

VULNERABILITIES AMONG INFORMAL ECONOMIC OPERATORS IN KANO METROPOLIS, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper examined the factors that render informal economic operators in Kano metropolis vulnerable. The study adopted quantitative research method and data was collected through the use of questionnaire covering a sample size of 384, following Cochran's formula for indefinite population. Copies of the questionnaire were divided across the six (6) clusters to achieve the desired proportion based on the population of the local government areas. Findings revealed that factors that render informal economic operators in Kano metropolis vulnerable are; lack of informal welfare, no access to credit facilities, non-membership of association, non-registration of business, lack of space, experience of harassment due to poor locations, poor security of space and low income. Socio-economic characteristics such as migration status, educational qualification and gender do not render operators vulnerable. When analysed within the clusters, Kano municipal ranked highest in vulnerability with 10 out of 14 factors rendering operators vulnerable; Gwale, Fagge and Dala show similarities with seven (7) factors of vulnerability, while Nassarawa is the least vulnerable area with only four (4) factors out of 14. The study therefore recommends provision of more serviced business space for operators, strengthening of informal welfare, simplification of registration procedures as a way of ensuring inclusion and creating conducive environment for business to thrive.

Keywords: Vulnerability, Informal Economy, Operators, Informal Activities, Kano Metropolis

Introduction

The informal economy according to UN Habitat (2015) refers to all units, activities and workers in the informal employment and the output from that employment that is partially or fully outside the realm of government. The International Labour Organization, ILO (1972) and Sparks and Barnett, (2010) adds that it is the non-structured sector that has emerged as a result of the modern sector's inability to absorb new entrants.

The rapid rate of urbanization and population increases the growing demand for unavailable jobs from the formal sector that had influenced the proliferation of informal economic activities in urban areas. Today, the larger part of urban population rely on the informal sector for employment with an average of 66 percent of non-agriculture employment in Sub-Saharan Africa

in the informal economy (Chen, 2014). The Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN), (2006) also posits that, the informal economy provides employment opportunities for about 70-80 per cent of Nigeria citizens; this signifies the importance of the informal economy as a source of livelihood, as the sector creates job opportunities, generates income and aid in poverty reduction.

Despite the contribution of the informal sector to the economy, it has less consideration as an important sector when compared to the formal economy, even when it provides over 70% of employments in most developing countries (Chen, 2014, OECD/ILO, 2019). The negligence of the informal sector makes operators to be exposed to several challenges such as lack of access to capital, locational instability, insecurity of their wares, and so on in the course of carrying out their livelihood activities. This can be attributed to the paucity of policies, planning and urban management and the lack of financial and social protection (Njaya, 2014).

Kano, being the nation's centre of commerce and one of the most populated state in the Nigeria, has a large proportion of its population involved in informal economic activities as a source of livelihood, as the informal economy in Kano contributes approximately 60 -70% of output and employment (Kano State Government, 2018). Considering the number of informal workers, it is important that their needs are well taken care of, and free from all sorts of difficulties as a way to create a healthy, pleasing, inclusive and just city where all components (physical, social and economic) coexist in harmony.

This can only be achieved by understanding the nature of informal economic activities and the factors that render operators in the informal economy vulnerable which, is the focus of this study.

Conceptual Framework Literature Review

A number of definitions have been put forward to describe the concept of vulnerability (Füssel and Klein 2002; Moench and Dixit 2004). Vulnerability is a resultant effect of exposure to internal and external factors, the sensitivity to such factor which leads to potential impact in the absence of adaptive measures. Adger and Kelly (1999) define vulnerability as the state of individuals, groups or communities in terms of their ability to cope with external stress placed on their livelihood. This is widely determined by the availability of resources and the ability of individuals, groups or communities to call on these resources.

A model for vulnerability analysis was conceptualised by Turner *et al* (2003). In this model, exposure, sensitivity and resilience are regarded as the major tools of measuring vulnerability.

