

A Study on Problems of COVID-19 Pandemic in Unorganised Sector with Particular Reference to Street Vendors in Namakkal, Tamil Nadu

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Abstract: *Everyone faced enormous economic hardships as a result of the global Covid-19 outbreak. In terms of livelihood and survival, the epidemic has disproportionately impacted the world's poor population. The street vendors were among the hardest hit, with their livelihoods wrecked in the most unexpected manner. This research looks into how street vendors dealt with the pandemic and the challenges they faced. The current study used a mixed research technique, which included both quantitative and qualitative methods. The primary data was acquired through personal interviews with 85 street vendors using a questionnaire and personal interviews with the street vendors. The study's goals were to look into the business profiles of street vendors and their behaviour during the COVID 19 pandemic, as well as analyse the concerns and challenges that street sellers faced during the lockdown. During the lockout, the majority of street vendors in the poll survived on their savings or loans from private money lenders, according to the findings of the study.*

Keywords: COVID-19 Pandemic, street vendors, business profile, issues, Lockdown

1. Introduction

From March to June 2020, the COVID 19 pandemic, a contagious sickness, prompted a nationwide lockdown. Lockdowns and restrictions on people's movement have a negative influence on the economy as well as the poorest and most disadvantaged citizens of the country. One of the most marginalised groups in society is street vendors. Street vendors, who are part of the informal economy, struggle every day to earn money and meet their basic requirements, and are considered one of society's most vulnerable groups. The epidemic exacerbated the situation of street vendors, since their livelihoods were destroyed and their lack of revenue drove them deeper into poverty. The central and state governments should pay special attention to street vendors since they are members of the impoverished and lower-income groups of society who receive no financial assistance or support and are also vulnerable owing to a lack of information. Street vendors are part of the economy's informal sector, which employed 415.23 million people in 2017-18, accounting for 90% of total employment. Street sellers employ 18.174 million people in this country.

In most Indian cities, people make a living in the informal economy. Poverty and a lack of productive employment in rural areas and small towns force a big number of individuals to the city in search of job and a way of life. These individuals typically have limited abilities and lack the education required for better-paying work in the formal sector. Furthermore, permanent protected jobs in the formal sector are disappearing, making it difficult for even those with the necessary qualifications to find suitable employment. For such people, working in the informal economy is their sole means of surviving. As a result, the informal sector has grown rapidly in most of the largest

cities. (Sharit, K. Bhowmik 1998). Street vending, often known as hawking, is an important part of India's informal economy, catering mostly to urban demand for low-cost goods and services. Despite their economic contribution, vendors are sometimes viewed as disruptive, anti-developmental, filthy, unsightly, and unsanitary. Government authorities frequently target them, harass them, and evict them. Even the Supreme Court has noted that vendors are a "harassed lot" who are "constantly attacked by officials of the local government, the police, and other organizations." (Centre for Civil Society, 2019)

1.1 Definition of Street Vendors

Street vendors as per NATIONAL POLICY OF URBAN STREET VENDORS, 2004 can be defined as "a person who offers goods and services for sale to the public and their customers, who do not have a permanent built-up structure or a building but have a temporary shelter or mobile stall (or head load). Street vendors can also be stationary by occupying space on the pavements or any other private/public areas, or can be mobile in a way that they can move from place to place carrying out their wares on pushcarts or in cycles or baskets on their heads, or may sell their products in moving trains, bus, roads, etc. such as hawkers, pheriwalas, rehri-patriwallas, footpath dukandars, sidewalk sellers, etc."

The First Indian National Commission on Labor (1966-69) defined 'unorganized sector workforce' as – "those workers who have not been able to organize themselves in pursuit of their common interest dues to certain constraints like casual nature of employment, ignorance and illiteracy, small and scattered size of establishments" (INCL 1966-69).

1.2 Problems of Street Vendors

The majority of street vendors are impacted by passing vehicles and pedestrians. Leafy foods vendors tend to stick to one spot; organic product vendors are unable to move because their products are sensitive to the sun, and flower vendors typically sit in one spot so their bloom tying is not disrupted, while vegetable vendors typically meander around on roads, remaining in arbitrary spots. However, they may be exposed to dangers from passing vehicles and hikers.

Other issues that experts have identified include:

- The mode of transportation or working hours of street vendors make life extremely difficult for them, leaving little time for rest and relaxation, which has negative health consequences.
- Their mobility on the main thoroughfare is hampered by increased traffic.
- Pollution affects them in a variety of ways, and road widening has an impact on street sellers.
- During vending, harassment from local officials or police officers. Because their profession is considered unlawful, vendors face a lot of uncertainty and insecurity.
- Vendors are not protected by the government, non-governmental organisations, or labour unions under any labour laws.
- They are insecure as a result of their poor income, sporadic employment, and fluctuating sales. Due to their low income and fluctuating revenue, they are unable to obtain easy financial aid from banks.
- Vendors need some market amenities such as water toilet, storage or shades, waste disposal.
- Sanitation and work place security.

