

A STUDY ON SURVIVAL OF STREET VENDORS DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO COIMBATORE CITY

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ABSTRACT

In developing countries like India, the informal sector including street vending absorbs the majority of the urban unemployed growing labour force. It creates a wide employment opportunity; it is a means for income generation for the marginalized groups, and the urban poor especially for those who migrate from the rural area. However, despite its increasing importance in the total economy (especially for urban poor in the city), policies, regulations, services, infrastructure facilities and institutional support programme are not available for the street vending and the environment under which the vendor operate their business are not suitable for their health and wellbeing. In addition to this, there is no proper attention, which is given to street vending by policy makers, decision makers, and planners. Currently, there is even strong negative measures and view prevailing against street vending both by the local government and by the formal business operators. In addition, street vendors face many problems in the course of running their activities. It is therefore, the focus of this study is to assess the survival of street vendors During covid-19 in Coimbatore City.

Key Words: Street Vendors, Covid 19, Socio - Economic Conditions, Attitude

INTRODUCTION

Street vending is a global phenomenon and the most visible aspect of the informal sector. Like other informal sector Street vending is characterized by low level of income, easy of entry, self employed and it like involves large number of people. In cities and towns thought the world millions of people, earn their living by selling wide range of goods and service on the street like fruits, vegetables, readymade garments, shoes, household gadgets, toys, stationery, newspapers and magazines and so on. Street vendors are very important part of the informal sector in the country. It is estimated that there are 40,000 street vendors in the Coimbatore. Out of that only 6,140 have got street vendor card.

Street vending is a global phenomenon and the most visible aspect of the informal sector. Like other informal sector, street vending is characterized by low level of income, easy of entry, self-employed and it involves large number of people. In cities and towns thought the world millions of people, earn their living by selling wide range of goods and service on the street. Despite a general belief that street vending will recede as economies develop and income rise, it is actually on increase in many places. Street vendors are very important part of the informal sector in the country. It is estimated that around 80 percent of the population are engaged in street vending profession. Women form a large segment of street vending in almost every city. Street vending is not only

a source of self-employment to the poor in cities and towns but also a means to provide “affordable” as well as “convenient” services to a majority of the urban population. Street vendors are often those who are unable to get regular jobs in the remunerative formal sector on account of their low level of education and skills. They try to solve their livelihoods problems through their own meagre financial resource. They are the main distribution channel for a large variety of products of daily consumption like fruits, vegetables, readymade garments, shoes, household gadgets, toys, stationery, newspapers and magazines and so on. If they were to be eliminated from the urban markets, it would lead to a severe crisis for fruit and vegetable farmers, as well as small scale industries which cannot afford to retail their products through expensive distribution networks in the formal sector. The importance of this sector cannot be undermined, especially considering that the government does not have the capacity to provide jobs to the millions of unemployed and underemployed people in India. Even the corporate sector is able to absorb only a tiny proportion of our expanding work force. Overall employment in the formal sector is actually declining. This means most people in India have to fend for themselves. People in the informal sector ought to be encouraged to grow and prosper if the governments want to reduce unemployment and poverty in our country. They contribute significant role in local economic growth and development of the urban economies. Public authorities considered street vendors as a nuisance and as encroachers of sidewalks and pavements and do not appreciate the valuable services that street vendors provide to the general population of the world. Street vendors provide valuable services to the urban masses while making out a living through their own enterprise, limited resources and labour. Street vendors have been demanding protection from civic agencies and the state government so they can earn their livelihood without fear.

OBJECTIVE OF STUDY

- To analyze the Survival of Street vendors during covid-19 pandemic in Coimbatore city.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology is a way to systematically solve the research problem. It may be understood as a science of studying how research is done scientifically. It is necessary for the researcher to know not only the research methods/techniques but also the methodology. Thus, the scope of the research methodology is wider than the research methods. This study was conducted in Coimbatore city in Tamil Nadu, India. This study was conducted with the sample size of 120 respondents in Coimbatore city. The Convenient sampling method is adopted to conduct of research.

