forcibly evicted or relocated street vending activities in the name of urban order and hygiene. As a result, street vendors often have to play 'hide and seek' with the authorities, moving from place to place. When found, they are subject to harassment and extortion (Forkuor,2017). In most countries, authorities do not allow vendors to vend outside the designated market spaces; as a result, there is a variety of tensions between the vendors and the authorities (Chen, 2012,).

Due to their small capital, street vendors undertake the business to avoid paying rent in the formal market. It is worth noting that marketing success of the street vending activities depends exclusively on locality and word-of-mouth promotion (Njaya, 2014, Deng & Raven, 2013). Street traders take their market sites at random (Onyango et al, 2012). It is important therefore to recognize the need to accommodate street vendors in public space, as many are unable to gather enough capital to invest in a market stall or to generate regular and sufficient earnings to support monthly rent payments (Alebachew, 2017;Bhowmik, 2011).

Within self-employment, street trade is one of the most visible occupations. Yet few cities effectively balance the need to sustain livelihoods with the need to manage public space (Roever & Skinner, 2016). Consequently, street vendors and market traders in many cities operate in unreliable work environments (Roever & Skinner, 2016). Recent research documents mass evictions and relocations as one of the major day- to-day struggles of street vendors to make a living within policy environments that regulate street trade in exclusionary or contradictory ways (Roever, 2014).

These negotiations for public space and their outcome have important implications for the well-being of vendors, because having a decent site for their activities is one of a diversity of significant factors that affect the well-being of street vendors' activities (Bhowmik, 2011; Chen, 2012). By their existence and activities, however, street vendors in different parts of the developing economies have been in confrontation with city authorities or regulators over space for business, conditions of work, sanitation, and licensing (Forkuor, 2017,Mitullah 2003, Chile & Haule, 2020).

The customers for street vendors are largely the pedestrians who pass by on their own businesses (Mitullah, 2003). In a few cases, especially when street vendors have done business in one spot for a long time, customer relation Street Vending gives underestimated individuals access to a salary, however unpredictable, it is still key for family unit survival (Njaya, 2014; Roever & Skinner, 2016). Some street vendors look for customers in offices, homes and beyond the urban areas where they are based (Mitullah 2003, Chile & Haule, 2020). This is quite common among those who have invested extensively in the street vending activities, especially those who use trucks, pick-ups and bicycles. Such vendors trade in cooked food, fruits, vegetables and clothes (Roever & Skinner, 2016).

Theoretical Perspective

Development as Freedom Approach by Amartya Sen (1999) was adopted. In his approach, Sen argues that freedom is both the primary objective of development, and the principal means of development. Freedom is the central value in development. Expansion of freedom is both the primary end and as the principal means of development (Hicks, 2012). For Sen, freedom is conceptualized as the capability to achieve valued ends. This approach provides a relevant and valuable backdrop to microenterprises in this case, street vending and how these tools can work towards improving the standards of living for street vendors thus impacting on socio-economic empowerment.

The constraints associated with street vending in terms of access to market sites ought to be addressed in providing greater freedoms for Street vendors and thus significant on their standards of living. In this work, access to market sites determines the degree of freedoms enjoyed by street vendors which consequently result to their social-economic empowerment. Sen argues that the main aim of development is to develop the freedoms of those who are disadvantaged (Sen, 1999).

METHODOLOGY

Pragmatism based on assumption that within the research it is possible to adapt both positivist and interpretivist positions whichever works best for particular research question. The philosophy is compatible with the design chosen for this study. According to Saunders et al (2012), pragmatics recognises that there are many different ways of interpreting the world and undertaking research and that no single point of view can give the entire picture and that there may be multiple realities. The study was carried out in three urban areas of Kenya. Multistage sampling, was employed to arrive at a sample size. Purposive sampling was employed to sample streets. The streets were purposively sampled for study because they record the highest concentration of street vendors in the country. Structured questionnaires were administered to 384 respondents based on Krejcie & Morgan (1970) formula. Three hundred (300) questionnaires were returned. Interviews and observation checklist was also utilized. Data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Findings were presented in tables, figures, and narrations. Inferential statistics used were regression and Pearson correlation coefficient tests. Manual analysis of qualitative data from the key informants analyzed among major concepts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Effect of Vendors' accessibility to Market Sites on Socio-Economic Empowerment of Urban Dwellers

