ISSN: 3082-5326(Online)
ISSN: 3082-5318(Print)

Toward Reflexive Governance and Policy Development in Street Vending: A Comparative Study of Street Vendors in PAMAMAZON

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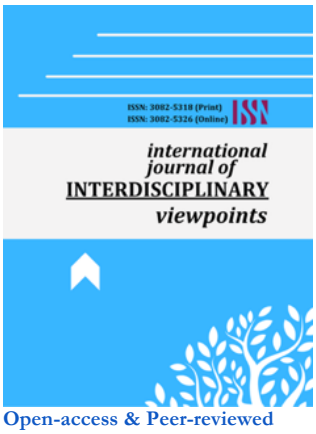
International Journal of Interdisciplinary Viewpoints
Vol. 2, No. 2, pp. 53–60, 2026

How to Cite
Tolentino, C., & Frivaldo, F. (2026). Toward Reflexive Governance and Policy Development in Street Vending: A Comparative Study of Street Vendors in PAMAMAZON. International Journal of Interdisciplinary Viewpoints , 2(2), 53–60. https://doi.org/10.64612/ijiv.v2i2.69

Research Article



Open-access & Peer-reviewed
Received: 29 Nov 2025
Revised: 13 Feb 2026
Accepted: 20 Feb 2026

ABSTRACT

Urban street vending is still a very noticeable and long-lasting part of the informal economy in cities in the Global South that are growing quickly. Urban street vendors play a big role in Metro Manila's economy by selling cheap things and keeping families afloat. Not only do vendors play an important part in the economy, but they also have to deal with unclear laws, unsafe public spaces, and inconsistent enforcement of regulations. Regulations for street vending in many Philippine cities are still mainly focused on control, putting an emphasis on space order and clearance operations while leaving few chances for inclusion, involvement, and policy learning. Although there is more research on informal economies and urban governance, not many studies use a reflexive governance approach to combine the real-life experiences of street vendors with the views of policymakers. Differences in local policies cause government problems and ongoing tensions in the PAMAMAZON urban cluster, which includes Pasay, Makati, Manila, and Quezon City. This research used a comparative mixed-methods approach to get survey data from 320 street vendors and interviews with eight policy implementers. The results show that sellers are very flexible and capable of learning. Additionally, there aren't many institutional tools for participation and inclusive governance. This shows the need for more reflective and fact-based methods in urban policy.

Keywords
Street vending; Reflexive governance; Informal economy; Urban policy; Public space governance

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INTRODUCTION

In towns across the Global South, street vending is still one of the most obvious ways that the informal economy works. For many people and families, selling things on the streets, sidewalks, and transit corridors is not only a way to make money, but also an important way to stay alive in places where formal jobs are still hard to come by. Early research on informality talked about how people make money outside of official regulatory systems. They created a dynamic but risky economic sector that supports millions of people's lives (Hart, 1973; Chen, 2012). Street sellers play a big role in city economies by selling cheap goods, helping small businesses, and keeping cities' everyday consumption networks going (Bromley, 2000; Bhowmik, 2010). However, even though sellers help the economy and society, they often have to work in places where regulations are not clear, public spaces are not safe, and institutions do not protect them well. These problems put them at the heart of ongoing discussions about how cities should be run, how spaces should be organized, and how to include everyone in the economy (Cross, 2000; Roever & Skinner, 2016).

In the Philippines, street vending is a deeply ingrained part of city life, especially in places with a lot of people, like Metro Manila. People walk a lot in Pasay, Makati, Manila, and Quezon City, which are all part of the PAMAMAZON cluster. Busy business areas, transportation hubs, and areas with lots of people needing to get around all make it easy for street vendors to do their jobs. People who live in cities can easily get goods and services from vendors, who also help families make ends meet when living costs are going up, and jobs are hard to come by. At the same time, city governments are in charge of things like traffic, keeping public spaces clean, and enforcing rules. These different goals often cause problems in government as leaders try to balance the goals of urban management with the needs of informal workers for a living (Recio & Gomez, 2013; Roy, 2005). Reports from the last few years also show how strict enforcement of rules and efforts to clean up cities can make it hard for street sellers to make a living. This shows the ongoing conflict between protecting people's jobs and controlling space in Philippine cities (Broadsheet Asia, 2025).

