

Earning On the Street: Occupational Experiences of Women Fish Vendors

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ABSTRACT

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Fish street vending is an important activity that gives employment opportunities to many women. The goal of this study is to determine the occupational difficulties of women street vendors as well as how they cope and act in the face of adversity, and their learning insights while doing the job. The researchers employed a transcendental phenomenological design that involves the researcher bracketing themselves through acknowledging experiences with the phenomenon under investigation. Ten

women fish vendors who are presently living in Malita, Davao Occidental, were chosen as participants through purposive sampling. Following intensive analysis, the results were organized into themes and core ideas. The themes highlight participants' exact experiences, such as occupational difficulties, coping mechanisms to alleviate problems, and realizations in doing the job. It was shown that women street vendors were motivated to start a business because of their family's needs and to generate income. The issues or challenges they encountered in doing business include a lack of capital, hard physical labor, paying rentals, and challenging weather conditions. Street vendors also consider self-help strategies and loans as their primary coping strategies.



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INTRODUCTION

Street vendors are an inevitable part of the economy around the world, especially in developing countries, offering easy access to a wide range of goods and services in public spaces, occupying the street (Hosen, 2017). They sell everything from fresh vegetables to fish, from fruits to prepared foods, from shoes to garments. The informal sector, which includes street vending, represents an important part of the economy and the labor market as it plays a significant role in employment creation, production, and income generation (Husain, 2015).

According to Mitullah (2000), women predominate in street vending worldwide. Hence, street vending has become one of the promising avenues of self-employment and a means of survival for many, especially women (Soujanya, 2018). Widows and women deserted by their husbands tend to get involved with street trade to meet the basic needs of their families (Mitullah, 2003). Conversely, research also shows that through street vending, most women have taken the role of bringing food to the table (Amankwaa, 2015).

However, their work in this sector is full of challenges, such as constant harassment from the police forces and municipal authorities, money extortion from gangsters, and competition from other sellers for valuable space (El-Azzazy, 2019).

Moreover, in the coastal municipality of Mali, the people rely mainly on agriculture as their primary source of living. Fish vending is one of the alternative occupations that has been a means of livelihood, with the majority of fish vendors being women. Thus, the low educational status, poor health, long hours of work, and low income and savings made them more exhausted and underprivileged (Minimol, 2017). As such, the same is true with the present circumstances of women vendors here in the said municipality.

In the specific local context of Malita, Davao Occidental, the post-pandemic period has seen a surge in the number of women fish vendors, exposing them to unique occupational challenges. Understanding and addressing these challenges is crucial to helping these women continue to support their families. Therefore, the researchers sought to explore the experiences of women fish vendors in this particular setting, considering the occupational conditions they face and the coping strategies they employ in their work.

Research Questions

The researchers of this study shed light on the different experiences, as well as their coping mechanisms in getting through the challenges that came with fish street vending. As a result, the following research questions were answered in this study:

1. What do women fish vendors encounter in their occupational experiences?

2. What is the coping mechanism of women fish vendors?
3. What are the learning insights based on experiences as fish vendors?

Significance of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the occupational experiences of women fish vendors here in the locality of Malita, Davao Occidental, and it will be beneficial to the following:

Fish Street Vendors - This may be beneficial for women fish street vendors since the result of the study will provide them with a better understanding of the issues present in the informal economy, and by gaining a better grasp of the coping strategies presented by other participants.

Community - This study may be helpful in the community, as it can provide relevant information from the researchers' results regarding the social situation and occupational experiences of women street vendors. In the same way, this will become an eye-opener for people in the community of Mali, in Davao Occidental, on how they should participate as consumers in the informal economy.

Local Government - The outcome of this study could serve as reference data for the municipal government of Malita to understand better the working conditions and experiences of women street vendors and their coping skills. The result of the study will be beneficial for the LGU in implementing a project regarding the informal sector in town.

