

A Study on the Daily Challenges Faced by Women Street Vendors and the Role of Municipal Policies and Support Systems in Tiptur

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Abstract

Street vending constitutes an essential segment of the informal urban economy, offering livelihood opportunities for women who are often excluded from formal employment. In towns such as Tiptur, Karnataka, women street vendors play a critical role in sustaining local markets by providing affordable and accessible goods. Despite their contribution, they encounter persistent challenges including economic precarity, absence of legal recognition, inadequate infrastructure, and frequent exposure to harassment and eviction. The Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014 was formulated to safeguard their rights, yet its implementation at the municipal level remains weak, resulting in limited awareness and poor enforcement. This study critically explores the socio-economic conditions of women street vendors in Tiptur, highlighting the interplay of gender-based vulnerabilities, institutional shortcomings, and governance gaps. The analysis emphasizes how inadequate municipal support, lack of basic amenities, and weak regulatory frameworks perpetuate insecurity and marginalization. Addressing these issues requires a stronger policy commitment that includes the establishment of designated vending zones, simplified licensing mechanisms, improved access to welfare schemes, and awareness programs on legal rights. Furthermore, integrating social protection, skill development, and infrastructural support into municipal frameworks can enhance livelihood security and promote dignity in work. By bridging the gap between policy and practice, the study underscores the importance of inclusive and gender-sensitive urban governance for empowering women vendors and fostering sustainable urban development.

Keywords: Women Street Vendors, Informal Economy, Urban Governance, Municipal Policies, Livelihood Security, Gender and Informality, Street Vendors Act, 2014

1. Introduction

Street vending plays a vital role in the urban informal economy, providing livelihoods to thousands of individuals, particularly women, who often turn to this sector due to limited employment opportunities and socio-economic constraints. In towns like Tiptur, located in the Tumkur district of Karnataka, women

street vendors contribute significantly to the local economy by selling fruits, vegetables, snacks, and various household items. Despite their contribution, these women face numerous daily challenges including economic insecurity, lack of legal recognition, limited access to basic services, and exposure to harassment and exploitation.

Women street vendors in Tiptur operate in a context marked by inadequate infrastructure, unpredictable weather, health hazards, and frequent evictions. Many lack accesses to secure vending spaces, sanitation facilities, and social security benefits. Gender-based discrimination further complicates their experiences, as women are more vulnerable to exploitation and often juggle vending activities alongside domestic responsibilities. These realities highlight the urgent need for systemic support and targeted policy interventions that address their specific challenges.

Municipal policies and support systems play a crucial role in shaping the environment in which street vendors operate. In Tiptur, the implementation of national-level frameworks such as the Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014, remains inconsistent and often ineffective. This study aims to explore the daily struggles of women street vendors in Tiptur, assess the impact of existing municipal support mechanisms, and suggest strategies for more inclusive and gender-sensitive urban governance. Through this lens, the research seeks to promote equitable development and recognize the rights and dignity of women in the informal sector.

2. Literature review

Muthulakshmi.A(2024): It explains that street vendors who believe in themselves are more satisfied with their work. This self-belief, or self-efficacy, has a strong positive effect on their overall job satisfaction. However, this relationship is influenced by the challenges and opportunities they face. When challenges are low, the impact of self-efficacy on satisfaction is stronger. On the other hand, when opportunities are high, the connection becomes even more powerful. The chapter also suggests that improving the working conditions of street vendors—such as reducing outside interference, ensuring respect, and creating better environments—can further boost their satisfaction and business success

Upadhyay, Garima (2021): Street vending is important. It gives jobs to poor people in cities. It also helps people buy cheap and easy-to-get things. Many women become street vendors because they are poor. They sell vegetables to earn money for their families. They have no other choice. But their work is hard. They face teasing, harassment, and danger. They also face problems like price changes, job loss, and being removed by police. Still, street vending helps many poor people get work. The government gave ₹5000 crore to help 50 lakh vendors. Each can get a ₹10,000 loan to start again. These laws and plans must be used well. Poor people must be part of city planning. Schemes like Atma Nirbhar Bharat and the Street Vendors Act must be improved. This will help stop hunger and job loss

Trivedi, Vivek (2020): The principal finding of the current research study is an assortment of affirmative, progressive and antagonistic insinuations on extending the benefits under social security schemes of state and central under various flagship missions to street vendors, psychosocial support rendered by street vendors federations, sustained handholding and protection of livelihood of street vendors and regulation of street vending in Shimla city in Himachal Pradesh.

