

Survival and Adaptation: Livelihood Sustainability of Street Food Vendors Amid Economic, Regulatory and Physical Adversities

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Abstract

Low sustainability of livelihood is concerning. I explored the proactive actions of street vendors in turning their adversities into resilience. I interviewed 9 purposively selected street food vendors. I analyzed their perception via thematic analysis. I am convinced that vendors face economic, regulatory, and physical adversities, which they address through self-driven actions, support networks, and reliance on faith, leading to resilience expressed in persistence, continued livelihood efforts, and livelihood sustainability driven by family motivation. I support the implementation of policies and programs that support vendors, including inclusive vending regulations, livelihood assistance, health and safety support, and the strengthening of community-based networks and institutional support systems. My study opens possibilities for multiple linear regression and mediation analysis to examine relationships among adversities, protective systems, and resilience, and develop validated instruments using Exploratory Factor Analysis.

Keyword: Survival and adaptation, livelihood sustainability, street food vendors, amid economic, regulatory and physical

1. Introduction

1.1 The Problem and Its Scope

In this study, I recognized that low sustainability of livelihood among street food vendors is increasingly evident as a problematic situation in the global context. As I reviewed existing literature, I noted that street food vending remains a significant component of the informal economy; however, the continuity and stability of this livelihood are persistently challenged across different regions. I observed from global assessments that informal workers, including street vendors, often experience unstable livelihood conditions that limit long-term sustainability and economic security (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2023; Food and Agriculture Organization [FAO], 2023).

In India, I noted that street food vendors experience precarious livelihood conditions marked by income insecurity, limited social protection, and challenges in sustaining stable livelihoods (Bhattacharjee et al., 2025). In Indonesia, I observed that vendors face ongoing challenges in maintaining stable livelihood conditions within urban spaces (Rahayu, 2025). Similarly, in South Africa, I found that street vending livelihoods continue to face economic vulnerability and instability within informal economic structures (Reed & Skinner, 2023). These

observations allowed me to see that the issue of low livelihood sustainability among street food vendors is a shared condition across diverse national settings.

In the Philippines, low sustainability of livelihood among street food vendors remains a prevailing concern. Street food vendors, as part of the informal sector, experience unstable livelihood conditions that affect their ability to maintain consistent economic activity (Solidum, 2023; Abulencia et al., 2025).

The consequences of low sustainability of livelihood among street food vendors became evident to me as I examined related literature. This condition contributes to livelihood instability, inconsistent income flow, and increased vulnerability among vendors, limiting their capacity to achieve long-term economic security (ILO, 2023). Unstable livelihood conditions may affect their overall well-being and productivity, as continuous pressure is placed on their daily operations (Sepadi et al., 2023). These insights led me to recognize that low sustainability of livelihood not only affects the present condition of street food vendors but also constrains their long-term economic resilience and stability. This led me to undertake the present study.

1.2 Significance of Study

I acknowledge its alignment with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth, as it reflects the need to promote inclusive and sustainable economic opportunities for all. Through my engagement with the experiences of street food vendors in Davao City, I aim to give voice to informal workers whose access to protection and opportunities remains limited. I also see this work as aligned with the vision and mission of Holy Cross of Davao College in promoting holistic development, community service, and social responsibility. As a Social Studies teacher, I find that this study strengthens my practice by connecting classroom learning with real-world issues such as poverty, inequality, and labor rights. As a researcher, I view this work as a contribution to understanding social realities and encouraging discussions that recognize the role of informal workers. I also hope that future researchers may consider this study as a reference in exploring the resilience of marginalized communities whose contributions remain undervalued in inclusive development.

1.3 Theoretical Lens

My study is anchored on Ann S. Masten's (2001) Resilience Theory, also known as Ordinary Magic. Masten conceptualizes resilience as "a process of positive adaptation in the context of significant adversity." The theory emphasizes that resilience does not arise from extraordinary traits but from ordinary protective systems available to individuals, families, and communities.

1.4 Paradigm

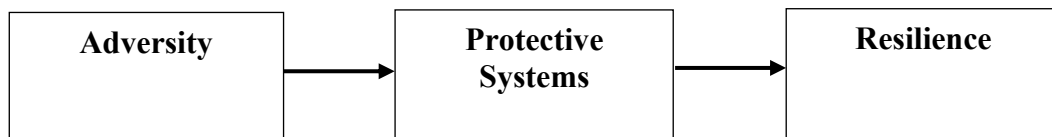


Fig. 1. Conceptual Framework of Masten's Resilience Theory (2001)

1.5 Statement of the Problem

In this study, I explored the proactive actions of street vendors in turning their adversities into resilience. Specifically, I sought answers to the following questions:

1. What adversities are encountered in terms of regulatory, economic, and physical challenges?
2. What protective systems are made to counter adversities?
3. What are the manifestations of resilience after undertaking the protective system?

