

THE RAISING CHILDREN ON THE STREETS: TALES FROM STREET VENDING MOTHERS IN THE HARARE CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

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Abstract

This study presents day-to-day experiences of street-vending mothers in the Harare Central Business District (HCBD) who go to work with their children as young as under the age of five. The study adopts a qualitative approach where 30 street vending mothers were identified and interviewed from five vending sites in the HCBD. The interviews were triangulated with observations since they were conducted at the women's vending sites where their daily routines were observed. The study indicates that vending street mothers experience a myriad of challenges, ranging from physical to mental and economic, in their quest to earn a living as street vendors. The major challenge identified by vending mothers in the study is their concern about their children's welfare, which they believe is compromised by spending most of their time on the streets where they are exposed to foul language; disease outbreaks and other physical accidents they are prone to due to the environment they spend the day in. Moreover, the women bemoan the harassment they experienced at the hands of local authorities given that they are operating as illegal vendors. The vending mothers also reported that they hardly make enough to cater for their economic needs. Their situation was exacerbated by the advent of COVID-19 when lockdown measures to combat the spread of the virus negatively affected informal sector activities. Regardless of the challenges reported by these participants, the numbers of people, especially

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women who engage in street vending, continues to rise due to the country's unrelenting economic woes. From the study findings it is therefore recommended that measures should be taken to make street vending sustainable for those who engage it as a means of livelihood and to protect children of street vending mothers so that they can also have a normal childhood.

Keywords: *economy; unemployment; welfare; informal sector, childhood, sustainability*

INTRODUCTION

Given the economic crisis and lack of gainful employment that has characterised Zimbabwe since the late 1990s, many people have resorted to the informal sector to earn a living. What happens in Zimbabwe echoes practices in many other developing countries (Daudi and Mugweni, 2018; Mutale and Muzingili, 2020). In many developing countries, crumbling economies are leading to high rates of unemployment. As a result, this contributes to increased numbers of people engaging in informal activities for survival.

The economy of Zimbabwe has been on a downward orientation since the adoption of the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) in the early 1990s (Ncube, 2000). When ESAP was first introduced, it was meant to initiate monetary policy reforms which included market-based interest rates, the liberalisation of the financial sector and labour market (Mzumara, 2012). These reforms were aimed at transforming the country's economy from a state-owned economy to a market-oriented economy. However, the programme failed to attain the aspired outcomes, resulting in the loss of more than 40 000 jobs in the formal sector between 1991 and 1995. This was followed by an economic meltdown witnessed from the late 1990s to early 2000s (Ndiweni *et al.*, 2014) Ndiweni *et al.* (*ibid.*) describe the period between 1998 and 2008 as a lost decade, as most, if not all, of the social and

economic benefits accrued during the first decade of independence were lost.

Mzumara (2012) argues that the economic turmoil in Zimbabwe was triggered, among other things, by the unplanned grant payment of the ex-combatants in 1997 which was followed by the sending of troops to the Democratic Republic of Congo in 1998. The situation was then exacerbated by the “Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) of 2000 which government initiated to calm a restless and impoverished population increasingly under the influence of war veterans. This reform, widely seen as disastrous, saw many settler farms possessed and redistributed to black Zimbabweans who, in most cases, were landless on account of colonial land policies (Dekker, 2009). After the FTLRP, Zimbabwe suffered economic sanctions imposed by the West, impacting negatively on the country’s trade and access to foreign currency (Mzumara, 2012). This was the same period that the country experienced very high inflation rates. Dekker (2009) states that the inflation rate rose from 15% in 1990, to 525% in 2003, went to 8 000% in 2007 and then 231 million percent in July 2008. As a result, the country’s manufacturing and agriculture sectors suffered massive setbacks as they were both directly affected by this economic downturn (Zhanda *et al.*, 2022). Many companies closed down because they could not produce at their full capacity, while others downsized and retrenched. Mzumara (2012) states that in 2005, only 3% of companies in Zimbabwe were producing at full capacity and in 2009 about 82% of the companies were operating at less than 50% capacity utilisation. As such, many people were released from their formal jobs. Due to the continued job losses, people migrated to different parts of the world. Some went to Europe and the US and Canada, while others opted to seek greener pastures within the region to countries such as South Africa and Botswana. The rate of unemployment, despite outmigration, continued to rise in Zimbabwe. Phiri *et al.* (2020) show that the rate of unemployment exceeded 90%, leaving a larger percentage of people seeking means of survival in the informal sector.

