



## **SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND HEALTH CONDITION OF MIGRANT STREET VENDORS IN KOZHIKODE**

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### **ABSTRACT**

India is one of the fastest-growing economies and the most populated country in the world. As per ILO Report 2019, 90 percent of the entire workforce is in the informal sector. As per the government estimates, 14% of the total urban informal employment and around 10 million street vending are due to low-level financial investment, easy access to entry, and no need of higher education, skill, and expenditure compared to any other job. Street vendors are very hard working, but they earn a low level of income compared to other jobs. The majority of the street vendors are doing their business on their own and work more than 10 hours a day, but they earn a very low level of income, compared to other regular jobs. This occupation is already having poor employment statics but domestic and migrant street vendors are facing many problems in their working life. The intensity of socio-economic and health problems is comparatively higher among migrant workers than domestic street vendors. They face so many problems in their workplace as well as their family life. So this study aims to find out the working conditions of migrant street vendors in Kozhikode City.

**Keywords: Domestic workers, Informal Sector, Migrant Workers, Street Vendors, Working Conditions.**

### **INTRODUCTION**

In India, most of the urban poor people survive by working in the informal sector. Poverty, lack of employment in rural areas, unemployment, and under employment are the main reasons for

migration of people to the informal sectors of the cities for work and their livelihood. Like other informal sectors, street vending is also characterized by a low level of initial investment, easy access to entry,

self-employment and it involves large numbers of people. In cities, there is a large number of people selling a wide range of goods and services on the street. Street vendors are those people who are unsuccessful or are unable to get regular jobs in formal sectors. This section of the people are poor and always tries to solve their livelihood problems through their own financial resources. The contribution of street vendors is important to the overall economy and labour market. Street vending is the most important and very regular phenomenon and plays a significant role in the urban informal economy by providing a wide range of goods and services to the common people and also generating self-employment. Street vendors are regarded as self-employed workers in the informal sector who offer their labour to sell their goods and services without having any permanent built-up structure (NPUSV-2006).

The number of street vendors in Kozhikode city is increasing day by day. They come here from various parts of the country. Almost all migrant street vendors start this business due to poverty, unemployment, low skill, low level of investment and easy access to entry. Their family size is large and find this business easy to earn for their family. Many of the migrant street vendors are constrained by the unstable socio-economic conditions of

their families. Migrant street vendors are mostly middle-aged men. The number of female migrant street vendors is very small because, they have to migrate with their families and need support from their family members for the vending activity. Migrant street vendors are an integral part of the urban informal economy and they prefer vending places where pedestrian flows are high, people come to this place are various reason and regular customers.

Debdulal Shaha (2011) depicts the working life of street vendors in Mumbai. They find out that most of the street vendors depend on money lenders for their financial requirements and they work for long 8 to 12 hours a day with no well-being and security conditions in their working environment. Bhat and Nengroo (2013) conducted a study on 'Urban Informal Sector: A case study of street vendors in Kashmir' and highlighted the reason for choosing street vending as their employment option. They found out that the main reason for choosing street vending was the lack of employment opportunities, poor educational background and absence of earning members in the family. There are more people from the age group of 16-35 years, are mainly concentrated this work. The majority of the street's business commenced their operations in the early morning typically working for 7 to 10 hours each day. Vendors' earning are

dependent on the type of product they sell. The highest profit has been earned by those vendors who are selling footwear cloth and fish. Karhikeyan and Mangaleswaran (2013) conducted a study on “Problem faced by the street vendors in their workplace: A study with special reference to Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu, India”. They found out that their physical health and their psychological condition are not as significant as their age. A brief study on marginalized migrant street vendors in Thiruvallur District by George and Saravanan (2019) depicted the working life of migrant street vendors. Both Government and NGO’s need to play a vital role in the development of migrant street vendors. Migrant street vendors working in unsafe places is a major problem for those people who at working on the streets. Vinod and Abinvyas (2020) conducted a study on ‘Socio-economic profile of street vendors in Kerala: A case study of vendors in East Fort, Thiruvananthapuram’. They found out that street vending is a male-dominated activity. As compared to males, females are less in numbers. The security problems faced by the women vendors and the male dominance may be the reasons behind the smaller number of females in these sectors. The study showed that the participation of youngsters was less in street vending because youngsters prefer white-collar jobs. Nowadays most of the youngsters are

highly qualified and they might not want to do such type of job.

