

The Impact of Street Trading on the Freetown Municipality

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Abstract: This paper attempts to investigate the impact of street trading on the Freetown Municipality. Street trading in Freetown is perceived as an economic activity for those with low educational level and highly dominated by women since it is considered as extension of their reproductive and domestic role. There are two categories of street traders in Freetown; sedentary who are found in fixed locations using pavements, verandas, stalls, tables, and sometimes the bare floor and footloose or mobile traders have no fixed locations and move throughout the city or in the city centre in search of customers. Their activities have positive impact such as generating revenue for Freetown City Council, making goods and services available. On the other hand, their activities has caused problems such as traffic congestion, air and noise pollution and poor sanitation, which cause health hazards, pick-pocketing stress is caused to pedestrians and makeshift structures along the streets also mar the environment and degrade the aesthetic quality of Freetown settlements. The main data collection instrument was structure questionnaire and 400 street traders served as respondents from all categories of traders. It is concluded that even though these street traders are of economic benefits, their presence is more embarrassing in terms of face looks.

Index: pedestrians, economic benefit, noise pollution, retailing, petty trading and congestion.

INTRODUCTION

The problem of unemployment of youths in the Freetown Municipality has generated an informal type of trading called street trading. This is as a result of the past ten year rebel war which forced many people to migrate from the rural areas to urban areas especially Freetown. When the war came to an rehabilitation package was introduced for war widows and ex- combatants. In the Freetown Municipality, street trading has become a source of livelihood for many and also as an important source of accessible, convenient and affordable goods for the urban poor. For example, the street food sector provides accessible food items and makes life easy for the working class. Beyond this, the socio – economic role of street trading in terms of its potential for employment and income generation

has attracted many people, male and female, single and married, into the practice. Although some people see and react to street traders as a nuisance, the forces that created their market have made them an inextricable part of the social fabric. Street trading is currently prevalent in Sierra Leone. Selling items from a vehicle, a cart or make – shift shop on a public street is allowed in Freetown without a permit. Male and female placing their wares in front of residential buildings or in make – shift shops are commonly found in Freetown Municipality. Such traders take opportunities of heavy traffic and the consequent frequent hold- ups to sell their goods to drivers and passengers inside vehicles. Other of such traders display their wares in public sidewalks.

The problems faced in Freetown Municipality between the local authorities called the Freetown City Council and other councils in other cities in Sierra Leone and street traders is a continuous battle as street traders are claiming that they have the right as long as they are paying market dues every day. In response to the street trading problem, the Sierra Leone government past and present has been putting up formal market infrastructure across the municipality, so that street traders in an orderly, safer and good environment. This was against the background of the various problems include stealing customers from the formal economy, nonpayment of taxes, causing road traffic congestion and sanitation related diseases such as cholera, crime (pick – pocketing) and working in the city centre is sheer agony for shoppers and pedestrians. However, despite government putting up formal market infrastructure, street traders keep trading from the streets. Street traders in the Freetown Municipality may stay in the business for many years, not planning to change to any other form of business, but some may do it for some time and quit when they get a salaried job or when they are able to afford better forms of businesses.

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. What is Street Trading?

Street trading is defined as the selling or offering for sale of any article in the street. Traders who use the public highway to sell goods or services must have a street trading license to carry out the trade from a designated site pitch and display of goods in front of a shop.

2.2. Categories of Street Traders in Freetown

There are two main categories of street traders along the major streets in centre of Freetown. The sedentary traders who works in fixed locations, include vendors of foodstuffs, fruits and vegetables, cooked food and various manufactured goods, such as stationery, watches, mobile phones and electronic goods. The footloose or mobile traders sell newspapers, iced water, ice cream, biscuits, second – hand clothing and different kinds of manufactured goods such as handkerchiefs, toilet roll and shaving sticks along the major streets within the Freetown Municipality centre. They carry their goods on their hands or in push – carts normally called “amulankay” and wheelbarrows.

2.3. Characteristics of Street Traders in Freetown

- Majority of street traders own account workers with majority engaged in reselling;
- A good number of these traders are married and support large families with a high percentage of the women being sole breadwinners. The rest of the traders are either single, widowed or divorced;
- Majority of the street traders are women, although there is also a large number of men and children with age group ranging from 10 years and above;
- Most of the female street traders take care of their own domestic chores and are assisted by relatives from the provinces;
- The male street traders who are married have domestic work done by their wives who are mostly housewives and single male street traders take responsibility of their domestic work;
- At work places which are in the streets, more men hire assistants or have helpers as compared to women depending on the size of the business;
- Most street traders live close to their work place and walk to work. Few use taxis and buses especially those living in the Eastern part of Freetown;
- A good number of these street traders have primary and below level of education. A few have secondary education while very few have professional training. However, the younger street traders tend to have acquired a higher education;
- Male street traders seem to have more professional training as compared to women street traders;
- Most street traders undertake selling due to lack of other sources of income and employment;
- Widows and women who have been deserted by spouses, whose husband were killed during the ten year rebel war and also during the Ebola outbreak opt for the street trade;
- Men tend to join street trade while young and use it as stepping stone for other jobs or further education, while women join early in life and continue till old age;
- Male street traders invest in businesses that require high capital and also yield more profits while women make less profits because they are mostly engaged in activities that require less capital such as selling vegetables, fish, fruits etc,;
- Most street traders work close to 13 hours a day, although the starting and closing time vary depending on gender, type and location of business. Men tend to trade for longer hours.

2.4. Characteristics of Activities of the Street Traders

The activities of these street traders fall under the following:

- Unregulated and competitive markets
- Small scale operation with individual or family ownership:
- Easy of entry and exiting
- Reliance on locally available resources
- Family ownership of business
- Labour intensive and adapted technology
- Absence of access to institutional credit from financial institutions in the country or other supports and protections from the Freetown City Council and the government.

