

## The Economic Impact on Street Vending in Nigeria: A Study of Bayelsa State

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### **Abstract**

*Street vendor is a person engaged in hawking goods such or offering services to the general public, on the street, side walk, pavement and any other public place. They usually carry out their trading activities from a temporary built up structure or by moving from place to place and this has become a common occurrence in most of the developing countries including Nigeria. The aim of this study is to examine the economic impact of street vending in Nigeria in order to help the government and business environment to exploit its benefits. This study administered 500 questionnaires and responses were 470 street vendors in a stratified areas in Bayelsa state, Nigeria. A descriptive analysis using simple percentage analysis with tables was carried out, and it was found that street vending had contributed to the social, political and economic life of Bayelsans despite its little contribution but Street vending has become a foundation of the retail economy in the cities especially to those who are unable to have a safe and proper employment. Hence, the government should recognize street vendors for the role they play in engendering economic activity, providing employment, and bringing retail goods to consumers. Nevertheless, government may not be able to accommodate all street traders but government agencies should look into the capacity and the side of street traders and accommodate appropriate number of street traders through the issue of permits.*

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**Keywords:** *Street vending, Street vendors, Economic impact, Value.*

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### **Introduction**

This paper discusses the economic impact of street vendors, also known as hawkers and how their activities impact the economy of Bayelsa state. Street vendor is a person engaged in vending of merchandise of everyday use or offering services to the general public, on the street or any other public place from a temporary built up structure or by moving from place to place.

Street vending plays an enormous role in the supply of goods and services in many cities of the world to the end users and has been defined by scholars based on their perceptions. Street trading can be defined as a “*form of squatting; it involves perpetual displaying of goods along roadsides which may occur within established market places or outside the intersection of major roads*” (Bogoro, et al. 2012), and has played an important part of urban economies around the world and has become a common occurrence in most of the developing countries (Anetor, 2015). It has happened for hundreds of years and is considered as a basis of many cities’ historical and cultural birthright (Skinner, 2011). Street vending is the selling of goods and services in the street without using a permanent built-up structure (Bhowmik, 2005). Street vendors include all those that sell goods and services in a public space such as regulated street markets, transportation centers, natural market areas, sidewalks, and in and along the streets. Street vending constitutes a significant proportion of the informal sector activities in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. For example, it is estimated that street vending accounts for 15% to 25% of total informal employment in Africa cities (Skinner, 2011). In Asian countries,

precisely India for instance, about 3% of the total employment in non-agricultural sector is attributed to street vending which translates to a total of about 3.1 million street vendors throughout the country. In the Americas, Peru to be precise, street trading accounts for up to 9% of all the employment in the informal sector; which translates to about 240,000 street traders (Anetor, 5015).

Street trading in these present days have become a major concern for many people and has culminated into heated arguments. Many scholars argue that street vending in Nigeria has negative effect on children and have brought about child abuse in the form of physical injuries, sexual assault, abandonment and child labour. According to Nurudeen et al. (2014) as cited in Anetor (2015), it is debated that the non-regulation of street trading in Africa; precisely Nigeria threatens food poisoning. In addition, it also contends that street trading contributes or leads to many hazards, precisely the girl child abuse. These threats include sexual assault in the form of rape, harassment and molestation. The chances of the girl child losing her virginity, education, her learning of social vices, and also the chances of been exposed to dangers from swindlers and ritual murderers. Other opinions leveled against street vending is that, street vendors contribute to traffic congestion and pollution (Adedeji, et al. 2014). In the view of Bromley, (2000) some of the street vendors seem to involve in criminal activities, from theft to the sales of unlawful goods and services. In Nigeria precisely, there are no clear-cut by-laws guiding street vending and licenses are hard to get. Hence, street vendors have become vulnerable to harassment, confiscations, and evictions by both official and fake representatives of local government authorities within their sphere of operations (Umar, 2009). Street vending is usually recognized to be the closest means to the end users. This paper sets to examine the economic impact of street vending in Nigeria with a particular focus on Yenagoa city, Bayelsa state and suggest ways how to harness its benefits.

