Horizon | Journal of Humanity and Artificial Intelligence

LIVED EXPERIENCES OF STREET VENDORS IN CATBALOGAN CITY: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

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Abstract

Street vendors play an integral part of the world's economies, contributing to thriving retail markets and providing a diverse range of affordable, accessible goods and services to every consumer. Street vending also provides a source of income for those with limited employment opportunities, such as migrants and internally displaced people. From the standpoint of business studies, it is useful to categorize street vendors into different groups based on the variables that may be observed in their working style. As a result, they can be classified as nomadic or permanent. Other categories include the type of goods or services given, the method of product procurement, and whether or not franchising or branding is used. By understanding the experiences of the street vendors, their challenges and ways of coping will be beneficial to everyone who faced the same situation and to what measures can be used to face the challenges. Qualitative research design was utilized to explore and determine the experiences of the participants in this study. Six vendors were interviewed in this study, meeting the saturation point. Phenomenologically, the responses of the participants were interpreted to further understand their lived experiences from the phenomenon. In this study, the researcher used a non-probability sampling design, specifically purposive sampling with the help of a selection criteria that aided the researcher locate the informants. Data was collected using semi-structured interview guide, an in-depth interview. This study concluded that street vending has become an important source of employment for large numbers of urban populations, and that vending-activities play an important socio-economic role especially as a coping mechanism for low-income households. In connection, vendors depend on many factors to live and continue their business. This study will be useful to the other street vendors towards the coping strategies used by the participants, the government to help create interventions for the vendors, and to future researchers that will conduct related studies.

Keywords: Vendors, Vending, Business, Lived Experiences, Challenges

INTRODUCTION

Street vendors play an integral part of the world's economies, contributing to thriving retail markets and providing a diverse range of affordable, accessible goods and services to every consumer. Street vending also provides a source of income for those with limited employment opportunities, such as migrants and internally displaced people. From the standpoint of business studies, it is useful to categorize street vendors into different groups based on the variables that may be observed in their working style. As a result, they can be classified as nomadic or permanent. Other categories include the type of goods or services given, the method of product procurement, and whether or not franchising or branding is used. The rise in the number of marginalized entrepreneurs, such as street food vendors, has been attributed to urban population expansion. As the number of marginalized people in cities has grown, so has the demand for low-cost, ready-to-eat food. By 2050, urban populations are expected to be over 75% of current levels, accounting for more than half of the world's population (UN DESA, 2015).

Aspects of vulnerability of this informal category include insufficient institutional support, need to care for dependents, long hours of work, and coping with the debilitating consequences of material poverty. From a structuralize perspective, workers in this informal sector have no proper status, being neither capitalist nor urbanized working class. They may be categorized according to whether they have a permanent or temporary pitch or whether they are itinerant. Other categories include the nature of goods or services provided, means of sourcing products, and whether franchising or branding takes place (Wang et al., 2021). Working outside is one of the challenges faced by the street vendors. Street vendors by themselves and their goods are exposed to strong sun, heavy rains and extreme heat or cold. Unless they work in markets, but most of them don't have shelter or running water and toilets near their workplace. Inadequate access to clean water is a major concern of prepared food vendors. Street vendors also face other routine occupational hazards. Many lift and haul heavy loads of their products. Some vendors are expose to physical risk due to a lack of proper fire safety equipment, and street vendors are exposed to injury from the improper regulation of traffic in commercial areas.

Many street-vendors are visible in many parts of Catbalogan City, often situated in strategic locations that will offer the best opportunities for them to sell their products. In this study, the researcher focused on understanding the lived experiences of street vendors, their challenges and how they coped-up with the current situation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Philippines has a huge number of street vendors (Recio et al., 2013). Most street vendors can be found on the corner side of parking tricycles, churches, local supermarkets, malls, and most common schools, where Filipino street vendors target places with a high traffic volume or a lot of people passing through. For example, according to Elli (2016) that Catbalogan City is one of the thriving cities in the Countryside Samar Philippines, with many street vendors, and these stalls can be found along the gates of academic institutions, particularly elementary, secondary, and tertiary schools. On the other hand, Tindowen and Aquino (2015) believed that in a city like manila, where even the cheapest fast-food meals can feel like a splurge for many office workers, informal stalls with minimal overhead and cheap wares like one of the street vendors she knows fill a need and help the city run more efficiently. On the report of the Look Upgrade Corp (2019), food excites all Filipinos, especially when it is inexpensive and delicious. Filipino street food is readily available at any time and in any location. Street vendors cannot compete with retail shops in terms of quality, brand name, or variety of products; instead, they attract customers who intend to spend only a short period of time shopping and buy at low prices (Tamilarai & Angayarkanni, 2016).

