

## Street Garment Vendors' Contribution to the Economy and Local Community: An Empirical Study to the Street Garments Vendors in Dhaka City, Bangladesh

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### ABSTRACT:

The street garment vendors are playing a significant role in the fields of the economic development through protecting resources (garment products) from such a position where they are treated as wastes; very much less valued products and creating the opportunity for self-employment. This study aimed at showing the economic contribution and the impact of the street vendors to the local community in Bangladesh. It considered street garment vending as a broad sampling area (since the majority percent of the street vendors are the street garment vendors) and was based on the survey of 150 street garment vendors in different areas of Dhaka city. The study also drew information from the existing literatures and various reports regarding street vending to reach the objective. The major finding of the study was that the street garment vendors are playing significant role in both the economy and the local community of Bangladesh, but they are socially deprived.

**Keywords:** *Street vendors, Economy, Local community, Contribution*

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### INTRODUCTION

Street vending is very common phenomena in many developing countries as well as some developed countries which hold an important share of urban informal employment. In city life informal employment sector plays a significant role by providing a wide range of goods and services to the public. According to city authorities, academics, and local NGOs, there are about 90,000 street vendors in Dhaka, Bangladesh (Bhowmik, 2010). One of the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) report shows that more than 60% of urban dwellers depend on urban street vendors. Street vendors 'are the people who sell various types of goods and services on streets, railway terminals and platforms, bus stations, besides parks and open spaces with a

very low cost to the city dwellers. Street vendors are identified as self-employed workers in the informal sector who offer their labor to sell goods and services on the street without having any permanent built-up structure (NPUSV, 2006).

The term "street vendor" in English is typically used interchangeably with "street trader," "hawker," and "peddler." There are also many local terms and regional variations.

Street vendors are sometimes distinguished from vendors who operate in the types of public spaces that are not specifically streets or related to streets – train stations, buses, public parks, and so on – but most commonly the term is used inclusively (WEIGO, 2013).

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According to Bhowmik (2003) “Street vendors are those who squat in public places such as pavements, parks, or other such places, and those that are mobile as they move from place to place in search of customers...conducting temporary business”. According to Sally (2008)

The term ‘street vendor’ may refer to vendors with fixed stalls, such as kiosks; vendors who operate from semi-fixed stalls, like folding tables, crates, collapsible stands, or wheeled pushcarts that are removed from the streets and stored overnight; vendors who sell from fixed locations without a stall structure, displaying merchandise on cloth or plastic sheets; or mobile vendors who walk or bicycle through the streets as they sell. Street vendors work in many types of public spaces: regulated street markets or hawking zones; natural market areas; transportation hubs; sidewalks; medians; and in and alongside the streets themselves.

From economic and social perspective street vendors provide a cheap and convenient way of meeting consumer demands. They provide affordable goods and services to the limited income to middle income people. Street vending as an occupation has existed for hundreds of years, and is considered a cornerstone of many cities’ historical and cultural heritage. In some cities, street traders account for as much as 20% of total employment. (Sally, 2008)

Depending on the nature of product they sold and type of business scholars Yatmo (2008). Classified street vending in the following way:

**Licensed-** Street vendors who have obtain licenses to vend in a particular area. They usually pay tax to the government.

**Squatting-** Street vendors who have not obtain licenses to vend in a particular area or street vendors who do vending in the countries where street vending is illegal. They are usually subjected to harassment and are compelled to pay bribery to maintain their business.

**Stationary** - Street vendors who stay and vend in a one place throughout the day (static vendors) or most of the day (semi-static vendors).

**Mobile** – Street vendors who walk around the city to sell their goods and services. They can be fully mobile or partly mobile (they may stay and vend in a one place for a short period to time).

**On-street** – street vendors who vend beside the roads.

**Off- street** – Street vendors who vend in area like a local market.

**Food item** – Street vendors who particularly sell foods.

**Non- food item** – Street vendors who sell goods and services which are non-food.

### **Street Garments Vendors**

Street garments vendors can be defined as the people who mainly sales different of garments items in different parts of the cities ranging from open space to massive public gathering and who made a diverse range of selection, starting from kids item, ladies garments, shirt, t-shirt, polo-shirt, pants and other traditional clothes and those who do not have any specific place for vending. Most of them are rural-urban migrant due to the lack of work facilities and public services in rural area. Despite of so many problems street vending provides a sense of self employment to the vendors and a large number of city dwellers from different spheres of life such as students, tourists, rickshaw drivers, cart pullers, and other such workers rely on street garments vendors for their day to day clothes.

