

## An investigation of socio-economic conditions of street hawkers: a case study of Hyderabad, Sindh, Pakistan

Nazia Dharejo\*<sup>1</sup> | Atif Hussain Dharejo<sup>2</sup> | Noor Un Nisa<sup>3</sup> | Hakim Ali Mahesar<sup>4</sup>

1. Institute of Commerce, University of Sindh Jamshoro, Sindh, Pakistan.
2. District and Session Court, Pano Akil, Sukkar, Sindh, Pakistan.
3. Department of Business and Management, Bath Spa University, Academic Centre RAK, UAE.
4. Department of Commerce, University of Sindh Jamshoro, Sindh, Pakistan.

\*Corresponding Author Email: [naziadharejo@gmail.com](mailto:naziadharejo@gmail.com)

### Abstract

Street hawkers have been part of urban street life in cities of developed and developing countries. The study focuses on the socio-economic conditions of street vendors in Hyderabad, Sindh province, Pakistan. A review of the existing literature shows an acute shortage of empirical evidence on street hawkers in Pakistan, especially in Hyderabad, Sindh. This study aims to bridge this gap by contributing empirical evidence on the subject. For this study, a survey has been conducted to identify the socio-economic condition of the street vendors, their reasons for joining street vending, and problems faced by the street hawkers during street vending. This survey covered 120 street vendors in Hyderabad. The data has been collected from both primary and secondary sources. The secondary data has been collected from research articles published in journals, and books, newspapers, and research reports published by various organizations. The findings of the study show that the street hawkers significantly contributed to the socio-economic uplift of the masses at a larger level. The street hawkers have very little capital to invest in their businesses.

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## **1. Introduction**

The original description of a hawker found in the judicial dictionary of terms and phrases translated judicially (1890, 841) is: “a person who goes from the city in which he resides and takes a room in another city and sells goods directly from the city of his residence was a Hawker, Peddler, Petty Chapman, or other trading person going from city to city.” Hawker is a person who goes from place to place and sells wares by bringing them through the streets. They are usually present in small and large towns of the country. In our everyday lives, they play a role as replacements. They provide services from “down to dust” in any situation. Bhowmik (2005) defines a street vendor as “a person who sells things for sale to the public without having a permanent built-up structure.” Wongtada (2014) described street traders as “people who offer products to the public for sale without a permanent built-up structure; they are often called hawkers, peddlers, street sellers, micro-traders, or urban vendors”. According to Hasan and Alam (2015) “street vending” is frequently used as a synonym for “street trade”, “hawking” and “peddling.” Street vendors are those who work in the field of street vending. In the 5<sup>th</sup> Street Vendor Project Working Group Meeting in Lahore with the Friedrich Naumann Foundation (FNF) and the National Youth Assembly, (2019) state that the local vernacular, known as “the lay walay” these street vendors make a significant contribution by taking the market to one's doorstep.

Street vending plays a major role in the economy of the country like; employment creation, production, and income generation but they are facing many problems in the workplace. The study investigated their problems and the reasons of entering hawkers into street vending. It is thus important to explore the various problems of street vendors in terms of their low income, double burden, covered long distance, lack of space, no social support, weather (sun, rain and cold), competitors, time consumption, physical and mental stress, harassment, health problems and lack of toilet (washroom facilities). Other important aspects the reasons of joining street vending were poverty, husband /father drunkard, no one support, husband/ father job-less, insufficient income, paying school fees for their children, husband/father dead, traditional profession, exploitation, uneducated or illiteracy and lack of skill to adopt other jobs. These all are the reasons of street hawkers of Hyderabad. In view of these discussions, the objectives of the study are: a) To know the demographic, socio-economic and geographic conditions of street hawkers of Hyderabad (Pakistan); b) To know the reasons of joining street vending; c) To explore the specific problems faced by street hawkers during vending; and d) To provide some suggestions to improve street vendor's problems.

## **2. Literature review**

### **2.1. Street vending**

According to Zulfiqar and Butt (2021), there are many different types of street selling, such as moveable (Chabri/Pheri) and immovable (kiosks/Khokas), and the phenomenon is not unique

to Pakistan. One of the most visible activities aspects of the informal sector is street selling, which is prevalent in both developed and developing nations. However, it may also involve engaging in trading without a license, outside of explicitly specified trading areas, and failing to pay local or federal taxes or allocating one's own shelter for trading (Alebachew, 2017; Ndhlovu, 2011).