Exposure describes the unit of analysis, either individual or group and also defines the characteristics of exposure to vulnerability with frequency, magnitude and duration. Sensitivity deals with the human and environmental factors that cause and perpetuate vulnerability. Such factors include quality of human and social capital endowment such as institutions, economic structure, population characteristics, culture, class among others. Lastly, resilience deals with modalities for coping with or responding to vulnerabilities such as existing policies, programmes and other options adopted by the vulnerable, the impacts of vulnerability like loss of productivity, livelihood and life; including adjustment and adaptive measures taken.

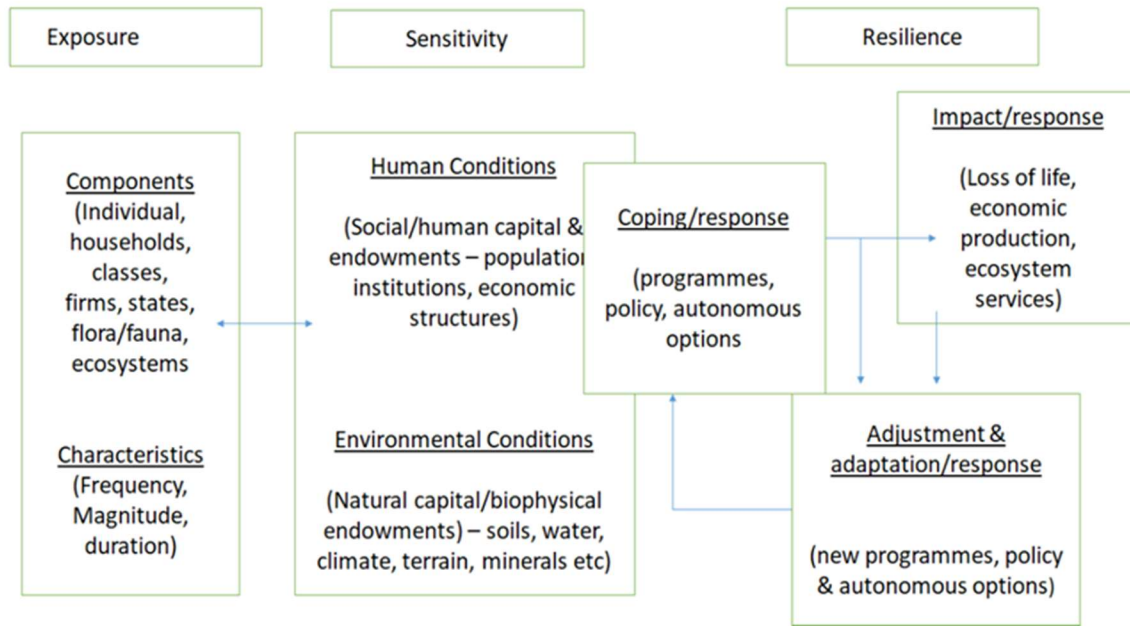


Figure 1: Vulnerability Analysis Model

Source: Turner et al (2003)

The Informal Economy

The informal economy is a significant component of the urban economies, driver and engine of growth especially in developing countries, where the informal economy is at its peak (ILO, 1993; Benjamin, 2014; Stuart, Samman and Hunt, 2018). The root of informal economy is diverse and different academic scholars have different explanations for its proliferation, however there is a general consensus that informal economy came up as a result of the need for individuals to meet up with basic needs for survival.

The term informal sector was first used internationally by the ILO (1972) to mean the way of doing things characterised by small scale, low resource and entry barriers, family ownership, labour intensive methods and adapted technology. Skills acquired outside the formal sector with unregulated and competitive markets also constitute integral parts of the informal economy. Since then, several scholars and practitioners interested in the concept have explored and advanced various definitions of the term 'Informal Sector'.

Vulnerabilities in Informal Economy

Risks and vulnerabilities are parts of everyday life for many operators and their families in the informal economy. More often, these risks and vulnerabilities can be related to the size of the informal economy and the risk management techniques available to withstand the effect of such threats (OECD/ILO, 2019). In many developing countries, informal employment represents a significant part of the economy, and plays an important role in production of goods and services, employment creation and income generation. However, informal operators are still exposed to risks of vulnerability, resulting from inadequacy of earnings, lack of occupational safety, health and good working conditions in general (ILO, 2021).

