

Exploring The Reasons For Street Hawking, Challenges & Quality Of Life Of Street Vendors

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Abstract

Street Hawkers/vendors are very common in India. They can be found everywhere and have become a part of life of all cities in countries all over the world. In recent years, there has been a tremendous growth in the number of street hawkers, which has resulted in an increase in the number of employees in India's informal sector. This research was carried out to identify the primary reasons why individuals become involved in the street hawking/vending sector, to highlight the challenges experienced by street hawkers/vendors and to understand their quality of life. In this study, the descriptive research method is applied. Data is collected from 112 respondents using an interview schedule that included a self-structured questionnaire as well as a standardized WHO scale (WHOQOL - Measuring Quality of Life, 2012). The reliability was re-established and found to be 0.812 Cronbach's Alpha. The results of this study indicate that street hawking/vending as a profession was done as a source income and as a means of survival for the working poor. In understanding the challenges experienced by street hawkers/vendors, it was found that this occupation required hard physical labour and lengthy working hours. Bribes from local men, inadequate security for products and exploitation from money lenders were identified as some of the significant challenges by majority of individuals engaged in this trade. In understanding the quality of life of individual research analysis revealed that more than three-fourth stated poor sleep patterns with inadequate money to supplement their daily necessities.

Keywords: Street Hawkers, street vendors, quality of life

1. INTRODUCTION

Street vending is an income-generating activity in which people sell their merchandise to passing pedestrians and vehicles along streets and sidewalks. Street vending is an example of the informal economy, which is the part of a country's economy that works outside of government regulation and protection. Also known as hawking, street sellers such as hawkers and peddlers have long been a feature of the urban landscape. In fact, there has been a barter system where essential goods have been exchanged since ancient times. When monetary money was established, the barter system was supplanted by street vending. Poverty and gainful employment in rural regions and small towns push a huge number of people to the city for work and livelihood in practically all Indian cities, urban/rural poor survive by working in the informal sector. These folks are usually unskilled and uneducated, and they are unable to obtain suitable work. As a result, labour in the informal sector is the only way for many people to make ends meet. This has led to a rapid growth of the informal sector in most of the larger cities, for the urban poor, hawking is one of the means of earning a livelihood, as it requires minor financial input and skills involved are low.

Hawkers are very common in India. They can be found here, there and everywhere. There is hardly any village, town or city without street hawkers. They go from one town to another town and street for selling their articles. Thus, this trade has become a part of the rural/urban scenario for a long time. They have become a part of life of all cities in countries all over the world. Street vending has increased due to the increase in the urban poor. These people are able to procure their basic necessities mainly through hawkers as the goods sold are cheap. Rural unemployment has led to migration of rural poor to urban centers. These migrants find it convenient to involve themselves in street vending as regular employment is not available in formal sectors. Several researchers have talked of the informal sector as

unregistered, unlicensed and as a consequence of the failure of legal framework and government regulations (de Soto 1989, 2000; Feige 1997 and Maloney 2004). And, in recent years, there has been a tremendous growth in the number of street hawkers, which has resulted in an increase in the number of employees in India's informal sector. Though street hawkers comprise a significant element of trade and commercial operations in our economy's informal sector, this unorganized sector of street vendors faces several issues in their day-to-day transactions. Characteristics of the informal sector are based on laws and regulations that bind all formal institutions. It has been observed that labour relations, where they exist, are based on casual employment, kinship or personal or social relations rather than contractual arrangements with formal guarantees (Harriss-White 2004 and Chen 2002). Their major issues are credit and infrastructure inadequacies, a lack of proper space for displaying their goods, harassment by municipal and police officials, sudden eviction from their place of business, non-recognition of their business by the government, an unsanitary environment for vendors, particularly women vendors, and so on.

As far as developing countries are concerned, vast segments of the workforce are less educated and lack requisite capital (Chen 2002, 2007). Therefore, it is easy for them to enter the informal economy. The informal sector is the only sector which enables competition with other actors involved in the same activity without any formal training and education. Hence, it provides a fair chance to survive in this sector. Castells and Portes (1989) and ILO (1972) noted that ease of survival is one of the strong reasons for the existence and expansion of the informal sector as far as the developing countries are concerned. The basic problem of street vendors is thus the absence of their right to exist because this profession is considered as an illegal activity and vendors are thus unlawful

entities. Hence, the researchers felt the need for a scientific study to probe into their day to day challenges, understand the reasons for street hawking and their quality of life.

