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Eviction-Related Threats and Coping Mechanisms among Women Street Food Vendors in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

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Abstract: The purpose of this study was to investigate eviction-related threats and coping mechanisms among women street food vendors in Ubungo Municipality, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. A cross-sectional research design was used and a questionnaire was administered to a random sample of 60 women. According to the findings, eviction-related threats included a decrease in the number of customers, the lack of specific location for food vending activities, an increase in the cost of doing business and the congestion of street food vendors in one location. Women coped with such evictions by maintaining the price but reducing the share of food, measuring food according to the client's financial ability, practicing good customer service, borrowing money from financial institutions and striving to expand customers' base. Other reported strategies include preparing enough food for the day and explaining to customers why food prices have risen. In harmony with the Multi-layered social resilience framework, respondents managed to demonstrate reactive capacities in dealing with such eviction-related threats. In order to cope with the threats more proactively, awareness campaigns are needed to educate women street food vendors on the need of conducting their enterprises in authorized locations in order to avoid further evictions. Similarly, women street vendors should be empowered to seek assistance from both local and national government authorities at various levels, participate in decision-making processes and create institutions that can defend and foster their well-being in the face of future crises.

Keywords: Street food vending; women; coping strategies; resilience; Dar es Salaam.

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Introduction

Street Food Vending (SFV) has increasingly become a key livelihood strategy among the young and poor in the urban settings in the developing world. Street food vending is an unregulated informal food supply sector in countries with high unemployment, low wages and limited job opportunities (Akinbode et al., 2011; Bryan et al., 1988). Street foods are any ready-to-eat foods, beverages and snacks prepared and/or sold by vendors or hawkers, particularly in streets and similar locations for immediate consumption or later consumption without further processing or preparation (Ekanem, 1998; Steyn & Labadarios, 2011; Hill et al., 2019).

Street food vending is fueled mostly by rapid urbanization (Alimi & Workneh, 2016) which to a great extent is caused by rural-urban migration and

natural increase of people with low income in places regarded as urban. Street food vending plays an important role in developing countries; it allows for self-employment with little capital, primarily among economically disadvantaged segments of the community in many developing countries (FAO, 2016). Furthermore, low-income urban population groups such as office workers, students, casual workers, commuters and city dwellers benefit from street food vending (Muyanja et al., 2011).

Despite the benefits listed above, the contribution of street food vending to the economies of developing countries is underappreciated due to the informal nature of the business (Alimi & Workneh, 2016). Street-vended food is considered to be a significant source of foodborne illnesses (WHO, 2010) like cholera, acute diarrhoea and typhoid fever in some developing countries in Asia and Africa (Mensah et al., 2002). The main risk factors that contribute to foodborne illnesses from street food are inadequate infrastructure, improper food handling and poor sanitary conditions at food vending points (CODEX, 2009; WHO, 2010; Cortese et al., 2016). Furthermore, street food vendors are unpopular because they take up a lot of public space, including sidewalks, streets, shopping/market areas, parking lots, vacant lots, city parks and bus/train stations (Muyanja et al., 2011; Yatmo, 2008) something which causes inconvenience to people using such places. Furthermore, street food vending is frequently regarded as a major source of environmental pollution in urban areas because vendors frequently fail to clean their working environments, which can lead to other health problems in the areas. As a result, street food vending is regarded as an undesirable activity due to its disorderly and transient nature, as well as its perceived lower contribution to urban income (Timothy & Wall, 1997).

Due to its informality, street trading and food vending in particular, is forbidden and is considered a violation of city by-laws in most cities of the developing countries (Roever et al., 2016). The eviction of street food vendors from restricted areas through law enforcement is therefore aimed at maintaining the orderliness of such places (Recio, 2013; Xue & Huang, 2015). Local government officials typically use local police and city paramilitaries to evict street vendors from public spaces where they conduct their businesses. The operations are carried out in such a way that the police frequently confiscate the belongings of street vendors with no clear procedures in place for the vendors to reclaim their belongings. In fact, several countries, including Malawi, Nigeria and Zambia as well as Indonesia, have enacted laws that not only prohibit street vending but also make purchasing from street vendors a criminal offense (Roever et al., 2016).

