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Street vendor entrepreneurship development system for local community, the case study from Southern Thailand

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the street vendor's entrepreneurship landscape and its development system based on a case study from Southern Thailand, using a mixed-methods methodology. There were 68 participants altogether, besides quantitative surveys with vendors, 19 in-depth interviews were conducted with stakeholders, including local practitioners and experts. Guided by the Entrepreneurship System (EDS) and system thinking frameworks, the findings reveal that street vendor participants exhibit a high level of entrepreneurial traits (\bar{X} = 2.62, SD = 0.24), with self-confidence and commitment as the most prominent characteristics, while problem-solving, negotiation, and networking were identified as core entrepreneurial skills. Digital marketing was highlighted as critical skills which require further development. The analysis identified four interrelated components of the entrepreneurship development system as follows: 1) operational goals; 2) implementing organizations and agencies; 3) entrepreneurial skills development strategies; and 4) resource support mechanisms. The conclusion highlights the importance of tailored, inclusive, and collaborative framework which could be adapted and applied in similar contexts. Specific recommendations for policymakers, local governments, and street vendors are provided to guide the design, implementation, and continuous improvement of the system that empowers street vendors as well as strengthens local community economy and livelihoods.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship development system, Street vendor entrepreneurship, Street vendor, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

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1. Introduction

The importance of fostering entrepreneurship across diverse groups and societal levels has been recognized worldwide, ensuring that the principle of “no one is left behind” is respected, in alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Particularly, SDG-1 which aims to eradicate poverty in all its forms, and SDG-8 which aims to promote the continuity, inclusive, sustainable economic growth, productive employment and decent work for all United Nations [1]. Dabson [2] emphasizes that inclusive entrepreneurship development should be systematically integrated, with a focus on local/regional contexts and multi-organizational collaboration, supported by policies and legal frameworks, local resources, human capital, infrastructure, access to financial resource, technology, and social capital. Such development should encompass all entrepreneurial groups, including socially vulnerable populations [3] and micro-entrepreneurs operating in public spaces, who particularly face economic and social constraints and are often affected by urban development policies at both local and national levels [4].

In general, street vendors can be considered micro enterprises that play a vital role in driving local and national socioeconomic development. However, the Thai government’s perspective on street vendors continues to portray them as a source of economic and social issues. As a result, the development of this entrepreneurial group faces several barriers and limitations. For example, there is a lack of efforts to strengthen local vendor networks, insufficient support for local administrative organizations to effectively connect with vendor communities, and negligence in promoting necessary knowledge and skills for professional development [5]. Moreover, local authorities have not fostered a positive and enabling culture to mitigate conflicts between street vendors and government officials. Evidence further suggests that initiatives to establish partnerships among local authorities, public and academic institutions, private organizations, and associations have been less successful than anticipated [6].

Amidst ongoing changes, street vendors are expected to adapt and develop the necessary skills and knowledge to explore opportunities for establishing or expanding their businesses [7]. This adaptation contributes to the growth of a conducive micro-enterprise ecosystem, which serves as a means for alleviating poverty. These expectations, however, have not been fully met, highlighting a gap in understanding among relevant agencies and organizations regarding entrepreneurship and the specific needs of street vendors [8], leading to less effective management and a lack of systematic development [9].

To bridge the gap, this study aims to explore the street vendor entrepreneurship landscape and its development system model within a local community in Thailand. Key factors include developing necessary skills at the individual level and the provision of supportive resources that foster entrepreneurship. On one hand, these aspects can empower and enable street vendors to advance their professional skills, strengthen their businesses, lift themselves out of poverty, and affirm their identity as entrepreneurs, on the other hand, they can serve as a crucial mechanism for urban development, contributing to local and national sustainable socioeconomic growth.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Conceptual Framework

This study adopts the Entrepreneurship Development System (EDS) as its primary theoretical framework, complemented by the concepts of Entrepreneurship Ecosystem, Entrepreneurship, and Street Vending. Developed by Dabson [2] and grounded in action research, EDS is designed to promote entrepreneurship in rural and regional communities, especially for socially vulnerable entrepreneur groups, with an emphasis on comprehensive integration to provide services and products that meet their needs. It emphasizes partnerships between the private and public sectors, non-profit organizations, and educational institutions, as well as the utilization of local resources, linking them to policies with a sustainability focus [10, 11]. The implementation requires continuous evaluation and improvement. While it is crucial to operate within local or regional context boundaries, it can be extended to multiple regions or states, emphasising collaboration between diverse organizations. Based on this structure, the system aims to support rural or regional entrepreneurship development through promoting education, training, access to capital, network building, and a conducive entrepreneurship culture. The EDS, therefore, can be applied and adapted to varying local contexts and capabilities [12].