Shashikala.T. (2019): It shows how government policies and customer relationships help street vendors grow and live peacefully in society. In India, a national policy shows what the government wants to do but is not a law. It is often the first step toward making laws. Since 2004, the policy has not been used well. The Supreme Court has supported street vendors' rights and asked the government to make a law for

them. The Court said proper rules and laws are needed to protect the right to hawk and gave a deadline of June 30, 2011. India's National Policy on Urban Street Vendors is special because it supports street vendors and gives them respect. It sees them as important to city life and part of the fight against urban poverty. Even though the policy is still being put into practice, it has helped vendor groups across India

Mahadevan, M (2018): The street vendors in Madurai City are mainly female in their middle age. Further, most of them had completed up to Primary classes with the family size of four to six members and residing in their own house. Most of them are doing eatery business with less initial investment with the meagre amount of profit per day and have been doing the business for many years. Their vending conditions are independent-self-employed on whole time basis in undesignated market place. They face the risks of perishing their marketing goods as they do not have proper storage place, the risk of their regular income due to day to day fluctuation in the price of the marketing goods and they risk their health due to defecating in open places

3. Research gap

Although much research exists on street vending, there is limited focus on women vendors in smaller towns like Tiptur. Studies often overlook how local policies and support systems impact these women, especially regarding awareness and enforcement of laws like the Street Vendors Act, 2014. This study addresses this gap by examining the specific challenges faced by women vendors in Tiptur and evaluating the effectiveness of municipal support.

4. Statement of the Problem

Women street vendors in Tiptur face a range of social, economic, and institutional challenges that undermine their ability to sustain their livelihoods with dignity and security. Despite being a vital part of the informal urban economy, they often operate without legal protection, face constant threats of eviction, and lack access to essential services such as clean water, sanitation, and waste management. Moreover, gender-specific issues such as safety concerns, harassment, and the dual burden of household responsibilities further intensify their struggles. Although policies like the Street Vendors Act, 2014 exist to safeguard their rights, inadequate implementation and poor municipal support have left many women vendors marginalized and unsupported. This study seeks to examine these issues in depth and explore how local governance and support systems can be strengthened to better address the unique challenges faced by women street vendors in Tiptur.

5. Objectives of the Study

1. To identify the daily challenges and socio-economic conditions of women street vendors in Tiptur.
2. To analyze the factors contributing to their vulnerability and marginalization.
3. To evaluate the effectiveness of existing municipal policies and support systems.
4. To suggest inclusive measures and policy recommendations for improving their livelihoods.

6. Scope of the study

This study focuses on understanding the daily challenges faced by women street vendors in the town of Tiptur, Karnataka. It examines their working conditions, socio-economic struggles, and the impact of municipal policies on their livelihoods. The research also explores the implementation and effectiveness of support systems, particularly in the context of the Street Vendors Act, 2014. The study is limited to

women vendors operating within Tiptur and aims to provide insights that can inform more inclusive and gender-sensitive urban policy interventions.

7. Limitations of the study

1. The study is limited to women street vendors within the Tiptur municipal area and may not reflect conditions in other regions.
2. Data is based on interviews and observations, which may be influenced by personal bias or limited respondent availability.
3. The study focuses only on existing municipal policies and does not deeply examine the role of NGOs or private support systems.

8. Research Methodology

8.1 Research Design

This study adopts a **descriptive research design** to explore and document the lived experiences of women street vendors in Tiptur. Descriptive design is suitable for understanding the existing conditions, behaviours, and opinions of a specific population. It enables the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data, which helps in capturing the multi-dimensional nature of the challenges faced by women vendors and the effectiveness of policy interventions. The design also allows for the identification of patterns and trends within the target group.

8.2 Target Population and Sample Size

The target population includes **women engaged in street vending activities within the Tiptur municipal limits**. These women typically operate informal businesses such as selling vegetables, fruits, flowers, cooked food, garments, or household items on pavements or roadside stalls. A **sample of 50 respondents** has been chosen using a **purposive sampling technique**, as it allows the researcher to focus on individuals who are directly relevant to the research objectives. Care has been taken to ensure diversity within the sample based on type of vending, age group, and location of vending (market areas, residential neighbourhoods, transport hubs, etc.).

8.3 Data Collection Methods

Both **primary and secondary data** have been used for this study:

Primary Data: Collected through **structured questionnaires** and **face-to-face interviews**. Personal interviews help build rapport with respondents, enabling them to share more accurate and honest responses. The interviews are conducted in the local language (Kannada) to ensure clarity and comprehension.

Secondary Data: Sourced from relevant academic literature, municipal records, government policy documents (e.g., Street Vendors Act, 2014), reports from NGOs working with informal workers, and previous case studies on street vending in India.