Srivastava (2019) found that street vending provides a flexible link in commercial supply chains vitality urban streets and provides affordable goods and services for many urban residents. Street vendors provide consumer demands from various class groups that the official economy is unable to fully meet. Their own social and economic circumstances, however, are appalling. Therefore, it is important to properly control street selling in order to safeguard those involved in it.

According to Bhatt and Jariwala (2018), along with supplying a family with food, street selling frequently creates jobs. The globe was observing a change in employment patterns and new workplace regulations during the challenging times of Covid-19, but street vendors have followed the same rules and provided services to the people of society. Yet, street vending exacerbates congestion at busy sites.

## **2.2. Characteristics of street hawkers**

Hasan and Alam (2015) argue that the term 'street vendor' is used for all the street vendors, fixed stalls, street vendors, they use kiosks; or semi-fixed street vendors, they do not have stalls to sell their wares from; instead, they use foldable tables, collapsible stands, or wheeled pushcarts that they remove from the streets and store overnight to exhibit their goods, and for mobile street vendors they use a bicycle, push cards or walk through the streets to sell their goods.

Bhowmik (2005) define that the street vendors may be mobile in the sense that they travel from one place to another place while pushing their carts or carrying baskets on their heads, or they may be fixed in the sense that they take up space on sidewalks or other public or private locations. In this article, the word "street vendor" refers to both stationary and moving vendors as well as any other terminology used locally or regionally to characterize them. In this study, the terms "hawker" and "street vendor" have the same meaning and are frequently used interchangeably.

Bhowmik and Saha (2012) found that the street vendors can be seen strategically setting up their pushcarts, tables, and loaders along sidewalks and street corners, which pushcart vendors use to transport their goods (Winter, 2017). Street vendors may be stationary in the sense that they occupy pavement space or other public/private areas; they may be mobile in the sense that they frequently move from place to place by carrying their goods on pushcarts, in baskets or on their heads.

### **2.3. Where street hawkers are found**

According to the National Policy for urban street vendors, this includes hawkers, peddlers, and squatters as well as anyone involved in the sale of items, goods, food, etc., or providing services to the general public on a street, lane, sidewalk, footpath, pavement, in public parks, or in any other public or private area. The street sellers may be seen in metropolitan public places worldwide, but street vendor employment statistics are notoriously difficult to come by (Roever, 2014; 2016).

Banerjee (2014) explains that in our streets, close to schools, fairs, intersections of roads or train stations, the street hawkers are seen here and everywhere familiar. Street hawkers are found in every corner of the streets, selling various items. They don't have any particular place to sell their items. They visit the public areas and sites crowded with people and sell their items in front of the people.

### **2.4. Reasons for street vending**

The reasons for driving people to accept street vending may vary because the triggers are not the same, for the underprivileged communities, street vending has become an option whose approved and traditional place and market forecasts differ locally and provincially (Hasan & Alam, 2015). Low ability levels, lack of paying jobs, and hunger in rural areas for secure employers in the formal sector have driven individuals out of their rural communities to search for a better city life (Timalsina, 2012). Most street hawkers sell for survival because they have failed to get jobs in the formal economy and are involved in street vending as their only option (Ndhlovu, 2011).

### **2.5. Contribution of street hawkers**

According to Zulfiqar and Butt (2021) the street vendors are not only trying to play their roles to earn their living and help the local economy, but also play a significant role in adding beauty to the country. The street vendors' contributions to the urban life go beyond their self-employment. They generate demand for various services provided by other informal workers, including transport workers, tea sellers, market porters, security guards, recyclers, and others (Roever, 2014).

Bromley and Mackie (2009) say that street vendors' contributions to urban life go beyond their self-employment; they generate demand for a wide range of services provided by other informal workers, including transport workers, tea sellers, market porters, security guards, recyclers and others. The contribution of street vending in the informal sector for the safety of the majority of poor urban authorities is disregarded; it has a considerable share of national economies for several prices and provides opportunities for earning income otherwise unemployed people (Bhowmik, 2003).