1.3 Informal/Unorganized Sectors in India

Before 1971, the work of the informal or unorganised sectors was referred to as "black market." Keith Hart was the first to coin the term "informal sector." Small self-employed individuals work in the informal industry. In general, people who work in the informal sector do so in cities, with the majority of workers coming from rural areas. One such informal industry is street vendors.

The phrase 'informal sector' is credited to **W. Arthur Lewis'** economic development model, which was intended to depict employment or livelihood generation particularly within the developing countries. Outside of the current industrial sector, it was used to indicate a sort of job that was seen as declining. Another definition uses job security as the criterion, describing informal economy participants as individuals "who do not have employment security, work security, or social security." While all of these definitions suggest a lack of choice or agency in participation in the informal sector, it is also possible that participation is motivated by a desire to evade regulation or taxation. (**Robert L. Tignor 2005**).

The phrase can also be used to describe and account for other types of shelter or living arrangements that are equally illegal, unregulated, or without state protection. As a favoured term for this activity, 'informal economy' is gradually replacing 'informal sector' (Robert L. Tignor 2005).

1.4 Problems of Unorganized Labour

The vast majority of workers are employed in the informal economy. They are expected to face a variety of issues in their daily lives, such as staying very close to their employment, extending working hours on a regular basis, and exploitation and hazardous workplaces.

- Inadequate housing facilities
- Low wages
- A lack of understanding
- Inadequate monetary and non-monetary rewards
- They have no idea about trade unions or labour unions.
- Unemployment
- Wages for women workers are moderate.
- Inadequate employment opportunities owing to contractor fraud
- Job loss owing to a non-material reason is a natural occurrence.
- The prevalence of workplace harassment among working women
- Disease susceptibility
- Cooperative labour

2. Review of Literature

To carry out the dimensions, aspects, and insights from many perspectives, the writers analysed a large number of articles published in magazines, books, newspapers, and reports of various agencies.

Debdual Saha (2011) examined the working lives of street vendors in Mumbai, their financial circumstances, indebtedness, the amount of bribes they must pay, working hours, issues of public space utilisation, and the legal aspects of their activity in his study "working life of street vendors in Mumbai." The main issue that street vendors face is that their profession is unlawful. Street vendors can play an essential role in the urban economy by creating jobs and providing support to both the urban poor and the wealthy. Due to the pressure to pay bribes on a regular basis, the merchants' income has remained stagnant.

In his paper "Legal Protection for Street Vendors," **Sharit k. Bhowmik (2011)** examined how the Supreme Court ordered the government to pass the street vendors Bill, 2009 by June 30, 2011. Significant provisions of the National Policy for Urban Street Vendors are absent from the law. The majority of these small dealers were locals, but some came from further afield. In most cities, "intruders" in public settings are considered a nuisance. Street sellers are seen as a blessing by the urban poor, particularly the working poor. These street vendors sell low-cost food, clothing, and other necessities.

Rakesh Raman (2012) "Agony and anguish on the Streets: Women" is the title of his study. Women vendors of fruits and vegetables in Northern India" looked at women vendors who come from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds and are locked in a scenario marked by illiteracy, a lack of resources, limited chances for progress, and exploitation. They are need to work 12-14 hours every day in order to earn merger amounts. The primarily

unorganised women vendors are completely unprotected in this tiny sum, which is insufficient to make ends meet, let alone assure good rearing of their children and create a decent life for them.

Nasibu Rajabu Mramba (2015) According to the research, Tanzania street vendors, despite their potential for employment, revenue generation, and distribution of reasonably priced goods, do not contribute significantly to economic growth and poverty reduction due to numerous obstacles. Street vending is common, particularly in underdeveloped countries. Despite its importance in pro-poor economics, it has gotten little attention; instead, attention has been placed on its negative consequences, such as the use of public space, traffic, health and safety issues, tax evasion, and the sale of inferior goods.

3. Objectives of the study

- Researching the commercial profile of street vendors and their behaviour during the Covid 19 pandemic.
- Examine the concerns and obstacles faced by street vendors during the lockdown.
- Make recommendations for improving the street vending business plan.

4. Methodology

The study was undertaken in Tamil Nadu's Namakkal area, because it was here when the Covid 19 pandemic initially began in Tamil Nadu. The researcher used a descriptive research study since it accurately portrays the current situation. This study relied solely on survey methodology. The researcher devised an interview plan for gathering information from Namakkal district street sellers. Purposive sampling was used to acquire primary data for the study's purposes. Ten of the 85 interview schedules utilised in this study were eliminated due to inconsistent responses from the respondents, leaving 75 sample respondents for the final analysis.

