

## THE URBAN INFORMALITY ECONOMY: THE EFFECTS OF STREET TRADING ON URBAN AREAS. THE CASE OF BORDJ BOU ARRERIDJ CITY

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**Abstract:** This paper explores the effects of street trade in urban areas. The choice of this topic was motivated by the increasing prevalence of street trade in Bordj Bou Arreridj without prior examination. It piqued our scientific curiosity to investigate from an urban perspective. We aim to uncover the causes of street trade and elaborate on its positive and negative economic, social & architectural impacts on the urban environment. The study utilizes various research tools, such as questionnaires & interviews. It also contextualizes the phenomenon within a historical framework to highlight the city's significance in trade. Additionally, we examine the legal framework established by Algerian legislation & the local-level measures taken to address street trade. The findings reveal both the negative and positive effects of street trade, including traffic congestion, urban landscape distortion, environmental and health regulations non-compliance. Nonetheless, street trade also has positive aspects, such as fostering social interactions and providing livelihood opportunities for marginalized groups in urban areas. Consequently, we propose technical and legal measures to maximize the benefits derived from street trade while mitigating its consequences. These measures aim to create balance between regulating street trade and harnessing its potential for urban development.

**Key words:** Street-trade, Urban areas, Effects, Bordj Bou Arreridj city, Urban environment

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## INTRODUCTION

Street trading is a worldwide common and integral part of urban areas. It involves the informal selling of goods and services on public streets, sidewalks, and other open spaces (Peimani & Kamalipour, 2022). While street trading has been part of urban life for centuries, it has recently become increasingly prominent due to economic pressures, the formalization of labor, and urbanization. Street trading is a complex phenomenon with multiple social, economic (Sun, Scott, Bell, Yang, & Yang, 2022), and cultural implications for the urban environment (Timothy, 2022). As such, it is essential to comprehend the impact of street trading on urban areas as well as to announce policy and planning decisions that affect the livelihoods and well-being of street traders and residents. This paper seeks to understand the effect of street trading on the urban area by examining its multiple dimensions and implications. The research is established on an empirical study conducted in a selected urban area, which is chosen based on its diversity, vibrancy, and complexity. The study employs a mixed-methods approach that combines quantitative and qualitative methods to collect and analyze data. The research questions focus on the economic, social, cultural, environmental, and spatial dimensions of street trading and their interrelationships. The study explores the experiences and perspectives of street traders, residents, and policy makers to gain a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. The determinations of this paper contribute to the literature on street trading by providing empirical evidence and insights into its impact on the urban environment. The study informs policy and planning decisions related to street trading and helps to address the challenges and opportunities associated with the phenomenon. Overall, this study aims to contribute to a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the effect of street trading on the urban area and its implications for urban development and sustainability.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Street trading is a prevalent informal economic (Ojeda & Pino, 2019) activity in many urban areas, particularly in developing countries. While street trading is often viewed as a way to provide low-cost goods and services to urban residents (Welmintje Fanggidae, 2021), it can also have negative consequences for the urban environment, such as traffic congestion, littering, and public health concerns (Kusakabe, 2006). Despite its significance, there needs to be more comprehensive research on the effects of street trading on the urban area, particularly in Algerian cities. Moreover, there needs to be more research on the economic impact of street trading on the urban area. Street trading has the potential to contribute to urban economy by creating jobs, generating income for traders (Lemessa, Watabaji, Yismaw, & Tadesse, 2021), and providing affordable goods and services to consumers (Moosv, 2023). However, street trading can also undermine formal businesses (Edward, Vandi, Lucy, & Emmanuel, 2023), reduce property (Luthra, 2023) values, and impede urban development (Moosv, 2023). Therefore, it is essential to examine the economic impact of street trading on the urban area to inform policies that promote sustainable and inclusive urban development.