Without effective policies to manage the risks and vulnerability of the informal operators, informal economy workers will remain particularly vulnerable and continue to pass vulnerability

on to others, particularly children and the elderly, who disproportionately live in informal households in developing countries (OECD/ILO, 2019).

The Africa Centre for People Institutions and Society (ACEPIS) (2018) states that the lack of recognition of the informal sector as an important component of employment and economic development has rendered people that rely on the informal economy for their livelihoods vulnerable. Overly, vulnerability in the informal sector arises as a result of neglects and failed social and economic policies that are supposedly created to improve their productivity.

Millions of people work in the informal sector where they are faced with low and uncertain income, threats in relation to their activities because of the inadequate spatial planning, poor land use management, poor facilities and services provision and weak social protection (ACEPIS, 2018). More often, the condition in which informal workers in the developing countries carry out their activities are quantitatively and starkly poor and unprotected (Lund and skinner, 2004)

Determinants of Vulnerability in the Informal Economy

Several studies on the informal economy has pointed out three major factors that determine the occurrence, seasonality, impact and magnitude of vulnerability by operators in the informal sector. These are;

Spatial planning and land use management: one of the most valuable resources in an urban area is space (Hackenbroch, 2013; Mwau, 2015; Doe, 2015). This is because most activities take place in space, and without space, economic growth and wealth creation will be impossible. Urban livelihood mostly depends on urban public spaces, which puts the urban poor at a disadvantage when competing for space for economic activities in the urban area (Hackenbroch, 2013). Restrictions on access to urban spaces by the poor are easily done through application of unaffordable costs, regulations and other forms of social exclusion (Brown and Lloyd-Jones, 2002). This makes quest for urban space difficult for the informal operators in need for space to carry out their activities as majority of people in the informal economy are poor (Becker, 2004) leaving operators in the informal sector to search for economically feasible urban spaces (Mwau, 2005).

Regulations: the Legalist School of Thought on the informal economy places emphasis on the regulatory limitations and challenges facing the informal economy as legality is an element of the conceptualisation of the sector. The legalists are of the opinion that informal economy sprawled from the desire to avoid regulatory obligations, such as business registration and tax payment (De Soto, 1989; Chepkemei, 2016). This is why in many contexts, the informal sector is considered to be illegal, undocumented, unregulated, and most often, hostile. De Soto (1989) further argues that difficult government rules and procedures in formalising business create difficulties and discourage operators from formalising their businesses. This is further complicated by inadequate public goods and services that could facilitate growth of enterprises in the informal sector like infrastructure, technology and finance (Chepkemei, 2016).

Shocks: Shock as a determinant of vulnerability relate to the ability of operators to rely on informal economic activities in supporting livelihoods especially during occurrence of shocks (Chaudhuri, 2000; Dercon, 2001). Shocks may include but not limited to health problems, inflation, disability, insurgency, flooding or other natural or manmade disasters, which are occasional or seasonal events that will have implication on the consumption and expenditure patterns of operators in the informal sector. While some shocks may last for short period (illness, fire incidence, flooding) others may take months (disability, insurgency) to recover from. Amendha, Buigut and Mohamed (2014) categorise shocks as either covariate or idiosyncratic; where covariate shocks are those that affect the whole community and idiosyncratic shocks affect

a particular household or individual. Dabir-Alai (2004) posits that high vulnerability will decrease the ability of street vendors to preserve their survival ability.