OVERVIEW OF STREET VENDORS

A street vendor is broadly defined as a person who offers goods for sale to the public at large without having a permanent built up structure from which to sell. Street vendors may be stationary in the sense that they occupy space on the pavements or other public/private spaces or, they may be mobile in the sense that move from place to place by carrying their wares on push carts or in baskets on their heads. In this essay, the term street vendor includes stationary as well as mobile vendors and it incorporates all other local/region specific terms used to describe them.

PROFILE OF THE STUDY

Now a days, the number of street vendors are increasing day by day. The aim of the study is to find out the socio-economic and the psychological condition, and the modes of risks or encountering problems for employment of the street vendors in Coimbatore city. Triangulation research like quantitative and qualitative methods were used by purposive sampling. People are coming in Coimbatore city due to illiteracy, poverty, long time unable to manage a job, labor supply, large family size, and to search for better job opportunities and better living, and administrative purposes, then the displaced and vulnerable people start street vending. This profession is needed very less capital, no educational qualification, no training, easy to start and easy to move.

Female vendors are very few because of patriarchy, religious bindings, unequal power relations, female inferiority, unable to decision making, women’s availability to indoor works where vending is an outdoor work. Besides, it is a very tiresome and arduous job so male are best suited to perform street vending under the scorching sun or rain in the roadside or market area. Most of them are married and live in the slum areas and congested small rooms with too many children which is very unhygienic and congested. Street vendors compete with the other vendors of the city, face difficulties when the municipality and the police force interfere with their business. Their mental stress becomes growing negatively when forced to leave their working place without prior notice. This situation creates both economic and psychological stress for the street vendors. To solve these problems government should provide them a certain place for vending, minimum/interest free loan, license, educational logistics support and to strengthen the social awareness program.

Street vending is most prevalent and very regular phenomena in many developing countries like Bangladesh as well as some developed countries which plays a significant role in urban informal sector by providing a wide range of goods and services to the masses and also generating employment and to eradicate poverty.

THEIR SERVICES

Street vendors are the people who sell various types of goods and services on

- Streets,
- Educational Institutions Like School,
- College and university areas,
- Natural market areas,

where there is the density of office going people, bus stations, railway terminals and platforms, parks and open spaces with a very low cost to the city dwellers. Street vendors are regarded as self-employed workers in the informal sector who offer their labor to sell their goods and services without having any permanent built-up structure (NPUSV 2006). The term 'street vendor' is typically used as 'street trader', 'hawker' and 'peddler'. They are also used many local terms and regional variations (Hasan and Alam 2015).

- Street vendor is defined as hawker, peddler, street vendor, footpath dukandars, sidewalk traders etc.
- They load them in basket or on pushcart, van, wheel barrow or tricycle and moves in selected areas to effect sales.
- Sometimes they announce loudly goods or necessary utensils for sale to attract customers. Many a times they also displayed goods or articles of sale on footpath. Street vendors and hawkers serve the same function for pedestrians, bicyclists and bus users.
- Pedestrians need cobblers on the road to have their footwear fixed, just as much as car owners need tyre repair shops.
- Bicyclists need repair shops for repairing their tyres, chains and pedals fixed.

They sell everything from fresh vegetables to fishes, from fruits to prepared foods, from shoes to garments (Hosen 2018). They help us to save our valuable time for availability with the necessary items or accessories what we need. Every day they serve us with different commodities what we need. In our country many people are not well off in the city so they prefer to buy the goods from street vendors rather than from the shops because they find those goods much cheaper in comparison with the shops. They are occupying almost the whole footpaths and other public places as their vending places. This leads to functional problems of the city and also creates problems for pedestrians. For this reason to solve the problem, sometimes the relevant authorities of the government forced them to stop their business in the street and to leave their vending places without previous notice. Here the vendors have to face a lot of troubles because they are not legal. Some of them are facing problem of eviction and few of them are facing problem of conflict with pedestrians, confiscation of goods and extortion by authority. Sometimes the vegetable vendors leave all of their items in the roads and run to save themselves from the police forces. This causes a huge economic loss for them. They become helpless emotionally and physically. Their families also suffer much. They become jobless instantly and have to lose their hope and items at the twinkling of an eye. This situation drags their families in the roadside sometimes. Again the vendors of the street have to pay different bodies, leaders in the locality in order to run their business there.