For future researchers, this study provides valuable insights and data for those undertaking similar studies or advocacy in the future. The findings of this study can serve as a rich source of literature and a guide for further research, contributing to the ongoing development and improvement of our understanding of the occupational experiences of women fish vendors.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study employed a phenomenological qualitative approach focused on determining the occupational experiences of women fish street vendors in the locality of Malita, Davao Occidental. This qualitative research design sought to describe the occupational experiences and coping mechanisms of women street vendors in the locality of Malita, Davao Occidental, using in-depth interviews to further investigate the reality faced by women street vendors. There were a total of 10 women fish vendors on Fish Street. Purposive sampling was applied to seek out participants with specific characteristics. In the data collection process, interview protocols and consent were secured, and data collection was conducted from January to March 2023. Interviews were also conducted at the participant's location. The researchers asked questions from the interview guide and recorded the responses to get precise information. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis, which involved identifying and

categorizing themes.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In presenting the findings of this study, the researchers followed San Jose (2009). The findings were put into a table with three columns. The first column draws the themes from the gathered information. These themes were then divided into two categories: general and variant. It was considered general if the pattern of responses reached 50% or above, while variant if it had less than 20%. In addition, the verbatim with tags was presented to elaborate on the participants' responses.

Profile of the Participants

The participants were women fish vendors who were residents of Barangay Poblacion, Sitio Kinapaan, Malita, Davao Occidental. There were ten (10) participants in this study. They were street fish vendors for one to two or more years. They had different experiences in their occupational life. Some participants were nervous at first, but when the interview started, they openly shared their thoughts and answers. Before the interview was conducted, the researchers politely introduced themselves to the participants. The researchers gave the participants informed consent and asked for their permission to be interviewed. Through the interaction with the participants, the researchers were able to learn about the experiences of participants in handling their business during face-to-face interactions. Also, the researchers learned from them the factors that they considered in starting their business, and their ways of achieving it.

Table 1 shows that about half of the vendors are in the productive age group of 25–58 years. Within this, around 50 percent are between 25 and 36 years, and 59 percent are between 43 and 58 years. Most vendors are middle-aged married women who have children. Many are still taking care of younger children (10 years old and younger). Irrespective of their reproductive responsibilities, more than half of the vendors do not have at least a high school degree, and street vending has become a full-time job for the majority of the participants. Consequently, the participants' length of vending varies in records, as do the reasons that drive them to enter street fish vending to make ends meet. However, according to Kambara (2021), marital status also influences the mobility and labor participation of women. The same is true in the study since most of the participants are married women who are street vendors with more than 10 years of experience. Accordingly, they started street vending because they had no other means to support their children. Street Vending provides an escape from poverty for many of the economically marginalized women. Many women also choose street vending for its schedule flexibility and low cost of entry. This is unlike other business establishments, where one has to make massive deposits to get a small shop on rent in the

main town (Morung Express, 2020). Many of the fish vendor participants were young and had family responsibilities. In particular, their involvement in fish vending is associated with poverty as well as a lack of job opportunities and working capital. According to Simachew 2017, it generally takes a great deal of courage for young people to be involved in the street vending business. This makes things extremely difficult for young people to engage in decent jobs in the formal sector. This was similar to what many of the fish vendor participants had experienced in their younger lives. This indicates that the informal sector seems to be the first job opportunity and income-generating area for those who have a formal business. The participants are capable of becoming involved in the street vending business because they are given this opportunity for free, and it only requires fewer skills.

Table 1. *Participants Information*

Name	Age	Length of Business in Years
Vendor A	28	15 years
Vendor B	58	41 years
Vendor C	36	10 years
Vendor D	50	34 years
Vendor E	25	1 year
Vendor F	43	7 years
Vendor G	36	20 years
Vendor H	46	1 year
Vendor I	58	25 years
Vendor J	32	24 years

Table 2. *Themes and Core Ideas on Earning in the Street: Occupational Experiences of Women Street Vendors: A Qualitative Study*

Themes	Core Ideas	Frequency of Response
Occupational Difficulties	Looking for capital	General
	Having to do physical labor	General
	Paying Rent	Variant
	Adjusting to unfavorable weather	General
	Taking of goods by the demolition team	Variant
Coping mechanism to alleviate the problem	Borrowing money from colleagues	General
	Taking medicine to get well	Variant
	Hawking house to house	Variant
Realization of doing the job	Finding friends	General
	Satisfying to sustain family needs	General

The replies provided by the women street vendors were taken into consideration as this investigation progressed. There were many challenges they encountered. The table above shows the different themes and core ideas on the challenges of women street vendors. The first central theme is the occupational difficulties of women vendors, including the following core ideas: looking for capital, performing physical labor, paying rent, adjusting to unfavorable weather, and having goods taken by demolition teams.

