

Street Food Vendors in Ballari: A Study on Socio-Economic Profile and Livelihood Challenges

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Abstract:

Street food vending is an important part of the urban informal economy, providing affordable food services and employment opportunities to a large section of the population. This study examines the socio-economic profile and livelihood challenges of street food vendors in Ballari City. The study adopts a descriptive research design and is based on both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected from 200 street food vendors using a structured questionnaire through the convenience sampling method. Secondary data were gathered from books, journals, government reports, and official publications. The collected data were analyzed using frequency and percentage analysis with the help of Microsoft Excel. The findings reveal that most vendors belong to the economically active age group, depend on street food vending as their primary source of income, and possess moderate business experience. The study also identifies several challenges, including limited access to institutional finance, inadequate basic infrastructure, long working hours, and insufficient awareness of government welfare schemes. In addition, a considerable number of vendors have experienced eviction or relocation, affecting the stability of their livelihoods. The study recommends improving access to affordable credit, strengthening basic civic amenities, simplifying vendor registration, enhancing awareness of government support programmes, and ensuring effective implementation of policies to improve the socio-economic well-being of street food vendors in Ballari.

Keywords: Street Food Vendors, Socio-Economic Profile, Livelihood Challenges, Informal Economy, Ballari

Introduction:

The informal economy plays a significant role in India's employment structure. Among its diverse activities, street food vending provides livelihood opportunities for thousands of urban households while supplying affordable food to workers, students and commuters. Street food vendors contribute to local economic activity through self-employment, low-cost services and support for allied businesses.

Ballari, an important commercial city in Karnataka, has witnessed a steady increase in street food vending due to urbanisation and changing consumer preferences. Despite their economic contribution, vendors continue to face problems such as limited access to finance, inadequate infrastructure, poor sanitation, business insecurity and periodic eviction. Although the Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and

Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014 provides a legal framework for protecting vendors, the benefits have not reached all eligible vendors. Against this background, the present study analyses the socio-economic profile and livelihood challenges of street food vendors in Ballari City.

Objectives of the Study

1. To analyze the socio-economic profile of street food vendors in Ballari.
2. To identify the major challenges affecting their livelihoods.

Review of Literature

Studies on street vending consistently recognise it as a major source of urban employment. Bhowmik (2012) observed that street vending absorbs labour displaced from the formal sector and supports low-income consumers. Bromley (2000) argued that vendors play a vital role in urban service delivery despite operating under uncertain regulatory environments. Donovan (2008) highlighted that inadequate infrastructure and harassment reduce business productivity. FAO and WHO publications have emphasised the importance of food safety training for street food vendors. Indian studies also report limited access to formal finance, inadequate civic amenities and weak implementation of welfare measures. However, relatively few empirical studies have focused specifically on Ballari, creating a need for a location-specific assessment.

Research Gap

Most previous studies have concentrated on metropolitan cities. Limited empirical evidence is available on the socio-economic conditions and livelihood challenges of street food vendors in Ballari. The present study attempts to bridge this gap by providing local evidence that can support policy formulation and urban planning.

Research Methodology

The study adopts a descriptive research design. Primary data were collected from 200 street food vendors in Ballari City using a structured questionnaire and convenience sampling. Secondary data were obtained from books, journals, government reports and official publications. The collected information was coded and analysed using frequency and percentage analysis with Microsoft Excel. The findings are presented through tables and interpreted systematically.

Data analysis:

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Respondents (n = 200)

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age	Below 25 years	24	12.0
	25–35 years	82	41.0
	36–45 years	60	30.0
	Above 45 years	34	17.0
	Total	200	100.0
Gender	Male	136	68.0
	Female	64	32.0
	Total	200	100.0

Education	Illiterate	28	14.0
	Primary Education	62	31.0
	High School	74	37.0
	PUC and Above	36	18.0
	Total	200	100.0
Family Size	1–3	44	22.0
	4–6	118	59.0
	More than 6	38	19.0
	Total	200	100.0

Table 2. Economic Profile of Respondents (n = 200)

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Business Experience	Less than 5 years	48	24.0
	5–10 years	86	43.0
	More than 10 years	66	33.0
	Total	200	100.0
Daily Income	Less than ₹500	42	21.0
	₹500–₹1,000	98	49.0
	More than ₹1,000	60	30.0
	Total	200	100.0
Primary Source of Income	Yes	164	82.0
	No	36	18.0
	Total	200	100.0
Source of Capital	Personal Savings	84	42.0
	Bank Loan	36	18.0
	Friends/Relatives	54	27.0
	Others	26	13.0
	Total	200	100.0

