

Social Inclusion of Street Vendors in Market Economy: A Study with Reference to Visakhapatnam District, Andhra Pradesh, India

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ABSTRACT

Street vending has been a widespread practice for countless centuries around the world. It represents the most apparent manifestation of informal industry across various sectors within our nation. Street vendors encounter numerous challenges due to their vulnerable status. This form of vending is a crucial component of the unregulated sector in all regions globally. Additionally, it creates economic opportunities for marginalized individuals, including women, minorities, and people with disabilities, who often encounter obstacles to securing formal employment in their countries. As a result, street vending is typically associated with low-income levels, minimal barriers to entry, unskilled labour, and self-employment, attracting a significant number of participants. In developing nations, including India and specifically in the state of Andhra Pradesh, millions of people generate income and sustain their livelihoods by selling a diverse array of goods and services on the streets.

In May 2006, India's National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganized Sector (NCEUS) defined the concept of a street vendor in its national policy on urban street vendors. A street vendor is described as an individual who sells goods or services to the public without a permanent building or a temporary structure. This policy document encompasses all types of urban vendors, including both traders and service providers, whether they are stationary or mobile stall, and extends to include hawkers, footpath sellers, sidewalk traders, and others. The idea of 'street vendors' has emerged as a crucial aspect of urban identity, embodying the very essence of the city. Nevertheless, we remain far from fully embracing this phenomenon, which is both economically and socially integral to our urban culture in both developed and developing contexts. Conceptually, street vendors play a key role in the informal economy of cities. They constitute a substantial portion of employment within the informal sector. However, street vendors encounter numerous obstacles and prejudices from local government officials as well as in urban policies and regulations.

However, many street vendors in Visakhapatnam originate from outside the city, primarily selling agricultural products, fruits, and vegetables, etc. They strive to live with dignity and self-respect through their hard work. As a result, Visakhapatnam is a growing city, bolstered by its port, industrial sector, educational institutions, and ample opportunities for employment. This has led many rural workers to migrate there, and as is typical in developing cities, the influx of labour creates pressure on urban infrastructure and resources.

Keywords: vending; manifestation; vulnerable; marginalized; unregulated; encompasses; Phenomenon; encounter; prejudices; infrastructure.

***“If Free Society Cannot Help the Many Who Are Poor, It Cannot Save
The Few Who Are Rich”***

John F. Kennedy

Introduction:

The world Population in the year 2024 is 8.16 billion and the degree of urbanization worldwide was nearly 57 percent and 4.4 billion inhabitants live in cities. With more than 80 percent of global GDP generated in cities. In year 2024, India's population is stood first rank in the world with 145 crores and urban population is 36.6 percent. Informal employment is dominating in the urban area with 80 percent of the workers under informal arrangement (NSO, 2019). 50 percent of the country's GDP comes from informal sector. Street vendors comprise 4.2 percent of total employment in the urban economy (Raveendran and Joann, 2020). As per the Ministry of Urban Development and Poverty Alleviation, 10 million vendors in India contribute to 50 percent of country's savings, and 63 percent of the country's GDP comes from vendors. It constitutes such an important segment of Indian informal economy which cannot be ignored. One of the characteristic features of this section of society is that they work with very small capital base. They are identified as self-employed workers in the informal sector who offer their labour to sell goods and services on the street without having any permanent built-up structure (National Policy on Urban Street Vendors NPUSV, 2006).

Street vending is a vital component of the informal economy in many developing countries, providing livelihoods to millions of urban poor. In India, this sector is particularly significant, reflecting the country's enormous socio-economic diversity and challenges. According to Bhowmik (2010), street vendors constitute a significant portion of the urban workforce, yet they often face numerous socio-economic challenges. These challenges include low income, lack of education, health issues, and inadequate support from government and organizations (Chakraborty and Karmakar, 2016). The informal nature of their work makes them vulnerable to exploitation and harassment, as well as exclusion from social security and health benefits (Singh, 2017). Despite these adversities, street vendors have developed various strategies to survive and sustain their livelihoods, often relying on community networks and informal support systems. In most countries, many people earn their livelihood wholly or partly by selling a wide range of goods and services on the streets, side-paths and other public spaces (Bhowmik, 2005). In India, street vending is not just an economic activity but a socio-cultural phenomenon. It reflects the vibrancy and resilience of the urban poor, who navigate a complex web of socio-economic challenges to sustain their livelihoods. Street vendors in India often operate in challenging conditions, facing daily uncertainties related to their income, legal status, and physical well-being.

Status of Street Vendors in India:

Street vending is not only important but also one of the most visible occupations in the urban informal sector in India. The street vendors constitute important segment in the bottom of the pyramid of economy. They need not necessarily belong to the urban population since beginning. Lack of livelihood sources coupled with poverty in the rural area forces poor people to migrate to cities and settle as street vendors. This could be due to lack of education and necessary skill required to get a formal sector employment. Number wise, street vendors are believed to be more in poorer countries and are more concentrated in

urban areas.

Government Support:

Indian government enacted the Street Vendors Bill in 2013 to safeguard the rights of street vendors. This legislation aims to legitimize the right of street vendors to sell their goods. The Act was established in accordance with Article 14 of the Indian Constitution, which ensures the right to equality, and Article 19 (1) (g) of Indian constitution gives its citizen a fundamental right to practice any profession, or to carry on any occupation, trade or business. Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act was enacted in 2014. Section 33 specifies that the provisions of this Act shall take precedence over any other existing laws or regulations that may conflict with its terms. It means vending occupation cannot be denied by the local authorities and the state. There are approximately 49.5 lakh street vendors identified in the country with Andhra Pradesh having maximum number of street vendors holding 5.19 percent of country's total street vendors.

Associations for Street Vendors:

In order to protect the interest of street vendors, many non-government organizations came forward, associations were formed which started representing the street vendors. These are raising voice in favour of street vendors and protecting their interests by opposing the eviction drives of local municipal authorities. Some associations are National Association of Street Vendors of India (NASVI), in 2003, an association registered under Societies Act came into existence. Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA), in 1972, an association formed. National Hawkers Federation (NHF), in 2000, is also an association of street vendors which started. Apart from these three associations, there are many non-government organizations at local levels playing role in protecting the rights of street vendors.

Importance of Street Vendors:

Vending has been an integral part of Indian trade since ages. It is considered to provide convenient and affordable service to urban population. Many times, street vendors are blamed for sale of shoddy merchandise. But the fact cannot be ignored that street vendors make the product available in every nook and corner of city which would otherwise cost dearly both in terms of money and time to get by many.

Product Availability:

City dwellers cannot go to market for purchasing each of the required items. The street vendors make the product available at great ease. Lower income population spends higher proportion of their income in making purchases from street vendors due to affordability.

Source of Employment:

Street vending can be considered as a source of employment for a large number of populations on which they along with their dependents depend for their livelihood. The total employment will be very large if the industries these vendors support is also considered. **Integral Part of Value Chain:**

Street vendors are important value chain actor. Many businesses depend on these vendors for sale of their product which otherwise would not be sold. Small manufacturers without much financial capital for marketing of the product are dependent on street vendors.

Economic Cost of Retailing:

Considering the rental and other expenses like manpower, electricity, the overhead costs incurred by established retail outlets is higher. The street vendors are able to save these expenses and may transfer proportionate benefits to the customers. It makes the product available at relatively lesser price to the customers.