Looking for Capital

Fish street vendors are always in short supply of money and are constantly living on the edge. One day, the fish is sold, another day, it is not. Women fish street vendors are obliged to pay back the price of the fish to the wholesaler. With little access to credit and limited by the small-scale nature of their business, women fish street vendors have little chance to expand their businesses and improve the well-being of their families (El-Azzazy, 2019). Thus, the participants revealed that one of the necessities to start up a business is to look for capital. The importance of capital can help their business to generate profit. Due to limited access to capital, they are struggling to produce a product to sell.

“Kulang sa pinansyal, dapat unta naa mi kapital. Dili baya mi makakumpira sa isda ug walay kapital.” (Lack of financial, we should have a capital. We cannot produce a fish if we can't afford to pay because of having no capital. Vendor D)

“Kulang ug kapital, kay kailangan baya ug kapital aron makakuha ug isda.” (Lack of capital, it needs to have capital to purchase a fish. Vendor G)

“Wala mi kapital, mag lisod ug Kuan sa isda labi na ug wala pud kay ikakapital.” (Lack of capital and it's difficult to purchase a fish if you have no cash or capital. Vendor H)

The main hindrance in setting up the vending business is a lack of capital (Songa, 2022). Vendors need financial assistance due to poor economic conditions. According to the participants' responses, there are times when they cannot sell fish due to a lack of credit support. This means that finance provides the necessary resources to meet the demands of business operations for the women street vendors.

The researchers observed that the number of women fish vendors in Malita had increased. However, the respondents find a lack of capital to be a significant challenge in their business. Having inadequate capital motivates entrepreneurs to sell more of their products, which in turn increases their income and provides more capital for the business. In addition, no capital can affect a low level of improvement in the business (Reuss, 2006).

Vending businesses do not generate enough income to invest in individual capital. This type of informal credit functions as a primary securing strategy for sustaining the women's businesses; however, it also indicates that the household income does not increase since the business revenue has to be utilized to pay back the loans (Tillerman, 2012). The challenge is that with a small profit each day, balancing the needs of the business with the daily expenditures required for their families is a huge task. In the informal sector, participants lack adequate capital to start their businesses, and this affects the size and rate of growth of their work. According to Kambara (2021), it does not follow that the more one invests, the more profit one will make, for profit levels depend on the business itself, the skill of the participant, the business environment, and sometimes the length of the period that it has been operational.

Having to do physical labor

Studies have revealed that street vending involves enormous physical labor. Some vendors move from one lane to another, regardless of heat, wind, rain, and cold. It consumes a significant amount of time, energy, and physical labor (Sharma & Konwar, 2014). Some participants stated that due to long hours of hawking, it causes them to feel body pain and eventually leads them to get sick.

“Kanang inig uli nimo sakit kaayu imong larwas. Kay mag libod ka mag gunit ka sa balde.” (When I reach home, I felt pain in my muscles, due to hawking and carrying out a heavy bucket of fish. Vendor J)

“Dili lalim ang mamaligya ug isda kay manakit imong larwas labi na inig mag libod ka sa isda.” (It’s not easy to be a fish vendor it cause body pains due to hawking our fish. Vendor B)

“Kapoy lang mag andam ug hipos sa isda kay daplin man mi sa dalan mamaligya.” (It is very tiring to prepare and dispose of our fish because we only display our product beside the road. Vendor I)

The study by Sharma and Konwar (2014) stated that to attract customers, they need to call out loud to attract the buyer’s attention. As a result, women street vendors face significant challenges, as they consume time and energy. According to Shaha (2011), street hawking involves considerable physical labor that women vendors experience, such as waking early in the morning, cleaning, sorting, and arranging the product. Thus, including their duty as a mother, they serve their family after their long working hours in the fish vending industry. Some studies found that women street vendors are exposed to physical harm from the improper provision of commercial areas where their health conditions are most affected (El-Azzazy, 2019).

