

Character and Problem Analysis of Sachet Water Hawkers in Ikeja, Lagos State, Nigeria

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Author's contribution

The sole author designed, analyzed and interpreted and prepared the manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Hawking is a common practice which hampers urban dignity. The study assessed “who”, “why”, “where”, and “when” the hawkers of sachet water carry out their business; in view of examining the associated physiological and psychological effects of their operations. 32 questionnaires were administered randomly to 32 sachet water hawkers. Oral interviews, direct observation and recording as well as series of secondary data sourced from relevant literature were used to buttress the data obtained via questionnaire administration. The research findings showed hawking of sachet water is most prominent along Obafemi Awolowo way. The hawkers are composed of male (24%) and female (76%), literate (58%) and illiterate (42%), hawking from morning till late in the evening. Using ANOVA with F-statistic computed as 0.09 at 0.05 alpha-level, it was ascertained there is no significant difference in the problems resulting from hawking sachet water in the 11 locations (clusters) sampled. This affirms the proposition that the mode of operation and disposal of the water sachets is the same in all parts of Ikeja. Furthermore, pragmatic measures were laid down in order to discontinue the ills associated with hawking of sachet water in the study area.

Keywords: Spatio-temporal; sachet-water; hawkers; urban.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The incidence of hawking is a common practice in developing countries of the world where poverty is more pronounced with continuous increase in the growth of population and urbanization. However, no matter how difficult a situation proves to be, the fact that people must eat is undisputable, although how each individual meet this obligation may vary [1]. An attempt to fulfil the obligations for live and survival in urban centre especially in Nigeria where the recession in the country's economy has forced people to look for various ways to earn their living, make people engage in divers informal activities which hawking constitute a considerable percentage. Street commercial activities are opined to be part of man's reaction to catch up with the minimum standard of living [2]. A preponderant informal activity embarked upon by most people in Nigeria and many developing countries as a reaction to poverty, unemployment and low income earning; manifesting in different ways. Reminiscent to this view, policy makers in developing nations perceive street commercial activities as a panacea to unemployment and low-income augmentation among urban poor who cannot make ends meet nor harness the basic necessities for life [3,4]. Although the activity account for 15 to 25% of total informal employment in African city [5] there is no doubt that it is accompanied by myriads of social, economic, and environmental problems. While some scholars examined the spatial implications of the act (some of which he itemized to include; waste generation, traffic congestion, auto-accident, and defacing of urban aesthetics) using Osogbo a state capital in Nigeria as a case study [6,7], another school of thought placed more emphasis on the impacts of hawking on the girl-child concluding that the act exposes the girl-child to all forms of abuses ranging from, rape, harassment, to molestation, street wise, education neglect, quests for sex among other immoralities and criminalities [8]. Different from the aforementioned, others examined the safety of the items sold by these hawkers; which he concluded to be unhygienic [9-11]. This study however gives specific interest to hawking of sachet water.

In most Nigerian cities, hawking of sachet water is taken for granted such that people who have convenient shops still consider it good business to engage in it. Hawking has become so rampant that at the peak hours of the day one could hardly go through some major roads and streets in big cities without coming across the traders in

large numbers. The sporadic increase in the hawkers of sachet water in urban centres therefore calls for urgent attention as the act poses several challenges ranging from social delinquencies and vices to transportation and environmental problems such as high rate of accident, pollution and unsanitary environment which are often overlooked [3,12]. Persons involved are often socially delinquent and they turn out to become parasites and impediment to achieving the Eldorado planners have in mind for urban centres. As a result, urban centres which are supposed to be cities of attraction are now becoming the home for social vices. The planners' dream and vision for urban centres are being thwarted by the activities of these hawkers as one could observe severity in environmental degradation due to increasing indiscriminately disposed water sachets, infrastructural deterioration especially along the traffic corridors, disorderliness due to interference with traffic flow, which results into limiting sight distance and visibility, damage of automobiles due to the formation of a maze of people creating navigator difficulty for the drivers, which may on the long run cause collision or loss of lives in extreme cases.