The Entrepreneurship Ecosystem in this study refers to the environment that supports entrepreneurs, emphasizing opportunities for developing new products and services, and highlighting the interconnectedness between communities, organizations, and business-friendly cultures. This ecosystem consists of six key domains: policy, access to financial resource, high-quality human capital, a conducive entrepreneurship culture, infrastructure, and a friendly marketing [13]. Besides, fostering networks and collaborations across sectors is essential [14]. These components interact both formally and informally to assist and promote target entrepreneurs, ensuring the continuity and scalability of their businesses.

According to the EDS principles, the development of street vendor entrepreneurship system requires an in-depth understanding of the target group. Consequently, this study integrates the concepts of Entrepreneurship and Street Vending to gain comprehensive results and insights. In theory, Entrepreneurship is often defined as a process in which individuals seek opportunities, initiate innovations, and manage resources to achieve success and drive innovation [15]. Key entrepreneurial characteristics include calculated risk-taking, strong commitment to success, and creativity. Different studies in various contexts, for example in small businesses and the informal economy, have shown that personal capabilities and self-reliance are also critical to business success [16]. In general, entrepreneurial skills can be categorized into two types; 1) hard skills, such as business management, finance, and marketing; 2) soft skills, such as creativity, problem-solving, and communication, which require experiential learning. As a result, entrepreneurial success relies on the development of a diverse skill set, together with support from different sectors [17].

The Street Vending concept in this study focuses on street vendor's roles as both entrepreneur and informal economy worker who contribute to informal and formal economy. In general, two prevailing perspectives towards street vendors are as follows [18-20]; first, marginalized labour perspective that views this group as disadvantaged workers, reflecting economic underdevelopment and raising concerns about sanitation and public safety. Second, an entrepreneurial perspective that recognizes street vendors as business owners who absorb surplus labour and contribute to the economic foundation.

2.2. Street Vending in a Local Context

The development of street vending at the local level has been increasingly shaped by several factors including urban governance reforms, climate adaptation strategies, local and global economic policies, as well as the emergent of local vendor-led organizations. For instance, in India, street vendor's involvement in the design of urban life constituted a starting point for urban poverty alleviation [21]. In 2014, the country enacted the Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act to protect livelihoods and regulate street vending activities. Under this policy, the Town Vending Committees (TVCs) or Town Board are established in every local authority. It consists of representatives from relevant actors, such as municipal authorities, planning and health departments, police representatives, street vendors associations, market traders, NGOs, and resident welfare organizations. These committees are responsible for different activities such as conducting surveys, issuing vending certificates, identifying vending zones, regulating vending activities, providing facilities, collecting fees [22, 23]. Such policy highlights the street vendor's recognition and its significance as well as the necessity of systematic and collaborative governance and management to balance informality with urban order. Similarly, Durban in South African is often praised as the first city to develop a comprehensive policy for street vending [24]. This policy prioritizes the informal economy as a driver for jobs and income generations for the poor, incorporating measures such as designated vending zones, market management, vendor registration, draft rental policy and framework, and other support for small businesses, including basic skills training, legal advice, health, education, and access to financial services [25]. Key successes in Durban's approach include structured consultation between vendors and municipal staff, area-based management, joint vendor-official forums, and political support from the African National Congress, which together, enhance the legitimacy and sustainability of vending practices [26, 27]. In Thailand, the Thailand 4.0 strategy has framed entrepreneurship as a national development priority, aiming to foster technology-, creativity- and innovation-driven economic growth. Within this framework, government programs have sought to transform different groups of entrepreneurs, particularly micro-enterprises including street vendors, into competitive actors through training, seminars and business matching [28]. However, there are still gaps in development systems, especially towards many existing micro-enterprises across all regions [29]. In general, street vendors remain diverse and loosely organized, which limit their competitiveness and leave them vulnerable to policies and urban planning practices that prioritize order over development.