Field visits and observations are also included to gather insights into the vendors' working environment, infrastructure conditions, and interactions with municipal authorities.

8.4 Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire is structured and includes both **close-ended and open-ended questions** to allow for both quantifiable data and personal narratives. It is divided into four sections:

Section A: Demographic Details: Age, education, marital status, family size, income level, and number of dependents.

Section B: Vending Profile: Type of goods sold, number of years in vending, working hours, location, and daily earnings.

Section C: Challenges Faced: Questions on safety, access to water and sanitation, weather-related problems, harassment, health issues, and family responsibilities.

Section D: Awareness and Support Systems: Knowledge of policies like the Street Vendors Act, access to municipal support, registration/license status, and availability of financial assistance or training programs.

The questionnaire is pre-tested on a small group to ensure clarity and consistency before final data collection.

8.5 Ethical Considerations

- Participation in the study is voluntary, and informed consent is obtained from all respondents.
- Respondents are assured of **confidentiality and anonymity**.
- The study respects cultural sensitivities and ensures that interviews are conducted respectfully and safely, especially considering gender-related dynamics.'

9. Theoretical Framework:

The framework highlights the interaction between structural gender norms, socio-economic challenges, and municipal governance in shaping the livelihoods of women street vendors in Tiptur. Gender roles and domestic responsibilities compel many women to enter vending as an accessible source of income, but these same norms heighten their vulnerability to exploitation, harassment, and economic insecurity. Their lived realities are marked by precarious earnings, long working hours, lack of infrastructure, and limited awareness of legal rights. These socio-economic pressures position women vendors at the intersection of informal work and systemic neglect.

At the municipal level, the Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014 provides a rights-based framework for vendor protection. However, weak enforcement, poor access to registration, absence of designated vending zones, and minimal welfare or training programs create a governance gap that perpetuates insecurity. This results in outcomes such as unstable livelihoods, poor health conditions, and social marginalization. To counter these challenges, the framework proposes inclusive interventions: simplified licensing systems, welfare and insurance coverage, legal awareness campaigns, and gender-sensitive urban planning. Together, these measures can bridge the gap between policy intent and practice, ensuring greater livelihood security, dignity, and equity for women vendors while fostering sustainable urban governance¹.

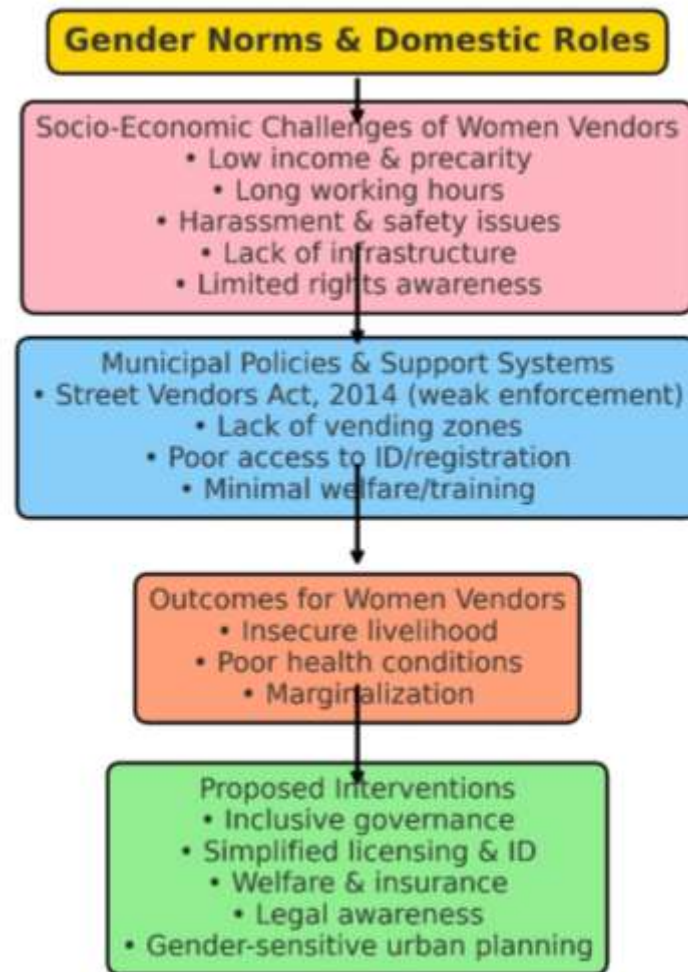


Figure 1. Theoretical framework for women street vendors in Tiptur.