2.5. The Role of Street Traders

Many young men and women in Sierra Leone especially those living in Freetown have opted to street trading as their main source of income. Uwitije C. (2016). Street trading serves an important social role in the generation of income especially for those at the bottom ladder of the social status. At least, it is more dignifying than begging, touting and petty crimes. Apart from the role of street traders, trading is being regarded as one of the contributions to alleviating poverty in the country. Street trading is yet to be fully recognized largely due to the fact that it is classified as underground activity and is not controlled and supervised by established regulatory bodies. Skinner C. (2008). It is observed that many at times corrupt officers from the Ministry of Trade and Freetown City Council are enriching themselves because the actual transactions carried out cannot be accurately quantified and taxed accordingly Skinner C. (2008).

In some cases, street urchins and criminals extort money from street traders without the knowledge of those in authorities. Street trading has shown to be a vital platform that bred entrepreneurs. Here, the unemployed used their untapped potentials to make ends meet by marketing and trading of goods through innovation and creativity Yankso P.W.K (2000).

Although it is widely held belief that street trading has always had a negative connotation, according to Skinner.C. (2008) the negative notion cannot be compared with the enormous contributions to the informal sector when adequate measures are put in place. This means that street trading should be given space in the city because every urban dweller has right access to the city. The flexibility of the trade means that traders have no fixed working hours unlike the normal working standards in pay jobs. For example, the traders

use commercial vehicles to market and make sales when workers are returning from work in the evening. The flexibility also entails their constant movement to areas where potential customers are concentrated. The prices offered by street traders are affordable compared with markets and shopping malls and this greatly benefits the urban poor. Generally, the role of street traders can be viewed from a political, social, economic and spatial point of view. Irrespective of the perspectives, street traders require support to fully rely on its potentials

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The study utilized a quantitative technique in measuring the effects of street trading on Freetown Municipality. The study also employed a cross – sectional survey research design approach for choosing the research instrument and estimating the required sample size. The survey research design approach helped determine the unique characteristics of the large population which is focused on those that patronized street traders. These set of people were selected based on their ability to complete the data instrument. The street traders would have sufficed as the research participants but due to their low educational status, contribution to the data instrument is limited. The population of those that patronize street traders in the study location was calculated through a field investigation and observation. The average daily carrying capacity of the Freetown Municipal centre was calculated at 1,000 persons per day.

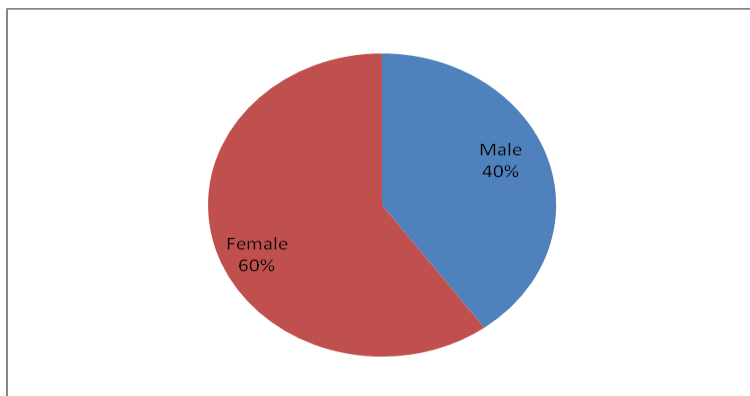
Using a purposive sampling technique, the Taro Yemane formula was utilized to arrive at a sample size of 400 persons as the research participants. The 400 research participants are representatives and a reflection of the entire population within the study area. The study location focused on the centre business district is in Freetown. It is located in the city centre and with popular streets like Sani Abacha, Wilberforce, Regent Road, Garrison all intersecting at PZ.

PZ meaning Paterson Zochonis was named after George Paterson, a Scottish and George Zochonis a Greek. They started the business when the Europeans were leaving their countries for the West Coast of Africa in search of opportunities. Two such European George Paterson and George Zochonis formed a close friendship and worked together for small trading company at Susan's bay in Freetown at Wilberforce Street called "Paterson Zochonis (hence the abbreviation PZ). Today hundreds of street traders converge to PZ to transact their businesses as it is centrally located and has the capacity to accommodate hundreds of people at a go. The data instrument used was a well – structured questionnaire. The questionnaire instrument had four (4) sections that analysed the socio – economic characteristics of street traders, the factors responsible for street trading, the perceived environmental hazard and the perceived spatial implications of street trading on Freetown Municipality. For the data analysis, the study utilized descriptive statistics, which are presented in the result.

RESULTS

The analysis below for this paper was derived from the structured questionnaire administered among the street traders.

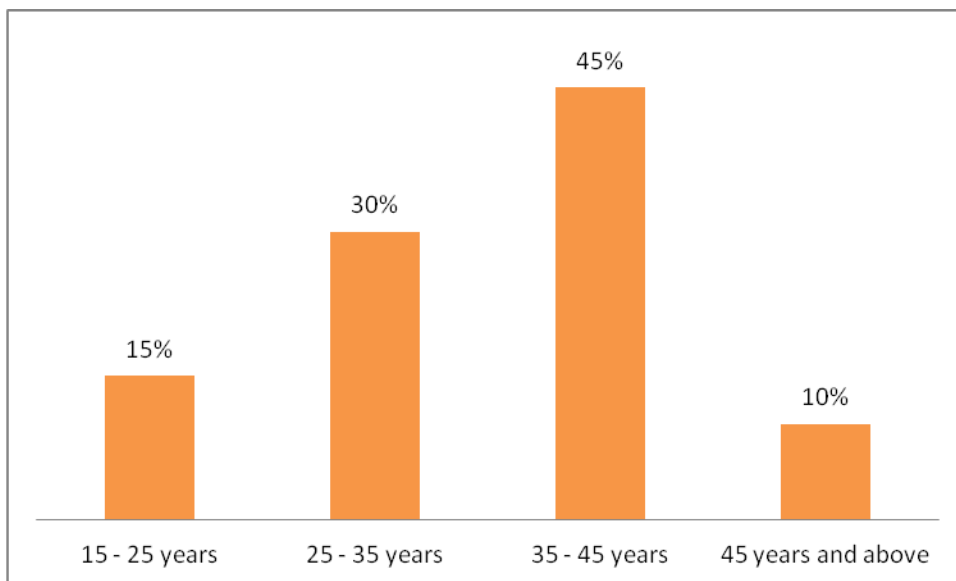
Figure 4.1. Gender of Respondents



Source: Primary Data 2022

The figure above shows that 40% of the respondents contacted for this research are males and 60% are females.

