



The Politics of Street Vendors: Community Perspectives in the State in Medan City

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A B S T R A C T

Street vendors illegally occupy urban space and conduct business there. As a result, street vendors are frequently targets of government policing and disciplinary operations (state). The people's relationship with the state includes aspects of rights and obligations. This study examines the perspectives of street vendors in Medan, North Sumatra Province, Indonesia. When it comes to rights and obligations, street vendors have their own point of view. The research on street vendors in Medan City concluded, using the survey technique and observation, that the state was not present to provide social protection guarantees, in community activities, or efforts to improve their welfare and quality of life.

INTRODUCTION

This study will discuss the politics of street vendors in the city of Medan from the perspective of the people in the state. The state is essentially just an abstract idea in the human mind (Prasetyoningsih, 2020). Humans cannot see the state, touch, smell, hear, or taste, so its existence can only be experienced representatively, either in material form (state symbols, state buildings, state monuments, etc.) (Kiefer & Pulvermüller, 2012; Santoso & Yusa, 2021), and conceptual (power, sovereignty, territory, etc.) (Sangkay, 2021). Among the various representations of the state, the aspect of power is the most tangible manifestation of the state's existence (Putra, 2016). In this case, power is related to the state's ability to influence a person's behavior to submit and obey the will of the state (Haboddin, 2017; Keohane, 2020). The aspect of power is so crucial for the existence of a state. Even theoretically, it can be said that the existence of a state is determined by the recognition of the validity of its sovereignty and power (Hasan, 2015). Without the aspect of sovereignty reflected in its power, "state" becomes a term that loses its meaning (Busthami, 2018; Muabezi, 2017; Smith, 2013).

Generally, there is an assumption that state power, supported by social contract enforcement mechanisms through punishment, discipline, and order, will automatically create obedience among its citizens (Hamzani, 2014). In this case, citizens' obedience to state power can be seen as a form of their recognition of the state's existence (Hermawan Usman, 2014; Nur Wijayanti, 2017). However, in the practice of state life, various empirical pieces of evidence show that the state's capacity to impose its will through its power apparatus does not automatically make its citizens submissive and obedient (Lubis, 2019). This can be seen in various everyday cases, where we can witness various violations of state policies happening around us, either secretly or openly. Starting from small things, such as: throwing garbage, traffic violations, and destruction of public facilities; to severe forms of violations, such as tax evasion,

corruption, rejection of state ideology, and even attempts to rebel against state power (Imbaruudin, 2019; Putri & Arifin, 2019).

In the context of state life in Indonesia, neglect or violation of state policies is common in life around us (Sumirat, 2020; Yudhyarta, 2020). Breaking the rules is a symptom of collective behavior that seems very common, especially among the people of big cities in Indonesia (Hasnati, 2015). Among the various forms of violation of rules in Indonesia, one of the most open, vulgar, collective, and mass violations is the violation of city spatial planning rules, which are carried out by traders who are often referred to as street vendors or abbreviated as street vendors. In this case, street vendors illegally occupy urban space and use it for business activities (Ramdhon, 2021). This makes street vendors often become targets of policing, and disciplinary operations carried out by city governments, which often lead to riots and conflicts involving acts of violence that kill victims (Destria, 2021; Kumorotomo & Purbokusumo, 2020; Uzhma, 2016).

One of the cities in Indonesia that the problem of street vendors has plagued for a long time is the city of Medan in North Sumatra. There are positive and negative aspects of the existence of street vendors in Medan City. However, the negative aspects are dominant from the state's perspective. Moreover, at this time, the presence of Street Vendors in Medan City has entered the uncontrolled category, thus disturbing public order, as well as the fact that currently, the presence of Street Vendors in Medan City has entered uncontrolled category, thus disturbing public order. At the same time, it undermines the authority of state regulations and their apparatus. Piles of garbage scattered around them also accompany the presence of street vendors, thus disturbing the cleanliness and beauty. In addition, the non-permanent kiosks built on the edges and sides of the road create traffic jams and social areas. Coupled with the emergence of multi-layered

parking along the road, buyers park where they want to be and do not bother when shopping.