10. Hypothesis 1:

Relationship between Awareness of the Street Vendors Act, 2014, and Harassment from Authorities

H₀: There is no association between awareness of the Street Vendors Act and harassment faced by women street vendors.

H₁: There is an association between awareness of the Street Vendors Act and harassment faced by women street vendors.

Table 1. Chi-square test results showing the association between awareness of the Street Vendors Act, 2014, and harassment faced by women street vendors in Tiptur

Response Category	Observed Value (O)	Expected Value (E)	O – E	(O – E) ²	(O – E) ² / E
Aware & Harassed	8	12	-4	16	1.33
Aware & Not Harassed	12	8	4	16	2
Not Aware & Harassed	22	18	4	16	0.89

Not Aware & Not Harassed	8	12	-4	16	1.33
Total	50	—	—	64	5.55

Chi-Square value = 5.55

Degrees of Freedom = 1

Critical Value (0.05 level) = 3.841

Conclusion: Reject $H_0 \rightarrow$ There is a significant association between awareness of the Act and harassment faced.

11. Analysis and interpretation

1. Most respondents (64%) are between 25 and 45 years old, indicating that the street vending workforce in Tiptur is largely composed of women in their prime working age.
2. A significant number of vendors have only primary or secondary education, limiting their access to formal employment opportunities and increasing reliance on informal work like vending.
3. The majority of respondents (60%) are married, showing that many women vendors are balancing family responsibilities along with income generation.
4. Most women support 3 or more family members, highlighting a heavy financial responsibility and dependency on their earnings.
5. More than half of the respondents are the main income earners in their families, underscoring their vital role in sustaining household needs.
6. Fruits and vegetables are the most common goods sold, suggesting a dependency on perishable items that require daily vending activity.
7. A majority of respondents have been vending for over four years, showing that street vending is not just a temporary job but a long-term livelihood.
8. Most vendors set up their stalls in market areas, with others working near transit points or residential zones, depending on footfall and accessibility.
9. Around two-thirds of the women work for more than 7 hours daily, reflecting physically demanding schedules and long working hours.
10. The daily income for most respondents ranges between ₹200 and ₹600, which reflects low earnings and economic instability.
11. A large portion of the respondents reported facing harassment from authorities, suggesting a need for better regulation and protection.
12. Nearly 50% have been asked to vacate their vending spot or have been evicted, pointing to the insecurity and unpredictability of their work locations.
13. Only a small percentage have access to both drinking water and toilet facilities, showing inadequate basic infrastructure at vending sites.
14. Many vendors expressed safety concerns while working during early or late hours, particularly due to lack of lighting and public presence.
15. Most respondents experience health issues such as body aches and fatigue, mainly due to long working hours and harsh environmental conditions.
16. A majority of women are unaware of the Street Vendors Act, 2014, indicating a lack of information and awareness about their legal rights.

17. Very few respondents have valid licenses or ID cards, which shows either weak enforcement or poor access to the official registration system.
18. Most vendors have never received support from municipal authorities, such as training programs, loans, or allotted vending spaces.
19. Only a small number of women are part of self-help groups or unions, limiting their ability to advocate for collective rights or access support schemes.
20. Most women requested permanent vending zones, better sanitation facilities, financial support, and protection from eviction and harassment.

12. FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS

12.1 Findings:

1. Most women vendors (64%) are aged 25–45, married, and support 3+ family members.
2. Many have only primary or secondary education.
3. Over half are the main income earners for their families.
4. Daily income is ₹200–₹600 with long hours causing health issues.
5. Many face eviction, harassment, and lack awareness of legal rights.

12.2 Suggestions:

1. Provide welfare schemes like health insurance and childcare.
2. Offer skill training and financial literacy programs.
3. Simplify vendor registration and issue official ID cards.
4. Create vending zones with water, toilets, and shelter.
5. Conduct legal awareness drives and set up grievance support.

13. CONCLUSION

Women street vendors in Tiptur play a vital role in sustaining the local economy, yet their livelihoods remain constrained by low income, long working hours, poor infrastructure, harassment, and limited awareness of legal rights. The weak enforcement of the Street Vendors Act, 2014 further deepens their vulnerability, leaving them exposed to insecurity and marginalization. Strengthening municipal support through simplified registration systems, welfare and insurance schemes, skill development programs, and the creation of designated vending zones is essential to protect their livelihoods. At the same time, empowering vendors through legal awareness, participation in decision-making, and collective organization can enhance their bargaining power and resilience. Recognizing street vending as an integral part of urban planning will help bridge the gap between informal economies and formal governance. An inclusive, gender-sensitive policy framework can not only improve the socio-economic conditions of women vendors but also contribute to sustainable urban development and social equity.

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