



(RESEARCH ARTICLE)



## Effects of management strategies on the performance of street food vending in urban areas of Western Kenya

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### Abstract

Street food (SF) vending is a common livelihood activity in many urban areas globally. It generates income for the vendors and contributes to the urban economy. However, the trade performs poorly due to the strategies used by urban authorities to manage the sector. The purpose of this study was to analyze the effects of urban management strategies on the performance of SF vending in Kakamega, Bungoma and Busia urban areas of Western Kenya. A cross-sectional descriptive survey was adopted for the study. Proportionate sampling and simple random sampling were used to select respondents in each urban area. A total of two hundred and twenty-four respondents were interviewed. Data was collected through questionnaires, observation checklists and photography. The questionnaire had a reliability Coefficient value of 0.781. Findings show that SF vendors were hardly engaged in decisions that affected them neither did they participate in formulation of rules governing their trade. Failure to observe the rules often led to conflict with enforcement officers. Lighting and waste collection were the only services provided appreciably while support in training, credit and registration were largely lacking. Authorities also charged levies which reduced the SF vendors' earnings considerably. The strategies, therefore, contributed to the loss of SF vendors' livelihood assets including their customers, finances, physical facilities and food stuffs. Loss of these assets contributed to the poor performance of the trade. It is recommended that urban authorities embrace an inclusive approach whereby vendors are engaged in urban management issues and their views considered in decision making processes.

**Key words:** Street food vending; Livelihood assets; Management strategies; Street food; Urban areas

### 1. Introduction

Street food (SF) vending refers to the trade in ready-to-eat food or drink by a vendor on the streets and other public places. This trade has existed through history from as far back as ancient Rome where the poor had no hearths in their homes and relied exclusively on SF for their meals [1]. Today, SF is consumed by approximately 2.5 billion people globally [2] and is a huge source of employment for many especially in developing countries [3].

The trade has, however, faced challenges arising from exclusionary approaches adopted by urban authorities in managing the sector. As argued from the perspective of the Modernization Theory of Development [4, 5], which formed the theoretical foundation for the study, SF vending symbolizes a lack of economic development that is expected to disappear once a country modernizes [6, 7]. Based on this argument, urban authorities come up with restrictive policies intended to exclude SF vendors from urban spaces [8]. These restrictive policies are often implemented through strategies that lead to the loss of SF vendors' livelihood assets thus affecting the performance of their trade negatively [9].

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The purpose of this study, therefore, was to analyze the effects of urban management strategies on the performance of SF vending in Kakamega, Bungoma and Busia urban areas of Western Kenya.

The purpose was developed due to concerns over frequent clashes between urban authorities and vendors as reported in the media [10, 11, 12]. The clashes are an indicator of the challenge urban authorities face in managing the sector sustainably. Secondly, while a reconnaissance of urban areas in Western Kenya showed a presence of SF vendors, the literature did not yield any relevant studies. This study, therefore, generates new knowledge that will enable urban authorities adopt a more inclusive approach to the management of SF vending. The objectives of the study were to identify the management strategies used by urban authorities and to analyse their effects on the livelihood assets of SF vendors and the impact this had on the performance of the trade.

## 2. Research methodology

The study used a cross-sectional descriptive survey. The study area comprised of Kakamega, Bungoma and Busia urban areas of Western Kenya. Western Kenya region is one of the seven administrative regions of Kenya, the others being Nairobi, Coast, Eastern, Central, Rift Valley and Nyanza. Street food vendors operating in the region formed the target population. A total of two hundred and twenty-four (224) respondents were interviewed. Proportionate sampling was used to get the sample per town and which was distributed as follows: Bungoma 85 (37.9%), Kakamega 47 (21.0%) and Busia 92 (41.1%). Individual respondents were then sampled using simple random sampling from sampling frames developed for each urban area.

Quantitative data consisting of participant responses was collected through questionnaires while qualitative data was collected through observation checklists and photographs to provide an in-depth understanding of SF vending behaviour. The analysis of data was done using SPSS software (version 26.0) and information presented in frequency tables, bar graphs and pie charts.

## 3. Results and discussion

The results and discussion are presented in four sections. These include the identification of the management strategies, respondents' satisfaction with the management strategies, respondents' degree of agreement with the premise that the management strategies affect their livelihood assets and the specific effects of the strategies on their livelihood assets.

