

# Hawkers and the Informal Economy of Ho Chi Minh City: The Multi-Scale of Risks from Migration

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**Abstract:** Street vending is quite pervasive in developing countries, in Southeast Asian nations, especially in urban areas. Street vending activity is quite common in cities in Vietnam. According to the 2015 survey of the Vietnamese Government, migrants aged 15-59 in Vietnam accounted for 17.3% of the population (GSO-UNFPA, 2016). A large proportion of them work in the informal economic sector, working without contract, insurance, tax and little control. Street vending is typical of such informal activities. The informal economy is said to account for 20% of the country's GDP and tends to increase rapidly since 2017 (Tran Thi Bich Nhan and Do Thi Minh Huong, 2019). The requirement of city development creates the critical debate on stopping street vending or managing this activity in a way that is compatible with growth and development. Yet it seems that hawkers are unaware of the risks that they are facing, especially migrant group. They seem to fail to comprehend the opportunities associated to controlling their livelihood. The factors impacting vending activities have not been discussed strictly. This paper analyses the social life of hawkers to find who they are and their awareness on street vending as well as factors contributing to these activities. Furthermore, the research explores the risks and difficulties of the migrant hawkers. It analyzes the relation between livelihood of the poor and urban development. Based on that, the potential policies for this issue are discussed. Research is implemented based on both qualitative and quantitative methods. 204 questionnaires for hawkers have been administered and in depth interviews have been conducted from March to April, 2019. All the data were collected through the designed survey in 5 places in District 1, Ho Chi Minh City.

**Keywords:** Migration; Migrants; Urban management; Street vendors; Hawkers.

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## 1. Introduction

Street hawking is a form of commercial business that has existed for a long time and still been developing in a number of countries in Asia, such as Thailand, China, Cambodia, and Singapore. Street vendors are quite common in urban areas and big cities, typically in Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC), Vietnam.

From actual observation and through some previous studies, street vendors are considered as mobile operators who sell goods without fixing places but have to move around. They often sell goods on tricycles, motorbikes, bicycles, even they have to walk for selling. They usually sell items such as vegetables, fruits, sometimes even fresh foods such as eggs, meat, fish, household items, lottery tickets and typically fast food. They often operate in roadways, tourist areas, public places where many people often gather.

Street hawking, on the one hand, is beneficial to society as it creates jobs and generates income for a large number of people. At the same time, it provides goods conveniently and cheaply. However, street hawking brings negative effects on food hygiene and safety, for example, the waste and rubbish created from their work have affected the urban environment. Street vendors are numerous in urban areas. They sell goods in many points out of the control of the state, and even may contribute to traffic jams. They can use public spaces in many places such as hospital gates, parks, roadside markets and visiting places. Street hawking is a type of informal economy, and it is an important economic driver and caters for both residents and tourists, especially a big city like HCMC, which has a large number of immigrants. A majority of immigrants are laborers from other provinces coming to HCMC to find a livelihood. They are willing to accept hard work, and jobs that are a part of the informal sector, such as street vending. This is seen as a constraint on economic development and urban management. Urban managers have had very little successes in the management of street vendors - this reflects a deficit of knowledge. Many questions arise when one envision the management of street vending activities: how should street vendors be managed, should such an

activity be removed or be maintained, if maintained, how can associated risks and negative effects on hawkers be reduced - how to protect the environment, the people and the foods. There is an urgent need for more research on these topics. However, so far, there have not been many studies on street vendors, have not yet got data system or extensive studies on this topic (Nguyen Tuan Minh, 2014).

Literature review shows that most of the new articles focus on identifying the role of street vendors in the informal economy. Typically, research by Nguyen Tuan Minh (2017) discusses the role of street vendors in four historical periods in Hanoi, from the feudal period, the French colonial period, the previous period before Doi Moi and the Doi Moi period. From time to time, street vending has become an integral part of providing goods and livelihoods for labor forces in urban areas. A research by Sarah Turner and Laura Schoenberger (2011) has also discussed the role and necessity of street vendors in the diversity of the economy.

Other studies discuss on the situation of hawking such as areas, locations, items, and characteristics of street vendors. For example, a research by Nguyen Tuan Minh (2014) has identified the characteristics of street vendors in Hanoi and also described the difficulties they cope with. While the topic of street hawking in Hanoi has attracted a number of researchers, it has quite limited studies in HCMC. Some studies on this topic in HCMC have a trend to learn about the management of street vendors. For example, the study of Samapundo et al. (2015) discusses food safety management of peddlers and peddlers' awareness on this issue. Courtney (2011) in her master's thesis analyzed the limitations in the management of sale spaces and locations of street vendors in HCMC.

Based on the literature review, it can be seen the importance of street vending in socio-economic development and the need for an effective management strategy. In order to manage the street vendor group well, it is necessary to understand their characteristics, their awareness on the living environment and

their work. Furthermore, it needs to analyze motivation and reasons attracted them on the street hawking work and the risks they face in their practice. Immigrant peddlers may be facing more risks because they move from other provinces to HCMC. They have far away from relatives, family and have to rent rooms for living there. To date, there has still little research on difficulties and risks of immigrant hawkers. In particular, the causes of attracting and retaining immigrants associated with street vending in urban areas have not yet been explored. This study aims to describe the portrait of street vendors in HCMC, classifying peddler groups, extensive analysis of migrant peddlers, their social life and the risks they face.