Overall, the problem is the need for more comprehensive research on the economic, social, and environmental impact of street trading on the urban area, particularly in Algerian cities, which can inform policies and practices that promote sustainable and inclusive urban development. Therefore, this paper seeks to address the following research questions:

- What factors contribute to the emergence of street trading activity in urban areas?
- How does street trading impact the urban context of Bordj Bou Arreridj?

## BACKGROUND

The phenomenon of street trading has become increasingly common in urban areas around the world, and its impact on the urban environment and economy is the subject of much debate (Martínez, Short, & Estrada, 2017). While street trading can provide a source of income for

individuals (Dao Truong, 2017) and contribute to the vibrancy and diversity of urban spaces, it can also have negative effects, such as congestion, littering, and competition with formal businesses.

Several studies have explored the impact of street trading on urban areas. For instance, in a study about street vendors in Mumbai, India (Debdulal, 2011) researchers found that street traders play an important role in the local economy, but also contribute to traffic congestion and waste accumulation. Similarly, a study on street trading in Accra, Ghana (Spire & Choplin, 2017) found that while street trading provides income for many individuals, it also leads to overcrowding, unsanitary conditions, and negative impacts on nearby businesses. One of the earliest studies on street trading was conducted by the Economist Hernando de Soto, who argued that informal street vendors played a vital role in the economy of developing countries (Cobbinah, 2023). In his book "The Other Path" (1989) (De Soto, 1989), De Soto analyzed the informal economy of Peru and argued that street vendors provide a valuable service to consumers and contribute to the overall economic growth of the country. Studies that are more recent have examined the social and environmental impacts of street trading. In their book "Street Entrepreneurs", examining the lives of street traders in cities around the world, argue that street trading was a form of resistance to the dominant economic and political systems (Cross & Morales, 2013). They also highlight the ways in which street vendors are often subject to harassment and violence from the police and other authorities. The effects of street trading on the urban environment and economy are complex and multifaceted and depend on a range of factors such as the type of products being sold, the density of vendors, and the regulatory framework in place. By examining the impacts of street trading in different urban contexts, policy makers can better understand the trade-offs involved in regulating or supporting this activity in their own cities (Kusakabe, 2006).

### APPROACH METHODOLOGY

This paper uses a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative research methods. The study is conducted in a selected urban area with a high density of street traders to ensure the accuracy and relevance of the findings. The study consists of the following research methods:

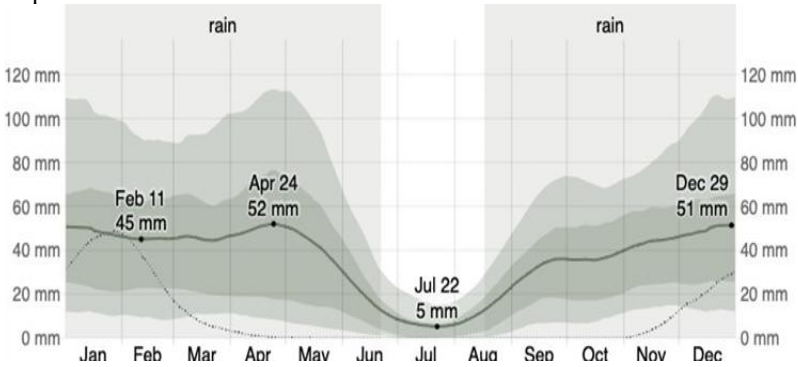
- Literature review: A comprehensive review of existing literature on street trading is conducted to provide a theoretical framework for the study.
- Surveys: Surveys are conducted among street traders, city officials, residents to gather quantitative data on their attitudes towards street trading and its impact on the urban environment.
- Interviews: In-depth interviews are conducted with a selected group of street traders, city officials, and residents to gather qualitative data on their attitudes toward street trading and its impact on the urban environment.
- Observations: Observations are conducted in the selected urban area to gather data on the spatial and temporal patterns of street trading.
- Data Analysis: The data gathered through surveys, interviews, and observations are analyzed using a mixed-methods approach. The quantitative data are analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics to identify patterns and relationships between variables. The qualitative data are analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring themes and patterns in the data.
- Data Collection: To analyze the effects of street trading on the urban area, we collected data from different sources. The following data sources were used:
  - Census data: We collected data on the number of street traders in different urban areas, their demographics, and the types of goods and services they sell.
  - Survey data: We surveyed residents, traders, and local authorities in different urban areas to gather their opinions and experiences of street trading.
  - Data Analysis: The data collected were analyzed utilizing both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques.