Street vending has been seen as an option for the poor; their legal and social status and business prospects differ domestically as well as regionally. In search of a better existence, people are gathering from rural areas in the cities for lack of gainful employment coupled with poverty. But they are not in position to get a better paid, secured employment in the formal sector and they have to stay for work in the informal sector (BLF, 2012).

### **Significance of the Study**

Some of the readymade garments products are being rejected because of some faults and making delay in shipment or fail to meet export target. About 20 per cent exportable readymade garments are usually rejected in the country which were once familiar as cheap products and were abundantly available in Banga Bazar and Badruddoza markets and New Market (Hossain, 2012). Those exportable products (now rejected) are in good quality and shape, they just need some repairing. The street garment vendors

purchase the rejected garments then they re-brand them and make necessary repairing, if needed.

The demand for the rejected or shipment-cancelled RMG products has also increased in some Asian countries which also buy those from the country's buying houses at cheaper price. Exportable garment products that are rejected for ignorable faults are being sold at very cheap rate by the street vendors. Street garments vendor sell rejected garment lots in the footpath or markets, simultaneously they sell local brands product also. They basically collect the product from buying house, middleman between garment factories and small garment shops, and sometimes from the factory. They sell various products of different brands ranging from kids item to gents and ladies items.

#### **Literature Review**

This part of the study reviewed available literature both locally and internationally to find out the research gap and ways to contribute in to the body of knowledge.

Jones (1988) presented in his study street peddling as an economic enterprise of Afro-Americans residing in an American city an classified two types of peddling strategies are delineated: mobile peddlers selling primarily grocery and household items, and semi-mobile peddlers specializing in "designer" clothing for teens and young adults.

Charmes (1998) anticipated in his study that the street vendors are probably the most important and the most challenging for a better understanding of the informal sector, and presented data based on category of workers from several African countries and discusses the concept or definition used to identify street vendors and methods of enumeration.

Bromley (2000) in his study supported street vendors in the light of following reasons. Provides entrepreneurial opportunity for the destitute people having problem in other start up business, it increases the competition in the trade sector by providing a diverse range of retail outlets with wide geographic coverage, provides a low-cost social safety net that supports income and provides an alternative to criminal activity.

Muzaffar and Huq (2009) in their study attempted to highlight the problem areas and identify some key factors that positively affect their sales revenue and found that the problem

areas are related to business operation, business knowledge, extortion, and product and production. Found that business experience, and initial capital is two key factors that positively affect sales revenue.

Akharuzzaman and Atsushi (2010) showed in their findings Street vendor is one of the better informal job opportunities for poor though they create problems in urban areas to produce street garbage and crowd the footpath and concluded the formalization and public management systems will be beneficial participated by street vender community itself.

Rover (2010) Studied the street vending issues in six major Latin American Cities and examined demographic trends and working conditions among street traders,, and working conditions and security, legal issues related to the governance of street trade unions and other types of associations, and their strategies and effectiveness.

Faruque and Haque (2010) found their study in Dhaka city there is no policy that can facilitate access to street entrepreneurship but as an alternative source for neighborhood-specific goods or an economic entry that does not require extensive capital, urban street selling can also foster social mobility and local economies.

Saha (2010) Pointed out that the street vendors access capital from different courses and depend on the money lenders especially for their economic activity as well as for social security purposes and street vendors are forced to borrow mainly for social security purposes at exorbitant rate of interest (amounting to 5-10% per month) rather than their economic activities which in turn cause to lead them to fall into a 'debt-trap' situation which is a deep concern.

Saha (2011) analyzed the 'working life' of street vendors in Mumbai, in terms of their financial conditions and the extent of indebtedness, the amount of bribes they have to pay in order to sustain themselves in the market, their working hours, the issues of public space utilization, and the legal aspect of their activity. It has been seen from the study that their entire existence and nature of activities are extremely informal and are trust-based.

