

THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF STREET VENDORS IN TIRUPATTUR TOWN AT TIRUPATTUR DISTRICT

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***Abstract:** Street vending refers to the selling of goods or services in public places without the use of permanent built structures. Vendors typically operate on streets, sidewalks, pavements, and other public spaces, either as stationary sellers or mobile hawkers. The Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014 provides a formal definition and legal framework for the protection and regulation of street vendors in India. Street vending is not merely an economic activity but also a socio-cultural phenomenon, reflecting local consumption patterns, traditional skills, and community interactions. It contributes significantly to employment generation, urban food security, and economic inclusivity. However, due to its informal nature, it is often excluded from formal economic statistics and policy frameworks.*

The Tirupattur town comprises various commercial hubs such as bus stands, weekly markets, roadside commercial stretches, and areas near educational institutions and hospitals, where street vending is highly concentrated. Vendors in Tirupattur deal in a variety of goods including fruits, vegetables, garments, street food, and household items. The socio-economic composition of the town includes a mix of middle-income households, daily wage workers, and small-scale entrepreneurs, which creates a steady demand for low-cost goods and services offered by street vendors. The study area thus provides a relevant setting to analyze the socio-economic conditions and challenges faced by street vendors in a semi-urban context.

1. INTRODUCTION

Street vending represents one of the most visible and vibrant components of the informal sector in developing economies like India. It serves as a crucial source of

livelihood for millions of urban poor who lack access to formal employment opportunities due to limited education, skills, or capital. In smaller towns such as Tirupattur, street vending plays a dual role by not only sustaining the livelihoods of vendors but also meeting the daily consumption needs of local residents through affordable goods and services.

The informal nature of street vending allows for ease of entry, low initial investment, and flexible working hours, making it an attractive occupation for migrants, women, and economically marginalized groups. However, despite their contribution to the urban economy, street vendors often operate in precarious conditions characterized by income instability, lack of social protection, and vulnerability to eviction and harassment by authorities.

In recent years, policy interventions have been introduced to recognize and regulate street vending, yet the implementation at the grassroots level remains uneven. Therefore, it becomes essential to examine the socio-economic conditions of street vendors in specific local contexts. This study attempts to provide an in-depth analysis of the socio-economic status of street vendors in Tirupattur town, focusing on their income, living conditions, occupational challenges, and access to institutional support.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Street vendors in Tirupattur town face numerous socio-economic challenges that affect their livelihood and quality of life. One of the primary issues is income instability, as their earnings depend on daily sales, seasonal demand, and external factors such as weather conditions and local regulations. The lack of access to formal financial institutions often forces vendors to rely on informal credit sources with high interest rates. Another major problem is the absence of legal recognition and secure vending spaces. Many vendors operate without licenses, making them vulnerable to eviction, fines, and harassment by local authorities. Inadequate infrastructure such as lack of proper sanitation, storage facilities, and shelter further complicates their working conditions. Social issues such as poor housing, limited access to education and healthcare, and lack of social security schemes also contribute to their overall vulnerability. Despite the existence of policies like the Street Vendors Act, their

effective implementation remains a challenge at the local level. Given these issues, there is a pressing need to systematically examine the socio-economic status of street vendors in Tirupattur town to identify key problems and suggest practical solutions.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To examine the demographic characteristics such as age, gender, education, and family size of street vendors.
- To analyze the income levels, savings patterns, and expenditure behavior of street vendors.
- To identify the occupational challenges such as competition, harassment, and lack of infrastructure.

4. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study is confined to street vendors operating within the geographical limits of Tirupattur town. It focuses on key socio-economic variables such as income, education, occupation, family background, and access to welfare schemes. The study covers different categories of vendors, including food vendors, fruit sellers, garment vendors, and others. The findings of the study are expected to provide valuable insights into the living and working conditions of street vendors and contribute to policy formulation and academic research in the field of informal sector economics.

5. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study holds both academic and practical significance. From an academic perspective, it contributes to the existing literature on informal sector economics by providing empirical evidence from a semi-urban setting. It also helps in understanding the dynamics of street vending as a livelihood strategy. From a policy perspective, the study provides insights that can assist local authorities, policymakers, and urban planners in designing inclusive policies for street vendors. It highlights the need for improved implementation of existing laws, better infrastructure, and enhanced access to financial and social security services. Furthermore, the study emphasizes the role of street vendors in promoting inclusive economic growth and reducing urban poverty.

6. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The present study aims to examine the socio-economic status of street vendors in Tirupattur using a structured and scientific approach. This chapter describes the research design, data sources, sampling techniques, tools of analysis, and other methodological aspects adopted in the study. This Study adopts a descriptive research design to describe the demographic profile, income levels. Living conditions and occupational characteristics of street vendors. Data forms the core of this study and is collected directly from street vendors through Structured questionnaires and Personal interviews. This enables the researcher to obtain first-hand and reliable information regarding socio-economic conditions, income, and occupational challenges. The study uses a combination of: Simple Random Sampling – to ensure representativeness and Convenience Sampling – due to the absence of a formal sampling frame in the informal sector. The sampling unit consists of individual street vendors operating in Tirupattur town, including vendors dealing in food items, fruits, vegetables, garments, and other goods. The sample size for the study is 60 respondents (final size to be specified based on field survey). The collected data is analysed using appropriate statistical tools to achieve the objectives of the study. Percentage Analysis to describe socio-economic characteristics.

7. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

According to **Bhowmik (2012)**, street vending is predominantly undertaken by individuals from economically weaker sections, with a higher concentration of middle-aged individuals who possess limited formal education. The study also highlights that low literacy levels restrict vendors' ability to access formal employment opportunities. A study by **Mitullah (2003)** found that street vending is gender-sensitive, with women vendors often facing additional socio-cultural constraints while balancing household responsibilities. Similarly, Roever and Skinner (2016) observed that female street vendors tend to earn less than their male counterparts due to restricted mobility and limited access to high-traffic vending locations.

In the Indian context, **Srivastava (2017)** noted that most street vendors belong to large family units, where multiple dependents rely on a single income earner. The study further emphasized that demographic characteristics directly affect income generation, savings capacity, and overall socio-economic well-being. Income instability is one of the defining features of street vending. **Chen et al. (2014)** reported that street vendors typically earn low and irregular incomes, which fluctuate based on seasonality, location, and demand conditions. This irregularity often results in limited savings and high vulnerability to economic shocks.

Bromley (2000) highlighted that street vendors operate with minimal capital and rely heavily on daily earnings to meet consumption needs. As a result, their savings patterns are weak, and they often depend on informal credit sources with high interest rates. Similarly, **Banerjee et al. (2025)** emphasized that financial insecurity among informal workers restricts their ability to invest in business expansion and adopt sustainable economic practices.

A study by **Kumar and Singh (2018)** found that expenditure patterns of street vendors are primarily concentrated on essential needs such as food, housing, and education, leaving little scope for savings or asset accumulation. The authors also noted that income variability significantly influences consumption behavior and financial planning.

The living conditions of street vendors are often characterized by inadequate housing, poor sanitation, and limited access to basic amenities. According to **UN-Habitat (2016)**, informal workers, including street vendors, are more likely to reside in slum areas with insufficient infrastructure and public services. **Bhowmik (2010)** observed that a significant proportion of street vendors live in temporary or semi-permanent housing, lacking access to clean drinking water, sanitation facilities, and healthcare services. This adversely affects their health and productivity.

In a study conducted by **Singh and Saha (2019)**, it was found that poor living conditions contribute to a cycle of poverty, as vendors are unable to improve their socio-economic status due to limited access to essential services. The study also emphasized the need for integrated urban planning to address these issues. Street vendors face numerous occupational challenges that hinder their economic stability.

One of the major issues is intense competition due to the high number of vendors operating in limited spaces. According to **Crossa (2009)**, competition often leads to price undercutting and reduced profit margins.

Harassment and eviction by local authorities remain critical concerns. **Roever (2014)** highlighted that despite policy frameworks, many vendors continue to face forced evictions and confiscation of goods. The lack of legal recognition and secure vending spaces exacerbates their vulnerability. Furthermore, lack of infrastructure such as storage facilities, shelter, and proper vending zones affects their efficiency and income levels. **Skinner (2008)** pointed out that inadequate urban planning fails to accommodate the needs of informal workers, leading to conflicts between vendors and authorities.

Government initiatives such as the Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014 aim to protect the rights of street vendors and regulate their activities. However, awareness and implementation remain limited. A study by **Saha (2011)** revealed that a majority of street vendors are unaware of government schemes and legal provisions designed for their benefit. Even among those who are aware, procedural complexities and bureaucratic barriers hinder effective utilization.

Recent studies have also examined schemes like PM SVANidhi, which provide micro-credit support to street vendors. According to **Raj and Das (2021)**, while such schemes have the potential to improve financial inclusion, their reach is limited due to lack of awareness and digital literacy. **Banerjee et al. (2025)** further emphasized that strengthening institutional support and improving awareness can significantly enhance the socio-economic conditions of informal workers.