Informal street vendors face several occupational challenges, including long working hours, ambient air pollution, and limited knowledge of health and hygiene practices for their activities. The SA Basic Conditions of Employment Act (Act No. 75, 1997) states a maximum of 45 hours of work time per week, which is nine hours a day for those working five days a week. According to Maasago (2022), longer working hours are known to have long-term adverse effects on human health and have been linked to increased mental health issues, decreased quality and quantity of sleep, lower back injury, higher blood pressure, and women experiencing an increased risk of spontaneous abortion, lower birth weight, or gestational age.

Paying rent

Street vendors often struggle with impermanent setups due to time and space restrictions, thus affecting their productivity (Chant, 2007). Moreover, the majority of the participants mentioned that the lack of a proper structure forces them to operate and display their products in public spaces or vacant areas owned by private individuals, resulting in daily rental costs.

“Kanang wala pako nahalanan unya gipaninglan dayun ko sa renta.” (I did not have a sale yet, and I was immediately asked to pay for the rent. Vendor E)

“Maningkamot mi mahalín amo isda kay naa baya maningil sa amoang renta.” (We work hard in vending our fish because there is a collector for our payment in rental. Vendor F)

The vendors are subjected to the daily collection of money compliments on a monthly/weekly basis by the corrupt persons (Munishi, 2022). In addition, the vendors are disturbed and harassed both physically & verbally regularly which interferes with their right to work with dignity and treated as criminals instead of hard-working self-employed people as most of the vendors try to escape from the eviction by bribing the individual who forces them to leave, such as the municipal officials, personnel, security, and shop owners in most public spaces. This form of bribery is voluntary, which is an act of escapism from eviction. However, at the same time, the vendors are also forced to pay bribes predominantly by the police, security, and other government officials (Yeboah, 2017)—refusing to pay bribes results in the seizure of their products, leading to a loss of money. Thus, in fear of losing, vendors are obliged to bribe rather than to accept the loss. However, some vendors refuse to bribe under any circumstances and accept the financial loss, leaving them in a debt trap and a vicious cycle of poverty (Hamidu, 2022).

According to Munishi (2022), vendors are required to pay for the daily collection of money, which the women vendors use to display their products. Moreover, vendors who refuse to pay daily rentals choose to hawk their product and move from place to place (Roever, 2016). The vendors want to save their money and to make sure that through hawking, they can sell all their products rather than staying in one place.

As a result of vending without a business license in other areas, women vendors are frequently troubled by the city police and authorities. These women were forced to pay bribes on a weekly or monthly basis in order to continue vending, thus decreasing their earned incomes through regular bribe payments. If the women are unable or unwilling to pay the bribe, they would be given a much higher official offence fee (Kambara, 2021).

Adjusting to unfavorable weather

Weather conditions are one of the most important physical working conditions. Concepts such as air movement, humidity, and temperature are addressed under weather conditions. Extreme weather changes can have a significant impact on their job and reduce the time vendors can work. They said that it affects their livelihood because they cannot operate or sell their product.

“Kanang panahon ni norte, pag norte kay dili jud mi maka kuan ug isda.” (During the Northeast monsoon weather condition, we cannot operate to sell our product. Vendor H).

“Init sa amoang area unya usabay pag moulán sd madamay among isda kay madaot.” (During sunny days our area is very hot, and during rainy days our fish is being affected because it will be damaged. Vendor E)

“Kanang lain ang panahon diri ting balud sa dagat walay makapanagat ana diri.” (When the weather is not in good condition, the waves are very strong, and none of the fishermen can go fishing. Vendor G)

Women street fish vendors are highly vulnerable to the impact of weather conditions. These women typically operate in open-air markets and rely on selling their goods to earn a living. Weather conditions such as heat, wind, rain, and cold concern the women street vendors (Shaha, 2022). Agnello and Moller (2006) agree that working on the streets exposes street vendors to harsh weather conditions and puts their safety and health at high risk. Street vendors spend nearly 10 hours a day in their business, taking up to 5 hours daily for preparations, including a visit to the wholesale markets. Moreover, they lack storage facilities, meaning that they cannot go back home with any food products left or they will be damaged, so they have to sell all products before going home (Panwar & Garg, 2015). The impact of these weather conditions is significant. Not only do they struggle to maintain their business during inclement weather, but they also face the challenge of providing for their families (Billiones, 2020). The extreme weather has made it almost impossible for street vendors to work and has spoiled fresh produce, rendering it unsellable. The situation has been disastrous for the incomes of these vendors. Scorching heat and unseasonal rains reduce the length of time that these traders can work. As heatwaves become more frequent, experts say heat-exposed work will become dangerous during the hottest hours of the day. A report shows that rising temperatures were primarily responsible for a 30 per cent decline in income among South Asian women working in the informal sector, such as street vendors (Grain, 2022).