## **2. Data and Method**

The research used both qualitative and quantitative methods to collect data. Based on this method, the survey named “Street vendors in Ho Chi Minh City” was designed and implemented to collect data in the center HCMC. The survey is conducted within the framework of subject practice to support teaching and studying by both lecturer and students of the Faculty of Sociology, University of Social Sciences and Humanities - HCMC, in April 2019. Based on the experimental quantitative and qualitative method, the survey was implemented by interviewing 204 street hawkers who were traveling and working in HCMC center and in-depth interviews with some hawkers. The survey was conducted at 5 typical sites, namely tourist areas, school, public areas where many tourists and people gathered in Center, HCMC such as Independence Palace, Saigon Waterbus Station, War Remnants Museum, Ben Thanh Market. At the first, it was easy to find hawkers for interviews since they stood and sold their goods on the streets. Besides, there were some difficulties to take the interviews with these special samples since hawkers - they are quite busy and move frequently. They not only spend time for selling but also have to take care their goods out of being expelled or fined, even they have to run out so fast when the security men come.

Hence, we had to design the questionnaire with the filtered question, avoid asking too many and long questions or taking long time for interviews. In

the beginning of the interview, we had to ask if they had been interviewed by others in our team or not to avoid overlap. In order to take interviews, we also had to choose the suitable time when there were few customers. But there were some difficulties during interviews such as the hawkers did not want to answer or refused to do interview, the interviews were interrupted due to the security men come or customers. Then we had to convince even insist them for interviewing. We also had to wait for hawkers when they sold their goods or had to take an appointment and comeback in other time for interviews.

The study could serve as a model for other similar districts or cities in Vietnam and Southeast Asia. It has applications in strengthening policies for the improvement of the urban environment manage the street vendor sector.

### **3. Identifying Street Vendors**

Street-hawking (street-vending/peddling) means activities of buying and selling without a fixed location and mobility. Street hawkers or vendors/peddlers conduct commercial activities independently and do not have to register a business. The goods they sell including various types, such as food, drinks, snacks, small items, cultural products, even some mobile services (Article 3, Decree 39/2007/ND-CP). So street vendors are understood as those who sell goods in a mobile form, without a fixed location and do not have to pay for tax. This section will identify and describe the portraits of street vendors in the downtown area (HCMC).

#### ***3.1. Gender, age, education and marital status***

According to the survey results, the majority of street vendors are female, accounting for 69.6%, equivalent to two-thirds of the surveyed people, while male peddlers account for only 30.4%. This can be considered as gender-specific in the hawker group. This characteristic shows the correspondence between the gender and the types of items, when the majority of items sold are food and drink accounting for 62.1% - equivalent to 2/3 of the hawking items.

According to an in-depth interview, Mrs. A - 52 years old, selling sticky rice at the gate of the University of Social Sciences and Humanities-HCMC said: "There are all women selling goods here, because it's all food and drinks such as sticky rice, tea, wet cake... Women can cook, produce food and then sell it, but men can't cook well." In Vietnamese culture, women are the ones who cook and do housework, hence they are also easy to carry out or stick with food items that they are familiar with or know how to cook. The identifying characteristics of street vendors are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1. Demographic characteristics of street vendors in the surveyed area**

<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Objects</b>	<b>Frequencies (N)</b>	<b>Rate (%)</b>
<b>Age</b>	<=25 years old	8	3.9
	26-29 years old	18	8.8
	30-39 years old	44	21.6
	40-49 years old	44	21.6
	50-59 years old	61	29.9
	60-69 years old	21	10.3
	>= 70 years old	8	3.9
<b>Sex</b>	Female	142	69.6
	Male	62	30.4
<b>Ethnicity</b>	Kinh	196	96.1
	Hoa	6	2.9
	Khmer	1	1
<b>Education</b>	Illiteracy	12	5.8
	Primary	45	22.1
	Secondary School	81	39.7
	High School	55	27
	Vocational School	3	1.5
	College, University	8	3.9
<b>Marital Status</b>	Single	33	<b>16.2</b>
	Marriage	<b>149</b>	<b>73</b>
	Divorce	8	3.9
	Separate	2	1
	Widow	12	5.9

Source: Survey result, 2019.

There is a wide range of ages of street vendors, demonstrating the accessibility regardless of age in this profession. The average age of street

vendors in this survey is 46, with the youngest age is 20 and the oldest is 82 years old. However, the young age group is quite small, under 25 year old account for only 3.5%. Besides, the youth group (26-29 years old) also stands on the low rate just only 8.8%, and the mature group (30-39) accounts 21.6%.

The age group with the highest percentage (65.7 %) is the middle-and old aged group from 40 years and older. The middle-aged and older age group is the most difficult group to find jobs in the formal economy. It is difficult to find the contracted and paid jobs because most recruitment agencies have the limitations on recruitment age. However, street vending is a job that is quite free, and not bound by age and participants can be active in their work without being dominated or managed by another subject.

In terms of ethnicity, there are Kinh, Chinese and Khmer people participating in the hawker team. However, the proportion of ethnic minorities is low, only close to 4%, while the Kinh people account for an almost absolute high percentage, up to 96% in peddling activities.