This paper is split into six sections. The first section introduced the topic. The second part talks about the review of related literature, the third part examines the methodology of the study, the fourth part showed the results and discussions, and the final part is the conclusion and recommendations.

### **Literature Review**

Many researchers have carried out research on the issue of street vending. The outcome of most of them focused on the adverse effect of street trading while concentrating less on its economic value. A few of such studies will be examined in this section. However, an effort was made to examine some studies that unravel the benefits of street vending. According to Urban Justice Center, New York (2017), there are as many as 20,000 street vendors in New York City selling hotdogs, flowers, t-shirts, arts, fancy food trucks and many others. They are small business people hustling to make ends meet. Some of these vendors are US military veterans who served their country and now are unable to fend for themselves because of their insufficient retirement benefits. They work long hours under harsh circumstances, asking for nothing more than a chance to sell their goods on the public path. Yet, in recent years, vendors have been victims of New York's aggressive "quality of life" restriction. They have been denied access to vending licenses. Many streets have been closed to them at the urging of powerful business groups. They receive exorbitant tickets for minor violations like vending too close to a crosswalk — more than any big businesses are required to pay for similar violations. According to WIEGO (Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing) in sited in Unni, J. (2010).

The Street Vendor Project is a membership-based project with nearly 2,000 vendor members who are working together to create a vendors' movement for permanent change. We reach out

to vendors in the streets and storage garages and teach them about their legal rights and responsibilities. We hold meetings where we plan collective actions for getting our voices heard. We publish reports and file lawsuits to raise public awareness about vendors and the enormous contribution they make to our city. Finally, we help vendors grow their businesses by linking them with small business training and loans.

*"If they don't let us sell on the streets anymore, will the government create new income opportunities for us so that our families don't die of hunger and so that we have money to send our children to school?" – Hawker in Hanoi, Vietnam*

Adedeji et al. (2014) examined the spatial implication of street trading in Osogbo, Nigeria and found that the activity has serious negative impacts on accessibility, erection of illegal structures, solid waste generation, traffic congestion, auto-accident, and the defacement of urban aesthetics. Umar (2009) studies on street vending, particularly its effect on the girl child found that it exposes the girl child to all forms of abuses that range from rape and harassment, to molestation. The findings also showed that the girl child becomes street wise, which culminate to her quest for sex and other immoral and criminal behaviour. In addition, the study asserts that, there is a high tendency for the girl child to forgo her education thus, losing all the benefits of education. Metiboba & Kakwagh (2014) examined the safety and hygienic implication of the street vended food in Kogi state, Nigeria. They found that most vended food were unsafe for human consumption. Furthermore, the study identified the poor construction and locations of the vending sites as well as the lack of facilities such as refuse collection, which identified as the main factor responsible for the lack of safety and quality of food. According to Chukuezi (2010), street vendors play important roles in meeting the food demands of urban dwellers, but their activities are associated with a number of health hazards. Bromley (2000) posited the following arguments against street vending in his study on street vending and public policy, that street vending contributes to vehicular and pedestrian congestion that cause traffic accident, increase pollution and impede the flow of police, ambulance, and other emergency vehicles. He also asserted that street vending often result in the obstruction of routes of outlets from crowded building such as theatres and stadia thus, increasing the scale of tragedy in the event of major fire, explosion or toxic gas escape. Bromley further argued that the street vendors' ease of mobility gives them the opportunity to swindle their customers and avoid official regulations. He also argued that some street vendors engage in selling contraband, fake or contaminated goods and disappearing to other locations before they are apprehended by angry customers or the police. According to Ekpenyong, S. N. & Sibiri, A. E. (2011) postulate that the causes and the consequences of street trading and child labour in the metropolis of Yenegoa and they are on the view that It has no stretch to state that street trading and child labour are a great menace to individual children and society at large. A poor individual or family has a high probability of staying poor as low income carries with it high risks of illnesses, limitations on mobility, and limited access to education. Poor parents often cannot give their children the opportunities for better health and education needed to improve their situation and so the cruel legacy of poverty is passed from parents to children. This situation is made worse when poor families encourage their children to pursue child labour or street trading as these activities further limit the future opportunities and possibilities likely to be experienced by the children. Furthermore, Bromley street food vendors were seen to pose major public health problems because they often expose their goods to the sun, air pollution and contamination by passers-by. A further assertion made by Bromley is that, street vending contributes to underground activities that support and facilitate crime and tax evasion thus, undermining the fabric of civil society. Few studies have however, embarked on assessing the

economic impact of street vending even though such studies were not wholly devoted to such purpose.