The second objective sought to evaluate the effect of vendors' accessibility to Market Sites on Socio-economic empowerment of Urban dwellers in Kenya. The researcher sought to find out what method of vending was adopted by street vendors. Summary statistics in Table 1 show that majority of the vendors

who were surveyed sell their wares at sidewalks (35%) followed by those who vend using racks or sacks. These finding concur with Woldeamanuel, Abebe and Supangkat (2023) who noted that most of SV in Addis Ababa conducted their businesses on the sidewalks, which are meant to be used by pedestrians

Table 1 Methods of Vending

	Frequency	Percent
Pushcart/Tricycle	77	25.7
Rack/Sacks on	78	26.0
Sidewalks	104	34.7
Others	41	13.6
Total	300	100.0

Source: Researcher (2022)

The study sought to find out the extent to which market sites determined their business outcome. Summary findings are presented in Table 2. The results show that street vendors argue that their ability to access the market affected their business outcome moderately (41.4%). This implies that access to the market sites explains sales volume and probably profits of the vendors moderately. Though the local governments often make decisions to remove street vendors to clear the public spaces for the purpose they are intended for as rationale as observed by Woldeamanuel et al (2023), the decision affects negatively affects incomes of SV and consequently their wellbeing.

Table 2 Extent to which ability to Access to Market Sites affect business outcome

Response	Frequency	Percent
Very Great Extent	87	29.0
Great Extent	89	29.7
Moderate Extent	124	41.3
Total	300	100.0

Source: Researcher (2022)

Finally, street vendors were asked to rate various statements related to market access on a scale of 1-5; where 1-Totally Disagree (TD), 2-Disagree (D), 3-Neutral (N), 4-Agree, (A) 5-Totally Agree (TA). Results are presented in Table 4.24.

Table 3 Access to Market Descriptive Statistics (N=300)

Variable	TD %	D %	N %	A %	TA %	Mean	Std. Deviation
I have repeat customers	2.3	2.3	10	67.3	18.2	3.9682	.76085
I pay for the space that I sell My goods from	1.4	40.5	12.7	34.1	11.4	3.1364	1.11427
I have enough customers where I sell from	2.3	7.3	20.9	57.7	11.8	3.6955	.85634
I have a problem with finding a stable space to sell from	3.6	47.7	11.4	26.8	10.5	2.9273	1.14445
I am not disturbed by City government officials on the selected space	5.9	65.5	10.4	11.4	7.3	2.4864	1.01801
There is general security where sell from	2.7	29.1	11.4	48.6	8.2	3.3045	1.06113

The local government formed the new space for my business	6.8	44.5	4.5	32.3	11.8	2.9773	1.23289
My selling space is accessible to customers	3.5	19.5	10.5	43.2	22.7	3.6210	1.14448

Key: Mean Totally disagree=1-1.9, Disagree=2-2.9, Neutral=3, Agree=3.1-4, Totally agree=4.1-5

Source: Researcher (2022)

The mean response ranges from disagree to agree. For example, on one hand, street vendors disagreed to the arguments that they had a problem with finding a stable space to sell from (mean=2.9273, SD=1.14445), they are never disturbed by City government officials on the selected spaces (mean=2.4864, SD=1.101801) and that the local governments established new spaces for their business (mean=2.9773, SD=.23289). These contradicts the arguments made by city officials. For instance, a qualitative interview with a city officer in Nairobi has revealed that the county government has designated areas for the street vendors. However, one of the vending licensing officers, K1 pointed out, “most of these street vendors dislike the places we have allocated them. They always argue that they are far away from their customers and hence, they have always opted to sell in prohibited places.”

On the other hand, street vendors agreed to the assertions that they had repeat customers (mean=3.9682, SD=.76-85), they have enough customers where they sale from (mean=3.6955, SD=.85634) and that generally, there is security from their vending sites (mean=3.3045, SD=1.06113). These findings indicate that marketing is not a big issue for the street vendors. In addition, the vendors agreed to the statement that their selling space was accessible to customers (mean=3.6210, SD=1.14448). The finding agree with Mazhambe (2017) who strongly recommended that regulatory authorities and government should put in place legislation and policies that recognize street vendors as key players in the county’s national economy.