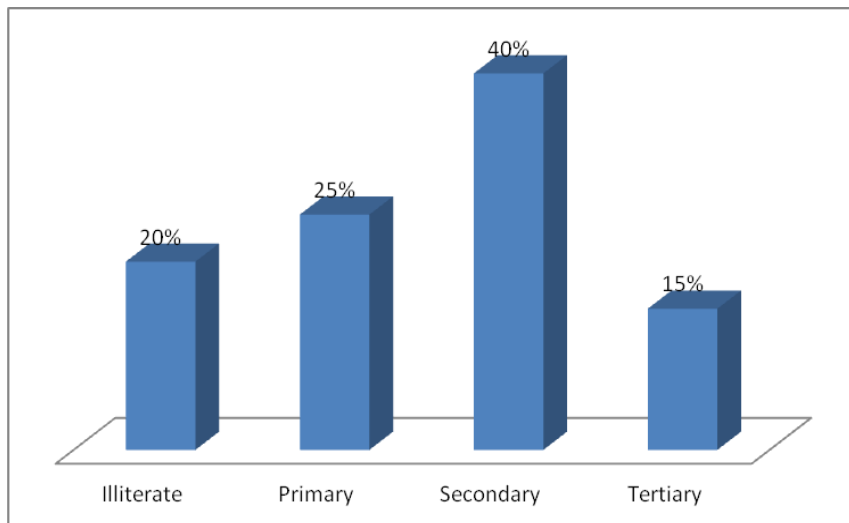
Figure 4.2. Age bracket of Respondents



Source: Primary Data 2022

The figure from above reveals that 15% of the respondents contacted for this research are within the age bracket of 15 – 25 years, 30% within 25 – 35 years, 45% within 35 – 45 years and 10% within 45 years and above.

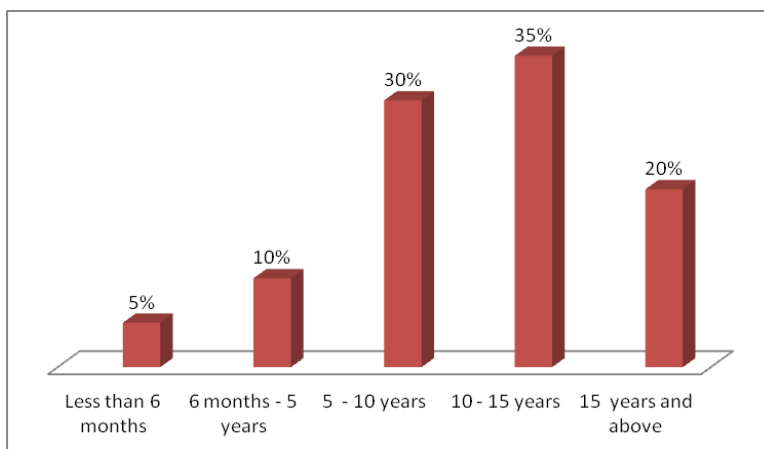
Figure 4.3. Educational level of Respondents



Source: Primary Data 2022

The figure above reveals that 20% of the respondents contacted for this research are illiterate, 25% had a primary education, 40% had a secondary education and 15% had tertiary education.

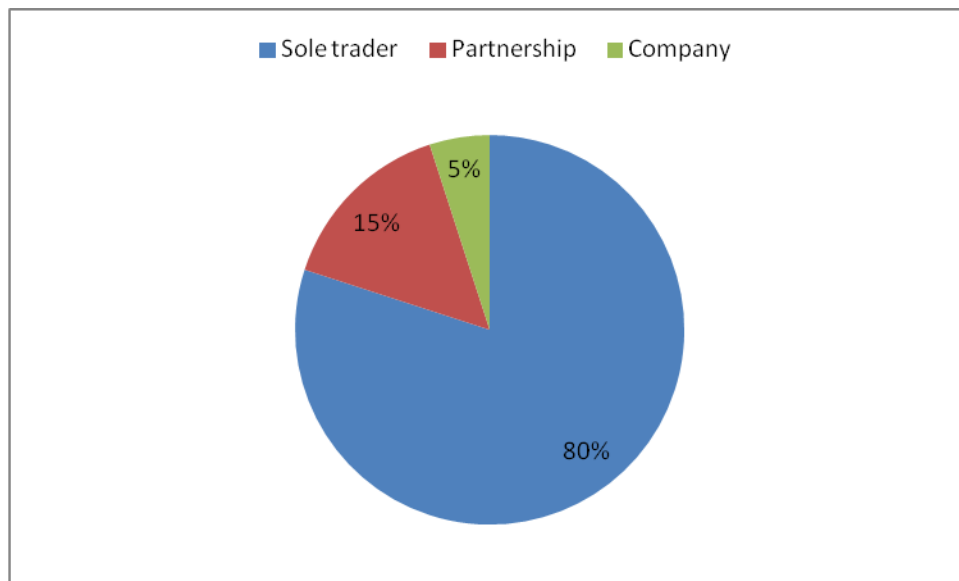
Figure 4.4. Duration of Business



Source: Primary Data 2022

The figure above reveals that 5% of the respondents contacted for this research indicated less than 6 months, 10% indicated between 6 months – 5 years, 30% between 5 – 10 years, 35% between 10 – 15 years and 20% between 15 years and above.