A lot of research has been done on the social and economic situations of street sellers and the problems that come up with managing informal economies. However, we still do not fully understand how these issues affect different areas of city government. Existing studies on street vending usually focus on how it works legally or how it helps the economy. However, there are not many studies that look at both vendors' and policy implementers' points of view within a reflexive governance framework that takes into account learning, adaptation, and interaction among stakeholders (Peimani, 2022; Roever & Skinner, 2016). This makes it harder to understand how policies are interpreted, negotiated, and experienced on the ground in metropolitan clusters like PAMAMAZON, where cities have different institutional priorities

and regulatory approaches. It is hard to explain why many policies about street vendors are still being contested and do not always lead to better government without looking at both the vendors' real-life experiences and the institutional views of those who make the policies.

This study fills in that gap by using reflexive governance theory to look at how street vendors are governed in the PAMAMAZON cluster. In complex governance settings, reflexive governance focuses on learning how to respond, getting people involved, and making policy changes over and over again (Voss & Bornemann, 2011; Voss & Kemp, 2006). Based on this point of view, the study looks into the location, age, gender, family size, and income of street vendors, as well as their selling habits and patterns, such as the goods they sell and when they are open. It also looks at how much sellers use flexible strategies to deal with current rules and enforcement methods. These strategies include learning, responding, including everyone, deliberation, participation, and adaptability. The study also looks at the problems vendors face when trying to access and use public spaces, checks to see if there are big differences in reflexive governance indicators across PAMAMAZON cities, and looks at how policymakers interpret and enforce current street vending regulations. It also checks to see if these regulations are enough, long-lasting, and effective in the long run to help manage public spaces and protect vendors' livelihoods. The study combines quantitative patterns with qualitative views to help us understand how the informal economy is governed better and to help make urban policies that are more open, flexible, and based on evidence.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Design

This study employed a convergent parallel mixed-methods design, in which quantitative and qualitative data were collected during the same phase of the research process, analyzed separately, and integrated during interpretation. This approach enabled the identification of convergent, divergent, and complementary patterns across the PAMAMAZON cities. By comparing quantitative indicators of vendor adaptability and enforcement experiences with qualitative accounts of policy interpretation and institutional constraints, the study generated meta-inferences linking individual experiences to broader governance dynamics. This integration strengthened the explanatory capacity of the research and supported the application of a reflexive governance framework (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

Study Area

The research was conducted in the PAMAMAZON cluster, which includes Pasay, Makati, Manila, and Quezon City, four highly urbanized cities within Metro Manila. These cities were selected due to their high concentration of street vending activities, diverse regulatory approaches, and strategic economic roles in the metropolitan region. The cluster provides a suitable comparative setting for examining differences in governance priorities and enforcement practices across urban contexts.

Participants and Sampling

The quantitative part included 320 street vendors who were chosen using a specific sampling method in the four PAMAMAZON cities: Manila (100), Quezon City (100), Makati (60), and Pasay (60). Larger samples were given to Manila and Quezon City because they have bigger populations and more street vendors. The sample size is larger than what is usually recommended for social science research. Studies show that having 200–400 respondents is enough for complex and comparison analyses, and that at least 30 participants per group are needed for trustable ANOVA results (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970; Hair et al., 2019; Pallant, 2020). Vendors were chosen based on three criteria: they must be actively involved in street vending, have at least six months of experience, and participate voluntarily. For the qualitative part, eight policy implementers (two from each city), including market managers and enforcement officers, were intentionally chosen because they were actively involved in controlling street vending. This was enough to reach thematic saturation (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015).

Data Collection Instruments

A structured survey was given to 320 street vendors to gather numerical data for the study. The instrument had four parts: socio-demographic and economic features (like location, age, gender, household size, and income); vending practices and operational habits (including types of goods sold and hours of work); adaptive strategies related to policies and enforcement measured in six areas—participation, learning, responsiveness, inclusivity, deliberation, and adaptability; and perceived challenges in regulations concerning vendors' access to and use of public spaces. We used a five-point Likert scale to measure adaptive strategies. For the qualitative part, a semi-structured interview guide was used with eight policy implementers. The focus was on how they interpret policies, their enforcement practices, the challenges they face, how they coordinate with each other, and the feedback processes related to street vendors. This approach ensured consistency among participants while also allowing for deeper insights.