Figure 1. Street Vendors in Medan City
Source: *dnaberita.com* (2018)

Until now, there are no exact figures regarding the number of Street Vendors throughout Medan City because it is an informal sector that is not recorded. The positive aspect of the presence of Street Vendors is that every day the people of Medan City are greatly helped by the presence of Street Vendors around their homes. For example, the presence of Street Vendors who hold stalls around Sukaramai Market and Jalan Sutomo, Medan. They sell on sidewalks, and some on roads, as we can see on Jalan Yos Sudarso Pulo Brayan, Sei Sikambang traditional market on Jalan Captain Muslin, the market at the intersection of Kampung Lalang, the Sukaramai market on Jalan AR Hakim and many other locations. Others in Medan City.

Although it seems trivial, from the point of view of state sovereignty, the prohibition of selling on sidewalks and road shoulders can be seen as an open challenge to the authority and power of the state. Ironically, the government, which in this case is represented by the Medan City Government, shows a weak attitude, and even seems to give in to respond to this form of disobedience carried out by street vendors. The government seems powerless to overcome the violations committed by street vendors. This can be seen from the protracted efforts to settle street vendors, even though they have changed mayors repeatedly. Is this related to the problem of fulfilling rights and obligations in the relationship between the state and citizens.

METHOD

Based on the research model, the type of research used in this study is a quantitative research using a survey (Sugiyono, 2017). Field research utilizing a survey was chosen for the extensive data collection on a large population, but the data is from a sample taken from that population. In this study, the population is street vendors in Medan. The purpose of survey research is to find out the general description of the characteristics of the population, which is then used to collect information in the form of opinions from many people on the topic of controlling street vendors. Data collection from the sample as respondents was done by using a questionnaire. The research location is in the city of Medan, not focused on one point location but spread over several locations where there are many street vendors: from the entire population of street vendors in the city of Medan, taken 40 street vendors with quota sampling technique. Furthermore, the data were analyzed by: (1) formulating solutions to existing problems; (2) compiling the data that had been collected; (3) explaining the relationship of the data obtained; (4) then analyzed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Phenomenon of Street Vendors in Medan City

The city of Medan is the capital of North Sumatra, Indonesia. By area (265.1km²), this city is the third largest city in Indonesia, after Jakarta and Surabaya, and is the largest city outside Java. Belawan Port and Kuala Namu International Airport, the second largest airports in Indonesia, have positioned the city of Medan as the gateway to the western part of Indonesia. The strategic position of Medan City, which is directly adjacent to the Malacca Strait, makes Medan City grow into a significant trade, industry, and business city for Indonesia. The existence of Medan City as a trading city has been started for a long time, namely since the reign of the Deli Sultanate. Deli became increasingly crowded when the Dutch colonial government opened large plantations in Medan and its surroundings. This was followed by a wave of migration of Javanese and Chinese, who initially came to work as coolies on plantations. However, in its development, the Chinese migrants were encouraged by migrants from Minangkabau, Mandailing, and Aceh, who also came to trade (Tirtosudarmo, 2007).

Until now, trade is still one of the primary livelihood sources for the city of Medan. According to *Badang Pusat Statistik* (2020) in Medan City, as many as 245,767 (24.33%) residents of Medan City work as traders. Most of them operate in 13,447 trade facilities owned by the government and private sector, in the form of markets, shops, kiosks, and warungs. Generally, the activities of Medan city traders are centered on the market. There are 53 market facilities, the largest in 21 sub-districts in Medan City, with a total market area of 297,832 m², making the trade sector an alternative livelihood that absorbs many workers. The speed of growth of traders in Medan City also continues to increase along with the speed of development of infrastructure and trading facilities.

Traders who are not accommodated in the official trading facilities provided by the government to survive are forced to find their own business locations. Traders with sufficient capital will build or rent their business space independently. However, traders with limited capital are forced to operate in locations that are not intended for trading. As a result, they are often referred to as illegal traders, or what is also popularly known as street vendors. The term street vendor has been known since the days of the Dutch colonial administration, precisely when Governor General Stanford Raffles issued a regulation requiring informal traders at that time to take positions as far as 5 feet (1.2 m) from the formal building in the city center (Hikmatulloh, 2021; Widodo et al., 2016). This position of 5 feet makes the informal traders in the city called "pedestrians." At present, the term street vendor no longer refers to a position as far as 5 feet from a formal building as in the colonial period, but instead expands its meaning and is used to refer to any informal trade that carries out commercial activities on the sidewalk (Cardona & Sos, 2020).

