



## Analyzing the Implications of the Growing Street Vendor Population in Gweru, Zimbabwe: A Risk Assessment

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**ABSTRACT:** This study investigates the consequences of the growing number of street vendors in Gweru, Zimbabwe, and offers a risk evaluation. The prominence of street vending can be attributed to several factors, including limited formal employment possibilities, poverty, inadequate education or skills, restricted job prospects, and exorbitant leasing expenses. The presence of restricted trading spaces also exerts a substantial influence. Although street selling is thought to have a positive effect on Zimbabwe's economy, it is recognized that there are possible adverse consequences, such as noise pollution and overcrowding in public areas. Street selling is accompanied with several risks, such as concerns regarding sanitation, competition with established enterprises, traffic congestion, and potential safety dangers. In order to tackle these concerns, it is imperative for policymakers and urban planners in Gweru to enact efficacious laws and regulations that guarantee the establishment of secure, hygienic, and controlled street vending settings. It is essential to strike a balance between the requirements of various groups and to minimize any adverse effects. It is imperative to implement education and awareness initiatives aimed at promoting effective waste management practices. Gweru has the capacity to allocate specific areas for vending, enforce regulations regarding sanitation, control the quantity of traders and their operating hours, offer training and assistance to vendors, facilitate their transition into formal businesses, establish a structured market system, and engage in communication with the informal sector. This study highlights the significance of tackling the problems associated with street vending in order to promote sustainable development and enhance the quality of life for people. Efficient tactics are required to alleviate adverse consequences and foster a cohesive urban milieu.

**KEYWORDS:** Informal sector, poverty, Limited employment, Street vendors, Sustainable development, Traffic congestion.

### INTRODUCTION

Prior to implementing a more stringent strategy to regulate and reduce street vending as a component of its social reform strategic plan, the Chinese government employed street vending as a means to foster economic development between 1949 and 1977 [1]. The promotion of street vending by the local administration in Chengdu during the COVID 19 epidemic has played a crucial role in generating employment prospects, in line with the Chinese government's overarching initiatives to rejuvenate the economy [2]. Individual peddlers have greatly profited from this action, as they have been positively impacted by the perceived advantages of the policy and subjective standards [3].

The economic activity of street selling in Africa holds considerable importance, particularly in the realm of food items, encompassing fast foods, animal products, and vegetables [4]. A significant proportion of street food sellers are unmarried women in their middle age who possess a high school education [5]. These vendors play a substantial role in generating household income. Street vending, despite its economic significance, encounters various obstacles like little understanding of food safety protocols and insufficient adherence to hygienic practices [6]. Presently, the prevailing economic difficulties in Africa and other nations across the globe have prompted an increasing number of individuals to partake in street vending, thereby perpetuating the prevailing circumstances.

In recent years, Zimbabwe has witnessed a significant increase in the population of street sellers, particularly in metropolitan areas [5]. Gweru, the city with the fourth-highest population in the country, has also been affected by this trend. The socio-economic dynamics and potential hazards associated with the decentralized street selling business in Gweru give rise to major inquiries. The existence of street sellers increases the likelihood of encountering dangers [7]. In the Midlands Province of Zimbabwe, the city of Gweru has experienced a significant rise in the occurrence of street vending, leading to the expansion of an informal economy.



Street selling has become a prominent feature of urban setting in various developing countries, functioning as a type of informal economic endeavor.

It serves as a means of generating revenue for a substantial portion of the populace, offering employment opportunities and affordably priced goods to consumers [8]. However, the rapid expansion of street vending has also generated concerns over its impact on urban environments, public welfare, and socio-economic balance.

The informal sector is subject to the effect of both economic and political forces, hence adding complexity to the issue [9]. During campaign periods, vendors are granted the freedom to conduct their work in any location they choose. However, this contradicts the legal provisions of the council, yet the political authority prevails over the council's legal authority. This exacerbates the perplexity faced by the local administration, even subsequent to the elections. The scenario in Zimbabwe, where the majority of municipal councils are under the leadership of opposition parties, adds complexity, as the ruling party seeks to portray the council authorities as ineffective in managing the cities. Mamvura [10] emphasize the ongoing contestation for power and self-governance between urban local government entities and the central government, wherein the techniques employed by the ruling party serve to strengthen the latter's hegemony.

