



Problems of Street Vendors of Women: A Case Study of Kollenkode Village in Palakkad district of Kerala

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ABSTRACT

Women street vendors are a crucial component of India's informal economy. Their roles go beyond merely selling goods; they influence economic, social, and cultural aspects of urban and semi-urban life. Women vendors are part of India's informal sector, which constitutes a significant portion of employment (around 80–90% of total workforce). They support local supply chains: for example, farmers sell produce to women vendors, who then sell it in urban markets, creating income for multiple stakeholders. Women street vendors provide a steady income for themselves and their families. This income is often the primary or supplementary source for households, especially in low-income families. They provide essential goods at lower prices than formal retail stores. Urban poor, daily wage labourers and slum residents depend on them for fresh vegetables, fruits, and cooked food. Women vendors often sell goods close to residential areas, reducing transport costs for buyers. Street vending gives women financial independence, which increases their decision-making power in households. Financial independence fosters self-confidence and social mobility. Despite their importance, women street vendors face several challenges lack of legal protection, limited access to credit, gender discrimination, poor infrastructure, and impact of urban policies like city beautification. The study put forwarded some steps are necessary to improve the condition of women street vendors such as proper implementation of the street vendors act, 2014,

childcare facilities near vending areas, health insurance and social security benefits.

Introduction

Street vending refers to the selling of goods or services in public spaces without a permanent built-up shop. Vendors operate from pushcarts, baskets, stalls, or temporary structures. They may be stationary (fixed spot) or mobile (moving from place to place). Recognizing and strengthening their contribution is essential for inclusive economic growth and gender equality in India. India's economy is characterized by a large informal sector, which provides employment to nearly 80–90% of the workforce. Women vendors are visible in metropolitan cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, and Bengaluru, as well as in small towns and rural markets. Among the many occupations in this sector, street vending plays a vital role in sustaining livelihoods and ensuring affordable access to goods and services. Women street vendors form a significant segment of this workforce. They sell vegetables, fruits, flowers, snacks, garments, handicrafts, household items, and many other products in markets, roadside spaces, and residential areas. This study examines the economic, social, and developmental importance of women street vendors in India, along with the challenges they face and policy measures needed to improve their condition.

Significance of the study

Street vending is an essential part of India's informal economy. Across cities, towns, and villages, women street vendors sell vegetables, fruits, flowers, garments, cooked food, handicrafts, and other daily-use items. These women contribute significantly to household income, urban food supply, and local economic development. Women street vendors play a vital social and economic role in India. Women street vendors are a backbone of India's informal economy and urban life. They ensure the availability of affordable goods, support family incomes, and promote women's empowerment. Although they face legal, social, and economic challenges, proper policy implementation and social support can significantly improve their conditions.



Statement of the problem

Street vending requires minimal capital investment and little formal education. For poor and marginalized women, it offers an accessible and flexible source of income. Organizations such as National Association of Street Vendors of India have highlighted the contribution of street vendors, especially women, in strengthening the informal economy. Despite their importance, women street vendors often face challenges such as harassment, lack of legal recognition, limited access to credit, unsafe working conditions, lack of infrastructure, and financial constraints. Women vendors often face risks of theft, harassment, and unsafe working environments. They have poor access to clean water, sanitation, storage facilities and shelter from weather

Objectives of the study

The major objectives of the study are given below:

- 1 To analyse the age, education, marital status and of women street vendors
- 2 To analyse the problems of the street vendors.

Review of literature

Naila Kabeer (2024) studied the street vending in India is a traditional occupation that has existed for centuries. Weekly markets, temple markets, and festival bazaars are examples of traditional vending systems. Today, urbanization has expanded the scope of street vending, especially in cities where rural migrants seek employment. Street vendors contribute to urban food supply, informal retail networks, low-cost distribution systems and employment generation. Women play a significant role in this sector, particularly in the sale of perishable goods such as vegetables and fruits.

Jean & Baptiste Say (2021) argued that many women street vendors belong to marginalized communities, including migrants, widows, and single mothers. Street vending provides them with an opportunity to survive in urban areas without requiring formal employment. Women vendors often build strong relationships with regular customers. They create trust-based networks within neighbourhoods and contribute to social cohesion in local communities.



Alejandro Portes (2023) said that women street vendors come from diverse backgrounds. Most belong to low-income households. Many are migrants from rural areas who move to cities due to poverty, unemployment, or family distress. A large number of women vendors have low literacy levels. Limited education restricts their access to formal jobs, pushing them toward informal occupations like vending. Women vendors often manage both economic and domestic responsibilities. They balance vending work with childcare, cooking, and household management.