**PRESENTATION OF THE CITY OF BORDJ BOU ARRERIDJ**

The municipality of Bordj Bou Arreridj is located in the west of the wilaya of Bordj Bou Arreridj, it covers an area of 82 km <sup>2</sup> for a population estimated at 190737 inhabitants (census office of the municipality of Bordj Bou Arreridj, 2019). Due to its geographical location, the climate of Bordj Bou Arreridj Province is Mediterranean. It experiences a dry season from May to September and a wet season from October to April. The study area is located in the province of Bordj Bou Arreridj and is characterized by a semi-arid climate. Its climatic regime depends on two main parameters: precipitations and temperature.

**Rainfall**

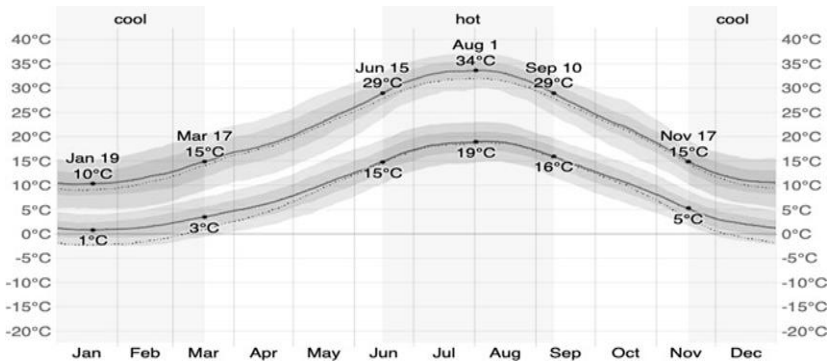
The rainfall distribution during this period shows a significant monthly variability (Figure 1). We Notice that April is the rainy month (50.3 mm) and July is the dry month with a rainfall of 5.6 mm. During the experimental period (December to July), the total precipitation is 286.9 mm, which is high compared to the previous year. Therefore, the distribution of rainfall is irregular during this period.



**Figure 1.** Average Monthly Rainfall in Bordj Bou Arreridj (2021/2022)  
(Source: Weather Spark, 2022)

**Temperature**

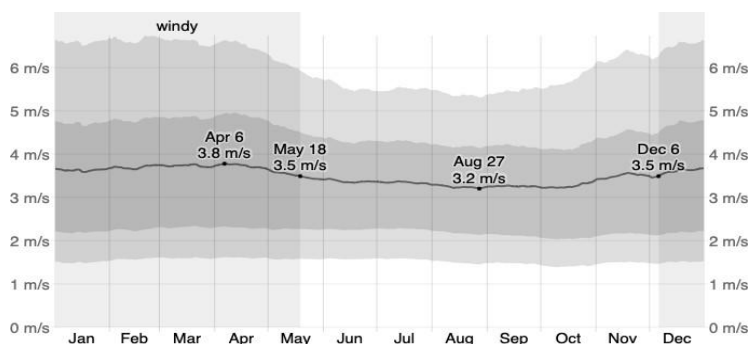
The climatic data recorded by the meteorological station of BBA during the period 2021/2022 show that January and February are the coldest months with an average temperature of 1°C. July and August are the hottest months with an average temperature of 33°C (Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** Average High and Low Temperature in Bordj BouArreridj (2021/2022)

## Wind

The wind speed in Bordj Bou Arreridj shows a mild seasonal variation throughout the year (figure3). During the windier period, which spans 5 months from December to May, the average wind speeds exceed 3.5 meters per second. The month of March experiences the highest average hourly wind speed of 3.7 meters per second. On the other hand, the calmer time of year extends for 7 months, starting from May and ending on December. During this period, the average hourly wind speed drops, with August being the calmest month at an average of 3.2 meters per second.