Urban culture creates a consumption pattern, especially for low-income customers. This pattern represents real demand for products offered in public spaces and on sidewalks, and street vendors find their businesses profitable because of the willingness of customers to deal with them. The resulting consumption pattern that consolidates the persistence of street vendors working in the informal trading sector. For instance, Khan (2017) found that street vendors are distinguished by cheaper pricing and quicker delivery, and that their customers see street vending as conveniently located, with flexible times and rich customization. Since urban culture generates low-income consumption, the real demand for products offered on public streets establishes resistance among vendors, thereby facilitating the survival of their livelihood and justifying their pervasiveness.

Street vendors also pay a form of rent through daily fees levied (or bribes demanded) in exchange for their use of public space. The street vendors always suffer competition with other street vendors because of fluctuation in market prices, insecure and irregular employment. Their incomes are often minimal and their sales fluctuate. Informal sellers are among the poorest people in society. They cannot afford to rent a retail outlet, expand their business, or shift to the formal sector (Tamilarai & Angayarkanni, 2016). Moreover, they do not meet the minimum requirements to apply for a loan, and banks are reluctant to be involved in microfinance. In short, an acute lack of microfinance results in poor and uneducated people trading on the streets, in contrast to a mature and developed financial system, which would create easier channels for financing microbusinesses and give unemployed people the opportunity to set up small

formal businesses (Esubalew & Raghurama, 2020). Since most unemployed and poor people have no access to the financial system to obtain loans, they become resistant. Thus, the strong resistance of street vendors can be explained in part by a lack of microfinance, which leads them to stay on the public streets.

METHODOLOGY

In this study, qualitative research design was utilized to explore and determine the experiences of the participants in this study and extract meanings from the responses. Phenomenologically, the responses of the participants were interpreted to further understand their lived experiences from the phenomenon. The relevance of human experience, personal perspective, and interpretation as they relate to the commonalities across all participants is emphasized in phenomenological techniques, which are built on a basic paradigm of personal knowledge and subjectivity. Furthermore, phenomenological research can describe the meaning of a phenomenon for numerous persons (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

In this study, the researcher used a non-probability sampling design, specifically purposive sampling with the help of selection criteria that aided the researcher locate the informants. Six (6) participants were interviewed in this study as it meets the saturation point. Upon identifying the participants, the researcher ensured proper consent which follows necessary ethical considerations.

Research Instruments and Data Gathering Techniques

In collecting the data, the researcher used an in-depth interview using a semi-structured Interview Guide. Overall, the interview process was anchored to the interview stages and strategies presented by Ritchie et al. (2013). By defining what should be included in the interview questions as reflected in the interview guide and by following the interview protocol, the researcher observed proper interview methods. A checklist, record book, and a cellphone (to record the scene) were used to document the interviews with the informants. The researcher ensured that the video recording will be deleted after needed information have been generated.

Treatment of Data

In order to interpret and understand the data collected from the informants, a thematic analysis based on Van Manen (2016) framework will be used. The framework that will be utilized will follow these six steps: (1) Familiarization; (2) Coding; (3) Generating themes; (4) Reviewing themes; (5) Defining and naming themes; and (6) Writing up. The analysis began by gathering and sorting the informants' responses, after which, the researcher compiled and organized the data according to their codes. The codes were grouped according to the themes that the researcher will make. After finalizing and interpreting the sorted data, the researcher ensured that the process was carried out in a systematic and orderly manner by emphasizing the rigor of qualitative research by integrating trustworthiness.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The sub-questions in the statement of the problem are answered in this chapter. It conveys street vendor's reactions and responses to the interview questions posed to their experiences. To carefully form interpretations and ensure authenticity, key elements of their comments was emphasized and reproduced directly below. This is intended to provide a more accurate image of self-employed street vendor's experiences.

