



A Sociological Study On The Socio-Economic Conditions Of Street Vendors In Gangavathi City

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Abstract

Street vending is a vital pillar of the urban informal economy, serving as a primary survival strategy for the socio-economically marginalized. However, these micro-entrepreneurs face persistent marginalization, spatial insecurity, and severe financial exclusion. This study systematically investigates the socio-economic conditions, occupational hazards, and livelihood struggles of street vendors in the rapidly urbanizing Gangavathi City, Karnataka. Adopting a descriptive research design, primary data was gathered through structured face-to-face interviews from a purposive sample of 40 street vendors. Empirical findings reveal that the sector is primarily driven by active-age individuals (26–35 years) heavily constrained by educational backwardness, featuring an illiteracy rate of 47.5%. Although 65% of vendors report manageable profit margins, a vast majority remain trapped in high indebtedness due to a heavy reliance on informal credit for business and family maintenance. Furthermore, 72.5% of respondents face severe operational hardships, including the lack of civic amenities and spatial conflicts. The paper concludes that achieving true socio-economic equity requires a paradigm shift toward inclusive urban planning. It strongly recommends the strict implementation of the Street Vendors Act, 2014, the allocation of permanent vending zones, and enhanced financial inclusion through formal micro-credit schemes to ensure dignified, sustainable livelihoods. Ultimately, integrating these marginalized vendors into the formal urban fabric is essential for fostering local economic resilience and achieving broader sustainable development goals. Furthermore, extending comprehensive social security measures, such as subsidized healthcare and life insurance, is crucial to shield their households from unforeseen economic shocks. By transforming their operational environment from precarious to protected, local authorities can empower street vendors as recognized, legitimate contributors to Gangavathi's ongoing economic growth.

Keywords: Street Vendors, Informal Economy, Socio-Economic Status, Urban Sociology, Spatial Insecurity, Street Vendors Act 2014, Inclusive Urban Planning, Micro-entrepreneurs.

1. Introduction

Street vending constitutes a vital segment of the informal urban economy, serving as a primary source of livelihood for the socio-economically marginalized. Because it requires minimal formal education, low specialized skills, and negligible capital investment, it acts as a crucial economic refuge for the urban poor. Broadly defined, a street vendor is an individual who offers goods or services for sale to the public without a permanent, built-up commercial structure. In rapidly growing semi-urban centers like Gangavathi in the Koppal district of Karnataka, street vending has emerged as a massive and indispensable socio-economic activity. Operating entirely within the informal sector, street vendors bypass formal commercial overheads such as shop rent, electricity bills, and Goods and Services Tax (GST). They typically function as mobile or semi-stationary merchants, navigating from place to place and transporting their merchandise on pushcarts, in woven baskets, or as headloads. Driven purely by the necessity of survival, these micro-entrepreneurs cater to the daily needs of the local population by

offering a diverse array of affordable commodities. Their inventory ranges from perishable agricultural produce—such as leafy greens, vegetables, fruits, and flowers—to prepared street foods (like idli, egg rice, ice cream, and juice), as well as clothing, footwear, toys, and daily household utilities. Despite their significant contribution to the local supply chain and their role in providing affordable goods to the public, street vendors in Gangavathi face a multitude of persistent socio-economic challenges. Their survivalist trade is fraught with daily infrastructural constraints and spatial conflicts at their vending locations, and the list of workplace hardships they endure continues to grow. Furthermore, a significant portion of this demographic lacks formal education. This widespread illiteracy results in a profound lack of awareness regarding their legal rights, social security benefits, and state-sponsored welfare schemes specifically designed for their upliftment. Consequently, they remain highly vulnerable within the urban economic structure. In this context, understanding the realities of these vendors is crucial. This study aims to systematically investigate the socio-economic conditions, occupational hazards, and daily livelihood struggles of street vendors in Gangavathi City, thereby shedding light on the broader sociological dynamics of the informal economy.