This study aimed to comprehensively comprehend the consequences of the growing street vendor community in Gweru.

The domestic economy of Zimbabwe has demonstrated inadequate performance, resulting in a significant increase in the cost of living and a widespread state of unemployment [11]. Consequently, a significant segment of the population has been compelled to engage in street vending, and this occurrence is progressively on the rise. The presence of street vendors is widespread in the majority of major urban centers across Zimbabwe. Street vendors dominate the major commercial sector in Gweru, especially in busy areas like the Kudzanai Bus Terminus. Merchants participate in the trade of a wide range of goods and services, including but not limited to food items, clothing, telecommunications, and mobile gadgets. Concerns have been raised by well-established retail establishments regarding the emergence of street vendors offering similar merchandise, resulting in heightened levels of rivalry. There is a lack of consensus regarding the overall economic impact of street vending, whether it is useful or negative. The researcher aimed to investigate the growing occurrence of street sellers in Gweru, a city that serves as a representative case study highlighting the current conditions in one of Zimbabwe's main urban regions.

The findings of this research would ultimately provide a significant addition to the ongoing academic debate around street vending and its impact on urban environments. The expected outcomes of this study are expected to provide significant insights to policymakers, urban planners, and other pertinent stakeholders in Gweru and neighboring regions. This will facilitate the development of effective strategies to capitalize on the potential benefits of street vending while mitigating the associated risks.

## METHODS

This research employed a case study approach to examine the consequences of the increasing number of street vendors in Gweru, Zimbabwe. The utilization of a case study design enabled a comprehensive analysis of the region, providing a wealth of quantitative data to gain a thorough understanding of the unique ramifications associated with the increasing prevalence of street selling in Gweru. The advantages of utilizing a case study technique to examine the consequences of street vending in urban settings have been underscored in prior studies undertaken by May et al., [12], Fuste-Forne [13], and Torky [14]. To ensure diverse representation across different sectors and types of enterprises, a mixed-sample strategy was employed, which involved the utilization of stratified, purposive, and random sampling methods. Quantitative data on the examination of the consequences of the increasing street vendor population in Gweru was collected through the administration of surveys utilizing a closed-ended questionnaire. From the city center of Gweru, a sample of 126 traders and municipal authorities were chosen based on their availability and willingness to participate. The quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, providing insights into the consequences of the increase in street vending in Gweru. Rigorous ethical guidelines were followed, which encompassed the acquisition of informed consent from participants and the safeguarding of response anonymity.

## RESULTS

### Factors leading to street vending

The present investigation investigated the elements that contribute to street vending and its subsequent effects. The study revealed that 69.80% of respondents regarded poverty as a prominent element, whilst 30.20% did not perceive it as a significant influence.



Likewise, 86.50% of participants acknowledged unemployment as a significant determinant, whereas 13.50% expressed disagreement. 89% of participants emphasized the exorbitant expense of rentals; however 11% did not consider it a significant factor. 78% of respondents attributed their loss to council ordinances, while 22% expressed disagreement. 90% of respondents identified political influence as a prominent role, whereas 10% did not connect it to street vending. 86.50% of participants accepted the limited availability of formal places, whereas 13.50% expressed a different opinion.

The means of Variable 1 and Variable 2 were compared using a t-test. The average value of Variable 1 was determined to be 0.833, whilst the average value of Variable 2 was found to be 0.167. Both variables had variances of 0.006164. The results of the t-test yielded a t Stat value of 10.38935398, accompanied with a one-tail p-value of 7.11476E-05 and a two-tail p-value of 0.000142295. At a significance level of 0.05, the crucial t-value for a one-tail test was determined to be 2.015048372, while for a two-tail test, it was found to be 2.570581835. The null hypothesis, which posits no disparity between the means of the two variables, was refuted based on these findings. Hence, it may be inferred that a statistically significant disparity exists between the predictors of street selling and the lack thereof.

