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Lived Experiences, Survival Strategies, and Aspirations of Street Food Vendors: Basis for Policy Framework and Economic Planning

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study using a phenomenological approach explored the lived experiences, survival strategies, and aspirations of street food vendors in Kalibo, Aklan, providing a basis for policy frameworks and economic planning. Sixteen participants were purposively selected based on established inclusion criteria, ensuring rich and relevant insights. Data were collected through an in-depth interview and analyzed using the thematic analysis framework of Braun and Clarke (2006). Findings indicate that, in terms of their lived experiences, vendors cope with economic challenges, daily concerns and struggles, family life and responsibilities, physical and emotional experiences, and sources of inspiration and motivation, which collectively shape their day-to-day survival and resilience in street vending. Street food vendors' survival strategies manage financial adaptation, resourcefulness in business operations, and social and informal dynamics. Vendors' aspirations encompassed not only economic stability and business growth but also family-centered aspirations, aspirations for stability, and improved quality of life. The study underscores the need for multidimensional interventions ranging from securing permanent vending space, conflict with the authorities, financial literacy, and skill development to social support, like event-driven income opportunities that strengthen both the economic and well-being of the street food vendors. This multidimensional support framework for street food vendors may enhance resilience, promote inclusive urban development, and support long-term livelihood sustainability in Kalibo, Aklan.

INTRODUCTION

The food business industry has consistently proven to be one of the most resilient and dynamic sectors in the Philippine economy. Despite economic uncertainties, tight competition, and shifting consumer preferences, this sector continues to thrive and evolve, providing employment, supporting local producers, and offering diverse food options to consumers. Among the many segments of the food industry, one particularly vibrant and enduring sector is the street food trade. Often overlooked in formal economic discussions, this informal enterprise caters to a wide range of consumers across socio-economic classes. As noted by Masigan (2019), the food business remains a dominant and influential economic force in the country, providing employment, supporting local producers, and offering diverse food options to consumers. As defined by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO, 2017), street food refers to "ready-to-eat food and beverages prepared and sold in streets and other similar public places." Characterized by accessibility, affordability, and convenience, street food vending is primarily conducted by small-scale vendors who sell their goods in public spaces such as sidewalks, parks, transit stations, and street corners. It offers not only an affordable food option but also a critical source of livelihood for many Filipinos.

The rise of street food vending, however, is not unique to the Philippines. Globally, particularly in developing countries, this form of trade has emerged as a vital

strategy for both economic survival and food accessibility. Alimi (2016) emphasizes that street food vending is often a response to limited formal employment opportunities, allowing individuals to participate in the economy through relatively low-cost business ventures. As part of the informal economy, street food vending may not be formally recognized, but its contributions to household incomes and urban food systems are substantial.

In the Philippine context, street food vending is highly visible in urban centers such as Metro Manila, Cebu, and Davao, where it serves as both an affordable source of food and a vital livelihood for individuals excluded from the formal labor market. Popular items such as fish balls, kwek-kwek, barbeque, and lugaw reflect local culture while providing income opportunities, particularly for economically disadvantaged individuals and women (Perez *et al.*, 2021).

Despite its importance, the street food sector remains marginalized in policy and economic planning. Vendors often face precarious conditions, including limited access to capital, inadequate sanitation facilities, insecure vending spaces, and inconsistent or punitive regulation (Roever & Skinner, 2016).

Nevertheless, street food vendors continue to demonstrate resilience by adopting survival strategies such as product diversification, price adjustments, customer relationship-building, and strategic relocation. These adaptive practices highlight vendors' practical understanding of informal market dynamics, a form of knowledge that remains

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largely undervalued in formal economic discourse (Alimi, 2016).

A significant knowledge gap exists in the lack of phenomenological studies that give street food vendors a voice. Many policy discussions and development plans are formulated based on secondary data or institutional perspectives, with minimal engagement with vendors' own narratives and the meanings they attach to their experiences. Consequently, the perspectives of vendors, especially regarding what support they perceive as most relevant and sustainable, remain underrepresented in policy formulation and local economic planning.

Within this context, the present study aligns with several United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 1 (No Poverty), as street food vending is a critical livelihood strategy for individuals and households seeking to escape poverty. The study also supports SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) by highlighting the role of street food vendors in enhancing food accessibility and affordability, especially for urban populations. Moreover, the research contributes to SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) by examining the conditions of informal employment and advocating for inclusive economic planning that recognizes and protects informal workers. Additionally, the study relates to SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) by addressing the integration of street vendors into urban development and local governance frameworks.

Against the backdrop of economic hardship, social exclusion, and entrepreneurial resilience, this study examines the lived experiences, survival strategies, and aspirations of street food vendors, seeking to humanize a workforce that is often overlooked. Despite their visibility in urban spaces, street vendors are seldom afforded the opportunity to share their perspectives; thus, this phenomenological inquiry amplifies their voices and highlights the realities of their everyday lives.