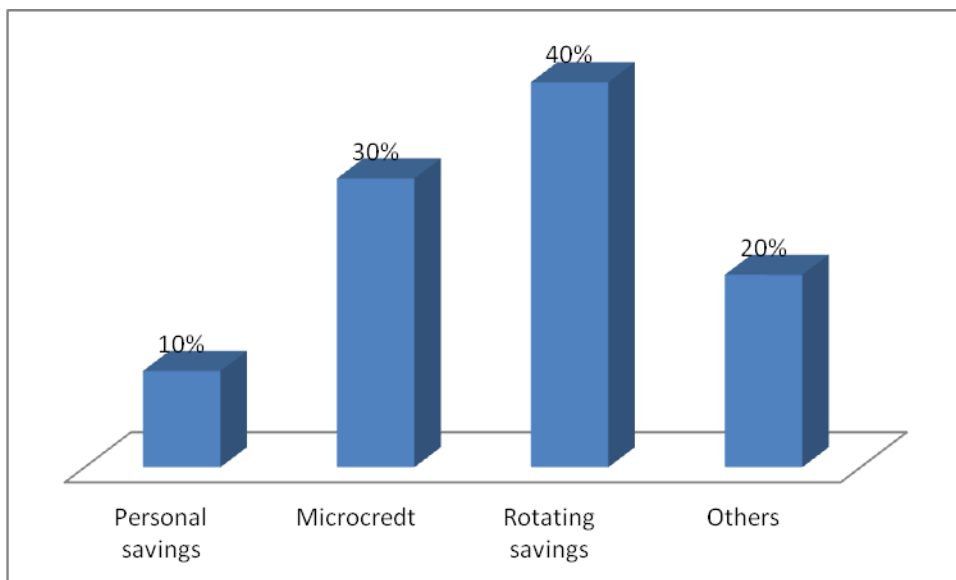
Figure 4.5. Ownership Status



Source: Primary Data 2022

It was revealed that 80% of the ownership of street traders businesses are sole traders, 15% indicated partnership and 5% indicated company.

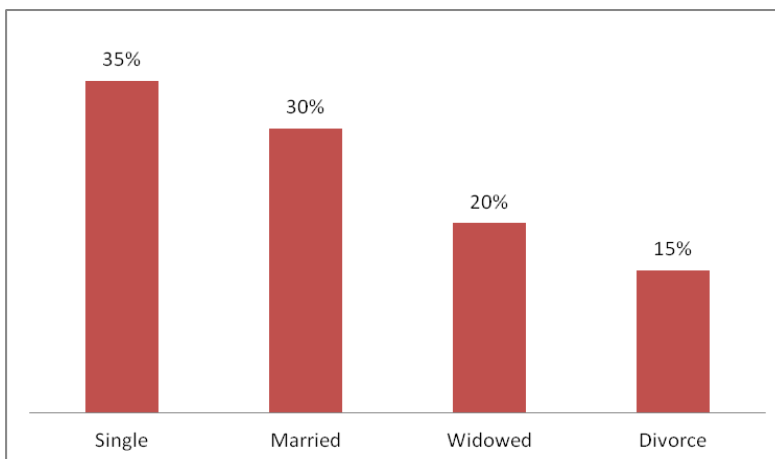
Figure 4.6.Sources of Finance



Source: Primary Data 2022

The figure above reveals that 10% of the sources of income for street traders is from their personal savings, 30% from Microcredit institutions, 40% from rotating savings and 20% from others such bank loan, relatives and friends.

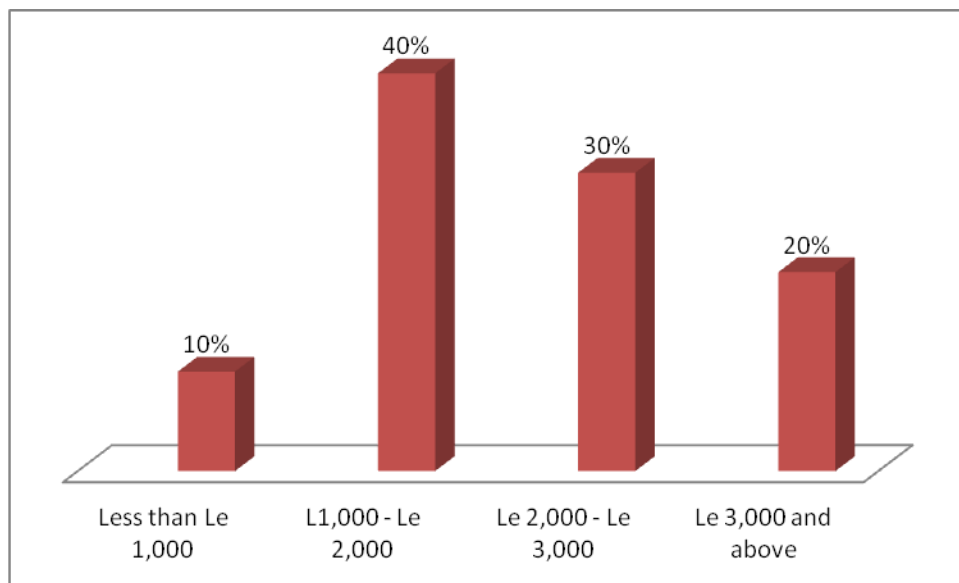
Figure 4.7. Marital Status of Respondents



Source: Primary Data 2022

The figure shows that 35% of the respondents are singles, 30% are married, 20% are widowed and 15% are divorcees.

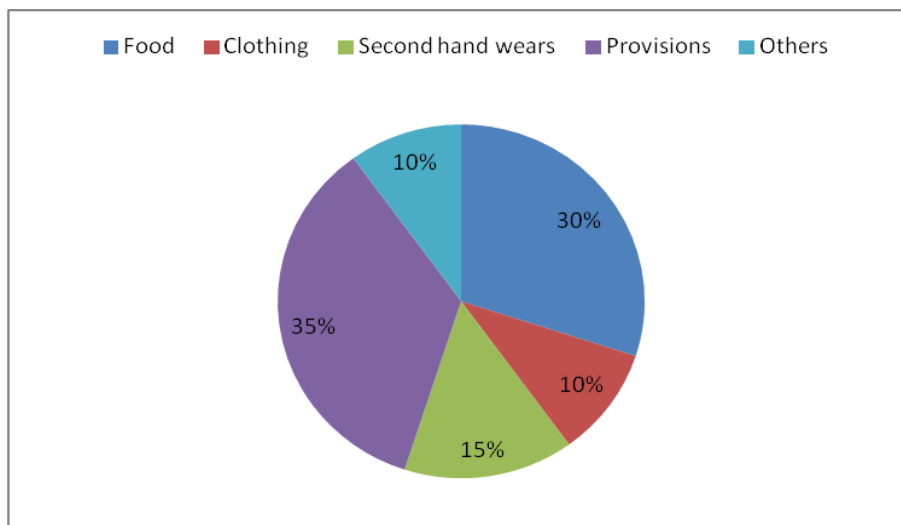
Figure 4.8. Approximately Weekly Profit



Source: Primary Data 2022

The figure above shows that 10% of the street traders approximate weekly income is less than Le 1,000, 40% is between Le 1,000 – Le 2,000, 30% is between Le 2,000 – Le 3,000 and 20% is between Le 3,000 and above.