All the above-mentioned studies focused on the working life of domestic street vendors in different cities but any of the studies not conducted on the socio-economic and health condition of migrant street vendors. Migrant street vendors are facing numerous problems in their day-to-day lives. Their major problems are related to credit and infrastructure inadequacies, social security economic instability, working instability, lack of awareness about their legal rights, non-availability of basic amenities, weather fluctuation, and lack of shelter and storage space. They have long hours of work without rest and lack of urban amenities and have an unhygienic environment. In this scenario, it is highly important to examine the real state of migrant street vendors in general and their working conditions. The study provides useful information about socio-economic and health issues faced by migrant street vendors in Kozhikode. Moreover, increasing the number of supermarkets and modern markets affect the efficient operation of street vending activity. They have long hours to work without any rest and lack urban amenities but earn a very low level of income compared to domestic street vendors. In this scenario, it is highly important to examine the real working conditions of migrant street vendors in Kozhikode.

Hence this paper attempts to analyse the socio-economic and health status of migrant street vendors in Kozhikode and to study the working conditions of migrant street vendors in Kozhikode.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The present study is descriptive and analytical in nature as it aims to describe the status of migrant street vendors in Kozhikode. The research is based on both primary and secondary data. The empirical analysis of the study is based on Primary data. Primary data was collected from the inter-state migrant street vendors in the Kozhikode District of Kerala based on a structured interview schedule, focus group discussions, and participatory approaches among various stakeholders. Both quantitative and qualitative information gathered to supplement the data. For the present study, a well-structured questionnaire was developed for primary data collection. A sample of 50 inter-state migrant street vendors was selected randomly.

Secondary data were collected from documents and published reports of Government and non-governmental agencies. Besides this, the relevant data were also collected from Economic Reviews by the Government of Kerala, Department of Economics and Statistics of the Government of Kerala, and various studies and reports undertaken by researchers in the relevant fields etc. For

the analysis of data, simple statistical techniques like percentages and averages were used.

Kozhikode is the second-largest urban city in the Kerala State. Over 30,000 migrant workers temporarily settled in different parts of Kozhikode District alone and they should get a comfortable stay for a healthy living (Labour Department). According to the official figure available from the Kozhikode Corporation, there are 2036 street vendors in the city with special identity cards. In Kozhikode District, street vendors are doing their vending activity mainly in Palayam, Kozhikode Beach, SM Street, bus stand at Vatakara, Koyilandy, Thamarassery, Medical College and highway roadside. Street vending profession is mainly male-oriented activity in Kozhikode and the result of this study also shows that the sex composition of the migrant street vendors in Kozhikode is 80% of the street vendors are male and about 20% are female and the majority of women vendors support their family members.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The major objective of the study is to examine the socio-economic and health conditions of migrant street vendors in Kozhikode based on both primary and secondary information. The primary data were collected from the street vendors of Kozhikode District, a sample size of 50 migrant street vendors were randomly

selected with the help of a well-structured questionnaire. The comprehensive analysis of the socio-economic and health profiles of migrant street vendors in Kozhikode is as follows.

The survey conducted among in-migrant street vendors consists of 80% male and 20% female. It is observed that street vending is a male-dominant activity, in the case of migrant vendors because it is easier for men to migrate in terms of family and social norms. About 20% of females migrated with their families to support their partner businesses.

The age group is 35-45, which constituted around 40% of respondents (Table 1). The second most observed age group is 45-55(30%). It indicates that middle age groups do not find any jobs in formal sectors. Only 4% of in-migrant vendors are below 25 years of age.