Taking of goods by the demolition team

Similarly, the participants revealed that demolition is one of the entrepreneurs' problems. Vendors are forced to leave, which interferes with their right to work, and are treated as criminals instead of hard-working self-employed people.

"Pagpamaligyaan namo kay kuanon mi kailangan namo ug permit. Unya pahawaon mi kay di mana pwede sa kalsada. Katong gidakop jud mi diha sa BM's gidal-an jud mi ug patrol car. Mag dinaganay unya nay mga nadakpan ug multa-multahan pa mi." (We are frequently evicted from our place since selling on the roadside is illegal. One time, they brought cops to our place and tried to arrest us. We ran as fast as we could, but unfortunately, one of our colleagues got caught, and the authorities asked for a penalty. Vendor A).

"Inig abot sa ting dakop tagbaw ka ug dagan. Unya ug masakpan ka dalahon sa pulis imong isda." (During the raid, we hid and ran as fast as we could. But if they catch you, they will bring your fish with them. Vendor G)

According to Hunt (2009), the displacement of vendors is often a consequence of plans to modernize cities and create an image of order and dignity. Hamidu (2022) states that street vending is not only a viable economic

activity but also a serious means of livelihood for many people living in urban settings. He added that continuous disruption through eviction and relocation is a threat to many people whose lives depend on it. In this situation, vendors develop strategies to continue existing amid government restrictions, evictions, and relocations. It has been established that, after eviction, a reasonable number of street vendors have resorted to selling their products at night (Manickavasagam, 2018). In addition, they assume that there are no police or paramilitary troops that can arrest them. Sadly, street vendors resorted to this just to cope with being arrested. Street vendors return to the streets by force, irrespective of the consequences. It was further reported by Saha (2011) that after eviction, some vendors return to the streets from which authorities ejected them. However, although street vendors have been continuing to operate in urban settings, their courage to return to the streets after being forcefully evicted by authorities is not normal. It might tell how desperate street vendors are regarding the uncertainties of their family livelihoods because their hopes of survival depend on street vending.

Moreover, the demolition of street vendors by local authorities has become a common occurrence. The impact of these demolitions cannot be underestimated, as they often lead to loss of income. Women street food vendors play a critical role in promoting food security and providing affordable nutrition for the populace. Therefore, there is a need to recognize their contributions and find alternative means of regulating their activities rather than demolishing their stalls (Billiones, 2020).

Coping mechanism to alleviate the problem

The second central theme that emerged was coping mechanisms to alleviate the problem. It had the following core ideas: borrowing money from colleagues, taking medicine to get well, and hawking from house to house.

Borrowing money from colleagues

Most of the vendors are poor and live below the poverty line. They even find it very hard to earn their daily livelihood. In such a situation, the vendors are most in need of financial assistance, no matter how small. Poor economic conditions and lack of access to credit support consequently push the vendors into a situation where they are left with the only option of borrowing from the money lenders (Saha, 2011). Literature on women working in the informal sector reflects that their operations take place without access to institutional credit (Schneider & Bajada, 2005). Microfinance institutions are reluctant to give substantial loans to women vendors due to the mobile nature of their business and the high risk it involves (Forkuor et al., 2013)

Moreover, accessing credits largely depends on social networks. Establishing ties with local money lenders is possible for women as they have greater access to social networks than men (Veliu et al., 2009). Generally, social networks are important for accessing credit, getting market information,

and price negotiations. Hence, the participants confessed that they borrowed money from those who lend money or from their colleagues to purchase fish and pay later.