## **2.6. Problems faced by street vendors**

Street vendors are the most internal working section of the human society. They face the problems like poverty, health care, lack of facilities (e.g., shelters, storage), lack of access to credit, safety equipment's (umbrella, water and etc), lack of business skills and education, harassment by police and local government. Hawkers lack a permanent location; they frequently travel from one location to another. They do not need to store their products because they sell them quickly (Karthikeyan & Mangaleswaran, 2013; 2017).

Amrutha and Cholakkal (2021) describe that the hawkers are facing so many problems in order to survive among the formal sectors. Their major problems are related to credit and infrastructure inadequacies, social security, economic instability, working instability, lack of awareness about legal rights, non-availability of basic amenities, weather fluctuations, harassment by municipal and police officials related to occupying major traffic junction and lack of shelters and storage space etc.

## **3. Research methodology**

The case study research approach is used for this research. This study is based on an exploratory research design. The data collected from both secondary and primary sources. Secondary data has been collected from books, journals, different websites, the local newspaper, reports on the activities of street vendors, and the attitude of the government. Primary data was collected through the qualitative method being the leading one for drawing samples from the population and for analysing the data. The city of Hyderabad, Sindh, Pakistan has been selected as a large-scale migration has been taken place and the city is the best indicator of urbanization and the street vending markets (Resham Bazar, Tower Market (Ghanta Ghar), Kapra Market, Naval Rai Market, Cloth Market, Sabzi Mandi, and Wholesale Market) have been chosen, as there is a large number of street vendors selling vegetables.

A total of 120 respondents (78 male vendors and 42 women vendors) from those streets and markets of the city; have been selected by a random draw. Information has been collected from respondents through personal interviews, based on a set of well-structured and determined questions regarding marital status, age, education, experience, family size, distance covered, and income monthly. Collecting more and more information through informal interviews has also been taken. Data has been analysed with the help of the excel method. Appropriate statistical tools like description, frequency, and percentage have been used to measure the demographic, and socio-economic, reason for joining street vending, and the problem faced by street vendors of Hyderabad.

## **4. Results and discussion**

The analysis of results is given in table-1 and describe the sociodemographic features of street

vendors. In this section, the sociodemographic profiles given to the vendors are based on primary data from the survey conducted in 2018-19.

The research results indicate specific differences in the degree of involvement in street trade between men and women. The results of the findings on gender of study, showed that total 120 street vendors are participants in the study, out of which 78 (65%) were male while 42 were female (35%). Women find it difficult to be street vendors and in comparison to males, have a lot more difficulty doing so. The crimes including rape, sexual harassment and eve-teasing typically harm women (Diwakar *et al.*, 2014; Shamsheri *et al.*, 2021). Although males predominate in the field of street vending the percentage of female sellers' day by day increases significantly (Bhowmik, 2001; Saha, 2009; Gamielidien & Niekerk, 2017).

It has been found that 57% of the street vendors were married, 30% were single, and 13% were divorced, as indicated by the marital status of the respondents. The age groups reveal that 36% of respondents were from 32 to 42 and 24% were aged from 21 to 31 years old; 22% were 43 to 53 years old; 10% were 10 to 20 years old, and 8% were 54 years old or higher. The above data shows that the largest population of street hawkers holds the division of 32 to 42 years old individuals. At this age, they need to pursue other means of money, like beginning businesses, to cover their day-to-day family living expenses.

Findings of the study regarding the level of education of respondents show that about 17% of street hawkers are illiterate, about 17.5% of total vendors can use signature only, 31% of street hawkers attended primary school from level 1 to level 5, 12% attended middle school from level 6 to level 8, 12% attended secondary education from level 9 to 10, 6% followed by those attending higher secondary education and 2% of street hawkers completed graduate and 2.5% of hawkers only join university, because most bachelor's degree graduates (even those with still higher degrees) tend to be working in the public sector and value white-collar socially respectable positions. Similarly, street selling professionals from the surrounding areas have a weak view.

The results show that 27% of respondents have less than five years of experience out of 100% and 32% have experience 5 to 10. This data reveals that most respondents have 5 to 10 years of experience in the street vending field. 21% of respondents have 11 to 20 years of experience. 12% of respondents worked for 21 to 30 years in the same field and only 8% had 31 or above years of experience.

The preliminary survey results have found a very high level of poverty among street vendors. But they (both male and female) have a significant size of family as they very little think about family planning. 21% of street vendors have 1-3 members in their family; 37% have 4-6 members, age 7 or above family members are 42% of the street vendors. Moreover, due to the large size of the family, females cannot spend much time in their workplace because they always have the double burden of managing the home and vending.

