



CITY POLLUTION: THE CASE STUDY OF VENDORS AND BEGGARS WITH DISABILITIES IN HARARE

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ABSTRACT

Urban areas in Zimbabwe such as Harare are facing pollution challenges mainly in the form of littering. One of the groups which is responsible for littering of streets in Zimbabwe are vendors and beggars with disabilities. The economic hardship that are being experienced by Zimbabwe has resulted in persons with disabilities swarming the streets of Harare in an effort to earn a living through selling a number of wares. The street space has also become a source of conflict as different groups compete for its use. The aim of the study was to find the perception of vendors and beggars with disabilities on the littering challenges that was being experienced by the city of Harare. Another objective was to find out if the local authority consults them or raise pollution awareness activities with them. The study adopted a qualitative research design so as to arrive at an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study. Focus group discussions were used to gather data. The findings showed little understanding on issues of pollution by vendors and beggars with disabilities. It further showed that the city authorities do not consult vendors and beggars with disability on the city pollution issues. The research recommended that the city authorities should involve beggars and vendors with disabilities on pollution initiatives and activities.

KEY TERMS: beggars, vendors, pollution, disabilities, Harare

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INTRODUCTION

One of the strategic objectives of the City of Harare authority is to achieve a world standard city by 2025 (City of Harare, 2012). As spelt out in the strategic plan, the key to achieve this status is having a clean environment with less pollution within the city and its surroundings. This objective entails having clean streets and well zoned city activities. Public transport will be allocated sites in the outskirts of the central business district. Vendors will be moved out of the city to their allocated places outside of the central business district. The City of Harare engaged different stakeholders in an effort to sensitise them about their strategic plan. For them, having a clean city will attract investors and tourists. Partnership with industry, private and the general populace is envisaged in the implementation of the strategic plan document.

Industry would play the role of manufacturing products which are environmentally friendly and disposing their affluent in a way that would not cause pollution. Industry would also take the opportunity to educate their clients about environmental issues. The City appealed to government to help in the implementation of the strategies by lobbying the government to implement laws and legislature to stop manufacturing of products which contribute towards pollution. Government made it compulsory for manufacturers of plastic bottles and kaylites to recycle their products which were identified as the major cause of pollution. However, the strategy is under threat because of the widespread mushrooming of vendors and beggars whose activities have become expensive and difficult for the local authority to manage. Vendors and beggars with disabilities are a delicate group which has been difficult to deal with due to the sensitivity associated with disability issues. Due to the collapse of the Zimbabwean economy a large chunk of the population of persons with disabilities have joined the vending and begging business in an effort to gain income.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Beggars and vendors are found on the streets of towns and cities worldwide. Their presents in the street has been documented for decades. Begging and vending have been regarded as a social problem (Konstantinos, 2016; Rugoho & Siziba, 2014). It's a phenomenon which cuts across all cultures and historical periods as noted by Wardhaugh, (2009). Begging and vending phenomena is not only a developing country problem but a problem for developed countries as well (Mhizha & Muromo, 2013, Timalsina, 2011). The motives behind begging and vending are so diverse. However, researchers agree that the main drivers of street begging and vending are unemployment and poverty (Lozanski, 2013, Nakisani, Chicho- Matenge, & Ongori, 2013). In developing countries, urban centres are characterised by high unemployment levels. In Gaborone, Nakisani, Chicho-Matenge, & Ongori (2013) concluded that high poverty and unemployment levels were the major causes of vending and begging. Similar findings were also found in Zimbabwe by Rugoho & Siziba (2014), who observed that the sudden increases of population in Zimbabwe's capital city Harare was not complimented with industry development. On the contrary, as the Zimbabwean economy slowed down, many companies closed down in Harare leaving its inhabitants with no option but to venture into begging and vending.

Substantial research has been done on begging and vending in many parts of the world (Delap, 2009). Researchers have focused on many different actors within the begging and vending business. These actors include children, women and people with disabilities. Other researchers were interested in different categories of beggars and vendors. For example, in his work in Tanzania, Namwata, Mgabo & Dimiso (2012), identified a number of categories for beggars. The first group was categorised as *beggars on the street*. These have got permanent homes and they have ties with their families and relatives. In most cases they sleep at home after a day's work. The second group they called it *beggars of the street*. This group almost regards the street as its permanent residence. They are not in touch with their family members or they seldom visit their families. The third category was the *beggars in the street*, and this group has abandoned family and moved permanently to street life. Everything of them now rotates in the streets. Another group is called the *beggars of street families*. This group is composed of individuals born and raised in the street. For this group, the entire family is engaged in street begging. Another group of beggars also constitutes those who move around with letters or placards stating the problems that they face.