5. Statement of the Problem

The informal sector, which includes street hawking in emerging nations like India, absorbs the majority of the rising urban unemployed labour force. It creates a large number of job opportunities; it is a source of income for marginalised groups and the urban poor, particularly those who relocate from rural area. Despite its growing importance in the overall economy (particularly for the city's urban poor), policies, regulations, services, infrastructure facilities, and institutional support programmes are not available for street vending, and the environment in which vendors conduct their business is not conducive to their health and well-being. Furthermore, policymakers, decision-makers, and planners do not give street vending the attention that it deserves. . Currently, both the local government and formal business operators are taking strong unfavourable measures and views against street vending. Furthermore, street vendors encounter numerous challenges in their daily operations. As a result, the focus of this research is on the

challenges of the covid-19 epidemic in Namakkal unorganised sector.

6. Results and Discussion

Table 1: Business Profile of the street Vendors

S. No	Profile	Group	Frequency	Percentage
1	Nature of the Ownership	Proprietorship	53	70.6
		Partnership	22	29.3
		Total	75	100
2	Period of doing Business	Below 3 Years	17	22.6
		3 to 6 Years	12	16
		7 to 9 Years	32	42.6
		Above 9 Years	14	18.6
		Total	75	100
3	Daily Working Hours	Below 8 Hours	15	20
		9 to 10 Hours	22	29.3
		Above 10 Hours	38	50.6
		Total	75	100
4	Types of Vendors	Mobile vendors	39	52
		Standard Vendors	36	48
		Total	75	100
5	Types of Business	Flower	18	24
		Fruits	13	17.3
		Vegetables	28	37.3
		Seasonal Product	10	13.3
		Others	6	8
		Total	75	100
6	Mode of handling Product	Pull or Push Carts	34	45.3
		Bike	21	28
		Mini vans	13	17.3
		Goods Carriers	7	9.3
		Total	75	100

Source: Primary Data.

From the above Table 1, it could be understood that,

- Majority (70.6%) of the street vendors are the proprietors of their own business.
- Maximum (42.6 %) of the street vendors are doing this business for 7 to 9 years.
- Majority (50.6%) of the street vendors are working for above 10 hours
- Majority (52%) of them are mobile street vendors.
- Majority (28%) of the street vendors are doing vegetable business.
- Majority (34%) of the mobile street vendors carry goods on pull or push Carts.

Table 2: Problems Faced Due to Covid-19

S. No	Enquiry	Response	Frequency	Percentage
1	During the lockdown did you shut down your business?	Yes	47	62.6
		No	28	37.3
		Total	75	100
2	Due to Lockdown has debit increased?	Yes	56	74.6
		No	19	25.3
		Total	75	100
3	During the lockdown how did you manage to survive your business?	Self-Finance	17	22.6
		Bank Loan	28	37.3
		Relatives and Friends	20	26.6
		Others	10	13.3
		Total	75	100
4	During the lockdown did you more expenses in Transport?	Yes	64	85.3
		No	11	14.6
		Total	75	100

5	During Lockdown did you face low return on Investment	Yes	48	64
		No	27	36
		Total	75	100
6	Do you face difficult to handle police and corporation people	Yes	60	80
		No	15	20
		Total	75	100

Source: Primary Data

In the above table shows that Majority (62.6%) Of the respondents shut down their business during lockdown period of time, and majority (74.6%) of the street vendors their debit is also increase in multiple level, so this is caused only covid-19 pandemic. In this table also revealed majority (37.3%) of the vendors manage their business from borrow bank institution and (26.6%) of the respondents borrow from relative and friends and remaining of the respondents managing their business in own sources and other financial institution. During the covid-19 pandemic situation also affect in many way for instance majority (85.3%) of the street vendors pay more transport charges in import vending goods. In the table also showed that majority (64%) of the street vendors face low rate return their investment because their sales quantity also affect covid-19 pandemic and 80% of the respondents face to difficult handle the police and municipal corporation authority's.

7. Suggestions

- Authorities should issue vendors with licences to safeguard them from harassment and eviction by local authorities.
- Some street vendors are food vendors who have not undergone official training and serve ready-to-eat meals because they are less knowledgeable. Local governments should be required to provide vendor training.
- Vendors will have access to skill training and finance facilities.
- Regular health checkups, health care, and pensions should be offered to vendors as well.
- Authorities should provide vendors with permanent storage structures as well as basic amenities like first aid, drinking water, toilets, garbage collection, and solid waste disposal.
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8. Conclusion

India's economic growth has accelerated dramatically since the reforms, establishing India as one of the world's fastest-growing economies. This classification applies to Tamil Nadu as well. Separated from other social issues such as poverty, health care, and education, the issue of unemployment is also taken seriously. Furthermore, most street sellers are having difficulty wearing masks and using sanitizer, and there is widespread concern about the pandemic Covid 19. As a result, the local government takes the required steps to protect street sellers by ensuring that roadways and drainage systems are kept clean. Moreover, the government has made arrangements to deliver high-quality N95 masks and sanitizer to street vendors in the

study region in order to protect them from the Covid 19 pandemic. It leads to increased street vendor satisfaction with the local ruling authority in Namakkal district.

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