**Table 1. Age Group of the Respondents**

| Age Group  | No of Respondent | Percentage |
|------------|------------------|------------|
| Below 25   | 2                | 4          |
| 25-35      | 6                | 12         |
| 35-45      | 20               | 40         |
| 45-55      | 15               | 30         |
| 55 & above | 7                | 14         |
| Total      | 50               | 100        |

Source: Primary Data

26% of migrants surveyed are from Tamil Nadu (Table 2). The second most migrant street vendors are from Bihar (22%) and then West Bengal (20%). There are a few from other states like Karnataka, Assam, and other states. It is found that the

high number of migrants are from Tamil Nadu due to being the neighbouring state of Kerala and the low wage rate in their state compared to Kerala.

**Table 2. State wise native respondents in Percentage (%).**

| State       | No of Respondent | Percentage |
|-------------|------------------|------------|
| Tamil Nadu  | 13               | 26         |
| Bihar       | 11               | 22         |
| Karnataka   | 3                | 6          |
| Assam       | 5                | 10         |
| West Bengal | 10               | 20         |
| Others      | 8                | 16         |
| Total       | 50               | 100        |

Source: Primary Data

It was observed that most (72%) of them have below SSLC and 22% had SSLC and anyone of the migrant vendors is not studying above degree (Table 3). Most of the surveyed are not able to study further because of family-related problems, due to which they had to find means of daily living at a young age.

**Table 3: Educational Qualification of the Respondents**

| Education        | No of Respondent | Percentage |
|------------------|------------------|------------|
| Below SSLC       | 36               | 72         |
| SSLC             | 11               | 22         |
| Higher Secondary | 2                | 4          |
| Degree           | 1                | 2          |
| Above Degree     | 0                | 0          |
| Total            | 50               | 100        |

Source: Primary Data

The factors that motivated the migrant street vendors to take up entrepreneurship have been identified and presented in the (Table 4). A majority of 44% of respondents took up street vending

to overcome unemployment. While 24% of respondents took up street vending to support their families. The respondents 16% got motivated for self-achievement and some are inspired to no other alternative income.

**Table 4: Motivating factors to start street vending**

| Motivating factor               | No of Respondent | Percentage |
|---------------------------------|------------------|------------|
| To be independent               | 8                | 16         |
| To overcome unemployment        | 22               | 44         |
| No other alternative for income | 6                | 12         |
| To support family               | 12               | 24         |
| Others                          | 2                | 4          |
| Total                           | 50               | 100        |

Source: Primary Data

It was observed that (34%) of the migrant street vendors are engaged in vending food items like bhaji, panipuri, tea, and snack items (Table 5) and the remaining 20%, 14%, 12% and 6% are involved in vending fancy items, fruits, vegetables and stationery items respectively.

**Table 5: Vending Product**

| Items                  | No of Respondent | Percentage |
|------------------------|------------------|------------|
| Vegetables             | 6                | 12         |
| Fruits                 | 7                | 14         |
| Ready to eat Food Item | 17               | 34         |
| Cloth                  | 5                | 10         |
| Stationery items       | 3                | 6          |
| Fancy Items            | 10               | 20         |
| Others                 | 2                | 4          |
| Total                  | 50               | 100        |

Source: Primary Data

Migrant street vendors engaged in different modes of vending like Static, mobile, partially mobile, and so on (Table 6). It is found that there are more static street vendors selling food items, clothes, footwear, etc. Mobile vendors include fruits, vegetables, fancy items so on. Based on the survey, static street vendors (42%), 26% are partially mobile vendors, 16% are mobile vendors, 10% are roll-out carpet vendors and 6% are selling their product at other methods.

**Table 6: Type of vending**

| Type of vending         | No of Respondent | Percentage |
|-------------------------|------------------|------------|
| Static street vendor    | 21               | 42         |
| Mobile vendor           | 8                | 16         |
| Partially Mobile vendor | 13               | 26         |
| Roll-out carpet         | 5                | 10         |
| Others                  | 3                | 6          |
| Total                   | 50               | 100        |