### 3.1. Identification of management strategies

The management strategies considered were based on the four major functions of management and which include decision-making, provision of resources/services, motivation and control. Decision making and provision of services were left as they were, while control was operationalized as the enforcement of rules and regulations and the payment of levies. Motivation was seen to be realized by how county officials handled the respondents and the support given by the county government. The findings are presented and discussed in the following section.

**Table 1** Participation of respondents in decision-making

Consultation approach	Frequency	Percent
Inform and seek your views	17	7.6
Inform without seeking your views	61	27.2
Act without informing you	106	47.3
I don't know	40	17.9
Total	224	100.0

The results (table 1) indicate that the county governments acted on issues that affected the respondents' operations without informing them (47.3%). On the other-hand, 27.2% of respondents were informed without their views being sought. In only 7.6 % of cases were respondents' views sought while in 17.9% of the cases, respondents did not know about these decisions. The foregoing findings indicate that the county governments hardly consulted the SF vendors,

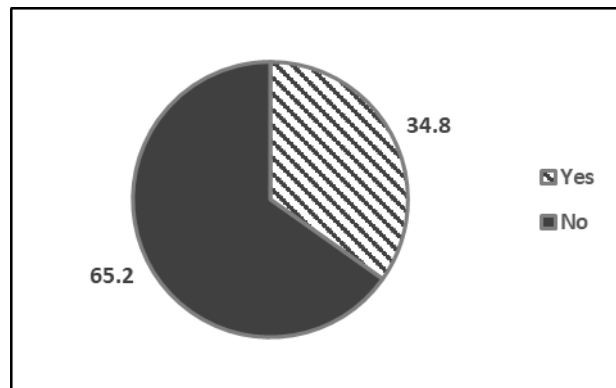
even on issues that directly affected their trade. This finding is in agreement with those by Meikle, et al. (13) that street traders were hardly involved in systems of city governance because their often ambiguous legal status.

**Table 2** Rules governing SF vending

Characteristic	Responses	Frequency	Percent
Presence of rules	Yes	149	66.5
	No	20	8.9
	Don't know	55	24.6
	Total	224	100.0
Participation in formulation of rules	Yes	4	1.8
	No	218	97.3
	Don't know	2	0.9
	Total	224	100.0

The results (table 2) show that most vendors (66.5%) were cognizant of the fact that there were rules and regulations governing their trade as compared to those who were not aware (24.6%) and those who supposed that there were no rules and regulations (8.9%). Further, asked whether they or any organization they were affiliated to had participated in formulating these rules and regulations, a majority of the vendors (97.3%) had not been involved at all. This is in comparison to 1.8% who had been involved and 0.9% who were not sure about their participation.

These findings show that the majority of respondents were aware that there were rules and regulations put in place by the county governments to govern their operations. However, very few of them had participated in the formulation of these rules and regulations. The implications of this lack of involvement is that SF vendors may fail to understand and adhere to the rules and regulations. WIEGO [14] alluded to this and recommended formulation of appropriate laws in a process that involves informal workers' representatives.



**Figure 1** Harassment of SF vendors by county officials

Figure 1 above shows that the majority of respondents (65.2%) had not been harassed by the county officials. However, a fairly large number of respondents (34.8%) reported some form of harassment meted out by officials. This included their foodstuffs being confiscated or poured out and other property damaged, arbitrary arrests and demands for bribes among other ills. Assan and Chambers [15], found such vendor harassment to be a common practice in India, where it was usually perpetrated by enforcement agencies including the police. These findings are corroborated by Kumari [16] who found that in Delhi, payment rates for bribes were fixed at weekly, fortnightly and monthly periods while their food items were often confiscated in lieu of this money.

**Table 3** Levies charged by county governments

Levy	Responses	Frequency	Percent
Licenses and permits	Yes	25	11.3
	No	197	88.7
	Total	222	100.0
Fees and fines	Yes	8	3.6
	No	214	96.4
	Total	222	100.0
Taxes	Yes	194	87.4
	No	28	12.6
	Total	222	100.0

The results in table 3 show that the respondents paid various levies to the county governments which included licenses and permits, fees and fines as well as taxes. This finding corroborates that by Roever [17], who found that vendors generated revenue for cities through payments for licenses and permits, fees and fines as well as value added tax on some of their purchases. The results further show that taxes were the most common levy paid (86.6%) compared to licenses (11.2%) and fees (3.6%). However, a small minority (2.7 %) of respondents did not pay any levies and hence were not included in the analysis. The reason they gave for not paying included being mobile, working outside official hours and having made a request not to pay due to low earnings.