Table 3. Working Conditions and Challenges (n = 200)

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Working Hours	Less than 6 hours	28	14.0
	6–10 hours	116	58.0
	More than 10 hours	56	28.0
	Total	200	100.0
Drinking Water & Toilet Facilities	Yes	72	36.0
	No	128	64.0
	Total	200	100.0
Major Problem	Lack of Capital	68	34.0
	Competition	46	23.0

	Lack of Basic Infrastructure	42	21.0
	Weather-related Problems	24	12.0
	Others	20	10.0
	Total	200	100.0
Evicted/Relocated	Yes	74	37.0
	No	126	63.0
	Total	200	100.0

Table 4. Satisfaction and Expected Government Support (n = 200)

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Satisfaction Level	Highly Satisfied	32	16.0
	Satisfied	98	49.0
	Neutral	70	35.0
	Total	200	100.0
Expected Government Support	Financial Assistance	76	38.0
	Basic Infrastructure	54	27.0
	Business Licence	28	14.0
	Social Security	30	15.0
	Others	12	6.0
	Total	200	100.0

Findings and suggestions:

Findings

1. The majority of respondents (41%) belong to the 25–35 years age group, indicating that street food vending is largely carried out by economically active adults.
2. Male vendors (68%) outnumber female vendors (32%), showing greater male participation in the street food vending business.
3. Most respondents have completed high school education (37%), while 14% are illiterate, indicating a moderate level of educational attainment.
4. A majority of vendors (59%) belong to families with 4–6 members, suggesting moderate family dependency.
5. About 43% of the respondents have 5–10 years of business experience, indicating that many vendors have established businesses.
6. Nearly half of the respondents (49%) earn ₹500–₹1,000 per day, while only 30% earn more than ₹1,000.
7. Street food vending is the primary source of income for 82% of the respondents, highlighting its importance for livelihood.
8. Personal savings (42%) are the main source of business capital, followed by financial support from friends and relatives (27%). Only 18% started their business with bank loans.
9. Most vendors (58%) work 6–10 hours per day, while 28% work for more than 10 hours, indicating long working hours.

10. 64% of the respondents reported the absence of drinking water and toilet facilities at their vending locations.
11. The major challenge faced by vendors is lack of capital (34%), followed by competition (23%) and inadequate infrastructure (21%).
12. Around 37% of the respondents have experienced eviction or relocation, indicating insecurity in business operations.
13. Although many vendors are engaged in business, awareness and registration under government policies and schemes remain limited, reducing access to institutional support.
14. Almost half of the respondents (49%) are satisfied with their livelihood, while 35% reported a neutral level of satisfaction.
15. The most expected government support is financial assistance (38%), followed by provision of basic infrastructure (27%).

Suggestions

1. Government agencies should expand awareness campaigns on the Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014 and the PM SVANidhi Scheme to improve participation.
2. Easy and affordable institutional credit should be provided through banks and financial institutions to reduce dependence on personal savings and informal borrowing.
3. Urban local bodies should provide essential infrastructure such as safe drinking water, toilets, waste disposal facilities, electricity, and hygienic vending spaces.
4. Registration of street vendors should be simplified and encouraged so that vendors can access government welfare schemes and legal protection.
5. Skill development and food safety training programmes should be conducted regularly to improve business practices, hygiene, and customer confidence.
6. Municipal authorities should ensure fair implementation of vending regulations and minimize unnecessary eviction by providing designated vending zones.
7. Special financial and entrepreneurial support should be introduced for women street vendors to encourage greater participation.
8. Government departments and financial institutions should organize regular awareness programmes on credit schemes, digital payments, and financial management.
9. Social security measures such as health insurance, accident insurance, pension schemes, and emergency financial assistance should be extended to all eligible street vendors.
10. Periodic monitoring and evaluation of street vendor welfare programmes should be undertaken to improve policy implementation and ensure that benefits reach the intended beneficiaries.

Conclusion:

Street food vending plays a significant role in providing livelihood opportunities for a large section of the urban informal workforce in Ballari City. The study reveals that vendors face several challenges, including inadequate infrastructure, limited access to institutional finance, and insufficient awareness of government welfare schemes. Strengthening financial support, improving basic civic amenities, and enhancing policy awareness can significantly improve their socio-economic conditions. Effective implementation of

government initiatives and inclusive urban planning will contribute to the sustainable development and well-being of street food vendors.

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