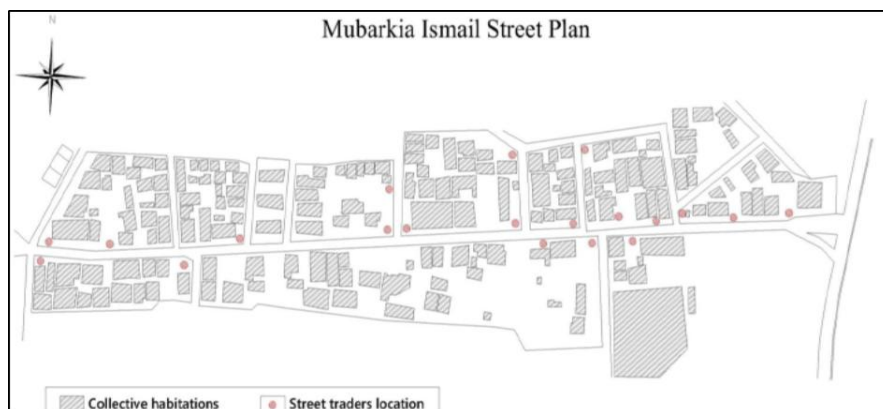


**Figure 3.** Average Wind Speed in Bordj Bou Arreridj (2021/2022)

(Source: Weather Spark, 2022)

## Exploring the Dynamics of Mubarakia Ismail Street

Mubarakia Ismail Street holds significant prominence as the primary commercial and arterial thoroughfare in the bustling city of Bordj Bou Arreridj (Figure 4). This street is a vital hub for various commercial activities and services. Boasting an impressive collection of more than 100 shops and commercial centers, Mubarakia Ismail Street offers a diverse range of services and commodities to cater to the needs and desires of its vibrant community. However, what truly distinguishes this street and piques our interest for further study is the prevalence of numerous street vendors dotting its lively sidewalks. These enterprising individuals contribute to the bustling atmosphere by offering the passersby an eclectic assortment of goods and services. Their presence adds charm and liveliness to the vibrant street, attracting locals and visitors alike. Mubarakia Ismail Street, with its vibrant commercial landscape and the fusion of traditional storefronts and street vendors, encapsulates the essence of a bustling marketplace. It is a captivating microcosm of economic activity, cultural diversity, and entrepreneurial spirit within Bordj Bou Arreridj.



**Figure 4.** Mubarkia Ismail Street Plan

(Source: authors, 2023)

### Occupation

Based on the provided information, an analysis can be developed regarding the occupations of street traders in Bordj Bou Arreridj (Table 1). The data reveal a diverse range of occupations within the street tradesector.

The findings indicate that most street traders, comprising 43%, are involved in selling vegetables. This suggests that the sale of fresh produce plays a significant role in the street trade economy of the city. The prevalence of vegetable traders may be attributed to factors such as the high demand for fresh food, the perishable nature of vegetables, and the relatively lower entry barriers for this type of trade. It also reflects the importance of local agriculture and produce's availability for direct consumer sales.

Additionally, the data reveal that 26% of street traders are involved in the perfume trade. This highlights the significance of the perfume industry within the street trade sector. The presence of perfume traders suggests demand for fragrance products and the popularity of these items among consumers. Furthermore, 13% of street traders sell clothes. This indicates the presence of a clothing market within the street trade sector. Clothes traders may offer a variety of apparel, catering to different customer preferences and budgets. Moreover, 12% of street traders sell accessories. This category includes traders offering jewelry, bags, belts, and other fashion accessories. The presence of accessories traders indicates a market for fashion accessories and reflects the desire of consumers to accessorize and enhance their style through affordable and accessible options. Lastly, 6% of street traders are involved in selling sweets. This category represents traders offering confectionery items and sugary treats.