Besides forward-looking improvements, several studies observe similar trends and suggest that street vending continues to face structural constraints such as limited access to finance, insecure or unhygienic workspaces, and weak institutional support Engidaw, et al. [8] Al highlight that while street vendors provide significant livelihoods in Ethiopia, vendors face persistence challenges related to credit, infrastructure, and regulatory uncertainty [8]. In India, with the Street Vendors Act in place, there remain several limitations and implantation issues. For instance, there were delays in forming TVCs, inadequate representation of vendors, and conflicts with urban authorities over public space allocations [19, 30]. These findings align with broader global patterns, where the sustainability of street vending depends on policies and systematic approaches that account for its specificities and challenges. Primary shortcomings reveal the gap between policy design and practice, highlighting a crucial step in understanding and the role of a systematic-development approach design that fosters inclusive institutional mechanisms and collaborative governance to empower street vendors.

Based on abovementioned conceptual frameworks and literature, the study of entrepreneurship development system aims to contribute and addresses a gap by advancing knowledge and understanding of street vendors, their current situations, needs, and challenges, particularly in this specific geographical area. Such systems research is necessary not only for strengthening individual entrepreneurial skills and capacities but also creating enabling environments that foster inclusive and sustainable economic development for all.

3. Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods methodology, applying a convergent design, where quantitative and qualitative data were collected simultaneously and integrated during analysis to ensure the validity and completeness of the findings [31]. The study consists of two key components: first, the street vendors' entrepreneurship landscape; and second, an analysis of the entrepreneurship development system, using a local community in Thailand as a case study. Data collection took place between July 2020 and January 2021, during the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in Thailand.

3.1. Research Area

Songkhla Province is one of the significant urban centers in Southern Thailand, in which Songkhla Municipality being the most densely populated area. This study focuses on "Wachira District", situated in Songkhla Municipality [32], Songkhla Province, Thailand. A purposive sampling was applied, and this area was chosen based on the following criteria: 1) it serves as a major hub for street food vendors and has been officially designated as a special vending zone; 2) it has an established vendor network with a management structure and successful practices that serve as a study model for both domestic and international organizations. Furthermore, it actively promotes food safety and the Green City Initiative,

contributing to Songkhla Municipality winning the 2020 Sustainable Environmental City Award from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment [32].

3.2. Participants and Data Collection

This study is divided into two parts. First, quantitative research involves data collection from 68 participants in total, including all members of the “Wachira Vendor Group,” who operate food stalls in front of Wachiranukul School [32]. The sample size was determined based on population size guidelines, which recommend a 100% sample when the population is fewer than 100 individuals [33]. Therefore, this study covers the entire research population, providing first-hand insights into the entrepreneurial landscape of street vendors in Wachira District. The primary quantitative instrument was a structured questionnaire, measuring entrepreneurial characteristics and skills. It was used to gather opinions, factual data, and future projections, minimizing interviewer bias from observation or interview, as respondents provided self-reported data [34]. The overall questionnaire validity score was 0.88, indicating strong internal consistency.

In addition, a qualitative research approach was incorporated through in-depth interviews with key stakeholders including: 1) four participants from the core members of the Wachira Vendor Group, comprising of the group’s president, vice president, and committee members, selected based on their roles and extensive experience in street vending over 15 years; 2) twelve participants from community representatives and relevant organizations, comprising individuals actively involved in operations within the Wachira district, selected for their direct engagement with street vendors; and 3) three participants from experts and scholars, selected based on their academic contributions and/or professional experience relevant to the study so they can provide insights and recommendations to enhance the research findings. The primary qualitative research instrument was an in-depth interview guide, designed to explore sensitive issues, diverse perspectives, and lived experiences among different stakeholder groups [35]. These research instruments underwent expert validation to ensure content validity and reliability. Informed consent was obtained from all participants involved in the study. Data collection continued until data saturation was reached, that is, when no new insights emerged or participants declined further participation. The second part of the study was based on documentary research, involving the collection, analysis, and synthesis of secondary data. This process cross-validates findings from the first part of the study to ensure accuracy and comprehensiveness before formulating a framework.