This situation is clearly observed in the metropolitan city of Lagos. Being a major commercial centre, Ikeja has attracted the interest of traders including hawkers [2]. They are readily found transacting there environmentally pathogenic businesses along most traffic corridors. The interest of this study therefore, is to assess "who", "why", "where", and "when" the hawkers of sachet water carry out their business. This is in a bid to examine the physiological and psychological effects of their operations on the city of Ikeja.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study area, Ikeja was statutorily declared, in 1976 as the capital of Lagos State, sequel to the creation of a new federal capital territory; Abuja [13,14]. The total coverage area of Ikeja is approximately 5630 hectares, which is about 1.57 percent of Lagos state as a whole [15,16]. It is bounded on the North by Agege/Ifako-Ijaiye Local Government Area and Ogun State, by Alimosho, Oshodi-Isolo Local Government Areas and Agege Motor Road on the West, by Ikorodu Road, Kosofe Local Government Area and Mushin Local Government Area on the East and on the south by Apapa-Oshodi Expressway (see Fig. 1).

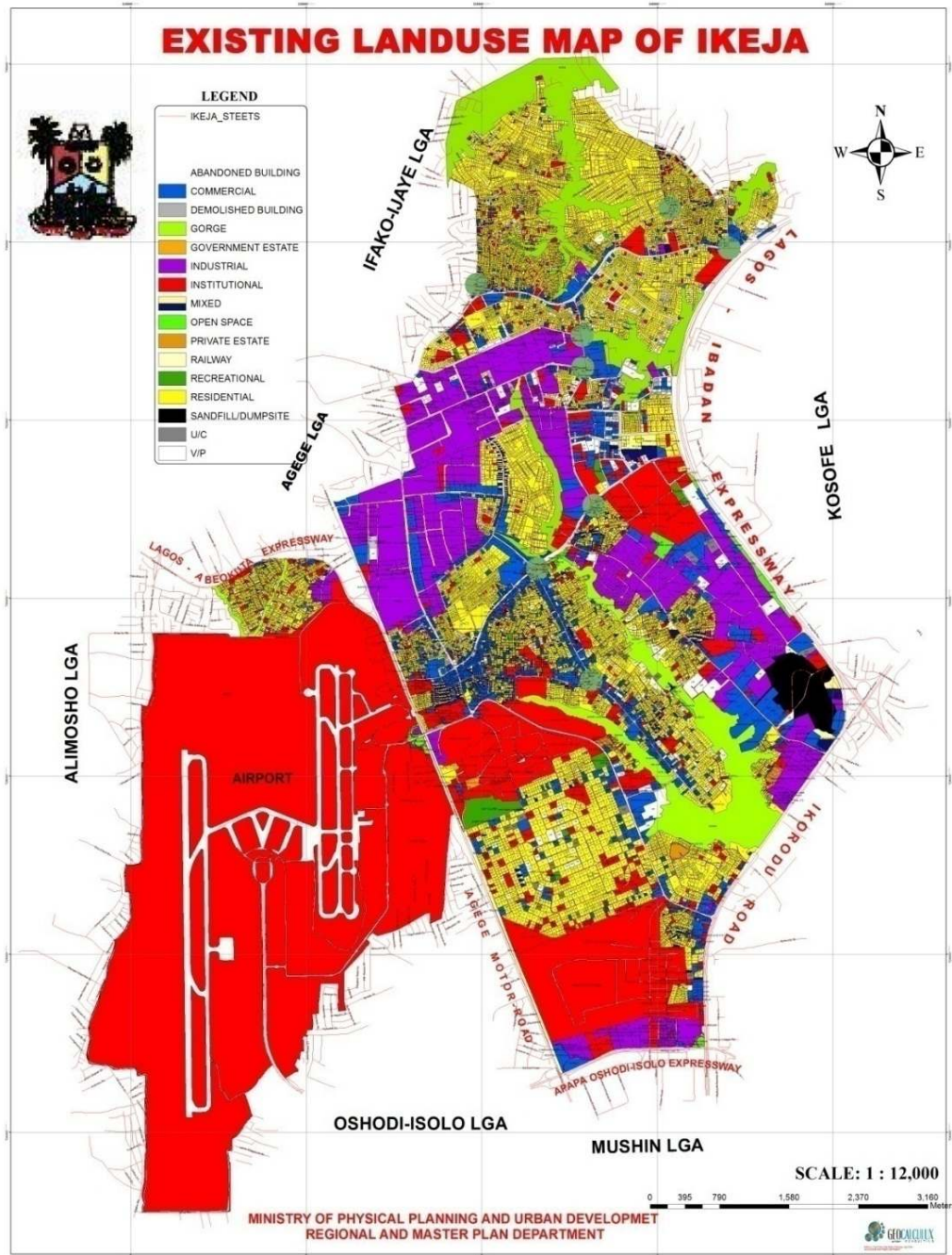


Fig. 1. Existing land use Map of Ikeja [18]

Ikeja is traditionally inhabited by the Aworis and the cradle of its civilization. However, because of the long historical goodwill and benefit derived up to the present day, Ikeja has attracted a lot of people from different ethnic nationalities working and living within its territorial boundary (Lagos state Government). The population of Lagos is summed up to 9,113,605 [17].

This figure was contested by the Lagos state government, whose own organized census was totalled as 17.5 million [19]. Although the later de facto population of Ikeja was supported by relevant data including existing housing stocks, school enrolments, vehicle and motor bike registration, immunization exercises and a host of other facts [19], the National Population

Census result remains constitutional, hence federally accepted. None the less, it was observed that Ikeja accounted for about 3.4% of the figures in both cases.