“Mangutang sa akong kauban para nay ika-kapital sa isda.” (I borrow money from my co-vendor for capital. Vendor F)

“Mangutang ug kwarta para makakapital. Mangutang sa ASA or sa kilid-kilid.” (I lend money in order to have capital. I lend from ASA or to anyone. Vendor H)

“Mangita ug paagi para makahulam ug kwarta aron makapamaligya gihapon ka.” (Find ways to lend money so that you can still operate and sell fish. Vendor D)

Based on the study of Redile (2011), Loan money can help the entrepreneur to stay in the long-term business. A loan is significant to help a business recover or alleviate financial burdens. As a result, women fish vendors see that lending money can be a valuable coping mechanism for them as entrepreneurs facing financial challenges. Thus, the participants understand that there is risk associated with borrowing money, so they develop adequate preparation, budgeting, and efficient cash flow management to ensure that the loan is repaid on time. Moreover, a well-managed business loan can help alleviate financial stress and give women street vendors the resources they need to succeed, thereby sustaining the needs of their families.

According to Tillerman (2012), women participated in rotating saving groups. They saved a small amount of money on a daily/weekly basis and thus gained access to a larger amount of capital once a month. This was crucial since it was directed at expenditures such as house rent and business rent, which require a larger amount of capital. Other coping strategies, which are used on almost a daily basis, include purchasing food on credit from the shops 24, where the women usually buy their goods, and then repaying the debt once they manage to generate sufficient income. The above statement indicates that the business does not generate enough income to invest with individual capital. This type of informal credit functions as a primary securing strategy for sustaining the women's businesses; however, it also indicates that the household income does not increase since the business revenue has to be utilized to pay back the loans.

Taking medicine to get well

Studies have revealed that street vending involves enormous physical labor. They start their day by purchasing fish early in the morning, followed by cleaning, sorting, and arranging them. With these challenges, women street vendors admitted that taking medicine and applying some oil liniment are their options to recover easily from muscle pain and sickness.

“Inig uli sa balay mubigda dayon magpa palit ug tambal unya magpa hilot ug lana.” (When I get home, I immediately lie on the bed and ask to buy medicine and massage my body with oil liniment. Vendor I)

“Mag inom ko ug tambal. Dili ko magpadala sa akong gibati kay basin ako ra gihapon Ang mag antus unya di pa gyud makapamaligya.” (I take medicine. I will not endure with what I feel because I myself will suffer and the fact that it will affect my business. Vendor C)

“Haplasan akong larwas dayun human nakog haplas inom ko ug tambal aron marwala sakit sakong larwas.” (I will massage my body using oil liniment and I take medicine in order to ease my body pain. Vendor J)

According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2013) guidelines, medicine and oil liniment are effective treatments for body pain that carry safety concerns and may impact the efficacy of therapies. The participants are more likely to have the same experience of pain in fish vending. They have to carry a heavy bucket full of fish. They need to prepare their products and develop strategies for selling their fish. As a result, the women fish vendors are having a hard time in their job, which makes them feel tired and get sick due to long working hours. This means that taking medicine and oil liniment massage helps them to alleviate sore muscle pain and recover easily from sickness.

Folk medicine is a field that falls under medical anthropology. It refers to traditional health knowledge and healing practices anchored on indigenous beliefs regarding body physiology and health preservation. In the Philippines, folk medicine is an organized body of traditional practices and beliefs that mirrors the country's indigenous culture and heritage. It basks in locally accepted concepts that utilize distinct techniques and human instinct as the means to reach a diagnosis, and applies unique methods of treatment, distinct from the conventional practices of Western medicine (Rondilla, 2021).

Which of the following statements is true? Women fish vendors use manual techniques and physical exercises, which are either applied singularly or in combination, to either maintain well-being or to diagnose, treat, and prevent illness. Thus, the study revealed that both medicine and oil liniments can be effective pain relievers. However, their appropriate use depends on the type and severity of pain, as well as individual health factors and preferences.

Hawking house to house

Furthermore, another women fish vendor mentioned hawking their fish house to house is an effective and alternative way to sell their product. This approach allows them to reach a broader customer base and increase their sales.

“Manuroy mi usabay labi na ug ting dakop. Isuroy nalang sa namo among baligya aron mahurot.” (We hawk our fish whenever there is a cop. Hawking house to house can probably sell our product. Vendor A)

According to Michael (2016), women street vendors provide innovative solutions by hawking their fish from house to house. The participants responded that they faced several challenges that impacted their earnings, including conflicts with municipal authorities or the police. As a result, women fish vendors hawk their product to attract more customers, increase their earnings, and avoid police raids.