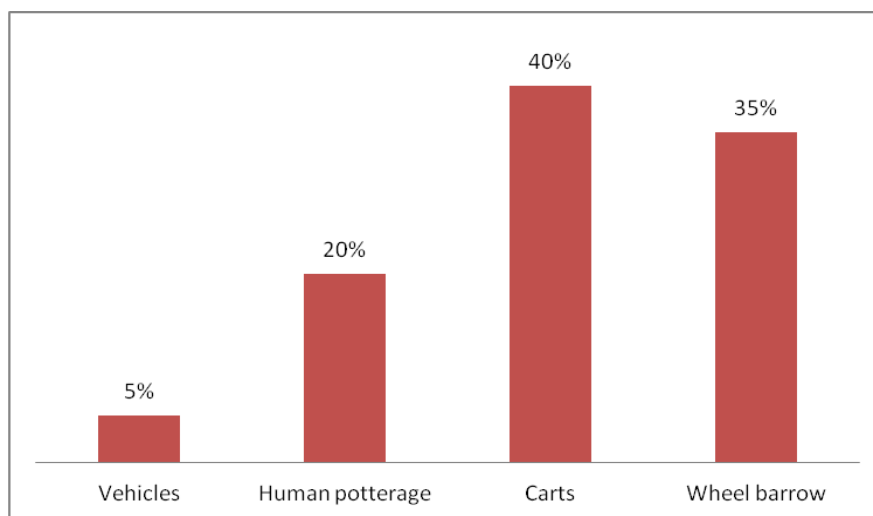
Figure 4.9. Type of Commodities sold



Source: Primary Data 2022

The figure above shows that 30% of the type of commodities sold by street traders is food, 10% is clothing, 35% is provisions, 15% is second hand wears and 10% is others such as open space saloon.

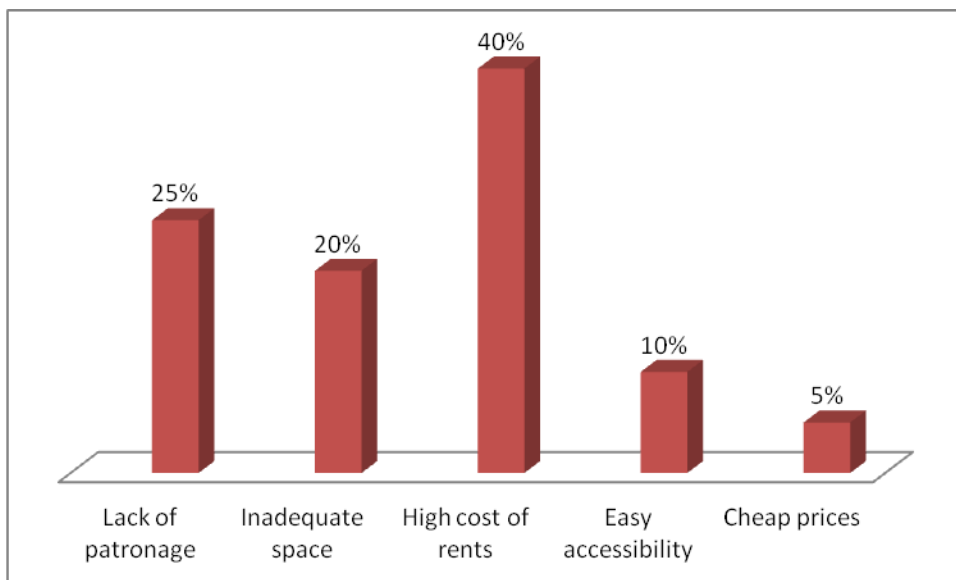
Figure 4.10. Mode of Conveyance of goods



Source: Primary Data 2022

The figure above shows that 5% of the mode of conveyance of goods by street traders is by vehicles, 20% is by human potter age, 40% is by carts and 35% is by wheelbarrows.

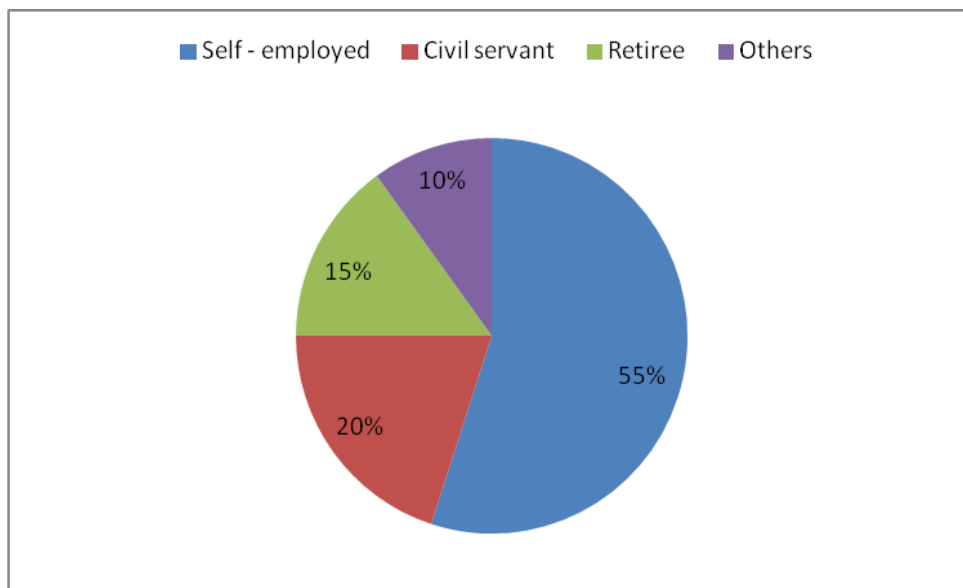
Figure 4.11. Reasons for not using designated shops



Source: Primary Data 2022

The figure above shows that 25% of the street traders indicated lack of patronage as one of the reasons for not using designated shops, 20% indicated inadequate spaces, 40% indicated high cost of rents, 10% indicated easy accessibility and 5% indicated cheap prices.