Government Intervention for Street Vendors:

Governments across the world have laws targeting street vendors and regulating their activities. In 1995, India signed Bellagio International declaration of street vendors. The declaration recognized street vending as informal and unrecognized trade. A task force for creating urban street vendor law was created in 2004. Considering the importance of street vendors and the contribution made by street vendors to the urban society, the government brought out National Policy on Urban Street Vendors 2004. The policy focused on legalization of trade, planning hawking zones and skill improvement of vendors. It was revised as National Policy on Urban Street Vendors 2009. It emphasized on the formation and functions of Town Vending Committees (TVC). In order to have a legislative framework, the government prepared Model Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) (PLRSV) Bill 2009. The Bill was modified in 2010, 2011, and 2012. After getting assent of the President of India, the bill eventually became Street Vendors (PLRSV) Act, 2014 and came into force from May 1, 2014 for the protection of livelihoods rights, social security of street vendors, regulation of urban street vending in the country.

Challenges in Street Vending:

Street vendors are always associated with blockage of pathways, causing traffic congestion and unhygienic condition of the premises. At the same time these vendors play an important role in making products available and accessible to the urban population at ease, but are afflicted with many problems these are: Wastage loss of perishable items; Lack of space; Supply Chain issues; Eviction and Extortion; Women forced in Street Vending; Long working hour; Safety and Health Issues; Lacking Linkages with government schemes; Prevalence of Social Evils; Competition from Emerging Marketing Models.

Recommendations for Street Vendors:

The importance of street vendors have been realized by the country and Act also been brought to protect their interests. Many associations are working for the assistance of street vendors. Government has launched several schemes for the benefit of street vendors. But still a long way to go to address the issues of street vendors as well as consumers. The main recommendations are: Adoption of Scientific Structure by Street Vendors; Implementation of Street Vendors Act both in Paper and Spirit; Creation of Vending Zones with proper Infrastructure and Facilities; Training and skill development; Digital Payment; Access to Formal Credit and Government Benefits; and Replication of Good Practices.

Literature Review:

The socio-economic analysis of street vendors in Andhra Pradesh requires a comprehensive review of existing literature to understand the complexities and dynamics of this informal sector. Street vending, integral to the informal economy, has been extensively researched across various regions, offering valuable insights into the challenges faced by vendors and their adaptive strategies.

Bhowmik (2010), observed that women tend to earn less than men and are typically relegated to lower-paying sectors within street vending underscoring their resilience and resourcefulness in navigating socio-economic adversities. Seminal study underscored that street vendors constitute a substantial segment of the urban workforce in developing countries, emphasizing their socio-economic hurdles such as low and erratic incomes, limited education, and inadequate health care access.

Bhowmik S. (2005). study focuses on India and other Asian countries, emphasizing the socio-economic contributions of street vendors. The author identifies legal and infrastructural barriers as key constraints, highlighting the need for supportive policies.

Bromley, R. (2000). This review evaluates global policies affecting street vendors, highlighting the regulatory and spatial constraints they face. Bromley suggests a participatory approach to policy-making to ensure the inclusion of street vendors in urban planning.

Chakraborty and Karmakar (2016) examined the socio-economic conditions of street vendors in West Bengal, highlighting their precarious legal status and vulnerability to exploitation by local authorities.

Chen, M. A. (2012). Chen's research explores the informal economy's structure, focusing on gendered challenges. It identifies systemic barriers such as limited access to credit, legal recognition, and social security, offering a broader lens for examining fruit vendors.

Devi (2018) highlighted these gendered disparities among vendors in Imphal, Manipur, noting additional burdens such as balancing household responsibilities with work, which further constrain economic advancement opportunities for women. It suggesting a need for better dissemination of rights and benefits information to enhance policy efficacy in the region.

Hart, K. (1973). "Informal Income Opportunities and Urban Employment in Ghana": Hart's pioneering work defines the informal sector, emphasizing its critical role in providing livelihoods in developing economies. This study identifies adaptability as a key survival strategy among informal workers, a concept applicable to vendors worldwide.

I.L.O. (2018) The ILO report provides global data on informal workers, focusing on income disparities and working conditions. Its emphasis on gender-based challenges resonates with the experiences of women fruit vendors in India.

Ministry of Labour and Employment, Government of India (2020). Report on Informal Sector Workers: This government report provides a comprehensive overview of the informal sector in India. It details the demographic and economic profiles of workers, including fruit vendors, and suggests reforms to enhance their livelihoods.

Rao, P. S. (2021). This regional study provides insights into the socio-economic conditions of street vendors in Andhra Pradesh. It highlights the role of informal networks and the challenges posed by urbanization, offering valuable parallels.

Reddy et al. (2019) explored the socio-economic integration of migrant street vendors in Bangalore, highlighting the unique challenges faced by migrant communities in urban settings.

Roever, S., & Skinner, C. (2016) This study discusses the urban governance challenges of accommodating street vendors. The authors advocate for inclusive urban policies that address vendors' socio-economic vulnerabilities, offering lessons for semi-urban areas.

Roy, A. (2016) Roy examines survival strategies among street vendors, emphasizing the importance of microfinance and community networks. The findings are relevant to understanding fruit vendors' resilience in semi-urban areas.

Sharma and Patel (2021) investigated the impact of digitalization on street vending in Mumbai, Maharashtra, demonstrating how technology adoption can both benefit and challenge vendors' livelihoods. **Singh** (2017) study in Guwahati, Assam, provided localized insights, revealing that vendors there confront economic instability exacerbated by fluctuating demand and competitive pressures, compounded by inadequate social security measures.

Swaminathan, M. (2008) Swaminathan focuses on the informal sector's socio-economic dynamics, emphasizing the lack of social protection. This work provides a theoretical framework for addressing the vulnerabilities of fruit vendors in India.

Meaning of Street Vendor:

The National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganized Sector (NCEUS) of India defined the term "Street Vendor" in its national policy regarding urban street vendors published in May 2006. According to this definition, a street vendor is an individual who sells goods or services to the public from a location on the street or footpath without any permanent structure.

Relevance of the Study:

The research carried out by the investigator is significant, as it addressed all the primary challenges and conflicts encountered by street vendors and gathered information directly from them. The reactions of street vendors in the presence of the researcher and the public were genuine, as they felt no threat, fear, or pressure when expressing their opinions.

Research Methodology:

The trustworthiness and validity of any research is contingent upon the methods utilized to investigate a particular issue. Given the legal and economic dimensions of the problem, the chosen research methodology is designed to effectively integrate data from various disciplines while establishing connections among them to illuminate different concerns. The researcher will adopt a multifaceted approach to gather extensive relevant information from various sources, including both primary and secondary data. To fulfill the objectives of the empirical work and address informational needs. This study is conducted with a sample of 250 respondents from street and market vendors across six markets in the Visakhapatnam District.

Objectives of the Study:

1. To analyse the social characteristics of street vendors in the designated study area.
2. To evaluate the economic challenges faced by street vendors within the study area.
3. To examine the working conditions of the sampled street vendors.
4. To study the key issues impacting the livelihoods and income levels of street vendors in urban Visakhapatnam.
5. To identify various local and broader challenges that influence their means of living.
6. To assess the degree to which the Act of 2014 has been implemented.
7. To review the different welfare policies enacted by the government to safeguard street vendors.

Main Hypotheses:

1. The majority of individuals engaged in street vending as a means of livelihood are migrants from other towns and rural regions within the state.
2. Many vendors choose this occupation due to their struggles with unemployment.
3. Street vendors often experience harassment from both municipal authorities and local thugs in the city of Visakhapatnam.
4. Many vendors are unable to access loan facilities offered by the banking sector.
5. There is a general lack of awareness about the laws governing street vending, affecting both authorities and the vendors themselves.