With the increasing unemployment, the proliferation of the informal sector in Zimbabwe continues to rise as people seek means of earning a livelihood (Chirisa, 2009; Zhanda *et al.*, 2022). Traditionally, informality was understood as petty trade and small-scale production that would eventually be absorbed in the formal sector. However, informality has continued to grow and is not showing signs of declining. Enterprises are downsizing, while governments in many developing countries are cutting on public expenditure (Matenga, 2018). All this creates a larger proportion of the unemployed who must turn to informality to survive.

Literature shows that women form a larger part of the vulnerable group negatively affected by the economic meltdown (Moghadam, 2005; Zhanda *et al.*, 2022). Because they are customarily expected to provide for households, women participate in the informal sector, engaging in small to medium enterprises as compared to their male counterparts (Mupedziswa and Gumbo, 2001; Chirisa, 2013). As Suwal and Pant (2009) have shown, these informal businesses are carried out on roadsides and in homes, with proprietors not registered or paying taxes to revenue authorities. Still, these provide livelihoods and income to millions of people who otherwise lack a means of survival. Mupedziswa and Gumbo (2001p12) note:

The importance of the informal sector cannot be overemphasised in terms of job creation. Looking at the situation of school leavers, the education system churns [out] 300 000 young persons every year. The formal job market can only absorb about a tenth, leaving the rest to seek their livelihoods in the informal sector. Thus, the informal sector has been an employment haven for thousands of people who would have otherwise been left without a means of survival.

Part of the reason the informal sector is growing relates to the nature of entry. The informal sector is marked by easy entry for operators. One does not need to have large sums of money or to mobilise

documentation in order to start operations in the informal sector (Chirisa, 2013). For this reason, most already poor women find the informal sector an easy route to securing a livelihood necessary to support families abandoned by men engaging alternative lives elsewhere in the diaspora (Tagutanazvo and Dsingirai, 2022).

While they must be on the streets, it remains unclear whether or not these enterprising women are encountering challenges that affect their responsibility to care for their growing children. The World Health Organisation (2018) suggests that the future of children is determined during childhood. It further suggests that care must be taken to ensure that children have a good environment in which to grow and be prepared for normal adult life. Whether these working mothers operate in environments that are harmful to children's development and growth, is a matter that scholarship is still grappling with.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Scholars show that women employed in the informal sector face a number of challenges, including health and safety risks, long working hours while their returns are very low (Davis, 2008; Chibango, 2024). Working conditions generate poor health, inevitably leading to erratic poor business for these women. Literature has shown that female poverty has a direct impact on the welfare of children as there is a link between the mother and children's poverty. The level of poverty experienced by mothers is likely to be the same level that their children experience (Moghadam, 2005; Mbulayi *et al.*, 2020). Studies indicate that poor young mothers are more likely to be single mothers and they receive very little child support from the fathers of their children (Ulrich, 2016; WHO, 2018). Moreover, such mothers struggle to fully participate in the labour market because of their little education (Zhanda *et al.*, 2022). Studies on female-headed households in sub-Saharan Africa found that heads have greater constraints in obtaining resources and services. Hence, Women in Development (WID) studies

recommend that poverty alleviation policies and strategies should explicitly target female-headed households (WHO, 2018).

Unable to secure formal employment, many women resort to informal activities to earn a living. The major challenge faced by women who work in the informal sector is the lack of social security caused partly by ineligibility owing to the nature of their work (Ulrich, 2016; Chirisa *et al.*, 2021). Most of the women take a double burden of ensuring social and economic provision for their families. This constrains them in the informal sector where their choices of opportunities are limited due to lack of social protection and inadequate child support services. As such, a larger number of women engage in the most vulnerable and insecure types of employment linked to high levels of poverty and social marginalisation (Ulrich, 2016). Such women are left without protection from economic and lifecycle related shocks, making it difficult to sustain their livelihoods. Hernandez *et al.* (1996) indicate that lack of social security coverage in the informal sector includes lack of access to medical services and lack of day care services for children of working mothers.