Reliability Testing

To establish internal consistency, a pilot test involving 30 street vendors from areas outside the final study sample was conducted. Respondents shared similar socio-economic characteristics and met the same inclusion criteria as the main sample. Reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha revealed acceptable to good internal consistency across the adaptive strategy dimensions, with values ranging from 0.73 to 0.83. The overall scale yielded a Cronbach's alpha of 0.87, indicating high reliability, confirming that the instrument consistently measures the adaptive strategies of street vendors.

Data Collection Procedure

Quantitative and qualitative data were collected concurrently. The survey was administered through face-to-face interviews to ensure clarity and inclusivity, particularly for respondents with limited literacy. Ethical protocols were strictly followed, including informed consent, voluntary participation, and confidentiality of responses.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, to summarize vendor characteristics, vending practices, adaptive strategies, and regulatory challenges (Field, 2018). The weighted mean was used to assess the extent of adaptive strategies across the six governance indicators. To determine whether significant differences existed across cities, One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was employed. This technique tested differences in the mean scores of the six adaptive strategy indicators—participation, learning, responsiveness, inclusivity, deliberation, and adaptability—across the four PAMAMAZON cities (Field, 2018; Pallant, 2020). Qualitative interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Coding combined deductive categories derived from reflexive governance theory with inductive insights emerging from interview narratives. Themes were developed around patterns of policy interpretation, enforcement discretion, institutional constraints, and governance reflexivity.

Integration and Validity

Integration of quantitative and qualitative findings occurred during the interpretation stage, where survey results were compared with policy implementer narratives to identify areas of convergence, divergence, and policy disconnect. Methodological and data source triangulation enhanced the credibility and validity of the findings. Transparency in qualitative coding and pilot testing of the quantitative instrument further strengthened research rigor.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to established ethical standards for social research. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all participants. Anonymity and confidentiality were ensured throughout the research process. Given the vulnerability of street vendors, particular care was taken to ensure that participation did not expose respondents to enforcement risks or economic harm.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As shown in Table 1, the distribution of respondents reflects the spatial concentration of street vending across the PAMAMAZON cluster. Manila and Quezon City account for the largest share of vendors, consistent with their larger populations, extensive commercial districts, and higher pedestrian traffic. Makati and Pasay show smaller but still significant concentrations due to stricter spatial regulation and business-oriented urban planning. From a reflexive governance perspective, location functions as a structural governance condition shaping both regulatory exposure and vendor adaptation. Cities with larger informal economies tend to produce more negotiated and fluid governance interactions, while highly regulated commercial districts impose stronger spatial constraints. The distribution, therefore, provides an initial indication that governance outcomes are influenced not only by policy design but also by the socio-spatial context within which regulation occurs.

Table 1. Percentage Distribution of Street Vendor Respondents by City (n = 320)

City	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Manila	100	31.25
Quezon City	100	31.25
Makati City	60	18.75
Pasay City	60	18.75
Total	320	100.00

The results indicate that street vending is predominantly undertaken by middle-aged and older individuals, with 59.37% of respondents aged 40 and above. This suggests limited access to formal employment opportunities among older workers. The dominance of middle-aged and older vendors suggests that street vending functions as a long-term livelihood strategy, not a temporary or transitional activity. Limited labor mobility and the absence of social protection push older workers into informal self-employment. The significant representation of women underscores the role of vending in enabling income generation compatible with caregiving responsibilities. These findings reinforce the study's core argument that exclusionary policies disproportionately affect structurally vulnerable populations.

Table 2. Percentage Distribution of Street Vendor Respondents by Age (n = 320)

Age Group (Years)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
18–29	48	15.00
30–39	82	25.63
40–49	104	32.50
50 and above	86	26.87
Total	320	100.00

More than half of the respondents support households of four to six members, indicating that vending income plays a critical role in sustaining family livelihoods. The combination of large household responsibility and low, unstable income heightens vendors' sensitivity to enforcement actions. Even short-term displacement or confiscation can disrupt household survival. This economic fragility explains why vendors prioritize adaptation over compliance, a key insight for reflexive governance.