This study was approved by the Research Ethics Committee for Social Sciences, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Mahidol University, under certification number 2020/111.1205, project code MU-SSIRB 2020/128 (B1).

3.3. Data Analysis

The quantitative data collected through the survey were analyzed using descriptive statistics (e.g., percentage, frequency, and mean) through SPSS for Windows Version 25.0 software. This analysis was conducted to identify street vendors’ entrepreneurial characteristics and necessary skills. Content analysis was employed to transcribe and organize qualitative data. They were categorized and grouped based on the study theoretical framework, linking them to key factors relevant to the street vendor entrepreneurship development system. To ensure the reliability and validity of the findings, the results were cross-checked and confirmed by experts and specialists. A triangulation method was used to verify the accuracy and credibility of the data.

4. Results

The study results can be divided into two parts. The first part concerns the street vendor entrepreneurship landscape, detailing the following: 1) general characteristics; 2) entrepreneurship traits; and 3) current entrepreneurial skills. The second part revealed the street vendor entrepreneurship development system based on the case study, consisting of four components: 1) operational goals; 2) implementing organizations and agencies; 3) entrepreneurial skills development strategies; and 4) resources support mechanisms.

4.1. Entrepreneurship Landscape

General characteristics: Most participants were mostly of the working age between 21-59 years (92.65 percent). About half (54.41 percent) had a basic level of education. Nearly one-third of participants (29.41 percent) stated that the reason for becoming street vendors was the desire to work independently and be their own boss. The nature of the business was predominantly sole proprietorship, with 42.65 percent using household labor, followed by 30.88 percent who used household labor and hired workers. Most participants (92.65 percent) spent between 9 to 12 hours per day trading, with no specific holidays. The average income (after deducting costs) ranged between 1,001 to 3,000 baht per day. More than half of the participants (67.65 percent) reported having some debt obligations. In terms of expectations, about one-third of participants (35.29 percent) stated they did not expect anything and just continued working, while 20.59 percent wanted to expand their business. Similarly, 20.59 percent expressed a desire to increase their customer base, while 19.12 percent wanted to pass on their business to the next generation. Interestingly only 4.41 percent reported that they would stop or sell their business.

Entrepreneurial traits: Overall, the entrepreneurial traits among participants were found to be at a high level (\bar{x} = 2.62, SD = 0.24). Self-confidence and commitment ranked the highest (\bar{x} = 2.91, SD = 0.21), followed by achievement motivation (\bar{x} = 2.82, SD = 0.27), self and social responsibility (\bar{x} = 2.77, SD = 0.28), competitiveness (\bar{x} = 2.71, SD = 0.40), positive thinking (\bar{x} = 2.67, SD = 0.34), willingness to learn (\bar{x} = 2.63, SD = 0.41), innovation and creativity (\bar{x} = 2.39, SD = 0.78), and self-independence (\bar{x} = 2.35, SD = 0.63). Calculated risk-taking ranked as the lowest trait (\bar{x} = 2.18, SD = 0.73) due to concerned about the potential impact and consequences.

Entrepreneurial skills: Overall, participants demonstrated current entrepreneurial skills at a high level ($\bar{x} = 2.56$, $SD = 0.21$). Among these, problem-solving skills were rated the highest ($\bar{x} = 2.75$, $SD = 0.32$), followed by negotiation skills ($\bar{x} = 2.63$, $SD = 0.42$) and networking skills ($\bar{x} = 2.60$, $SD = 0.39$). Financial management skills were also found to be reasonably high ($\bar{x} = 2.44$, $SD = 0.45$). However, upon further analysis, accounting skills were found to be at a moderate level, as reflected by a lack of liquidity in working capital, leading to financial debt burdens. Among these results, technological skills were rated the lowest ($\bar{x} = 2.40$, $SD = 0.79$).

In terms of necessary skills, 35.29 percent of participants identified online marketing as the most important skills. Integrating digital technology to drive sales and marketing was a key area of interest, as many street vendors expressed a strong desire to learn due to the impact of socioeconomic changes and other global factors such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The rapid expansion of the online market for goods and services has made it essential to quickly adapt and learn new skills to boost sales and income opportunities.

