

The Existence of Street Vendors as An Element of Urban Space: A Dilemma

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Abstrak

Keberadaan pedagang kaki lima selalu menjadi bagian dari perkembangan kota di seluruh belahan dunia, khususnya di negara-negara berkembang. Kemiskinan adalah penggerak utama dari keberadaan dan pertumbuhannya. Riset ini dilakukan untuk memahami permasalahan PKL dalam konteks ruang urban, melalui perspektif dari sejumlah ahli dari berbagai bidang keilmuan yang meneliti tentang pedagang kaki lima di berbagai kota di dunia. Tulisan ini disiapkan melalui kajian terhadap 50 (lima puluh) sumber literatur, kebanyakan berupa artikel dalam jurnal ilmiah internasional. Hasil kajian memperlihatkan bahwa penelitian terhadap topik ini umumnya dilakukan berdasarkan dua jenis kepentingan. Kepentingan pertama adalah untuk memahami permasalahan yang dialami oleh pedagang kaki lima di dalam ruang kota, sementara kepentingan kedua adalah untuk memahami permasalahan yang disebabkan oleh keberadaan pedagang kaki lima dalam ruang kota. Kedua jenis kepentingan ini adalah representasi dari adanya suatu dilema tentang keberadaan pedagang kaki lima dalam ruang kota.

Kata-kunci : elemen perkotaan, pedagang kaki lima, urban, ruang urban.

Abstract

The existence of street vendors has always been part of the growth of cities throughout the hemisphere, mainly in developing countries. Poverty is the major driver of their growing existence. This research aims to comprehend the issues of the street vendors in the context of urban space, through the perspectives of researchers from various expertise backgrounds who conducted their research at various cities around the world. This paper was prepared as a result of review to 50 (fifty) literature sources, mostly in the form of international scientific journal articles. The review is carried out by initially classifying the literature into groups according to the researcher's area of expertise and research location. The result of the review shows that research on this topic commonly evoked by two kinds of interest. The first interest is to reveal problems that experience by the street vendors in urban space, while the second interest is to reveal the problems generated by the existence of street vendors in urban space. Both kinds of interest are representing the persistent dilemma about the existence of street vendors in urban spaces.

Keywords : urban element, street vendor, urban, urban space.

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Introduction

Bhowmik (2005) defines a street vendor as:

"a person who offers goods for sale to the public without having a permanent built-up structure from which to sell."

A street vendor is an informal sector activity which uses simple physical form, relatively small, cheap, semi-permanent and movable stated Rochmad (2005). Rochmad characterized street vendors by the type of building structure they use and therefore confirmed Bhowmik's definition.

Bose and Mishra (2013) describe a more holistic definition about street vendors, as follow:

"A "street vendor" is usually a person engaged in vending of articles, goods, wares, food items or merchandise of everyday use or offering services to the general public, in a street, lane, sidewalk, footpath, pavement, public park or any other public place or private area or from a temporary built-up structure or by moving from place to place and includes hawkker, peddler, squatter and all other synonymous terms which may be local or region-specific."

So according to Bose & Mishra, street vendors also include persons that are offering services. Street vendors are selling goods or offering services, both in the public area and private area.

Refer to definitions mentioned previously; it can be concluded that a street vendor is: "a person who offers goods or services at the street, the area around the street, other public area or private area by itinerately or using simple non-permanent and or movable structure."

The street vendor and all their attribute is a global phenomenon that can be easily observed in the urban area, in developing or developed countries. A street vendor is growing with the city itself (Sekar, 2008).

These street vendors are origin from two groups of people (Bhowmik 2005). The first group is the "low skill rural-urban," consist of migrants from the poor suburban area. The second group is "former formal sector workers," which consist of people who previously worked in the formal sector and became informal sector workers.

Street vendors included in the first group can also come from other (poor) countries around. The study of Lucan et al. (2013) to street vendors in New York City, U.S. They found that 85% of the street vendors preferred to speak in the Spanish language. It means that they came from the Latins country around the U.S. area.

Poverty seems to be a major factor in the growth of street vendors. Also, the lack of employment exacerbated by the high population growth has contributed to the growing number of street vendors in urban areas (Nidan, 2010).