Table 3. Percentage Distribution of Street Vendor Respondents by Household Size (n = 320)

Household Size	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1–3 members	72	22.50
4–6 members	178	55.63
7 or more	70	21.87
Total	320	100.00

While males constitute a slight majority, the high proportion of female vendors underscores the role of street vending as a gender-inclusive livelihood, particularly for women balancing income generation with household responsibilities.

Table 4. Percentage Distribution of Street Vendor Respondents by Gender (n = 320)

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	182	56.88
Female	138	43.12
Total	320	100.00

The majority (73.76%) earn PHP 500 or less per day, highlighting income precarity and vulnerability to enforcement disruptions and spatial displacement. The combination of large household responsibility and low, unstable income heightens vendors' sensitivity to enforcement actions. Even short-term displacement or confiscation can disrupt household survival. This economic fragility explains why vendors prioritize adaptation over compliance, a key insight for reflexive governance. The socio-demographic profile of respondents reveals that economically vulnerable populations primarily undertake street vending. The dominance of middle-aged and older individuals, moderate-to-large household sizes, and low daily income levels indicates that vending is not a temporary activity but a long-term survival strategy. The substantial participation of women further highlights the accessibility of street vending as a livelihood compatible with household responsibilities. These characteristics are significant when viewed through reflexive governance theory. The findings suggest that governance systems that fail to recognize these socio-economic realities risk producing enforcement cycles rather than sustainable solutions. In this context, vendor adaptability emerges not simply as resistance to regulation but as a rational response to livelihood insecurity and policy uncertainty.

Table 5. Percentage Distribution of Street Vendor Respondents by Average Daily Income (n = 320)

Daily Income Range (PHP)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Below 300	94	29.38
300–500	142	44.38
Above 500	84	26.24
Total	320	100.00

Food vending dominates across all cities, reflecting low capital requirements and constant urban demand. Food vending reflects low entry barriers and constant demand, but also exposes vendors to stricter health and sanitation regulations. This duality places food vendors at the center of governance tensions—highly visible, economically necessary, yet heavily regulated.

Table 6. Percentage Distribution of Types of Goods Sold by Street Vendor Respondents (n = 320)

Type of Goods	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Food and Beverages	168	52.50
Clothing and Accessories	74	23.13
Household Items	48	15.00
Other Goods	30	9.37
Total	320	100.00

More than half of the respondents operate between 6 and 10 hours daily, indicating long working hours despite income instability. Extended working hours compensate for low margins and enforcement disruptions. Vendors in Manila and Pasay reported fragmented operating hours, deliberately avoiding peak enforcement times. This confirms that time itself becomes an adaptive governance strategy, reinforcing informal negotiation rather than formal compliance. The results show that food vending dominates across the PAMAMAZON cities, while most vendors work extended daily hours to sustain household income. These patterns reflect the low entry barriers, consistent consumer demand, and spatial flexibility associated with food-based informal trade. Importantly, vendors also adjust their operating schedules and locations in response to regulatory pressure. Many reported modifying working hours to avoid enforcement periods, particularly in cities where clearing operations are frequent. This behavior illustrates a core concept of reflexive governance: actors within a governance system continuously learn from regulatory signals and adapt accordingly. Rather than operating randomly, vendors actively interpret enforcement patterns and reorganize their practices, demonstrating high levels of experiential learning within constrained institutional environments.

Table 7. Percentage Distribution of Street Vendor Respondents by Daily Hours of Operation (n = 320)

Hours per Day	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Less than 6 hours	64	20.00
6–10 hours	178	55.63
More than 10 hours	78	24.37
Total	320	100.00

Table 8 reflects the most frequently reported challenges—threats of eviction, lack of secure vending space, confiscation of goods, and inconsistent enforcement—and indicates that regulation is experienced primarily as spatial exclusion rather than structured governance. Vendors face uncertainty regarding where they can operate and under what conditions, resulting in precarious livelihood arrangements. From a reflexive governance perspective, these conditions highlight a disconnect between policy objectives and policy experience. When regulations emphasize removal rather than engagement, they weaken opportunities for institutional learning and feedback. Instead of promoting compliance, such environments encourage vendors to rely on informal negotiation, mobility, and adaptation. Consequently, governance becomes reactive rather than developmental, reinforcing the persistence of informality.