Discussing about education, street vendors have a variety of qualifications, ranging from illiterate to college/university. Secondary education is common among peddlers, accounting for the highest proportion of nearly 40% (39.7%), followed by high school (27%), vocational (22.1%). It is worth noting that, not all street vendors are uneducated. In the survey sample, students still have college/university education, but this is a very small percentage, accounting for only 3.9%. The diverse composition at many levels of education shows that street vendors are not only those with low education but also those with high qualifications. However, the majority of street vendors have relatively limited education, most of them from secondary school or below account for more than 50%, there are even illiterates accounting for 5.9%.

In terms of marital status, only a small number of street vendors are single and unmarried, accounting for 16.2%. The majority of street vendors are married, reached to 83.8% of which the number of married/married people accounts for 73%, the remaining percentage includes groups of divorce, separate, widow.... Marital status also corresponds to the peddler's age. The number of people also corresponds to the age of the peddler, when the youth group has a low proportion, the middle-aged group dominates.

### ***3.2. Types of hawker groups - immigrants and locals***

In terms of residence status, street hawkers belong to two 2 groups: the local (group with permanent residence permit) and the immigrant (the group without permanent residence in HCMC). The majority of the street vendors belong to the second group - immigrant group. The number of street vendors without permanent residence accounts for 56.4% (nearly 60%) or 2/3 of the surveyed people are immigrants. Furthermore, in the number of local hawkers who have permanent residence, a part of them are not entirely original from HCMC, but some of them may be migrants who has the root from other areas. After a period of time moving to HCMC, they could obtain the permanent residence permit there. According to Articles 20, Clauses 1 and 2 of the 2006 Residence Law, a person may register for permanent residence permit if he/she has an own house in HCMC or he/she gets the consent of the household registration holder to enter into their household registration book. Then the migrant residents may be registered and issued permanent residence permit. According to the survey, up to 67.2% of street vendors live in rented houses or stay with acquaintances' houses, or even do not stay in HCMC.

Thus, nearly 70% are de facto homeless in the city. This is also partly said that, maybe up to two-thirds of the street vendors are immigrants from elsewhere. Thus, the number of immigrant hawkers should be higher than the current number 56.4%.

**Table 2. Residential characteristics of street vendors by residence group**

Characteristics	Objects	Frequencies (N)	Rate (%)	
<b>Groups without permanent residence</b>	KT2	31	15.2	
	KT3	46	22.5	
	KT4	36	17.6	
	No registration	2	1	
<b>Groups with permanent residence</b>	KT1	89	43.6	
	<b>Hometown</b>	The North	21	10.3
		The Middle	77	37.7
		The South	106	52

Note: KT1: the registered permanent residence of citizens; KT2: Long-term stay within the same province/city under the Central Government; KT3: Long-term stay in the different province/city in the country; KT4: short-term stay.

Source: Survey result, 2019.

**Table 3. Distinction characteristics among peddler groups in the surveyed area**

Characteristics	Local Group		Immigrant Group	
	N	%	N	%
<b>Male</b>	30	33.3	32	28.1
<b>Female</b>	60	66.7	82	71.9
<b>Previous jobs</b>				
Agriculture	0	0	<b>30</b>	<b>25.4</b>
Industry	4	4.3	19	16.1
Services	17	18.5	7	5.9
Self-business	24	26.1	14	11.9
Students	5	5.4	5	4.2
No Job	<b>30</b>	<b>32.6</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>20.3</b>
Others	12	13	19	16.1

Source: Survey result, 2019.

Migrant peddlers come from different regions in Vietnam, especially the South (52%), the Central (37.7%), and the North 10.3%. This figure shows that the

migration flow from the Central and the South to HCMC is more dominant. The Central and the South are geographically closer than the North, so the proportion of people from these two areas who come to HCMC to work as peddlers is much higher than that of migrants from the North.

If the peddlers are classified into immigrant and local groups, the study finds the difference between these two groups in terms of gender and jobs (previous job that they had done before they became street hawkers) as described in Table 3.

The research results show that the immigrant peddler group accounted for a much higher proportion of women than the local group when this proportion was 71.9% and 66.7%, respectively. In terms of previous job, the immigrant group accounted for the highest proportion of individuals originally involved in agriculture (25.4%) while this rate was zero in the local group. Before working as peddlers, both groups experienced some jobs such as working in industry, service, self-employment, but the most remarkable point is that both groups accounted for a high percentage of people without jobs.

In general, the study has built a picture of street vendors, who are diverse in age, ethnicity, gender, etc. It shows that street hawking is a simple and easy job to do without regarding or distinction of gender, age, education and status of residence. But the peddlers also have typical characteristics such as the majority of them are middle-old age, marriage and immigrants accounting for high percent. Coming from many regions and provinces, street vendors have created cultural richness through the types of regional goods they bring to Ho Chi Minh City.

#### **4. Social Situation of Migrant Street Vendors in Ho Chi Minh City**

This part discusses and explores the social situation of migrant street vendors in which includes: Choice of migrant hawkers engaging in this job, life of migrant hawkers and risks in work.