**Table 4** Services provided by the county government

Service	Responses	Frequency	Percent
Potable water	Yes	192	85.7
	No	32	14.3
	Total	224	100.0
Toilet facilities	Yes	73	32.6
	No	151	67.4
	Total	224	100.0
Waste collection	Yes	176	78.6
	No	48	21.4
	Total	224	100.0
Street lighting	Yes	133	59.4
	No	91	40.6
	Total	224	100.0

The findings in table 4 show that the county government provided some of the essential services required by SF vendors. However, only waste collection (78.6%) and street lighting (59.4%) were provided to an appreciable level. Provision of water (14.3%) and that of toilet facilities (32.6%) were still below par. This corroborates Nguyen [6] who found that in Vietnam, due to their lack of legal recognition, vendors have traditionally been marginalized and operated most of the time without urban infrastructure or services.

**Table 5** Support given by the county government

Support provided	Responses	Frequency	Percent
Registration/issuance of identification certificates	Yes	7	3.1
	No	217	96.9
	Total	224	100.0
Linkages to social security schemes	Yes	2	0.9
	No	222	99.1
	Total	224	100.0
Facilitation of training and skill development	Yes	6	2.7
	No	218	97.3
	Total	224	100.0
Facilitation of credit/loan schemes	Yes	16	7.1
	No	208	92.9
	Total	224	100.0

The findings (table 5) show that very few respondents had received the kinds of support envisioned from the county government. These were registration (3.1%), linkages to social security schemes (0.9%), facilitation of training (2.7%) and facilitation of credit (7.1%). The bulk of the respondents had not received any support at all as indicated in the table.

Such lack of support has been widely documented by researchers like Stutter [18] and Pilato, et al., [2], who found that most street food vendors were not able to access financial intervention from the public sector and relied instead on their own savings or the support of social capital. It is also clearly illustrated by Sibhat's study [19] in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, where street vendors decried the limited support from the government or NGOs in terms of training.

### 3.2. Respondents' satisfaction levels of with the management strategies

The findings and discussion on respondents' level of satisfaction with the management strategies are presented below.

**Table 6** Satisfaction with management strategies

Management strategy	Response	Frequency	Percent
Involvement in decision making	Least satisfied	167	75.9
	Moderately satisfied	41	18.6
	Extremely satisfied	12	5.4
	Total	220	100.0
Services provided	Least satisfied	56	25.4
	Moderately satisfied	128	58.1
	Extremely satisfied	36	16.3
	Total	220	100.0
Assistance given	Least satisfied	202	91.8
	Moderately satisfied	13	5.9
	Extremely satisfied	5	2.3
	Total	220	100.0

Rules and regulations	Least satisfied	95	43.1
	Moderately satisfied	92	41.8
	Extremely satisfied	33	15.0
	Total	220	100.0
Harassment by county officials	Least satisfied	100	45.5
	Moderately satisfied	40	18.2
	Extremely satisfied	80	36.3
	Total	220	100.0
Levies charged	Least satisfied	76	34.5
	Moderately satisfied	68	31.0
	Extremely satisfied	76	34.5
	Total	220	100.0

Results in table 6 show that the strategies respondents were least satisfied with were their lack of involvement in issues that affected their businesses (74%) and the lack of support from the county government (90.6%). In considering the moderately satisfied and the extremely satisfied, it appears that respondents were fairly satisfied with services offered (73.3%), how county government officers handled them (53.6%) and with the rules and regulations laid down (55.8%).

### 3.3. Extent of agreement that management strategies affect livelihood assets

The respondents were asked to state the extent to which they agreed with the view that the management strategies affected their livelihood assets. The assets found most applicable were financial, human, physical and social. These were operationalized as earnings, ability to work, business premises and tools, and customer access respectively.