Table 8. Major Regulatory Challenges Experienced by Street Vendors (n = 320)

Regulatory Challenge	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Threat of eviction or clearing operations	226	70.63
Lack of secure vending space	204	63.75
Confiscation of goods	188	58.75
Inconsistent enforcement	176	55.00
Difficulty obtaining permits	149	46.56

Table 9 reveals that the adaptive strategy indicators demonstrate consistently high levels of learning, responsiveness, and adaptability among vendors across all cities, while participation, inclusivity, and deliberation remain comparatively low. This pattern reveals a significant imbalance between individual reflexivity and institutional reflexivity. Street vendors actively adjust their behavior to regulatory conditions, indicating sophisticated experiential knowledge of urban governance processes. However, limited participation and deliberative mechanisms suggest that institutions provide few opportunities for vendors to influence policy or communicate feedback. As a result, reflexivity operates primarily at the level of survival rather than collaborative governance. Across the PAMAMAZON cities, differences in scores reflect variations in regulatory style rather than fundamental differences in vendor behavior. Cities where enforcement is less punitive tend to show slightly higher levels of perceived participation and inclusivity, suggesting that governance environments shape the degree to which adaptive practices translate into constructive engagement.

Table 9. Adaptive Strategy Indicators of Street Vendors by City

Adaptive Strategy Indicator	Quezon City (%)	Makati City (%)	Manila City (%)	Pasay City (%)	Overall Interpretation
Participation	60.0	55.6	51.9	49.6	Moderate
Learning	83.7	77.4	72.3	69.1	High
Responsiveness	80.7	74.6	69.7	66.6	High
Inclusivity	52.9	48.9	45.6	43.6	Low
Deliberation	51.2	47.4	44.2	42.2	Low
Adaptability	85.7	79.2	74.0	70.7	High

To determine whether there is a statistically significant difference in the extent of reflexive governance indicators—operationalized through the composite adaptive strategy dimensions (participation, learning, responsiveness, inclusivity, deliberation, and adaptability)—across the PAMAMAZON cities, a one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted. The ANOVA results confirm that reflexive governance indicators vary significantly across the four cities. However, rather than representing isolated cases, the differences can be understood along a continuum of governance approaches. At one end are enforcement-dominant contexts where regulation focuses on spatial order and removal. In these environments, vendors develop high adaptive capacity but experience limited institutional learning. At the other end are governance settings where regulatory practices show partial accommodation and greater administrative coordination, allowing limited forms of policy adjustment. This continuum illustrates that reflexive governance is not a binary condition but a gradual institutional capacity shaped by political priorities, administrative structures, and urban development goals.

Policy Implementers' Perspectives on Street Vending Governance

Qualitative interviews reveal that policy implementers operate under competing mandates, balancing livelihood considerations with traffic management, sanitation, and public order.

Theme 1: Street Vending Is Interpreted Primarily as a Public Space Management Issue

Policy implementers predominantly interpret street vending through a spatial governance lens, framing it as an issue of obstruction, congestion, and order rather than livelihood regulation. Even in Quezon City—where facilitative approaches exist—vending remains subordinate to public space management priorities.

This interpretation shapes enforcement practices that prioritize clearance and restriction over integration. From a reflexive governance perspective, this narrow framing limits institutional learning by marginalizing socio-economic considerations in policy interpretation.

Theme 2: Policy Implementation Relies Heavily on Discretion and On-the-Ground Judgment

Implementation of street vending regulations is highly discretionary, shaped by officer judgment, situational factors, and external pressures rather than standardized procedures. This discretion allows short-term flexibility but also produces inconsistency and unpredictability, reinforcing vendors' perceptions of arbitrariness. Reflexive governance theory suggests that without institutional mechanisms to reflect on discretionary outcomes, discretion becomes a source of fragmentation rather than adaptive learning.