Thousands of vendors in Tanzania's urban areas, including Dar es Salaam, have been evicted or reallocated for a variety of reasons, one of which is infrastructure development and expansion (Hamidu & Munishi, 2022a). The most recent major street vending eviction in Dar es Salaam occurred as a result of the construction of the Bus Rapid Transit Project (BRT) and Standard Gauge Railway line (SGR) as well as the expansion of main and feeder roads in various locations (Brown et al., 2015). Street vendors' eviction is also regarded as a means to plan and put urban areas in order (Hamidu & Munishi, 2022b). Just recently, vendors were evicted in many urban areas in Tanzania so as to keep those areas clean and neat.

Most evictions and reallocations which are orchestrated by city para militias take place in a brutal way, causing massive property and business damage. Most street vendors operate their business with very little capital and oftentimes they use unfriendly commercial loans to support their small businesses. They depend on the street vending to support themselves and their families and in most cases many vendor's household expenditure depends to a great extent on the day-to-day income. Considering that street food vending is a necessary activity (Karondo & Tumaini, 2021) to a substantial people with limited formal education and skills and people who do not have big substantial capital to switch business, this article sought to investigate eviction-related threats and coping mechanisms among women street food vendors in Ubungo Municipality, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

Theoretical Framework

Multi-layered social resilience framework serves as the foundation of this paper (Obrist et al., 2010). Adapting the definition of Obrist et al. (2010) to the context of this study, social resilience implies the ability of women street food vendors to not only cope with and adjust to eviction-related threats (reactive' capacities), but also search for and create options for overcoming such threats (proactive capacities). In this regard, proactive capacities refer

to the ability of food vendors to conduct their activities while observing all the required procedures. Reactive capacities are considered to be direct responses to a threat that is or has recently occurred, whereas 'proactive' capacities are considered to be the ability to anticipate and recognize a threat, plan and create options necessary to increase competency and thus create pathways for mitigating adversity or threat(s) to address the threat well in advance before the threat occurs. Carpenter et al., (2001) interpreted resilience as the ability to self-organize, learn and adapt.

Building resilience is a multi-layered process that involves social networks at the individual, household, community, meso, national and international levels. This is to say that, an 'actor's' resilience to a threat is determined by the 'actors' ability to solicit support from a diverse set of actors and institutions at various layers. Other actors' assistance may improve actors' ability to deal with threats by providing resources, learning from experience and developing constructive problem-solving strategies (Obrist et al., 2010). According to Keck and Sakdapolrak (2013), being fully resilient means coping with future crises by learning, through shocks and distress, which actions are more or less appropriate in the context of uncertainties.

This framework is deemed useful in the context of this study because it assists researchers in understanding the impact of frequent evictions on street food vending activities. It also highlights the abilities of the actors (women street food vendors) to overcome eviction-related threats (Dongus et al., 2010). This framework emphasizes the importance of various actors from various layers (individual, street, district, regional, national and international levels) working together to address challenges related to street food vending in order to develop a sustainable and permanent solution 'proactive' capacities.

Methodology

Description of the Study Area

This study was conducted in Ubungo Municipal Council which is one of six municipalities that make up the City of Dar es Salaam, a Tanzania's major business center. The Municipality is bounded to the north by Kibaha District, to the south by Kinondoni District and to the west by Kisarawe District. The municipality is well connected to the rest of the city and other parts of the country by roads and other communication networks. Morogoro Road, Mandela Road and Kawawa Road are major road links in Ubungo Municipality that are currently under construction. Furthermore, Ubungo Municipality is home to newly constructed large bus stands such as Kimara and Mbezi Mwisho, which are specifically for the Dar es Salaam Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system, Simu 2000 Bus Terminal, Kawe Bus Terminal, which is specifically for city businesses and Magufuli Bus Terminal, which is specifically for upcountry buses. As a result of all of these constructions, street food vendors have been evicted or relocated in some way. Furthermore, these bus terminals and markets attract a large number of passengers who are also potential customers for street food vendors.

Research Design and Sampling

This study employed the cross-sectional research design. A multi-stage sampling method was used to select the study area and the respondents. The City of Dar es Salaam was purposefully chosen because, in comparison to other cities in the country, it has the most street food vendors (Tanzania National Bureau of Statistics, 2015). Similarly, Ubungo Municipality was purposefully chosen because it has been heavily impacted by the eviction of street food vendors as a result of the construction of major infrastructure, particularly rapid bus transport road lanes and bus stations. The sampled study sites were Mawasiliano, Kimara Mwisho, Kawe and Magufuli bus stops. A total of 60 research participants were selected at random from the locations where they do their daily food vending. This sample was selected for its ability to provide richly textured information relevant to the phenomenon under investigation (Luborsky & Rubinstein, 1995).