Table 4 Factor Analysis for Market Sites Access

Next, the researcher carried out factor analysis on market access Likert to reduce items for correlation, regression and hypothesis testing. Table 4.25 presents KMO and Bartlett’s Test which shows that the sample was adequate given a KMO value of 0.527. In addition, since the Bartlett’s test p-value is less than 0.05 (0.000), finding imply that Bartlett’s test for Sphericity is significant, and therefore factor analysis was satisfactory.

Table 5. KMO and Bartlett’s Test on Market Access

Kaiser-Meyer-Olk in Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.527
Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	432.815
	df	28
	Sig.	.000

Source: Researcher (2022)

Total variance explained output (Table 4.26) indicate that three components were extracted. The three components explain 67.556 percent of the variance in the market access variable. In other words, the three components contain up to 67.556% of the information in the larger data set.

Table 5 Total Variance Explained on Access to Market

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	2.399	29.992	29.992	2.399	29.992	29.992	2.222	27.769	27.769
2	1.666	20.825	50.817	1.666	20.825	50.817	1.824	22.796	50.565
3	1.339	16.739	67.556	1.339	16.739	67.556	1.359	16.991	67.556
4	.796	9.947	77.503						
5	.637	7.963	85.466						
6	.545	6.811	92.277						
7	.383	4.789	97.066						
8	.235	2.934	100.000						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Source: Researcher (2022)

Finally, the rotated component matrix shows that the second, fourth and fifth variables associated with public space are substantially loaded on the first components while, the first and third variables are adequately loaded on the third component which is related to customer availability. Finally, the last three variables associated with market centres are adequately loaded on the second component (see Table 5).

Table 6 Rotated Component Matrix on Access to Market

Variables	Component		
	1	2	3
I have repeat customers	.137	.067	.861
I pay for the space that I sell My goods from	.812	-.011	.081
I have enough customers where I sell from	.195	.076	.576
I have a problem with finding a stable space to sell from	.619	-.059	-.513
I am not disturbed by City government officials on the selected space	.615	.411	-.437
There is general security where sell from	-.199	.825	-.225
The local government formed the new space for my business	.075	.835	.215
My selling space is accessible to customers	.087	.793	.068

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Source: Researcher (2021)

After having conducted factor analysis, the next sub-section carries out correlation, regression and hypothesis testing to determine the relationship between market access and street vendor’s socio-economic empowerment.

Correlation Analysis between for Market Access and Socio-economic Empowerment

The correlation results are presented in Table 7

Table 7 Correlation between market access and socio-economic empowerment

		Socio-economic empowerment	Public space	Customer availability	Market centres
Socio-economic empowerment	Pearson Correlation	1	-.312**	.470**	.234**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N	300	300	300	300
Public space	Pearson Correlation	-.312**	1	.000	.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		1.000	1.000
	N	300	300	300	300
Customer availability	Pearson Correlation	.470**	.000	1	.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	1.000		1.000
	N	300	300	300	300
Market centres	Pearson Correlation	.234**	.000	.000	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	1.000	1.000	
	N	300	300	300	300

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Researcher (2021)

The results in Table 7 indicate a positive and statistically significant correlation between socio-economic empowerment and customer availability and market centres with $r=.47$ and $r=.23$ respectively. Nevertheless, the correlation coefficient of public space is negative. Generally, these findings imply that a relationship exists between access to the market and street vendor’s socio-economic empowerment. However, the correlation for all the three coefficients is weak. Further analysis of this relationship is conducted in the next-sub-section on regression.

Regression Analysis between Market Access and Socio-economic empowerment

The study conducted a regression analysis between market access variables and socio-economic empowerment. OLS approach was adopted. Summary estimates are presented in Table 4.29. The analysis indicates that the findings are statistically significant given the probability value of $0.000 < 0.05$. This means that the estimated results are statistically significant or, the model is well fitted. With regard to Adjusted R squared statistic value of 0.364, findings show that a unit change in market access, lead to 36.4% change in socio-economic empowerment of vendors. This is a lower impact in comparison to that of Resource mobilization which was 47.3%. The collinearity statistics indicate absence of collinearity in the model given the VIF value of less than 10 and the tolerance values of greater than 0.01. These implies the validity of the model estimation.