Thus, Hawking provided them with security to continue their trade and allowed them to pursue their trade without fear. Walking kilometers in search of customers consumes much of their time, energy, and money. This means that women vendors have to sacrifice in hawking their products to earn enough and satisfy the needs of their families (Billiones, 2020).

The more the government invests efforts in phasing them out, the more they come up with new mechanisms of ensuring that they survive amid great government antagonism. After the recent eviction, a reasonable number of stationary vendors have resorted to being mobile vendors. However, in reality, they do business around the same streets from which they were evicted. Such findings are in line with the propositions of the multi-layered social resilience framework (Obrist, 2010), which contend that in situations where a threat arises, resilience strategies start from the individual to the upper levels of society. Most of the coping strategies depict personal efforts to adjust him/herself after periodic evictions or threats.

It has been discovered that some street vendors who were running bigger kiosks decided to rent shops when they heard rumors about evictions. This differs from the previous operations, in which municipal authorities announced the operation two to three weeks before it took place. As a preventive and proactive strategy, some street vendors decided to rent shops in areas near their operating locations. While some report this to be an expensive strategy that requires them to incur more costs on rent, license, and other charges, others consider it to be a means of formalization (Steel, 2014).

Realization of doing the job

The coping mechanisms experienced by women street vendors were clearly stated as a response to their occupational difficulties. The last central theme articulated was the realization that comes with the job, which involves sharing three core ideas: finding friends, meeting family needs, and doing hard work.

Finding Friends

Among all participants, one fish vendor stated that through vending, they establish relationships with their colleagues and the community based on solidarity and reciprocity.

“Nindot kaayu mamaligya ug isda kay daghan ka ma amega ug makaila nga customer.” (It is so lovely in vending fish because you can find friends and meet different faces of customers. Vendor H)

“Aron ang customer di matingala sa presyo dapat sa pag timbang palang tama. Aron pud nga makaamego ka ug customer.” (In order that the customer will not be surprised by the price, we should make sure that when scaling our fish, it is done honestly. So that you can create friends with the customers. Vendor C)

According to Leung (2015), truthfulness and honesty as a fish vendor should be enforced. In this way, they are not only gaining income but also gaining the trust and establishing relationships with the customer. Thus, showing honesty and kindness toward customers and colleagues can result in a tightly-knit community. In addition, according to Al-Jundi (2022), urban or street culture refers to values and practices shared by the residents of cities. Street vending is a core part of this culture. In this context, customers visit nearby traditional markets not only to make purchases but also to spend time communicating with each other, meeting their friends, walking, and looking at the attractive offerings of street vendors.

Many vendors try to keep the streets clean and safe for their customers and provide them with friendly personal service. For interpersonal individuals, developing emotions to care for each other and satisfy one another's needs serves as a means to alleviate the load of one another's troubles in public spaces. Establishing an emotional connection between people and their environment fosters community connections. Hence, it has a beneficial effect on the lives of street vendors, especially since their occupation involves dealing with and attracting customers (Motala, 2002).

In conclusion, street fish vending creates a social environment that promotes trust, friendship, and communal living. Street fish vending offers a platform for individuals to connect with others on a human level, creating a sense of belonging and reducing feelings of isolation. They also enjoy the freedom and flexibility that allow them to have control over their lives (Perez, 2019).

Satisfying to sustain family needs

Structuralism perceived street vending as a survival tactic. Fish vending women contribute their mite to their own families. Almost all the past studies have indicated that their income is the backbone of the family's survival and sustenance. Women, as a rule, typically entered the workforce due to family needs for income. While many among the participants are married, husbands of many fish vendors are unemployed, people with alcoholism, or occasional drinkers who contribute a considerable portion of the family income. Hence, the families almost entirely depend on the income of the women fish vendors.

Thus, the participants stated that their motivation and inspiration to

achieve their business goals are their families. It is the very reason why they needed to put out more effort in their occupation, so that they can meet the needs of their families on a day-to-day basis.