Scope of the Study:

This study focuses on the vending conditions and associated risks faced by street vendors in Visakhapatnam. It addresses various aspects, including the socio-demographic profiles of the vendors, their intergenerational occupational status, and economic circumstances. Additionally, the research explores the distinctive characteristics and nature of street vendors, their vending status, working conditions, the context of their vending activities, and management of the physical work environment. The study also examines the vendors' legal standing, as well as the different risks they encounter, such as income risk, asset risk, physical danger, external factor risk, legal sanction risk, social sanction risk, and job-related risk.

Sampling Procedure:

According to Goode and Hatt, a sample is a smaller representation of a larger entity. P.V. Young elaborates that a statistical sample acts as a condensed representation or snapshot of the entire group from which it is drawn. The complete set of individuals or items that comprise the basis for the sample is referred to as the 'population' or 'universe'. The sampling method employed was Purposive sampling. For this study, a total sample of 250 individuals was selected, comprising 62.4 percent males and 37.6 percent females from each designated market area.

Study Sample:

A sample refers to a smaller group chosen to represent a larger population. By examining the characteristics of this sample, researchers can make reasonable inferences or generalizations about the broader population it reflects. This particular research is being carried out in Visakhapatnam. The sample consists of 250 street vendors who receive social assistance, selected through purposive sampling.

Sampling Plan:

Sampling is the intentional process of choosing a specific subset from a wider population to include in a study, allowing researchers to draw conclusions that apply to the entire group. This method is widely used in research, as gathering data from each individual in the population is often unfeasible. In this study, a stratified random sampling technique will be employed to select 50 street vendors from each of the six marketplaces in Visakhapatnam, leading to a total sample size of 250 individuals from the city's broader population.

Methods Employed in the Study:

The researcher promoted a systematic strategy for collecting essential data to achieve the outlined objectives. This investigation employed a structured interview schedule as the key method for obtaining information about the socio-economic conditions and demographic characteristics of 250 street vendors in Visakhapatnam city. The main tools used in this study include the interview schedule, featuring various questions across different sections, such as socio-demographic profile, personal details—including age, gender, educational background, income, loans, family structure, rural or urban distinction, economic status, and business awareness.

Primary and Secondary Data:

The researcher gathered primary data by engaging directly in the field through various methods, including conducting interviews with participants facilitated by an interview schedule. Primary information was obtained through interview schedules and observational techniques. Furthermore, supplementary (secondary) data was collected from an array of sources such as books, published works, journals, magazines, seminar papers, and websites. This also included articles and written materials published in newspapers pertaining to academic research.

Demographic Profile of Street Vendors:

This section examines the demographic traits of street vendors, focusing on aspects such as age, gender, education, and family size. Most vendors come from marginalized communities and have restricted access to formal education. The analysis highlights the significance of women in this profession, underlining their contributions to economic empowerment and society.

Income and Expenditure:

Street vendors in Visakhapatnam experience significant variations in their earnings, primarily driven by seasonal changes in demand and supply. Typically, their daily income ranges from ₹500 to ₹1,500, but it fluctuates based on factors such as the availability of seasonal fruits, market dynamics, and local celebrations. Earnings tend to peak during harvest seasons, particularly in the summer with fruits like mangoes, and during festive occasions (Roy, 2016). Conversely, during the off-seasons, vendors commonly face a decrease in sales, leading to lower overall income. Their earnings are further impacted by their dependence on informal credit systems, which often involve borrowing at high-interest rates from moneylenders (Bhowmik, 2005).

The spending habits of vendors are significantly shaped by factors such as procurement costs, transportation, and spoilage, particularly since many fruits have limited shelf lives. They source their fruits from wholesalers or intermediaries, who usually apply a markup to prices, resulting in diminished profit margins for the vendors (EXIM Bank, 2023). Additionally, the lack of cold storage facilities in Visakhapatnam contributes to considerable post-harvest losses, with estimates indicating that spoilage rates during peak seasons could be as high as 30 percent of total produce (Statista, 2024). This issue is especially pronounced for perishable fruits and vegetables, thereby increasing the financial strain on vendors.

Savings and Indebtedness:

Street vendors typically experience low savings because of their unstable income and insufficient financial

security. Many of these vendors depend on informal lending to cover their daily expenses, which leads to significant debt levels (ILO, 2018). This dependence on informal loans often ensnares vendors in continuous debt cycles, as they borrow funds to acquire inventory without a guarantee of steady sales. Consequently, their capacity to save or invest in business expansion is severely restricted, perpetuating their economic instability.

Market Dynamics:

The Street vendors in Visakhapatnam city operate within a market landscape influenced by various elements, such as competition among sellers, accessibility to fresh produce, and the existing market infrastructure. Most vendors obtain their material from wholesalers or intermediaries, as they typically do not have the financial resources to buy directly from industries or farmers. This reliance on intermediaries' places street vendors at a disadvantage in terms of price negotiation (Bhowmik, 2005). Consequently, their profit margins are further narrowed, and their control over purchasing expenses is limited. While middlemen play a significant role, their practices often exploit the vendors, hindering their ability to maximize their profits.

Competition:

Street Vendors encounter significant competition from large retail chains and supermarkets that can provide more competitive prices and a more reliable supply thanks to their economies of scale. These larger retailers often benefit from superior storage facilities that help preserve the freshness of their produce for extended durations. Conversely, street vendors, especially in Visakhapatnam city face challenges due to insufficient refrigeration, resulting in faster spoilage and diminished product quality, which hampers their ability to compete effectively (Chen, 2012).

Market Access and Seasonal Variations:

Seasonal changes significantly influence the market behavior of fruit and vegetable sellers. In prime seasons, like those for mangoes or guavas, demand tends to increase; however, supply frequently exceeds market capacity, causing sharp price declines. On the other hand, during off-seasons, vendors often encounter shortages and challenges in sustaining a reliable supply (Roever & Skinner, 2016). Furthermore, the absence of cold storage facilities in Visakhapatnam worsens the situation, resulting in elevated post-harvest waste and financial losses (Statista, 2024). In summary, the economic difficulties encountered by street vendors in Visakhapatnam, including meager earnings, substantial expenses, dependence on intermediaries, and variations in seasonal market demand-highlight an urgent requirement for policy initiatives. Enhancements in infrastructure, including cold storage options, improved access to financial services, and direct connections to markets, could significantly boost their profitability and financial security (EXIM Bank, 2023).

Working Conditions:

Street vendors in Visakhapatnam endure challenging working conditions, marked by extended hours and continual exposure to harsh environmental elements. Their day typically begins at dawn and stretches deep into the evening, leaving them with minimal opportunity for rest or personal time. This demanding schedule often results in physical fatigue and stress (Gopal & Soni, 2019). The vendors depend significantly on transporting goods physically from wholesale markets to their retail spots, subjecting

themselves to laborious tasks that adversely affect their health over time. Additionally, these vendors contend with extreme weather conditions, harsh heat during the summer months and heavy rainfall during the monsoon (Chandran, 2021). Such factors increase the risk of illness or tiredness, yet they lack access to medical leave or employer-sponsored healthcare, as most operate independently or within small family-owned businesses that don't follow a formal employer-employee model (Sharma & Gupta, 2018).

The absence of social security or compensation for work-related injuries intensifies their vulnerability (Singh, 2017). Many vendors are deprived of benefits such as health insurance, retirement plans, or savings programs, which are generally provided in more formal job sectors. Urban policies, including regular evictions and relocations, further disrupt these vendors' livelihoods. Local authorities often displace them from their preferred locations in public areas, citing concerns about urban aesthetics or traffic congestion, which hampers their ability to sustain consistent business operations (Gupta, 2019). Additionally, such relocations can result in the loss of regular customers who are used to visiting vendors at their former sites, complicating efforts for vendors to rebuild their clientele (Rai & Kumar, 2020).