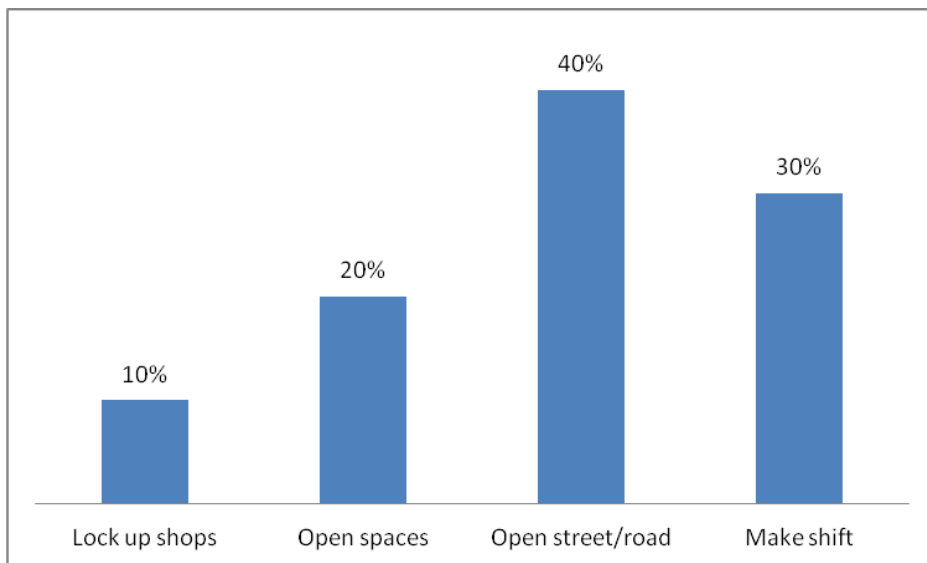
Figure 4.12. Employment Status



Source: Primary Data 2022

The figure above reveals that 55% of the employment status of street traders is self – employed, 20% is civil servant, 15% is retiree and 10% is others such as seasonal traders who are seen in the street during festive seasons.

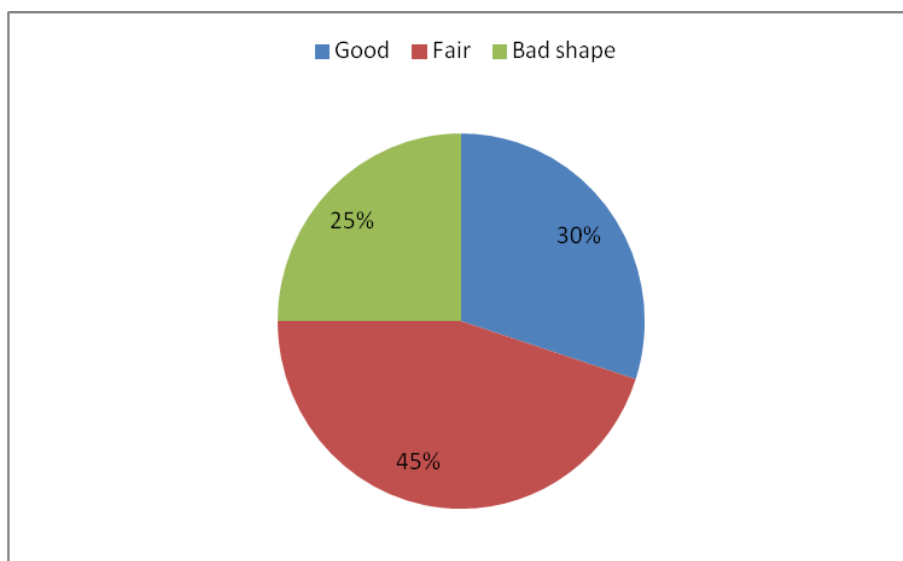
Figure 4.13.Type of Structures



Source: Primary Data 2022

The figure above reveals that 10% of the street traders type of structures are lock up, 20% are open spaces, 40% are open street/road and 30% are make shift.

Figure 4.14.Condition of the Structures



Source: Primary Data 2022

The figure above shows that 30% of the condition of the street traders structures are good, 40% indicated fair and 25% indicated in bad shape.

Figure 4.15. Factors responsible for the patronage of street trading in Freetown Municipality (Strongly Disagree, Disagree,Neutral,Agree and Strongly Agree)

No	Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	T
1	Availability	20 (5%)	30 (7.5%)	30 (7.5%)	80 (20%)	240 (60%)	400 (100%)
2	Affordability	20 (5%)	25 (6.25%)	35 (8.25%)	80 (20%)	240 (60%)	400 (100%)
3	Location	30 (7.5%)	40 (10%)	60 (15%)	70 (17.5%)	200 (50%)	400 (100%)
4	Cost	40 (10%)	50 (12.5%)	10 (2.5%)	80 (20%)	220 (55%)	400 (100%)
5	Proximity	20 (5%)	25 (6.25%)	40 (10%)	85 (21.25%)	230 (57.5%)	400 (100%)
6	Time	20 (5%)	40 (10%)	40 (10%)	50 (12.5%)	250 (62.5%)	400 (100%)
7	New items	20 (5%)	25 (6.25%)	45 (11.25%)	90 (22.5%)	220 (55%)	400 (100%)
8	Marketability	40 (10%)	20 (5%)	50 (12.5%)	80 (20%)	210 (52.5%)	400 (100%)
9	Handiness	60 (15%)	40 (10%)	30 (7.5%)	80 (20%)	190 (47.5%)	400 (100%)
10	Convenience	30 (7.5%)	50 (12.5%)	40 (10%)	80 (20%)	200 (50%)	400 (100%)
11	Attractiveness	70 (17.5%)	30 (7.5%)	45 (11.25%)	75 (18.75%)	180 (45%)	400 (100%)
12	Comfort	40 (10%)	50 (12.5%)	50 (12.5%)	70 (17.5%)	190 (47.5%)	400 (100%)
13	Customer care	230 (57.5%)	25 (6.25%)	55 (13.75%)	50 (12.5%)	40 (10%)	400 (100%)