Table-1: Demographic socio-economic profile of street hawkers

Variables	Description	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	78	65
	Female	42	35
Marital Status	Married	68	57
	Single	36	30
	Divorced	16	13
Age	10-20	12	10
	21-31	29	24
	32-42	43	36
	43-53	26	22
	54 or above	10	8
Education Level	Illiterate	20	17
	Signed Only	21	17.5
	Primary School	37	31
	Middle Education	15	12
	Secondary education	15	12
	Higher Secondary	7	6
	Join University	3	2.5
Experience	Graduated Degree	2	2
	Less than five years	32	27
	5 to 10 years	38	32
	11 to 20 years	25	21
	21 to 30 years	15	12
Family Size	31 years or above	10	8
	1-3 Members	25	21
	4-6 Members	45	37
Distance Covered	7 or above Members	50	42
	1-2 Km	42	35
	3-4 Km	33	27
	5-6 Km	21	17
	7-8 Km	3	2.5
	9-10 Km	3	2.5
Monthly Income	11 or above	19	16
	4000-5000	24	20
	5001-6000	37	31
	6001-7000	24	20
	7001-8000	20	17
	8001 or above	15	12

Source: Primary data

Regarding the distance from their home to the marketplace to buy goods for sale, the highest 35% of street hawkers say that they are 1-2 km Travel, while 27% of street vendors travel 3-4 km. 5-6 km respondents are 17% of the respondents; 7-8 and 9-10 km respondents are 2.5%, whereas 11 km or above respondents are 16%. Some street vendors sell vegetables or fruits in

their auto-rickshaws; they carry goods from the marketplace and then sell them to villages they travel 11 or more than 11 km. Many of the street vendors complain that we do not want to go five or more Kilometres away from home. This is because it is too stressful for us; we go to the market because of poverty or low income. The survey found that women travel less distance than men.

The respondent's total monthly income shows that 20% of the respondent's monthly earnings range from Rs.4000 to 5000. 31% of the respondents are earning between Rs.5001-6000. 20% of the vendor's monthly earning ranging between Rs.6001-7000 and 17 percent of the respondents are earning Rs.7001-8000. 12% of the vendors are earning monthly between Rs.8001 or above.

From the information gathered from field surveys, the reasons for street hawkers' involvement can be drawn. The table-2 shows the reasons for joining street vending. It was found that due to poverty street vendors have entered this profession, 17.5% of the respondent given the reason for joining vending is poverty; it is the highest percent. Poor people in society resort to doing some sort of job to generate income. Even vendors did not get a fixed amount of money from street vending, but they do. Secondly, 17% of vendors have said that we do not have jobs and their fathers/ husbands are jobless. 15% of the respondents say that they have no education/ illiterate, so they have to option of this vending job, but it was observed that most of the street vendors, both male and female, were illiterate even they were speaking national languages (Urdu), and their other language change (Sindhi, Balochi, Pathani, etc). 10% of street hawkers have chosen the vending job due to low income and 8% have chosen it due to no one supporting them, whereas 7.5% of street hawkers have chosen the vending job as a traditional profession. 7% have to choose it due to lack of skill to adopt another job.

Table-2: Reasons of joining street vending

Reasons of join Street Vending	Frequency	Percent
Poverty	21	17.5
Job-Less	20	17
Uneducated or Illiteracy	18	15
Insufficient Income	12	10
No one Support	10	8
Traditional Profession	9	7.5
Lack of Skill to Adopt another Job	8	7
Paying School Fees for their Children	7	6
Husband/Father Dead	7	6
Father unable to Continue	4	3
Husband/Father Drunkard	4	3

Source: Primary data

The 6% of hawkers have entered due to pay school fees for their children. 6% are bound to adopt this vending as their father/ husband is dead and 3% of the participants adopt vending because their father is unable to continue it. 3% of the street vendors join this business, husband/father drunk; they spend time and money mostly on liquor. Most street hawkers in the sample area were males than females because individuals do not like sitting on the roadside, selling vegetables and other items to female members of the family. Females enter this career only because they have no alternative, and there are no jobs for the male members of the family, and even if they earn money, they spend most of the money on liquor.