Review of Literature

Bhat and Aasif Hussain (2013), in their research on "Urban Informal Sector: A Case Study of Street Vendors in Kashmir", noted Shopping and marketing in the traditional Indian sense have always been informal. Display of wares and social interaction are the hallmark of Indian markets as compared to the mechanized and sterilized concept of shopping in the modern market centers and super market structures. From ancient times, hawking and vending have been an integral part of Indian trade and commerce. In this the lives of these street vendors who are regularly offering their service from dawn to dusk in the Kashmir valley is studied. The study revealed that most of the respondents enter into street vending from poor illiterate families and were working seven to ten hours daily. However it is interesting to note that we do not find any significant difference between the earnings of male and women and majority of them were satisfied with their occupation.

Bamigboye Hamilton (2016), in his research sort to address the lives of the hawker as witnessed by many people in the major towns. Analysis revealed the composition of the hawkers regarding their marital status, educational levels and the number of hours that these hawkers carry out their work in a day. Challenges the hawkers face as far as the government was of less importance. Various people have criticized hawker's relationship with the government. The government has been adamant in legalizing the hawking business, but this report has come out with the underlying benefits of the hawking industry if well established and promoted by the government.

Jaishankar and Sujatha (2017). Conducted a study on Problems Faced by the Street Vendors in Tiruchirappalli City. The study

denoted that 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.

Shweta Sharma (2018), further highlighted, the National Policy on Urban Street Hawkers (NPUSV) which was passed in 2009 that it mandatory for all the master plans of cities/ towns to demarcate an area for hawkers to carry out their daily activities. The policy advocated that spatial planning should take into account the natural propensity of street hawkers to locate in certain places at certain times in response to the patterns of demand for their goods/services and thereby make hawking zone, restricting hawking zones and no hawking zones in cities. Quantitative space norms were mentioned whereby it was mentioned that there is a need to fix space norms for hawking at both city/zonal development plan and local/layout plan levels, but these quantitative norms were left open ended to be worked out by each city/ town. In India, the Largest concentration of street vendors in Mumbai has 0.25 million, followed by Kolkata is having 0.2 million street vendors. This informal activity offers employment opportunities and livelihoods for urban weak, but the urban local authorities consider it to be an illegal activity. As per National Policy on the Urban Street Vendor, 2004 and 2009, Model Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihoods and Regulation of Street Vending) Bill, 2009-

some initiatives are taken by the government. Other agencies, such as NASVI and SEWA, have played significant roles in encouraging suppliers to develop policies for street vendors (Bhasker Bhatt, 2018).

Manickavasagam (2018), noted that 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 meager 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 introduction and literature review thus paves way to better comprehend the informal sector and the harsh realities that come with it. However, there is a lacuna of research on why street hawking and vending remain a much sort after profession. Though obstacles have been highlighted in various studies, it is still unknown how such challenges affect the quality of life of those involved in this sector. As a result, this research was carried out to identify the primary reasons why individuals become involved in the street hawking/vending sector, to highlight the challenges experienced by street hawkers/vendors and to understand their quality of life.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

In this study, the descriptive research method is applied. It investigates the several elements that contribute to the motives for street hawking, as well as the challenges and quality of life of street hawkers in Tirupattur, Tamil Nadu, India. The researchers sought to apply the census approach, which included based on official data, capturing the whole compositions of street hawkers/vendors, however, it was found that such records were out of date and lacked detailed parameters regarding the study's target segment. Therefore, the purposive sampling method was adopted. As a result, the researchers travelled throughout the neighbourhood looking for street hawkers and vendors, gathering information from 112 respondents using an interview schedule that included a self-structured questionnaire as well as a standardized WHO scale (WHOQOL - Measuring Quality of Life, 2012). Both of the aforementioned instruments were in English and had to be translated into Tamil, the local language. The reliability was re-established and found to be 0.812 Cronbach's Alpha. The data was imported into SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences V.21) and analyzed using a range of statistical tests, with the findings given in the form of tables and diagrams below.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Every activity in this world has a purpose. Similarly, there must be a motive for street hawkers/vendors to seek a career in this field. According to studies, some individuals work because it is required of them, while others work because they enjoy what they do. As a result, there should be some influencing or favourable aspect in selecting this business. Table 1, denotes the influential or conducive factor for street hawking/vending.

Table 1: Influential/Conductive Factors for Street Hawking/Vending

<i>Influential/Conductive Factors</i>	<i>Frequency (n:112)</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
<i>Easy to venture</i>	8	7.1
<i>Interest and Experience in the same line</i>	8	7.1
<i>Needs no education and special skills</i>	13	11.6
<i>Easy availability of raw materials</i>	6	5.4
<i>low cost of investment</i>	12	10.7
<i>Availability of finance</i>	6	5.4
<i>Less Competition</i>	9	8.0
<i>Large number of customers</i>	6	5.4
<i>To be independent</i>	32	28.6
<i>Suggestion by friends and relatives</i>	12	10.7

According to the table above, more than one-fourth of the respondents (28.6 percent) did street hawking/vending to supplement their income and as fact to be independent. More than a tenth of pursued this business because this trade required no formal education. It was also inferred that almost the same proportion of respondents took to the trade as a result of the suggestions they received from their family and friends. In understanding the presented analysis, it is also evident that less than one-tenth of the respondents inferred that, street hawking/vending was an easy to venture trade, which required less finance and had less competition from other types of business. Salient findings further

suggested, that this was sort of a family trade with gained on the mindset and interests of the individuals. The ease and availability of raw materials and the target of a lager customer base were also some of the influential and conductive factors that facilitated individuals to pursue this career.