Guided by this purpose, the present study explores the lived experiences, survival strategies, and aspirations of street food vendors in Kalibo, Aklan, Philippines.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The daily lives of street food vendors are complex and often difficult, as shown by studies that closely examine their experiences. Their days usually start very early, as they prepare food and set up their stalls. This work can be tough on their bodies (Curran *et al.*, 2024). They work in different city spots and must constantly negotiate their space and territory with city workers, other vendors, and people walking by (Solidum, 2023).

This means finding the best spot to be seen, following unspoken rules with other vendors, and sometimes moving quickly to avoid trouble. Talking with people is a big part of their job. Vendors build friendly relationships with their regular customers, who often become like friends or family. These talks are more than just about buying and selling; they often include friendly chats, sharing stories, and helping each other out. These

connections can be a huge source of support for the vendors (Curran *et al.*, 2024).

Street vendors are very adaptable and resourceful, dealing with money problems by changing how they do business and using help from informal social groups. This shows how important it is to build ways for them to cope. Community ties are also vital, offering money, shared items, and emotional support. While government help is not always steady, aid like money, training, or better facilities can make a big difference. Finally, having loyal customers helps their businesses succeed (Carel *et al.*, 2024).

The study of Hidalgo *et al.* (2022) examined the vulnerability of street food vendors, who work informally and have little protection against events such as typhoons. The research found that overall, vendors face a moderate level of risk. Key factors that make them vulnerable include their shelter type, business losses, risk management, and financial situation. However, their strong social ties with customers are a major help. This study developed a new way to measure the vulnerability of informal businesses, focusing on their ability to keep operating even in the face of problems.

In Adhikari's (2017) study, income generation is the main finding: labour supply has a highly significant impact on respondents' income. This confirms that increased investment leads to higher income for vendors. Education level also plays a vital role in generating income from street vending.

Beyond their daily work, street food vendors are deeply tied to the culture and community of cities. In many places, street food is more than just something to eat; it is a big part of local identity, showcasing traditional recipes and cooking styles (Chakravorti, 2024). Vendors often help keep these food traditions alive by making and selling their dishes. They also make public places feel more lively and exciting.

Health and safety concerns are very important, not just for the vendors but also for the people buying their food. Vendors often lack adequate handwashing facilities and proper food safety training. This can increase the risk of foodborne illness (Salamandane *et al.*, 2023). Socially, even though vending gives them freedom, it can also make them feel left out because their work isn't formal, and some people might look down on them. But the strong friendships among vendors often help them feel less alone (Solidum, 2023).

Romero *et al.* (2024) examined street vendors, why they choose the job despite the lack of official rules and support, and how they overcome these challenges. The study found that vendors face financial difficulties, family responsibilities, competition, health issues, and regulatory constraints. To cope, they manage debt, adapt their businesses, get help from their communities, and stay emotionally strong. Based on these findings, the paper suggests a plan to help vendors, including making vending legal, providing financial and health support, improving enforcement of rules, and encouraging public

understanding of vendors' important role in the city. A study by Alemayehu and Zhang (2023) found that vendors rely heavily on various social relationships to secure housing, food, good vending spots, start and grow businesses, save money, and maintain social ties. These connections also help them ensure their families' well-being, gain mutual protection, and keep their goods safe. The study suggests that government and non-profit groups should work together to support vendors through these existing social networks to improve their lives. Based on their findings and conclusions, the study of Ovharhe *et al.* (2023) contributes to the knowledge that business creation could be achieved by practicing lean entrepreneurship on value creation, value capture, and wealth creation. According to Chaudhari (2026), the special inclusion of social entrepreneurship was desired. It was also found that mere intention will not result in action.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Methodological Perspectives

This study utilized a phenomenological research design. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), phenomenology serves as a qualitative research method that aims to explore and describe how individuals experience a particular phenomenon in their daily lives. This study sought to uncover the meaning and essence of lived experiences through the participants' own narratives and perspectives. This approach was widely used across the social sciences, psychology, education, and health, particularly when the research goal was to understand human experiences in depth. In qualitative research, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability are considered the counterparts to internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity. These criteria ensure the quality and trustworthiness of qualitative research findings, as discussed by Merriam and Tisdell (2016). The phenomenological research design was particularly appropriate for this study because it enabled an in-depth exploration of a specific, real-world phenomenon in its natural context. By focusing on the lived experiences, survival strategies, and aspirations of street food vendors in Kalibo, Aklan, the design enabled the researcher to delve into the daily realities of individuals operating in the informal economy. This approach enabled us to understand how these vendors coped with challenges, made sense of their roles in society, and envisioned their futures. It also facilitated a comprehensive understanding of the emotional, economic, and social dimensions of their work, offering practical and human-centered insights grounded in their personal stories.

Context of the Study

The primary goal of the study was to gain a deep, contextual understanding of how street food vendors experience their everyday realities, navigate socio-economic challenges, and envision their future within the local setting.