### **Risk of street vending**

The report conducted an investigation of the perceived hazards that are linked to street vending. Out of the participants, 83.30% recognized noise pollution as a substantial hazard, whilst 16.70% did not regard it as a significant issue. 45% of interviewees acknowledged the risk of poor hygiene and disease, whereas 55% expressed a different opinion. 69% of respondents recognized garbage pollution as a risk, but 21% did not regard it as a serious factor. 59% of interviewees recognized the risk of lower business compared to the formal sector, but 41% did not consider it a significant worry. 70% of respondents perceived street congestion as a risk, while 30% expressed disagreement.

Furthermore, a t-test was performed in order to compare the means of Variable 1 and Variable 2, which respectively represent the perceived dangers associated with street vending. The mean value for Variable 1 was determined to be 0.6526, suggesting a comparatively elevated perception of risk. Conversely, the mean value for Variable 2 was found to be 0.3274, indicating a comparatively diminished sense of risk. Variable 1 had a variation of 0.0202888, while Variable 2 had a variance of 0.0241588. The obtained Pearson correlation coefficient of -0.958643837 suggest a robust negative association between the two variables.

The comparison using the t-test yielded a t Stat value of 2.466821049. The p-value for the one-tail test was determined to be 0.034591249, while the p-value for the two-tail test was 0.069182499. Based on the obtained crucial t-values of 2.131846782 and 2.776445105 for a one-tail and two-tail test, respectively, at a significance level of 0.05, the findings indicate a statistically significant disparity in the perceived dangers associated with street vending between Variable 1 and Variable 2.

### **Impact of street vending**

A study was conducted to assess the perceived effects of street vending. Out of the participants, 73% acknowledged the presence of inexpensive products as a beneficial consequence of street vending, however 27% did not regard it as a noteworthy element. 83% of participants recognized the convenience to customers as a positive consequence, whereas 17% expressed a different opinion. 64% of respondents recognized the potential of street vending to enhance the economy, whilst 36% did not perceive it as having a substantial effect. In addition, 69% of interviewees acknowledged the enhanced accessibility of items as a favorable influence, although 21% did not consider it a significant determinant. 68% of respondents regarded the preservation of culture as having a beneficial impact, while 32% expressed dissatisfaction.

In addition, a t-test was used to assess the differences in means between Variable 1 and Variable 2, which assess the perceived influence of street vending. The average value for Variable 1 was determined to be 0.714, suggesting a comparatively elevated sense of positive influence. Conversely, the average value for Variable 2 was found to be 0.266, showing a comparatively diminished perception of positive impact. Variable 1 had a variation of 0.00523, while Variable 2 had a variance of 0.00603. The obtained Pearson correlation coefficient of -0.824463608 suggests a moderate negative association between the two variables. The statistical analysis yielded a t-statistic value of 6.99317406. The p-value for the one-tail test was determined to be 0.001100079, while the p-value for the two-tail test was 0.002200159. The results show a significant difference in the perceived impact of street vending between Variable 1 and Variable 2, as indicated by the crucial t-values for a one-tail test at a significance level of 0.05 (2.131846782) and a two-tail test (2.776445105).



## Measure to minimize street vending

The study examined strategies aimed at reducing street vending as assessed by the participants. Out of the participants, a majority of 90% expressed agreement with the notion that licensing vendors could be a beneficial strategy for reducing street vending, however a minority of 10% did not perceive it as an efficacious tool. 93.70% of respondents acknowledged that public education and awareness may effectively reduce street vending, while just 6.30% disagreed. 90.50% of participants regarded empowering people as an effective approach, whereas 9.50% did not consider it a major component. Regarding the implementation of vending spaces as a strategy to mitigate street vending, there was a divergence of perspectives, with 49% expressing agreement and 51% expressing disagreement regarding the efficacy of this method.

In addition, a t-test was performed to compare the means of Variable 1 and Variable 2, which depict the perceived efficacy of the interventions aimed at reducing street selling. The average value for Variable 1 was determined to be 0.808, suggesting a comparatively elevated impression of effectiveness. Conversely, the average value for Variable 2 was found to be 0.192, showing a comparatively diminished perception of efficacy. Both Variable 1 and Variable 2 had variations of 0.045212667. A Pearson correlation coefficient of -1 was observed between the two variables, suggesting a strong negative association.