According to Bhowmik S. (2005), a thriving city needs a healthy economy. People need job opportunities. People also need access to goods and services at affordable prices. Vending provides all of these things. Vending provides employment and for many people, it is the only available job. In the absence of a safety net (government-provided support for those in need), the “informal” sector is an essential service to prevent desperate poverty. In addition, vending provides affordable goods and services and where governments issue licenses in exchange for a fee, contributes to local government revenues. The Informal Economy Monitoring Study (IEMS) was a study of street vendors in five cities: Accra, Ghana; Ahmedabad, India; Durban, South Africa; Lima, Peru; and Nakuru, Kenya. The study identified several ways in which street vendors strengthen their communities. These include generating employment for themselves and others, maintaining a household on their income, contributing to cleanliness and safety on the streets, providing friendly personalized service to customers, and contributing to city revenue via payment for licenses, permits, fees, fines and taxes. Many of the goods sold by street vendors are made by small local industries, thereby further benefiting local economies. The so-called informal sector is very large in many countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, and is vital to their economies. Unfortunately, rather than recognize their importance, governments are at best indifferent, and at worst hostile, to them. Too often, says Bhowmik, rather than recognize their Contribution, “governments view street vendors as encroachers or criminals.”

Street vending is a source of earning both for the rural poor migrating to the city and for those who have lost their formal sector jobs after financial contraction. Vending is not a hobby or an additional income source; for most street vendors, their occupation is the main source of income for their families. Their work allows them to feed their families and pay their children’s school fees, thereby contributing to the wellbeing of the next generation. Vending creates jobs not only for the street vendors themselves but also for various others such as farmers, artisans, and porters. About a fifth of informal, non-agricultural employment in various cities in Africa comes in the percent in Hanoi, Ho Minh City, and Lima (Peru). About 10 percent of total urban employment in India and fifteen percent in South Africa is in the form of street vending.

Censuses in Harare, Zimbabwe and in Lusaka, Zambia, found that many sellers of street food employ others, thereby generating up to three times as many jobs as there are vendors. Many also earned a considerable wage, at least in comparison to other jobs available (Unni, J. 2010).

Bhowmik S. (2005) observed that vendors must obtain their goods somewhere. What they sell benefits those who produce or create those goods. Since they tend to sell local items, they contribute to the local economy. Vendors are an important link between rural farmers and their urban customers. They buy local Products and make them available throughout the city, thereby increasing sales, which benefits the producers of the goods as well as the vendors. Governments that legalize vending benefit from the licensing fees and sometimes taxes; otherwise the fees for use of space simply go to Political or other elements that control access to public places. Large stores, on the other hand, tend to access their products outside of the local community – indeed, often out of the country -And move their profits out as well, so that the locale gains little, as opposed to the positive Effects of small shops and, by extension, vendors. Vending provides another benefit as well. For low-income people to benefit fully from employment, at least some of the money they earn needs to remain at the bottom of the economic pyramid, among the poor, and circulate there. If the only option for obtaining goods and services is from

formal businesses owned by the wealthy, then wages to the poor and middle class will simply rise back up the pyramid again. The presence of vendors means that at least some of the money that reaches the poor will stay there; benefiting other low-income people as well and avoiding the gravitational pull of money upwards.

The absence of overhead expenses associated with personnel or electricity and other related costs mean that vendors can make their goods and services available at lower costs than in shops. The availability of low-priced goods is a boon for both the poor and middle class. In many cases, these may be the only goods that others can afford. Vendors provide other benefits to customers as well. The Process of negotiating prices may lead to lower prices for the low income.

