



## Research Article

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# Informal Workers in the Streets: An Integral View

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## Abstract

*This article analyzes the profile of people working informally in the streets according to the following categories: sociodemographic traits, precursors to dedication to informal work, benefits and difficulties in conditions of informal labor, practices of income and expenses, and self-concept. This study consists of 284 interviews of people dedicated to labor activities in different public zones in the city of Bogotá, Colombia. The results indicate that informal workers include individuals of different ages, with the majority being adults; and there is an increasing trend in participation from individuals with high levels of education, showing that low educational levels are not sufficient to explain informal street work, especially in situations of displacement such as that caused by violence in Colombia in recent years. Instead, the main reasons for engagement in informal work are limited opportunities and low wages in the formal labor market, as well as the desire for work autonomy. While informal workers recognize the arduosity of informal street labor, they maintain positive concepts of themselves and their work, as these activities allow them to support their family while serving others in their communities. This article provides reflection on the conditions of informal street workers and provides understanding of the problem in order to better design strategies to overcome discrimination and exclusion.*

**Keywords:** *informal work, worker profile, psychosocial analysis, experiences of production and consumption*

## 1. Introduction

From the late 1980s to the first two decades of the twenty-first century, abundant research has focused on the economic context of globalization. Under the dominance of neoliberal doctrine, this phenomenon has reduced the role of the State while affecting the lives and circumstances of citizens, especially those in less-developed countries, with respect to market dominance and the inequitable distribution of resources. Privatization, decentralization, and flexibility are the current trends in employment, thus creating new conceptions of production and worker identity and resulting in the development of new worker categorizations. These categorizations include, on the

one hand, individuals with advanced credentials, access to attractive work conditions, and high levels of employability; on the other hand, large groups of outsourced, marginalized individuals with low levels of employability who informal work (Rodríguez et al. 2006).

Additionally, there has been a shift from a society of producers to one of consumers (Bauman, 2005a). In present-day society, the capitalist spirit establishes new relationships. This change involves a shift from the tendency to measure the value and dignity of an individual by the economic rewards achieved through his or her work towards a consumer world tendency that places greater value on desire fulfillment and freedom of choice.

In Latin America (LA), as Benería (2006) and Blanco and Lillard (2013) indicate, these process are occurring alongside settings of historical inequalities in the distribution of income. High volumes of informal work, persistent poverty, and the emigration of large populations are basic differentiating factors that should be taken into account in attempting to understand the experiences and practices of workers in this region. Only with this understanding may one contribute to policy on this subject. Additionally, according to Ramírez and Guevara (2006), lack of protection for the health of workers is evident through the denial of pension rights and the reduction in government services for poor populations.

According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), informal labor includes “[all] employee jobs characterized by an employment relationship that is not subject to national labor legislation, income taxation, social protection, or entitlement to certain employment benefits” (2007, p.1). The informal workforce consists of unprotected individuals who are governed by uncertainty, insecurity and job scarcity. The group is largely comprised of youth, women, and the elderly (Rodríguez et al. 2006). Hence, variables of age and gender are relevant when examining the profile of this population group.

Sánchez et al. (2009) indicate that excessive labor regulations in Latin American countries increase levels of informal work and unemployment and extenuate their prolonged circumstances. Applying this perspective, Loaiza et al. (2005) and Charlot et al. (2011) indicate that decreased labor regulations reduce informal work and unemployment levels. Samaniego (2008) coins “the informal work trap” as the self-reinforcing factors that result in more informal work, lower taxes, and the stunted development of formal enterprise.

Bosh and Malony (2008) propose that informal work is a product of labor market cyclical properties. They cite Brazil and Mexico as examples, where rates of unemployment and informal work tend to be contracyclical, meaning that these processes increase dramatically during economic recessions. Other causes of informal work identified in Peracchi et al. (2008) are related to the expulsion of workers from the formal sector and, in limited cases, the voluntary assumption of informal work as a favorable alternative.