#### *4.1. The reason for leaving hometown of street vendors*

The main reason that the group of immigrant peddlers had to move from their hometown to HCMC was due to the unsecured economic and livelihood environment in their hometown, as described above. In addition, the study also found that there are many factors promoting the migration of people from different regions to HCMC such as: unfavorable natural conditions, no productive land, and the desire to earn more income and experience...

**Table 4. The reason for leaving hometown of street vendors**

<b>Causes</b>	<b>Frequencies (N)</b>	<b>Rate %</b>
Lack of job	44	<b>38.6</b>
Low income	68	<b>59.6</b>
Low qualifications/skills	25	<b>21.9</b>
Unfavorable natural conditions	22	19.3
No productive land	16	14
Earn more income and experience	25	<b>21.9</b>
Go with family	18	15.8
Other	7	6.1

Source: Survey result, 2019.

According to the survey results, there are 3 most important reasons, which are low income in the hometown, lack of jobs in the locality, low qualifications/skills or lack of knowledge and skills. In three most important reasons affecting migration, low income is the reason with the highest proportion of 59.6%, nearly 2/3 of the respondents. The second most important cause accounting for 38.6% is the lack of employment in the locality, which also includes the unemployed, unable to find work in their home country. Some rural areas have been converted to urban areas, so the land has also been converted from agricultural land to other types of land, serving construction, business and services. As a result, some population groups, typically farmers,

lost their jobs and were unemployed, and had to look for other jobs. Difficulty in finding work at home, so many people have to migrate to find work. This is also an important reason, motivating people to migrate to HCMC.

The third important reason accounting for 21.9% is low knowledge and skills or the reason for earn more income and experience. When knowledge and skills are limited, it is more difficult to switch jobs or find other jobs. It can be seen that, with limited knowledge, qualifications, low income, and lack of work, many people have not been able to meet the economic needs of their families. They have to go to the city to earn living, increase their income, and improve their family economy. Thus, the important factors motivating people to migrate seem to focus on the economic aspect, the purpose of migration is the economic purpose. Economic factors and social environment in the city have attracted them to look for opportunities to work, earn money and experience life.

#### ***4.2. Reasons for becoming a street hawker***

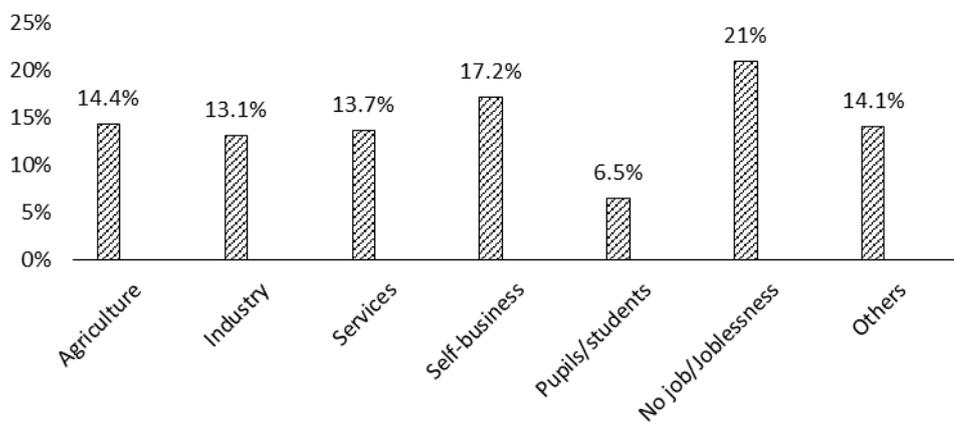
The above part depicts quite clearly the portrait of street vendors and reason moving to the city center of HCMC. This section will discuss the reasons that lead people to come to hawking and the reasons that keep them on this job.

According to the survey results, many street vendors move from other regions and areas to HCMC, and the majority of street vendors fall into the middle-age group, therefore, they should have experienced in some previous jobs. The chart below depicts the jobs that peddlers used to do before peddling.

Figure 1 shows that there are quite some types of jobs that peddlers have experienced before peddling such as: agriculture (14.4%), service (13.7%), industry (13.1%), or self-business 17.2%. A factor accounting for the highest proportion to 21% is “no job”, more than a fifth of those surveyed and it's an alarming issue. They selected to be a hawker as they have no other choice, forced to come to this job to earn a living, and to survive. It could indicate that they come to the peddler occupation as a last resort.

As findings on the above part, the economic factor is considered as the main factor motivating migrants to HCMC, this part analyses some factors that attract both migrants and locals to choose peddling even though there are many other jobs in the city. According to survey result, there are a number of factors that attract people to work as peddlers such as: this job does not require a lot of capital, being proactive, being able to arrange time to take care of their families and children, or for those who are “difficult in finding work because of their age”. It could be said that, peddling is a lifeline.