1. What are the lived experiences of the street vendors?

1.1. Reasons for being a street vendor

In respondent's 1's and 5's, they stated that they choose their job because of their old age. In respondent 2's case, her reason was because it is the only available job here in Catbalogan and that she can also have an everyday income. Moving on with respondent 3's case, his reason was because he didn't graduate and it is the only job he know. In respondent 4's case, she said that it is hard to find job in today's era, especially when you didn't finish your studies. In respondent 6's case, he said that in this job he can enhance his knowledge in Culinary that he had studied in TESDA.

R1: "Kay amo nala inin tak kaya nga trabaho kay tak edad."

R2: "Kay amo la it available na trabaho dinhi haat lugar na pwede ko kuhaan hin income ha pan adlaw adlaw."

R3: "Waray man ak makagtapos uday, kaya amo la inin tak maaram na trabaho."

R4: "Kay makuri mamiling hin trabaho yana nga mga panahon lalo na kag waray makagtapos, makuri gud man sanglit kamo pamagtapos kamo ha pag eskwela."

R5: "Ginpili ko inin nga trabaho kay amo na manla tak kaya kay kitaa nala ako iday lagas na gudman."

R6: "Kay syempre hini nga trabaho mas nahahasa pa nak mga nahibaruan han nag

eskwela ak han culinary ha TESDA."

1.2. Years they have been in their job and what they have learned the most.

Respondent 1 stated that she had been working for almost seven years in street vending, and what she had learned the most is how to be strategic as a street vendor. Respondent 2, said that she had been in street vending for five years or more, to save money is what she had learned the most. In respondent 3's case, he said that he had been in this job the same age as his oldest, 15 years. He said that through this job he learned on how to be resourceful in life. Respondent 4 said that she's been working for nine or ten years. She stated that she learned how to be resourceful to always have a bigger income. Respondent 5. He said that his children already have partner in life but he's still working, he's been street vending for more than two decades. What he learned the most is that you have to finish your studies so that you'll have a better life. Respondent 6 also stated that what whay she learned is how to be resourceful and have been working for five years.

R1: "7 years na ada. An akon nahibaruan didto an pagiging mas madiskarte nga taragtinda."

R2: "Ha akon tantsa mga 5 years na gud ada sobra. Syempre agi hini nahibaro ak pagtipid."

R3: "Kuan na bagat ka edad tak suhag nga anak, siguro mga 15 ka tuig na. Agi hinin nga pagtitinda nahibaro ak magin madiskarte ha kinabuhi."

R4: "10 ada or 9 ka tuig, di ak sure kay baga maiha na gudman. Siguro nak nahibaruan hadto nga pira ka tuig an pagiging madiskarte nga taragtinda para dako it income pirmi."

R5: "Bangin sobra na duha ka dekada kay nak iba nga anak nakaasawa na ako aadi la gihap nagtitinda la gihap. Uhmm nahibaruan? Nahibaruan ko nga dapat ngayan gintapos ko nak pag eskwela hadto kay para mas maginhawa nam kinabuhi yana."

R6: "Siguro 5 pala ada katuig. Nak nahiadman hito nga 5 katuig siguro it pagiging madiskarte."

1.3. Difficulties on how to meet their basic needs and important demands, who rely on their career

Almost of them have the same answers. Respondent 1 said that it is really very hard because sometimes there is no sale that they won't have something to eat. Respondent 2 also said that it is very hard because sometimes she's sick and there's no one will take care of her merchandise, automatically they won't have money to spend. He said that it very hard because he can't have an income every day, Respondent 3. Respondent 4 said that it is very hard because her income is not enough for her family. Respondent 5 stated that it is also very hard because she had 10 children with him and his wife, 300 pesos is not enough for them. Respondent 6, a single parent, she said that it is very hard, because sometimes her income is less for her family.

R1: "Makuri gud duro kay danay waray benta, sugad kun mahina it income, sus waray gud pangangaunon."

R2: "Kakukuri gud man kay danay nagkakasakit ako tas waray magtitinda syempre automatic waray kami hito pangastos."

R3: "Makuri hin duro kay dire man adlaw-adlaw makakabenta ka."