Focusing on Colombia, Uribe et al. (2006) view informal work as the result of a poorly developed modern economic sector that cannot absorb the entire available work force. The surplus population, whether educated or not, is thus relegated to low-paid, informal activities or into unemployment. Likewise, in the Colombian context, informal work is a result of the violence-related displacement figures, which according to a recent Norwegian Refugee Council and Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre report (2017) has reached 7.2 million internally displaced, followed by Syria (6.3 million), Sudan (3.3 million), Iraq (3.0 million) and Democratic Republic of Congo (2.2 million). Worth noting is that this displacement is also a result of weak governmental support of rural activities, the illusion of higher quality of life in urban areas, higher prospective wages and work conditions in cities, as well as support from family members who have already settled in a city (Borja et al. 2008; Aysa-Lastra 2011).

As functions the “informal work trap”, Batini and Levine (2010), through their study on the costs of informal work, find that this sector reduces government tax revenues and thus also reduces expenditures in social investment. According to Peracchi et al. (2008), at the individual level, the costs of informal work include the taking of greater risks by seeking less protection on the basis of old age, illness, or unemployment.

Batini and Levine (2010) identify benefits of informal work to the extent that it absorbs the most vulnerable groups of the population, particularly women and youth. Similar to the conclusions of Álvarez-Uría and Varela (2009), these authors highlight that capitalist societies rely on the

existence of unemployment and temporary work as a wage lowering mechanism.

Focusing on Colombia, Flórez (2002) divides the informal sector into occupational groups related to gender, age, and educational level and finds a subsector of subsistence characterized by self-employed workers, unpaid family workers, and domestic service workers which includes a high proportion of women and migrants with low levels of education. Immigrants, women without employment qualifications, workers of older age, and young individuals who do not qualify for employment reside on the borders of the wage society, forming a type of peripheral block (Álvarez-Urúa and Varela 2009). According to the National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE, in Spanish) (2017), the proportion of informal workers reached 47.2% and 48.4% in the thirteen major cities and the 23 most important metropolitan areas, respectively. Of these, 60.3% were self-employed as independent and were nearly evenly distributed amongst men (51.9%) and women (48.1%).

Echebarria and Larrañaga (2004) explain that women comprise the majority of non-market workers; and even though women work for a larger number of years than men, the work that they perform tends to be, in the majority of cases, unpaid, at least directly. Additionally, women assume the dual role of traditional caretaker in the home as well as economic agent in the public sphere. Thus, there still appears to be an element of family and gender conditioning at play, which can be observed in the precarious working conditions engaged in by women, who largely occupy the poorest segments of the job market (Arango 2004).

Another variable associated with informal work is formal education. Pérez et al. (2006) find that for each additional year that an individual engages in the educational system, inactivity decreases and the probability of participation in the formal sector increases. In Argentina, young individuals who fail to complete their studies are excluded from the formal system of work while being relegated to opportunity individualization and socioeconomic segregation (Aparicio 2008). With concern, Ramírez and Guevara (2006) find that the number of informal workers holding at least one university degree has been increasing each year, which has not occurred for groups with other levels of education.

Modern industrial society views work as both the axis of individual and social life as well as a guarantee of societal survival (Bauman 2005b). Sacipa (2003) highlights that "within life stories, work is understood as something more than a mechanism by which basic needs can be met; it is experienced, in turn, as an opportunity for internal strengthening" (p. 53). Work connotes commitment to identity, relates closely to the social roles assumed by a person, and denotes a number of obligations and the ability to fulfill them (Sánchez and Jaramillo 1999).

In Colombia, according to the Office of the Attorney General (OAG) (2012), work continues to be a fundamental aspect of individual life. Employment represents the means of productive contributions to society; it also signifies the acquisition of new skills, the achievement of life projects, the establishment of interpersonal relationships, and the obtainment of resources for self and family welfare. However, troubling is that Colombia is the third most unequal country in LA (Pineda and Acosta 2009; CEPAL 2010), demonstrating that the labor market in Colombia, rather than serving to close the opportunity gap between rich and poor, has instead increased this gap.