Street vendors

A street vendor is a person who offers goods and services for sale to the public without having a permanent built-up structure but with a temporary static structure or mobile stall or carrying by head. Street vendors offer different products and services that can be stationary and occupy space on the pavements or other public/private areas, or can be mobile, and move from place to place carrying their wares on push carts or in cycles or baskets on their heads, or could sell their wares in moving buses (Ahmed, Bhowmik 2005).

Socio-Economic Condition

Socio-economic status (SES) is defined as a measure of one's combined economic and social status and tends to be positively associated with better health. It focuses on the three common measures of socio-economic status: education, income, and occupation (EH Baker 2014).

Psychological Condition

Psychological condition of a person refers to the mental condition of a person which affects the physical soundness of a person.

Present Scenarios of the Street Vendors of Coimbatore City

Street vendors are running their business in Coimbatore city from many years. Vendors engaged in fixed location activities or mobile and semi-mobile activities. Many street vendors are constrained by the unstable socio-economic backgrounds in their families. Almost all of the street vendors start this business due to poverty. Their family size is large and find this business easy to earn something to run the family. Most of the street vendors are male and middle aged group. Female vendors are very few because of patriarchy, norms and responsibilities, religious bindings, unequal power relations, female inferiority, unable to decision making of women, women's availability to indoor works where vending is an outdoor work. Besides, it is a very tiresome and arduous job so male are best suited to perform street vending under the scorching sun or rain in the roadside or market area. Women are seen making *pithas* during the winter season in different area of Coimbatore city. The study reveals that only 21.7% of the street vendors have higher education. For this reason, most of the street vendors fall in trouble frequently to understand any legal rights or the tricks of different authorities who claim bribe to run their business for illiteracy. Most of them are married with having too many children and live in the slum areas and congested small rooms in the Coimbatore city. The slum areas are very unhygienic

and congested. In the city most of them live in the slum area included lack of pure drinking water, sanitation and hygiene. The number of women street vendor is increasing in Coimbatore city. This is why women who do not have other way to meet the subsistence needs of their families enter into the informal sector like street vending. But street vending is a non-traditional and male-dominated job and there is an earning gap between men and women vendors. Social acceptance or recognition or social status of street vendors are very low.

Working Environment of the Street Vendors in Coimbatore City

Most of the street vendors are working in the city under open sky. They have to suffer in the time of rain, scorching sun, and other natural calamities. They are seen always in the public places. Especially in the roadside area they are seen most of the time. They occupy those areas without any legal permission. The places beside roadside are noisy and unhygienic always. Hawkers occupy footpaths to conduct their business; sometimes they also occupy part of the vehicular street. This also seriously hinders the flow of vehicular traffic by creating congestion, delay in reaching destinations, loss of valuable time and money. Such problems are evident in most parts of the city where hawkers conduct businesses and this creates obstruction to the functionality of the city. Considering the working environmental context, many street vendors work long hours at the same site on daily basis while other vendors move to two or more sites to grab the opportunity to sell to different types of customers. Most vendors work as independent self-employed entrepreneurs, either with or without employees (Husain et al. 2015). In Southeast Asia, the average earnings of a vendor may be three to ten times more than the minimum wage and they are often comparable to the wages of skilled laborers' employed in the formal sector (Andringa and Kies, 1989).