“Sa pagpamaligya kay nakatabang ko sa akong pamilya. Naa pud baya ko’y mga estudyante mabalonan nko sila ug tarong.” (In fish vending I can help to sustain the needs of my family. I send my children to school and give them the right allowance. Vendor H)

“Maayu gyud tarwon ang mamaligya kay makatabang-tabang unya maka pamubugas man gyud mi.” (It is very lovely to sell fish since it can help and sustain my family, especially since we can buy rice for our family. Vendor B)

“Dako ug tabang ang mamaligya ka ug isda labi na ug duha mo sa imong bana mag tinabangay. Makapalit gyud sa mga pamalitunon para sa balay.” (Selling fish is a big help especially when you and your husband will joint force. It will help to sustain the needs inside the house. Vendor G)

Street vendors rely on informal “micro-economies” to sustain their families. For families experiencing persistent poverty, owning a street vending stall is a dream that often seems out of reach. Hence, street vending has become one of the promising avenues of self-employment and a means of survival for many, especially women (Soujanya, 2018). Widows and women deserted by their husbands tend to get involved with street trade to meet the basic needs of their families (Mitullah, 2003). Conversely, research also shows that through street vending, most women have taken the role of bringing food to the table (Amankwaa, 2015). The motive for engaging in vending was to increase the household income. The relatively low cost of entry and minimal requirements of education enable women to engage in vending and earn an income, whilst it is also an indication of a lack of other alternatives for income-generation (Michael, 2016). According to Guillen (2013), family can be a motivation in starting or making a business for income generation and survival purposes. This means that participants look upon their life situations and consider their families as an inspiration to work hard so that they can meet their families’ needs. Most importantly, the women considerably decrease household vulnerabilities by providing food through the business. Hence, Tillerman (2012) mentions that women contribute to reducing household hazards and ensure that the household survives.

SUMMARY

The study was conducted to determine the occupational experiences of women street vendors in the locality of Malita, Davao Occidental. There were 10 women street vendors; 5 were aged 25–36, and 5 were aged 43–58. Purposive sampling was applied to select participants with specific characteristics. All of the interviews were conducted at the participant’s location. The researchers

asked questions from the interview guide and recorded them to get precise information. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis, which involved identifying and categorizing themes.

From the gathered information, the first theme was occupational difficulties; the core ideas are looking for capital, performing physical labor, and adjusting to unfavorable weather, with a general response reaching 50% or above. Another core idea is paying rent and taking goods by the demolition team, which falls within the variant response range. The coping mechanism to alleviate the problem of women street vendors involves borrowing money from colleagues, which is generally well-received. On the other hand, taking medicine to get well and hawking house to house belong to the variant response. On the theme of realizations in the work of women street vendors, the core ideas presented are finding friends and meeting family needs, which belong to the general response.

CONCLUSION

This study outlined the difficulties faced by women street vendors. The findings of this study indicated that financial lack, hard physical labor, and physical environment are common among women street vendors. The difficulties most frequently included the demands in purchasing a fish, dealing with the added duties that came with hawking products of the women street vendors. Having a good structure also hampered the opportunity for street vendors to market their products. Furthermore, women street vendors have learned from their experiences that, despite their livelihood status, honesty toward customers should be enforced. With this, the customer will be comfortable, and increasing sales would be possible, which helps to sustain the needs of their families. Thus, the study's findings might also be viewed as a contribution to determining the frequent challenges faced by women street vendors.

Implications

The result of this study would be relevant for the community as they can be informed with important information from the results presented by the researchers regarding the social situation and occupational experiences of women street vendors.

This is relevant to the local government unit of Malita, Davao Occidental, as the outcome of this study could serve as a reference for understanding the working conditions and experiences of women street vendors. The LGU should have project interventions regarding the informal sector in town. Lastly, it is relevant for future research related to street vending and its occupational difficulties.

The study further recommends that the government, through municipal authority, include provisions that accommodate street vendors. Since street vending is a source of informal income for communities, vendors should be included among beneficiaries, and there should be representatives coming from the sector to encourage the allocation of street vendors in areas with all available social amenities, and above all, areas that people can easily go to in order to obtain their needs.

Finally, the findings convey the significance of understanding women street vendors in their occupational situation. They will go to great lengths to overcome challenges as they navigate difficulties in their business. This study discovered the challenges of women fish vendors, but also their strategies to overcome them throughout the lifespan of the business.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Authors declare no conflict of interest.

DECLARATION OF REGENERATIVE AI

AI was used as a tool for proofreading to enhance grammar and check for misspelled words only.

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