Scholars also point to pandemics as some of the major challenges faced by women vendors on the streets (Toriro and Chirisa, 2021). Such pandemics are often characterised by limitations to mobility which is popularly seen as a driver of transmission. This immobility results in mothers being unable to fend for their children as they remain confined to the home when their source of livelihoods requires them to be out on the streets. This point is exemplified by COVID-19. In a bid to curb the spread of the virus, national governments-imposed lockdowns that restricted internal and external movement of individuals. Many jobs were lost due to reduced working hours (Chingarande, 2020). Although such measures affected both the formal and informal sectors, individuals in the informal sector were affected the most given the lack of social protection in the sector (Chirisa *et al.*,

2021). Many lost their businesses as they ended up using their capital for consumption, given that they could not go out to work.

Another challenge observed by Guantai (2015) relates to the absence of family time among vending mothers. Unlike women in the formal sector who enjoy time at home with their new-born babies during maternity leave, those in the informal sector have no option but to bring their infants to the streets to work. While other children learn to walk in the comfort of their homes, Guantai (*ibid.*) highlights that children of vending mothers in Nairobi slowly learn how to tactfully run from city police officers. Women in the informal sector do not have the opportunity to recover and bond with their babies after giving birth as they are compelled by circumstances to go back to work early. Guantai (*ibid.*) also highlights a structural challenge among street vending mothers. This concerns the absence of caring structures for these working mothers. Vending mothers do not have resources to send their children to day-care facilities. As a result, these vending mothers bring their children to the streets since they have no one to look after them at home. The situation is critical since the children are too young to be left on their own. Mothers, therefore, spend time with their children at the market throughout the day. As Guantai (*ibid.*) highlights, the conditions that the children are exposed to on the streets are not conducive to their proper growth and welfare.

Another major challenge experienced by street-vending mothers is the lack of proper resources and equipment to sustain their trade. Bhowmik and Saha (2012) and Maviya and Simbanegavi (2024) state that although some vendors sell perishable products, they lack facilities such as refrigerators and end up losing out as they throw away the products once they go bad. In some instances, they continue selling such products, thereby posing a major health risk to the society and their accompanying children. Davis (2008) echoes similar sentiments when highlighting that water sold by street vendors in

Accra is unsafe for human consumption. It is reported that about 42.5% of water bags filled by vendors themselves sold by the road sides contain bacteria as compared to 4.5% of factory packed water. Although the vendors are aware that some of their products are not safe for consumption, they nevertheless sell them to earn an income. And, in some instances, they feed their children with these unhealthy products, endangering them immediately or in the long term.

It can be noted that there is some preliminary work on vulnerability of street vending mothers. However, more research is needed to explore the experience of street-vending mothers who go to work with their young children.

METHODOLOGY

In order to elicit data this, study adopts a qualitative approach where 30 street-vending mothers who go to work with their young children below the age of five in the Harare CBD were interviewed. Creswell (2009:4) defines qualitative research as “a means for exploring and understanding the meanings individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem”. Qualitative research allows the subjective meanings and experiences of the problem to be identified and understood from participant’s point of view. Given that the study is aimed at understanding the day-to-day experiences of street-vending mothers, qualitative was identified as the suitable approach to elicit the information from the participants’ perspective. The study adopted purposive sampling to recruit 30 street-vending mothers from five vending sites in the HCBD. The selected vending sites were Market Square, Fourth Street, Copacabana Rank, Charge Office and Zimpost. Purposive sampling technique was used as the research’s specific target population were mothers who come to work with their children under the age of five. In-depth interviews were employed to collect data and participants were interviewed at their stalls where they sold their wares. Given that interviews were conducted at the vending sites,

this allowed for observations which aided the process of data collection. Triangulation of two data collection methods enhanced the rich depth of data elicited for the study. As in-depth interviews allow the research to access subjective meanings, observations allow for capturing of contextual and non-verbal communication that can add to the richness of data (Patton, 2015). Thematic analysis was used to analyse data where a six phase guide was adopted for identifying, analysing and reporting themes emanating from the data. The study used pseudonyms to ensure that anonymity is maintained.