1.6 Assumptions of the Study

In this study, I view that street food vendors encounter regulatory, economic, and physical adversities that shape their everyday conditions in sustaining their livelihood. I recognize that they rely on protective systems, such as self-driven actions, support networks, and faith, to respond to these challenges. I also see that these responses are reflected in the manifestations of resilience, as vendors continue their livelihood through persistence, adaptation, and efforts to sustain their income. I further acknowledge that the participants provide honest and meaningful descriptions of their conditions, responses, and practices during the in-depth interviews.

2. Methodology

2.1. Research Design

In this study, a descriptive qualitative research design was employed to provide a clear and straightforward account of the experiences and conditions of the participants without extensive theoretical interpretation. This design is used when the purpose of the study is to describe a phenomenon as it naturally occurs and to answer “what” and “how” questions by presenting findings that remain close to the participants’ actual words and perspectives (Kim et al., 2017). It is particularly appropriate in contexts where there is a need to understand real-life situations in detail, such as the living conditions and daily experiences of street food vendors. One of its key advantages is that it allows for rich, contextualized descriptions that are easily understood and directly applicable to practice and policy, while also ensuring that participants’ voices are accurately represented and not overly abstracted (Colorafi & Evans, 2016).

2.2. Locale of Study

The city that I selected to conduct my research was Davao City, as it is the largest city in Mindanao and among the fastest-developing cities in the Philippines. I also observed the vulnerability of street food vendors, including those who had been displaced from one of the public markets in the city. The location provided qualified participants for the study. To me, these conditions positioned Davao City as a significant and pressing context for examining how street food vendors adapt and cope amid rapid urbanization and ongoing socioeconomic challenges.

2.3. Sample and Sampling Technique

The participants of the study were 9 street food vendors who sold cooked food, snacks, beverages, or other ready-to-eat items in open sidewalks, streets, markets, and other outdoor areas where food was offered as quick and convenient. They were either fixed vendors operating in small carts or stalls, or ambulant vendors who moved from one location to another, typically working on a small scale with little or no regulation. The inclusion criteria for participation were: (1) at least 18 years old, (2) with a minimum of three consecutive years engaged in street food vending, (3) operating in public spaces such as sidewalks, markets, terminals, or mobile setups, (4) vending as a primary source of livelihood, and (5) willing to provide informed consent. Individuals who did not meet these criteria or were unwilling to participate were excluded from the study.

In this study, purposive sampling was used as the technique for gathering data. This approach involves the deliberate selection of participants based on specific characteristics relevant to the research problem. I selected individuals who had direct knowledge and engagement in street food vending to ensure that the data gathered were rich, relevant, and grounded in actual conditions and practices. Purposive sampling is appropriate in descriptive qualitative research where the goal is to obtain a detailed understanding of a particular group rather than to generalize findings (Campbell et al., 2020). Moreover, purposive sampling allows the selection of information-rich participants who can provide meaningful insights aligned with the objectives of the study. Additionally, this method is flexible and efficient, enabling the researcher to focus on participants who can best contribute to answering the research questions (Palinkas et al., 2015).

2.4. Data Gathering Technique

In this research, I employed the in-depth interview technique to gather data, which involved conducting one-on-one, open-ended conversations to obtain detailed descriptions of participants' conditions, practices, and perspectives. This technique was appropriate for the study because it allowed me to document how street food vendors described their situations and responses within their daily context. It is commonly applied in qualitative research when the goal is to obtain clear and detailed accounts of a phenomenon from participants who have direct knowledge of it (Kim et al., 2017). One of its advantages is that it produces rich and context-specific data, as participants can explain their responses in their own words. It also allowed me to ask follow-up questions to clarify responses and capture more complete descriptions, making it suitable for a descriptive qualitative approach.

2.5. Data Analysis Technique

In this study, I used thematic analysis as the technique for analyzing data. Thematic analysis is a qualitative method that involves identifying, organizing, and describing patterns or themes within the data to provide a clear account of participants' conditions, practices, and responses (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This technique is commonly applied in qualitative research when the goal is to present a structured and meaningful description of a phenomenon based on participants' accounts, making it appropriate for a descriptive qualitative design (Nowell et al., 2017). In conducting the analysis, I followed a systematic process. First, I familiarized myself with the data by reading and reviewing the interview transcripts several times. Second, I generated initial codes by identifying relevant segments of the data that reflected key ideas and patterns. Third, I organized these codes into potential themes by grouping similar codes together. Fourth, I reviewed the themes to ensure that they accurately represented the data and were consistent across the dataset. Fifth, I defined and named the themes by refining their scope and meaning. Finally, I produced the report by presenting the themes with supporting descriptions and selected quotations. One of the advantages of thematic analysis is its flexibility, as it allows the researcher to describe data in a clear and organized manner while remaining close to participants' accounts. It also enables the identification of patterns across responses, making it suitable for generating meaningful insights in descriptive qualitative research (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