**Table 1.** Diverse Street Trading Activities in Mubarakia Ismail Street  
(Data source: Data collection questionnaire by authors)

Occupation	Percentage
Perfumetrader	26%
Vegetables trader	43%
Clothes trader	13%
Accessoriestrader	12%
Sweetstrader	6%

### Exploring the Interplay between Weather Conditions and Street Trading Activity

The effect of high temperatures, extreme cold, and irregular rainfall can significantly affect street trading activity in Bordj Bou Arreridj. Here's a developed explanation of these factors:

1. High Temperatures: In regions with high temperatures, such as Bordj Bou Arreridj, street trading activities can be greatly affected. The scorching heat can discourage both traders and customers from engaging in outdoor activities, mainly street shopping. The intense heat can make it uncomfortable for traders to spend long hours outside, leading to decreased participation and reduced business transactions. Additionally, customers may prefer to stay indoors or in air-conditioned environments, resulting in lower footfall and reduced sales for street traders.

2. Extreme Cold: Similarly, extreme cold weather can also have a negative impact on street trading activity in Bordj Bou Arreridj. During periods of freezing temperatures, traders may face challenges in setting up their stalls and maintaining the quality of their goods. Customers may be less inclined to venture outside in cold weather, leading to decreased demand and lower sales. Additionally, extreme cold can create logistical difficulties, such as transportation issues and the need for extra precautions to protect perishable items.

3. Irregular Rainfall: Irregular rainfall patterns can disrupt street trading activities in several ways. In periods of heavy rainfall or storms, street traders may face difficulties in setting up their stalls and protecting their merchandise from water damage. The presence of rainwater on the streets can make it challenging for customers to navigate through the market, resulting in reduced footfall and fewer potential buyers. Moreover, unpredictable rainfall patterns can make it harder

for street traders to plan their operations and stock inventory accordingly, leading to supply chain disruptions and potential financial losses.

4.The Wind: the wind can significantly impact the activities and operations of street vendors. Wind conditions play a crucial role in the functioning and profitability of street trading. Strong and gusty winds can pose challenges for street traders by affecting the stability and safety of their stalls or display setups. Windy conditions can cause merchandise to be blown away or damaged, potentially leading to financial losses. On the one hand, extreme wind can make it difficult for customers to navigate through the street market, as it may create discomfort and hinder the overall shopping experience. On the other hand, moderate and pleasant breezes can attract more pedestrians to the streets, increasing the potential customer base for street vendors. A gentle breeze can create a pleasant atmosphere, encouraging people to spend more time outdoors and engage in shopping activities. However, it is essential for street traders to consider and adapt to wind conditions by employing suitable stall structures, securing their merchandise, and being prepared for weather fluctuations. Overall, the relationship between wind and street trading in BBA highlights the importance of weather conditions in shaping the success and viability of street vendors' businesses.

To mitigate the impact of these weather-related factors on street trading activity, the local authorities and traders can consider implementing certain measures. For instance, providing shaded areas, awnings, or temporary shelters can help protect traders from excessive heat or rain. Promoting indoor market spaces during extreme weather conditions can encourage customers to continue shopping while ensuring the safety and comfort of both traders and buyers. Additionally, establishing flexible regulations and support systems that allow traders to adapt to changing weather conditions can help sustain their businesses during challenging periods.

### **Impact of Street Vending on Driving Efficiency**

The impact of street vendors on traffic flow along Mubarakia Ismail Street is a significant aspect to consider. With a length of 700 meters, the street is subject to established speed limits ranging between 30 and 40 kilometers per hour. Based on these speed limits, the anticipated time required to traverse the street would range from, approximately, one minute and five seconds to one minute and twenty-four seconds at maximum. However, the time it takes to navigate the street differs in practice. During non-peak hours, the minimum time recorded for crossing the street is two minutes and six seconds. This suggests a notable increase compared to the estimated time, implying that the presence of street vendors affects the overall traffic flow. During peak hours, the situation is even more pronounced. The minimum time recorded for crossing the street surges to four minutes and twelve seconds. This substantial increase in travel time signifies the heightened impact of street vendors on traffic congestion during periods of high activity (Figure 5). These findings highlight the tangible influence of street vendors on traffic flow along Mubarakia Ismail Street. By impeding the smooth movement of vehicles, the presence of vendors prolongs travel times and contributes to congestion, particularly during peak hours. Understanding and mitigating these effects is crucial for ensuring efficient traffic management and optimizing the overall functioning of the street.