Community Perception:

In Visakhapatnam and various regions of India, street vending is frequently regarded as a job of low status (Bose, 2020). This perception arises from the informal and unregulated characteristics of the trade, which lack the prestige associated with traditional employment. Consequently, street vendors may face stigma and marginalization from certain segments of society, affecting their self-esteem and presenting challenges in accessing better opportunities or connecting with other businesses within the community (Patel & Verma, 2021). Nevertheless, this profession also enables vendors to cultivate strong social networks. These connections can offer emotional support, business insights, and a sense of solidarity among individuals operating in the same market or neighborhood. Such relationships foster a sense of community, particularly in rural areas, making this occupation an essential social glue (Chaudhary, 2019). In a competitive and often unpredictable economic landscape, street vendors heavily depend on these social ties for their survival (Desai, 2022).

Education and Family Welfare:

Although street vendors encounter significant financial obstacles, many emphasize the importance of their children's education as a means to escape the cycle of poverty. They regard education as a vital pathway to enhancing their children's future opportunities, resulting in considerable investments in schooling despite limited resources (Patel & Sinha, 2020). This emphasis on education shapes household decisions, with parents making deliberate sacrifices, such as reducing daily expenditures or neglecting their personal needs, to ensure their children can attend school (Rani & Raghav, 2021). For numerous street vendors, securing an education for their children symbolizes a chance to rise above their challenging socio-economic circumstances (Kumar & Sharma, 2019). Nonetheless, the financial pressures associated with education can create a paradox; it can drive street vendors to work harder and save more, yet it simultaneously heightens their susceptibility to economic instability (Singh, 2020). The desire for an improved future, fueled by the hope that their children will experience greater social mobility, lies at the heart of decision-making within households (Bhat & Ali, 2021). This hopeful outlook influences the spending, saving, and career decisions of vendors, as they strive to open doors to opportunities that were unattainable during their own youth.

Challenges Faced by Street Vendors:

Street vendors in Visakhapatnam encounter numerous challenges that can be classified as structural and systemic obstacles. Structural issues mainly involve insufficient infrastructure, including the lack of appropriate vending areas, storage access, and sanitary conditions for showcasing and selling their products. These vendors often operate in congested, unregulated environments with limited amenities, making it challenging to uphold cleanliness and proper organization (Sharma & Sharma, 2020). Furthermore, legal recognition poses a significant challenge for street vendors, as many do not possess official licenses or permits to process sales on public streets. This situation leaves them susceptible to harassment or eviction by local authorities (Kumar & Gupta, 2018). This legal ambiguity obstructs their access to loans and formal market prospects, adversely influencing their long-term viability.

From a systemic perspective, street vendors frequently encounter exploitation by middlemen who dominate the supply chain. These intermediaries typically impose high costs on the products that vendors purchase, resulting in minimal profit margins. Singh (2020) highlights that numerous vendors are compelled to enter into unfavorable agreements that hinder their earning potential. Furthermore, a lack of adequate policy support from local or state authorities intensifies the difficulties vendors experience. Policies that might aid in formalizing the sector or safeguarding street vendors are often poorly enforced, creating a landscape where vendors must continuously adjust to fluctuating regulations (Desai & Verma, 2021). Additionally, female vendors face specific challenges. Concerns for safety, including threats of harassment and violence, along with societal biases regarding women's roles in public domains, impose further challenges upon them in their daily activities (Bose, 2021). These gender-based obstacles limit their mobility, earnings, and social recognition in the public sphere.

Policy and Support Measures:

In recent years, various government initiatives have been launched to enhance the welfare of workers in the informal sector, including different street vendors. One of the most prominent initiatives is the PM-SVANidhi (Pradhan Mantri Street Vendor's Atma Nirbhar Nidhi) scheme, designed to offer microfinance support to street vendors, enabling them to maintain and grow their businesses. Kumar and Rani (2022) note that the scheme has made a notable difference, especially for urban vendors facing challenges in obtaining capital. Nevertheless, its effectiveness and reach among street vendors in rural or semi-urban regions are limited due to insufficient awareness and logistical hurdles. As a result, many vendors in these areas continue to encounter obstacles in accessing the necessary documentation for loan approval (Patel, 2021).

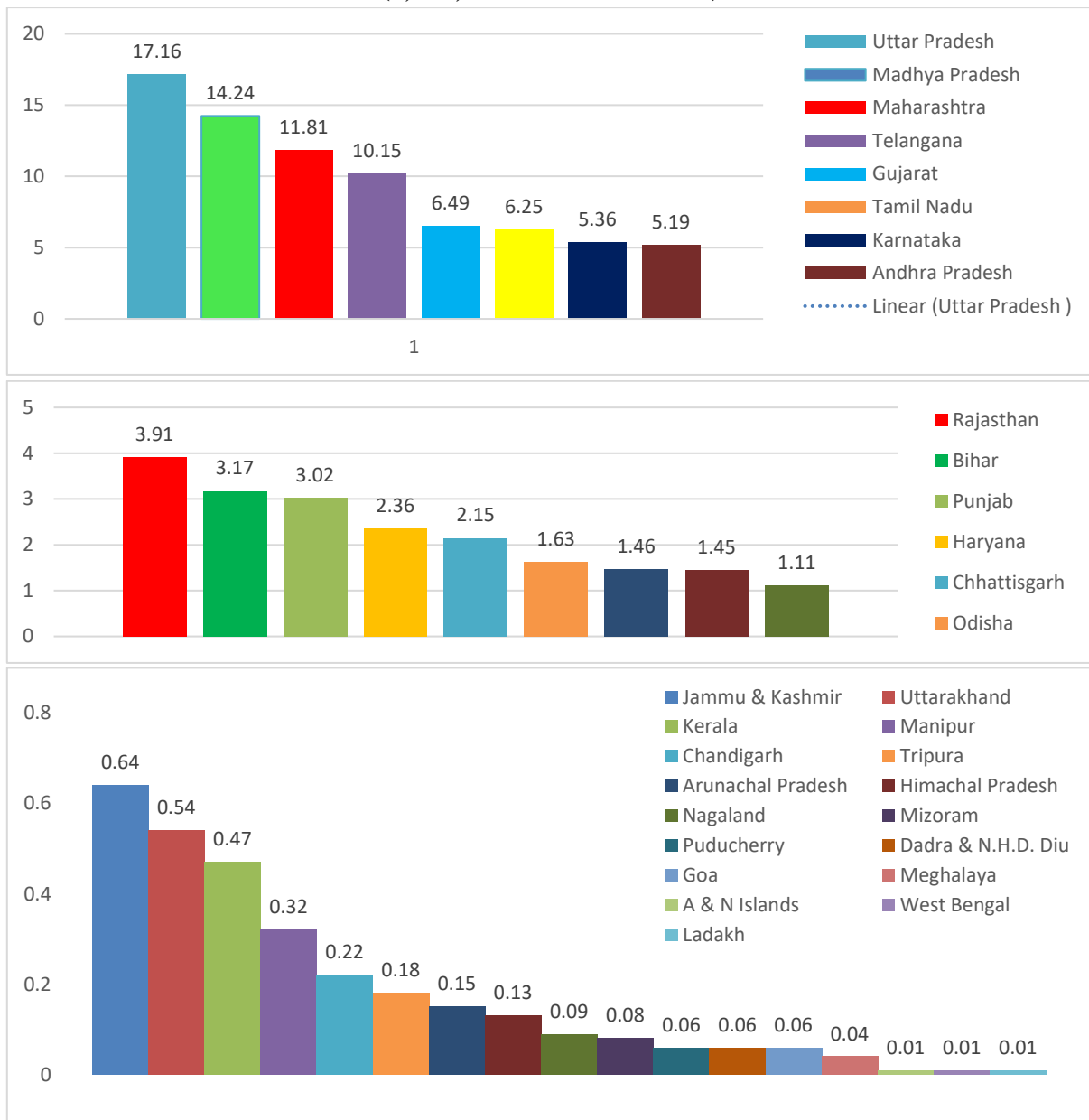
Although initiatives like PM-SVA Nidhi mark progress, there is a pressing need for policy changes to tackle broader systemic challenges. For example, skill development programs aimed at street vendors could assist them in enhancing their marketing techniques, increasing their understanding of hygiene and food safety, and broadening their range of products (Rai, 2020). It is also vital to implement financial inclusion strategies to enable vendors to access formal banking services and credit options, thereby lessening their dependence on exploitative intermediaries (Desai & Sinha, 2019). Furthermore, improving infrastructure, with features such as designated vending areas equipped with basic amenities like sanitation, electricity, and storage, would significantly enhance the working conditions and economic opportunities for street vendors (Chandran, 2020).