FINDINGS

LIMITATION OF APPROPRIATE SPACE

Street-vending mothers, like many other street vendors, bemoan the limitations of the spaces they operate their businesses in. All the participants in this study sold their wares out in open streets. Most of them did not have any shade for protection from the direct heat from the sun hence, they used portable umbrellas to protect themselves. As such, they had to choose either to stay at home during harsh weather conditions and risk losing an income or brave the bad weather to secure an income while risking their health and that of their young children. The mothers, especially the sole bread winners, stated that although they were aware of the dangers of exposing their children to harsh weather conditions, they were compelled by circumstances to come to work. One participant recalled how her daughter spent two weeks in hospital suffering from pneumonia due to exposure to excessive cold weather. The participant had this to say:

“That week was very cold and raining. Initially, I did not want to come to town because I was worried that my baby would catch a cold. But after three days, I realised the weather was not getting any better and I wanted to raise school fees for my other child who is in Form Three. You know, schools these days they send them away if fees are not paid up, and so I did not want that to happen. Then I decided to come and sell my seat covers since it was a month-end and I knew business would be high. That was the

worst mistake that I made because all the money I made from the sales had to go for my child's medical bills. I even went on to borrow more money for those medical bills and the school fees I wanted to raise" (Ms Moto, Market Square, 12 March 2022).

The same challenge was highlighted by most, if not all, participants and it is echoed in literature. For example, Chirisa *et al.* (2021) show how women in Harare are forced to operate in the open which can be cold at times. They note that women's endeavours to feed families are constrained by such environments. Affected women sometimes they have to stay at home, while those who do not have young children go to work every day.

ABSENCE OF SUPPORTING CHILD REARING STRUCTURE

The findings of the study reveal that street-vending women do not have adequate support structures in child rearing. One participant reported how she started to come to work with her son three weeks after giving birth. One other mother at Copacabana jokingly remarked;

"I do not think it's true that after giving birth, you need two to three months to recover. You see this boy here? I started bringing him to work when he was two weeks old. You need more time to recover if you have food to eat at home. For some of us, if you sit at home, there will be nothing to eat. I know this is not good for my health and my child's, but what can I do? I used to bring a big blanket so that I could cover him so that he would not catch a cold. It was heart-breaking to take my child out every day like that but circumstances forced me. Those days I was selling fruits and "freezits" at 4th Street Bus Terminus. So, I would leave the house around 8 o'clock in the morning and spend the whole day at the rank" (Chipo, Copacabana, 13 March 2021).

The mothers reported that although they knew that the environment they worked in was not conducive to bringing up their children, they had no other choice since they could neither afford to hire

childminders, nor take their children to day care facilities. These women reported that they made very little which, in most cases, barely covered their food and accommodation needs. Therefore, they could not afford another expense of sending the child to day care or hiring someone to look after the child in their absence. What these women narrated is confirmed in literature as Mbulayi *et al.*, (2020) show how most female vendors earn very little income which may not be enough for them to cover for such needs as health and childcare.

PERSECUTION FROM LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Like many other street vendors, these vending mothers reported that they had constant confrontation with city council officials, since they were not registered hawkers and they operated on undesignated points. When these swoops occur, which also resulted in the city council police confiscating their wares, children are caught in the middle. Mothers from one of the vending sites reported how one woman dropped her 10-month-old baby in the middle of the road while she was running away from the police. One participant reported:

“We were seated busy chatting when we heard noise from the street across and we knew the police were coming. She was nursing her child, and she got up and strapped the baby on her back. She then tried to pack a few things so that she would not lose everything. But it was too late as the police were already close by, so she tried to run, but the towel she used to strap the baby on the back was not tight enough and the baby fell from the back as she was running” (Caroline, Fourth Street, 24 March 2021.)

Participants indicated that it was better for their counterparts who do not bring children to work because they could collect their wares and run away before being apprehended by police. This was not the case with those who brought children to work as they could not run because they had to attend to the children as well.

This phenomenon where infants are caught in the crossfire has been noted elsewhere in Africa. For example, Guantai (2015) presents accounts of this happening in Ghana. She notes how mothers confronted by the police precariously fled with their children who were traumatised in the process. It was indicated that as they fled from the police, they had to navigate busy roads and risk being run over by cars.

BAD INFLUENCE ON CHILDREN'S BEHAVIOUR

The study also found out that vending mothers acknowledge that their working places are not conducive to raising children. They all agreed that the language that people use out on the streets is very foul and it affects their children's psychological and language development. Given that their children are always on the streets with adults who often use offensive and vulgar words, these children tend to imitate such language. Some of the mothers reported that it is embarrassing as a mother to hear your child speak vulgar and offensive words. The mother of a four-year-old boy narrated how this has affected her life in the location where she lives in. The participant said:

"At home, several people no longer want my son to play with their children because they say he is bad influence, he uses bad language and because I am a single mother, people would say I am a prostitute, that's why my son uses such language. But spending the day selling my wares here does not mean I sell my body as well. It used to hurt me a lot when people said that, but I don't care anymore. If anyone speaks badly about me, I also retaliate because I realised that if I keep quiet, they continue talking badly about me. It's not like I enjoy when my son says those words." (Ms Mbeva, Charge Office Bus Terminus, 17 March 2021).