Data Collection

Data was collected from women street vendors in Ubungo Municipality, in the City of Dar es Salaam in September 2022, using a questionnaire and field observation. Data was collected on the socio-demographic characteristics of street food vendors, as well as the operational characteristics of their units and types of food products sold. The field team was made up of five people. Two senior members oversaw the remaining three members who were well-trained and experienced in field data collection. Each field enumerator was assigned to a different special study site and interviewed 20 women street food vendors. Each questionnaire was administered for about 30 minutes at a convenient location near the participant's workplace.

Data analysis

Statistical Package for Social Science was used to describe the socio-demographic characteristics of women street food vendors and their vending facilities. Using the Multi-layered social resilience framework (Obrist et al., 2010), content analysis was performed to investigate eviction-related threats and coping mechanisms among the respondents.

Validity and reliability

Development of the questionnaire based on the study's objectives to ensure the study's validity. Selected experts in the field were consulted prior to data collection to review the questionnaire against the research objectives and to provide feedback for further improvement. Following the pilot study, items that were ambiguous or irrelevant were changed to better suit the study's objectives. Furthermore, the study's findings were more reliable due to the use of multiple approaches such as questionnaires and field observation.

Ethical Considerations

The researchers followed ethical principles during data collection, presentation and discussion. Before the interviews began, all respondents signed consent forms indicating their informed consent. Confidentiality was maintained by assigning each questionnaire a unique code number rather than the interviewee's name. Participants were informed that their participation in the data collection was entirely voluntary and that they could refuse to provide information that they did not wish to provide.

Results and Discussion

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

This study included 60 women as participants. The mean age of women street food vendors was 32.38±7.76 years. The mean (7.75±2.75) for years of schooling was almost eight years. In terms of marital status, more than half of respondents (58.3%) were unmarried while about a third (33.3%) were married and less than 10% were divorced. More than half (54.1%) of the participants admitted to being primary providers in their households compared to 41.7% who were not. Each participant had two dependents on average.

Research Question 1: What characteristics distinguish street food vending activities?

The study established that the average age of most vending activities was three years (38.97±36.1 months), meaning that some businesses were quite old while others were relatively new. In terms of where respondents conducted their street food vending activities, approximately 44% operated in a temporary paper shed while approximately 12% and 44 % operated in a rented kiosk and in open areas without walls or roof, respectively. The average daily operating capital was TZS 58,500 (USD 25) and the average daily profit was found to be TZS 13,133 (USD 6). Vendors who sold breakfast, lunch and dinner used more capital and earned higher profits than those who only sold groundnuts or fruits because breakfast, lunch and dinner generate more profit than just trading groundnuts or fruits.

Research Question 2: How do eviction and reallocations impact on street food vending activities?

Evictions of women street vendors from informal locations affected them in a variety of ways, depending on a variety of factors such as the vendor's location, experience, capital and ability to deal with challenges associated with the eviction. For example, some vendors who were able to secure good locations near bus stops or market places fared better than those who were relocated to new distant locations far from people's homes and those who missed out on a slot in planned locations. However, whether or not a vendor obtained a slot in planned locations, frequent evictions affected the vendors in one way or another as reported below:

Decreased Number of Customers

Many female street vendors reported that being evicted from one location to another has a significant financial impact on their business. Street food vendors, like other businesses, have regular or loyal customers. As a result, when vendors are relocated from their current locations to new areas, they lose such customers. This has a direct impact on their operational capital and profit as reported by one of respondents:

> After the eviction, I just found myself conducting business in an unfamiliar environment where I don't know anyone. Many people will not buy food from a vendor they are unfamiliar with. A decrease in customers has an impact on my business because the operating costs exceed the profit" (Respondent, Mawasiliano Bus Stand)

Lack of Specific Location for Food Vending Activities

The study established that most evictions and street vendor placements were not well organized. After the evictions, only a few vendors were able to be placed in previously planned areas. Those who did not get a slot to conduct their business were forced to conduct it in unofficial areas. One respondent from Kawe Bus Stand stated:

> When they removed us from where we were conducting our activities, they promised to give us a good alternative place. Surprisingly, they did not provide us with an alternative location, so we ended up conducting our activities here (on the street) as you can see.