This study further sought to identify the compulsive features of street hawking/vending in accordance with the findings from Table 1, which reflected the influential/conductive variables for street hawking/vending. Table 2 was prepared to go more into the bleak realities that have transpired behind the scenes of those pursuing street hawking/vending.

Table 2: Compulsive Factors for Street Hawking/Vending

<i>Compulsive Factors</i>	<i>Frequency (n:112)</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
<i>Poverty</i>	41	36.6
<i>Sole bread winner</i>	27	24.1
<i>Loss in the previous job</i>	16	14.3
<i>Lack of employment opportunities</i>	18	16.1
<i>Family business</i>	10	8.9

Table 2 illustrates that more than a third of the respondents (36.6 percent) participate in street hawking/vending as a means of survival for the working poor. The principal or single source of income in a home is referred to as the breadwinner. Breadwinners provide the majority of home income, cover the majority of household costs, and provide financial assistance for

their dependents. According to the data, less than one-fourth (24.1 percent) of respondents were the sole breadwinners for their families. According to the Indian government, 31 million people were unemployed in India as of September 2018. (Times of India, 2021). Because Indian labour laws are inflexible and restrictive, and its infrastructure is weak, the

fundamental reason for India's unemployment crisis is a lack of skill-based education in schools and universities. Drawing conclusions from both tables 1 and 2, it is underlined here that more than one-tenth (16.1 percent) of respondents

were engaged in street hawking/vending due to a lack of employment opportunities in the country. It can be further observed that less than a tenth (8.9 percent) denoted that this profession was their family business.

Table 3.1: Problems in Street Hawking/Vending

<i>a) Work related problems</i>	<i>Low (%)</i>	<i>High (%)</i>
<i>Problem of storage and stock</i>	47.3	52.7
<i>Problem in getting minimum profit</i>	49.1	50.9
<i>Competition from other hawkers/vendors</i>	28.6	71.4
<i>Involves hard physical work</i>	14.3	85.7
<i>Health, hygiene & sanitation problems</i>	39.3	60.7
<i>Problem of drinking water facility</i>	38.4	61.6
<i>Shrinking space for vending</i>	26.8	73.2
<i>Long working hours</i>	17.9	82.1
<i>No place to dispose waste</i>	44.6	55.4

Factors affecting the daily work of street hawkers/vendors are presented in Table 3.1. The data reported here shows that this occupation required hard physical effort and lengthy working hours, with a vast majority of (85.7 percent and 82.1 percent) indicating the same. Constraints on adequate locations for street hawking (73.2 percent) and competition from other hawkers/vendors (71.4 percent) were

identified as important challenges in their daily job. Individuals engaged in street hawking and vending also indicated a lack of access to drinking water and sanitation, as indicated by the majority (60.7 percent) of respondents. An equal proportion (50 percent and above) of respondents reported stock, storage, and profit-minimization challenges.

Table 3.2: Problems in Street Hawking/Vending

<i>b) Social Problems</i>	<i>Low (%)</i>	<i>High (%)</i>
<i>Disrespect from public</i>	59.0	41.0
<i>Cheated by public</i>	60.7	39.3
<i>Exploitation by Money Lenders</i>	34.8	65.2
<i>Constant threat of eviction</i>	50.0	50.0
<i>Levy of fine by Municipal Authorities</i>	50.0	50.0
<i>Family Stress</i>	34.8	65.2
<i>Bribes by local men</i>	24.1	75.9
<i>Bribes by local authorities</i>	43.7	56.3
<i>Low Security for Goods</i>	30.4	69.6

This table highlights the social issues and harassment that street hawkers/vendors face on a daily basis. Bribes from local men (75.9 percent), inadequate security for products (69.6 percent), and exploitation from money lenders were identified as some of the significant challenges by majority of respondents. The study found that those involved in street hawking and vending experienced family stress, with the

majority (65.2 percent) revealing high levels family pressure and strain. More than half (56.3 percent) of the respondents also highlighted that they faced issues in bribing local authorities on a regular basis. This was further supported by the fact that 50.0 percent of respondents claimed to have been harassed by the municipal officials, who threatened them with eviction and penalties on a regular basis. Disrespect

from the general public (41.0 percent) and being scammed by the community (39.3 percent) were two of the study's least-

mentioned societal issues in relation to the problems with street hawking and vending.