In general, street vendors are defined as those who sell in public places such as on roadsides, city parks, storefronts, and markets without permission from the government (Handam & Tahir, 2016; Okvian & Nawangsari, 2019). They are categorized as weak economic groups who sell daily necessities, food, or services with relatively small capital, whether sourced from their capital or borrowed capital from other parties, who sell in prohibited places or not (Mardeliah et al., 2021). Meanwhile, according to Presidential Regulation No. 125 of 2012 concerning

Coordination of Arrangement and Empowerment of Street Traders; and Regulation of the Minister of Home Affairs No. 41 of 2012 concerning Guidelines for Structuring and Empowering Street Trade, Street Vendors are business actors who carry out trading businesses using movable or immovable business facilities, using city infrastructure, social facilities, public facilities, land, and buildings owned by the government and private sector, which are temporary/not permanent (Budiman, 2021; Prasetya & Fauziah, 2021).

Street vendors are a safety valve for the weak economic community as a profession and consumers to meet their daily needs, mainly due to the economic crisis (Nurjanah, 2020; Pulungan, 2017). Street vendors are the informal sector that has the potential to become a life belt to accommodate excess workers who are not accommodated in the formal sector so as to reduce unemployment (Sarmita & Treman, 2017). Street vendors provide goods and services that are relatively inexpensive for people with middle to lower incomes while providing a sense of security that becomes a barrier to the security of formal merchant activities because the continuity of their activities is almost 24 hours. In addition, a large number of street vendors, various forms of business, and uniqueness are great potential to decorate the face of the city if properly organized and regulated, including saving promising tourism potential (Rahayu & Wulandari, 2017).

Meanwhile, on the other hand, the trade media used by street vendors are not aesthetically pleasing. They are not well-organized, giving rise to a chaotic and shabby impression, resulting in a decrease in the visual quality of the city (Ramadhan et al., 2017). The trading locations of some street vendors who use roads that are not supposed to cause traffic jams and the locations of street vendors who use pedestrians, sidewalks, and parks confiscate the rights of pedestrians and shift public spaces (Yani & Farida, 2021). In addition, the uncontrolled presence of street vendors causes pedestrians to jostle so that criminal acts can arise (for example, pickpocketing and thuggery). Not to mention the presence of street vendors who interfere with the economic activities of formal traders because of their location, which tends to cut off the path of visitors, such as roadside and shop fronts (Hermanto et al., 2012; Nurati, 2016).

General Public Perspective

Factually, the general public referred to in this study are residents of Medan City who come from various backgrounds and social categories, who collectively need to utilize public facilities, such as roads, sidewalks, public parks, and others; who feel disturbed and at the same time benefit from the commercial activities carried out by street vendors. The dynamics of urban life make time efficiency and mobility levels become necessary resources contested by the citizens of Medan City. We can see the competition for these resources every day in the traffic jams that have become part of the daily life of Medan residents, where everyone is competing to get ahead of each other. Various reasons trigger congestion; growth in the number of vehicles, road damage, weather problems, and others. However, in specific locations, such as on Yos Sudarso Pulo Brayan Street, the Sei Sikambang traditional Jalan Captain Muslim market, the Kampung Lalang intersection, Pasar Sukaramai on Jalan AR Hakim, and several other locations, the community and the state interpret this as congestion. The activities of street vendors cause them.

Ironically, the main factor that triggers the activities of street vendors in these locations is precise because of the demand from consumers, which is none other than the general public themselves. Street vendors are unlikely to operate in an area if there are no opportunities for profit. The results showed that the presence of street vendors disturbs public order in the morning or evening when they leave for work. At lunchtime, they are loyal customers of one or several street vendors operating nearby.