The study specifically focused on four (4) key areas. First, the lived experiences, which encompassed the day-to-day realities of street food vendors, their motivations for selling, interactions with customers and local authorities, and the personal and professional meanings they attached to their work. Second, the survival strategies, highlighting the various ways vendors sustained their livelihoods despite financial instability, limited formal support, and market competition. These strategies included resourcefulness, reliance on community support, adaptability, and effective time management. Third, the aspirations, which revealed how street food vendors envisioned their futures whether through business expansion, educational opportunities for their children, or personal fulfillment and how these aspirations shaped their daily efforts and resilience. Finally, the fourth focus, Formulation of a Policy Resolution for Street Food Vendors, sought to translate the findings from the first three areas into actionable recommendations. This involved identifying key needs and challenges faced by vendors and proposing a multidimensional support framework to guide local policies, programs, and interventions aimed at improving the welfare and sustainability of street food vending in the community.

This qualitative study aimed to highlight the unique experiences and inner resilience of street food vendors in Kalibo, Aklan. By examining how they coped with daily hardships, faced challenges, developed survival mechanisms, and nurtured personal aspirations, the study contributed to a deeper understanding of the informal sector. The findings offered valuable insights for academic inquiry and for policymakers, local stakeholders, and advocacy groups seeking to support and empower small-scale informal workers in similar contexts.

Participants of the Study

The participants consisted of 16 individuals, carefully selected to provide a comprehensive understanding of street food vending in Kalibo. Among these, 10 were street food vendors who shared their personal experiences and insights. To validate the findings, two (2) customers, two (2) family members of vendors, and two (2) local government or regulatory officials were included. Among the 10 street food vendors, one was interviewed via Google Meet, with the panel serving as witnesses. These individuals have been purposively selected based on specific inclusion criteria to ensure their experiences, strategies, and aspirations are relevant to the research objectives.

To be included in the study, participants must meet the following qualifications: (1) Must be the owner or renter and primary operator of a street food vending cart; (2) they must have been engaged in street food vending for a minimum of three (3) continuous years; (3) they must currently be operating within the geographical boundaries of Kalibo and express a willingness to participate in a semi-structured, in-depth interview; and (4) they must be earning at least PhP 10,000.00 per month from their

street food vending activities.

The rationale for selecting vendors with at least three years of experience was to ensure that participants had established a sustained livelihood in street food vending and could therefore provide deeper insights into long-term coping mechanisms, business adaptation, and future aspirations. In addition, the inclusion of a minimum income threshold emphasized the study's focus on vendors who depend on their enterprise as their primary source of livelihood.

Research Instrument

The research instruments used in this study included a semi-structured interview guide, one-on-one interviews, note-taking, video, and audio recording. These tools were chosen to allow for an in-depth exploration of the lived experiences, survival strategies, and aspirations of street food vendors in Kalibo, Aklan. The development and validation of the interview guide followed a structured and collaborative process. Initially, the interview questions were formulated based on insights gathered from existing literature and phenomenological research. The research instrument guide was reviewed by an advisory committee, an examining committee, and one research expert and one specialization expert from Aklan to ensure proper checks and balances. This review process aimed to confirm that the questions were clear, relevant, appropriately worded, and aligned with standards of validity and reliability.

To ensure linguistic and cultural appropriateness, the validated interview guide was translated into Akeanon by local language expert(s). This ensured that participants who were more fluent in their native dialect fully understood the interview questions and actively engaged with them. During the interviews, either the Akeanon or English version of the guide was used based on the participant's preference. The use of a validated interview guide, supported by detailed field notes, participant observation, and video recordings, allowed the researcher to collect rich, authentic, and meaningful data. These instruments worked together to facilitate a deep understanding of the everyday realities of street food vendors in Kalibo, Aklan.

Data Gathering Procedure

The data were gathered through face-to-face, semi-structured interviews with the participants. The interviews were conducted at mutually agreed-upon locations within the Municipality of Kalibo, Aklan, where the street food vendors felt comfortable and safe to share their experiences. The following steps were undertaken by the researcher during the data-gathering process.

In the preliminary phase, the researcher first sought formal permission from the Office of the Municipal Mayor of Kalibo to access or identify potential participants who met the study's inclusion criteria. Invitation letters were prepared for qualified vendors, briefly explaining the research objectives, the voluntary nature of participation, and the confidentiality of their responses. These letters

were accompanied by informed consent forms detailing the nature of the study, participants' right to withdraw at any time, and assurances of anonymity. Prior to data collection, approval to conduct the study was also secured from the College of Education Dean's Office, and ethical clearance was obtained, as required by the institution.

The interview guide was constructed by the researcher and validated by experts in qualitative research and social sciences. The researcher also prepared materials, including an audio-video recorder, a field notebook for observational notes, and printed interview guides. All research tools were tested and reviewed prior to the scheduled interviews.

Data Gathering Process

The individual interviews were conducted over a scheduled period, depending on the participants' availability. Each session began with a short introduction and a reiteration of ethical guidelines. The researcher built rapport to foster trust and encourage openness among the participants. With their permission, the interviews were audio-recorded, and relevant observations such as tone, emotions, and body language were noted. Each interview lasted approximately 40 minutes to more than one hour.