Moreover, the significance of NGOs and community-based organizations in assisting street vendors is immense. These organizations frequently engage in providing legal support, financial education, and

vocational training for the vendors. Additionally, CBOs help to establish networks that deliver both emotional and practical assistance, enhancing the overall welfare and social advancement of the vendors (Gopal & Sharma, 2021). These grassroots organizations have demonstrated effectiveness in advocating for improved policies and raising awareness among vendors regarding their rights and benefits (Singh & Raghav, 2022).

Data Analysis:

Table: 1 - State-wise Number of Street Vendors Identified in India (4,949,657 as on 24.02.2022)



Source: Lok Sabha Unstarred Question No. 3452 of Mar 24, 2022; Sustainability of Vegetable Street Vendors in India, Dec.2023, ICAR-National Academy of Agricultural Research Management, Hyderabad.

Table 1 demonstrates that there are a total of 4,949,657 street vendors spread across 34 states and union territories in India, encompassing both urban and rural locations. Uttar Pradesh houses the highest percentage of street vendors at 17.16 percent, while Andhra Pradesh accounts for 5.19 percent.

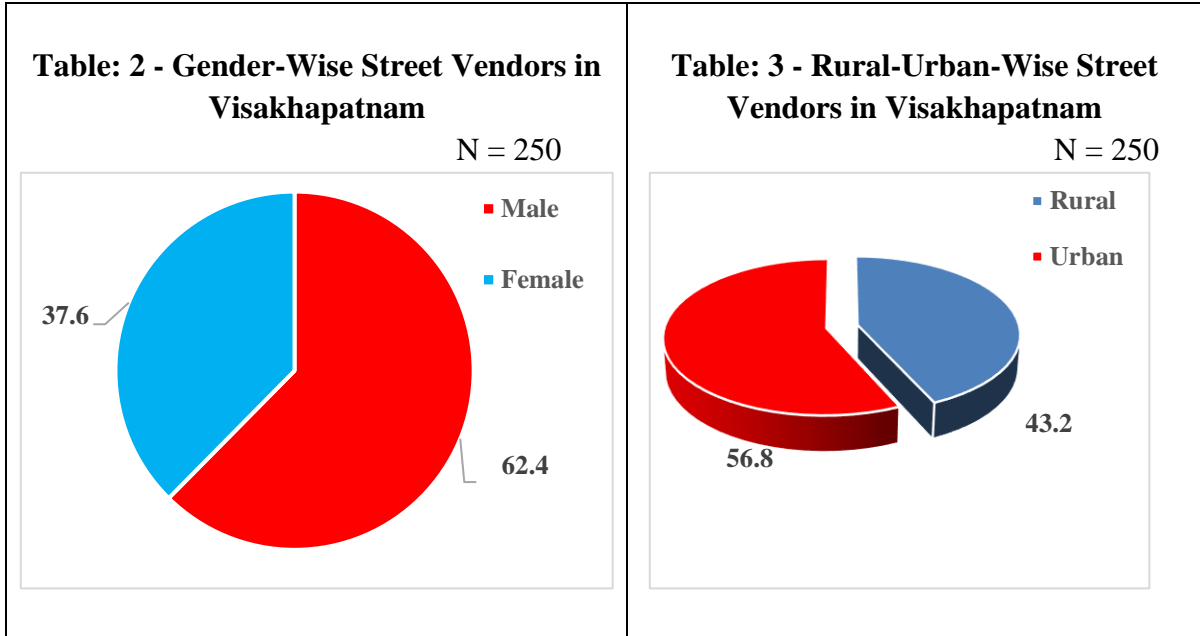


Table 2 presents the gender distribution of respondents. The study primarily includes male participants, who represent 62.4 percent of the vendors, with females constituting 37.6 percent of the respondents.

In Table 3, the data is categorized by residence, revealing that 56.8 percent of respondents live in urban areas, while 43.2 percent reside in rural settings.

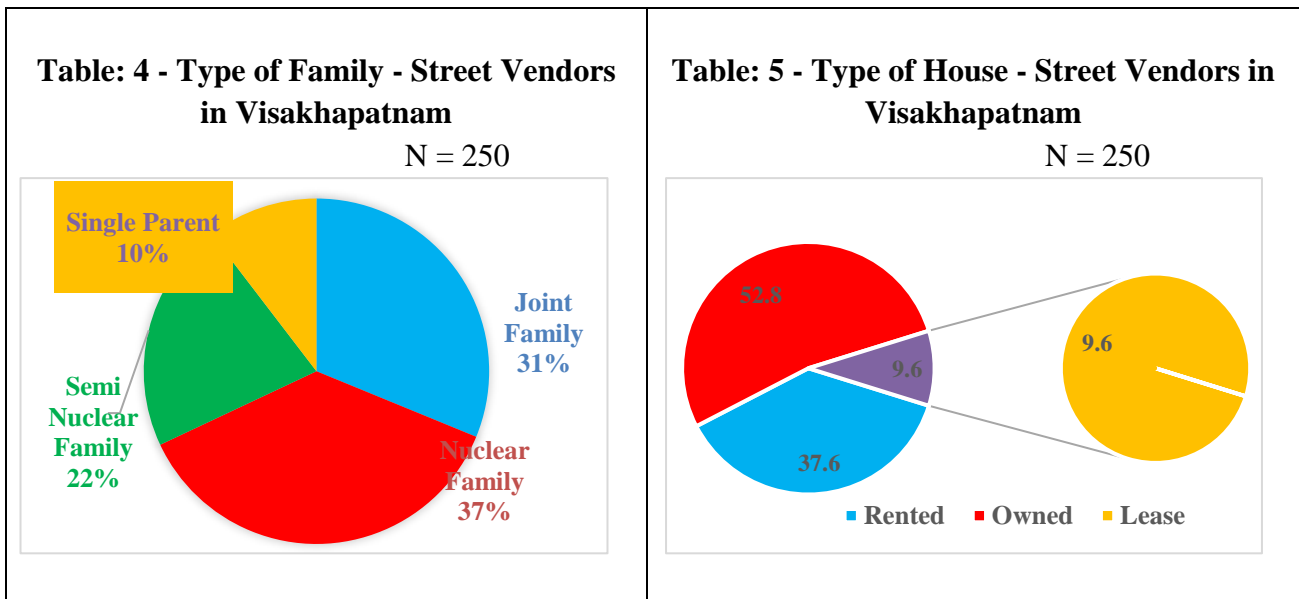


Table 4 presents the distribution of respondents categorized by their family structure. The findings indicate that the majority, accounting for 37 percent, come from nuclear families, while 31 percent represent joint

families. Additionally, semi-nuclear families constitute 22 percent, and only 10 percent belong to single-parent households.

In Table 5, the data reveals that 52.8 percent of respondents live in their own homes, 37.6 percent reside in rented spaces, and the final 9.6 percent are in leased accommodations.