4.2. The Street Vendor Entrepreneurship Development System

The findings support the simultaneous development of individual street vendors' entrepreneurial skills and the provision of supporting resources for small-scale entrepreneurs. A synthesized model for street vendor entrepreneurship development system, based on the case study, consists of the following four components:

4.2.1. Component 1: Operational Goals

The primary goal found in the study is to promote entrepreneurship among street vendors, enabling them to develop their occupations and sustain their businesses in the long term. Additionally, the development system aims to foster their participation in urban development and contribute to a thriving local community.

4.2.2. Component 2: Implementing Organizations and Agencies

The study identified various types of organizations, including 2.1) local government agencies or administration; 2.2) financial institutions; 2.3) private sector organizations; 2.4) non-governmental organizations (NGOs); 2.5) academic institutions, and 2.6) local street vendor groups. Local government agencies play a critical role in coordinating, facilitating, and supporting relevant organizations. A key success factor is fostering strong relationships at both the institutional and personnel levels to ensure effective collaboration. However, the findings suggest that academic institutions should strengthen their role in providing more substantial academic and technical support.

"... The municipality should take the lead and invite other organizations to collaborate ... The Skill Development Centre could offer vocational training ... The Non-Formal Education Department could provide training for local businesses like fabric-handicraft making or salted egg production ... Universities have mostly conducted research but haven't been engaged in occupation development at a deeper level ..." (NGO Representative).

4.2.3. Component 3: Entrepreneurial Skills Development Strategies

To enhance their ability to operate and expand their businesses, as well as resiliency through changing circumstances, entrepreneurial skill development is categorized into three dimensions:

Dimension 3.1 : Entrepreneurial characteristics and traits. General characteristics such as age, education level as well as traits such as confidence and commitment, willingness to learn, self and social responsibility have been considered and promoted by supporting agencies. These elements are critical in designing and implementing entrepreneurial skill development and participation in training programs.

"The knowledge we provide stays with them, so they can apply it in real life situations... When faced with challenges like COVID-19, they start thinking about their networks, thinking about who they can reach out to... They prepared information and applied negotiation strategy before speaking with municipal authorities...." (NGO Representative)

Dimension 3.2: Necessary entrepreneurial skills for street vendor entrepreneurship. It was found that street vendors recognized the importance of various entrepreneurial skills, such as digital and online marketing, due to evolving societal trends and the impact of COVID-19. Such circumstances underscored the necessity to integrate technology into business operations.

"COVID taught us a lesson that we need to be able to take online orders... We started learning new skills, watching YouTube tutorials, creating promotional content, managing a business page... running promotions...these are essential in today's world." (Street vendor 1)

Dimension 3.3: Approaches for developing entrepreneurial skills. Time constraints were identified as a major challenge for street vendors due to their unpredictable work schedules as a saying that goes "for vendors, time is as precious as gold." Consequently, a combination of non-formal training and informal training approaches facilitate and make skill development accessible under demanded flexible timing.

"We schedule activities outside of their peak business hours... If they sell in the evening, we conduct training during the day... We also provide compensation since attending training means losing sales and income..." (Representative from a financial institution/Thai Government Savings Bank manager)

4.2.4. Component 4: Resource Support Mechanisms

Supporting resources mechanisms for street vendors consist of six key dimensions.

Dimension 4.1: Local policies and regulations. Policy inconsistencies between different administrations and unclear regulations in public space management constituted challenges in this study. Public consultation and multi-stakeholder committees were recommended to ensure fair and transparent space allocation that allow shared and collective benefits.

"Managing vending areas requires clear criteria...to be able to sell, a selection process is needed with clear requirements. A committee from all parties involved should be set up to oversee applications and co-managed... including officials, community representatives, and vendors..." (Private sector representative/School director)

Dimension 4.2: Access to financial resources. Previous attempts to establish savings groups were unsuccessful, highlighting the limitations and the need for structured financial management. As a result, Government financial institutions should tailor lending programs to better respond to street vendors' needs.