Perspektif Pedagang Kaki Lima

Street vendors represented by 40 respondents in this study are primarily engaged in the culinary field, such as selling rice, side dishes, cakes, and other side dishes, traders of raw materials (vegetables, fruit, meat, etc.), service providers (barbershop, workshop, etc.). They sell daily necessities, food, or services with relatively small capital, own capital, or borrow from other parties. Regarding working hours, most traders work all day or operate for 5-10 hours. They use trade equipment that can be folded and moved, such as box cars, carts, bicycles, and others, while the rest use semi-permanent tents. In running their business, 77.5% of respondents who occupy business locations mix with traders who offer other types of goods, while the remaining 22.5% are traders with similar goods.

Regarding business licenses, 87.5% of respondents said they did not have an official license to operate, but only 52.5% were aware that this violated government regulations. This is reasonable, considering that 90% of respondents had never received an official explanation of the authorities' public order and spatial regulations in Medan. As a result, the response of street vendors to the structuring efforts carried out by the Medan City Government is often reactive, impulsive, and full of suspicion because the information about the rules and regulations of the city obtained by street vendors is mainly sourced from information channels, such as daily gossip with fellow street vendors. Moreover, the village is fantastic.

Limited access to information about city regulations and spatial planning creates a feeling of being marginalized among street vendors. In addition, most respondents feel that they have never been touched by the empowerment program, which is often echoed through the mass media. Of all respondents who filled out the questionnaire, only 2.5% (1 person) had ever been consulted to solve street vendor problems by the government. In addition, 5% (2 people) have received capital assistance and business facilities/infrastructure from the government. In other words, the government's efforts to find solutions to the problems of street vendors exist, but they are not well socialized, so they only touch a small number of street vendors in Medan.

In this case, what is known by most street vendors about efforts to organize and empower street vendors is in the form of news about repressive forms of control by the Medan City government, which makes street vendors tend to see themselves as victims. This becomes the basis of justification for them to defend themselves and fight. For Examples, the resistance of street vendors on Gatot Subroto street, Medan Baru sub-district in 2015, the resistance of street vendors on Jalan Rakyat Simpang Pelita I, Medan in 2016, and the resistance of street vendors around Medan's Petisah market in 2017 and resistance of street vendors on Jl. Ngumban Surbakti, Medan Selayang Subdistrict, Medan in 2018.

The resistance of street vendors does not always resort to violent means, but more often through petty disobedience that undermines the system's authority. For example, by refusing to apply for a permit, as was done by 77.5% of the respondents we studied, or refusing to pay a levy to the state, as was done by 50% of the respondents. In addition, they also fight symbolically by demonstrating their indifference and continuing to sell in locations that are prone to traffic jams. In this case, 70% of the respondents stated that they are aware that the consequences of their business activities make pedestrians lose their rights, and 62.5% are aware that their business activities have the potential to cause traffic jams.

The eroding of street vendors' trust in formal institutions, the Medan city government, has led some Medan Street vendors to seek protection from informal institutions, such as community organizations, religious organizations, or non-governmental organizations. When there are social problems in the business environment, 32.5% of the respondents choose to ask for help from informal authorities, such as mass organizations or building owners, around the location they live in.

This is seen as an "opportunity" by several community organizations in the city of Medan. They then took the initiative to provide shelter locations and provide protection to street vendors operating in their "territory" with the condition of a certain amount of compensation. Fifty percent of the respondents stated that they paid a levy to specific community organizations, of which 37.5% said they paid between 500 thousand and 1 million rupiahs. It is common knowledge that the nameplates and flags of specific mass organizations in some public regions mark their claim to "power" in the area.

However, according to our observations, there is still hope in the hearts of street vendors to obtain a solution from the government. As many as 47.5% of respondents stated that they would be relocated if the government was willing to provide a unique location for street vendors in Medan. It is also interesting that behind the disobedience that street vendors in Medan often show, it turns out that they still have a concern for maintaining the environment around the location where they work. As many as 90% of respondents stated that they routinely clean their business locations, even 62.5% of whom took the initiative to provide their facilities and infrastructure to maintain cleanliness in their business environment.