In their study on street kids, Mhizha and Muromo (2013) also noted similar trends of some street kids being born out of parents who are also street beggars. They further noted the presence of street fathers and mothers. In studies carried out in Thailand (Bangkok) and India (Bombay) amongst children beggars and international tourists, Brito (2013) observed a number of forms of begging. He noted that some beg holding a cup or plate in their hands whilst some are involved in what he call irritating begging. Irritating begging is whereby the tourist is followed for a long distance while asking for donations. Rugoho & Siziba (2014), also noted similar grouping in street begging. They concluded that the category one belongs also influences the spending pattern. For those in first category who go home after a day's work, proceeds from begging are used to buy food and pay fees for the children whilst those who are permanently holed in the streets spend their proceeds on food and drugs. Baljit

(2015), also notes that even vendors can be categorised using the wares they sale. In India, he notes that street vendors sell different wares ranging from fruits, food stuffs, airtime and many others. Just like begging there is some sort of specialisation with vendors.

Begging and vending have become associated with livelihoods mostly in developing countries. Timalsina (2011), described begging as a profession that had been able to stand the test of time. Begging and vending are thriving livelihoods options in Botswana as noted by Joseph (2011). Namwata, Mgabo, & Dimiso (2012), noted that beggars spend a good percentage of their earnings on food. Beggars are able to buy food for the whole family. This finding is also similar to that of Rugoho & Siziba (2014) who also found out that money obtained from begging is usually used to support families by buying food. Begging and vending are usually done by those people who would have failed to enter the formal employment sector as noted by Mengistu & Jibat (2015). Persons with disabilities are found in these businesses because they find it easy to enter it as it does not have many barriers in comparison to the formal sector Timalsina (2011). The sector does not require huge capital as noted by Malik & Roy (2012). Individuals can get start up loans from personal savings or from family savings. Begging on the other hand does not require any capital.

Vendors and beggars are concentrated in busy areas of the city as this offers a large volume of potential customers. Rugoho & Siziba (2014), notes that they are frequently found in street pavements and road intersections. Their presence on the street pavements have caused despondence with the shop owners who often accuse vendors and beggars of disturbing the peaceful movement of their clients. Most governments prohibit begging and vending in Africa and the world over. Countries like India, Mexico and Uganda and many others have enacted laws that outlawed street begging and vending (Devlin, 2011; Wongsamuth, 2015).

Beggars and vendors have been accused of causing a number of conflicts in streets spaces Potrache (2016). The more pronounced conflict is between them and the city authority or police Quentin & Bonnet, (2015). Beggars and vendors are seen as deviant by the local authorities. In Zimbabwe, vendors frequently have their wares confiscated by the police because they will be selling on undesignated sites. Literature has stories of vendors and beggars being rounded up and driven off the city. In Ethiopia, Mengistu & Jibat (2015) observed that vendors and beggars are always under threat of being arrested by police. Those who would have been arrested would be asked for bribes by the police. In Botswana Joseph (2011), police arrest vendors and beggars in the streets. Rodrigo (2013), also observed that vendors and beggars in Mexico are often accused by the local police of committing various crimes in the city hence police pounce on them. (Olang'o, Olima & Onyango, 2012, Yasmeeen & Nirathron, 2014) notes that the result of this arrest is because vendors and beggars settle to do their business on unsanctioned and illegal areas. Human Rights Watch (2011) noted in Rwanda beggars and vendors are detained for weeks and months. During the time they are under detentions they are made to survive under draconian and harsh conditions.

Quentin & Bonnet (2015) noted that if beggars and vendors are not controlled, they will occupy public spaces in town thereby hindering the smooth movement of people and traffic as well. In Mexican cities, toleration of vendors and beggars resulted in pedestrian congestion, litter accumulation, noise, and other problems in the mid-1990s Rodrigo (2013). Within the context of tourism, beggars and vendors are seen as driving away tourists because of their nauseating behaviour, Lozanski (2013). This view is also shared by Adriaenssens & Hendrickx (2011) who noted that tourists often complain about the behaviour of beggars and vendors in the streets.

Begging and vending had been understood within the context of informal sector Timalsina (2011). This is also further supported by Joseph (2011) who argues that it has been able to create jobs for those that have not been employed. Olang'o, Olima & Onyango, (2012), treat vending and begging as a sub-sector of informal businesses that operate in urban areas. It is a sector that is providing employment to the population who could not be absorbed by the formal sector. In the 1970s the sector was recognised as having the potential to expand and employ more people, Olang'o, Olima & Onyango (2012). In Zimbabwe the Ministry of Small and Medium Enterprises has advocated for the protection of small businesses because the sector employs many young people. Various organisations of disabled people have also acknowledged that begging has offered an income to families of disabled people who are being neglected by the government of Zimbabwe.