"They (street vendors) once tried to organize a savings group, but it failed... This is a lesson learned. If we restart again, we must involve different actors, for example, should we involve the bank's financial advisors? Who should we involve and how should we organize a committee structure? (Head of Public Health and Sanitation)

Dimension 4.3: Creating positive street vendor entrepreneurial culture. Continuous meetings and organizing community events have helped foster cooperation among vendors. Due to COVID-19, online communication has been adopted and become increasingly common, promoting peaceful and mutual living culture, as well as active participation.

"The municipality holds annual meeting each year... but since COVID, we started to use a Line group more often, particularly, for information sharing...if any problems or issues arise, we also communicate through our Line group." (Street vendor leader 2)

Dimension 4.4: Basic infrastructure and utilities. Based on the study, two approaches were found; 1) vendors sought municipal support for necessary utilities; 2) they contributed financially to the organization and management of shared resources, including basic welfare services, based on transparency principles.

"...Each vendor contributes 30 baht (~\$0,9) daily for waste collection, traffic control, and other services... At the end of the month, we share a financial statement summary, and a copy is distributed to all members... If a member's family experiences a bereavement, we use these funds to provide condolences". (Street vendor leader 3)

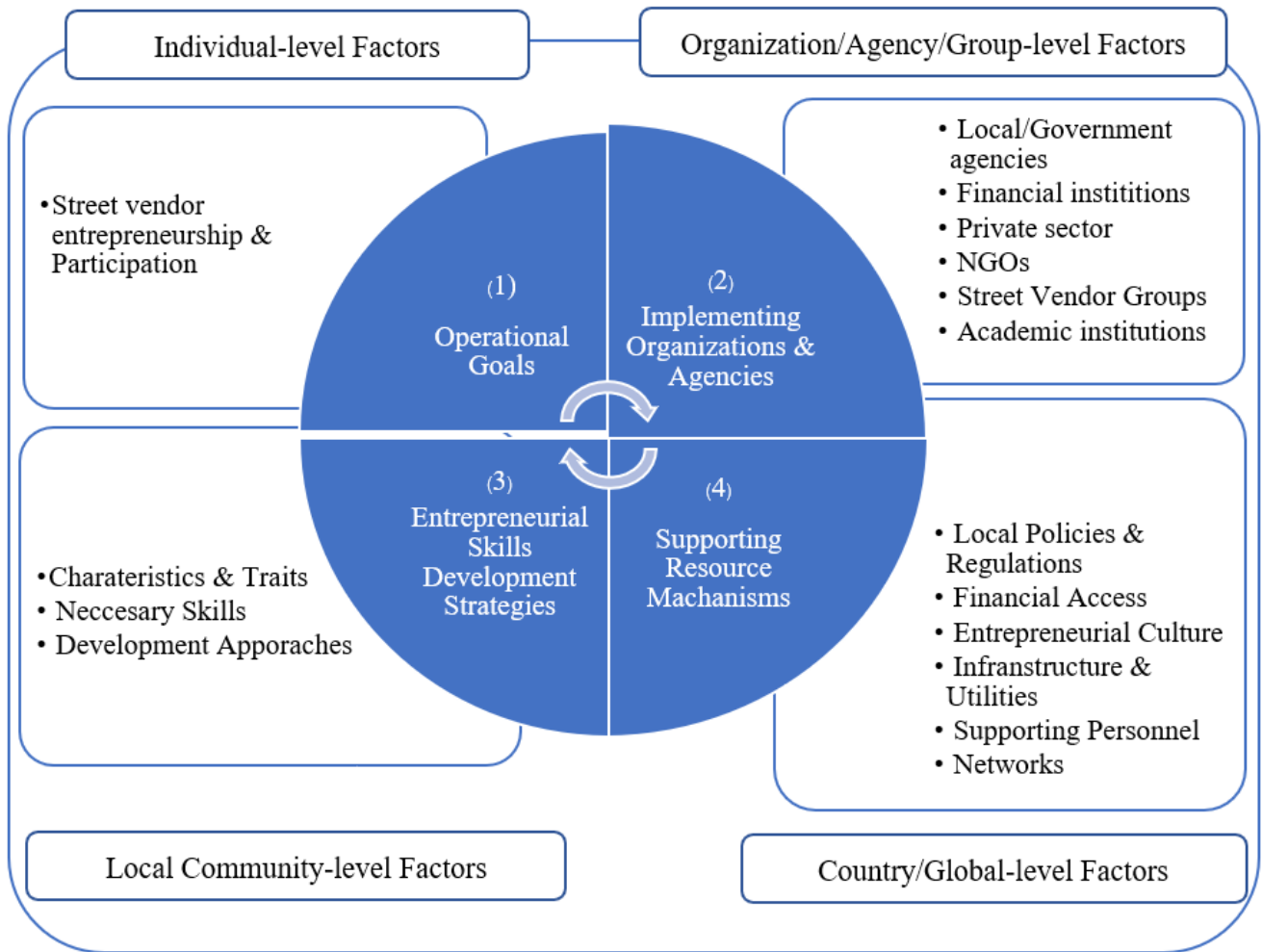
Dimension 4.5: Supporting personnel working in promoting entrepreneurship. Annual action plans and budget were allocated for personnel capacity building to provide skills development tailored to local specific context and situation. This enables them to effectively collaborate with relevant parties, ensuring learning exchange to gain different perspectives.