Table 4: Quality of life of Street Hawkers/Vendors

<i>Quality of life (WHOQOL- BREF)</i>	<i>Low (%)</i>	<i>High (%)</i>
<i>How would you rate your quality of life?</i>	70.5	29.5
<i>How satisfied are you with your health?</i>	68.7	31.3
<i>To what extent do you feel that physical pain prevents you from doing what you need to do?</i>	50.0	50.0
<i>How much do you need any medical treatment to function in your daily life?</i>	44.5	55.5
<i>How much do you enjoy life?</i>	60.7	39.3
<i>To what extent do you feel your life to be meaningful?</i>	61.8	38.2
<i>How well are you able to concentrate?</i>	58.0	42.0
<i>How safe do you feel in your daily life?</i>	53.9	46.1
<i>How healthy is your physical environment?</i>	51.4	48.6
<i>Do you have enough energy for everyday life?</i>	50.2	49.8
<i>Are you able to accept your bodily appearance?</i>	60.3	39.7
<i>Have you enough money to meet your needs?</i>	77.7	22.3
<i>How available to you is the information you need in your daily life?</i>	66.1	33.9
<i>To what extent do you have the opportunity for leisure activities?</i>	87.5	12.5
<i>How well are you able to get around physically?</i>	41.6	58.1
<i>How satisfied are you with your sleep?</i>	75.9	24.1
<i>How satisfied are you with your ability to perform your daily living activities?</i>	59.8	40.2
<i>How satisfied are you with your capacity for work?</i>	56.2	43.8
<i>How satisfied are you with yourself?</i>	59.8	40.2
<i>How satisfied are you with your personal relationships?</i>	46.4	53.6
<i>How satisfied are you with your sex life?</i>	61.1	38.9
<i>How satisfied are you with the support you get from your friends?</i>	68.7	31.3
<i>How satisfied are you with the conditions of your living place?</i>	53.8	46.2
<i>How satisfied are you with your access to health services?</i>	61.5	38.5
<i>How satisfied are you with your transport?</i>	53.9	46.1
<i>How often do you have negative feelings such as blue moods, despair, anxiety or depression?</i>	36.6	63.4

In recent years, quality of life instrument have been acknowledged as very important in the evaluation of individual's perception of their position in life in the context of the culture and value systems in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns (Shahrum Vahedi, 2010). The WHOQOL-BREF is one of the most well-known instruments for intra- and

inter comparisons of quality of life, and thus the same was used in this study to examine the quality of life of street hawkers/vendors. According to data from table 4, a significant majority (87.5 percent) of respondents reported that they had no time for leisure activities. More than three-fourth (75.0 percent and above) said they didn't get enough sleep and didn't have

enough money to supplement their daily necessities. When asked 'how would you rank your life?' nearly three-fourth (70.5 percent) indicated a low rating. A sizable majority (68.7 percent) denoted a low level of satisfaction with regard to their health and the support they receive from their friends respectively.

The data also shows that the majority (63.4 percent) of respondents engaging in street hawking and vending expressed strong negative emotions such as despair, anxiety, or depression. This was further reinforced by the majority (61.8 percent) admitting that their life had no purpose. Findings further reveal, inadequate access to health services (61.5 percent), lower satisfaction with one's sex life (61.1%), and an unsatisfactory quality of happiness among individuals engaging in street hawking and vending. Majority of responders (60.3 percent) expressed unhappiness with their physical appearance. More than half of the participants in the survey expressed dissatisfaction with themselves, lesser satisfaction in performing daily activities and low levels of concentration. The need for medical treatment (55.5 percent), an unsafe working environment (53.9 percent), dissatisfaction with one's lifestyle (53.8 percent), a lack of energy (50.2 percent), and the extent to which physical pain prevents one from doing what is required (50.0 percent) all contributed to the poor quality of life of those working in this field.

4. CONCLUSION

The results of this study indicate that street hawking/vending as a profession was done as a source income and as a means of survival for the working poor. Drawing conclusive data from both tables 1 and 2, it is evident that more than a tenth of respondents engaged in street hawking/vending due to a lack of employment opportunities in the country. In understanding the challenges

experienced by street hawkers/vendors, it was found that this occupation required hard physical labour and lengthy working hours. Bribes from local men, inadequate security for products and exploitation from money lenders were identified as some of the significant challenges by majority of individuals engaged in this trade.

In understanding the quality of life of individual in this profession, research analysis revealed that more than three-fourth stated poor sleep patterns with inadequate money to supplement their daily necessities. A sizable majority denoted a low level of satisfaction with regard to their health and further revealed that individuals engaging in street hawking and vending expressed strong negative emotions such as despair, anxiety, or depression. Thus the research undertaken provides meaningful insights and useful information to better understand the grim realities surrounding this profession.

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