Study Area

Kano is the largest city in the Northern Region of Nigeria. It is located between Latitude 11° 25'N to 12° 40'N and longitude 8° 35'E to 8° 45'E. Kano city has for centuries been the most important commercial and industrial nerve centre of Northern Nigeria, attracting millions from all parts of the country and beyond. Kano metropolis is among the fastest growing cities in Nigeria with eight (8) out of the forty-four (44) Local Government Areas in the state found within the Metropolis. Kano Metropolis covers 499 square kilometres (193 square miles) with a population of 2,828,861 persons according to the National Population Commission (2006) with a growth rate of 3.2 percent per annum which gives a projected population for 2020 to be approximately 4,393,009 persons. The Local Government Areas within the metropolis are Nasarawa, Tarauni, Fagge, Dala, Gwale, Kano Municipal, Ungogo and Kumbotso. However only six local government areas that are fully within the metropolis out of the eight local government areas in Kano Metropolis were the focus of the study (see table 1).

Table 1: Population of Study

S/N	Local government area	2006 Population	2020 Projected Pop.
1	Dala	418,759	650,849
2	Fagge	200,095	310,994
3	Gwale	357,827	556,146
4	Kano Municipal	371,243	576,998
5	Nasarawa	596,411	926,961
6	Tarauni	221,844	344,797
Total		2,166,179	3,366,745

Source: National Population Commission (NPC), Kano, 2006 and Modified by Author (2020)

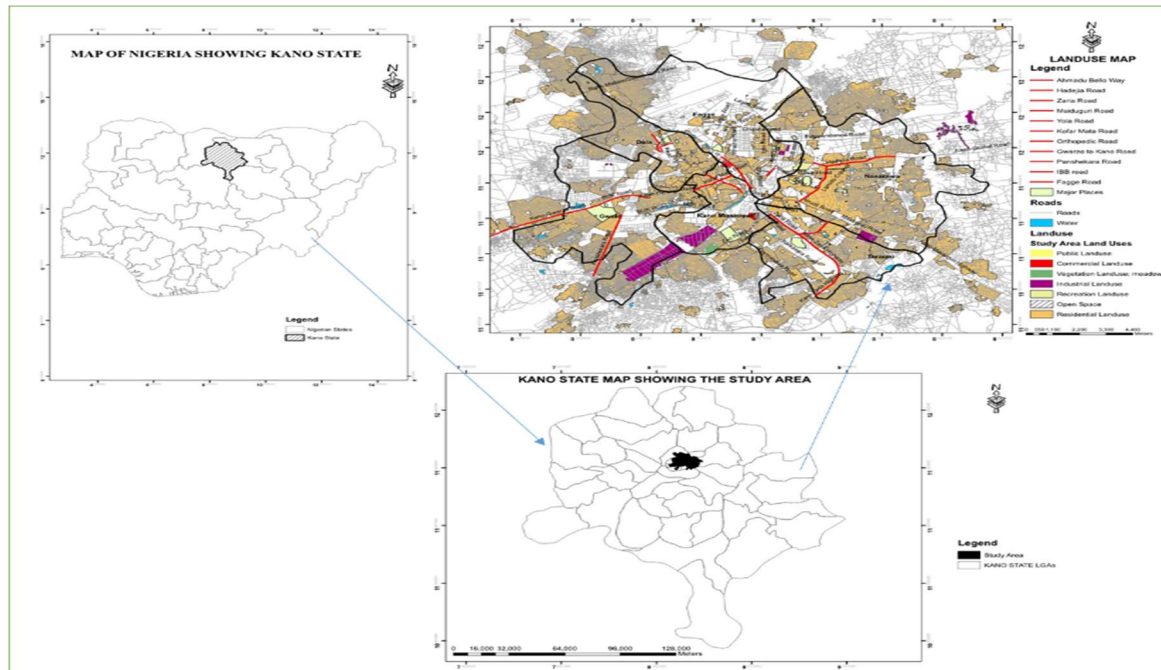


Figure 2: Kano Metropolis in the National Context, Source: GIS Lab, URP Department, KUST, Wudil.