Theme 3: Implementers Experience Tension Between Enforcement Mandates and Livelihood Awareness

Policy implementers consistently express moral tension between recognizing vendors' economic vulnerability and fulfilling enforcement mandates. However, livelihood considerations are largely framed as personal empathy rather than institutional responsibility. This disconnect indicates weak institutional reflexivity: awareness exists at the individual level but is not translated into policy redesign or procedural reform. Consequently, governance remains enforcement-led despite acknowledgment of socio-economic impacts.

Theme 4: Assessment of Policy Effectiveness Is Based on Visibility, Not Sustainability

Policy effectiveness is primarily assessed using short-term, visible indicators such as cleared sidewalks, reduced complaints, and traffic flow. Long-term outcomes—such as vendor livelihood stability, compliance sustainability, or reduced return rates—are largely absent from evaluation criteria. This outcome-oriented but non-reflexive assessment reinforces repetitive enforcement cycles, confirming reflexive governance critiques of linear policy evaluation models.

Theme 5: Absence of Structured Feedback Mechanisms from Street Vendors

Across PAMAMAZON, formal feedback mechanisms from vendors are largely absent. Interaction is reactive and conflict-driven rather than deliberative. Even in Quezon City, participation remains ad hoc. This structural exclusion prevents governance systems from learning from vendor adaptations and undermines the co-production of policy solutions. Reflexive governance requires institutionalized feedback loops, which remain weak or nonexistent in current practice.

Theme 6: Policy Implementers View Existing Regulations as Incomplete and Unsustainable

Policy implementers openly acknowledge that existing street vending regulations are unsustainable and incomplete. The recurring return of vendors after clearing operations is widely recognized, yet this awareness has not translated into systematic policy reform. This finding highlights a critical reflexive governance gap: recognition of policy failure without institutional mechanisms for learning, experimentation, and adaptation.

Table 10, Test of Significant Difference in Reflexive Governance Indicators by City (One-Way ANOVA) Descriptive Statistics

City	Mean	Standard Deviation (SD)
Quezon City	3.61	0.62
Makati City	3.34	0.59
Manila City	3.12	0.65
Pasay City	2.98	0.68

ANOVA Results

Source of Variation	df	F-value	p-value
Between Groups	3	8.47	0.001
Within Groups	316		
Total	319		

Manila and Pasay exhibit strong enforcement orientation, resulting in frequent displacement and high vendor adaptation but minimal policy learning. Makati emphasizes urban order through indirect regulation, selectively integrating vendors while excluding most. Quezon City emerges as the most aligned with reflexive governance principles, though participatory mechanisms remain limited.

Table 11. Comparative Governance Outcomes in PAMAMAZON Cities

City	Enforcement Intensity	Vendor Adaptability	Policy Reflexivity
Manila	High	Very High	Low
Quezon City	Moderate	High	Moderate–High
Makati	Moderate (Indirect)	Moderate	Low–Moderate
Pasay	High	High	Low

Quantitative results reveal distinct governance regimes across PAMAMAZON. Manila and Pasay register the highest enforcement intensity and eviction exposure, which correspond with very high vendor adaptability scores. This pattern indicates that adaptive behavior is reactive, driven by coercive enforcement rather than participatory governance. Vendors in these cities survive through spatial mobility, temporal adjustment, and informal negotiation. Quezon City stands out with lower enforcement pressure, greater access to secure vending spaces, and the highest perceived policy fairness. While adaptability remains high, it is less survival-driven and more structured, suggesting partial institutional accommodation. Makati occupies an intermediate position, where indirect regulation constrains vending without overt clearance, resulting in moderate adaptability but continued insecurity. Overall, the data demonstrate an inverse relationship between enforcement intensity and policy legitimacy: as enforcement becomes more punitive, perceived fairness declines, reinforcing informality rather than compliance.