The comparison using the t-test yielded a t Stat value of 2.897014379. The determined p-value for the one-tail analysis was 0.031327098, while the p-value for the two-tail analysis was 0.062654197. The results indicate a statistically significant difference in the perceived effectiveness of the measures to reduce street vending between Variable 1 and Variable 2, as evidenced by the critical t-values for a one-tail test at a significance level of 0.05 (2.353363435) and a two-tail test (3.182446305).

## DISCUSSION

The findings derived from the risk assessment conducted on the consequences of the expanding street vendor population in Gweru, Zimbabwe offer significant contributions in understanding the perceived hazards linked to street vending, its influence on diverse facets, and viable strategies to mitigate its consequences. The findings of the analysis indicate that a significant proportion of participants identified several risks associated with street vending. These risks include noise pollution (83.30%), poor hygiene and disease (45%), garbage pollution (69%), low business compared to the formal sector (59%), and street congestion (70%). The aforementioned findings shed light on the community's concerns over the adverse externalities associated with street vending, including noise pollution, unhygienic conditions, and heightened garbage accumulation. These factors have the potential to adversely affect the overall quality of life and appeal of the urban environment. The findings align with the research conducted by Hove et al. [15] in their article titled, "Illegal street vending and national security in Harare, Zimbabwe". Conversely, when analyzing the perceived influence of street vending, the findings reveal that a substantial number of participants acknowledged favorable consequences. The positive effects of street vending were recognized in terms of the accessibility of affordable goods (73%), the convenience it offers to clients (83%), its potential to stimulate economic growth (64%), and its contribution to the preservation of cultural heritage (68%). The aforementioned findings indicate that street vending has the potential to yield advantages for consumers, make a positive impact on local economies, and contribute to the preservation of cultural heritage. In their respective publications titled "Assessment of the Contribution of Street Vending to the Zimbabwe Economy," Mazhambe [11] and Madziba [16] arrived at similar findings. In the articles titled "A Case of Street Vendors in Harare CBD" and "Street Vending in Zimbabwe: An Urban Scourge or Viable Enterprise," the authors present their opposing perspectives. The investigation additionally examined alternative strategies to mitigate the prevalence of street selling. The effectiveness of licensing vendors (90%) and public education and awareness (93.70%) was strongly endorsed. The significance of empowering individuals (90.50%) was also seen as a crucial aspect, underscoring the potential of offering assistance and avenues for street vendors to shift towards official economic endeavors. In their scholarly study titled "Hygienic Practices of Street Food Vendors in Zimbabwe: A Case of Harare," Nyoni and Bonga [17] provided support for this assertion. However, there was a divergence in attitudes regarding the efficacy of constructing vending areas (49%), suggesting contrasting viewpoints on the potential success of establishing designated locations for street vending. This statement contradicts the findings of Nyaya [18], which propose that enhanced infrastructure has the potential to eradicate street vending. To summarize, the risk assessment results underscore the intricate characteristics of street vending in Gweru, Zimbabwe. Although there are perceived concerns connected with it, such as noise pollution, poor hygiene, and congestion, it is also seen to have beneficial consequences, including the provision of inexpensive items, convenience, economic contributions, and cultural preservation. The results indicate that effectively tackling the difficulties associated with street selling necessitates a comprehensive



strategy encompassing licensing policies, public awareness campaigns, empowerment programs, and meticulous allocation of vending spaces. These observations can provide valuable guidance to legislators and urban planners in formulating effective approaches to address the increasing number of street vendors, while simultaneously considering the interests of the community, the economy, and the vendors themselves.

## CONCLUSION

This research examines the consequences of the increasing number of street vendors in Gweru, Zimbabwe, offering significant perspectives on the perceived hazards, effects, and possible strategies to tackle the difficulties linked to street vending. The results uncover various issues, such as excessive loudness, inadequate cleanliness, and overcrowding, while also emphasizing the favorable elements such as cost-effectiveness, convenience, economic impact, and cultural conservation. The research highlights the necessity of adopting a holistic strategy that integrates licensing policies, public awareness campaigns, empowerment programs, and strategic planning of vending spaces in order to efficiently address the issue of street vendors.

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