### **Impact of street vending on walking efficiency**

The presence of vending tables along Mubarakia Ismail Street significantly impacts pedestrian movement on the sidewalk, disrupting the anticipated smooth flow. In ideal circumstances, covering a distance of 700 meters along the street should take an average person approximately 14 minutes. However, the reality paints a different picture. Due to the presence of vending tables, the time it takes to traverse the sidewalk is notably extended (Figure 6). Instead of the expected eight minutes, pedestrians require between 18 and 21 minutes to reach the end of the street. This increase in travel time underscores the hindrances created by the placement of vending tables, which obstruct the path and impede pedestrian movement. These findings highlight the

practical implications of street vending on pedestrian accessibility and mobility (Kadri & Khalfallah, 2022) along Mubarakia Ismail Street. The longer travel duration experienced by pedestrians navigating the sidewalk not only affects individuals' daily routines but also underscores the need to address the challenges posed by the presence of vending tables in order to improve the overall pedestrian experience and ensure a smoother flow of movement along the street.



**Figure 5.** Traffic Obstruction caused by Street Traders  
(Source: Authors on 15/05/2023)

### **Effect of Street Vendors on environmental and waste management**

The effect of street vendors on environmental and waste management in Mubarakia Ismail Street reveals several concerning issues. One prominent problem is the presence of numerous remnants of goods discarded along the street. The improper disposal of waste by sellers contributes to visual pollution and disrupts the overall cleanliness of the area. This not only tarnishes the aesthetic appeal of the street but also creates negative implications for the environment. Another significant concern is the disregard for designated areas for garbage disposal by street vendors. Instead of utilizing proper waste bins or designated collection points, some vendors opt to dispose of their garbage haphazardly. This practice contributes to the accumulation of waste and hinders practical waste management efforts. The lack of adherence to proper waste disposal methods threatens the street's cleanliness and hygiene. Furthermore, there is a specific issue with tables used for selling sweets that must meet appropriate health standards.



**Figure 6.** Illegal and Unlicensed exploitation of the sidewalk.  
(Source: Authors on 15/05/2023)



These unhygienic conditions (Figure 7) pose a potential risk to the health and safety of consumers. The absence of proper sanitary practices, such as regular cleaning and maintenance, increases the likelihood of food contamination and the spread of diseases. This situation necessitates urgent attention to ensure consumers' well-being and uphold health regulations. Addressing these environmental concerns requires a comprehensive approach. Municipal authorities should prioritize establishing proper waste management infrastructure, including adequate waste bins and regular waste collection services.

Additionally, it is crucial to raise awareness among street vendors about the importance of responsible waste disposal and the implications of their actions on the environment. Furthermore, stricter regulations and inspections can help ensure that street vendors comply with health and hygiene standards. This involves enforcing regular monitoring of street vending activities and conducting inspections to ensure that vendors maintain clean and safe selling practices.



**Figure 7.** Random Waste Dumping on Mubarakia Ismail Street  
(Source: Authors on 15/05/2023)

### **The Effect of Street Vendors on the Urban Landscape:**

The effect of street vendors on the urban landscape of Mubarakia Ismail Street is evident through the distortion it brings to the overall visual aesthetics of the area. The presence of numerous street vendors, with their makeshift stalls, significantly alters the planned urban design and architectural harmony of the street (Figure 8). The vibrant and diverse range of goods and products offered by street vendors can create a crowded and cluttered atmosphere, making the street appear chaotic and disorganized. The excessive presence of stalls and merchandise obstructs the natural flow and spatial arrangement of the urban landscape, leading to a visually cluttered and congested environment.