Table: 6 - Selected Localities for Street Vendors Survey
N = 250

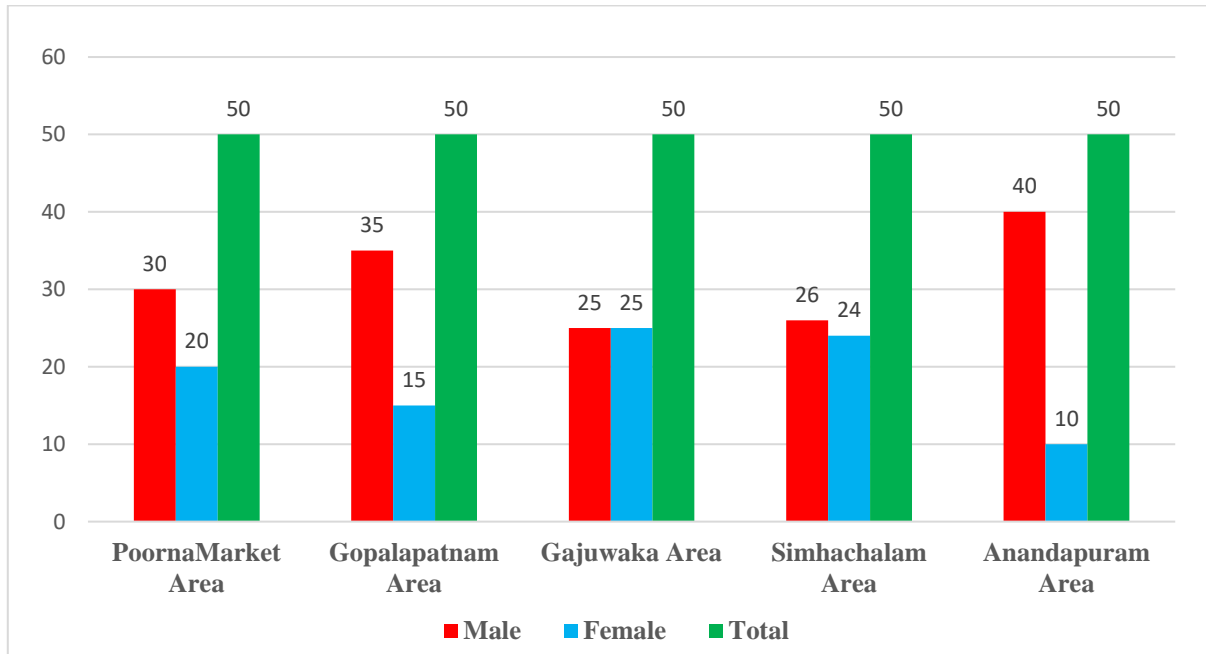
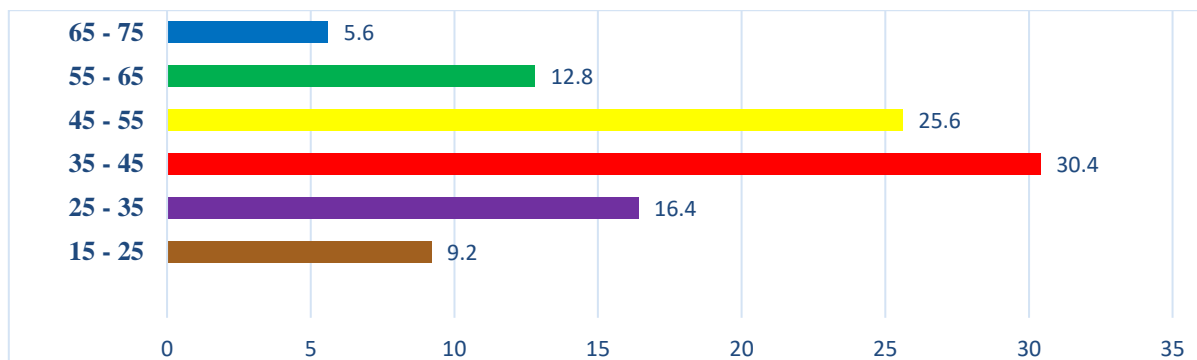


Table 6 illustrates how the 250 sampled respondents are spread across five specific localities, with 50 individuals randomly selected from each area for inclusion in the study.

Table: 7 - Age-Wise Street Vendors in Visakhapatnam
N = 250



In Table 7, the distribution of the 30.4 percent of sample participants in the 35-45 age range shows that 25.6 percent belong to the 45-55 age category, 9.2 percent are within the 15-25 age group, and only 5.6 percent are between the ages of 65 and 75.

Table: 8 - Educational Status of Street Vendors in Visakhapatnam
N = 250

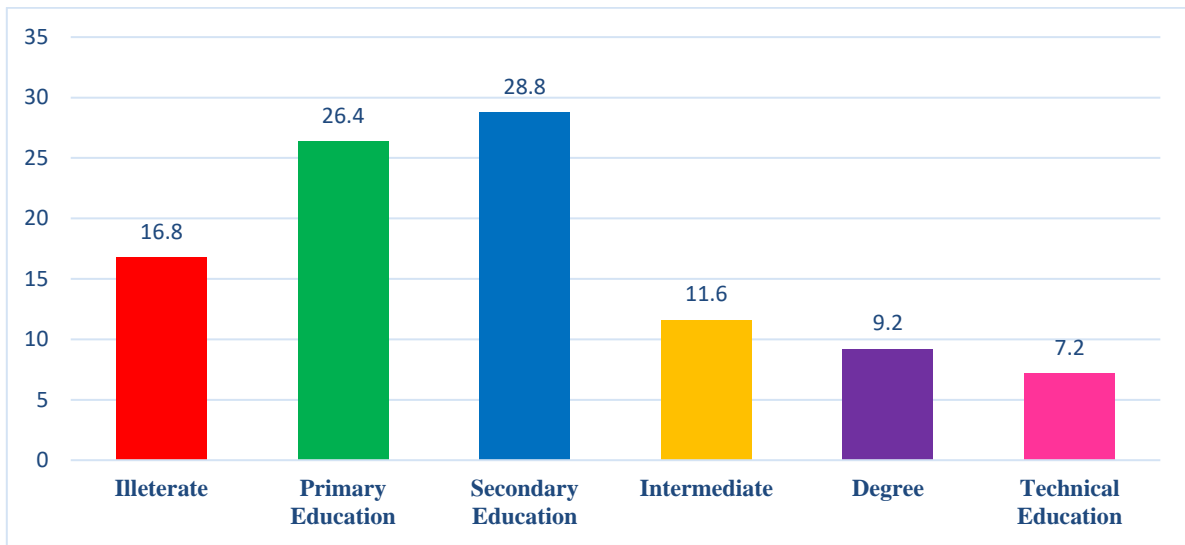


Table 8 offers an overview of the participants' educational qualifications, revealing that a considerable 28.8 percent have completed secondary education, while 16.8 percent are classified as illiterate. This suggests that those with limited formal education often resort to street vending due to difficulties in accessing employment in the formal job market. Since a majority of the respondents come from rural areas, their education levels are typically below primary education. Only 26.4 percent have achieved primary education, and a smaller 9.2 percent have engaged in degree programs, while 11.6 percent have completed intermediate studies, and just 7.2 percent have received technical training.