In this regard, for the OAG (2012), information on the locations and types of work is still essential in defining the identities of individuals in Colombia. Still, in line with Álvarez-Urúa and Varela (2009), indicators of identity and social position no longer serve as symbols of production as much as they serve as markers of consumption and lifestyle.

With all this in mind, this study seeks to analyze the profile of the people working informally in the streets of Bogotá by sociodemographic traits, precursors to dedication to informal work, benefits and difficulties in conditions of informal labor, practices of income and expenses, and self-concept. Introducing and highlighting the conditions in which these individuals work allows understanding of the problem and promotes designing of strategies that limit processes that exclude and discriminate against individuals in the informal work environment. This is an imperative goal for Colombian society.

## 2. Methodology

This research project engages in a descriptive study that aims to characterize informal work. Similar to the method employed by Correa-Garcia (2010) for studying migrant workers, informal work is studied here as a determinate context in relation to the profile of workers who sell services on the streets of Bogota. Applying this perspective in combination with a transversal focus aids in identifying variables that characterize the survey population.

Participants were selected randomly from the streets of Bogota in different areas of the city. The formula  $n = (Z^2) (P) (Q)/E^2$  was used to calculate the minimum sample size. The confidence level was 95% ( $Z = 1.96$ ) with a probability of occurrence  $P = 0.76$  (probability of participating in the study, estimated through a pilot sample) and a probability of not participating  $Q = 1 - P = 0.24$ , with an estimation error of 0.05 or 5%.

$$n = 1.96^2(0.76)(0.24)/0.05^2$$
$$n = 281 \text{ street workers}$$

The final sample comprises 284 participants.

Information was collected using a semi-structured interview method. The interviews consisted of 28 items and were held for duration of 70 to 90 minutes for each person. The authors of the study conducted the interviews directly and in collaboration with a group of students in their eighth semester of Business Administration. Fieldwork took place from March to December of 2016.

Categories of analysis were sociodemographic variables (gender, age, marital status, and education level), precursors to engagement in informal work, benefits and difficulties of working in conditions of informality, practices of income and expenditures, and self-concept.

## 3. Results

An analysis of the study results was carried out according to the aforementioned categories:

### 3.1 Sociodemographic variables: gender, age, marital status, education level

Within the sample group, 52.8% were men and 47.2% women. On the variable of gender, the chi-square test (for differences in proportions) shows no significant difference between the number of men and women engaged in informal work ( $X^2 = 0.90$ ;  $\alpha < 0.05$  or confidence level of 95%).

The results support Beneria (2006) who states that female participation in domestic responsibilities associated with childcare acts as a source of vulnerability not only because it pertains to unpaid work but also because it restricts their mobility and autonomy to obtain formal employment. Gallaway and Bernasek (2002) make the same observation, highlighting that it is common for women to choose informal employment to guarantee compatibility between private and public roles. According to these authors, public policy should focus on providing conditions in which formal employment is made compatible with the female roles of mother and spouse.

Regarding the age of individuals who engage in informal work, 20.7% are youth (between 15 and 25 years), 57.2% are adults (between 26 and 55 years), and 22.1% are seniors (over 55 years). This indicates that mid-range adults are significantly more prone to informal work than individuals under 25 or over 55 years of age.

With respect to marital status, 41.8% of the participants were single, 39.0% were married, 9.6% were cohabitating, 5.3% were separated, and 4.3% were widowed. This indicates that there is no significant difference between the number of single and married individuals engaged in informal work ( $X^2 = 0.29$ ;  $\alpha < 0.05$ ). Additionally, 39.0% of the participants (both single and married) were without children, 24.1% had one child and 36.9% had two children.