R4: "Makuri gud syempre tak benta kada adlaw dire danay sadang ha amon pamilya."

R5: "Makuri hin duro kay napulo gud nak mga anak tas kami pa nak asaw, dira sadang."

R6: "It mayayakan ko gudla is makuri gud hin duro kay danay kulang pa tak benta para ha akon pami."

1.4. Most difficult problem they need to solve regarding street vendor.

Difficulty of finding space, Respondent 1 answered. Respondent 2 said because of bad weather that she might get sick. Respondent 3 answered that his problem is about money. Im respondent 4's answer, she said that finding money for investment. Respondent 5 said his difficulty of walking up in the early morning to cook his foods. Respondent 6 answered how difficult it is to sell, especially selling across the street.

R1: "Pamimiling pwesto."

R2: "It pagtitinda gud tak problema kay kun sugad mauran syempre sakit gud it abot haak."

R3: "It problema basta tungkol ha kwarta, asya gud it makuri haak."

R4: "It pagbiling hin kwarta para panpuhunan."

R5: "It pagtitinda gad syempre kay kailangan ko bumuhat hin timprano para pagluto hin mga igtitinda ko."

R6: "It pagtitinda kay maguol gad udog, pagsinudoy-sudoy pala."

2. How Street vendors cope up with their lived experiences

2.1. How they handled challenges they face.

In terms of finding investments, Respondent 1 and 4 would borrow money from their friends or from "bombay", just so they could have investments for their business. When other street vendors would fight and compete with each other, Respondent 2 would just be happy, not because her other co-street vendors are fighting but be happy with life and go on because she said, they only want their products to be sold. In terms of customers who have debts or who owed Respondent 3, he said he would need to force them just so they could pay their debts, because he also needs the money. When Respondent 5 needed money, he had no other choice but to borrow money for his business. When there was a time that only a small or little amount of Respondent 6's products were bought by his customers.

R1: "Kun diin ak pwede kumuha hin panpuhunan, syempre mangungutang nala ak ha akon mga kasangkayan or ha mga bombay."

R2: "Kuan pag may kompetensiya, danay aragway pero kailangan happy lang kay parehas manla tam karuyag it makabenta."

R3: "It panunukot ha mga kostumer na may mga utang haak, syempre ginpipirit ko gud hira nga magbayad kay kinahanglan ko gihap hin kwarta."

R4: "Asya na adto, it kanan puhunan, pakapalan nala nawong para umutang ha akon mga sagkay magkamayda la puhunan."

R5: "An time nga kailangan ko gud hin kwarta, syempre mangungutang gud ak para ha akon negosyo."

R6: "Iton adlaw ba nga guti la it mapalit tim mga paninda, kaya tak binubuhat hito ginsusudoy ko gud ha bug-os nga Catbalogan para maubos la."

2.2 A situation they adopt which is a major departure from their old ways of doing things.

Respondent 1, never liked the idea of asking help from someone, she said she never asked help from someone regarding her business, because she never had full trust in other people, but there was a time that she had a lot of customers and she needed help, that was the time she asked someone for help even tho she was not accustomed to. Respondent 2 was never used to waking up early in the morning before

she became a street vendor, and it was a major departure from her waking up time. Respondent 3 was never resourceful before, because she said, what she does before was already fine with her, but now she realized that she needed to be resourceful. Just like Respondent 3, Respondent 4 wasn't also resourceful, even tho she was lazy before, she said she needed to be resourceful just so she could have more customers. Respondent 5 learned or adopt time management, he had no exact time in cooking or preparing his food products, but he needed to learn to manage his time. Respondent 6 realized that there were a lot of customers early in the morning, that's why he tried to adopt to wake up early in the morning just so he could sell more of his products.

R1: "Mayda kasi adto program ngadi han usa nga eskwelahan, syempre ngadi nak huna huna damo gud inin it benta ko. pira kaoras an naglabay damo na an namamalit, ako kasi di kasi ak mahilig tumapod ha iba nga tawo kaya ako la nga usa it nagtitinda haak business waray ko kabulig, kaya adto nga time tumawag talaga ako han akon bugto para umaro bulig bisan dire ko gud nakasanayan umaro hin bulig ha iba."