Table 8 Regression Analysis between Market access and socio-economic Empowerment

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	.003	.054		.048	.962		
Public space	-.312	.054	-.312	-5.770	.000	1.000	1.000

Customer availability	.471	.054	.470	8.699	.000	1.000	1.000
Market centres	.234	.054	.234	4.330	.000	1.000	1.000
Dependent	Socio-economic empowerment						
Obs	300						
Adj. R squared	.364						
Std. Error	.726						
F – ratio (3, 218) (ANOVA)	42.574						
Prob. > F	0.000						
Durbin-Watson	1.994						

Source: Researcher (2021)

With regard to the coefficients of market access, the study has established a negative relationship between access to public space and socio-economic empowerment of the street vendors (-312, Sig.=0.000, <0.05). This can be attributed to the challenges such as harassment by county security that street vendors encounter in those public spaces. Nevertheless, the coefficient for both availabilities of customers and access to the market centres are positive and statistically significant. This imply that customer availability (.470, Sig.=0.000, <0.05 and access to market centres (.234, Sig.=0.000, <0.05) influences street vendors’ socio-economic empowerment positively. When vendors find more customers, they are able to increase their sales volume and hence profit margins which can in turn boost their socio-economic status. In addition, vending in market centres does not attract county official’s harassment or mistreatment of the vendors and thus, they are able to conduct their businesses smoothly. This can ultimately enhance their socio-economic situation.

Hypothesis Test for Market Access and Socio-economic Empowerment

Finally, the study tested the hypothesis that: Vendors’ accessibility to Market Sites has no statistically significant effect on Economic Empowerment of urban dwellers in Kenya. Using Spearman’s rank technique, the results of the test are presented in Table 4.30.

Table 9 Test for Hypothesis

Number of obs	300
Spearman’s rho	0.540
Prob> t	0.000

Source: Researcher (2021)

Findings indicate rejection of the null hypothesis given the P-value =0.000 is less than 0.05. Thus, the study concludes that there is a statistically significant relationship between market access and socio-economic empowerment of street vendors. These results are consistent with regression findings.

The quantitative study findings reflected the qualitative findings through interview with the city management. In one of the interviews, one respondent noted;

The major challenge we are facing with most of the street vendors is their specific location for the business. While there are some designated areas for the business, majority ignore and place their business strategically at the walkways meant for decongesting the city. This has a big effect on the outlook of the town, the general sanitation, and operations. The vendors not only block the movement of the walkways bit also the roads meant for vehicles. This has also impacted on jam in the town. We are working out with the partners

to provide as much possible space for market sites for these types of businesses [KI, 02].

This indicates that the availability of the market sites may not necessarily inform the specific location for the street vendors. This is, however, created by the suggestions among the street vendor that they may not afford to carry out their business in a specific location away from the walkways as their target customers are those using the ways. This is in line with the findings of Uwitije (2013) that revealed that relocation of street vendors in Surakarta City Indonesia that was meant to ‘empower the poor’ caused declines in their livelihoods.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Following the finding that public spaces has adverse effect on street vendor’s socio-economic empowerment, this study recommends enactment of policies to smoothen trading on public spaces by street vendors. There is need for the government to draw inclusive strategies by offering necessary support.

There is need for a Participatory urban design where by street vendors should work collaboratively with local government, city authorities and regulators to design more appropriate vending zones and facilities where vendors and pedestrians congregate for exchange.

CONCLUSION

The study revealed that street vending has a significant impact on social economic empowerment of urban dwellers through accessibility to the market sites by street vending micro enterprises which affects their socio-economic empowerment. Specifically, the study concludes that availability of customers which depends on the market sites where the street vendors are staged and selling at market centers has a positive influence on street vendor’s socio-economic empowerment. In addition, the study concludes that selling in public spaces has a negative effect on socio-economic empowerment of street vendors majorly attributed to harassment, eviction and confiscation of their goods and or tools by city officials thus the need for necessary support through supportive accommodative policies.

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