**Table 7** Opinion on whether the management approach affected assets

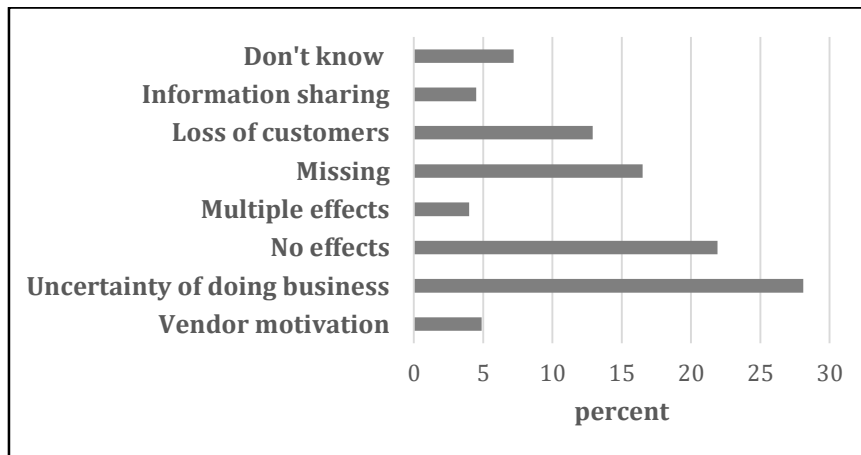
Assets	Classification factor	Frequency	Percent
Earnings	Agree	153	68.3
	Disagree	35	15.6
	Not sure	36	16.1
	Total	224	100.0
Customer access	Agree	120	53.6
	Disagree	51	22.8
	Not sure	53	23.6
	Total	224	100.0
Business premises /tools	Agree	129	57.6
	Disagree	48	21.4
	Not sure	47	21.0
	Total	224	100.0
Foods sold	Agree	119	53.1
	Disagree	60	26.8
	Not sure	45	20.1

	Total	224	100.0
Ability to work	Agree	148	66.1
	Disagree	49	21.9
	Not sure	27	12.0
	Total	224	100.0
Ability to manage waste	Agree	142	63.4
	Disagree	76	33.9
	Not sure	6	2.7
	Total	224	100.0

The results (table 7) show that most respondents agreed with the premise that the management strategies used by the county government affected their livelihood assets compared to those who disagreed and those were not sure about its veracity. This is reflected across earnings (68.3%), customer access (53.6%), premises/tools (53.6%), foods sold (53.1%), ability to work (66.1%), and ability to manage waste (63.4%).

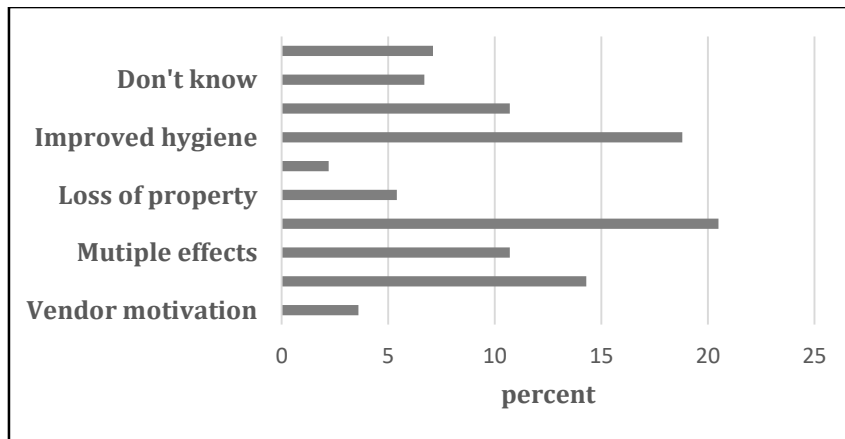
### 3.4. Effects of the strategies on their livelihood assets

The respondents were further asked to state the specific ways in which the management strategies affected their assets. The results are as presented below.