Source: Primary Data

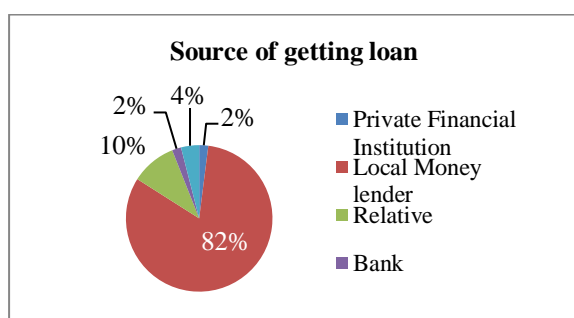
The daily income of 2% of migrant street vendors is observed to be Rs.100 and Rs.200 profit (Table 7). About 6% vendors earned between Rs.200 and Rs.300, 12% of respondents earned Rs.300 and Rs.400, 32% of street vendors earned Rs.400 and Rs.500. The daily profit of 48% of migrant street vendors is observed to be above 500 and they work more than 12 hours, which means they are very hard working.

**Table 7: Duration of work per day and amount of profit**

| Amount of Earning | Duration      |           |            |                | Total | Percentage |
|-------------------|---------------|-----------|------------|----------------|-------|------------|
|                   | Up to 5 Hours | 5-8 Hours | 8-12 Hours | Above 12 Hours |       |            |
| 100-200           | 1             | --        | --         | --             | 1     | 2          |
| 200-300           | 2             | 1         | --         | --             | 3     | 6          |
| 300-400           | --            | 4         | 2          |                | 6     | 12         |
| 400-500           | --            | 2         | 10         | 4              | 16    | 32         |
| Above 500         | --            | 1         | 5          | 18             | 24    | 48         |
| Total             | 3             | 8         | 17         | 22             | 50    | 100        |

Source: Primary Data

**Figure 1: Source of Getting a Loan**



Source: Primary Data

In the study area, 68% of the migrant street vendors are using banking services for saving and transaction money for their families because they visit their homes twice a year (Table 8). They transfer the saved amount to their families and spend very less amount for consumption purposes. The street vendors, 4% have no saving habits because all family members migrated to Kozhikode and they get a minimum level of income to meet their daily needs.

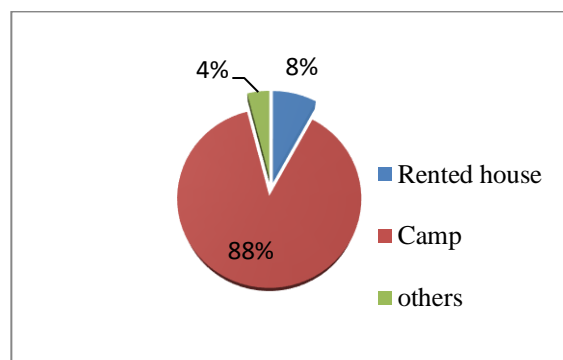
**Table 8: Mode of saving**

| Mode of saving                | No of Respondent | Percentage |
|-------------------------------|------------------|------------|
| No Saving                     | 2                | 4          |
| Bank                          | 34               | 68         |
| Private financial Institution | 12               | 24         |
| Self Help Group               | 0                | 0          |
| Others                        | 2                | 4          |
| Total                         | 50               | 100        |

Source: Primary Data

The result of the present findings revealed that 88% of migrant street vendors lived in camps or rented rooms. The street vendors 8% are lived in rented houses because they migrated with their families and 4% of migrated vendors are lived in the bus stand and other public places.

**Figure. 2: Type of stay**



Source: Primary Data

The table reveals that 52% of the migrant street vendors are facing dust allergies, skin rashes, teary eyes, and wheezing. 30% of migrant street vendors feel cough and fever due to climatic change. About 14% of migrant street vendors face hypertension because of vending pressure, long distance of family, and also feel loneliness. The migrant street vendors, 2% face urinary infections due to the shortage of clean drinking water and the lack of proper toilet facilities is mainly affected by the women vendors.

Street vendors play a significant role in the urban informal economy. But they are facing a lot of problems. Following (Table 9) are the main troubles

faced by migrant street vendors in Kozhikode.