Increase in the Cost of Doing Business

The study found that evictions and reallocations of street food vendors did not take the vendor's residence into account. As a result, some vendors were relocated to distant locations far from their homes, increasing the costs of running their businesses, particularly in terms of bus fares. As a result, some vendors decided to discontinue operations as reported below:

> […] this eviction and relocation has increased cost to our business and some of us have decided to stop doing this business. Some of us had spent up to TZS 7000 (USD 3) to get to the location where assigned to do the business. This adds cost, which we cannot afford in our current business (Respondent, Kimara Mwisho Bus Stand).

Congestion of Street Food Vendors in One Location

Due to lack of large places to conduct business in some areas of the city, local government officials decided to consolidate all street food vendors, regardless of the types of foodstuffs they sold in one location. The vendors contested for this action because many food providers found themselves in one small area with very few customers. Furthermore, because they cooked on charcoal stoves, being together is hazardous to their health due to the intense heat from the stoves. They used the Kisutu market as an example, where all street food vendors had been ordered to do their jobs:

> [...] Putting all of the food vendors in one location implies that customers will go there to eat. Customers who live a long distance away will be unable to eat at this place; we end up with only a few customers. Furthermore, because we cook on charcoal stoves, the heat is extremely intense; this is also hazardous to our health. Personally, I was assigned to vend at the Kisitu market in Ilala, but I was unable to stay there due to overcrowding and heat from the charcoal stoves (Respondent, Magufuli Bus Terminal).

Research question 3: How do female street food vendors deal with eviction threats?

Businesses in general are currently shaken by the global economic recession caused by a variety of factors such as prolonged droughts, the outbreak of COVID and, most recently, the war in Ukraine (Cekerevac & Bogavac, 2023). Street food vending activities have not been spared. In addition to those factors, street food vending activities have been severely impacted by frequent evictions from locations with a sufficient number of potential customers. As a result, women street vendors in particular have not been passive in the face of these evictions. They implemented a variety of strategies to sustain their businesses and livelihoods as follows:

Maintaining the Price but Reducing the Share

Many respondents stated that in order to keep their vending operations going, they were forced to reduce the amount while maintaining the price of food. They would be able to cover expenses and make a profit this way. One respondent reported that "What we do is reduce the proportion of food as customers do flee if you raise the price. So, in order to keep these customers and make a profit, we reduced the amount of food" (Respondent, Kawe Bus Stand).

Measuring Food based on the Client's Financial Situation

Although women street vendors had set prices for the various dishes they sold, they did not turn away customers with less amount. To deal with customers who needed food but did not have enough money, they decided to ration the food based on the amount of money the customer had as reported below:

> When a customer arrives, you must inform them of the price of the food they have requested. If they have the required

> amount, you provide food for them; if they do not have the required amount, you must ration the food based on what the customer has. This allows us to sell to all customers because we wouldn't be able to finish the food we prepared for that day (Respondent, Mawasiliano Bus Stand).

Good Customer Service

To compete, participants reported striving to improve their services by being polite and using a good language that attracts customers. They also improved cleanliness, were neater and they strived to prepare food that tastes well. One of respondents reported: *"In order to cope with the decreasing number of customers, you have to differentiate your business from others. To keep my customers, I try to be neater, keep the business premises clean and use language that customers find appealing." (*Respondent, Kimara Bus Stand).

Borrowing Money from Financial Institutions

Frequent evictions of street food vendors left the majority of business women with little or no capital. As a result, many food street vendors were unable to continue operating, which can lead to poverty for them and their families as a whole. Some of those who are successful in continuing their business decided to seek loans from financial institutions in order to revive or expand their vending activities. One respondent from Magufuli Bus Terminal reported that:

> Due to these business challenges […] I try to borrow money from financial institutions with low interest rates. I borrow money from Village Community Bank (commonly known as VICOBA) and a women's group financial institution to help raise capital and expand the scope of my business.

Expand Customers Base

When street food vendors are evicted from their long-standing locations, they frequently lost their loyal customers. Building a customer base in new locations took time and significantly reduced their sales. To address this issue, they developed a variety of methods for increasing customers, such as going around nearby streets to advertise their business and for those who were at bus stations, advertising their business to travelers on buses and other modes of transportation. This was reported by one respondent as follows:

> When I was evicted from where I was conducting my business before, it took me a long time to rebuild my business. I had to start looking for customers by walking around the streets and bus stops. This helped me get some clients, though not as many as it did at first (Respondent, Mawasiliano Bus Stand).