With regards to academic levels, 3.7% of the participants were uneducated, 41.1% had completed primary education, 35.6% held high school diplomas, 2.9% held vocational/technical degrees, and 17.7% held university degrees. This result indicates that although a significant difference ( $X^2 = 3.52$ ;  $\alpha < 0.05$ ) exists between the number of individuals engaged in informal work with primary and secondary levels of education and those with university degrees, informal work is not only associated with less-skilled workers but also appears to provide options for skilled

individuals who may have faced difficulties in accessing formal employment or who may view informal work positively as self-employment. This results are compatible with the proposal of Ramírez and Guevara (2006) who affirm that the level of informality among individuals with higher education has been increasing. This finding shows that low educational levels are not sufficient to explain the tendencies for individuals to engage in informal work.

Furthermore, 57.3% of the participants were born either in Bogota or in surrounding municipalities, while 42.7% are from other cities and regions of the country. These data show no significant difference ( $X^2 = 0.90$ ;  $\alpha < 0.05$ ) between the number of individuals who are native to Bogota and those from other regions. This demonstrates that Bogota has become a convergent space for migrants and displaced individuals and inaccessibility to formal employment is a precursor to their engagement in informal work (Borja et al. 2008).

With respect to lengths of time spent working in informal employment, 44.2% of the sampled individuals had worked in the informal sector between one and five years, 39.5% had worked informally between six and ten years, and 17.3% had worked in this sector for more than ten years. This result indicates a significant difference ( $X^2 = 32.1$ ;  $\alpha < 0.05$ ) between individuals who have recently begun informal work activity and those who have worked in the sector for a longer duration. However, no differences ( $X^2 = 0.91$ ;  $\alpha < 0.05$ ) were found in periods of engagement in informal work between men and women or between married and single individuals ( $X^2 = 0.74$ ;  $\alpha < 0.05$ ), (Table I). This finding indicates that informal work represents a lifestyle that may be entered voluntarily or conditionally rather than serving as a sector that individuals temporarily pass through over the course their working lives.

Of the total sample of interviewed individuals (52.7% men and 47.3% women), 86.9% claimed to be self-employed, and only 13.1% reported working for other individuals, indicating that a large percentage of individuals involved in informal work choose self-employment (significant difference,  $X^2 = 28.5$ ;  $\alpha < 0.05$ ). Of all of the self-employment opportunities reported, 55.1% generate employment for the sole individual, while 44.9% generate employment for one or more individuals, typically spouses and children.

**Table I.** Type of business according to the gender and age of individuals shown as percentages

Type of opportunity	Gender		Total	Age			Total
	Male	Female		Youth	Adult	Senior	
Self-employment that does not employ others	26.50	28.60	55.10	15.90	27.50	11.20	54.70
Self-employment that employs others	9.50	4.90	14.50	1.80	9.80	3.30	14.90
Self-employment that employs a spouse	5.70	1.40	7.10	0.40	3.60	2.90	6.90
Self-employment that employs children	2.80%	7.40%	10.20%	0.40%	6.90%	2.90%	10.10%
Workers for other individuals	8.10%	4.90%	13.10%	2.20%	9.40%	1.80%	13.40%
Total	52.70%	47.30%	100.0%	20.70%	57.20%	22.10%	22.10%

### 3.2 Reasons for working in conditions of informality

Individuals primarily engage in the informal economy due to financial need (57.7%), the loss of formal employment or difficulty in accessing the formal sector (32.6%), the desire for supplementary income (19.8%) and displacement due to violence (13.1%). These data show that financial need represents, to a significant degree, the main reason for respondents to opt for informal work ( $X^2 = 32.1$ ;  $\alpha < 0.05$ ). While these reasons are generally similar between men and women, men demonstrate a higher desire for autonomy ( $X^2 = 3.4$ ;  $\alpha < 0.05$ ). In this sense, informal work is viewed as providing greater autonomy and independence in decision-making, and these arguments tend to be more common among individuals dedicated to these tasks (Tokman 2008; Batini and Levine 2010). The desire for supplementary income tends to be more significant for women. These reasons are also similar across the different ages of individuals; financial need (45.7%) and loss of formal employment or difficulty in attaining formal employment (36.7%) are the main factors causing adults to engage in informal activities, while young individuals primarily cite financial need, desire for supplementary income, and desire for independence (Table II).