**Table 9: Health Problems**

| Health problems   | No of Respondent | Percentage |
|-------------------|------------------|------------|
| Dust allergies    | 26               | 52         |
| Cough and fever   | 15               | 30         |
| Urinary infection | 1                | 2          |
| Hypertension      | 7                | 14         |
| Others            | 1                | 2          |
| Total             | 50               | 100        |

Source: Primary Data

**Table.10 : Difficulties Faced During Vending**

| Particulars                    | No of Respondent | Percentage |
|--------------------------------|------------------|------------|
| Trading sites are too small    | 34               | 68         |
| 1. Yes                         | 16               | 32         |
| 2. No                          |                  |            |
| Lack of facilities             | 40               | 80         |
| 1. Yes                         | 10               | 20         |
| 2. No                          |                  |            |
| Lack of access to credit       | 49               | 98         |
| 1. Yes                         | 1                | 2          |
| 2. No                          |                  |            |
| Language barriers              | 47               | 94         |
| 1. Yes                         | 3                | 6          |
| 2. No                          |                  |            |
| Too much competition           | 42               | 84         |
| 1. Yes                         | 8                | 16         |
| 2. No                          |                  |            |
| Climate changes                | 40               | 80         |
| 1. Yes                         | 10               | 20         |
| 2. No                          |                  |            |
| Lack of time spent with family | 46               | 92         |
| 1. Yes                         | 4                | 8          |
| 2. No                          |                  |            |
| Poor living condition          | 35               | 70         |
| 1. Yes                         | 15               | 30         |
| 2. No                          |                  |            |

Source: Primary Data

The analysed factors (Table 10) revealed that the majority of the migrant street vendors are getting a very small place for their trading activity and migrant street vendors are mainly mobile or partially mobile vendors. They move from

one place to another place because, migrant street vendors are not aware of the existing trade site allocation of municipal cooperation and small numbers of vendors are unregistered. Migrant street vendors do not have any permanent building or shops for their business. They move from one place to another place. So they are not using cold storage for their perishable commodity and they store their non-perishable commodity inside some safety equipment in rented places of other private shop owners. The migrant street vendors are not able to invest a lot of money on their vending activity because they do not have enough income to meet the basic needs of their families. The formal institutional mechanism needed collateral securities for providing the loan. Migrant vendors typically do not have access to formal institutional credit for their initial investments and business expansion; instead, they rely on support from their relatives and friends.

Migrant street vendors are mainly low-skill and low-educated people. They use conventional methods for business. Every human being is capable of doing work with their skill. Migrant vendors feel shy because they don't know Malayalam, but people are interested in buying street food items because, it was tasty and available at very low prices. The language barrier is the main problem faced by migrant street vendors. They mainly speak



languages like Tamil, Hindi, and Bengali etc, during vending time. They know some Malayalam words for vending purposes and they are not properly communicating with the customers. It is seriously affecting their business and income. There are large numbers of vendors doing this business in Kozhikode District. These vendors are always aware of the changing prices and they provide goods at lower price than other vendors. Migrant vendors believe a low-pricing strategy, which is the best method to attract customers. They prefer work in an open place and they always face health problems because of the climate conditions which is so varied from their nature states. They prone to fever, cold, cough, dust allergies, and skin rashes. Lack of proper rest may also cause other health-related problems for migrant street vendors. The majority of migrant street vendors live and work in an unhealthy and unsafe conditions. This group of people also stay at worker camps in a different part of Kozhikode and they don't have adequate space to live. It was very unsafe because, large numbers of migrant street vendors live in small rooms and any infection of one individual will affect the entire room-sharing people.

To conclude that, Street vendors are an integral part of the urban informal economy of our country. They help us to save our valuable time by providing the necessary items or accessories that we

need. Every day they serve us with different commodities that we need. They provide necessary commodities at reasonable prices to the lower and middle class people with low income. However many of the migrant street vendors are constrained by unstable socio-economic conditions in their families. There are social, economic and political imbalances among their state and this leads to internal migration in general. Kerala offers the highest wages for migrant workers for jobs in the unorganized sectors. Interstate migrant workers have become an indispensable part of the Kerala economy. Migrant street vendors have poor social security and their working conditions on the street expose them to a variety of safety and health issues. Street vendors always suffer competition with other vendors because of fluctuations in price and irregular employment. Their income is often minimal and their sales fluctuate on the basis of season.

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