**Figure 2** Effects of involvement in decision-making on assets

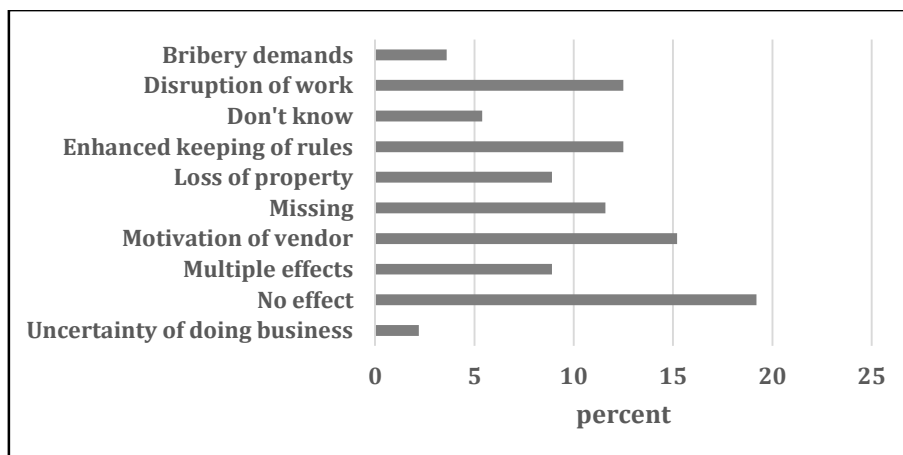
The findings (figure 2) show that 28.1% of respondents felt that lack of involvement in decision-making affected the certainty of doing business. Another 12.9 % felt that lack of consultation affected access to customers as they could be relocated at any time leaving their customers behind. In general, 54.5% of respondents felt that this variable affected one asset or the other as opposed to 21.9% who felt that lack of consultation had no effect on their assets and 16.5% who did not respond to the question. Such lack of participation means that the respondents were never sure of what would happen on a day-to-day basis and, therefore, could not easily plan ahead. These findings corroborate Roever and Skinner [9] who found that violent evictions and relocations to marginal locations with low pedestrian traffic and/or inadequate facilities were common strategies used by governments.



**Figure 3** Effects of rules and regulations on assets

Results in figure 3 show that overall, 58.5% of respondents felt that the rules and regulations affected their assets in positive ways such as motivation to work harder (3.6%), information sharing (2.2%), and improved food hygiene (18.8%). There were also negative effects such as damage/loss of property (5.4%), financial loss (10.7%), displacement (7.1%). A few respondents (10.7%) experienced multiples of these effects while 14.3%% felt that rules and regulations had no effect on their operations. The remaining 6.7% did not know what effect rules and regulations had on their livelihood assets.

Enforcement of rules specifically was found to cause disruption of activities and to lead to damage and/or confiscation of their goods. The disruptions often led to loss of customers who did not want to get caught up in the melee. Often the vendors got displaced and had to rebuilt their customer base afresh in their new locations. WIEGO [14] have in the past argued that apart from irrelevance and bias, formal regulations were often hostile towards SF vendors.



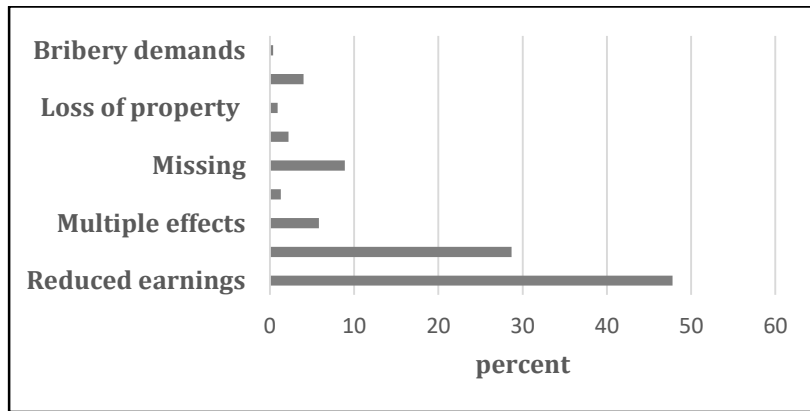
**Figure 4** Effects of handling by county officials

The findings (figure 4) indicate that 63.8% of the respondents felt that how county officials handled them had an impact on their assets. Out of these, 15.2% stated that it affected their motivation levels while 12.5% cited displacement and disruption of activities and another 12.5% cited enhanced keeping of rules. Increased bribery demands and uncertainty of doing business were given by 3.6% and 2.2% of respondents respectively. A few others (8.9%) experienced multiple effects while 5.4% did not know what effect handling by officials had on their assets. On the-other-hand 19.2% felt that how county officials handled them had no effect on their assets.