The interviews were conducted in the participants' preferred language or dialect. At the end of each session, the researcher thanked the participants and provided a token of appreciation. All interview sessions were documented, and the audio files and field notes were properly stored for transcription and analysis.

Following data collection, the researcher transcribed each recorded interview verbatim, with support from a language expert to ensure accuracy and cultural nuance. These transcripts served as the primary data source for analysis and were carefully examined in preparation for thematic coding. Throughout the process, all materials were securely stored, and participants' identities were consistently anonymized.

For the qualitative data collected in this study, Braun and Clarke's (2019) updated thematic analysis framework was utilized.

The first step of the process involved familiarization with the data. The researcher carefully reviewed the transcribed narratives multiple times to fully immerse herself in the participants' experiences and develop a comprehensive understanding of the content. This repeated reading helped identify initial patterns and develop a holistic sense of the lived realities of street food vendors. Next, the researcher generated initial codes by systematically identifying significant segments of the data that were relevant to the research questions. These segments were assigned descriptive codes to facilitate organization and interpretation. Coding allowed the researcher to break down the narratives into smaller, analytically useful units. After the coding process, the researcher identified emerging themes by analyzing relationships among codes and clustering similar codes together. These emerging

themes represented recurring ideas and experiences shared by participants regarding their daily lives, survival strategies, and future aspirations. The fourth phase involved reviewing and refining the themes. This step ensured that the themes were coherent, internally consistent, and well supported by the data. Themes were examined for overlap, clarity, and alignment with the overall dataset and research objectives, and adjustments were made as needed to improve thematic accuracy and distinctiveness. In the fifth phase, the researcher defined and named the themes. Each theme was clearly described, with careful attention to its unique characteristics and significance within the study's context. This provided a strong foundation for interpreting the findings in a meaningful and accessible manner. Finally, the researcher conducted the final analysis and produced the report.

Ethical Consideration

The researcher took deliberate steps to ensure that participants in the study, the street food vendors in Kalibo, Aklan, were not exposed to any form of physical, psychological, or emotional harm. Prior to participation, all vendors were fully informed of the study's objectives, procedures, and potential risks. The researcher carefully avoided questions or activities that could lead to discomfort, particularly when discussing sensitive topics such as income insecurity, personal hardships, or future uncertainties.

A written consent form was used to document voluntary participation and confirm that participants understood their rights, including the right to refuse or withdraw from the study at any time without consequences. This process ensured that participation was voluntary and informed.

Participants' identities were not disclosed in the final report or in any form of data presentation. Each respondent was assigned a pseudonym or code to protect privacy. All data, whether audio-recorded or transcribed, was securely stored in password-protected digital folders and locked physical storage, accessible only to the researcher.

During data collection, the researcher employed ethical interviewing techniques to build trust and maintain mutual respect with participants. Leading or suggestive questions were avoided, and participants were encouraged to express their thoughts and experiences freely without fear of judgment or coercion. The interview settings were designed to be comfortable, private, and non-threatening, allowing vendors to speak openly about their lived experiences, challenges, and aspirations.

The researcher also engaged in participant validation to ensure the ethical accuracy and authenticity of the findings. After the initial data analysis, participants were given the opportunity to review and validate the researcher's interpretations of their responses to clarify any misinterpretations and confirm that their perspectives were accurately represented. In addition, a brief post-interview debriefing was conducted, during which participants could ask questions and gain a clearer understanding of how their contributions informed the

study. This level of transparency strengthened trust and reinforced ethical collaboration.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Lived Experiences of the Street Food Vendors

There were six (6) themes that emerged in the lived experience as per the thematic analysis, namely: economic challenges, daily concerns and struggles, family life and responsibilities, management and adaptation strategies, physical and emotional experiences and sources of inspiration and motivation.

The vending of street food in Aklan, Kalibo, is determined by different financial challenges that greatly affect the stability of the livelihoods of the vendors. The results indicated that one of the most urgent issues for the participants is the problem of the economy, since it has a direct impact on whether they can continue their daily functioning, help their families, and strategize the future. In spite of their ambitions and efforts, vendors frequently cannot get a stable income, control the costs, and survive in the circumstances of a variable market. They experienced unpredictable income, limited capital, high cost of raw materials and daily expenses, and debt and loans. These issues indicate how vulnerable street food vendors are economically and show that they should be more supported, become more stable, and have more chances to develop their finances.

Their narratives demonstrate the constant uncertainty vendors face, requiring them to endure days of little or no income or to seek alternative sources of income. The interviewees' accounts indicate that unpredictable income is a key economic challenge for street food sellers. Earnings are heavily influenced by external factors such as school timetables, community events, and traffic flow that vendors cannot control. Even minor changes in foot traffic can significantly reduce sales, leaving vendors with days of minimal or no income. This inconsistency compels them to adapt constantly, either by surviving on low-income days, finding alternative sources of revenue, or hoping for better sales in the future. Beyond affecting daily subsistence, unpredictable income limits their ability to save, invest, or plan financially. In short, this theme reflects a livelihood characterized by uncertainty, vulnerability, and continuous adaptation to external conditions beyond the vendors' control.