These vending mothers indicated that some people blamed them for exposing their children to unhealthy environments.

"They think we enjoy putting our children in such environments. If we stay at home, they talk about us again because we will then borrow everything to provide for our children. The economy is tough these days, you just have to do whatever you can to provide for your family. If you are the sole breadwinner, you can never have time to rest. On the one hand, you are

looking after the children, while on the other, you need to find ways to provide for them. It is really tough these days” (Christine, a participant at Charge Office Bus Terminus on 17 March 2021).

Mbulayi *et al.*, (2020) posit that vending mothers are compelled to continue working under harsh environments because of lack of better alternatives. Similar points were raised in the study as all of the participants indicated that they were forced to accept the unconducive conditions that they exposed their children to as normal so that they could carry on with selling their wares. They acknowledged that they felt guilty exposing their children to such conditions, but they tried to brush the guilty conscience aside so secure a livelihood as indicated by one of the participants

“It is heart-breaking to see your child fast asleep on the dirty streets where people dump all sorts of rubbish. If only I could find a better way to provide for my children, I would not do this to my child. But as it is, he will continue to sleep on this pavement so that we can have a meal. All I have to do is to be vigilant so that he won’t be run over by cars. Sometimes this place is very busy, and I have to be extra careful that my son will not follow someone as he will be playing. I sometimes fear that someone can take advantage of the chaos and take my son with them. But I thank God my son is smart; he doesn’t follow anyone he does not know”(Clariss, Market Square, 15 March 2021).

LIMITED TIME FOR NURTURING CARE

The study also found out that mothers have inadequate time to care for their children. Given that they spend the bigger part of the day at work, the mothers in the study reported that they prepare all their meals in the morning, which they will give their children for both breakfast and lunch. When they prepare their breakfast in the morning, that same meal is also packed for children to take as their lunch during the day. By so doing, there is little consideration for the provision of a balanced diet for the children. Moreover, the food is

often served cold as they have no facilities to warm the food on the streets. In some rare incidences they can afford to buy food, most however often buy fast foods which is not suitable for the young children. Not only do they often give their children cold food, but they also buy stale foods which vendors sell at low costs. As such, they risk food poisoning their children. Regardless of the risks associated with giving children cold and stale food, these mothers believe it is better to give their children such meals during the day than not to have anything at all and starve them.

“Every time I bring my daughter something for her to eat during the day. When I prepare the porridge in the morning, I always make an extra plate for her to eat during the day. In between, she will be eating maputi and mahewu. Although the food will be cold, she will not go hungry. She will always have something to eat”, said one respondent with a two-year-old daughter (Melody, Charge Office, 17 March 2021).

Such presentations show that given the circumstances they find themselves in, these mothers are no longer worried about the nutritional content of the food they give their children. Regardless of the emphasis on ensuring a proper meal and balanced diet for young children to avoid stunted growth, their concern is on reducing hunger, with less or no concern on the quality of food provided. Such findings are a critical contribution to the literature on challenges experienced by street-vending mothers.

ANALYSIS: INCOMPATIBILITY OF VENDING AND CHILDCARE

The study reveals a number of challenges that street vending mothers experience in their trade. Their main challenge is that they concurrently play two major roles in the welfare of their children, yet the two do not complement each other. Street vending and childcare cannot be undertaken concurrently, since their functionalities are in opposition to each other. Street vending happens in a noisy public space where there is limited control of human behaviours, while