2.6. Trustworthiness of the Study

To ensure the rigor of this study, I established trustworthiness through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. I ensured credibility by conducting face-to-face in-depth interviews, clarifying participants' responses, and using verbatim quotations to reflect their descriptions. Transferability was addressed by providing a clear description of the participants, setting, and context. I ensured dependability by maintaining a consistent process using an interview guide, documenting procedures, and applying systematic data analysis. Confirmability was achieved by grounding the findings in the data and ensuring consistency between the participants' accounts and the identified themes. I upheld ethical

considerations by assigning pseudonyms, maintaining confidentiality, and excluding identifying information, thereby respecting the dignity, safety, and anonymity of the participants. I also obtained a certification from the Holy Cross of Davao College - Society for Moral Integrity and Legal Ethics (HCDC-SMILE) prior to data collection to ensure that my study complied with research ethics.

3. Results

3.1 Modified Paradigm

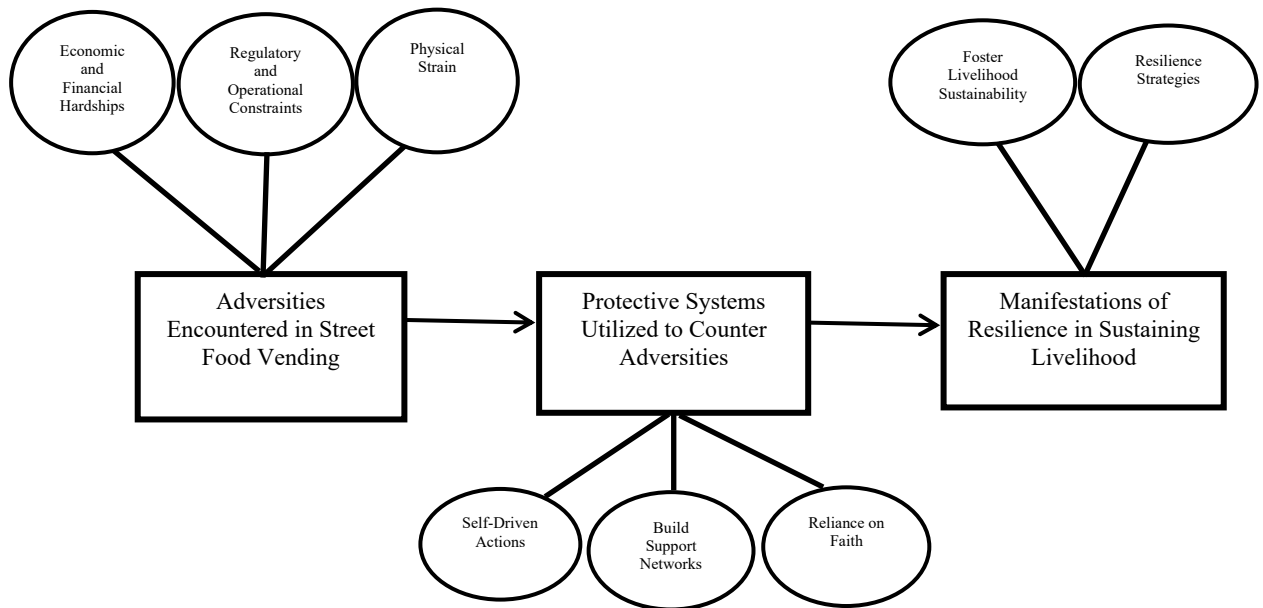


Fig. 2. Modified Paradigm of my Study

Adversities encountered by street food vendors in terms of regulatory, economic, and physical challenges

To explore the adversities of street food vendors in terms of regulatory and operational constraints, economic and financial hardships, and physical strain, I engaged in conversations with the participants regarding how they cope with daily challenges. One participant shared:

Aside pod ana kay naay demolition, magdagan-dagan mi po. Dili mi permanent sa among pwesto kay wala man mi arkila. So, dili lalim ang amo na agian. IDI-1 (Aside from that, there are demolition operations where we have to run. We are not permanent in our place because we do not rent the space. It is not easy what we are going through.) IDI-1

This indicated the instability of their working conditions, where vendors are forced to move frequently due to demolition activities. Building from this experience, another participant shared:

Ang akong nasinati lang, grabe ang gi agihan kay nagapwesto ko sa kalsada. Pag naay demolition, ang pwesto namo sa una, diri sa kalsada lang mi. Cart among

gamit. Kung maabot ang demolition, dagan na pud mi. Mayabo among mantika, tapos katong jar nako na bagong palit, buak, kay abot man ang demolition. Kay lahi man ang demolition karon og katong sa una, kay katong sa una, pangwaon ang imong mga paninda. -IDI-8