According to Assan and Chambers [15], vendor harassment is a common practice. They found that in India, such harassment was perpetrated by enforcement agencies, criminal organizations, formal business organizations and resident associations. The police, for instance, were found to demand bribes of between 200-500 rupees per month; mafia style groups extorted money from vendors while resident associations demanded their removal from streets. This

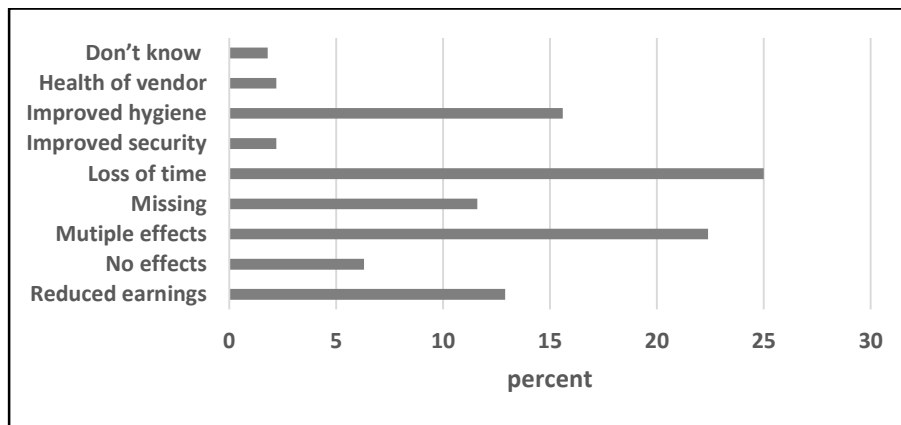


is also supported by Roever and Skinner [9] who argue that there is ongoing harassment of vendors by corrupt state officials, often facilitated by legislation.



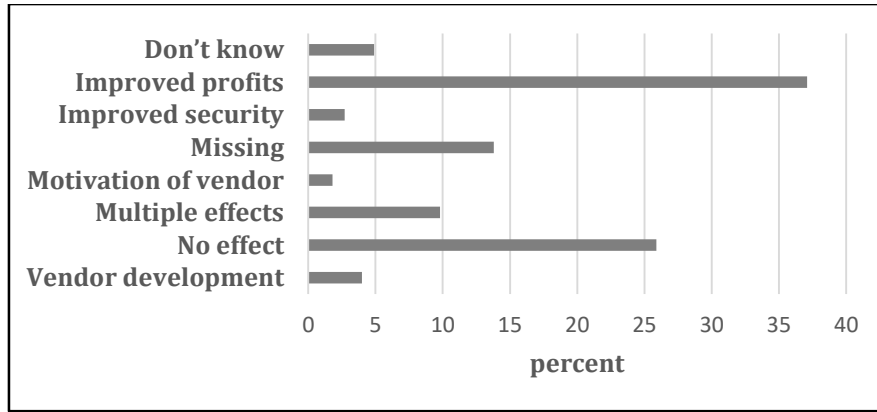
**Figure 5** Effects of levies paid

The results (figure 5) indicate that the effect of paying levies, mentioned by a majority of respondents (47.8%), was that it ate into and reduced their earnings. The other effects mentioned included loss of time (2.2%), motivation to improve (1.3%), confiscation and/or loss of property (0.9%) and bribery (0.4%). Five point eight (5.8%) of respondents also stated that they experienced multiple effects while 4.0% did not know what effect paying of levies had on their businesses. On the-other-hand, 28.6% of respondents felt that the payment of levies did not affect their assets in any way and 8.9% did not respond to the question.



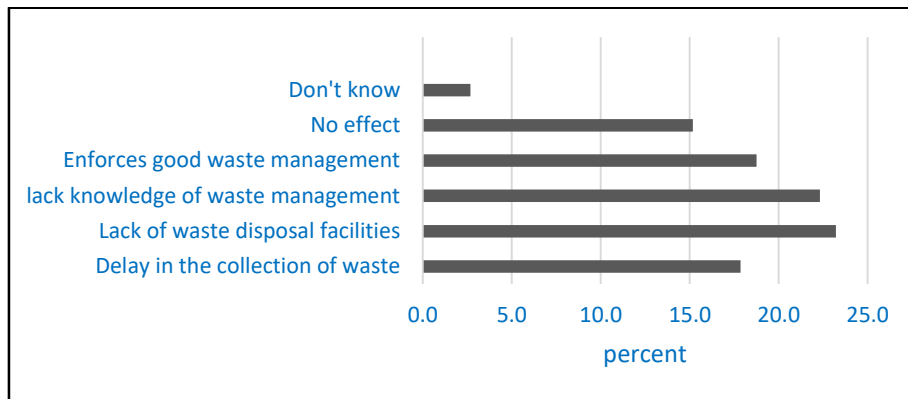
**Figure 6** Effects of service provision

Twenty-five percent (25.0%) of respondents (figure 6) argued that where government services were lacking, they wasted a lot of time accessing these services. Further, buying such services reduced their earnings considerably (12.9%). Where services were easily accessible 15.6% of respondents reported that the hygiene of their workplaces improved. Twenty-two point four percent (22.4%) of respondents experienced multiple effects arising from provision of services. Hence, there were both positive and negative effects. The finding that there was a lack of services, is supported by Nguyen [6], who found that vendors in Vietnam have traditionally been marginalized and operated most of the time without urban infrastructure or services.