These qualitative experiences are supported by Adami *et al.* (2025), who also found that vendors located on university campuses are highly reliant on student availability, which is why the influence of classes and academic years on daily revenue is described. Also, Carel *et al.* (2024) noted that economic instability is a chronic problem for street vendors, who must constantly adjust to fluctuating customer traffic and unpredictable sales. The results demonstrate that the income of street food vendors in Kalibo is inherently unstable and shaped by constant uncertainty, compelling them to continuously adjust to external social and environmental conditions such as school schedules, community activities, and

customer flow over which they have little control.

Street food vending involves a variety of daily concerns and struggles that shape how vendors operate and sustain their livelihoods, such as weather dependence, maintaining cleanliness, competition, and difficulty securing a vending space. These challenges reflect the demanding nature of vending work and the vulnerability of vendors to factors beyond their control. The findings revealed that weather dependence was a critical daily struggle for street food vendors, as their sales were highly sensitive to rainfall, storms, and fluctuations in the presence of students and employees. Operating in informal or semi-exposed settings, vendors were unable to fully protect their stalls, products, or customers from harsh weather conditions. Consequently, their income became unstable and unpredictable. They sometimes experienced days without earnings, customer flow drastically decreased even with light rain, and extreme weather events, intensified by climate change, further amplified their financial vulnerability.

These qualitative experiences are supported by Aspacio *et al.* (2024), who found that women fish vendors in outdoor markets face reduced working hours and spoilage of perishable goods due to weather conditions such as heat, wind, rain, and cold, making it difficult to sustain a stable income. Similarly, Sepadi (2025), in a systematic review of informal street vendors across multiple regions, including Asia, highlighted that climate-driven events and extreme weather repeatedly disrupt operations and create economic instability. A locale, specific study in Durban, South Africa, also reported that flooding and heavy rainfall were statistically associated with income loss among street vendors, Mkhize and Cele (2025). Meanwhile, StreetNet International (2025) documented that in Southeast Asia, heavy rain, floods, and extreme heat regularly force street vendors to pause or close for the day due to lack of protective infrastructure and social safety nets. Together, these findings demonstrate that the income of street vendors is highly sensitive to environmental conditions, requiring constant adjustment to weather-related challenges beyond their control.

Survival Strategies of Street Food Vendors

Financial sustainability in street food vending relies heavily on vendors' everyday financial decisions to maintain business operations and support their households. The findings reveal that disciplined daily budgeting is a central coping strategy, enabling vendors to secure ingredients, cover household needs, and preserve working capital despite fluctuating sales and recurring expenses. Vendors consistently prioritize essential expenditures, sequence payments strategically, and set aside funds to buffer against predictable and unforeseen costs.

As a collective body of evidence, their narratives indicate that daily budgeting is a central financial adaptation among vendors, one that is deliberately structured to secure working capital, meet household needs, and buffer predictable and unpredictable expenses. Participants'

routines (setting aside fixed capital, dividing weekly receipts, prioritizing ingredients, and keeping emergency reserves) suggest that budgeting practices both reflect and mitigate vulnerability to income shocks. This pattern implies that vendor resilience depends not only on income levels but also on the presence of simple, rule-based financial management strategies. Programmatically, supporting vendors with basic financial literacy, small-scale saving mechanisms, and access to emergency micro-savings could strengthen their ability to maintain capital and reduce the likelihood of business interruption.

These qualitative experiences are supported by Bateman *et al.* (2019), who emphasized that in low-income and informal economic settings, resilience relies heavily on internal coping mechanisms like capital protection, disciplined budgeting, and small but consistent savings rather than external financial assistance, aligning with how participants manage their limited income. Furthermore, the findings of Uddin *et al.* (2021) revealed that households operating small informal enterprises sustain their livelihood by dividing income into functional categories such as food, capital, and emergency savings, which directly reflects the budgeting practices narrated by the street vendors in this study. The results indicate that effective daily budgeting is not only a personal strategy but also a critical economic adaptation that enables micro-entrepreneurs and street vendors to maintain business continuity, safeguard their capital, and meet their household needs despite unstable and limited income sources.

These participants' testimonies indicate that flexible pricing is a deliberate adaptation to both the market and operational realities. Vendors carefully assess customer capacity, competitive pricing, ingredient costs, and unsold inventory to make informed pricing decisions that optimize sales and secure capital. This practice demonstrates that pricing is not fixed but contextually responsive, allowing vendors to manage risk, maintain sales turnover, and enhance affordability for key customer groups.