Suraiya and Noor (2012) showed the businesses of street vendors as well as their impacts on society and constituted three central messages like, a large number of people are

generating income through street vending, street vendors occupy a large part of informal sector in Dhaka city, street vendors offer intense services for the city dwellers within reasonable cost range.

Rover (2012) pointed out Street vending as an occupation has existed for hundreds of years, and is considered a cornerstone of many cities' historical and cultural heritage in some cities, street traders account for as much as 20% of total employment.

Warakagoda (2013) provided background information on street vendors, the reasons to consider street vending as an obstacle or as beneficial to urban setting, livelihoods framework, vulnerability context and impacts on livelihoods assets, and finally coping and adapting strategies of street vendors.

WIEGO (2013) identified that the street vending is a matter of survival for informal vendors and their families, who have few or no other employment opportunities. They merit a policy framework that helps mitigate income loss and protects the earnings on which their households rely.

#### **Objective of the Study**

The objective of this study is to show the economic contribution of the street vendors and impact to the local community in Bangladesh.

### **RESEARCH METHOD**

#### **Research Design**

The study was descriptive in nature. It was conducted based on primary as well as secondary data. Primary data was collected through a well structure questionnaire included both open and closed end questions. Before making the final questionnaire a preliminary survey and discussion with the respondents was conducted by the researchers. Depending the preliminary survey and discussion the final questionnaire was made in which socio economic conditions, demographic characteristics, living conditions, fulfillment of basic needs, problems of vending and their social recognition was asked. In order to make the primary data valid the study extensively surveyed available source of secondary data like published books, articles, printed newspaper, online newspaper, online blogs and websites.

#### **Study Area**

The study area fall within the Dhaka city the capital of Bangladesh 10 specific place of street vending were selected based on their availability. The study mainly focused on their vending point and the convenient way to meet with them. The study choose the places purposively to meet the research objectives stared from Uttara, Mohakhali, Mirpur, Mohammadpur, Dhanmondi, Azimpur, Farmgate, Gulistan, Kamlapur and Malibag. These places include bus station, railway station, parks, busy market places and other such public spaces.

#### **Population of the Study**

The population of the study was garments street vendors in Dhaka city.

#### **Sample**

Considerable effort was made to develop the appropriate sample plan. To meet the researches objectives 150 street garments vendors were randomly selected within the study area where each specific location contained 15 street garments vendors. The preliminary survey and discussion with the street vendors helped a lot to construct an appropriate sample size. To make sample size representative sample size was calculated by using formula offered by Gay (1996). He suggested the following guidelines for selecting a sample size: If the population size is around 500, 50% of the population should be sampled. If the population size is 1,500, 20% should be sampled. Beyond a certain point (at approximately N=5,000), the population size is almost irrelevant, and a sample size of 400 will be adequate. Thus, the larger the population the smaller the percentage. This study calculated the sample size based on the above assessment and it was 150.

#### **Data Analysis**

After having the collected data from the field the researcher made the data sheet with proper caution and check. Data was analyzed using SPSS version 17 through different statistical techniques.

#### **Time Frame of the Study**

The study was conducted during the period of early February 2014 to early May 2014.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Age Wise Analysis of the Street Garment Vendors**

Table 1 shows the frequency as well as the percentages of the vendors in accordance of their age groups. Notice that, most of the vendors engaged with garments vending are in the average age of 25-35 years (42%). And about one third (27.3%) of them are in the age of 15-25 years. Only 4% of them are in the age of 55-65 years old.

**Economic Contribution: Sales and Income and Savings Percentages of the Vendors Selling Different Items**

From the responses of the garment vendors it

is found that the majority of them are engaged with selling t-shirt and kids items. Table 2 shows the percentages of the vendors selling different items of garments.

**Average Unit Sales per Day per Vendors**

We stated earlier that the street garment vendors are engaged with different types of garment products to sell. The volume of sale and items vary vendor to vendor. Table 3 shows the amount of average sales in units of different items by per vendor per day. The table shows that the kids item has the highest volume of average sales per day and the lowest volume of average sales is for pants.