**Figure 1. Previous jobs before working as a street vendor**

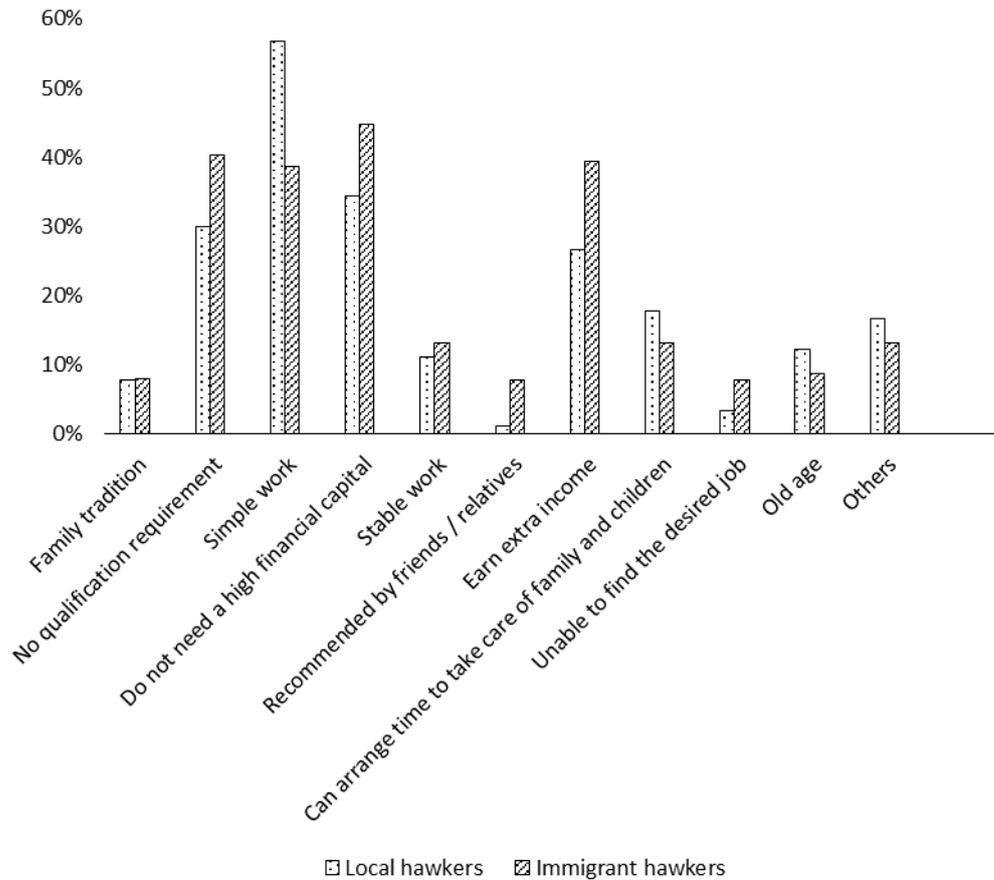


Source: Survey result, 2019.

Among the reasons, the three most dominant factors that attract people to practice as peddlers are: (1) the job is simple/simple work, (2) No need for high financial capital and (3) the job does not require a degree/does not require qualifications. For the first reason, street vendors are "simple jobs" accounting for near half of the survey respondents 46.6% in average. Because this is a simple job, anyone can do it, with no restrictions on qualification or age, no restrictions on regional or religious influences, etc. Next, this profession does not require high skills or professional qualifications/academic degrees. Anyone can still do it, even if they are illiterate. Up to 35.8% in average of the surveyed respondents confirmed that they chose the peddler job because this profession

does not require a degree or high skill. Thus, the reason to attract people to the peddler profession seems to lean towards social factors such as: no degree requirements, quite freedom and comfort in working. People can be active in their work. Street hawking caters for both residents and tourists and attracts a great number of immigrants working in this informal sector.