Both primary and secondary data were utilized in this study. First, a reconnaissance survey involving oral interviews and direct observations was conducted in the study area so as to ensure familiarization with the operations of the sachet water hawkers, more so to be better knowledgeable in designing the questionnaire. Only prominent locations where hawking of sachet water is prominent were considered. The sample locations were modeled in clusters, hinged on the opinion of [20,21] who recommended cluster sampling when it is either impossible or impracticable to compile a list of the elements of a population. Such is the case in the population of study. However, in a bid to select samples for the study, a Hawkers Volumetric Count (HVC) was conducted for three randomly selected days, consisting of two weekdays (Monday and Wednesday) and one weekend day (Saturday) to estimate the average number of sachet water hawkers in the area of study. An average of 92 hawkers was enumerated. Subsequently, 35% of the average population estimate was selected for sampling. Hence, 32 hawkers were randomly sampled via questionnaire administration. Cross tabulations and percentages were used to describe the socio-economic characteristics of sachet water hawkers i.e. *who they are, and why they engage in the act*; their mode of operation i.e. *where and when they carry out their business* and problems associated with their operations. While the principal locations of the sachet water hawkers

were presented pictorially on a map. Analysis of variance was used to examine if there is a statistically significant difference in the problems resulting from the act in the various clusters sampled.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Operations of Sachet Water Hawkers: Where and when they carry out their Business

3.1.1 Where

Having conducted a total survey of the entire study area (Ikeja), the following areas were identified to be the principal choice locations of sachet water hawkers; Adeleye street, Obafemi Awolowo road, Kudirat Abiola way, Allen avenue, Oba-Akran avenue, Toyin street, Kodesho street, Francis street, Simbiat Abiola way, Agege motor road and Mobalaji bank Anthony road. These locations constituted the clusters where samples were selected for the study. The estimated mean population of number the hawkers as the proportion sampled in each location is presented in Table 1.