Methodology And Data Collection

The study is based on both **descriptive and analytical methods**. The study uses **both primary and secondary data sources** to ensure accuracy and reliability.

A. Primary data

A field visit was conducted to **Kollengode village and nearby tourism spots** to observe the tourist inflow, local environment and infrastructure, Interaction between tourists and local residents and Cleanliness, waste disposal and transport facilities. The direct observation helped in understanding the behaviour of tourists, impact of tourism on paddy fields and village life, traffic congestion and overcrowding issues and facilities available for tourists. Also, informal interviews were conducted with the local residents, shop owners and tea stall operators, farmers involved in farm tourism and auto drivers and local guides

B. Secondary data

The secondary data was collected from the books related to **kerala tourism, western Ghats and rural tourism**, government publications and reports of **Kerala tourism department**, newspapers such as *Hindu*, *Indian Express*, *Manorama*, travel magazines and journals, online articles, research papers and tourism websites.

C. Sampling Method

A **convenience sampling method** was adopted with constituting 270 respondents due to time and resource limitations. The sample included the local residents, small business owners and tourists



visiting the village. This method was suitable for understanding **general perceptions and experiences** related to tourism.

Limitations of the Study

The important limitations of the study are listed below:

- Time constraints limited detailed surveys
- Some respondents were unwilling to share detailed information
- Lack of official tourism statistics specific to Kollengode
- Dependence on secondary sources for certain historical and economic data

Despite these limitations, the data collected is sufficient to draw meaningful conclusions.

Data analysis

The study the age, educational levels and marital status and problems confronted by street vendors especially women are explained in the different tables.

A. Educational levels

In the study 270 respondents are surveyed. The gender wise classifications are listed below:

No.	Educational levels	No. of people	% of people
1	Illiterate	58	21.48
2	Below primary	116	42.96
3	Secondary	73	27.05
4	Higher secondary	19	7.03
5	Degree or others	4	1.48
	Total	270	100

Source: primary data



The table examined that male visitors (58%) are higher than female (42%) in the study area. Likewise, the average visitors of male are higher than female.

B. Age Group

The age categories of respondents are 4 namely below 20, 20-40,40-60 and above 60 for knowing demographic features of visitors. The age wise classifications in the study area are given below:

No.	Male	% of male
Below 20	7	2.59
20-30	36	13.33
30-40	49	18.15
40-50	79	29.26
50- 60	62	22.96
60-70	22	8.15
Above 70	15	5.56
Total	270	100

Source: primary data

The table illustrated that age category of 40-60 (both male and female) is more prefer to eco-tourism which is a signal of environmental preservation attitude of modern people. Above all age of more than 60 people in Kerala also prefer to village tourism.

Marital status

Status	numbers	% of male
Married	152	56.29
Unmarried	16	5.93
Diverse	24	8.89
Separated	49	18.15
Widow	26	9.63
Others	3	1.11



Total	270	100
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Source: primary data

Problems

Problems	numbers	% of male
Storage	120	44.44
Shelter	13	4.82
Govt. support	23	8.52
Credit facility	63	23.33
Discrimination	19	7.04
Legal protection	32	11.85
Total	270	100

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Recommendations of the study

The study put forwarded the following steps are necessary to improve the condition of women street vendors:

- Proper implementation of the Street Vendors Act, 2014.
- Easy access to microfinance and digital payment systems.



- Skill development and entrepreneurship training.
- Provision of safe vending zones with basic facilities.
- Awareness programs about legal rights and government schemes.
- Skill development programs.
- Gender-sensitive urban planning.
- Childcare facilities near vending areas.
- Health insurance and social security benefits.

Conclusion

Women street vendors are a backbone of India's informal economy. They provide affordable goods, generate employment, support families, and strengthen communities. Despite facing legal, financial, and social challenges, their resilience and determination sustain millions of households. Protecting and empowering women street vendors is not just a matter of social justice but also essential for inclusive economic growth. Effective implementation of policies, improved infrastructure, financial support, and gender-sensitive planning can significantly enhance their working conditions and overall contribution to society. While women street vendors play a significant role in India's economy and society, their full potential is hindered by multiple challenges. Strengthening legal protections, providing financial and infrastructural support, and empowering women through skill development can help address these challenges.

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