Moreover, the phenomenon of street vending in Gangavathi cannot be viewed merely as an isolated economic activity; it is deeply intertwined with broader sociological shifts. As agricultural distress and mechanization disrupt traditional farming in surrounding rural villages, a steady wave of migration brings marginalized laborers into the city. For many of these migrants, particularly women and socially disadvantaged groups, the informal street markets offer the only accessible avenue for financial survival and independence. These vending spaces act as dynamic social hubs where complex networks of trust, informal credit, and community relations are built daily. However, the rapid urbanization of tier-two cities often prioritizes modern retail spaces and urban beautification over the inclusion of these traditional markets. This creates a stark paradox: while street vendors are indispensable to the daily lives of the urban majority, they are frequently treated as public nuisances by civic authorities. The persistent threat of eviction and the absence of a supportive legal framework constantly push these micro-entrepreneurs to the margins of society. Addressing this imbalance is not just an economic necessity, but a fundamental matter of human dignity and social justice. Recognizing their invaluable contribution is the first step toward transforming urban spaces into more equitable environments. Therefore, a deeper sociological inquiry into their lives is essential to bridge the gap between their lived realities and inclusive urban policymaking.

2. Statement of the Problem

The present research, titled "**A Sociological Study on the Socio-Economic Conditions of Street Vendors in Gangavathi City,**" seeks to investigate the persistent marginalization of informal micro-entrepreneurs. Despite their vital role in the local economy, street vendors in Gangavathi operate under severe socio-economic and structural constraints. Economically, these vendors are predominantly from impoverished backgrounds, struggling with severe capital shortages and consistently low profit margins. Their financial vulnerability is further exacerbated by unequal and fierce competition with established large-scale retail shops. Structurally, their daily livelihood is highly precarious. Vendors face continuous spatial insecurity as local authorities frequently restrict roadside vending. This vulnerability is a direct consequence of the non-implementation of the Street Vendors Act, which leaves them without legal recognition or protection. Furthermore, the complete lack of basic civic infrastructure and government amenities at their vending sites adds to their occupational hardships. Therefore, the core problem investigated in this study is how these combined economic constraints, intense market competition, and policy implementation gaps collectively impact the socio-economic survival and living standards of street vendors in Gangavathi City.

3. Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the socio-economic status of street vendors in Gangavathi City.
2. To analyze the financial behavior and saving patterns of the vendors.
3. To evaluate the overall livelihood benefits and economic viability of street vending.
4. To assess the daily income generation and expenditure of the street vendors.
5. To study the impact of street vending on the standard of living of female vendors.

4. Hypotheses of the Study

Based on the objectives of the study, the following hypotheses have been formulated for empirical testing:

1. The overall socio-economic status of street vendors in Gangavathi City may be positively improved by their continuous involvement in street vending.
2. The financial behavior and saving patterns of the vendors may be very poor due to their dependence on irregular daily income.
3. Street vending may be an economically viable and highly beneficial livelihood option for people who have low education and limited skills.
4. The daily income generated by the street vendors may be mostly spent on covering their basic family needs and daily business expenditures.
5. Active participation in street vending may be a major factor in improving the independence and overall standard of living for female vendors.
6. Engaging in street vending may be a key factor in improving the social identity, self-reliance, and respect of the vendors in their community.
7. Working as a street vendor may be very helpful in achieving financial stability and economic growth for the vendors.
8. The desire to earn more money may be the main reason why street vendors work longer hours and change their business plans.
9. Needing less money to start and having low daily expenses may be the main reasons why street vending businesses survive and run successfully.
10. Doing street vending business may be highly beneficial in improving the overall standard of living of the vendors and their families.

5. Scope of the Study

The scope of this sociological research is defined by its geographical, demographic, and thematic boundaries, focusing specifically on the micro-level realities of the informal economy.