Consequent to a perceptive study of the environment and interaction with the hawkers, it was observed that the reasons behind the choice of these locations include; its nearness to their place of residence, prevalence of traffic delay within the area, presence of a major activity centres like churches, mosques, motor-parks or markets. These factors invariably have a resultant effect on the level of patronage received.

Table 1. Population (N) and sample (n) selected in the study area

| S/N | Prominent locations of sachet water hawkers in Ikeja (clusters) | Population (N) | Sample population (n=35% of N) |
|-------|---|----------------|--------------------------------|
| 1 | Adeleye street | 06 | 2 |
| 2 | Obafemi Awolowo way | 14 | 5 |
| 3 | Kudirat Abiola way | 07 | 2 |
| 4 | Allen avenue | 06 | 2 |
| 5 | Oba-Akran avenue | 10 | 4 |
| 6 | Toyin street | 06 | 2 |
| 7 | Kodesho street | 11 | 4 |
| 8 | Francis street | 04 | 1 |
| 9 | Simbiat Abiola way | 06 | 2 |
| 10 | Agege motor road | 11 | 4 |
| 11 | Mobalaji bank Anthony road | 10 | 4 |
| Total | | 91 | 32 |

Source: Authors' fieldwork (2013)

engage in the act in order to assist their parents financially, less privileged teenagers and youths who fend for themselves, among others. Aside the part-time hawkers, (12%) of the sample population hawk both in the early hours of the day (morning) as well as in the afternoon, 18% engage in the act in the morning and evening, afternoon and evening (40%), while only (5%) are found hawking in the morning, noon and evening (see Table 3).

Table 2. Time of operation of sachet water hawkers

| S/N | Variables | Percentage (%) |
|---|--------------------------------|----------------|
| Time of business of the sachet water hawkers | | |
| i. | Morning | 03 |
| ii. | Afternoon | 04 |
| iii. | Evening | 06 |
| iv. | Morning and afternoon | 24 |
| v. | Morning and evening | 18 |
| vi. | Afternoon and evening | 40 |
| vii. | Morning, afternoon and evening | 05 |
| Total | | 100 |

Source: Authors' field work, (2013)

3.2 Sachet Water Hawkers: Who they are and why they Engage in the Act

Having sampled all the clusters, the result of the 100 randomly selected samples summarized in Table 4, revealed that sachet water hawkers in Ikeja is composed of both the male (24%) and female (76%) gender who are between the ages of less than 20 years (29%), 20 and 35 (63%) and above 35 years of age (8%). It is not unexpected to find more female than male in the act, considering the conjecture that majority of the ethnic groups in Nigerian perceive hawking as a feminine activity. However, realizing that the hawkers are mostly teenagers and youth who are still in their prime (82%) is pathetic. Some of them engage in the act so as to assist their parents, another fraction is the less privileged that fend for themselves, while others are unemployed secondary school leavers and rural urban migrants who do not have the required qualification or skill to take up white collar jobs in the city. While (37%) of the sampled respondents are single, (63%) are married. Both male and

female are found in the category of singles (i.e. hawkers who are not married yet), however all the married sachet water hawkers are female. This affirms the aforementioned fact that hawking is a feminine activity.

The causes of poverty in the Nigeria include; inadequate access to employment opportunities, destruction of natural resources leading to environmental degradation and reduced productivity, inadequate assistance for those living at the margin and those victimized by transitory poverty and lack of participation, failure to draw the poor into the design of development, low endowment of human capital, government's neglect, unviable developmental policies, and inadequate growth rate of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) [22]. The major reasons why the sampled respondents engage in hawking is not farfetched from these. As a result of gross unemployment in the nation, both the illiterates and literates; even those with tertiary education (mostly Ordinary National Diploma (OND)) engage in the act. It could therefore be asserted that poverty makes education loose its value. This is affirmed by the words of [23,15]. Nevertheless, people with no formal education (42%) have the highest percentage of involvement, next to this are those with only primary education (31%) and the percentage decreases as the level of education increased therefore having those with tertiary education (12%) as the least percentage as shown in Table 1. This implies that most of the primary schools leavers and illiterates find solace in hawking sachet water due to the fact that they do not have the requirements to fit in into better jobs while the educated sachet water hawkers involve in the act because of other reason such as unemployment and insufficient income.