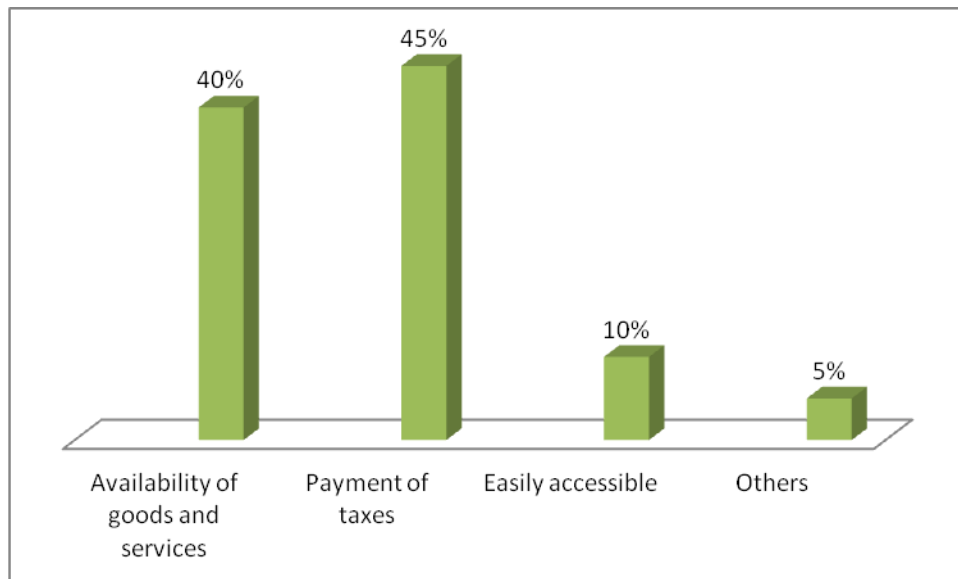
Source: Primary Data 2022

The table above highlighted the responses from street traders in relations to the factors responsible for the patronage of street trading.

With regards to availability, 5% indicated strongly disagree, 7.5% indicated disagree, 7.5% indicated neutral, 20% indicated agree and 60% indicated strongly agree. With regards to affordability, 5% indicated strongly disagree, 6.25% indicated disagree, 8.25%

indicated neutral,20% indicated agree and 60% indicated strongly agree. With regards to location, 7.5% indicated strongly disagree, 10% indicated disagree, 15% indicated neutral, 17.5% indicated agree and 50% indicated strongly agree. With regards to 10% indicated strongly disagree, 12.5% indicated disagree, 2.5% indicated neutral, 20% indicated agree and 55% indicated strongly agree. With regards to proximity, 5% indicated strongly disagree, 6.25% indicated disagree, 10% indicated neutral, 21.25% indicated agree and 57.5% indicated strongly agree. With regards to time,, 5% indicated strongly disagree, 10% indicated disagree, 10% indicated neutral,12.5% indicated agree and 62.5% indicated strongly agree. With regards to new items, 5% indicated strongly disagree, 6.25% indicated disagree,11.25% indicated neutral,22.5% indicated agree and 55% indicated strongly agree. With regards to marketability, 10% indicated strongly disagree, 5% indicated disagree,12.5% indicated neutral,20% indicated agree and 52.5% indicated strongly agree. With regards to handiness, 15% indicated strongly disagree,10% indicated disagree,7.5% indicated neutral,20% indicated agree and 47.5% indicated strongly agree.With regards to convenience, 7.5% indicated strongly disagree,12.5% indicated disagree,10% indicated neutral,20% indicated agree and 50% indicated strongly agree. With regards to attractiveness, 17.5% indicated strongly agree, 7.5% indicated disagree,11.25% indicated neutral. 18.75% indicated agree and 45% indicated strongly agree. With regards to comfort, 10% indicated strongly disagree, 12.5% indicated disagree,12.5% indicated neutral, 17.5% indicated agree and 47.5% indicated strongly agree. With regards to customer care, 57.5% indicated strongly disagree, 6.25% indicated disagree,13.5% indicated neutral, 12.5% indicated agree and 10% indicated

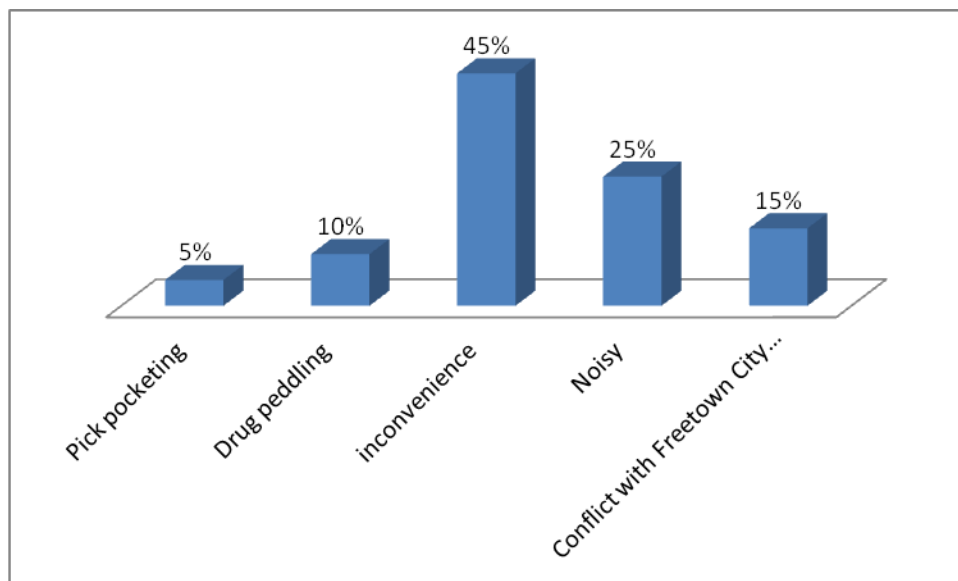
Figure 4.16. Economic Impacts



Source: Primary Data 2022

The figure above reveals that 40% of the economic impact of street trading is availability of goods and services in the market, 45% is payment of taxes to the government through the Freetown City Council, 10% is easily accessible and 5% is others such as hiking of prices at the expense of the buyers.