Methodology

The study uses quantitative research method to assess the factors that render informal economic operators vulnerable. The research population comprises of persons engaging in informal economic activities in Kano Metropolis, which has no finite number, therefore, a purposive (non-probability) sampling technique was employed to get the target population, using Cochran's formula for indefinite population using the formula $n_0 = \frac{z^2 pq}{e^2}$

$$e^2$$

Where n_0 is the sample size, z is the selected criteria value of desired confidence level, p is the estimated proportion of an attribute that is present in the population, $q = 1-p$ and e is the desired level of precision. The sample size was calculated assuming 50% of the population proportion are into informal activities at 95% confidence level, therefore $p = 0.5$, $q = 1-0.5=0.5$, $e = 0.05$ and $z = 1.96$ So, $n_0 = \frac{(1.96)^2(0.5)(0.5)}{(0.05)^2} = \frac{0.9604}{0.0025} = 384.16 = 384$

$$(0.05)^2 = 0.0025$$

The sample size of 384 was then employed. The sample sizes for each cluster was extracted from the population of each local government within the metropolis. This was done by using the percentage of each cluster to the total population to get the sample size.

Table 2: Population and sample size

S/N	Local government area	2020 Pop.	Projected	Percentage	Sample size
1	Dala	650,849		19.3	74
2	Fagge	310,994		9.2	35
3	Gwale	556,146		16.5	63
4	Kano Municipal	576,998		17.2	66
5	Nasarawa	926,961		27.5	106
6	Tarauni	344,797		10.3	40
Total		3,366,745		100	384

Source: Author's compilation (2020).

In analyzing the data collected to depict the real picture in the study area, the mean value for each variable factor was used in the six clusters to determine the level at which each factor render operators vulnerable using color class and index mean for interpretation from 0.00 to 1.00. The study used three indexes to categorize the level of vulnerability base on the factors into those that render operators weakly vulnerable (0.00 – 0.33), vulnerable (0.34- 0.67) and strongly vulnerable (0.68- 1.00) (see table 3). Descriptive statistics was used for data analysis and results are presented in tables and charts as frequency, percentage and mean.

Table 3: Vulnerability index mean for interpretation

Index mean	Colour class	Rank
0.68 – 1.00		Strongly vulnerable
0.34- 0.67		Vulnerable
0.00 – 0.33		Weakly vulnerable

Source: Authors compilation, 2020

Results and Discussion

Socio economic characteristics of respondents

The socio economic characteristics of the respondents is presented in the Table 4 to show the gender, age distribution, educational qualification, monthly income of respondents, migration status and distance to work.

Table 4: Socio-economic characteristics of respondents

		Local Government Areas						
		Tarauni	Gwale	Fagge	Municipa l	Nasarawa	Dala	Total
Distribution of respondents by LGA								
	F	40	63	35	66	106	74	384
	%	10.4	16.4	9.1	17.2	27.6	19.3	100
Gender of respondents								
Male	%	82.5	88.9	91.4	97.0	78.3	74.3	84.1
Female	%	17.5	11.1	8.6	3.0	21.7	25.7	15.9
Age of respondents								
Less than 20 years	%	5.0	3.2	5.7	3.0	0.0	6.8	3.4
20-30 years	%	37.5	42.9	62.9	25.8	46.2	40.5	41.7
31-40 years	%	42.5	23.8	25.7	43.9	20.8	36.5	31.0
41-50 years	%	10.0	15.9	5.7	24.2	20.8	9.5	15.9
51 – 60 years	%	0.0	9.5	0.0	0.0	12.3	4.1	5.7
Above 60 years	%	5.0	4.8	0.0	3.0	0.0	2.7	2.3
Educational qualification								
No formal education	%	7.5	19.0	11.4	31.8	32.1	10.8	21.4
Primary	%	20.0	3.2	11.4	3.0	11.3	14.9	10.2
Secondary	%	37.5	60.3	60.0	47.0	30.2	48.6	45.1
Tertiary	%	35.0	17.5	17.1	18.2	26.4	25.7	23.4
Alternative source of income								
Yes	%	22.5	19.0	8.6	21.2	30.2	18.9	21.9
No	%	77.5	81.0	91.4	78.8	69.8	81.1	78.1
Distance to work								
Less than 500m	%	22.5	36.5	14.3	33.3	20.8	28.4	26.6
1km	%	52.5	41.3	20.0	31.8	42.5	48.6	40.6
2km	%	20.0	14.3	31.4	25.8	20.8	18.9	21.1
Above 2km	%	5.0	7.9	34.3	9.1	16.0	4.1	11.7