Shelter of the beggars and vendors is usually on the street pavements. Most beggars and vendors sleep on streets pavements. In Zimbabwe a substantial number of beggars and vendors with disabilities have taken advantage of the collapse of the economy to remain permanent dwellers of streets Rugoho & Siziba (2014). They do not have access to toilets and other sanitation facilities. These beggars and vendors in the street pavements also offer their problem such as urinating and defecation on the street pavements (Tanwne, Rana, Mitu, Rupa & Khadeza, 2016; Nurudeen, Lawal & Ajayi, 2014)

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The Zimbabwean economy has been on a decline over the past decades. It has witnessed the sudden closure of companies. At the international level disability management also changed from institutionalization to community based Grills, Varghese, Hughes, Jolly, & Kumar, (2016). The world financial recession also impacted on the

assistance of persons with disabilities by the civil society and the donor community Eva-Maria (2010). The bulk of the initiatives which support people with disabilities in Zimbabwe are donor funded. Donors withdrew their financial support. All these factors affected the disabled community more. In an effort to earn a living some have invaded the streets of Harare as beggars and vendors. As noted by Rugoho & Siziba (2014) the vendors and beggars in Harare are in two categories. There are those who stay permanently in the street and those who go home after a day's work. These beggars and vendors with disability have also contributed towards the littering of the street. Some sell different wares at undesignated places. It is against this background that this study was conducted in Harare.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The main objective of the research was to find out the perceptions of vendors and beggars on street littering and pollution. A second objective was to know if they were consulted by the city of Harare authorities on pollution issues. The research was guided by the following questions

- What is the perception of beggars and vendors to street littering and pollution?
- What facilities do they have access to at night?
- Are they consulted by city authorities on pollution issues?

METHODOLOGY

The research was carried out in Harare, which is the biggest and capital city of Zimbabwe. As noted by World Bank (2003), Harare has slightly fifty percent of the entire population in all urban centres in Zimbabwe. A qualitative research design was adopted for this research because of its potential to generate rich and detailed data from the participant's perspective Anderson (2010). Another advantage of qualitative research is its ability to allow the researcher to gain the experience of the participants from their perspective and life experiences Yin (2015). The FGDs were used following an observation by (Yin, 2015) that it allows the researcher to obtain insight into the setting, context, environment and experiences of participants. Individual participants for the focus group discussions (FGDs) were selected through the snowballing technique. Eight focus group discussions were held with each group consisting of 12 participants each. The groups were constituted based on age and sex. These groups were composed of those in the 16–25-year age group, group 2 of 26–35-year olds, group 3 of 36–45-year olds, and group 4 of over 46s. Permission was sought from the Harare City council before the research commenced. Authorities were informed about the objectives and methodology of the study.

Shona language which is the local language was adopted because all participants who were recruited were very fluent in it. The researcher allowed for multiple breaks to accommodate participants. A tape recorder was used to record all the FGDs. Thematic analysis was used to analyse data. Braun & Clarke (2014) and Hannah & Lalita (2016) argued that thematic analysis is used more in qualitative research because it follows familiarisation with the data, systematic reading, coding, searching, categorisation and generating of definitions, and interpretation.

The research adhered to ethical issues as propounded by Yip, Han & Sng (2016), that is, research should be able to protect the life, dignity, privacy, health, integrity and right to self-determination. Above all it should guarantee confidentiality of the research participants. At the beginning of the research, participants were informed that participation was entirely voluntary. It was within their right to exit the research discussion without giving notice and reasons. Informed consent was also provided and participants signed a consent agreement with the researcher encouraged by Schroter, Plowman, Hutchings & Gonzal (2006)

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Perception on street littering and pollution

The research found out that street vendors and beggars were aware that their activities contributed towards street littering. However, they did not think that they should shoulder the responsibility of taking care of their litter. For them the responsibility of cleaning lies solely with the City authorities. Similar trend of behaviour was also found in Nigeria by Nurudeen, Lawal & Ajayi (2014) amongst food vendors who did not want to take care of the rubbish besides acknowledging that it poses a danger to the environment.

Paul, a male participant said:

We have other pressing needs than thinking about the cleanliness of the city. We don't get our money to support our families from clean streets. Let those who are paid by the government to clean the city do so. I will never carry a bin with me.