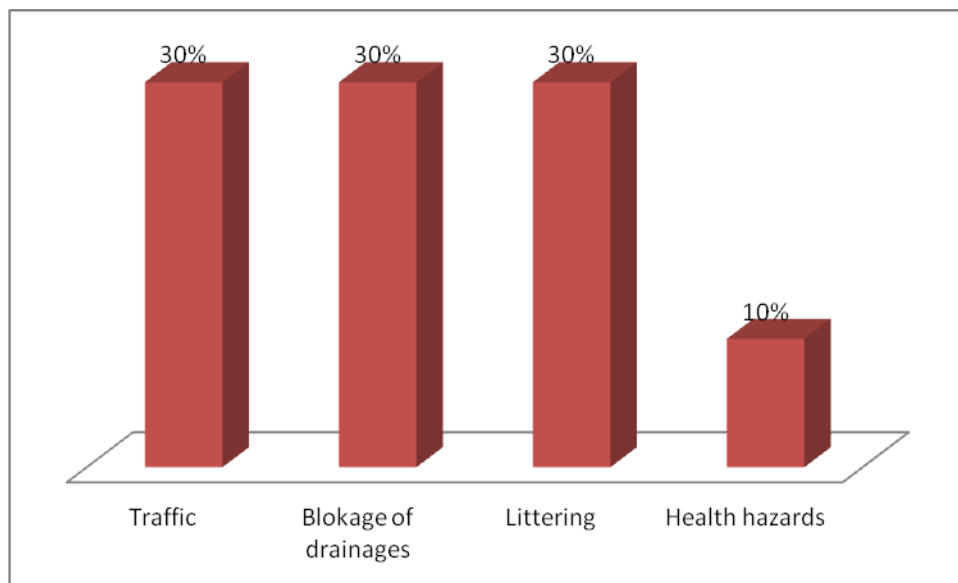
Figure 4.17.Social Impact



Source: Primary Data 2022

The figure above shows that 5% indicated pick – pocketing as one of the social impacts of street trading on Freetown Municipality, 10% indicated drug peddling, 45% indicated inconvenience to the general public, 25% indicated noisy and 15% indicated conflict with Freetown City Council Police.

Figure 4.18 .Environmental Impact



Source: Primary Data 2022

The figure above reveals that 30% of the environmental impacts of street trading on Freetown Municipality is traffic congestion, 30% is blockage of drainages, 30% is littering and 10% is health hazards to the environment and traders themselves.

FINDINGS

Based on the data analysis, it was found out that majority of the street traders are women with 60%, majority of them are within the age bracket between 35 – 45 years with 45%, majority had a secondary education with 40%, majority of them have spent between 10 – 15 years in street trading with 35%, majority of the street traders are sole traders or petty traders with 80%, their major source of finance for their businesses is from rotating savings normally called “Osusu”. Majority are singles with 35%, their weekly profit is approximately within Le 1,000 – Le 2,000 with 40%, major commodities sold in the street is food which consist of vegetables, ice water ,boiled eggs etc with 35%, the cart is the major mode of conveying their goods with 40%. Due to the high cost of rents they preferred trading in the street with 40%, 55% of these street traders are singles, 40% of their structures are open street/road. 45% of the condition of their structures are fair, strongly agree that availability, affordability, location, cost, proximity, time, new items, marketability, handiness, convenience, attractiveness, comfort are the major reasons responsible for the patronage of street trading and strongly disagree with customer care with 57.5%. Payment of taxes which contribute to national development and making available of goods and services in the market are their major economic impacts on the Freetown Municipality. Socially, their presence in the street causes inconvenience for the public with 45% and environmentally, their presence in the street causes traffic congestion, blockage of drainages and littering with 30% respectively..

CONCLUSION

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Key points are established in this paper; First Street trading in Freetown Municipality is poverty alleviation which has to be publicly recognized and appreciated. Secondly, street traders need to be supported by giving free entrepreneurship education to the traders and thirdly, the activity has to be officially regulated in favour of traders and public as a whole. Street trading has benefits to traders and others. The major reasons for them being in street is the high cost of rents and which a good number of them cannot afford, their low level of education is having negative effects on the business.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the researcher offers some policy recommendations. Though they are context- specific to Freetown Municipality and thus may hold beyond the current study area.

1. Government to encourage training institutions to provide entrepreneurship training for these street traders which will enable them to grow and expand their business. This may create employment for the youths and poverty eradication.
2. Street traders are to be involved in the plan for youth entrepreneurship education.
3. Street trading is a means of livelihood for some people and therefore, should be considered for inclusive physical planning for economic sustainability of the urban poor.
4. Policy measures that incorporate design of trading space for the street traders may be of assistance to solve the problems of street trading activities.
5. Government to regulate between the activities of wholesaling and retailing so that there is a distinction between the two. As long wholesalers are retailing it will be difficult to regulate street trading.
6. Building formal market structures will be appreciated by the street traders if only wholesalers are not retailing which deprive them of customer and will prevent them from the patronage of structures as in the case of Krootown Road as an example.
7. Politicians should not see the street traders as campaign tools by telling them vote for our party we will not remove you from the street and once the party is in power finds it difficult to regulate them.
8. Ministry of Health and Trade to enforce the cleaning of these streets where the daily trading activities are transacted with strong penalties for defaulters
9. Street and informal traders require laws that recognize their economic activities as an important component of the city economy, and ensure their right to trading space.
10. Freetown City Council to develop areas like Lumley, Shell Company and Wellington more attractive for business to encourage traders to concentrate their rather than converging to PZ on a daily bases

11. The market dues collected should be put into physical development such building of public toilets for the traders to benefit from.

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