Moreover, the ad hoc structures and temporary stalls used by street vendors need to be more consistent in design, materials, and color schemes, further contributing to the visual disruption of the urban landscape. These makeshift structures differ from the surrounding buildings in terms of architectural style and aesthetic appeal, resulting in an inconsistent and disjointed streetscape. Addressing the distortion of the urban landscape caused by street vendors requires a comprehensive approach. Local authorities should develop and enforce regulations and guidelines regarding the placement, design, and appearance of street vendors' stalls to ensure their integration into the existing urban fabric. Consideration should be given to maintaining the architectural harmony, visual coherence, and overall aesthetics of the street.

Balancing the vibrant street vending culture with the preservation of the urban landscape requires collaborative efforts between municipal authorities, urban planners, and street vendors. The visual appeal and functionality of Mubarakia Ismail Street as an integral part of the urban landscape.



**Figure 8.** Distorting the aesthetic urban landscape of the city due to the use of inappropriate kiosks  
(Source: Authors on 15/05/2023)

### **The Effect of Street traders on Social Context:**

Street trading plays a crucial role in providing a means of earning a living for vulnerable groups within urban society. For individuals who may lack access to formal employment opportunities, street selling offers a chance to generate income and support themselves and their families. It serves as a lifeline for marginalized communities, empowering them to meet their basic needs and improve their socio- economic conditions. Furthermore, street trading fosters social and cultural interaction, contributing to social cohesion within urban areas. The vibrant and diverse mix of vendors and customers creates a dynamic environment where people from various backgrounds come together. It becomes a space for exchange, dialogue, and the celebration of different cultures, promoting a sense of unity and mutual understanding among community members. However, it is essential to address the potential negative aspects associated with street trading. In some instances, individuals may exploit licenses for selling in the streets as a cover for engaging in other criminal activities, especially in areas like Mubarakia Ismail Street, where many customers are women. This can create an environment conducive to theft and pickpocketing, posing a threat to public safety and eroding trust within the community. Additionally, concerns arise regarding unfair competition and tax evasion. Established businesses that adhere to regulations and pay taxes may feel disadvantaged by street vendors who operate informally. This can lead to economic imbalances and unfair competition, negatively impacting the viability of legitimate businesses and potentially reducing tax revenue for local governments.

### **CONCLUSION:**

This paper marks a significant milestone in our research journey, as we transitioned from the theoretical exploration of street trading to the practical side. Through direct engagement with local officials and street traders themselves, we were able to gain invaluable insights and access realistic data that deepened our understanding of the subject. This firsthand knowledge has empowered us to formulate concrete recommendations aimed at improving the often stereotyped image of street traders in Bordj Bou Arreridj. Interactions with local officials and the Municipal People's Assembly provided us with a crucial perspective on the licensing process and the municipality's interests in street trading. Through these discussions, we gain a nuanced understanding of the procedures and considerations involved, enabling us to view the topic from a more practical and context-specific standpoint. This direct contact with key stakeholders has been instrumental in bridging the gap between theory and reality, enriching our analysis with real-world insights. Equally important was our engagement with street traders themselves, who provided us with firsthand accounts of their experiences, challenges, and aspirations. By administering a well-structured questionnaire and conducting interviews, we are able to capture a comprehensive picture of their daily realities. This direct interaction humanized the research process, allowing us

to empathize with their struggles and recognize the immense potential they possess in contributing to the local economy and the urban fabric.

Based on our findings and the wealth of data collected, we have formulated a series of recommendations aimed at improving the often stigmatized perception of street traders. These recommendations focus on enhancing the professional image of street traders, providing them with the necessary support and resources to elevate their businesses, and fostering a more inclusive and positive environment for their operations. By addressing issues such as licensing procedures, infrastructure development, capacity building, and collaboration, we aim to dismantle stereotypes and promote the recognition of street traders as valuable contributors to the local economy.

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