**Table II.** Reasons for working informally by gender, age, and marital status shown as percentages

Reasons for engaging in informal work	Gender			Age			Marital status		
	Male	Female	Total	Youth	Adult	Senior	Single	Married	Cohabiting
Financial necessity	23.0	18.7	41.7	8.7	25.7	8.0	17.7	15.6	8.5
Job loss or difficulty securing work	11.0	11.7	22.6	1.8	16.7	4.0	9.6	7.8	4.6
Independence/ autonomy	10.2	3.2	13.4	4.7	5.1	3.3	6.0	5.0	1.1
Experience and knowledge	1.8	1.8	3.5	0.4	2.2	1.1	1.4	1.8	0.4
Desire for supplementary income	3.9	11.0	14.8	5.1	5.1	5.1	6.4	5.7	1.1
Family and social ties	2.8	1.1	3.9	0.4	2.5	0.4	0.7	3.2	0.0

It is worth noting that causes for engaging in informal work show a positive correlation ( $p < 0.05$ ) with the age of individuals ( $r = 0.47$ ), levels of education ( $r = - 0.39$ ), and benefits and costs of informal work ( $r = 0.49$ ). This variable is also related to a less significant degree to autonomy in managing time ( $r = 0.27$ ), access to health services ( $r = - 0.57$ ) and positive self-concept ( $r = 0.49$ ). The variable was not found to be correlated with marital status ( $r = 0.06$ ), the number of children ( $r = 0.03$ ) or the ability to carry out work ( $r = 0.09$ ).

### 3.3 Benefits and difficulties of engagement in informal work

The main benefits of informal work that individuals identify include the knowledge and experience acquired through the work (29.3%), the income the work generates (24.8%), the independence it offers (24.3%), and the satisfaction that the work brings through contact with other individuals and particularly with clients (21.6%). Significant differences were not found between these benefits ( $X^2 = 1.64$ ;  $\alpha < 0.05$ ) or between the benefits that men and women value from this activity ( $X^2 = 0.91$ ;  $\alpha < 0.05$ ). Differences were found, however, between youth and adults. For youth, income provides the greatest levels of satisfaction; whereas for adults, the nature of the work and the knowledge and experience acquired from the activity are the most valued ( $X^2 = 7.81$ ;  $\alpha < 0.05$ ).

The major difficulties associated with performing informal work include complications associated with scheduling (33.7%), access to work sites (23.4%), the conditions for street work (22.4%), and low incomes (18.4%). Low income was found to be the greatest source of dissatisfaction for men, while scheduling and limited access to work sites represented the greatest source of dissatisfaction among women. No differences were found in this regard between individuals born in Bogota and elsewhere nor across the different academic levels ( $X^2 = 2.74$ ;  $\alpha < 0.05$ ).

Regarding education, the data show a significant difference ( $X^2 = 46.3$ ;  $\alpha < 0.05$ ) between individuals who are not trained to perform their activities (74.7%) compared with those who are trained (26.3%), especially among individuals with university education (16%). It is also more difficult for women to access job training because of their time dedicated to domestic responsibilities and childrearing in particular (Echebarria and Larrañaga 2004).

### 3.4 Practices of income/consumption

The data in Table III show no significant difference ( $X^2 = 1.74$ ;  $\alpha < 0.05$ ) between participants who consider the income obtained through informal labor activity to be insufficient to cover their expenses (46.8%) and those who consider it sufficient (53.2%). However, while there tends to be a difference of opinion between adults and youth ( $X^2 = 3.5$ ;  $\alpha < 0.05$ ), a significant difference was not found between married and single individuals ( $X^2 = 0.48$ ;  $\alpha < 0.05$ ).