Preparation of Food for the Day

Due to a decrease in the number of customers, women street food vendors prepared a small amount of food that could be consumed in one day to avoid food spoiling and causing further losses as reported:

> One of ways of dealing with shortage of customers caused by evictions is to prepare food that can be consumed in one day so as to avoid food spoilage and loss. If the food is left, the cost increases because it will spoil and you will have to throw it away. Otherwise, customers will avoid you (Respondent, Kimara Bus Stand).

Explain to Customers Why Food Price Has Increased

In order to cope with the rising cost of living, some participants reported that they attempted to explain to their customers that food price has risen significantly, requiring them to raise the prices of their food items as reported by one of respondents:

> I overcome the difficulties posed by evictions by informing consumers that because product prices have grown, we are left with no choice except to raise the price of food. Some clients will understand and there will be fewer complaints as a result (Respondent, Kawe Bus Stand).

Discussion

According to the findings, the average street food vending operation run by women is three years old. They operate in an open space without a wall or roof, with a daily operating capital of USD 25 and a daily profit of USD 6. These findings support previous research findings that street food enterprises use basic facilities and require little capital (Muzaffar et al., 2009; Njaya, 2014). Street food vendors prefer to operate in unauthorized locations, near bus stops or at markets where pedestrian traffic is high and the sidewalks are wide because this business is dependent on location and word-of-mouth promotion. Operating in an

unauthorized location with a small capital could be one of the factors keeping these food vendors in the streets. If these vendors had enough capital, they could hire licensed spaces to conduct their activities and so relocate away from the streets. However, it has been noted that some vendors chose to operate in unlawful areas purposely because of the freedom and flexibility that informality provides. In Lusaka, Zambia, for example, many street vendors opt to work outside the licensed marketplaces because the procedure of entering the markets is costly and cumbersome (Vargas Falla, 2013).

The findings also show that frequent evictions and reallocation impact the women street food vending in a variety of ways such as decreased number of customers, lack of specific locations for food vending, increased cost of doing business and congestion of street food vendors in one location. These findings reaffirm the findings of a study by Roever et al. (2016) in five cities in Africa, India and Latin America, which found that eviction of street food vendors resulted in vendors ceasing to operate and decreased number of customers. Several studies have shown eviction-related threats, including harassment of vendors by authority militia, confiscation of vendors' property, arrests, fines and imprisonment (Ackson, 2020). Apart from having an impact on the vendor's health and income, they have far-reaching effects for the vendor's household livelihoods and the community as a whole, as they are likely to exacerbate both individual and household poverty.

According to the findings and the Multi-layered social resilience framework (Obrist et al., 2010), the strategies used by the women street food vendors to overcome street food vending evictions demonstrate reactive capacities. As already explained before, reactive capacities are measures that seek to restore the current level of well-being by utilizing resources that are readily available in order to ensure short-term survival. Adaptive capacities, on the other hand, include the ability to learn from their past experiences, anticipate future risks and adjust their livelihoods as a result of such measures (Keck & Sakdapolrak, 2013). Thus, most of the strategies provided by the vendors are deemed to be reactive techniques because they do not address the main reason of repeated evictions, which is conducting food vending activities in unauthorized sites. Vendors who did not receive a slot in the planned market locations and thus continue to operate illegally are vulnerable to future evictions, which are likely to impact on their businesses in future.

Conclusions and Recommendation

Based on the findings, most food vending activities run by women are less than five years old, operate in unauthorized locations without a roof or a wall, use a small daily operating capital and earn a small profit. Further studies are needed to establish how women street food vendors might be assisted in raising their operating capital. There is also a need to identify the reasons why many street food vendors prefer to operate in unauthorized places despite repeated evictions from such locations.

The fact that evictions have a detrimental influence on street food vending activities necessitates a meeting of all responsible actors, principally local government officials and heads of street food vending associations, to discuss the best ways to conduct street food vending activities in general. A conducive and legally regulated working environment for street food vendors is an absolute, inescapable prerequisite if Tanzania is to attain its Development Vision 2025 and Millennium Development Goals (MDG) No. 1.

Accordingly, as the respondents have only demonstrated reactive capacities in coping with eviction-related threats, awareness campaigns are needed to educate women street food vendors on the need of conducting their enterprises in authorized locations in order to avoid further evictions. Similarly, women street vendors, like other vendors, should be empowered to seek assistance from both local and national government authorities at various levels, participate in decision-making processes and create institutions that can defend and foster their well-being in the face of future crises.

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