Table: 9 - Monthly Income Status of Street Vendors in Visakhapatnam
N = 250

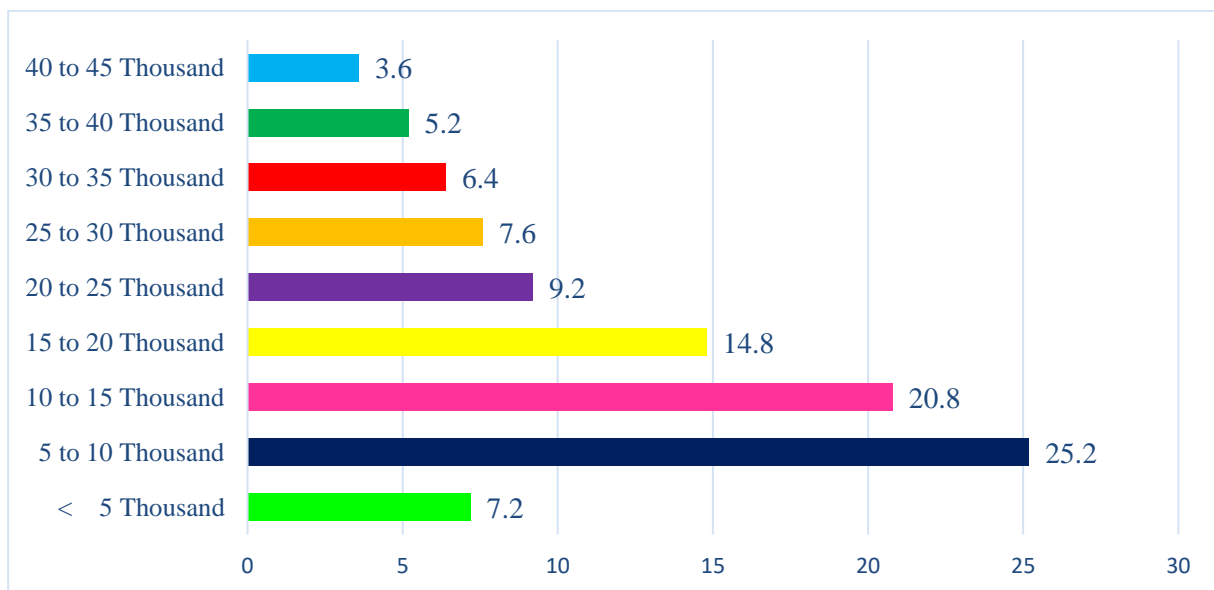


Table 9 presents a classification of participants based on their monthly income. Among the respondents, 25.2% indicated a monthly income between Rs. 5001 and Rs. 10000, while 7.2% earned less than Rs. 5000. Additionally, 5.2% and 3.6% of the participants were categorized into other income groups.

Table: 10 - Family Condition of Street Vendors in Visakhapatnam
N = 250

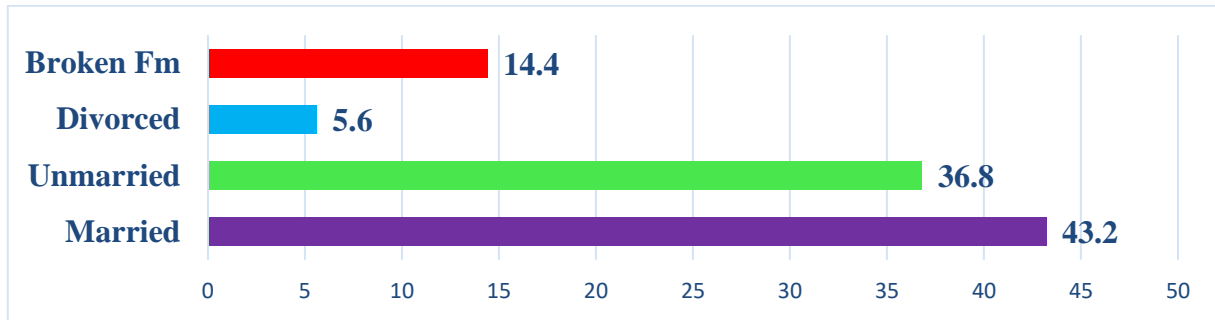
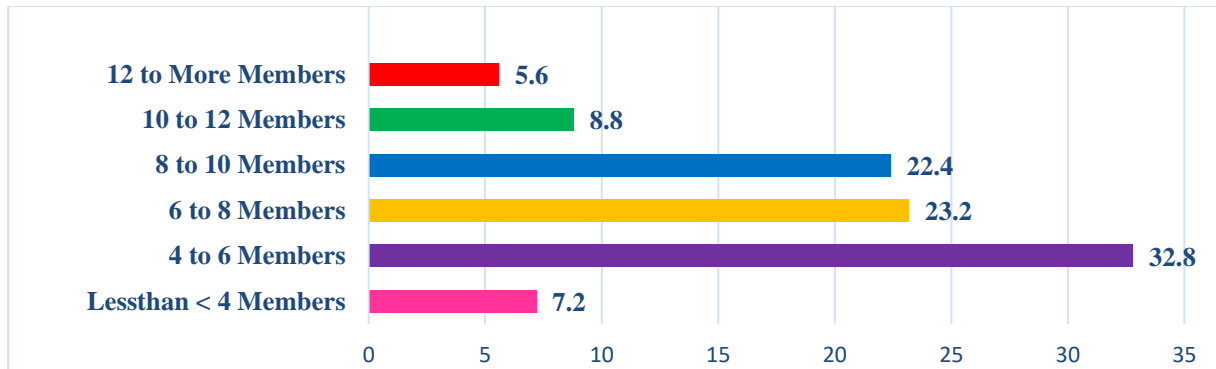


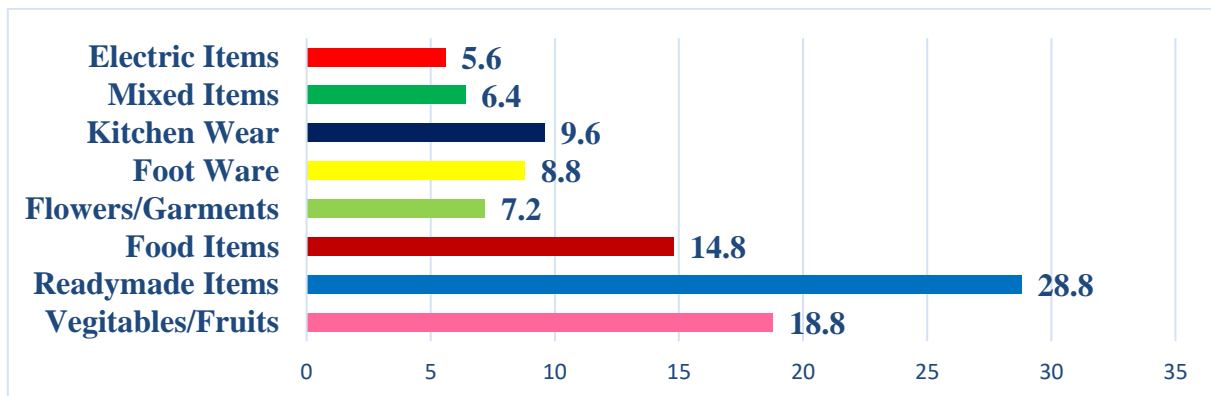
Table 10 reveals that 43.2% of respondents are married, 36.8% are single, 5.6% are divorced, and 14.4% come from separated or broken families.

Table: 11 - Size of Family - Street Vendors in Visakhapatnam
N = 250



In Table 11, the distribution of respondents according to family size highlights that the largest group, comprising 32.8%, has between 4 to 6 family members, while only a small percentage, 5.6%, belongs to families with more than 12 members, which are typically joint families.

Table: 12 - Type of Business - Street Vendors in Visakhapatnam
N = 250



In Table 12, the distribution of respondents by business type reveals that 28.8 percent are involved in selling ready-made goods, while 18.8 percent focus on the sale of fruits and vegetables. Additionally, 6.4 percent sell mixed items, and 5.6 percent engage in selling electrical products.