With regards to return from the sachet water business, (61%) have an income of between ₦500 and ₦1000 daily, while those who earn above ₦1000 but not more than ₦2000 daily are 39%. Their income is dependent on the number of hours they spend on their job as well as how tenacious they are when it comes to chasing customers. Since the income of the sachet water hawkers range from between ₦200 to ₦500 daily, it is simply indicate that these hawkers sell between 5 to 20 bags of sachet water daily because each bag contains 20 sachets which is sold for ₦10 each. The business is relatively lucrative going by the fact that for every bag sold, 100% profit is made. Above all, it is observed that the more the sales of water sachet hawkers,

Table 3. Cross examination of time of business and age of sachet water hawkers

| Time of business | Age | | | Total |
|--------------------------------|----------|-------|----------|-------|
| | Under 20 | 20-35 | Above 35 | |
| Morning (7 am-11:59 am) | 03 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Afternoon (12 pm-4:59 pm) | 4 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| Evening (5 pm-9 pm)) | 6 | 0 | 0 | 6 |
| Morning and afternoon | 8 | 7 | 0 | 15 |
| Morning and evening | 0 | 18 | 0 | 18 |
| Afternoon and evening | 0 | 37 | 3 | 40 |
| Morning, afternoon and evening | 0 | 0 | 5 | 5 |
| Total | 21 | 62 | 8 | 91 |

Source: Authors' field work, (2013)

the more waste that is generated and the lesser the time they have to contribute to environmental sanitation.

Table 4. Socio-economic characteristics of sachet water hawkers in Ikeja

| S/N | Variables | Percentage (%) |
|--|------------------------|----------------|
| Gender of respondents | | |
| i. | a. Male | 24 |
| | b. Female | 76 |
| | Total | 100 |
| Age of respondents | | |
| ii. | a. under 20 years | 29 |
| | b. 20-35 years | 63 |
| | c. Above 35 years | 08 |
| | Total | 100 |
| Marital status | | |
| iii. | a. Single | 37 |
| | b. Married | 63 |
| | Total | 100 |
| Level of education of respondents | | |
| iv. | a. No formal education | 42 |
| | b. Primary education | 31 |
| | c. Secondary education | 15 |
| | d. Tertiary education | 12 |
| | Total | 100 |
| Daily income of the sachet water hawkers in Ikeja | | |
| v. | a. N500 – N1000 | 61 |
| | b. N1001 – N2000 | 39 |
| | Total | 100 |

Source: Authors' field work, (2013)

Table 5. Problems associated with hawking sachet water in Ikeja

| S/N | Problems caused by sachet water hawkers in Ikeja | Percentage (%) |
|-----|--|----------------|
| i | traffic delay | 16 |
| ii | waste generation | 42 |
| iii | accident | 04 |
| iv | traffic delay & waste generation | 17 |
| v | waste generation & accident | 09 |
| vi | traffic delay, waste generation & accident | 12 |
| | Total | 100 |

Source: Authors' field work, (2013)

3.3 Problems (Physiological and Psychological) Associated with Hawking Sachet Water in Ikeja

Findings from the field survey are sufficed to say that consumers of sachet water are nonchalant with disposing the waste water sachets, hence the resultant associated problems. Their attitude is very much environmentally unfriendly to the extent that (58%) of the sampled respondents discard the empty water sachets on the road and streets while others (42%) claim the vehicles is their disposal site. Personal observation of the transference of the waste proved that, emptied waste sachets are more often than not dumped on roadways and gutters before being swept by the sanitary keepers i.e. Lagos Waste Management Authority (LAWMA). This indiscriminate method of waste disposal deteriorates the environment's sanity and undermines her urban value. It also reduces resilience to mishaps such as flood, as most of the empty sachets are washed or blown into drainage channels and its accumulation results into impediment of drainage flow. Sometimes