(What I experienced was really difficult because we were stationed along the roadside. When there was a demolition, our previous space was just here on the road, and we used a cart. When the demolition came, we had to run again. Our cooking oil spilled, and a newly bought jar broke because of the demolition. The demolitions now are different from before; in the past, they would just take your goods away.) -IDI-8

This further highlighted the physical and material losses experienced during demolition. In the same way, another participant described:

Dagan dagan, hipos dayun. Kuhaon ang mga tinda. Na agi naman ni demolis diri. Gi bungkag ang tindahan diri nabungkag. Balik na pod mi og tinda. -IDI-7
(We had to run and quickly pack up our goods. The authorities would take the items. Demolition has happened here before, and the shop was destroyed. Then we would return to sell again.) -IDI-7

Another participant said:

Mga kuan, mga maruya, buko, maglutong saging, maghiwa ug mangga, hotcake lisod uy. Lisod ma, kung usahay may income, ginagmay usahay dako-dako, usahay gamay, usahay wala, gamay ra gyud. -IDI-7
(Selling maruya, coconut, cooked bananas, sliced mango, and hotcakes is really difficult. Sometimes there is income, sometimes it is a little bigger, sometimes small, and sometimes there is none at all mostly it is very little.) -IDI-7

This reflected the unpredictability of their daily earnings. Similarly, another participant explained:

Usahay hinay ang tinda, usahay naa pod kusog Ingon ana lang. Kuan, parehas anang ulan, mingaw. Maayo pa ug dili ulan kay kuan, kusog akong tinda. Kuan, kasagaran kusog kanang Biyernes, Sabado, Domingo. Pagka lunes ana, mingaw na na. -IDI-2
(Sometimes sales are slow, and sometimes they are strong, it's just like that. When it rains, there are few customers. But when it doesn't rain, my sales are better. Usually, sales are strong on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays, but by Monday, it becomes quiet again.) -IDI-2

This showed how weather conditions directly affect their income. Expanding on this, another participant shared:

Dili man permanent ang among income diri. Usahay kanang gamay lang among kita, usahay pod kanang dako. Usahay kanang ma alakansi pod mi kay usahay mo-ulan, mangalata among pinya. sahayn a maka ginansiya pod mi gamay, usahay tama-tama lang. -IDI-1
(Our income here is not permanent. Sometimes we earn a little, sometimes we earn more. Sometimes we even incur losses when it rains and our pineapples get spoiled. Sometimes we earn a small profit, and sometimes it is just enough.) -IDI-1

Another participant said:

Duha mi sa akong asawa atubangay ang amuang tulog tag duha lang ka oras kay ka adlawon dretso mi ug Bankerohan unya mag limpyo sa mga products tinda na pod mi. Ou, usahay isa lang ka oras, usahay gani wala pami tulog sayo kaayo mi mo lakaw ug Bankerohan. Usahay mo lakaw mi ug palengke mga alas dose sa gabie usahay pod mga ala una -IDI-8

(My spouse and I only sleep facing each other for about two hours because by daytime we go straight to Bankerohan, clean the products, and then sell again. Sometimes we sleep only for one hour, and sometimes we don't sleep at all because we leave very early for Bankerohan. Sometimes we go to the market around midnight or one in the morning.) -IDI-8

This revealed physical exhaustion due to lack of rest. Similarly, another participant shared:

Kadlawon maglung-ag ko, magluto daan 2:30AM magluto na ko kay magtinda man mi inig anhi diri. Pagka 4:30AM or 5:00AM, lakaw na mi diri. Oh, sa pwesto kay mag-kuan ra pud, magluto og hotcake. Mag timpla na pud kuan buko, panit na pud mangga. Uhm, unya mag buhat ug ice water. -IDI-7

(At dawn, I cook rice and start cooking as early as 2:30 AM because we sell when we arrive here. By 4:30 AM or 5:00 AM, we leave for the selling area. At the stall, I continue cooking hotcakes, preparing coconut drinks, peeling mangoes, and making ice water.) -IDI-7

This further emphasized the demanding nature of their daily routine. Another participant added:

Kini jud pagpamaligya og balot. Antos gyud ko kay tungod kay perminte mapulaw. Kulang kag tulog ba. Unya kay kaning mao ray, mao ramay ako ang pangita. Mao ng kanang maayo akong kuan nga paningkamotan sa matag kuan, matag baligya nga makabaligya gyud ko. - IDI-3

(Selling balot is really something I have to endure because it is often embarrassing, and you lack sleep. This is my only source of income, so I make sure to put effort in every sale so that I can sell successfully.) - IDI-3

Another participant expressed:

Sa panahon, usahay, siyempre, naa gyud panahon nga masakit ka tungod kay maulanan ka. Gikan ka sa init, maulanan. Ah, naay gyuy usahay nga naay mga ana nga mga kuan 'gud, mild lang gud nga mga kuan, ah, mga sakit. Oh, apektado ang income- IDI-3

(Because of the weather, there are times when you get sick after being caught in the rain. Coming from the heat and then getting rain on causes illness. Sometimes there are mild sicknesses like that. Yes, income is affected.) - IDI-3

This indicated the health risks associated with environmental exposure. Building on this, another participant explained:

Kung mo-ulan, siyempre ma-ulanang ka nya singot kay ka magpanit. So, maglain jud imong lawas. Kung init pod, siyempre kanang ma-- ma-init ka ay karon nya mag-ano jud pod imong ulo, maglabad tungod sa kainit kay siyempre wala mi kapisilongan. Init kaayo ang kalsada, kanang amoy sa gasoline. -IDI-1

(When it rains, of course you get soaked, and when you sweat while peeling, your body starts to feel unwell. When it is hot, you feel overheated, and your head starts to ache because of the heat since we do not have shelter. The road becomes extremely hot, and there is also the smell of gasoline.) -IDI-1

This further showed the lack of protection from extreme weather conditions. Another participant expressed:

Ah, usahay ma'am kay kani atong lawas di man lig-on. Maabtan tag uwan, pero og maabtan mi ug uwan nga naa diri, walay kaso. Pero og naa pa sa gawas, mao na naay kaso kay kuan man kanang, kuan man kanang mauwanan ka, mainitan ka. Mainitan ka, mauwanan ka, kalinturahon gyud ka. -IDI-4

(Sometimes, ma'am, our bodies are not strong. If we get caught in the rain while we are here, it may be manageable, but if we are still outside, that becomes a problem because when you are exposed to both heat and rain, you will really develop a

fever.) -IDI-4

As I listened to the participants, I heard statements such as she was the breadwinner, she had a sick husband and a child with a disability, and anger of disappointment and frustration at other vendors. From what I saw, they showed visible fatigue, with heavy eyes, a wrinkled and worn-out face, yet never stopped and continued working in the hope that she would be able to bring home food to her family. I came to understand that they were carrying heavy responsibilities, yet they kept going because their families depended on them. Their tired eyes and worn faces showed how exhausting their work was, but they still chose to continue, driven by the need to provide and survive each day. As I reflected, I felt a deep sense of admiration and empathy for them, like steady lights that keep shining even in the darkest moments, quietly enduring and moving forward despite everything they carry.

Protective systems of street food vendors to counter adversities

While the previous section highlighted the adversities encountered by street food vendors, the following narratives present the protective systems they employ to cope with and counter these challenges, particularly through reliance on faith, self-driven actions, and building support networks. One of the participants shared:

Kanang kuan, salig lang. Una ko mo kuan, una ko maninda. Mo hangad pa ko sa langit. "Lord, mahalinan unta ko karon og ubay-ubay, Lord oy." Para naa koy kuan, naa koy pang, pangbayad sa akong arawan. Makatigum ko pangbayad sa akong coop. Ing ana. -IDI-2

(Just trust. Before I start selling, I look up to the sky and pray, Lord, I hope I can sell a lot today, so I have money for my lending and savings to pay my cooperative. 'That is how it is.) -IDI-2

This reflected how participants turn to faith as a source of hope and guidance in sustaining their daily livelihood. Building up this, another participant expressed:

Ang makatabang jud sa ko, ang Ginoo lang jud. Siya ra jud bahala sa tanan. Gi-girely jud nako siya sa iyaha tanan, ang akong kalisod sa akong gibati. Mental, emosyonal o pinansyal. Siya may bahala sa ko ah. Ang gusto lang nako, safety ko diri isip street vendors. -IDI-1

(The one who truly helps me is God alone. He takes care of everything. I rely on Him for all my struggles and feelings mental, emotional, or financial. He is the one who looks after me. All I want is to be safe here as a street vendor.) -IDI-1

Another participant described:

Di na ko mangayo ug tabang sa lain kay wala may lain makatabang sa imoha, ma'am. Wala may tawo makatabang sa imong problema. Ikaw raman makatabang sa imong problema. Ikaw maghimog solusyon sa unsaon nimo pag kwan, pagpalusot sa imong problem. - IDI-9

(I no longer ask help from others because no one else can truly help you. No one can solve your problems for you. You are the one who must help yourself and find solutions on how to overcome your problems.) - IDI-9

This highlighted their reliance on personal effort in overcoming difficulties. Similarly, another participant shared:

Ako lang paningkamot, sarili nakong paningkamot. Walay gikan sa uban nga tabang gihatag sa akoang kuan, negosyo. Ako, ako ra ba, sariling paningkamot. Walay laing tabang. Ana ra. Ah, wala ko. naningkamot gyud ko nga maka-tinda ko basta maayo lang ako lawas. Wala, wala gyud ko nagapangayo og tabang. -IDI-6