Psychological and Health Condition of the Street Vendors of Coimbatore City

The working environment of the street vendors are not well furnished and even don't have any roof of itself. So the place is always unhygienic and unhealthy. In this situation the health of the street vendors is affected by this. They inhale all the dust from the road and vehicles, which affect their health in the long run. Sometimes they are forced to leave their business place with all of their items without prior notice for keeping the city function well. They become helpless and anxious for the coming day. In this situation their mental health can't be sound. Majority of the street hawkers claimed their body pain including legs pain, back pain, neck pain, hands pain, headache, and muscle pain. Most of them complained tiredness and became parched or scorched in the sun. A large portion of respondents suffer from insomnia (disturbance of sleeping), dizziness etc. because of their body pain.

Vending stands are often crude structures, and running water, washing facilities, and toilettes may not be available. In most cases, the vendors do not have adequate washing facilities, and some vendors started their duties without taking a proper bath. Foods and ingredients are also subjected to repeated contamination from unwashed hands and the materials used for wrapping, such as leaves, old newspapers, and reusable polyethylene bags. Moreover, some food handlers washed their hands in the same bucket used for cleaning utensils, which may lead to the faecal contamination. On the other hand, most food vendors operate their business without health certificates or licenses (Khairuzzaman et al. 2014).

Street trading involve small earning, high risk, especially for the fresh vegetable and fruit seller and regular occupational and physical hazard as a result of unhygienic market condition. They also identified that the street vendors are highly exposed to economic downturn and political unrest (Husain et al. 2015, ILO & Weigo 2013).

Challenges of Street Vendors in Coimbatore City

There are lot of challenges and problematic situations which are faced by the street vendors in Coimbatore city. They have no places of their own where they can run their business smoothly. So they have to grab the public places for their business. In this situation they have to face harassment from different government and non-government authorities very often. They have to pay a certain amount daily to different authorities to stay in a certain place. Again they have to keep running their business in an uncertain condition all the time. A lack of capital is the main hindrance in setting up the vending business. In the absence of adequate and sufficient source of fund, vendors are unable to maintain the level of stock and in this process they lose customers and are also unable to meet their own daily needs. The owners of the small businesses are often also might be discouraged to borrow since they know their future stream of income might be lower than their assets (collateral). These businesses also suffer from inefficient managerial skill, lacking risk assurance and transportation problem. They failed to obtain loan from established formal financial institutions due to their failure to meet the obligations to manage the collateral.

Street vendors face unique kinds of livelihood risks because of the legal, physical, and socio-cultural environment in which they work. The most pressing and ongoing risk for many street vendors is the possibility that local government authorities will forcibly remove them from the streets or confiscate their merchandise. This risk of displacement often increases in the context of elections, mega events, or efforts to beautify historic city centers. Just like formal business operators, street vendors are less productive in unstable institutional environments where rules are irregular and unpredictable (Bhowmik 2010, Khairuzzaman et al. 2014). Street traders face more routine occupational hazards as well. The low cost, accessibility, and convenience are the key factors for the growing popularity of street foods. Women play vital role in the street food sector through their direct and/or indirect involvement in the business.

CHI SQUARE TEST
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EDUCATION AND REASON OF
CHOOSING THE PROFESSION
AIM

To check whether there is any significant relationship between education and reason of choosing the profession.

HYPOTHESIS

H1: There is significant mean difference between two variables.

Table 1

Reason for choosing profession of street vendors						
		Regular income	Easy mobility	Family business	No qualification needed	Total
Education status	Illiterate	6	10	5	6	27
	Schooling	5	9	10	7	31
	Degree	7	6	14	6	33
	Others	5	8	6	9	28
Total		23	33	26	28	120

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	9.636 ^a	12	.648
Likelihood Ratio	9.766	12	.636
Linear-by-Linear Association	.483	1	.487
N of Valid Cases	120		

DECISION RULE

The significance value (0.648) is greater than 0.05, therefore H1 is accepted

CONCLUSION

There is a significant relationship between education and reason for choosing profession

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RESIDENCE AND KINDS OF OFFERS GIVEN DURING COVID -19
AIM

To check whether there is any significant relationship between residence and kinds of offers given during Covid -19

HYPOTHESIS

H1: There is significant mean difference between two variables.