R2: "Na adopt? bangin han mga panahon nga kailangan ko magmata hin aga pa bisan dire ako sanay ha pagmamata hit kaagahon."

R3: "Gin-adopt ko gud adto an pagiging madiskarte, kay dati sugad bagat okay la haak inin nga butang basta matinda ko la tak mga paninda okay nat haak, yana na realize ko na dapat magin madiskarte pa ak."

R4: "Uhmmm siguro nak na adopt la ada an pagiging madiskarte kay mayda kasi hadto time nga kailangan ko gud mag isip hin bago nga igbaraligya, bisan hubyaon ak basta ha mga sugad hito ginhimo ko gud na dre hubyaon kay para man liwat iton haak negosyo."

R5: "Nak na adopt ada bangin an time management ada, kay dati kasi waray ak hadto sakto nga oras kun sano ak magluluto o di kaya magbabaligya."

R6: "Anay daw, bangin an pagkukuan gihap han oras, kay dati kasi mga tag alas 9 ak hadto nagmamata hit aga, yana kay mas nahuna hunaan ko nga dapat aga ako magmata kay mas damo it mapalit hinin, so pinili ko aga nala magmata sugad mga 4 or 5 hit aga."

2.3. How they deal with the situation when their work was interrupted because a problem arose.

When Respondent 1's child was rush to the hospital, even when she was having second thoughts between leaving her business and head to the hospital where her child is, she still choosed her child over her business. Respondent 2 needed to leave her job as a street vendor because she doesn't have enough customers, and that she can't earn enough money for a living, that's why she decided to leave, and went to find a job in manila for 6 months and went back her after she already had enough money to start her business again. Respondent 3 needed to stop from street vending when his wife died, because his childrens were still small when his wife died, and went back to street vending after a few years. Respondent 4's work was interrupted when he got sick and was diagnosed of diabetes, he stopped street vending for a few months, but his wife pursued street vending. Just like Respondent 4, Respondent 5's work was interrupted because he also got sick because of his age, but his childrens and wife continued it so they could buy his medecines. Repondent 6's work was interrupted when it was his child's graduation; he left his business just so he could attend his child's graduation day.

R1: "Siguro tak mabubulig la ha ira it pagtitinda ha ira hin barato la nga mga paninda kay paprehas manla kami hinin mga pobre kaya para medyo gumaan gaan it ira pangastos babaligyaan ko hira hin barato."

R2: "Nahinunumdom ako nga waray gud ak pakwarta kwarta hadto tas guti pa nak benta hadto ha pagtitinda kaya ginsara ko anay tas nagtrabaho ak anay ha Manila siguro mga 6 kabulan didto ngan balik utro dinhi Samar ngan nagbaligya utro."

R3: "Bangin hadto han namatay nak asawa, kailangan ko anay humuyo pagtinda kay waray bantay tam balay tas tak mga anak hadto gudti pa. Pero pira katuig an naglabay balik gihap ako kay baga marisyo ko man magtinda na." *chuckles*

R4: "Naapektuhan gud adto nak pagtitinda han time nga naospital ak agi nak sakit nga diabetes, pira ak anay kabulan waray makagtinda kaya maupay nala nak asawa nagpursige magtinda kay karag daw kuno it benta."

R5: "An yana nga tuig, syempre senior na ak ngan medyo dre na magtig-a it bukog, nagkasakit ak maupay nala nak duha nga anak ngan nak asawa hira la anay an nagbaligya ha karsada para makakuha hin income ngan paralit tak mga medisina."

R6: "An hadto nga time nga graduation nak usa nga anak ha grade 6, ginbayaan ko anay nak mg paninda ha akon bugto ngan umattend ak han program syempre anak ko adto."

2.4. How can they help their selves and others escape poverty.

Respondent 1 and 5 stated that the only thing she can somehow help, is to sell cheap products that everyone can afford, to somehow reduce the money they spend. Respondent 2 said that the only way she can help is to motivate others to find a job, like being a street vendor, rather than committing bad deeds. Respondent 3 would like to share his life story, so others would imitate him and be resourceful like him. Respondent 4 would tell others that they'll go nowhere if they just sit there and do nothing for them to escape poverty that they need to fight, for them to survive. Respondent 6 would like others to be inspired with his life that even in being a street vendor, and being the only one who supports his childrens financially, since his wife died, he was able to fill the needs of his childrens.