Source: Fieldwork, 2020

Findings on the socio-economic characteristics of informal economic operators in Kano metropolis shows that operators are mostly male (more than 70% from each cluster) in their productive age (41.7% of respondents are in the age bracket of 20-30 years and 31% between 31-40 years) with only 21.4% not having access to formal education, although secondary and tertiary educational attainment has the highest percentage of 45.1% and 23.4% respectively. 78.1% of the respondents rely solely on the proceeds of their business as they do not have alternative sources of income while most operators (40.6%) travel relatively short distance (within 1km) to work.

Nature of informal economic activities

The study categorize informal economic activities in Kano metropolis into three sub sectors; the production subsector which deals with production of tangible goods such as small scale manufacturing, welding, furniture making and so on; the service subsector involving in repair and maintenance work such as vehicle repairs and maintenance, tailoring, hair dressing and; the retail subsector such as enterprises engaging in buying and selling of basic products including general daily provision, fruits and vegetables, foods and drinks vending etcetera. Operators in the production subsector in Kano Metropolis add up to 7.9%, 24.5% are in the service subsector while 67.9% are in the retail subsector.

Plate I: Informal economic activities in Kano Metropolis

Source: Field Work, 2020

Vulnerability Assessment Factors



Service subsector along Kabuga road



Petty trading on road setback along Dorayi road



Production subsector



Food vending on open space along Kabuga road



Photo studio and business center along Dorayi



Row of shops along Dorayi,



Servicing activities in Gwale



Informal activities on open spaces with temporary shed and container



Retailing activities on walkway

Factors that render informal economic operators vulnerable in the running of their businesses are presented in the Table 5 as follows:

Table 5: Vulnerability assessment factors

		Local Government Areas						
		Tarauni	Gwale	Fagge	Municipal	Nasarawa	Dala	Total
Distribution of respondents by LGA								
	No of respondents (N)	40	63	35	66	106	74	384
	Mean = S/N	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	
Factors that render operators vulnerable								
Low income		.4750	.4603	.3143	.5000	.2830	.3243	.3802
Migration status		.0000	.0000	.1143	.0000	.0377	.0405	.0286
No formal education		.0500	.1905	.1143	.3485	.2453	.0811	.1901
Gender base threat		.0000	.0000	.1714	.0303	.0849	.0405	.0521
Lack of space		.5250	.4921	.5143	.4788	.2358	.3478	.4323
Inadequate access to facilities needed		.1750	.4127	.1429	.5303	.2642	.1216	.2865
Long distance from home		.2500	.2698	.6857	.4091	.3302	.2568	.3438
No access to credit facilities		1.0000	1.0000	.9143	1.0000	1.0000	1.000	.9922
Lack of security in goods		.1000	.0794	.3143	.1818	.1132	.5811	.2266
Business not registered		.8500	.8889	.9429	.9697	.6604	.9595	.8542
Not a member of an association		.7750	.7460	.5714	.6061	.7075	.8243	.7135
High tax rate		.0500	.0794	.0000	.0000	.1981	.2703	.1250
Lack of informal welfare		1.0000	1.0000	.9714	1.0000	1.0000	1.000	.9974
Experience of bullying and harassment		.2000	.2381	.6571	.6212	.2642	.3514	.3672

Source: Field Work, 2020

Out of the fourteen factors assessed; lack of informal welfare (.9974), no access to credit facilities (.9922), non-registration of businesses (.8542) and not being a member of an association (.7135) render informal operators in Kano metropolis strongly vulnerable within and across the clusters. Lack of space with mean value of .4323 render operators vulnerable across the clusters except in Nassarawa (.2358) where most operators used shops and have consent of land or shop owners for economic activities. Low income, bullying and harassment and long distance from home also render operators vulnerable. Socio economic factors such as migration status (.0286), no formal education (.1901) and gender do not render operators vulnerable within and across the clusters.