8. RESEARCH GAP OF THE STUDY

The informal sector plays a crucial role in employment generation and poverty alleviation in developing countries. Street vending, as a major component of this sector, has attracted increasing academic attention due to its socio-economic significance. Several studies have examined different dimensions of street vendors'

lives, including demographic characteristics, income patterns, living conditions, occupational challenges, and access to welfare schemes.

Although several studies have examined street vending in metropolitan cities, there is a lack of empirical research focusing on semi-urban areas such as Tirupattur. Most existing studies concentrate on individual aspects such as income or occupational challenges, with limited integration of demographic, economic, and social dimensions.

Moreover, there is insufficient evidence on the effectiveness of government welfare schemes at the local level. Therefore, the present study attempts to fill this gap by providing a comprehensive analysis of the socio-economic status of street vendors in Tirupattur town.

9. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The majority of street vendors (30.0%) belong to the age group 36–45 years, indicating dominance of economically active middle-aged individuals. Street vending is male-dominated (63.3%), though a significant proportion of females (36.7%) participate in the informal sector. A large proportion of respondents have low educational attainment. A considerable proportion (20.0%) earn below ₹10,000, highlighting income vulnerability. Savings levels are very low, with 30.0% having no savings and 36.7% saving less than ₹2,000. Formal savings through banks (33.3%) are slightly higher, but reliance on informal systems like chit funds (23.3%) remains significant.

Street vending is highly competitive, with 46.7% facing moderate and 36.6% facing high competition. A majority (63.3%) have experienced harassment from authorities, indicating insecurity in occupation. The major occupational problem is competition (33.3%), followed by lack of infrastructure (28.3%). A large majority (70.0%) lack secure vending spaces, exposing them to eviction risks.

A majority are not aware of government welfare schemes, indicating poor outreach. Legal awareness is low, with unaware of the Street Vendors Act, 2014. Only 30.0% of respondents have utilized government schemes, showing a gap between

awareness and access. The major barriers to utilization include Lack of awareness, Complex procedures and Lack of documentation

10. SUGGESTIONS

Government agencies should conduct regular awareness campaigns, workshops, and street-level outreach programs to educate vendors about available welfare schemes. Information should be disseminated through local language pamphlets, mobile apps, and social media platforms for better reach. Collaboration with local bodies, NGOs, and vendor associations can enhance awareness and participation.

The process of accessing government schemes should be simplified by reducing documentation requirements and bureaucratic delays. Introduction of single-window systems for registration and scheme benefits can improve accessibility. Digital platforms should be made user-friendly and accessible to low-literacy populations.

Municipal authorities should allocate designated vending zones with legal recognition to reduce eviction risks. Implementation of the Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014 should be strengthened to ensure vendor protection. Issuing identity cards and licenses can provide legal security and stability. Establishment of common vending markets with proper facilities can improve working conditions and hygiene standards. Encourage vendors to adopt formal banking systems instead of relying on informal sources like chit funds. Ensure inclusion of vendors under schemes like PMJDY, PMJJBY, PMSBY, and PM-SVANIDHI. Promote universal social protection coverage for informal sector workers. Local governments should actively involve vendor representatives in decision-making processes.

11. CONCLUSION

The present study examined the socio-economic conditions of street vendors, focusing on their demographic profile, income, savings, living conditions, occupational challenges, and awareness of government welfare schemes. The findings reveal that street vendors largely belong to economically vulnerable sections, characterized by low levels of education, moderate but unstable income, and limited savings capacity. Their expenditure is primarily directed towards basic necessities,

leaving little scope for financial security or investment. In terms of living conditions, a significant proportion of vendors reside in semi-pucca or kutcha houses with inadequate access to sanitation and other basic amenities, indicating a modest standard of living. Despite their crucial role in urban informal economies, they continue to face multiple hardships that affect both their livelihood and well-being.

Furthermore, the study highlights serious occupational challenges, including intense competition, lack of infrastructure, insecurity of vending spaces, and frequent harassment by authorities. A major concern identified is the low level of awareness and utilization of government welfare schemes, primarily due to lack of information, procedural complexities, and documentation barriers. The results emphasize the urgent need for effective policy implementation, improved infrastructure, financial inclusion, and awareness initiatives to enhance the livelihood conditions of street vendors. Overall, the study underscores that a comprehensive and inclusive approach is essential to empower street vendors and integrate them into the broader framework of sustainable urban development.

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