(It is really my own effort, my personal effort. No help came from others for my business. It is all me, my own effort, with no other assistance. I just keep striving to

sell as long as my body is still strong. I truly do not ask for help.) -IDI-6

Another participant mentioned:

Matul-tul jud na sila ah, okay ra man sila. Motul-tul gyud na sila diri sa ako ug palit. Muna, tarong nako na silag mopalit para anang, kanang limpyo imong pag-prepare, para, para mobalik-balik jud sila. Kay kon dili limpyo na, di asa ba na mamalik. - IDI-2

(They really keep coming back, and they are good customers. They come to me to buy, so I make sure to prepare my food properly and cleanly so they will continue coming back. If it is not clean, they will not return.) - IDI-2

This showed how maintaining good customer relationships serves as a support system. Expanding on this, another participant emphasized:

Oh, ayuhon pagdala para magbalik-balik og palit. Kung ayuhon pagdala, dili nimo striktuhan. Palanggaon nimo ang customer para magbalik-balik og palit.-IDI-7
(Treat customers well so they will keep coming back to buy. If you treat them properly, you should not be strict with them. You need to value and care for customers so they will return to buy again.) -IDI-7

The participant stated:

Ang interaction nako sa uban mga vendor naka dasig sa akua, sila man naghagad sa akua mamaligya Mga kauban nako, mamaisay. Sila ang naghagad sa akua nga mamaligya. -IDI-5
(My interaction with other vendors encouraged me, because they invited me to sell. My fellow vendors were the ones who encouraged me to join them in selling.) -IDI-5

This reflected how fellow vendors provide encouragement and influence livelihood decisions. In addition, another participant shared:

Naa pud ko'y silingan kaning silingan nako dinhia sa pwesto. Mm-hmm. Permini man ko nga walay stocks, usahay lagi mahutdan ko ug kapital, iyaha kong komprahan. Komprahan ko niya og mangga, pinya, melon. Human akong itinda. Pagka, maningkamot jud ko nga pagka-gabii makabayad jud ko niya. Og di ko makabayad karon, ugma ako gyud na bayaran kay unsa man pud i kompra niya. - IDI-4
(I have a neighbor here near my selling area. Whenever I run out of stocks or capital, she buys fruits like mangoes, pineapples, and melons for me so I can sell them. I really strive to repay her by the evening, and if I cannot pay that day, I make sure to pay her the next day because she also needs to restock.) -IDI-4

Most of the participants entrusted their life to God, and they trust God's help and providence. They usually address their loyal customers by names to make them feel familiar. They would light-heartedly exchange conversations, share stories, laugh together, and update each other on everything that had happened. From what I saw, they did not hesitate to stop, respond and continue cooking, served their customers as quickly as they could, with drops of sweat under the intense heat of the frying pan and the scorching afternoon sun, showing forceful and hurried movements. I perceived that their faith served as a steady source of strength, while their warm interactions with customers were not just casual exchanges but meaningful connections that helped sustain both their livelihood and their spirit. Their quick responses, sweat, and hurried movements showed how hard they worked to keep their small businesses going, balancing physical demands with the need to maintain relationships that keep customers coming back. I felt a deep sense of admiration and warmth, like witnessing small flames that continue to glow despite the heat around them, quietly enduring while finding strength in both faith and connection.

Manifestations of resilience of street food vendors after undertaking the protective system

While the previous section highlighted the protective systems utilized by street food vendors to cope with adversities, the following narratives illustrate how resilience is manifested through their resilience strategies and efforts to foster livelihood sustainability in sustaining their daily livelihood. One of the participants shared:

Gasalig ko sa Ginoo kay siya naghatag sa ako og kusog, og kabaskog, og fighting spirit na maka-survive ko sa pang-adlaw adlaw namong mga panginahanglan. -IDI-1

(I trust in God because He gives me strength, resilience, and a fighting spirit to survive our daily needs.) -IDI-1

This demonstrated how reliance on faith translates into inner strength and determination to continue despite challenges. Building from this, another participant shared:

Ampo sa Ginoo nga maayo ang lawas para makakuha og kusog kada adlaw. Mao ra na lagsik ta ug lawas kada adlaw. Maayo ta ug lawas, Mao ra gina ampo nako sa Ginoo nga maayo ta ug lawas kada adlaw para continue ang pagpaninda. -IDI-6
(I pray to God to keep my body healthy so that I can have strength every day. That is all, to have a strong and healthy body each day. I just pray to God for good health every day so I can continue selling.) -IDI-6

Another participant described:

Kuan, kanang tyaga. Tyaga lang ka, mag- magtiis. Ana lang para lig-on, para modugay. - IDI-2
(It is about perseverance. You just endure and be patient. That is how to become strong and make it last.) - IDI-2