**Figure 2. The reasons for becoming hawkers**

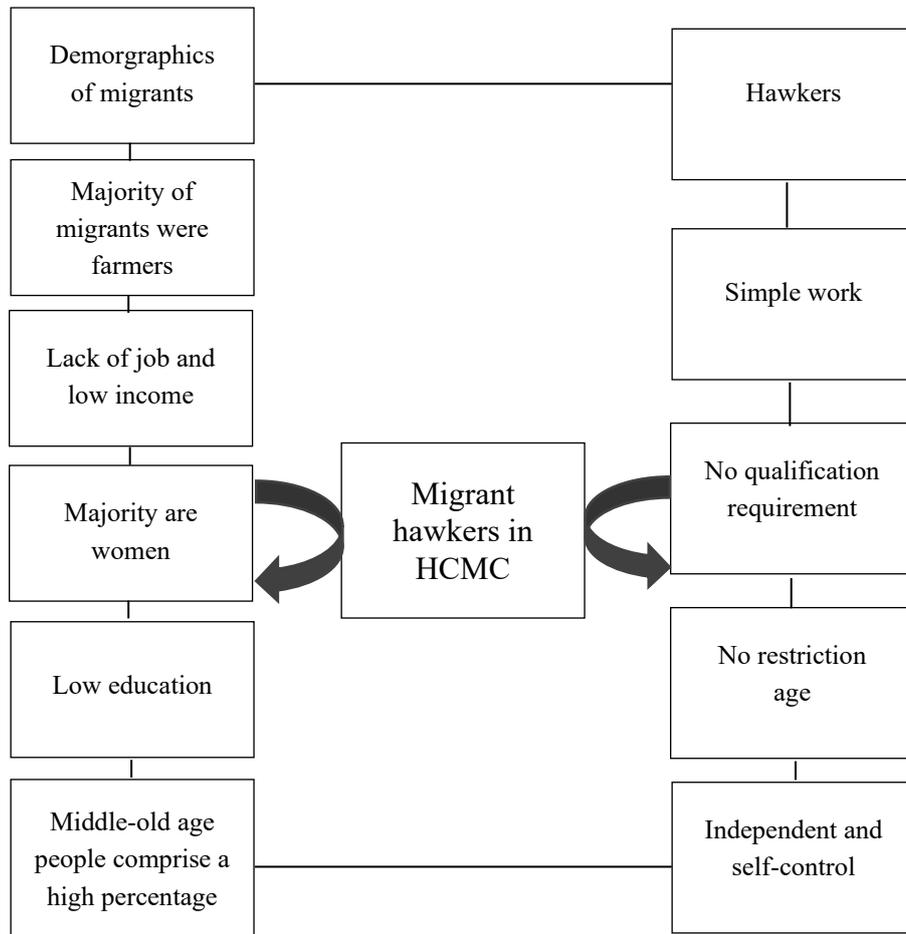


Source: Designed by author.

Furthermore, it is different between local and immigrants in the reasons of selecting this hawking job. It seems that, the immigrants choose to become hawkers with the priority in economic side while the local people's reasons for working seem to lean towards the social aspects. The immigrants account

higher percent in selecting the economic factors as promotion them to be hawkers, such as: “Do not need to high financial capital” with 44.7% while this rate in local group is 34.4%; “Earn extra income” with 39.5% while this rate in local group is 26.7%.

**Figure 3. Portrait of Migrant Hawkers in the center of HCMC**



Source: Survey result, 2019.

Hence, economic factor, first, is considered as the main factor has motivated people to migrate to HCMC. Then, the social factors are important reasons attracted people engaging in street hawking although there are many other jobs in Ho Chi Minh City. In the series of reasons becoming hawkers, mostly reasons are for social aspects, typically, “No qualification requirement”

accounts to 30% in local and 40.4% in immigrants; “Simple work” accounts to 56.7% in local and 38.6% in immigrants; “Can arrange time to take care of family” accounts to 17.8% in local and 13.2% in immigrants; Old age accounts to 12.2% in local and 8.8% in immigrants.

It is noted that, the immigrant group accounts higher percent 7.9% - 7 times higher than local group only 1.1% in the reason to put them to be hawker: “recommended by friends/relatives”. This expresses the immigrant group got the social network support to work in the city. In the in-depth interview Mrs. A - an immigrant hawker, 52 years old, who sell sticky rice in the area of University of Social Sciences and Humanities - HCMC, she told that: “My sister come here from my hometown to sell sticky rice for over 15 years. She often stands next to the gate of Saigon Zoo and Botanical Garden. After, she earned well by this way, I followed her to move here, also selling sticky rice.” It could be seemed that they have applied and received the social capital when they moved to HCMC for working and living. However, they have been suffered more vulnerable during the life and work in the city. From these finding, the portrait of migrant hawkers in the center of HCMC is drawn as in Figure 3.

Based on survey results, the portrait of migrant hawkers in HCMC is drawn with majority are middle-aged and the elderly. They have low education levels, almost of them are only from lower secondary school and primary school.

Women accounts high percent and they have come from rural area with the original job in agriculture. According to the survey, more than a quarter or 25.4% of migrant hawkers were farmers accounting the highest proportion of the previous occupations before becoming hawkers while this proportion is zero in the local group. They come from rural areas where they were originally farmers, but due to lack of work and low income, they moved to the city with the aim of finding work and improving the family's economy. Furthermore, the majority of migrants have limitations in human capital, such as qualifications, working skills as well as health, while this group is mostly from middle and old

age. It's hard to find jobs in agencies and factories. It explains why the migrants account higher percentage compared to local in the number of hawkers. The percentage of migrants working as street vendors also accounted for 71.9% while the local hawker is lower with 66.7%. However, they also do not have enough financial capital to expand their business or invest in themselves and their work.

Street hawking is a simple job, it does not have to pay taxes, does not cost too much for investment and especially is not too hard. Hawkers can work free and independently, are not limited in the region, qualification or age. Therefore, they have to become street vendors as a lifeline, especially for migrant women who are disadvantaged, lack of resources and are of limited age (middle-old age). Thus, for the migrant group, who are mostly women and elderly, the choice of working as a street vendor is quite suitable for their situation.