Numerous financial and non-financial issues affect street sellers. The primary difficulties faced by street vendors include a lack of space, a lack of funding, frequent conflicts with local governments, and an absence of the right to sell in that location, security concerns, and several other everyday problems. Some problems researchers used for the research. Most of them have no education, no capital for further investment, no support, time-consuming, physical and mental stress, and competitors, double burden, environmental problems, harassment, health problems, and lack of toilets.

The table-3 give a picture of the key problems challenging the lives of most of the street vendors. Street vendors maintain the business and bear a livelihood from what they earn daily. 20% of street vendors believe that Lack of Space is a major problem, they face. 16% of vendors face low-income issues. 12% have said that the vending job is very time-consuming. 11% of street vendors think that municipal authorities, police, and local bodies are harassed. All vendors have to pay a fixed daily sum to the police or deals every day, whereas women vendors are harassed by the male vendors also and are not allowed mostly to sit on the pavements or in the daily make-shift markets.

Table-3: The problems faced by street vendors

Problems Faced by Street Vendors	Frequency	Percent
Lack of Space	24	20
Low Income	19	16
Time Consuming	15	12
Harassment	13	11
Lack of Toilet	10	8
Health Problems	9	7.5
Weather (Sun, Rain and Cold)	8	7
Covered Long Distance	7	6
Security	7	6
Competitors	5	4
Physical and Mental Stress	3	2.5

Source: Primary data

The results show that 8% of street hawkers feel that a lack of toilets (washrooms) has an effect on a hawker's health and 7.5 vendors suffer from health problems. 7% of street vendors face environmental issues during vending; they are not protecting themselves and their products. 6% of participants covered long distances, which is very time-consuming. 6% of respondents feel insecure because they have no social support; they suffer a lot from municipal authorities and the police, local authorities or Dallahs and mafias; and 4% of the vendors face problems due to the competitors. Physical and mental strains are major problems and 2.5% of hawkers find this problem.

## **5. Conclusion**

Street vendors are quite prevalent and visible everywhere today. Their calls (hokas) are interesting. When people of society hear their voices, people swarm to them and buy all the necessities they require. They provide a variety of things for sale, including fruits and vegetables. They can also fix furniture, cutlery, shoes, and other items. A street vendor is a person who sells goods or services to the general public from a temporary static structure or movable stall rather than from a permanent built-up structure (or headload). Street vendors may be fixed, taking up space on sidewalks or other public or private spaces, or they may be mobile, traveling from location to location while pushing carts, cycling, carrying baskets on their heads, or hawking their products inside moving buses.

Vending is currently a substantial source of income for many urban poor people because of the low skill and capital requirements. Due to a lack of social protection, street sellers regularly expose their goods to inclement weather, such as bright sunlight, continuous rain, and excessively hot or low temperatures. Furthermore, street vendors' working conditions were not good; they faced long working hours, unsafe work environments, and lower incomes. The majority of street vendors in Hyderabad, Sindh province, Pakistan, were shown to trade continuously for over eight hours each day in order to survive. Most of them appear to be concerned for their families and personal lives. They cannot spend much time with their family members. The government and agencies are not focusing much on the hawker's contribution to economic development; after this study, hawkers may be the centre of attraction.

### **5.1. Suggestions**

Here are some Suggestions to improve the street vending business and their contributions:

- The majority (20%) of the Street Vendors are in search for space where they run their business, so the government should arrange place or venue for their vending.
- The government should improve the conditions of the vending venue by including all facilities like space, washrooms, water facilities, and protection. The Street Vendors are working in the open places; hence they are affected by more health problems. So, they must have monthly check-ups in the hospital.

- Arrange vending awareness programs in cities and make welfare organizations encourage vendors and help street vendors in the uncertainty.
- Develop financial strategies to improve street vending in Hyderabad Sindh, Pakistan.
- Offer street sellers skill-based training on topics including social skills, communication, time management, self-confidence, and the capacity to accept and learn from both positive and negative situations.

## **5.2. Recommendation for future research**

This research mainly focused on street vendors, as a result of research and research scholars in the future would be able to suggest and lead to the improvement and self-respect of street hawkers, and future researchers will also be examined other variables of the street hawkers. In the future sample size may be expanded at the country level rather than the focused city or province, like our neighbouring country India has been deeply studied by Hawkers and published their reports. The study may serve as the beginning road map for resolving issues that street sellers meet on a daily basis.

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