Dimension 4.6: Network building and maintenance. It was found that maintaining a database of street vendors not only facilitates group formation but also supports agencies in providing targeted assistance and other resource allocation.

"The municipality organizes registration process... Once registration was completed, they scheduled meetings... They provided training for vendors at each location. The municipality focuses on hygiene subject... (Mentioned the person's name: representative from an NGO) focuses on matters concerning the vendors' organization, welfare, and social security". (Head of Public Health and Sanitation)

Furthermore, it is noteworthy to mention relevant system-enabling factors that can contribute both positively and negatively to the street vendor entrepreneurship development system. These factors include: 1) individual-level factors, such as personal characteristics, legal and normative compliance, respecting the rules established by the group (jointly created by the members) and complying with local/central government regulations, as well as government support perceptions; 2) group/organization- level factors, such as leadership, collaboration, and communication, as well as fostering relations with relevant agencies; 3) community-level factors, such as public acceptance, local cultural values, and participation; and 4) country- and global- level factors such as economic fluctuations, technological advancements, and global crises like COVID-19 pandemic. Together, these factors significantly influence the entrepreneurship landscape and its development system, as found in this study (Figure 1).

Street Vendor Entrepreneurship Development System for Local Community



Enabling Environment

Figure 1.

The Street vendor entrepreneurship development system for local community, a case study from Southern Thailand.

5. Discussion

Based on the findings, the Wachira Street Vendor Group demonstrated high levels of entrepreneurial traits and characteristics, reinforcing their entrepreneurial identity and various capacities. This supports the model's development goals, which emphasize promoting entrepreneurial traits and participation as part of an enabling dimension and driver for business growth. This result aligns with core entrepreneurship theory, which emphasizes the ability to innovate in response to emerging opportunities while fostering sustained personal and business development.

Drawing on the EDS and Entrepreneurship Ecosystem frameworks, the Wachira Vendor Group's approach to developing street vendor entrepreneurship system reflected a practical, context-specific model aimed at building individual capacity and promoting inclusive and sustainable livelihoods. To illustrate, rapid socioeconomic changes and market uncertainties, such as those brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, expose micro and small enterprises (MSMEs) to vulnerabilities and growing pressure to develop new skills to stay competitive. Digital or online marketing emerged as a key competency mentioned by participants. While many of them attempted self-learning or received informal training from family members, older vendors often face digital learning barriers due to health limitations and technological unfamiliarity Santoalha, et al. [36]. Besides, Yudhana, et al. [37] observes that although vendors try to use online platforms and social media for commerce, limited digital skills and inadequate access to technology have excluded some of them from digital market, an issue prevalent among small-scale entrepreneurs. Addressing this requires personalized training approaches that account for varied learning styles and cultural contexts. Effective methods include hands-on workshops, mentorship, and peer learning, in alignment with entrepreneurial goals, characteristics, and outcomes. These findings highlight that flexible timing arrangement, together with tailored entrepreneur skills development, lead to practical and inclusive approaches among the target group.