The street vendors can peddle products with almost unlimited variants and can also offer services as diverse as shoe polishes, cleaning cars, busking, carrying groceries, and more. The commodity goods or services they offer are very flexible in terms of skills or capital demands. Hence, everyone can become a street vendor. There are no specific requirements.

Sometimes street vendor is not as chaotic as they seem to be. To protect themselves, they established networks through an informal organization (Sheri L Gibbings, 2013; Sheri Lynn Gibbings, 2011). Two main functions of the informal organization are: 1) as negotiators (representing them to make agreements with others, especially the authorities), 2) as social managers to limit membership to reduce competition among street vendors (Peña, 1999).

One of the prominent characteristics of street vendors is the mobility and structure of the selling place. Based on that, Yatmo (2008) divides street vendors into several categories, namely: 1) kiosk; 2) mat; 3) tent; 4) pushcart; 5) carrier; 6) basket.

The presence of street vendors in the urban area, the background of their presence, implication, and impact of their presence to their self or the surrounding environment, are the things that have attracted several researchers to learn more about street vendors (Asiedu & Agyei-Mensah, 2008).

Method

This paper is prepared as a result of a review to 50 (fifty) scientific papers on the topic of street vendors written based on research in both developing and developed countries and has been written by researchers from various backgrounds of science. The studies are conducted with a very diverse method, ranging from positivistic quantitative methods to phenomenology ethnographic methods.

This review aims to examine the results of research on street vendors in various locations and through the different focus of studies. The expected result of the analysis is to reveals the types of perspectives upon street vendors as research objects.

Result and Discussion

(1) The Study of Street Vendors in Developed Countries

The presence of street vendors seems to be conspicuous in developing countries, but they also present in developed

countries. Carroll, Basinski, and Morales (2016) stated that since long time ago, street vending became an essential part of the urban economic structure in United States cities. The research shows the long-term existence of street vendors in New York City and how the city government efforts to control their existence through registration and regulation.

The study of Tchoukaleyska (2014) highlights the other side of street vendors, which is the relationship between the group of informal vendors and the group of illegal vendors. The study, conducted in the public spaces of Montpellier-France.

Munoz (2016) studied female street vendors from Latin American countries in downtown Los Angeles, USA. This ethnographic study examines how personal relationships and social interactions within this group and how they interact with the outside world. Bhimji (2010) studied the same community and focused on strategies they undertook as part of the struggle to survive on the street.

Other studies on street vendors in developed countries are more focused on the impact of their existence on urban aesthetics, especially for the efforts to improve the aesthetic quality of their physical buildings (Abdulkarim & Nasar, 2013).

Research on street vendors in developed countries also targeting the business aspects such as business typology and application of tax provisions. Wakefield, Castillo, and Beguin (2007) stated that street vendor business is transient businesses and classifies street vendors business into four types: 1) sideline business, 2) nomadic business, 3) opportunistic business and 4) traditional business; based on mobility and business persistence.

(2) The study of street vendors in developing countries

Street vendors are the most visible symptoms in the third world or developing countries rather than in developed countries. That is why the research on street vendors is majorly held in developing countries.

Bhowmik (2005) research has held by reviewing some studies that have been conducted on street vendors in several Asian countries, discovering their progress, trade composition and their interaction with advocacy institutions and non-governmental organizations. This study is one of the studies that provide a relatively broad picture of street vendors in plenty of urban areas in Asia, especially in developing countries such as India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Cambodia and Vietnam. The countries are countries that have a very high prevalence of street vendors. Furthermore, according to Bhowmik, the monetary crisis that occurred in 1998 has doubled the number of them throughout urban Asia.

Indonesia, as one of the developing countries, also impinged from street vendors phenomenon. Yatmo (2008) reviews the position of street vendors in urban areas in Indonesia and presents population data of street vendors in Indonesian cities.

Yatmo (2008, 2009) attempt to understand the public perception about the existence of street vendors. Street vendors perceived as an element that creates many problems in urban areas and should be eliminated. On the other hand, some opinions support their existence.

Another study implemented by (Nidan, 2010) in Patna, a metropolis city in eastern India, shows that the presence of street vendors is oftenly ignored in government policy because it is considered illegal. Swider (2015), who researched in China, found a similar situation in cities of China. Street vendors must struggle to be abnegated from the illegal stigma attached to them in order to gain access to their rights as citizens.