Regarding the allocation of resources from informal work, expenses necessary for sustaining the household (39.3%) are most significant ( $X^2 = 14.6$ ;  $\alpha < 0.05$ ) compared to expenses dedicated to housing (15.6%), personal expenses (15.3%), business reinvestment (13.5%), and child or personal education (10.2%). Additionally, differential levels of consumption were found for these variables between adults and youth, as well as between married and single individuals.

Furthermore, upon analyzing the most frequented sites at which these individuals made

purchases, it was found that towns shops, mom-and-pop stores, and supermarkets (40.4%) are frequented significantly more often ( $X^2 = 9.1$ ;  $\alpha < 0.05$ ) than chain department stores and shopping centers (25.2%) and market places (22.2%). These statistics are similar for all of the participant groups. Regarding the consumption of brand-name products, 33.5% of the individuals expressed interest in buying these products, 59.7% did not, and 6.8% reported occasionally buying such products. These preferences are more prominent among single individuals (18.8%) than among married individuals (10.5%).

**Table III.** Income availability shown as percentages

Income versus expenses	Gender		Total	Age			Marital status		
	Male	Female		Youth	Adult	Senior	Single	Married	Cohabita-ting
Sufficient	22.1	17.5	39.6	10.6	21.2	7.3	17.9	17.6	2.5
Not sufficient	23.2	23.6	46.8	7.3	28.2	11.7	19.0	15.1	5.7
Sometimes sufficient	7.1	6.4	3.6	2.9	7.7	2.9	5.0	6.1	1.4

### 3.5 Time management

Eighteen percent of the interviewed individuals follow no work schedule, 28% work five days per week, 18% work six days per week, 29% work seven days per week, and 14.9% work for more than eight hours per week. These schedules are similar between individuals of different marital statuses (single, married, and other). However, work schedules are longer for individuals of lower academic levels than those of higher levels. Additionally, individuals originating from outside of Bogota work longer hours than natives of the city.

Overall, although a high percentage of women (69%) and adults reported having no free time, the data indicate that there is no significant difference ( $X^2 = 1.8$ ;  $\alpha < 0.05$ ) between the number of individuals who consider themselves to have no free time (55.1%) compared to those who report having free time (44.9%).

### 3.6 Access to health services

The data in Table IV show that a significant percentage (52.5%) are affiliated with an insurance group (EPS, in Spanish), while others (34.0%) are assigned to government paid insurance (SISBEN). Only a low percentage (13.5%) do not rely on any health service (Table V). This situation is similar between men and women and between youth and adults, regardless of area of origin. However, affiliation with EPS is more common among individuals with higher levels of formal education than among less-educated individuals.

**Table IV.** Access to health services shown as percentages

Access to health services	Gender		Total	Age			
	Male	Female		Youth	Adult	Senior	Total
None	7.8	5.7	13.5	3.6	7.3	2.2	13.1
SISBEN	19.1	14.9	34.0	4.4	22.5	6.9	33.8
EPS	25.5	27.0	52.5	12.7	27.3	13.1	53.1
Total	52.5	47.5	100.0	20.7	57.1	22.2	100.0

### 3.7 Workplace self-concept

Variables studied with respect to work identity are concerned with an individual's self-perceptions as a worker. Considerations include perceptions of personal strengths, interpersonal relationships, and the degree to which individuals feel that their work is valued.

In assessing these variables, respondents perceive themselves to be good workers (32.3%) (though women more so than men) and responsible and committed (20.5%) while also believing

themselves to be poorly disciplined, persevering, and ambitious. Adults demonstrate a higher level of self-concept than youths ( $X^2 = 8.2$ ;  $\alpha < 0.05$ ), and married individuals exhibit higher self-concept than single individuals ( $X^2 = 6.9$ ;  $\alpha < 0.05$ ). Likewise, individuals from Bogota assess themselves more favorably than those from other areas of the country ( $X^2 = 12.6$ ;  $\alpha < 0.05$ ).