Table 6. ANOVA table

| Sum of variation | Degree of freedom | Sum of squares | Mean of squares | F | α value | Significance | Decision |
|----------------------|-------------------|----------------|-----------------|------|----------------|-----------------|-----------|
| Between groups (SSB) | 10 | 1.49 | 0.15 | 0.09 | 0.05 | Not significant | Accept Ho |
| Within groups (SSW) | 89 | 144.7 | 1.63 | | | | |
| Total | 99 | 146.19 | | | | | |

the consumers do not exhaust all the water in the sachet and when moving vehicles, bikes run over or pedestrians step on them, the leftover in the sachet is splashed on the passers-by. More so, stepping on these non-biodegradable sachets could cause pedestrians to slip and fall abruptly. Other problems identified with the act include: traffic delay, waste generation & accident.

Using ANOVA with F-statistic computed as 0.09 at 0.05 alpha-level (see above Table 6), it asserts that there is no significant difference in the problems resulting from hawking sachet water in the 11 locations (clusters) sampled. This also affirms the proposition that the mode of operation and disposal of the water sachets is the same in all parts of Ikeja, the Lagos state capital and this is also likely to be the same in other parts of the state. This cannot be allowed to continue; else it might culminate into more nefarious condition.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Hawking is a despicable act especially for the educated. It is no man's dream but a rather a profession born out of frustration for which the impatient might opt out for vices or restiveness. Although it has existed for hundreds of years and is considered as a cornerstone of many cities' historical and cultural heritage [24], it depicts an uncivilized trade mannerism which undermines the goal of a sustainable environment. The mode of operation of the hawkers is the same at all levels and locations, hence similar associated problems. Poverty has been seen to be the major force behind its survival in most developing countries like Nigeria. For national development to therefore be achieved, it is not enough to improve the quality of education only but also ensure national productivity through employability, industrialization and economic diversity. These would cumulatively improve the quality of lives her people. Although it would be radical to put and immediate embargo on hawking in the area of study, it is believed that the problems associated with hawking and the

act of hawking itself will fade away if the remedial process highlighted the subsequent section is implemented.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were advanced:

1. In the main time, an association of sachet water hawkers should be established in order to facilitate interaction with the government thereby enhancing government intervention via financial support, enlightenment and empowerment programmes. Hence, a better means of livelihood. The association will as well enable mobilization of sachet water hawkers to make environmental sanitation easier.
2. Government should enforce environmental sanitation campaign to improve the present state of environmental deterioration in the area. Government should also set up task force to monitor and provide sanitation facilities along streets for easy disposal and collection of waste in the study area. The task force should also be responsible for enforcing laws against indiscriminate disposal of water sachets among other wastes, and collecting tax from the sachet water hawkers in the study area. The tax collected should be saddled towards effective environmental sanitation in the study area.
3. Government should equip the Lagos State Waste Management Authority (LAWMA) and Ikeja Environmental Sanitation Department with sanitation facilities in order to improve their effectiveness in sanitizing the area. This would also enable LAWMA to increase the percentage of recycled water sachets above 17%.
4. While these are being put in place, construction of "sachet water sales point" at different bus stops along the traffic routes and motor parks should be

embarked upon. Considerations should be given to affordability and modernity in order to ensure functionality of these stalls. This would gradually reduce and finally eradicate sachet water hawkers in the study area.

5. In addition, The Government should therefore as a matter of urgency in line with the One World Goals (Post-2015 UN-Agenda) embark on more empowerment schemes to train youths in various professional skills that will better their lives as well the nation at large.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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