These experiences are supported by empirical and theoretical studies that highlight the importance of flexible pricing strategies in small and informal food enterprises. Kaur and Bhardwaj (2025) demonstrated through interviews with informal street vendors that pricing decisions are dynamic and responsive to factors such as perishability, customer characteristics, and competitive pressures, emphasizing that adaptive pricing is crucial for maintaining sales and market relevance. Ofosu-Boateng (2019) found that strategies such as bundle pricing and demand-responsive adjustments significantly improve sales performance among street hawkers, illustrating how temporary or strategic price modifications help vendors recover capital and minimize unsold inventory. Garduce *et al.* (2024) revealed that in micro-enterprises like sari-sari stores, pricing that balances cost, customer affordability, and competitive parity directly enhances turnover and revenue stability, indicating that context-sensitive pricing

decisions optimize both sales and customer satisfaction. Collectively, these studies reinforce that flexible pricing is a deliberate and effective strategy that enables small food vendors to manage risk, maintain product turnover, and enhance affordability for key customer groups.

Aspirations of The Street Food Vendors

The aspirations of street food vendors are multifaceted and extend beyond immediate income generation, reflecting broader hopes for economic security, family well-being, and long-term life improvement. Analysis of the narratives revealed three (3) major themes that encapsulate these aspirations: economic and business aspirations, family-centered aspirations, and aspirations for stability and improved quality of life. These themes illustrate how vendors envision a future where their livelihoods are more secure, their families are adequately supported, and their overall living conditions are improved. The themes highlight that the vendors' aspirations are deeply interconnected, as economic goals are pursued not only for business growth but also to fulfill family responsibilities and achieve a more stable and dignified way of life.

The findings indicate that the desire for stable and permanent vending spaces is a central economic aspiration among street food vendors. A fixed and legally recognized location is seen not merely as a physical space, but as a foundation for business continuity, income stability, safety, and dignity. The findings suggest that supportive local policies, designated vending areas, and inclusive urban planning play a critical role in sustaining the livelihoods and economic aspirations of street food vendors in Kalibo, Aklan.

These aspirations for stable and permanent vending spaces are supported by existing research on urban informal economies and livelihood security. Studies on street vending consistently show that access to secure, legally recognized, and well, located vending spaces is a central aspiration among informal vendors, as it directly affects income stability, customer access, and protection from eviction or penalties. Romero *et al.* (2024) found that street vendors in Manila viewed permanent vending locations as essential to sustaining their businesses and reducing daily stress caused by displacement, enforcement actions, and uncertainty. Similarly, a phenomenological study of street vendors in Tacloban City revealed that vendors aspired to designated and regulated vending spaces to ensure predictable earnings, minimize conflict with authorities, and create safer working conditions (Carel *et al.*, 2024). Taken together, these studies reinforce that the aspiration for stable vending locations is not merely about physical space but represents a deeper desire for economic security, dignity, and long-term livelihood sustainability, mirroring the lived aspirations of street food vendors in Kalibo, Aklan.

The findings also indicate that while street food vending provides an immediate and accessible source of income, many vendors do not view it as a permanent or ideal

occupation. Aspirations to transition into more secure or formal employment reflect vendors' recognition of the limitations of informal work, including income instability, lack of social protection, and physical demands. These aspirations reveal a forward-looking orientation toward economic security, upward mobility, and improved quality of life, key components, which centers on the long-term aspirations of street food vendors beyond daily survival. These aspirations align with existing research on informal workers' desire to transition into more secure or formal employment. The International Labour Organization (ILO, 2018) emphasized that workers in the informal economy often aspire to formal employment due to the promise of income stability, labor protection, and social security benefits, which are largely absent in informal vending. In the Philippine context, Asis (2017) noted that many informal workers, including small vendors, view overseas employment as a pathway to economic mobility, driven by wage differentials and the need to support family livelihoods.

Street food vendors' aspirations are also closely tied to the well-being and future of their families. They also aspired for better education for children, improved living conditions, and the health and well-being of the family. These reflect vendors' hopes of achieving a better quality of life for their loved ones through sustained livelihood efforts.

The findings revealed that education is the central aspiration that gives meaning to vendors' daily struggles and perseverance. For these street food vendors in Kalibo, Aklan, vending is not merely a source of income but a deliberate strategy to invest in their children's future. Their narratives showed that aspirations for better education are closely tied to hopes for dignity, stability, and upward mobility. This underscores how family-centered goals, particularly children's education, serve as a powerful driving force that sustains vendors' resilience amid economic uncertainty and hardship.

The findings, supported by existing research, suggest that educational aspirations among informal workers are deeply tied to long-term goals of stability, dignity, and upward mobility. Research indicates that parental aspirations for children's education can significantly influence household investment decisions, even in economically constrained settings, as families perceive education as a pathway out of poverty and toward future opportunity by Suryadarma *et al.* (2022). Studies on the intergenerational transmission of poverty in Indonesia found that parents who aspire for higher educational attainment for their children are more likely to invest in schooling despite economic pressures, highlighting education's role in shaping life plans and social mobility by Lim and Lee (2022). Moreover, as stated by UNESCO (2023), global education monitoring efforts stress that education is critical to expanding capabilities, reducing inequality, and improving livelihoods, objectives that resonate with informal workers' pursuit of better futures for their families. In the Philippine context, as supported

by Gipson and Hindin (2015), mothers' educational aspirations positively correlate with children's schooling outcomes, emphasizing how family goals centered on education can shape life trajectories across generations. Together, these studies reinforce that vendors' aspirations for their children's education reflect not only personal desires for family well-being but also broader patterns in which education functions as a catalyst for social and economic mobility.