*“The city area, rich or poor or in between, harmed by an interesting sidewalk life and plentiful sidewalk contacts have yet to be found.” – Jane Jacobs*

According to Dipeolu et al. (2007), who examined the income generating potentials of street food vending businesses in Ogun state, Nigeria, street food vending is very profitable and yield a substantial monthly income to the street vendors. Nakisani Carol & Ongori (2013) investigated the importance of street vending as a livelihood strategy and strategies to lessen the challenges bedeviled by street vendors in Gaborone, Botswana. They found that street vending was mostly a source of income and a way of creating employment for the urban poor. In the same vein Amoo et al. (2012) investigated the street trading activities and maternal health in the urban area of Nigeria and found that street trading has provided employment opportunities for mothers. Bromley’s (2000) study on street vending and public policy has also presented the following assertions in favour of street vending. He stated that street vendors, through their transactions, contribute directly to the overall economic activity of a nation. In addition, it forms a potential source of income to the government through the levy of licensing fees, sales and value-added taxes. Bromley also asserted that street vending provides entrepreneurial opportunities to people that may not be able to afford to buy or rent fixed premises. He further stated that street vending offers a considerable flexibility in hours and levels of activity, and provides choices in terms of locations. According to Bromley, street vending can be practiced as a part-time job that generates and increases gross income. In the same view Anetor’s (2015) investigation has shown that street vending, its shortcomings notwithstanding, has contributed immensely to the economic, social and economic life of Nigerians. It has created employment opportunities for a number of school leavers that could not secure immediate admission to higher institutions of learning. Anetor (2015) also asserted street vending has also formed a major source of livelihood to a number of Nigerians that are unable to find white collar jobs. In addition, street vending has helped to reduce crime rate in the country because, of the flexibility of the business and the ease of start-up. Furthermore, street vending constitutes a source of income to the local and state government, even though a larger number of street vendors are unregistered and do not pay taxes. It is therefore important, for the Nigerian government to see how the activities of street vendors can be encouraged rather than harassing, confiscating or evicting them and their goods. These scholarly arguments have given rise to study the economic value of street vending in the context of the Nigerian business environment.

*“I have two small children, three years and five months. My husband died last year in an accident. I’ve been selling for five years now. ... These days the police often catch us, so I lose my goods, my money, and my customers. It’s really difficult. We just live day to day. I had to drop my studies, I don’t know any other way to make a living.” –Hawker in Hanoi*

### Methodology

This research work is carried out in Yenagoa metropolis of Bayelsa State which is situated in the South South Geo-political Zone of Nigeria. Most of the state is covered by water. The state is a major oil and gas producing state and contributes over 30 percent of Nigeria's oil production (Nigeria Galleria, 2017). The state has a population of about 1,703,358 people according to the National Population Census (2006) estimates. This study covered various locations between Tombia to Opolo and Amarata to Swali, this area are most well-established street vending locations in Bayelsa state were purposely selected by the use of stratified random sampling techniques. These locations are major traffic routes where street vending is predominant. The study administered structured questionnaires that consisted of questions on street vending and associated informal structure to five hundred (500) questionnaires were distributed to street vendors in the selected areas but four hundred and seventy (470) questionnaires were received from the respondents. The data collected from the 470 street vendors were subjected to descriptive analysis using simple percentage analysis with tables. These locations are shown in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Sample Distribution of Location**

S/N	Location	Frequency	Percentage (%)
	Tombia to Opolo	200	42.55
	Amarata to swali	270	57.45

*Source: Author's Device, 2017*

The goods sold by the street vendor's include Food & Drinks, Household durables, Electronics, Fashion accessories, and Book materials.