Respondents also perceive that their main strengths lie in their experience and knowledge of the business (28.3%) (being more characteristic of men than women) and in their social abilities while interacting with clients (22.4%). This is followed by perceived strengths in providing love for one's children and family (14.0%).

Participants evaluated their interpersonal relationships as good (72%), normal (15.7%), and regular or bad (12.1%), with a significant difference of ( $X^2 = 41.8$ ;  $\alpha < 0.05$ ). These perceptions are similar between men and women; however, the perception is more positive for adults than for youth as well as being more positive among married individuals than among single individuals or participants of other marital statuses.

Moreover, a significant difference was found ( $X^2 = 45.8$ ;  $\alpha < 0.05$ ) between the percentage of respondents who report feeling well while doing their job (72%) and those who report feeling unwell (15%). These trends are similar across individuals of different ages, marital statuses, geographic origins, and academic levels. Despite this perception, only 54% of individuals would like to continue engaging in the activity that they perform (Table V).

**Table V.** Value attributed to work performance shown as percentages

	Gender		Total	Age			
	Male	Female		Youth	Adult	Senior	Total
<b>Value of work</b>							
Good	36.4	35.7	72.1	15.9	37.7	18.5	72.1
Normal	8.1	4.2	12.4	2.2	9.1	1.4	12.7
Bad	8.1	7.4	15.5	2.5	10.5	2.2	15.2
Total	52.7	47.3	100.0	20.7	57.2	22.1	100.0
<b>Opinions on continuing informal work</b>							
Would like to continue	27.9	26.1	54.1	12.3	27.2	14.9	54.3
Would not like to continue	21.2	19.1	40.3	8.0	26.8	5.4	40.2
Unsure	3.5	2.1	5.7	0.4	3.3	1.8	5.4

Similarly, 57% of the individuals believe that their families support them in performing this type of work. This opinion is shared by both men and women regardless of age, marital status, academic level, or area of origin (no significant difference was found for this perception,  $X^2 = 1.2$ ;  $\alpha < 0.05$ ). Moreover, perceptions of the opinions that friends and individuals passing by in the street have of informal workers were favorable for 67.2% of the participants. This opinion prevailed among both men and women independent of age, marital status, academic level, and area of geographic origin.

In short, regardless of the circumstances in which individuals engage in informal work, individuals who work in this field are satisfied for the following reasons: the ability to rely on family support, work availability and health services (39.7%) and favorable lifestyles (13.4%). However, 19.3% of the respondents are dissatisfied by the fact that their wages are not high enough, while 8.5% do not enjoy the work that they perform. These perceptions are similar for men and women but different between youth and adults and between single and married individuals. Rather, the perceptions of adults and married individuals tend to be more positive, especially in relation to feelings of happiness from family life.

#### 4. Conclusions

The most relevant results generated from the interviews with informal workers are that adults are generally more likely to engage in informal work in response to the demands of the current workplace, which offers fewer opportunities for formal employment. However, as a consequence of the high unemployment rates in the country, youth are also forced to earn an income while waiting



for formal employment, acquiring work experience, or completing their studies. However, while youth tend to view this type of work as temporary prior to placement in formal jobs, individuals over the age of 27 and seniors tend to see their work circumstances as longer term.

The respondents demonstrated positive perceptions of themselves and of their work. This is because informal activities allow these individuals to support their families and contribute to the betterment of others and society. It can thus be concluded that this group of individuals has constructed a positive self-identity that is associated with an appreciation of their abilities regardless of whether others express positive or negative perceptions of them as workers.

Informal work represents more than a mechanism through which basic needs are met; it is a dimension of human expression. Therefore, its relationship to personal and social identity and thus contributions to the conditions of human production and consumption create the foundation for lifestyles and personal and group identity. Through this work, we have attempted, from the perspective of social psychology rather than economics, to contribute to understandings of the realities of workers who perform work in the streets of Bogota.

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