The findings also indicate that improved living conditions are a central component of family-centered aspirations among street food vendors. Home and land ownership represent not only physical comfort but also emotional security, dignity, and long-term stability. These aspirations reflect vendors' desire to move beyond day-to-day survival toward a more secure and sustainable family life. The findings underscore how vending is strategically sustained as a means to gradually achieve upward mobility, reduce vulnerability, and establish a stable home environment for present and future generations.

These findings are supported by existing research showing that informal workers often aspire to improved living conditions, including stable housing and upward mobility, as central elements of their long-term goals. Studies on street food vendors and other informal enterprises demonstrate that, despite precarious and unstable work conditions, vendors harbor clear aspirations to grow their economic activities and improve their households' socio-economic status, including housing quality and security (Ketchen & Lyon, 2019), indicating that informal work is strategically sustained to achieve broader life goals rather than simply for subsistence. Research on informal workers across developing contexts also highlights that insecure income and housing conditions are key motivators for workers to seek greater stability, dignity, and security through incremental improvements in livelihood outcomes (Self-Employed Women's Association & WIEGO, 2022). Furthermore, analyses of the informal economy suggest that when informal workers are enabled to build assets such as land or home ownership, they gain not only physical comfort but also emotional security and social recognition, contributing to reduced vulnerability and stronger resilience (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2018). These studies reinforce that the aspiration for improved living conditions and stable homes reflects a deliberate pursuit of upward mobility and long-term family stability, mirroring the lived experiences of street food vendors in Kalibo.

The aspirations for stability and improved quality of life reflect the participants' overarching desire to achieve a secure, balanced, and dignified life through their engagement in street food vending. Rather than aspiring for wealth or luxury, the participants emphasized stability, sufficiency, personal growth, and gradual improvement in living conditions. Their narratives revealed that vending is viewed as a pathway toward consistent income, self-development, and an enhanced quality of life for themselves and their families by achieving financial

stability and consistent income, and enhanced quality of life. This underscores that financial stability is defined not by abundance but by sufficiency, consistency, and the ability to meet family needs without constant stress or uncertainty. The participants' broader aspirations for dignity, ethical living, and gradual improvement in their life circumstances. They associated quality of life with simplicity, honesty, moral integrity, and the hope of eventually rising out of poverty.

Studies show that informal vendors perceive their work as meaningful despite its precarious nature and often derive self-worth from fulfilling family needs and contributing to their communities (Peimani & Kamalipour, 2022; Bhowmik, 2018; ILO, 2018). Since informal workers commonly lack social protection and job security, their well-being depends more on stability, fair regulations, secure vending spaces, and access to support services. Improving vendors' quality of life requires a holistic approach that promotes income stability, dignity, and long-term resilience rather than short-term financial gains.

Formulated Policy Resolution for Street Food Vendors

The proposed policy resolution, "A Resolution Adopting a Multidimensional Support Framework for Street Food Vendors in the Municipality of Kalibo, Aklan," was developed from the emergent themes identified in this study. Findings indicate that the lived experiences of street food vendors are shaped by economic hardships, daily operational challenges, family responsibilities, and the physical and emotional demands of sustaining their livelihood. In the face of these conditions, vendors display resilience through survival strategies such as financial adaptation, resourcefulness in business operations, and reliance on social and informal support networks. Their aspirations, moreover, extend beyond business expansion to encompass family-centered goals, long-term financial stability, and an enhanced quality of life.

These realities underscore the need for multidimensional and developmental interventions that address the economic, social, and health-related concerns of street food vendors. Recurring challenges such as income instability, limited capital, and regulatory uncertainties informed the inclusion of financial literacy initiatives and expanded access to capital within the proposed framework. Likewise, issues involving conflicts with authorities and the lack of secure workspaces supported the recommendation to designate permanent, regulated vending areas. Concerns related to sanitation, environmental exposure, and physical exhaustion further highlight the importance of infrastructure support and access to social protection services. In addition, vendors' aspirations for sustainable income and overall well-being including opportunities for event-driven earnings guided the integration of skills development programs and community-based support mechanisms into the policy proposal.

In this regard, the proposed Resolution serves as an evidence-based policy response that translates the study's findings into actionable interventions for the local government unit, aimed at strengthening the economic resilience, operational sustainability, and overall well-being of street food vendors in the Municipality of Kalibo, Aklan.

A RESOLUTION ADOPTING A MULTIDIMENSIONAL SUPPORT FRAMEWORK FOR STREET FOOD VENDORS IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF KALIBO, AKLAN

This Resolution is anchored on the findings of the academic study entitled “**LIVED EXPERIENCES, SURVIVAL STRATEGIES, AND ASPIRATIONS OF STREET FOOD VENDORS: BASIS FOR POLICY FRAMEWORK AND ECONOMIC PLANNING**,” which examined the everyday realities of street food vendors in the Municipality of Kalibo, Aklan. The study sought to understand how vendors describe their lived experiences in operating their businesses, the survival strategies they employ to cope with economic, environmental, and social challenges, and their aspirations for future well-being and economic stability. Guided by these empirical insights, the study further aimed to formulate a responsive and inclusive policy framework that addresses the actual needs of street food vendors while supporting sustainable local economic planning. The findings of the study serve as an evidence-based foundation for this Resolution, underscoring the need for a multidimensional, enabling, and developmental approach to supporting street food vendors in Kalibo.