Tecla, another female participant supported by saying:

Honestly you can't expect a disabled person like me to clean the litter that is caused by my clients. Neither do you expect me to provide a bin to my clients. The government should see what it can do to keep this street clean. It's not my worry whether it's clean or not. I do not see the benefits of the street being clean accruing to me.

Tapiwa, a young male vendor said:

Even if we do not litter the streets, they will always be litter. There are major culprits than us. The city authorities do not clean the street and they do not provide bins. All street uses are littering the streets.

Another female participant, Monalisa said:

We are not entirely to blame for this city street littering. It's also the able bodied. Let the able bodied take the initiative of not littering the city first and we will also follow suit.

Timalsina, (2011), has also argued that this negative attitude towards littering by beggars and vendors has made it hard for developing countries to maintain clean and modern city standards. Olang'o, Olima, & Onyango (2012), also found similar perception amongst vendors with disabilities who think that the duty of keeping the city streets clean entirely lies with the government not citizens.

Street defecations and urination

The participants highlighted that the city has privatised toilets thereby making them inaccessible to the majority of beggars and vendors with disabilities. Many of them have now resorted to street defecations. This is mainly done at night when there is very few movement of people. Dark spaces within the street provided a convenient space for defecations. The major problem associated with those who sleep in the streets is hygiene with regards to defecation. The majority of toilets in towns are now privatised. One has to pay money to access the toilets. This has caused major challenges. The majority of street dwellers now defecate and urinate in the streets. As noted by Tanwne, Rana, Mitu, Rupa & Khadeza (2016) in Bangladesh, beggars and vendors urinate and defecate in the street and this has become a big challenge to keep the street clean and health. Joseph (2011) found out that in Botswana streets urinating and defecation has also exposed street dwellers to a number of health hazards. Chipu another said:

We don't have money to pay for the toilets. We relieve ourselves on the street pavements. We have to do it during midnight when the streets are empty. We have nowhere else to go and relief ourselves. Sometimes we relieve ourselves in sacks and plastics. We dump these plastics on streets or bins. After relieving ourselves, we have no place to wash our hands. We are used to this. Even during the day when we are 'pressed', we urinate in the street.

Another middle-aged beggar, Simba said: *It's hard, we use the streets as our toilets and bathrooms.*

Human Rights Watch (2011), further notes that street dwellers have higher risk of contracting water borne diseases. Rodrigo (2013) further notes in Rwanda that this poor hygiene does not only put city inhabitants at health risk but also other people who get buy wares from the streets vendors especially food staffs like fruits.

Streets sleeping

Christopher another participants narrates

We sleep on street pavements. We use papers and boxes to make our makeshift beds on the street. We do this on a daily basis. In the morning we simply leave these boxes and papers in the street because we have nowhere to take them.

Another young female beggar, Angela added:

Since we sleep on street pavements, we empty bins in search of boxes, plastics and papers to make our beds. You cannot just sleep on the floor, you need some stuff to make it comfortable. We do not take care of the litter that we empty from the bins in search of plastic and boxes, no.

Beggars and vendors also sleep in the streets. Some vendors and beggars with disabilities do not go home on a daily basis hence they sleep on street pavements. As noted by Rugoho & Siziba (2014), sleeping on street pavements has also added a new dimension in street littering as these streets inhabitants live a lot of objects and litter where they would be sleeping.

Involving vendors and beggars with disabilities in pollution and environmental hazards

Clever, a vendor said:

The city does not consult us on anything, they do their things and we do our business. We only have interface with the local authority police when they are looking for bribes.

Shami, another beggar added

The city does not know our challenges as vendors and beggars with disabilities. And we also do not know the challenges they have save what we see with our eyes like busting sewages, water and the litter in the streets.

City authorities were not involving vendors and beggars with disabilities in pollution and environmental issues. There was no involvement of persons with disabilities in environmental issues that are that are undertaken by the city of Harare.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Research findings demonstrate that the activities of beggars and vendors with disabilities contribute substantially towards littering of the streets. Selling of different wares without having disposable bins is a major challenge. Another challenge is street urinating and defecation. Those who sleep in the street also live their plastics and papers which they use for bedding on the pavements. The city authority also do not consult with beggars and vendors with disabilities when coming up with environmental policies. The research recommends:

- Provision of portable bins and having accessible toilets at night to allow access to beggars and vendors with disabilities who sleep on street pavements.
- Provision of environmental awareness to beggars and vendors with disabilities.
- Engaging beggars and vendors with disabilities when coming up with policies on city environment.

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