Being illegal is not the desire of the street vendors. Nidan's research found that the majority of street vendors are willing to pay or perform other obligations to gain legality in the endeavour. Obligations that have been implemented by street vendors, basically just to obtain permission for the space they use. They are not granted other rights related to hygiene and sanitation, electricity, children education, storage, insurance, and other rights.

Concerns about the uncertainty of their legal status followed by the neglect of the political rights of street vendors as part of the urban poor is a background issue of research conducted on street vendors in Kolkata, India by Bose & Mishra (2013). This study criticized the regulations issued by the municipality to regulate fees for street vendors operating in the city.

The relocation issue is one of the research topics on street vendors. Permatasari, Putro, and Nuraeni (2014) researched to find out the relocation strategy implemented by former Solo Mayor Mr Joko Widodo that has succeeded in relocating street vendors. The strategy that he applied so that the relocation process can run voluntarily is by involving the street vendors in the formulation of decisions on relocation measures. Another study which also raised the issue of relocation was done by Latifah and Aziz (2013).

Research conducted by Lincoln (2008) in Hanoi, the capital of Vietnam describes the role of street vendors in the urban economic structure. The street vendors are seen as a self-employed micro business but also as an illegal activity.

Some studies on street vendors in developing countries also highlight the health aspects of street vendors. Furman and Laleli (2000) examined the impact of exposure to highway pollution on street vendors. Another study

conducted in Uganda by Muyanja et al. (2011) shows that the knowledge and application of sanitation and hygiene principles among food vendors are deficient. This situation poses a significant health risk to the consumers.

The previous description shows that research on street vendors in developing countries has focused intensely on the problems experienced by street vendors. The following matrix shows the research themes of street vendors in developing and developed country locations.

Table 1. The topic of research on street vendors in developing countries and developed countries

| Location | Topic | Author/Researcher |
|--------------------|---|---|
| Developing Country | The growth and the dilemmatic situation in urban space | (Bhowmik, 2005; Yatmo, 2008, 2009) |
| | Legal issues and the rights | (Bose & Mishra, 2013; Sheri Lynn Gibbings, 2011; Latifah & Aziz, 2013; Nidan, 2010; Permatasari et al., 2014; Swider, 2015) |
| | Bussines aspects | (Baqi & Kasto, 2007; Bhowmik & Saha, 2013; Lincoln, 2008) |
| | Health problems conditions & environmental health problems due to t | (Furman & Laleli, 2000; Marcotty, Dione, & Ieven, 2009; Muyanja et al., 2011) |
| | Spatial Setting | (Asya, 2017; Rochmad, 2005) |
| Developed Country | Controlling efforts from the government | (Carroll et al., 2016; Devlin, 2010) |
| | Personal and social interaction within the community | (Estrada, 2012; Estrada & Hondagneu-sotelo, 2011; Munoz, 2016) |
| | public space element | (Abdulkarim & Nasar, 2013; Henderson, Yun, Poon, & Biwei, 2012) |
| | The business strategy in illegal status | (Bhimji, 2010; Tchoukaleyska, 2014) |
| | Typology of business | (Reuveni, 2017; Wakefield et al., 2007) |

Source: Author, 2019

(3) The Study on Street Vendors from Various Scientific Background

Street vendors can be examined through many disciplines of expertise from various cluster of science. Although social science is the dominant discipline, some critical research is also conducted by researchers from other science clusters such as urban planning and environmental psychology.

Most research on street vendors involves more than one expertise. However, there is at least one discipline that is the dominant science background.

Research conducted by Swider (2015) is one of the research-based on political science but has a firm legal and sociology nuance. Swider (2015) examines the citizenship system in Chinese cities known as the Hukou system. In the system, street vendors as unregistered migrants have poor access to public services and even considered not to have the same legal rights as other groups of higher status.

The street vendor is a sort of small business which is an essential part of the urban informal sector. Therefore, many studies on street vendors are conducted by economists and business experts like Bhowmik and Saha (2013), which raised the issue of financial access difficulties for street vendors as part of the city's economic structure.