**Figure 7** Effects of support given on assets

Figure 7 shows the effects that various forms of support (loans, training, social security) had on vendor’s operations. These include increased profits (37.1%), achievement of goals (4.0%), improved security (2.7%) and enhanced motivation (1.8%). A good number (25.9%) said it would have no effect while 4.9% felt that, since this support had never been given, they did not know what effect it would have. On-the-other hand, 13.8% did not respond to this question.



**Figure 8** Effects of management strategies on waste management

The results (figure 8) show that the strategies used caused a number of challenges to the SF vendors in waste management. These included lack of knowledge in waste management (24.1%), lack of waste disposal facilities (22.3%), and delay in collection of waste by the government (17.0%). On-the-other hand, 15.2% thought that the management strategies had no effect on how they managed waste while 2.7% did not know whether the management strategies had an effect or not. A contrary opinion by 18.1% of respondents was that the management strategies helped to enforce good waste management practices on their part.

Such insufficient waste removal and sanitation services result in unhygienic conditions that undermine the vendors’ sales as well as their health and that of their customers [20]. Such uncollected waste can provide breeding areas and food for potentially disease causing pests such as rodents and insects [21].

#### 4. Conclusions and recommendations

The study found that SF vendors were hardly consulted by authorities even when the decisions made affected their trade. Some decisions and actions by government often caused the SF vendors to lose the financial, physical, social and human assets essential for their livelihood activity. Road development projects, such as took place in Bungoma town during the study period, are a case in point, whereby no sufficient arrangements were made for the relocation of vendors. Such decisions and actions affected the certainty of doing business. It is recommended, therefore, that a system of consultation through vendors’ representatives, be adopted to improve the relationship between county governments and SF vendors. This would allow for better planning and achievement of goals for both entities.

The study also found that very few vendors had been involved in the formulation of rules and regulations on vending activities in the study area. The result of this was that the rules were not known and where known, were followed in fear as failure to obey them had repercussions. The study recommends that SF vendors be involved in the formulation of the rules for relevance and ownership. This would enhance adherence to the rules eventually reducing confrontations with enforcers.

It was further established that levies charged, and especially the daily tax, were too high and thus acted to demotivate the traders as they were not able to save or to increase their assets. It is recommended, therefore, that a renewable registration fee, paid monthly or annually, be charged instead of the many levies currently charged. This would also reduce opportunities for corruption occasioned by the frequency of paying the various levies.

Additionally, whenever they delayed to pay taxes, SF vendors' assets were usually confiscated. In the ensuing melee, some assets would be damaged and the food get poured out. To recover their items, vendors would pay fines which they could ill afford. Such actions by authorities disrupt SF vendors' work causing the loss of customers as well as that of financial and physical assets. It is recommended that authorities adopt a digital method of payment to streamline the process as well as improve accountability on part of the tax collectors.

To reduce delays in payment of levies it should be a requirement that SF vendors form site specific or food specific associations to monitor their uptake of regulations through a self-regulating system. Such associations can also mete out disciplinary actions on vendors who do not comply with regulations.

Services that were provided by the county government to any meaning level were waste collection and street lighting. Respondents had to access other services including water and toilet facilities at high cost and/or at far distances. This led to loss of work time leading to negative returns. It is recommended that the county government should provide necessary infrastructure close to the vendors' locations.

The study established that, although limited, some support was given to the SF vendors. Key support given was training and the issuance of umbrellas for shelter over the workplaces. However, the criteria for selecting beneficiaries was not quite clear. The study recommends that authorities establish a more equitable, transparent and accountable way of providing support to SF vendors.

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## **Compliance with ethical standards**

### *Acknowledgements*

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### *Disclosure of conflict of interest*

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

### *Statement of ethical approval*

The present research work does not contain any studies performed on animal/humans subjects by any of the authors.

### *Statement of informed consent*

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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