WHEREAS, street food vending serves as a significant source of livelihood for many residents of the Municipality of Kalibo, providing income opportunities particularly for low-income households and contributing to the local economy;

WHEREAS, recent local studies on street food vending in Kalibo reveal that vendors experience financial insecurity, environmental constraints, and social pressures, yet demonstrate resilience through adaptive livelihood strategies, strong social networks, and responsible business practices;

WHEREAS, the same findings indicate that street food vendors aspire not only for economic stability but also for family welfare, access to education and health services, and opportunities for personal and skills development;

WHEREAS, supporting street food vendors through inclusive, developmental, and well-regulated interventions aligns with the Municipality's goals of inclusive growth, poverty reduction, public health protection, and sustainable urban development;

WHEREAS, there is a need to shift from purely regulatory or punitive approaches toward an enabling policy framework that recognizes street food vending as a legitimate micro-enterprise sector while ensuring public safety, sanitation, and order;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, as it is

hereby resolved by the Sangguniang Bayan of Kalibo, Aklan, to adopt a Multidimensional Support Framework for Street Food Vendors, which shall include the following policy directions, consistent with the economic, social, and health-related needs identified in the study findings:

1. **Formal Recognition and Registration.** The Municipality shall formally recognize street food vending as a legitimate livelihood and establish a simplified and affordable registration and accreditation system for street food vendors.

2. **Financial Literacy and Access to Capital.** The Municipal Government, through the appropriate offices, shall facilitate financial literacy programs and coordinate with government agencies, cooperatives, and microfinance institutions to improve vendors' access to affordable credit and savings mechanisms.

3. **Designation of Safe and Regulated Vending Areas.** The Municipality shall identify and designate appropriate street food vending zones that ensure public safety, sanitation, and accessibility, particularly in areas of high foot traffic, subject to existing ordinances and health regulations.

4. **Skills Development and Business Enhancement.** Relevant municipal offices, in partnership with TESDA, DTI, DOH, and local educational institutions, shall provide training programs on food safety, sanitation, product development, customer relations, and basic entrepreneurship.

5. **Social Protection and Family Welfare Support.** Registered street food vendors shall be assisted in accessing social protection programs such as PhilHealth, SSS, and other municipal health, education, and social welfare services.

6. **Strengthening Vendor Organizations and Participation.** The Municipality shall encourage the formation and strengthening of street food vendor associations or cooperatives to promote peer support, dialogue, and participation in local economic planning.

7. **Inter-Office Coordination and Implementation.** The Municipal Mayor is hereby requested to direct the concerned municipal offices, including the Municipal Economic Enterprise Office, Municipal Health Office, Municipal Social Welfare and Development Office, and other relevant units, to coordinate in the implementation of this framework.

RESOLVED, FINALLY, that copies of this Resolution be furnished to the Office of the Municipal Mayor, concerned municipal departments, and other relevant agencies for their information, guidance, and appropriate action.

CONCLUSION

Street food vendors in Kalibo, Aklan, underscore the precarious yet resilient nature of their livelihood. Economic instability, operational challenges, and physical and emotional strain define their daily realities, while family responsibilities and community ties intertwine with their work. Despite persistent hardship, vendors demonstrate

remarkable adaptability and resilience, drawing strength from social connections, family support, and pride in their labor. Street food vending is not merely an individual economic activity but a family-centered livelihood, where household survival often depends on collective labor and shared responsibility. The physical and emotional toll of long working hours, health concerns, and regulatory enforcement further intensifies the strain on vendors. Despite these hardships, the vendors demonstrate strong resilience, drawing motivation from social connections, community support, dignity in labor, and the aspiration to provide for their families. Vendors' aspirations illustrate a holistic vision that integrates economic resilience, family welfare, and personal development. The pursuit of stable vending spaces, access to capital, and business growth reflects proactive engagement with long-term livelihood sustainability. Meanwhile, family-centered goals, including education, health, and improved living conditions, underscore the inseparability of work and domestic responsibilities. Personal growth and skill development reinforce the desire for self-improvement and adaptability within an unpredictable economic environment. Sustainable livelihood support for vendors cannot be achieved through regulatory measures alone but requires comprehensive interventions that promote financial capability, operational security, health protection, and institutional support. By translating the empirical findings of the study into actionable policy directions, the proposed Resolution provides a structured mechanism through which the local government unit may enhance the economic resilience, social well-being, and long-term sustainability of street food vendors' livelihoods. Consequently, the adoption of such a policy framework may contribute to inclusive local economic development and improved quality of life among informal sector workers in the Municipality of Kalibo, Aklan.

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