Similarities and Differences in vulnerability factors in between the clusters

The factors that render informal economic operators vulnerable in each of the clusters are presented to show similarities and differences in each cluster. This is particularly to ensure clear understanding of factors of vulnerability in each of the local government areas

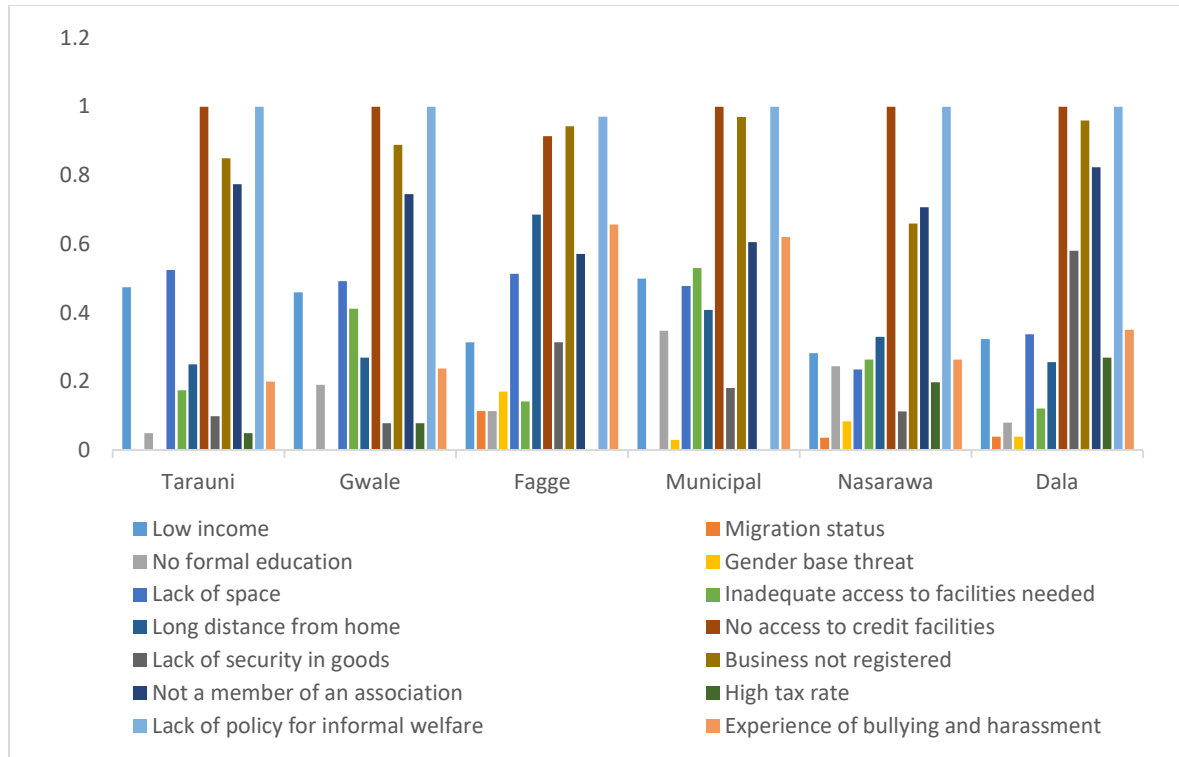


Figure 3: Similarities and differences in vulnerability

Source: Field Work, 2020.

Operators in Kano Municipal are the most vulnerable as they fall victims of ten out of fourteen factors of vulnerability. Gwale, Dala and Fagge ranked second in vulnerability with seven factors respectively. Tarauni ranked third with six factors of vulnerability, while Nassarawa is the least vulnerable area of vulnerability affected by only four of the fourteen factors under consideration. The difference in the level of vulnerability and the types of factors between the areas cannot be divorced from the difference in the status of each of the clusters; manifested in their location of economic activities, nature of enterprise, structure type, source of space for trading and functionality of infrastructural facilities and public utilities among others available in each locality.