childcare should be undertaken in the private space that is calm with a clear routine where children can learn and internalise various norms. Unfortunately, these mothers are both breadwinners and caregivers and cannot alternate the provision of their services as they cannot go any day without offering either of the two. They play the nurturing role while, at the same time, engage in the informal sector to secure a livelihood for the same children they care for. Findings from this study show that, as a result, vending mothers are compelled by their circumstances to raise their children in environments that are not conducive to proper nurturing and this is detrimental to the welfare of their children. Taking from the study findings and other studies, it can be argued that the streets are not safe places to raise children (Guantai, 2015; Mbulayi *et al.*, 2020). Caring for and nurturing children requires a place with homely qualities that allow the child to develop. As Richter (2018) highlights, nurturing care encompasses health and nutrition, safety and security, responsive caregiving and opportunities for inclusive early learning. Such qualities are not found on the streets where these vending mothers spend much of their time seeking a livelihood. Hence the nurturing care of these vending mothers is compromised. As the mothers revealed, they are sometimes blamed for the negative outcomes on the welfare and well-being of their children yet it is not entirely their faulty. These outcomes are a result of the circumstances that the mothers are in which, in turn, are transmitted to their children. Bandura *et al.* (1961) highlight how children's development is influenced by the role models around them. As the children grow up in such environments, they learn the behaviours they are exposed to regularly. In the end, street-vending mothers unwittingly play a part in the internalisation of bad habits by their children.

Literature highlights that young children experience their world through their parents and the environment around them (WHO, 2018). As such, children need safe, stable and nurturing environments that

allow them to develop physically, psychologically and emotionally. Unsafe and unstable environments can have long-term negative effects on a person's welfare and well-being (*ibid.*). Deriving from the findings of this study, it can, therefore, be argued that nurturing and providing the economic need of children simultaneously is difficult because either one of or both will be compromised. The two cannot be satisfactorily attained if they are done concurrently. Their preferred environments and conditions are in opposition, hence cannot be done by the same person simultaneously. Richter (2018) and WHO (2018) highlight the importance of nurturing environments in early childhood development. Nurturing care is regarded as conditions created to enable parents and caregivers to ensure children's good health and nutrition, as well as protecting them from possible threats. Given such importance in the upbringing of a child, nurturing care should be done in an enabling environment for a holistic child development. However, with the current economic outlook in Zimbabwe where more mothers participate in the informal economy, many children are likely to be raised under such unhealthy conditions as their parents will be seeking livelihoods in the informal sector.

Raising children in an unfriendly environment has far-reaching effects on child development. As the results of this study reveal, not only is the children's psychological wellbeing jeopardised, but they are exposed to harsh weather conditions from a young age and their nutritional provisions are compromised as well. Such children become susceptible to different diseases and could grow up sickly. By so doing, their potential to grow healthy is endangered. As the WHO (2018) identified the tenets of the framework for nurturing care, it is important that efforts to improve health and well-being of individuals start in the earliest years of life. The findings of this study indicate that most, if not all of the five components of nurturing care, are not observed in the nurturing of the children. The components of good health and adequate nutrition were weakened as the children were not

given proper meals during the day. Although these vending mothers highlighted aspects of responsive caregiving, their efforts were negatively impacted by the unsupportive environments. In the end, the social and psychological development of children who spend most of the time on the streets with their mother is compromised. Their ability to reach full potential in life is affected.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study shows that the major threat to nurturing care is extreme poverty that compels vending mothers to take their children with them to the streets where they spend most of their time selling their wares. The conditions that both mothers and their children are exposed to negatively affect the children's social well-being and social development as well as their health. The study reveals that vending mothers have no social support as they do not have someone to look after their children while they are working, which forces them to go to work with them. Due to limited resources, the vending mothers cannot expand their business as they operate on a hand-to-mouth basis, rendering their operations vulnerable as they cannot make any savings to cushion them in times of shocks. The study indicates that due to the nature of their operation, vending mothers are prone to various challenges and often times their resilience is compromised due to lack of insurances to help them bounce back in the event of any mishap. Moreover, the vending mothers revealed that they were not registered hawkers, hence their operations are regarded as illegal by the city council. As such, they often face harassment from the authorities. Moreover, the study reveals that vending and childcare cannot be engaged in simultaneously as they require very different environments. Because of that, mothers' ability to provide nurturing care to their children is compromised as they pursue a livelihood in an environment that does not support nurturing care. It is, therefore, recommended that initiatives are established to protect the welfare of vending mothers and their young children. The state and other

relevant stakeholders should consider enhancing the social protection systems that can protect families and individuals during periods of social and economic adversity. Given that the vending mothers in this study are the sole breadwinners in their families, intervention strategies to ensure sustainability of their endeavours should also consider the fact that they are the caregivers for their young children as well. Hence, there is need to provide childcare facilities for these mothers so that they can place their children in safer environments while they pursue economic activities in order to fend for their families. Such facilities can reduce the burden on mothers since the study findings proved that seeking a livelihood and nurturing a child simultaneously can have detrimental effects, especially on the welfare of the child.

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