This reflected endurance as a key manifestation of resilience in maintaining their livelihood. Similarly, another participant expressed that:

Ah perminte lang gyud ta gana ug magpadayon ma'am kay ang atong hunahunaon ang atuang, unsa naman lang atuang panginabuhian dili na lang gyud ta mag tinapulan, unsaon nalang. -IDI-4
(We should always stay motivated to continue because we have to think about our livelihood. We should not become lazy, otherwise what will happen to us.) -IDI-4

This was evident in one of the participant's words:

Ah, magpabilin gyud kong lig-on tungod sa ako gyong pamilya. Ang akong pagpamaligya-- ang akong pagpa nginabuhi para gyud sa akong pamilya. -IDI-3
(I will remain strong because of my family. My selling, my way of earning a living is truly for my family.) -IDI-3

This showed how family responsibility strengthens their resolve to continue working. Expanding on this, another participant emphasized:

Ang pamilya, makahatag og gana aron magpadayon gihapon. Oo, ang suporta gyud sa pamilya. Mao nang pinaka-importante. Kay kung walay suporta imong pamilya, di ka naganahan. Kay para asa ang imong income? - IDI-8
(Family gives me the motivation to continue. Yes, family support is the most important. Without family support, you would lose motivation, because what is your income for?) - IDI-8

As expressed by another participant:

Makapalit ka sa imong gustong paliton. Naa kay, naa kay, naa kay ma-maipon. Mopalit lang ko ginagmay. Sukad ay, para maninda ko, daghan ko mapalit-palit para sa anang order og shopee. [laughs] palit og gamit. Makapalit ko gamit ginagmay. -IDI-2

(You can buy what you want. You also have something you can save. I only buy small things. Since I started selling, I can buy many small items, like Shopee orders and things I need. [laughs] I buy small items. I can afford to buy little things for myself.) -IDI-2

This indicated that their efforts gradually result in small but meaningful improvements in their living conditions. In relation to this, another participant shared:

Akong pangita sa gamay pa ko. Mao ni nakasalbar sa amoang negosyo sa akong pagpadako sa akong anak. Dili na Ko buhi-an ni akong baligya nga mais a'am. Bisan kapoy, agwantahon na ko kay nakasalbar man ni sa among pagkinabuhi. Makatabang pa man jud ko sa akong mga apo. -IDI-9

This was reflected in the statement of one participant:

Nakapundar og gamay ana. Naka-palit og, nakapalit og baboy para naay paabuton sa income sa habang nagtinda. Nakapalit og baboy para naay paabotun laing negosyo, makwartahan. -IDI-6
(I was able to save a little from it. I bought pigs so there will be expected income while still selling. I bought pigs so there will be another source of business to earn money.) -IDI-6

As I carefully attended to their accounts, participants shared that because of their hard work and perseverance, they could afford to buy small things for themselves and their families, save a portion of their daily income, and even invest in raising pigs as an additional source of livelihood. From what I saw, they continued selling despite changing weather conditions, with ready-to-install large umbrellas to prevent their goods from being soaked by the rain or exposed to the heat of the sun. They also cooked in bulk during peak times, such as office and school dismissal hours, when customers were expected to arrive in greater numbers. Their perseverance, like a quiet flame that refuses to die, was evident in how they adapted their selling practices and maximized every opportunity to earn. These actions showed how they actively fostered livelihood sustainability through saving, diversifying income, and responding to changing conditions. I felt a deep sense of respect for their strength, as their resilience was not only about surviving but about continuously finding ways to sustain and strengthen their way of living.

3.2. Summary of findings

Street food vendors face adversity in terms of regulatory, economical, and physical threats. Regulatory work constraints, such as demolition work, cause instability and interfere with their operations. Vendors are also economically disadvantaged as their income is unstable and reliant on daily sales, and thus it is hard to sustain them with their basic needs. Physically, they become fatigued, sleep deprived and are exposed to poor environmental conditions that are known to impact their health and capacity to support their livelihood.

Vendors in street food have adopted different protective systems to deal with adversities, which include reliance on faith, self-driven actions and building support networks. They use faith to gain emotional strength and take personal responsibility in maintaining their livelihood. Also, they use relationships with customers, other vendors, as well as resource-sharing agreements as sources of support. These security measures allow them to cope with the everyday challenges and sustain their business activities.

Following these protective systems, resilience is expressed through resilience strategies, persistence, sustained livelihood efforts, and family-driven motivation. Vendors continue working despite hardships, demonstrating determination and commitment to their livelihood as part of their resilience strategies. These efforts also reflect their ability to foster livelihood sustainability, as seen in maintaining daily income, supporting their families, and achieving small improvements in their quality of life. These manifestations highlight their strength and capacity to adapt to changing economic and environmental conditions.