**Table 1: Age wise analysis of the street garment vendors**

	Age group	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	15-25	41	27.3	27.3
	25-35	63	42.0	69.3
	35-45	27	18.0	87.3
	45-55	13	8.7	96.0
	55-65	6	4.0	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	

**Table 2: Percentages of the vendors selling different items**

Garments Item	Percentage*
Shirt	23
Pant	24
T-shirt	48
Polo-shirt	28
Kids items	34
Others	37

\*Percentages will not add to 100 because many of the respondents sell more than one items (All are rounded figure)

**Table 3: Average unit sales of different items per day**

Garments item	Unit sales
Shirt	14
Pant	6
T-shirt	14
Polo-shirt	9
Kids items	18
Others	11

**Daily Sales in Taka**

Table 4 shows the daily sales statistics of the respondents. Much of them have the daily sales tk. 1000-1500 (22.7%) and 20.7% of them have the sales tk. 1500-2000. The average sale of per vendor per day is tk. 2475.

**Savings per Month**

Table 5 shows the savings status of the vendors per month. 46% of the vendors have the savings is about tk. 300 per month. 21.3% of them have the savings is tk. 900 and above per month and only about 5% of them have no savings.

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savings is about tk. 300 per month. 21.3% of them have the savings is tk. 900 and above per month and only about 5% of them have no savings. Table 6 shows the descriptive statistics of savings of the street garment vendors. The mean value of it is 1.9267 that means almost all of the vendors have the average savings of tk. 300-600 per month (the scale is 0=no savings, 1=below 300, 2=300-600, 3=600-900 and 4=900-above).

Table 6 shows the descriptive statistics of savings of the street garment vendors. The mean value of it is 1.9267 that means almost all of the vendors have the average savings of tk. 300-600 per month (the scale is 0=no savings, 1=below 300, 2=300-600, 3=600-900 and 4=900-above).

**Table 4: Daily sales in taka**

	Amount	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	500-1000	22	14.7	14.7
	1000-1500	34	22.7	37.3
	1500-2000	31	20.7	58.0
	2000-2500	22	14.7	72.7
	2500-3000	22	14.7	87.3
	3000-above	19	12.7	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	

**Table 5: Savings status**

	Amount (tk.)	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	no savings	8	5.3	5.3
	below-300	69	46.0	51.3
	300-600	31	20.7	72.0
	600-900	10	6.7	78.7
	900-above	32	21.3	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	

**Table 6: Descriptive statistics for savings**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Savings status	150	0.00	4.00	1.9267	1.26436
Valid N (list wise)	150				

### **Economic Contribution: Employment Effect**

Street vending is an important source of income and employment and most street vendors undertake vending due to lack of other sources of income and employment. That means street vending act as a supplement of formal employment sector of a country. Mithullah (2003) says that,

Vending provides an opportunity that minimizes the impact of social exclusion for many urban residents. In countries such as Kenya, when development partner's support was frozen in order to pressurize for multi-party plural politics, the informal economy sustained many families. Despite the important role of street vending, the activity is less understood, less recognized, and unaccounted for in National economic statistics. This has resulted in lack of enabling policies, regulations and organization of the sector. In all the cities covered, street trade is rampant and a source of employment and income for many urban dwellers. However, in most of the countries, it is unaccounted and unrecognized in national economic statistics. Street trade has in the past, been viewed as an underground activity that undermines the healthy function of the formal economy. This perception has resulted in conflicts with urban authorities over licensing, taxation, site of operation, sanitation and working conditions. In Kenya, street vending falls with the Small and Micro Enterprises [SME] which provides employment and income to about 70 per cent of Kenya's population, especially in urban areas. In the year 2002 alone, the SME sector employed about 5,086,400 people up from 4,624,400 in 2001. This was an increase of 462,000 persons and consisted of 74.2 per cent of total national employment. The Uganda case study points out that the women participate in street vending as a way out of a predicament. Women have moved from being subsistence and commercial farmers to engaging in trade and informal employment. In most cases they vend when their husbands cannot sustain the family or to supplement the husbands income. The Kenya case study argues that the formation of women's groups gives women some form of recognition and freedom in an otherwise male dominated society.