The live aspect of street vendors as human beings often becomes the object of research by anthropologists like Munoz (2016). Munoz looks at the private and social lives of female groups of street vendors in Los Angeles City.

Some researchers examine the street vendors from the background of architecture, urban planning and design. One of them is Rochmad (2005) that research the spatial setting of street vendors. Rochmad found three factors that determine the location of the distribution of street vendors, namely: 1) the area function; 2) distance; and 3) circulation.

Some studies on street vendors are base on interdisciplinary science, such as environmental psychology; like research conducted by Yatmo (2009) to the public perception about the existence of street vendors in the day and night. Lucan et al. (2013) researched to find the appropriate way to assess the quality of food selling by street vendors in New York City. This research is an example of research on public health aspects.

Table 2 shows the themes raised by the research from various scientific background.

Table 2. The Themes of Research on Street Vendor from Multiple Scientific Clusters

| Scientific Cluster | Theme | Author/Researcher |
|--------------------|------------------|--|
| Law and Policy | Legal protection | (Carroll et al.,2016; Nidan, 2010; Bhowmik, 2010; Bose & Mishra, 2013; Swider, 2015; Roever & Skinner, 2016; Sally Roever, 2016) |

| Scientific Cluster | Theme | Author/ Researcher |
|---|---|--|
| Economy & Bussiness | The impact of national policy | (Bhowmik, 2005; Nidan, 2010; Recio & Gomez, 2013; Sekar, 2008; Sundaram, 2016) |
| | Balance between the rights to seek livelihood with the interests of urban spatial arrangement | (Alva, 2014; Asiedu & Agyei-Mensah, 2008; Forkuor, Akuoko, & Yeboah, 2017; Hanser, 2016; Pappeswari & Rajalakshmi, 2014) |
| | Internal economic & typology of business | (Oluwoyo and Enemali 2016; Wakefield, Castillo, and Beguin 2007) |
| Anthropology | Informal organization | (Sheri L Gibbings, 2013; Peña, 1999; Williams & Youssef, 2015) |
| | The role in the urban economic structure | (Baqi & Kasto, 2007; Bhowmik & Saha, 2013) |
| | Personal life and social interaction. | (Estrada, 2012; Munoz, 2016) |
| Architecture, Urban Planning & Design | The struggle to seek for livelihood. | (Bhimji, 2010; Lincoln, 2008) |
| | Urban/area planning decisions that accommodate street vendor's requirements | (Ismail, 2016; Kuyucu, 2016; Permatasari et al., 2014; Tonda & Kepe, 2016) |
| | The existence in urban spatial planning | (Baroni, 2007; Palacios, 2016; Solomon-Ayeh, Sylvana, & Decardi-Nelson, 2011; Widjajanti, 2016; Yatmo, 2008) |
| Environmental Psychology/ Architecture & Behavior | Spatial setting | (Asya, 2017; Rochmad, 2005) |
| | Street vendor as an element of public space | (Abdulkarim & Nasar, 2013) |
| | Perception of the street vendor | (Yatmo, 2009) |
| Public Health & Environment | Impact of pollution on the highway | (Furman & Laleli, 2000) |
| | Education and standardization of hygiene and sanitation of food products | (Lucan et al., 2013; Muyanja et al., 2011) |

Source: Author, 2019

Conclusion and Recommendation

The research on street vendor seeks for 2 (two) things. First, the ways to solve problems experienced by street vendors in urban space. Second, the ways to solve problems caused by the existence of street vendors in urban space. The focus of research on the topic of the street vendor has been built on two contrary perspectives. One perspective saw the street vendors as "victims" of urban space issues while another perspective saw the street vendors as "criminals" that generate problems in urban space.

Consistently, the research based on different kinds of expertise and conducted to the street vendors at many different locations, lead to the same dichotomy of focuses. The dichotomy represents the dilemma of the existence of street vendors in urban space.

On the other side, regardless of the negative stigma, their ability to survive in physical limitations, without the support of legal, planning and financial policies, is a rare and worthy quality to learn. Their strategies may apply to different communities and situations but have the same fundamental issues. Therefore, we are recommended for future research that seek to explore strategies used by street vendors to maintain its existence, both physical strategy (spatial) and non-physical strategy (socio-economic culture).

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