4. Discussions

Adversities Encountered in Street Food Vending

Street food vendors face adversity in terms of regulatory, economical, and physical threats. Regulatory work constraints, such as demolition work, cause instability and interfere with their operations. Vendors are also economically disadvantaged as their income is unstable and reliant on daily sales, and thus it is hard to sustain them with their basic needs. Physically, they become fatigued, sleep deprived and are exposed to poor environmental conditions that are known to impact their health and capacity to support their livelihood.

My finding aligns with Solidum (2023), who found that street vendors experience governance, socioeconomic, and workplace-related problems that contribute to instability in their operations. Similarly, my finding also supports the assertion of Duy and Thanh (2024), emphasizing that vendors experience economic vulnerability due to unstable income and dependence on daily sales, leading to reduced financial security. However, my finding contrasts with Abulencia et al. (2025), who found that some vendors demonstrate adaptability and effective coping mechanisms despite these challenges.

Protective Systems Utilized to Counter Adversities

Vendors in street food have adopted different protective systems to deal with adversities, which include reliance on faith, self-driven actions and building support networks. They use faith to gain emotional strength and take personal responsibility in maintaining their livelihood. Also, they use relationships with customers, other vendors, as well as resource-sharing agreements as sources of support. These security measures allow them to cope with the everyday challenges and sustain their business activities.

My finding is consistent with Sepadi et al. (2023), who found that informal food vendors rely on individual strategies and social support networks to manage work-related challenges. Likewise, my study affirms the similar pattern in Nguyen-Anh et al. (2023), claiming that informal workers adopt various coping strategies, including personal initiative and community-based support to sustain their livelihoods. However, my findings differs from Kurniadi et al. (2023), who highlighted that formal governance and institutional collaboration play a more central role in sustaining street vending activities than informal coping mechanisms alone.

Manifestations of Resilience in Sustaining Livelihood

Following these protective systems, resilience is expressed through resilience strategies, persistence, sustained livelihood efforts, and family-driven motivation. Vendors continue working despite hardships, demonstrating determination and commitment to their livelihood as part of their resilience strategies. These efforts also reflect their ability to foster livelihood sustainability, as seen in maintaining daily income, supporting their families, and achieving small improvements in their quality of life. These manifestations highlight their strength and capacity to adapt to changing economic and environmental conditions.

With this finding, I agree with Staupe-Delgado et al. (2023), who reported that individuals demonstrate resilience through persistence and adaptive livelihood strategies in sustaining their daily economic activities despite ongoing challenges. Similarly, I support Catacutan et al. (2023), who noted that street food vendors maintain livelihood continuity through determination, family-based motivation, and practical coping strategies as they adapt to economic uncertainty and sustain daily income-generating activities. However, my finding diverges from the idea of Sepadi et al. (2023), which emphasized that resilience among informal workers is often constrained by health-related risks and environmental conditions, highlighting limits to their adaptive capacity.

4.1. Implication for Practice

To address adversities encountered in street food vending, Local Government Units (LGUs) may reduce displacement and income instability. They may implement inclusive vending measures such as designated zones and improved permitting systems. They may coordinate with the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) for financial support and with the Department of Health (DOH) and Barangay Health Units (BHUs) for basic health services.

For the government officials, they may strengthen protective systems to counter adversities. They may enhance support networks and self-driven capacities by organizing vendor associations and conducting skills and resilience training. These efforts may also help strengthen vendor–customer relationships. To sustain manifestations of resilience in sustaining livelihood, partnerships with microfinance institutions may support livelihood continuity through savings programs, micro-insurance, and family-oriented assistance, along with recognition programs that acknowledge vendors' efforts.

For school head/principal, they may initiate community extension programs. The school extension/community involvement coordinator may organize outreach activities. Teachers, particularly in Social Studies and Entrepreneurship, may conduct financial literacy and basic business sessions. The Guidance Counselor may support well-being sessions. The Supreme Student Government (SSG) or student organizations may lead campaigns that encourage support for local street food vendors.

4.2. Future Directions

Future research may consider multiple linear regression analysis using Adversities Encountered in Street Food Vending as well as Protective Systems Utilized to Counter Adversities as predictor variables, while Manifestations of Resilience in Sustaining Livelihood may serve as the criterion variable. In addition, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) may be employed to develop and validate research instruments for Adversities Encountered in Street Food Vending, Protective Systems Utilized to Counter Adversities, and Manifestations of Resilience in Sustaining Livelihood, using the identified subthemes as corresponding indicators. Furthermore, mediation analysis may be explored by using Protective Systems Utilized to Counter Adversities as the mediating variable in the relationship between Adversities Encountered in Street Food Vending and Manifestations of Resilience in Sustaining Livelihood, to provide a clearer understanding of how resilience is shaped among street food vendors.

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