The number of street vendors in Bangladesh is large to contribute to the informal employment sector. According to the Dhaka City Corporation there are around 90,000 street vendors in the city (Bhowmik, 2010). They operate mainly in Motijheel, Baitul Mukarram, Gulistan, Shahbagh and New Market Areas. As street vending in Bangladesh is considered an illegal trade and the street vendors face constant harassment from the authorities. The vendors have to pay a sizeable part of their income as bribes in order to keep plying their trade.

### **Contribution to the Local Community**

The contribution of the street garment vendors in the local community is also notable. The garment vendors sell the garment products to local people of different area in the Dhaka city and purchasing those products the local community people achieve a major monetary gain as they purchase the branded products at a low price comparing to their actual price in the showroom. One of the customer said, *"I bought a pant from the footpath some days ago with tk. 300, if I bought it from the showroom it would cost tk. 1500"*.

### **Social Status of the Street Garment Vendors Fulfillment of Basic Needs**

The fulfillment of some basic daily needs of the street garment vendors are divided into four major dimensions: drinking water, sanitation, electricity use and treatment (which is shown in the table 7).

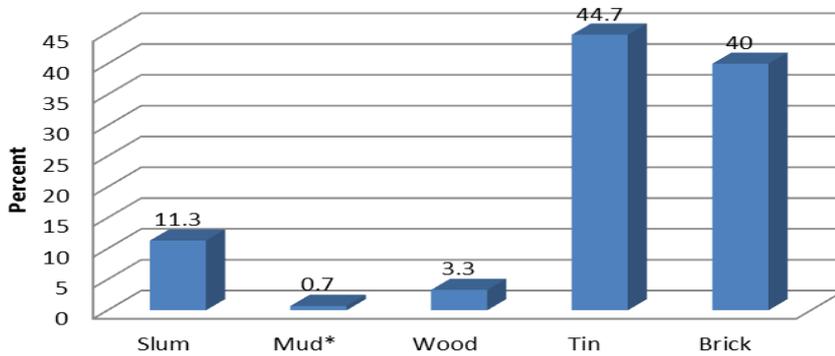
It is found that, about 15 percent of the respondents don't get water (don't get means they don't have well arrangement of collecting water rather they collect water from the different leak point of WASA or sometimes from another's house everyday) and 8% of them don't have hygienic sanitation.

### **Housing Status**

The housing status of the respondents is shown in figure 1. 11.3% of them leave in the slums in different dwells of the Dhaka city. And the majority of them leave in the houses made of tin and bricks (44.7% & 40% respectively).

**Table 7: Fulfillment of basic needs**

Drinking water	Frequency	Percent
Get pure drinking water	73	48.7
Get water but not pure	55	36.7
Don't get water	22	14.7
Total	150	100.0
Sanitation		
Hygienic	83	55.3
Moderate	55	36.7
Not Hygienic	12	8.0
Total	150	100.0
Treatment		
Have well treatment	75	50.0
Don't have	75	50.0
Total	150	100.0
Electricity use		
Use	144	96.0
Don't use	6	4.0
Total	150	100.0



**Figure 1: Housing status of the vendors**

### Education Status

The education status of the vendors is not so poor but more than 15% of them are illiterate yet. Their children education status reveals that 12 percent of their children are illiterate (shown in the figure 2). This study reveals that the main cause of it is that many of them are unable to bear the cost of education of their children. Some of them are found to induce their children to labor due to the insolvency of their family.

### Social Acceptance

The perceptions of the street garment vendors are shown in the following table (table 8) regarding their social acceptance collection vote for the statement, "Doing this business I am well accepted in the society". 36% of them are found neutral, 40.7% agreed and only 16.7% strongly agreed regarding the statement. That means they are moderately accepted in the society for this business.