**Table 2: Product Categories and Specific Product Types**

Food & Drinks	Household Durables	Electronics, & ICT	Fashion Accessories	Books, journals & magazines
Sachet/ Bottled Water, Soft Drinks, Ice Cream, Fruit juice Biscuit, Sweets/ Chewing gum, Rice, Beans, Plantain.	Bed covers, Pillows, Wall clock, Wineglass, Tumbler, Kitchen Utensils.	Electric iron, Portable radio, Mobile phones, Electric shavers, Electric bulbs Recharge card.	Wearing apparel, Footwear, Sunglasses, Hat, Caps, Stockings, Wallets, Handkerchief, Wrist watches.	Books, Celebrity magazines, Special interest magazines, Newspapers, Journals.

*Source: Author's Field Work*

### Findings

This section deals with the analysis of findings of the study, using the responses of the questionnaire for each questions, related questions in the questionnaire were singled out and responses to them were analyzed, using frequencies and percentages.

**Table 3: Educational qualification of street vendors**

Qualification	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Primary school certificate	40	8.51
Junior secondary certificate	19	4.04
Senior school certificate	248	52.77
National diploma	70	14.89
NCE	12	2.55
Undergraduate	27	5.74
Graduate	54	11.49
<b>Total</b>	<b>470</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source: Author's Field Work*

Table 3 above shows that street vending is a source of employment for secondary school graduates which accounted for 52.77% (248) street traders out of the total sample of 470. This occurrence has helped in enhancing the consequence of unemployment on youth that are majorly secondary school leavers. From the result we can see that 14.89% (70 persons) of national diploma graduates are into street trading as a way of raising funds to pursue their studies and also as a means of livelihood. The result also indicates that about 5.74% (26 persons) of the undergraduate students are also involved in street vending as a part-time work. This significant part of undergraduate in street trading is most likely due to the recent increasing review of tuition fees by public and private universities in Nigeria without any equal proportion in grant. In addition, the outcome also tells that street trading provides a source of revenue to about 11% of the unemployed graduate youths. Table 4 below shows the number of years people engage in street vending.

**Table 4: Number of years in street vending**

Year	Number of vendors	Percentage (%)
0-5	359	76.38
6-10	79	16.81
11-15	20	4.26
16-20	7	1.49
21 and above	5	1.06
<b>Total</b>	<b>470</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source: Author's Field Work*

Table 4 above shows the number of year's people have spent in street vending and about 76% (359 persons) of street trading fall between five years and below in active service which constitutes the majority. It was also found that about 16.81% (79 persons) of them involve in between six to ten year in street trading. Likewise, the result also shows that only 1.06% (5 persons) of vendors have been in the business of street vending for more than twenty years. These predict the fact that street vending has formed the major source of livelihood to some residents in Yenagoa. Table five 5 below indicate another source of employment.

**Table 5: Another source of employment**

Engagement in other Business	Number of vendors	Percentage (%)
Yes	153	32.55
No	317	67.45
<b>Total</b>	<b>470</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source: Author's Field Work*

Table 5 discloses that about 67% (317 persons) of street vendors do not have any other source of income. This means street vending is the only way of employment and living to a large number of street vendors. The result also shows that 32.55% (153 persons) of street traders are involved in other businesses. These indicate that a few number of street vendors that are engaged in street vending have other sources of income as well. Table 6 below shows the sources of fund for the street vendors.

**Table 6: Sources of funds for the vendors**

Source	Number of vendors	Percentage (%)
Personal saving	359	76.38
Family relatives	31	6.60
Peer group	11	2.34
Bank loan (microfinance)	63	13.40
Government	6	1.28
<b>Total</b>	<b>470</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source: Author's Field Work*

Table 6 indicates that about 76% (359 persons) of street vendors raise their fund from personal savings to start a business. The outcome also shows that about 13% (63 persons) of them got capital from microfinance banks to startup. Furthermore, only 1.28% (6 persons) acquired fund from the government. These indicate that contribution of government is insignificant to street vendors and this could have been a source of livelihood to street traders which would have brought benefit to the local economy. Table 7 below illustrate the estimate of credit level of street vendors in Yenagoa.