R1: "Siguro tak mabubulig la ha ira it pagtitinda ha ira hin barato la nga mga paninda kay paprehas manla kami hinin mga pobre kaya para medyo gumaan gaan it ira pangastos babaligyaan ko hira hin barato."

R2: "Tak mahibubulig nala ada it pagkuan ha ira nga igmotivate ba hira nga dapar dire la hira mag inukoy mamiling ba hira hin trabaho bisan la pagtitinda kaysa naman magpinan ngawat or mag inugtukon la."

R3: "Kuan nala ada ig iistorya ko ha ira tak kinabuhi para ba sumubad liwat hira haak nga madiskarte na kay usa nala gudman ak kay waray na tak asawa, todo kayod na ba."

R4: "Kuan nala ada siguro pag istorya ada ha ira nga waray mahinanabo haat kun maghinuyo la kita ha kakurian, dapat laban kay para matalwas kita hinin nga aton kinabuhi."

R5: "Tak mahihimo nala ada iday it pagtinda ha ira hin mga barato nga papliton kay paprehas manla kami hinin pobre bisan ha ito la nga paagi makabulig ak ha ira."

R6: "Gusto ko ma inspire hira haak kinabuhi nga bisan pagtitinda la tak trabaho nakakaya ko buhion tak tulo nga anak bisan usa la ak, karuyag ko tanan kami makaahon ba ha hirap, asya la."

In summary, the themes gathered from the responses of the participants are as follows:

An Opportunity

According to the participants, the majority of participants believe that is an appealing position for those seeking employment with a limited educational background and due to age, as it provides an opportunity to have a job that can provide for their own and their family's physiological needs, as well as help their children's academic lives.

Full of hardship

Most of the interviewed participants answered that their life experience as a street vendor was simple but full of hardships in which they encountered numerous problems, which increases this sector's struggle for survival as they are exposed to numerous shocks and risks.

Lifelong Learners

All of the interviewed participants answered that they learned a lot from this position, and it encourages them to improve their own quality of life and sense of self-worth by paying attention to the and goals that inspire them.

Hard Occupation

Based on the results of this study, street vendors' emotional and physical tensions are high as a result of the large amount of time and effort required to prepare, display, and sell their products, especially the ergonomic risks associated with lifting, carrying, and transporting heavy merchandise and also, it is a job whose livelihood is dependent on good weather, which street vendors find difficult to access due to extreme weather changes.

Competitors are present

Most of the interviewed participants answered that there is market competition because geographical market areas overlap and their price points resemble each other, especially they offer the same or similar products.

Time Management

Based on the study, the coping strategies they applied to the various situations encountered are through proper time management in which they prioritize the important things to be done chronologically to increase effectiveness, efficiency, and productivity.

Low pricing strategy

Again, based on the study, another coping strategy they used was penetration pricing, which involved setting their products at an affordable price, often lower than the eventual market price, in order to attract new customers.

Ambulatory vendors

Most of the interviewed participants answered that their coping strategy for effectively selling their products is to be mobile, which they accomplish by carrying and transporting heavy merchandise or by using carts.

Professional Integrity

Some of the participants said that integrity is beneficial to both businesses and individuals, as it involves making ethical decisions and dealing with challenges calmly and purposefully.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results, the study concluded that street vending has become an important source of employment for large numbers of urban populations, and that vending-activities play an important socio-economic role as a coping mechanism for low-income households. The study also concluded that street vendors living standards improved as a result of selling activities. The conclusion, therefore, was that street vending has a multiplier effect as their profits accumulate, resulting in higher demand for more goods and services.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Street vendors play an important part in the economy of the nation. Therefore, it would be beneficial to also give more aid and assistance to them. The researcher suggests that regulators and government should introduce laws and policies that recognize street vendors as key players in the country's national economy. On the other hand, street vendors should also be responsible and obedient to law. The challenges experienced by the interviewed street vendors can help other street vendors to understand what is it like and how to cope-up with the challenges faced. Future researchers may also look in to innovations and interventions that may help the street vendors. Generally, to make a better community, everyone should help each other and abide to the necessary laws of the community.

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