Table: 13 - Financial Support for Business - Street Vendors in Visakhapatnam
N = 250

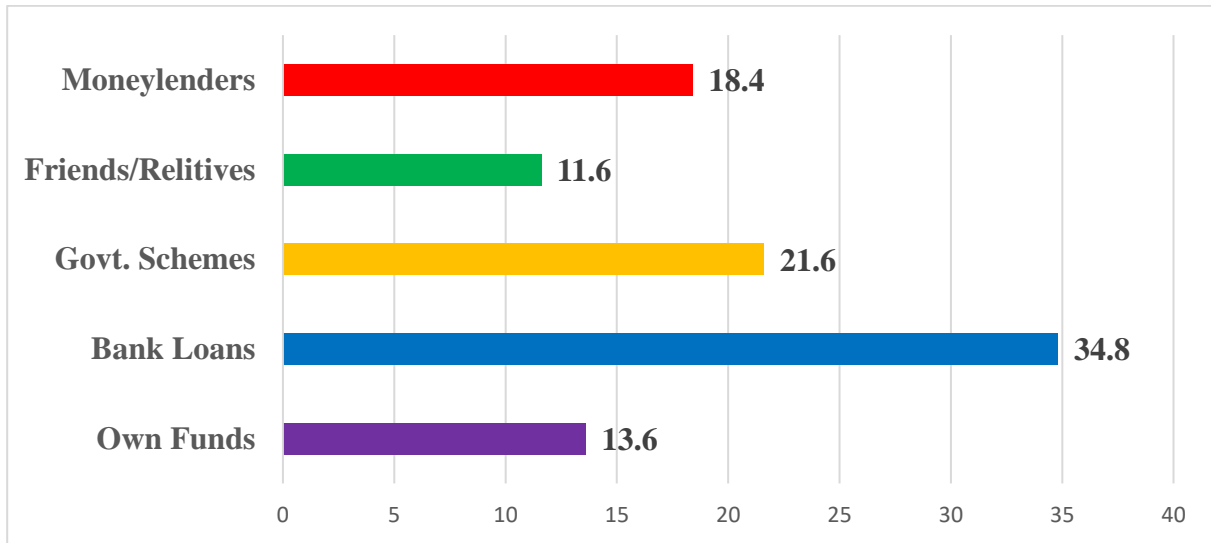


Table 13 illustrates the financial support mechanisms utilized by respondents for their businesses. It shows that 34.8 percent of participants have secured loans from various banks, and 21.6 percent have benefited from government financial assistance programs. Furthermore, 18.4 percent of respondents obtained money from daily finance companies or moneylenders. Only 13.6 percent of the participants rely on their own funds to support their business endeavours.

Table: 14 - Satisfaction of Business Job - Street Vendors in Visakhapatnam
N = 250

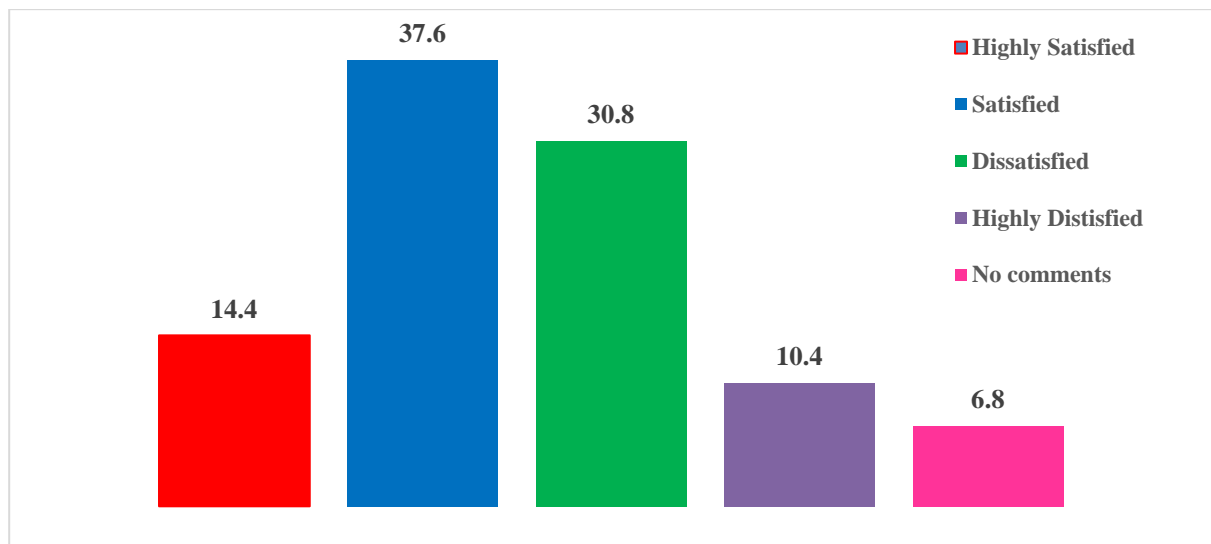


Table 14 illustrates the respondents' distribution based on their satisfaction levels. It shows that 37.6 percent of the participants are satisfied, while 14.4 percent express high levels of satisfaction with their occupations. Conversely, 30.8 percent report dissatisfaction, and 10.4 percent are highly dissatisfied with their business. Additionally, 6.8 percent of respondents chose not to provide feedback on their business satisfaction.

Conclusion:

Street vendors require assistance with market access, as well as training in vocational and life skills to boost their employability and enhance working conditions. However, their journey towards self-empowerment is fraught with challenges due to the absence of formal recognition for their economic activities. A street vendor is defined as an individual who sells goods and services directly to the public without a permanent building, typically operating from a temporary structure, such as a mobile stall. The informal sector has been crucial in generating employment and income opportunities in India. Therefore, it is essential that these workers are granted specific rights, including access to quality education for their children, availability of financial resources and credit, protection against workplace discrimination, the ability to use public spaces, and the opportunity to engage in trade union activities. These rights are vital for ensuring that they can attain decent employment and maintain an adequate standard of living.

Many individuals choose to work as street vendors because it offers an engaging experience with minimal initial investment. Nevertheless, street sellers frequently face harassment from various authorities and do not possess the legal rights to operate in numerous locations. They encounter several challenges, including obtaining permits and managing inconsistent earnings. Street vendors play a crucial role in delivering services to the community, particularly to those in need. However, their contributions often go unacknowledged by government authorities. These vendors face numerous health and safety hazards due to their challenging working conditions and limited social protections. Their lack of awareness about their rights compounds the difficulties they face. Furthermore, they often contend with insufficient capital, frequently depending on loans from family, friends, or moneylenders to sustain their enterprises.

The Indian government demonstrates a lack of concern for the existence of street vendors, rather than defending this sector and ensuring that its workers receive their rightful earnings. Street vendors are vital to the informal economy, not only due to their sheer numbers but also because of their essential functions in sustaining this sector. It is crucial for social activists to inform vendors of their rights and obligations. To prevent them from resorting to high-interest loans from moneylenders, the government should take proactive steps to provide vocational training, encourage vendors' children to attend school, and establish self-help groups that focus on health initiatives. Despite being part of a marginalized and vulnerable community, street vendors are productive and contribute significantly to the economy, making it imperative that they receive support. Both state and central governments should play a role in enhancing the capabilities of vendors, enabling them to collaborate and establish market management committees for their own development in the near future. The results of this study reveal that many street vendors earn meagre daily incomes, which adversely affects their quality of life. Furthermore, the research highlights the vendors' working hours, inadequate safety and security conditions at their workplaces, and the illegal fees they are compelled to pay to local authorities.

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