### Credit facilities

**Table 7: Estimate of credit level**

Credit level	Number of vendors	Percentage (%)
Cash	403	85.75
Credit	67	14.26
<b>Total</b>	<b>470</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source: Author's Field Work*

Table 7 indicate that provision of credit facilities is about 14% (67 persons) of street vendors are enabled to start-up small businesses. It is important to state that one of the core hitches facing street vendors is the lack of easy access to fund, and this has worsened the level of unemployment and increase crime rate in the country. Street vending has thus; amended the challenges associated with unemployment, crime rate and access to credit.



**Table 8: Projected recurrent income of street vendors**

Income per month	Number of vendors	Percentage (%)
20,000-39,000	35	7.45
40,000-59,000	20	4.26
60,000-79,000	10	2.13
80,000-99,000	30	6.38
100,000-119,000	53	11.28
120,000-139,000	38	8.09
140,000-159,000	22	4.68
160,000-179,000	47	10
180,000-199,000	84	17.87
200,000 and above	131	27.87
<b>Total</b>	<b>470</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source: Author's Field Work*

Table 8 revealed that 27.87% (131 persons) of the street traders make a gross monthly income of N200,000 and above which include all expenses and tax/levy impose on street vendors in Yenagoa. The gross monthly income depends on the goods and services sold. Table 9 illustrate the estimate of tax/levy paid yearly.

**Table 9: Estimate of tax/levy paid**

Range paid	Number of vendors	Percentage %
5,000.00 and below	54	11.49
10,000.00 and below	109	23.19
10,000.00 and above	307	65.32
<b>Total</b>	<b>470</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source: Author's Field Work*

Table 9 specified that about 65% (307 persons) of street vendors pay N10,000 and above yearly as a tax/levy. And about 23% (109 persons) of roadside traders contribute N10,000 and below monthly. Thus, it is relevant to state that street vending in Nigeria are informal (unregistered) businesses. However, the insignificant contribution can make impact in the local economy.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The study revealed that street trading, despite its shortcomings, has contributed thus, insignificant to the local economy through social, political, and economic life of Nigerians precisely Bayelsans. This occurrence has helped in enhancing the consequence of unemployment on youth that are majorly secondary school leavers that could not secure immediate admission to higher institutions of learning and other qualifications in the society. Street vending has formed the major source of livelihood to a number of Nigerians that could not find a pay job. In addition, it is important to state that one of the core hitches facing street vendors is the lack of easy access to fund, and this has worsened the level of unemployment and crime rate in Bayelsa state. Street vending has thus; amended the challenges associated with access to credit, and because of its flexibility of the business and the ease of start-up of street vending in Bayelsa state. Furthermore, street vending constitutes a source of income to the local and state government, even though a large number of them are unregistered.

It is, therefore imperative, for Nigerian government to understand how the activities of street vendors can be fortified rather than harassing, confiscating, or evicting the street traders and

their goods. The following recommendations are proposed to improve the productivity of street vending in the nation:

- Street vending has become a foundation of the retail economy in the cities especially to those who are unable to have a safe and proper employment. Hence, Nigerian government should recognize street vendors for the role they play in engendering economic activity, providing employment, and bringing retail goods to consumers. Nevertheless, government may not be able to accommodate all street traders but government agencies should look into the capacity and the side of street traders and accommodate appropriate number of street traders through the issue of permits.
- The government should bring up credit facilities to enable street vendors easy access to fund, and this will solve to extend the level of unemployment and crime rate in Bayelsa state.
- The government should also provide infrastructural development to support the productivity in the informal sector, such as street lighting, pipe born water, public toilet, and waste disposal to street traders and customers to keep the street sanitary.
- The government should also plan to capture the activities of local level street vendors in order to reduce the incidence of tax evasion and this indirect tax should in turn channel to support or improve the activities of street vendors.
- In other to keep sanitary in market places or populated street, government agencies should provide waste bins and cleaning campaign in such areas to avoid pollution.
- Government agencies should also allow street vendors to sell in a permitted area and avoid the harassment and confiscation of street business.

The important role played by street vendors to the development of the local economy and avoidance human right violation, government should hear the voices of street vendors and their organizations in policy processes.

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