## **5. Risks of Migrant Hawkers**

### ***5.1. Risks in work of migrant hawkers***

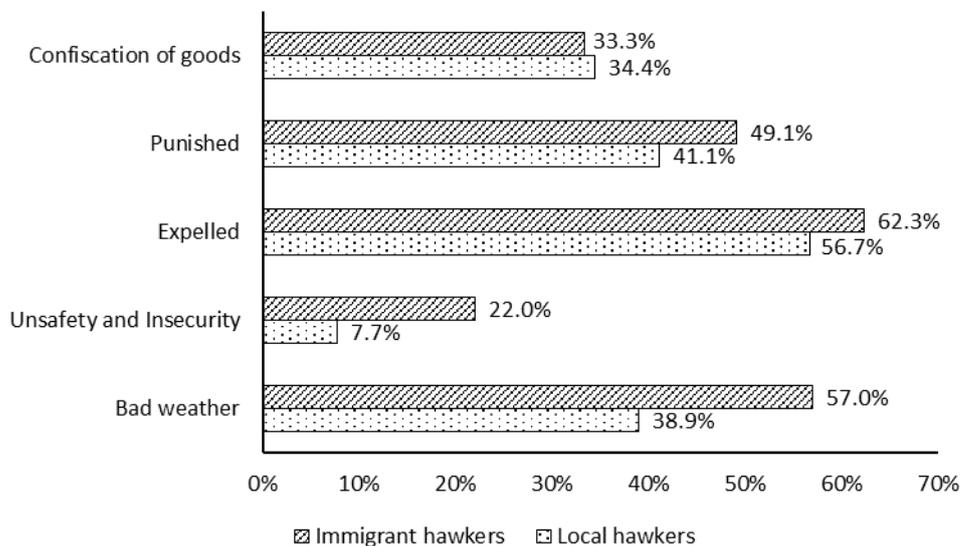
Immigrant hawkers have faced many risks in the process of operating and practicing. These risks are the dangers or threats that they have to expose in the process of living and working in the city. These risks may arise from internal factors (subjective factors) from individual side or family perspective, or be influenced by external factors (or called objective factors) such as weather, policies, traffic, etc.

First of all, there are risks arising from external factors or objective factors that immigrant hawkers have to bear in the process of practicing their profession.

The survey results show that hawkers face a series of risks in the process of peddling practice such as bad weather impacts, insecurity, traffic accidents, conflicts with other sellers... Among the risks that threaten the activities and livelihoods of hawkers is the problem of being expelled - accounts for the highest proportion 59.8% (in average) and it is a great obsession for them.

The second risk threatening the hawker's business is the weather factor (up to 49.1 %) and immigrant group continuously gets the number (ie. 57%) higher than local group (ie. 38.9%). Street vendors sell goods outdoors, so they are directly affected by the weather. If the weather is bad or unfavorable such as hot sun, rain and wind, it also causes many obstacles in sales. If it rains, floods will make them unable to stand on the flooded street to sell, and have to stop selling. The third risk is being punished or fined (ie. 45.6%), and having goods confiscated (ie. 33.8%) due to violating legal regulations such as the policy of banning sales on the roadside. Furthermore, there are a series of risks that threaten the hawker's safety and put their goods and their health in insecurity accounting for 15.8% such as lack of traffic accidents, conflicts with other sellers, be stolen, or lost money by gangster bands... Thus, the risks all revolve around weather influences, evictions, fined, insecurity...these risks can constitute double risks when the associated consequences are impacts on physical, mental health, obstructing the livelihoods of street vendors.

Figure 4. Expressing risks in work



Source: Survey result, 2019.

The study also compared and found differences in risk levels between immigrant and local hawkers. Survey data in Figure 4 show that immigrant hawkers seem to be more at risk than local hawkers. The risks that the immigrant hawkers have to endure with a high percentage fall into both groups: risks from natural disasters and risks from man-made. Risks of natural disasters or extremes, unexpected changes of weather directly affect goods and hawkers in which immigrant hawkers reached 57% - near double to local (ie. 38.9%). Street hawking is mainly carried outdoor, so it depends greatly on the weather and climate. If the weather is abnormal, so hot or heavy rain, it not only makes goods damaged but also directly affect the health of hawkers. Risks caused by abnormal and severe weather are also associated with risks of the trading area such as difficulties in finding a place to sell, being evicted or competing for a selling place.

The immigrant hawker group has faced and account higher rate compared to local hawkers not only in the risks of natural disasters but also in the risks from man-made factors such as being expelled (equivalently 62.3% for immigrants and 56.7% for locals), punished (equivalently 49.1% and 41.7%). Two groups have not the big gap in the factor “goods is confiscated” in which local group got 33.3% and immigrants reached 34.4% due to violating legal regulations such as the policy of banning sales on the roadside. The last factor - “unsafety or insecurity” is a series of risks that threaten goods and health of hawkers, such as lack of traffic accidents, conflicts with other sellers, be stolen, or lost money by gangster bands... The immigrant group seem getting much more risks when it attained 22%, means 3 times higher than local group just 7.7%.

Thus, the risks all revolve around weather influences, evictions, fined, insecurity arising from both natural environment and human. These risks can constitute double risks when occurring with physical, mental health, consequences obstructing the livelihoods of street vendors. The risks from man-made side can be partly understood as the limitations in resources for

immigrant hawkers compared to local hawkers. Both types of risks are difficult to improve because most of them are risks from external agents, by the natural environment and by social circumstances. Migrant hawkers are completely passive to these risks. As in an in-depth interview, Mrs. Nguyen Thi A, 52 years old, selling sticky rice at the gate of the University of Social Sciences and Humanities, she said: “This time is the rainy season, rainstorm is happened every day, heavy rain, and flooded in many places. Hence, it is difficult to find a place to stand to sell goods. But when it rains, no one want to go out to buy something, so there are very few goods sold”. Notably, immigrant hawkers not only bear risks arising from the official institutional perspective such as confiscation of goods, expelled and fined, but they are also vulnerable by informal arrangements such as conflicts over the place of sale, loss security fees or to be paid to obtain a selling place that is not required by official law.