State in the Frame of Social Exchange

From the perspective of social exchange theory, the vicious circle problem of street vendors in Medan City is closely related to the inequality factor between rewards and sacrifices in the flow of social exchange between the actors involved. Starting from the perception of the public (the residents of Medan City) who think that the sacrifices they make through paying taxes, paying levies, and giving donations to the city government authorities are not commensurate with the benefits they receive in the form of infrastructure and public services provided by the City Government. In other words, the relationship between the citizens of Medan and the city government is not characterized by a form of social exchange that reflects a form of distributive justice. In the case of street vendors, Medan City residents think that motor vehicle taxes, parking fees, market services, garbage fees, and others are not commensurate with their expectations of safety and comfort when using public facilities such as; roads,

sidewalks, public parks, and others as a result of traffic jams, garbage, and chaos caused by the activities of street vendors.

Meanwhile, street vendors can be seen as an interest group in a society formed due to the limited job opportunities provided by the government. In this case, street vendors manifest some of the Medan city workforces who are not accommodated in the formal sector, so they are forced to work in the formal sector by trading on a small scale. However, the problem is that the increase in the number of small traders is not proportional to the availability of infrastructure and trading facilities. As a result, traders who are not accommodated in the official trading facilities provided by the government are forced to find their own business locations.

Social exchange theory states that behaviors that produce positive rewards are more likely to be carried out. Traders who have sufficient capital will build or rent their business space independently. However, traders with limited capital are forced to operate in locations that are not intended for trading. However, in this case, on the one hand, the Pemko Medan only obliges the traders to comply with the applicable rules of city planning and order. However, on the other hand, the Pemko Medan does not provide adequate compensation for the compliance that they demand from the traders.

The unbalanced social exchange between the city government, which demands obedience, and street vendors, who demand their right to obtain guarantees of protection from the state, in their activities and efforts to improve welfare and quality of life, then creates a feeling of relative deprivation, namely perception of inequality. Between expectations and reality that makes an individual or group of individuals feel marginalized. This feeling of being marginalized then leads to minor disobedience, which at a certain point explodes into violent collective actions, as witnessed in the cases of resistance by street vendors to control efforts carried out by the Medan City Government. Ironically, street vendors from informal institutions, such as community organizations, religious organizations, or non-governmental organizations, are guaranteed to obtain protection in their activities and business. As a result, street vendor regulations that should have been directed at the state are now projected on informal authorities, which are considered consistently capable of rewarding compliance and punishing violations. This, in turn, creates a dualism of power in the governance of the city of Medan, which undermines the authority of state institutions.

Street vendors in the framework of social exchange theory, the Medan City Government's half-hearted attitude in solving problems and street vendors, can also be seen as the impact of an unbalanced social exchange between the government and the community. Every development and empowerment program implemented by the Pemko Medan must be seen as a state investment expected to return to the state through local revenue. On the one hand, the community, in this case, the street vendors, demands the government invest by providing relocation areas for the shelters of street vendors, special regulations governing the operations of street vendors, and local government organizations, which are responsible for fostering and empowering traders.

CONCLUSION

The condition of street vendors in Medan City can be seen as the face of state life in Indonesia, which is colored by

conflicts, conflicts of interest, instability, and injustice due to the failure of the state to provide adequate compensation in social exchange relations in the daily lives of its citizens. The main problem of street vendors lies in the inequality in the flow of social exchange between the state and citizens. In the framework of social exchange, the relationship between the ruler and the people is related to fulfilling rights and obligations, where the people's obligation to obey state power is not only influenced by the fear of punishment but even more so by the expectation of reward. In this case, the state will not be able to create compliance with its citizens if it only relies on repressive means, for example, threats of corporal punishment. If a repressive approach is applied without balancing it with the reward aspect, then there is a possibility that the community will start to resist. The main problem of street vendors lies in the inequality in the flow of social exchange between the state and citizens. The recommendation of this research for the Medan City Government is to provide opportunities for the people to question, demand, and fulfill the rights of street vendors. Not only limited to obligations (obligations) in the form of blind obedience (blind compliance) to the authorities. Further research can further explore the fulfillment of the rights of street vendors within the framework of the state without injuring the public interest of other people.

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