Ranking of vulnerability factors for informal economic activities

The factors that render informal economic activities operators in Kano Metropolis vulnerable were ranked using the total mean value across the clusters for each factor from the highest to the lowest (as demonstrated in the figure 4).

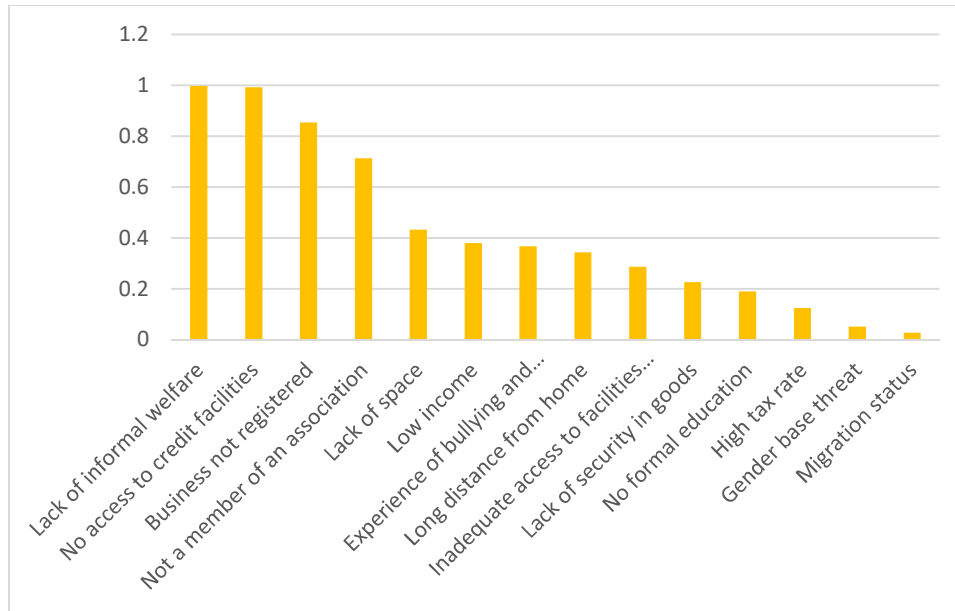


Figure 4: Rank of vulnerability factors

Source: Field Work, 2020

Figure 4 shows that lack of informal welfare, lack of access to credit facilities and non-registration of businesses top the list ranking first, second and third respectively. Not being a member of an association and lack of space ranked fourth and fifth; closely followed by low income, experience of bullying and harassment, and long distance from home. The least factors of vulnerability are gender-base, threat and migration status ranking thirteenth and fourteenth respectively. This is in line with the literature on the determinants of vulnerability, as the first to tenth factors of vulnerability fall under planning and land use management (lack of space, long distance to work, inadequate facilities and services and security) and regulations (lack of informal welfare, no access to credit facilities, non-registration of businesses).

Conclusion and Recommendation

This study has highlighted the factors that render informal economic operators in Kano metropolis vulnerable, which calls for the need for proper planning and regulation formulation as a way of creating an environment where the physical, social and economic components exist in harmony by improving the welfare of operators, and make them enjoy what they do as an important component of the city. In essence, the study observes, and therefore concludes that, lack in integration of informal sector to the formal sector is the major problem, because naturally, the products and services of the informal sector form parts of the essential daily needs of all, including the population and operators of the formal sector.

It is therefore recommended that, informal operators be provided with serviced spaces or retailing outlets. Also, strengthening of informal welfare through increased access to social, financial and non-financial development services such as health schemes, training, skills acquisition/upgrading, new technology, infrastructure and other empowerments which will in turn improve their level of productivity, with eventual increase in income level; and therefore raise their standard of living. Simplification of business registration format will also go a long way in encouraging informal operators especially those in the retail subsector, and also, provision of other incentives to formalise their operations.

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