One thing that could be explained for the difference among both groups maybe is the mobility situation. Migrant hawkers have much more risks than non-migrant hawkers since their work accounts for higher percent of mobility to 54.8% two times compared to non-migrant only 27%. This means migrant hawkers have to move continuously to sell their goods and find customers or they have to spend much more time for working compared to locals.

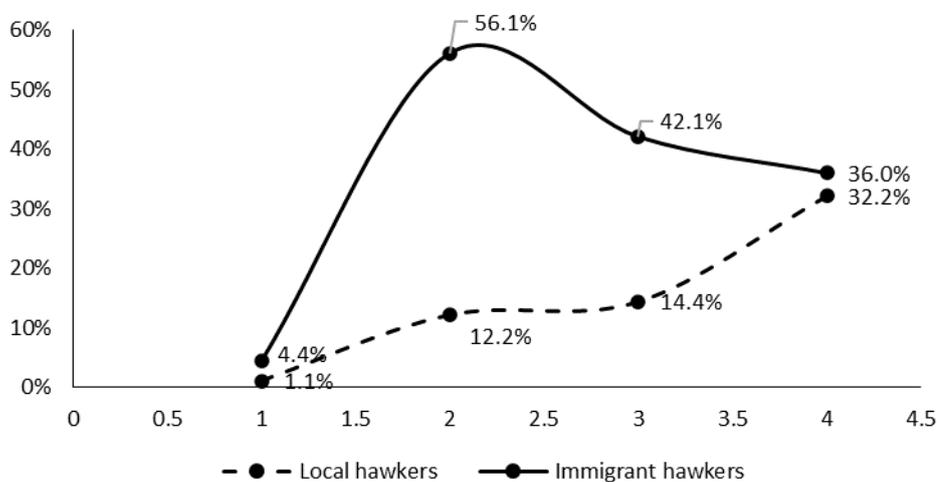
### ***5.2. Risks in the life of migrant hawkers***

Immigrant hawkers not only face risks arising in the working process, but they also suffer injuries or losses in their private life and these risks seemly come from subjective side of hawkers. The survey data shows that, immigrant hawkers not only have to work hard to earn living but they also have an uncomfortable social life. Leaving their hometown, they move to a city to work and earn a living. There they have to accept the disadvantages, emotional and spiritual losses such as being away from family and relatives, having to be alone - accounting for 56.1% of the respondents. Furthermore, they lost the opportunity to take care of their parents, children, even lost the family

moments together (42.1%). Both physical and mental health are affected due to living away from home, have to stay in rented accommodation, stand outside selling goods, and even suffer from mental stress when they are expelled and or confiscated goods (ie. 36%).

In particular, although it accounted for a low rate of 4.4% but it was also a notable risk that a part of immigrant hawkers have faced limited opportunities for marriage, difficulty in finding personal happiness. These risks come from the subjective side of the hawkers, they could know and see these risks but they still accept in order to work and earn living.

**Figure 5. Losses/difficulties in the social life of migrant hawkers**



1. Difficulties in getting married; 2. Far away from relatives.  
 3. Could not take care of parents and children; 4. Health effected.

Source: Survey result, 2019.

On the other hand, the survey result shows that, immigrants have more risks in their social life compared to local people. Most of risks that immigrants cope with normally account higher percent compared to local. Typically, immigrants have to stay alone and “far away from their relatives” and this rate reached 5 times higher than locals (equivalently 56.1% and 12.2%). Similarly, in the item of “Could not take care of parents and children”, migrants also got near 4 times than local (42.1% and 14.4%). Especially, immigrants have more risks in

getting married, higher 4 times compared to locals (equivalently 4.4% and 1.1%). Based on this finding, it is said that, being a migrant seems more to be the issues than being a hawker.

## **6. Conclusion**

This research on street hawking in the downtown area in Ho Chi Minh City pointed out the attraction and important role of this job in the informal economy and economic development in Vietnam. They contribute for the urban culture and provide apart for social services in cities. Street vending is an income or job surviving the vulnerable migrant groups.

The study also identifies different hawker groups, the difference between local groups and immigrant hawkers, in which the immigrant group stands out with a diversity of origins from different regions, ages, and backgrounds, culture, ethnicity or religion. The study also found that the immigrant group is a vulnerable and disadvantaged group in society on both physically and mentally. Immigrant hawkers are more vulnerable compared to local. This group is mostly including immigrants, women and middle-aged and old, and be limited in marriage.

The research results also show, hawkers have faced series of challenges and risks in cities. Those risks, damages and losses that immigrant hawkers have to face both in the process of earn a living and in their family life, including risks from man-made and natural disasters. Immigrant hawkers all bear more risks in both work and social life compared to the local group. Hence, immigrant hawkers are more vulnerable than non-migrants. The reason may be that the immigrant hawker group has more difficulties than the local group in accessing the resources, difficulties in accessing the selling places and has to move around a lot. In fact, there is a lack of efficient policies for street vending issue. With these findings, the government and social organizations need to take the initiative to pay attention and improve policies to promptly support and reduce risks for immigrant hawkers. The study also sets the stage for an in-depth

analysis of the formal and informal institutions that influence street vendors and urban governance.

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