Moreover, the role of local government organizations as central coordinators in developing a robust street vendor support system is crucial, given their authority over public space management. This aligns with research advocating for integration with local urban planning policies and regulatory frameworks. Balanced policymaking and multi-stakeholder engagement, as noted by Ramos and Tshikovhi [38], can reduce conflicts with authorities and foster inclusive economic

participation. Berceanu and Nicolescu [39] also emphasize that local governance structures are key resources for supporting street vendor entrepreneurship. However, the study notes that frequent policy shifts, often due to leadership changes, can undermine long-term goals. Additionally, while global frameworks like the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) offer guidance, they must be carefully adapted to local contexts to avoid cultural mismatch and inefficient resource use. This study addresses the abovementioned gap and requirements by revealing a shared preference among stakeholders for participatory public space management through public consultations, as well as policy decision-making through multi-stakeholder management committees based on transparency, ethical governance, and collective space-sharing principles. In line with Carmona [10] who emphasizes the importance of multi-agency integration and cultural consideration in public space governance, while Pulliat, et al. [11] highlight the necessity of incorporating street vendors' voices into policy design.

Nevertheless, several limitations for the study should be mentioned. First, the sample size is relatively small and limited to one specific geographical area. Second, participants may have responded under the influence and consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. And third, the primary focus of the study is mainly on the street vendors' landscape and perspectives, excluding other important stakeholders such as local government officials or customers. As a result, future research could address such limitations by expanding the sample size and study areas. Longitudinal studies could provide a deeper understanding of the long-term impacts. Finally, a study design that includes a wider range of stakeholder groups could contribute to the broader perspectives, providing inclusive insights to identify the best innovative approaches to support the street vendor entrepreneurship development system.

6. Conclusion and Recommendation

The systems thinking perspective and ecosystem-based approach in this study reflect the Office of the Education Council of Thailand's [40] call for structured, systematic, and enabling environments for entrepreneurial development. The Wachira Vendor Group model offers insights that can be adapted and applied to other informal worker groups operating in similar community settings. Its operational system can be summarized into three key principles. First, prioritizing the needs of target group, to ensure relevant and timely entrepreneurial skills development. Second, emphasizing participatory management among stakeholder organizations, particularly in designing policies related to public space management that reflect the realities and practices of street vending in specific areas and contexts. Third, utilize diverse and culturally appropriate communication channels to gather feedback and ensure inclusive participation across all stakeholder groups.

Communication is considered a strategic tool for designing and managing the entrepreneurship development system, while inclusive policy design, stakeholder engagement, cultural sensitivity, and collaborative governance are among the key factors to ensure public spaces serve community needs and promote sustainable economic, social, and environmental outcomes. The study suggests that beyond economic contributions, street vendors can play an active role in shaping urban spaces and strengthening community ties. Notably, the active and continued participation from all stakeholders, especially the vendors themselves, is essential for the system to thrive.

Consequently, two levels of recommendations are proposed. At national and local government levels: 1) policy formulation should ensure a balance between regulation, public order, and the promotion of inclusive economic opportunities, developed through public consultations and participatory planning, grounded in democratic values; 2) governments should establish channels for street vendors to voice concerns related to both personal and socioeconomic development. For example, combining digital and social innovation to create inclusive platforms that provide easy access for vendor participation in planning, implementation, and resource mobilization. This can contribute to more sustainable urban growth and resilience; 3) clear and accessible public information, disseminated through both online and offline platforms, should be prioritized to enhance public understanding and foster broader acceptance of street vendors as legitimate economic contributors. These combined efforts are essential to support skill development in response to socioeconomic changes, ensure active participation, while upholding their human dignity.

Recommendations at the street-vendor level include: 1) recognizing the importance of continuous skill development by actively participating in training programs and knowledge-sharing activities both for themselves and their families; and 2) fulfilling social obligations by complying with public health and regulatory standards while staying informed about economic and social trends. This approach should help foster responsible entrepreneurship and expand business growth opportunities.

The integration of these multi-level recommendations, supported by a balanced, collaborative, and inclusive entrepreneurship development system, can increase the informal workforce's resilience and transition them into fully recognized entrepreneurs. This, in turn, will strengthen the local economy, and ensure no one is left behind amid rapid local and global socioeconomic changes.

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