Table 12. Comparative Quantitative Governance Indicators Across PAMAMAZON Cities

Governance Indicator	Manila	Quezon City	Makati	Pasay
Mean Adaptive Strategy Score	4.05	3.82	3.41	3.96
Perceived Enforcement Intensity (%)	78.0	52.0	46.5	74.5
Perceived Inconsistent Enforcement (%)	61.0	43.5	48.0	67.5
Reported Eviction/Clearing Threat (%)	76.0	48.0	55.0	78.5
Access to Secure Vending Space (%)	18.0	36.5	24.0	16.5
Mean Perceived Policy Fairness (1–5)	2.31	3.12	2.68	2.21

Qualitative findings confirm that policy framing fundamentally shapes governance outcomes. In Manila and Pasay, street vending is framed almost exclusively as a problem of obstruction, leading to repetitive clearing operations. Implementers acknowledge policy failure ("vendors always come back") but lack institutional mechanisms to translate this awareness into reform—an indicator of low reflexive capacity. Quezon City exhibits emerging reflexivity, evidenced by compassionate enforcement, avoidance of confiscation, and administrative facilitation such as registration and amnesty. While participation remains uneven, implementers demonstrate greater openness to learning from outcomes rather than relying solely on visibility-based success indicators. Makati's governance outcome reflects technocratic regulation,

where vending is not explicitly prohibited but systematically constrained. This results in selective inclusion (e.g., licensed carts) while excluding most vendors, producing stability for a few and precarity for many. Across all cities, the absence of institutionalized feedback loops limits co-production of policy, reinforcing top-down governance even where empathy exists.

Table 13. Comparative Qualitative Governance Outcomes by City

Governance Dimension	Manila	Quezon City	Makati	Pasay
Policy Framing	Obstruction & order	Livelihood within regulation	Urban order & image	Security & congestion
Enforcement Logic	Clearance-driven	Guided compliance	Indirect restriction	Zero-tolerance near hubs
Institutional Reflexivity	Low	Moderate–High	Low–Moderate	Low
Vendor Engagement	Reactive & conflict-based	Occasional consultation	Minimal	Absent
Policy Learning	Limited	Emerging	Weak	Absent

The comparative results reveal a systemic reflexivity gap across PAMAMAZON. Street vendors consistently display high reflexivity, rapidly learning and adapting to enforcement patterns. In contrast, institutional reflexivity remains uneven and generally weak. Where institutional reflexivity is lowest (Manila and Pasay), governance outcomes are characterized by recurring conflict, displacement, and policy ineffectiveness. Quezon City narrows this gap by partially aligning institutional practices with lived realities, producing more stable—though still incomplete—outcomes. The findings confirm that vendor adaptability alone does not produce good governance; without institutional learning, adaptation becomes a coping mechanism rather than a pathway to inclusion.

Table 14. Comparative Reflexivity Gap Between Vendors and Institutions

City	Vendor Reflexivity	Institutional Reflexivity	Governance Outcome
Manila	Very High	Low	Cyclical displacement
Quezon City	High	Moderate–High	Partial accommodation
Makati	Moderate	Low–Moderate	Selective integration
Pasay	High	Low	Persistent precarity

The comparison of governance outcomes across the PAMAMAZON cities shows that differences in how street sellers are regulated can be seen not only in how strict and focused local policies are, but also in the six adaptive strategy indicators that were looked at in this study. The results of the quantitative analysis showed that these indicators were very different between cities. This suggests that vendors' adaptable behaviors are highly influenced by the way things are run in each city, not just their own choices. This finding fits with ideas about urban informality that say illegal business activities are strongly rooted in institutional and spatial settings that are shaped by rules and regulations (Roy, 2005; Chen, 2012). Qualitative research supports this trend even more, as policy implementers in Manila, Quezon City, Makati, and Pasay talked about different ways of enforcing policies, different ways of doing things, and institutional limitations. These differences show how the way cities are run affects how people who work in the private economy get around and deal with rules (Roever & Skinner, 2016).

Respondents' sociodemographic and other information also supports the idea that selling things on the street is a long-term way to make a living, not just a short-term way to make money. Most of the vendors in the study were middle-aged, from medium- to large-sized families, and made relatively low wages. These are characteristics that are often linked to long-term participation in the informal economy (Hart, 1973; Bhowmik, 2010). For vendors to keep making money, they need to be able to keep using public spaces. So, actions like threatening to evict them, taking their goods, and not having safe places to sell things have a big effect on their financial security. These regulatory pressures affect how vendors change their businesses by changing their hours, moving around cities, or changing the kinds of things they sell. Adaptive practices like these show that informal economic activity is ordered and planned, not random and disorganized as many people think (Bromley, 2000; Cross, 2000).