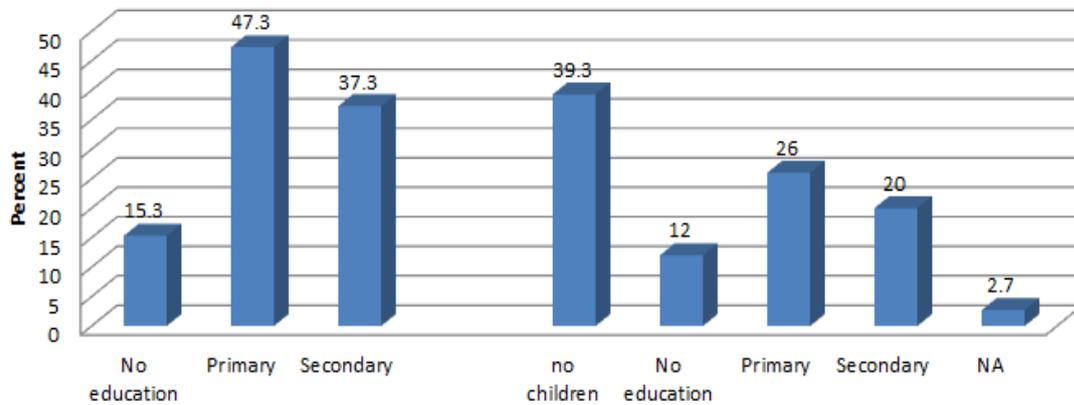


Figure 2: Education status (vendors' education status [left] children education status [right])

Table 8: Social acceptance

	Scale	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	SA	25	16.7	16.7
	A	61	40.7	57.3
	N	54	36.0	93.3
	D	6	4.0	97.3
	SD	4	2.7	100.0
	Total		150	100.0

(SA=Strongly agree, A=Agree, N=Neutral, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly disagree)

## CONCLUSION

The street garment vendors play a substantial role by contributing to the economy and to the local communities. They contribute to the economy by selling and adding value to the garments products. In the field survey we found that almost all of the street garment vendors sell the defected (but branded) products from different garments companies. So to say the street garment vendor's deal in the rejected or wasted garments which were identified and valued as wastes by the garments companies authorities. The vendors collect the products from different garments companies and repair them if necessary and sell them in the street. Thus they add value to the rejected garments products and transform the wastes into the usable as well as valuable goods. Purchasing

those products the local community people achieve a major monetary gain as they purchase the branded products at a low price comparing to their actual price in the showroom. Another contribution of the vendors to the economy is their savings and deposits. They contribute to our national investment by making deposits out of their small income. This study revealed that almost all of the vendors have the average savings of tk. 300-600 per month.

Though the street garment vendors have a notable contribution to the economy and to the local community in our country, their living standard is very low. Access to pure drinking water and hygienic sanitation of the vendors is only 48.7% and 58.3% respectively. About 15 percent of them don't have well arrangement of collecting water, 8% of them don't have

hygienic sanitation. More than 15% of them have no education at all. 12% of their children are illiterate. Therefore, the government and other non government organizations should concentrate to them and harness required facilities in order to upgrade their living standards.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Since the contributions of the street garment vendors are very important in economic development of a developing country like Bangladesh, the Govt. should adopt proper policies to develop this sector and to upgrade the socio-economic status and the living status of the vendors. Therefore, the researchers of this study offer the following recommendations to develop the garments vending sector and to upgrade the vendors' socio-economic status:

- ✓ This study shows that most of the street vendors don't get pure water live in different dwells (bosti) of the Dhaka city. So the govt. can ensure supply of pure drinking water through situating pure water supply plant for those dwellers;
- ✓ Government should either provide interest free loan to the street vendors for building up hygienic toilet or ensure proper drainage system to their living area;
- ✓ Government should establish charitable dispensaries for the free medical treatment of the vendors;
- ✓ Introduction mass education program is desirable for the improvement of the present educational status of vendors;
- ✓ Arrange comprehensive publicity for making the street vendors aware of the necessity of their children's education and in the school more facilities such as scholarship, free book, lunch, tiffin etc. may be introduced to encourage them to school;
- ✓ Government should also provide them with interest free house loan facility;
- ✓ They should be rewarded for their contributions to the economy and environment of our country;
- ✓ Comprehensive publicity should be arranged to change the attitude of the general public towards the street garment vendors.

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