Table 2

Residence of the street vendors offers given during covid-19

Offers given during covid-19				
Residence of the Street Vendors		Discount	Buy one get one	Total
	Urban	20	20	40
	Semi urban	22	20	42
	Rural	15	22	37
	Total	57	63	120

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	2.125 ^a	3	.547
Likelihood Ratio	2.514	3	.473
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.312	1	.252
N of Valid Cases	120		

DECISION RULE

The significance value (0.547) is greater than 0.05, therefore H₁ is accepted

CONCLUSION

There is a significant relationship between residence and kinds of offers given during Covid -19

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GENDER AND SAFETY PRECAUTIONS TAKEN BY STREET VENDORS DURING PANDEMIC

AIM

To check whether there is any significant relationship between gender and safety precautions taken by street vendors during pandemic

HYPOTHESIS.

H₀: There is no significant mean different between two variables.

Table 3
Mode of the Shop and Safety Precaution Taken

			Hand sanitizer	Extra hygiene	Social distancing	Insisting on wearing mask	Soap water	Total
Gender of the respondent	Male	1	0	0	0	0	0	
	Female	0	9	14	12	15	44	1
		0	4	5	4	3	10	94
Total		1	13	19	16	18	54	26

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	1.226E2 ^a	10	.000
Likelihood Ratio	13.107	10	.218
N of Valid Cases	121		

DECISION RULE

The significance value (.000) is less than 0.05, therefore H₀ is accepted

CONCLUSION

There is no significant relationship between gender and safety precautions taken by street vendors during pandemic.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MODES OF THE SHOP AND SAFETY PRECAUTIONS TAKEN BY STREET VENDORS DURING PANDEMIC

AIM

To check whether there is any significant relationship between modes of the shop and safety precautions taken by street vendors during pandemic.

HYPOTHESIS

H0: There is no significant mean difference between two variables.

Table 4
Mode of the shop and Safety precaution taken

		Safety Precaution taken						Total
			Hand sanitizer	Extra hygiene	Social distancing	Insisting on wearing mask	Soap water	
Mode of the shop		1	0	0	0	0	0	1
	vegetable	0	1	0	1	1	8	11
	fruits/juices	0	3	3	2	2	9	19
	chat items	0	9	14	6	12	20	61
	fancy items	0	0	0	6	2	9	17
	food stalls	0	0	2	1	1	7	10
	Total	1	13	19	16	18	54	120

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	1.471E2 ^a	30	.000
Likelihood Ratio	42.966	30	.059
N of Valid Cases	121		

DECITION RULE

The significance value (.000) is less than 0.05, therefore H0 is accepted

CONCLUTION

There is no significant relationship between modes of the shop and safety precautions taken by street vendors during pandemic.

CONCLUSIONS

Street vendors form a very important segment of informal sector. Street vendors offer goods and services for sale without having a permanent built up structure to satisfy the demands of urban poor's and urban youth. They ensure the distribution of benefits in favour of the disadvantaged group. The objective of this paper is to identify the socio economic conditions of street vendors during covid-19 and what measures are taken by the Government during the pandemic to street vendors by police and other authorities, improvement in the working conditions, social protection and life skill development to improve the level of profitability. Sometimes the vendors are cheated by the customers or sometimes they are harassed by leaders and other authorities. Street vendors can not maintain their living standard as they faced a number of problems like health hazard, low living standard, illiteracy, poverty and so on .

In most cases, the vendors do not get sufficient pure water, adequate washing facilities, toilet facilities, and some vendors started their duties without taking a proper bath. So government should take necessary steps for providing them pure water, proper sanitation facilities and other amenities for them to upgrade their living standards. Government should take proper planning and steps for creating their business environment. For keeping the city function well there should be some rules and regulations of their

vending business. Some rules should be imposed on the vendors so that they cannot sell the unhygienic foods to the customers. To find out certain places for the vendors where they can run their business smoothly. Government should either provide interest free loan to the street vendors for building up hygienic toilet or ensure proper drainage system to their living area.

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