The results also show that there is a big difference between how reflexive vendors are and how reflexive governing structures are. Vendors show they can change well by constantly figuring out how enforcement works and changing how they do things to match. At the individual level, this shows high levels of learning, response, and adaptability. However, the study found that there were not many opportunities for participation, inclusion, and discussion. This suggests that there are not many institutional ways for vendors to have a real impact on policies or give feedback to authorities. According to reflexive governance theory, good governance systems should allow both state and non-state players to learn, talk, and make changes to policies over time (Voss & Bornemann, 2011; Voss & Kemp, 2006). Reflexivity happens more at the survival level among street vendors in the PAMAMAZON cities than at the institutional level within government systems when it comes to street vending.

Qualitative research also shows that many lawmakers see street vending more as a problem with managing public spaces than as a way for people to make a living. Policy talks often center on issues like traffic, pollution, keeping cities clean, and keeping order. In studies of street vending, larger governance conflicts are often found as local governments try to balance space regulations with the social and economic realities of informal workers (Recio & Gomez, 2013; Roever & Skinner, 2016). The differences between the PAMAMAZON towns show how the way institutions are set up affects how well they run. Partially accommodating vendors in Quezon City through programs that let them work in controlled areas has made respondents think that the city's policies are more fair. In Manila and Pasay, on the other hand, enforcement-based methods are used more often, which forces vendors to move around a lot. Makati is in the middle, mixing parts of regulation, selective accommodation, and control over space. Overall, these results show that more reflective, inclusive, and learning-focused policy models are needed for long-term street vending governance. Including vendors' real-life experiences and flexible knowledge in the process of making urban policies could help close the gap between regulatory goals and the facts of people's lives. In line with the ideas of reflexive governance, policies that promote dialogue, mechanisms for participation, and flexible policy changes may help create more balanced urban governance plans that can handle both managing public spaces and the social and economic needs of informal workers (Voss & Bornemann, 2011; Meadowcroft, 2007).

Conclusion and Recommendations

This research looked at how street vendors are regulated in the PAMAMAZON cluster, which includes Pasay, Makati, Manila, and Quezon City. It used a comparative mixed-methods approach led by reflexive governance theory. The results show that street vending is a permanent part of the urban economy, not just a temporary thing to do. Most vendors depend on it as their main source of income to support modest to large households, even though their incomes are low and unstable. The quantitative results show that vendors are very good at learning, responding, and adapting. The qualitative results, on the other hand, show that vendors are constantly threatened with eviction, that enforcement isn't always consistent, and that access to public places isn't always safe. These situations show that street vendors

are always changing to deal with uncertain regulatory settings. This proves that informal economic activity is planned and not random. The study also shows that there is a clear difference between how responsive vendors are and how responsive institutions are. Vendors actively respond to policy signs, but governance institutions don't have many ways for people to learn, participate, and change policies.

The comparison shows that the results of government in the PAMAMAZON cities are mostly determined by how the institutions are set up, not by differences in how vendors act. In situations where enforcement is strong, vendors are likely to be able to change quickly, but policies are not seen as legitimate. This can lead to cycles of moving and returning. On the other hand, towns that show some flexibility and good coordination between departments are seen as more fair and stable, though there aren't as many ways for people to get involved. Based on these results, the study suggests moving away from regulation that is only focused on control and toward methods that are more inclusive and flexible. The reflexivity gap found in this study can be closed by making it easier for vendors to get involved, making sure vending areas are safe, and improving the ways that vendors can give feedback to lawmakers. This will help with the long-term management of urban public spaces and informal livelihoods.

Acknowledgment
The author would like to express her gratitude for granting permission to conduct the study. Appreciation is also extended to the individuals who provided valuable guidance, effort, and assistance in achieving the study's objectives.
Conflicting Interest
The author declared no conflict of interest in the preparation and publication of this research.
Funding
The author funded this study.
Contribution
The author contributed to the overall conduct and writing of the study.
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