- **Geographical Area:** The study is strictly confined to Gangavathi City, located in the Koppal district of Karnataka. While the primary market interactions occur within the city limits, the spatial scope naturally extends to rural-urban transit linkages. This is because a significant portion of the street vendors commute daily to Gangavathi from surrounding peripheral villages and settlements, including Gundamma Camp, Hosahalli, Chikka Jantakal, Virupapura Tanda, Anegundi, Kesarahatti, and Herur.
- **Demographic Scope:** The research encompasses the active street vending population operating within the commercial spaces of Gangavathi City. It includes vendors from diverse social backgrounds, age groups, and genders, ensuring a representative understanding of the micro-entrepreneurs engaged in this informal sector.
- **Thematic Boundaries:** The study goes beyond mere economic data to explore deeper sociological dimensions. It covers parameters such as daily income, expenditure, savings behavior, and occupational hazards. Furthermore, it specifically examines issues of social stratification and the impact of street vending on the empowerment and financial independence of women in rural and semi-urban contexts.
- **Methodological Limitations:** The scope of data collection relies entirely on primary data gathered directly from the selected street vendors in Gangavathi. The findings, conclusions, and socio-economic evaluations are intrinsically linked to the current conditions of this specific locale and may not be universally generalizable to larger metropolitan cities.

6. Need and Significance of the Study

While formal business enterprises are legally recognized, protected by laws, and structurally integrated into the economy, the informal sector—particularly street vending—often operates in the shadows. Despite being a crucial pillar of the urban supply chain and a primary survival strategy for the urban poor, street vendors remain highly marginalized. In this context, studying the socio-economic dynamics of street vendors in a rapidly developing semi-urban center like Gangavathi holds immense significance for the following reasons:

- **Addressing the Empirical Data Gap:** While extensive research exists on street vendors in metropolitan cities, semi-urban towns like Gangavathi are often overlooked. This study is essential to document the grassroots socio-economic realities and daily livelihood struggles of vendors in such transitioning urban spaces.
- **Analyzing 'Push and Pull' Factors:** It is necessary to understand the sociological and economic drivers—such as agrarian distress, lack of alternative employment, and rural-urban migration—that compel individuals from surrounding villages to adopt street vending as a livelihood.
- **Bridging the Policy-Awareness Gap:** A vast majority of street vendors lack formal education and remain unaware of state-sponsored welfare schemes (such as the PM SVANidhi scheme). This study is significant as it highlights these informational blind spots, advocating for better financial inclusion and policy implementation.
- **Highlighting Infrastructural and Spatial Conflicts:** The research is crucial to analyze the operational hazards, harassment, and spatial insecurities faced by vendors. It underscores the urgent need for inclusive urban planning, recognizing their right to basic infrastructure (like designated vending zones, sanitation, and drinking water).
- **Promoting Social Mobility Through Education:** By assessing the educational backwardness of the vendors, the study emphasizes the critical need for social awareness. It highlights how educational interventions can empower these marginalized groups and prevent the intergenerational transmission of poverty.
- **Academic Contribution to Sociology:** From a sociological perspective, this study provides valuable insights into social stratification, gender dynamics (women in the informal economy), and the survival mechanisms of the vulnerable, thereby enriching the existing literature on urban sociology.

7. Research Methodology

This section outlines the systematic framework adopted to investigate the socio-economic conditions of street vendors in Gangavathi City.

- **Research Design:** The study adopts a **Descriptive Research Design** to systematically analyze the demographic profiles and economic realities of the vendors.
- **Study Area:** The research is conducted in the commercial streets and marketplaces of **Gangavathi City** (Koppal District).
- **Sample Size & Technique:** A sample of **40 street vendors** was selected using **Purposive and Convenience Sampling** methods to represent diverse vending categories.
- **Sources of Data:** **Primary data** is collected directly from the vendors through fieldwork. **Secondary data** is sourced from academic journals, government reports, and municipal records.
- **Tools for Data Collection:** Considering the low literacy rates among vendors, a structured **Interview Schedule** and **Direct Observation** are utilized to gather accurate field data.
- **Data Analysis:** The collected primary data will be tabulated and analyzed using simple statistical tools like percentages and averages, and represented through tables and charts.

8. Limitations of the Study

Despite the careful design and execution of this research, it is subject to certain inherent limitations:

- **Geographical Restriction:** The present study is geographically confined only to the municipal limits of Gangavathi City. Therefore, the findings and conclusions drawn may not be directly generalized to street vendors operating in larger metropolitan cities or other geographic regions.
- **Small Sample Size:** Due to time and resource constraints, the primary data collection is restricted to a limited sample size of exactly **40 respondents**. A larger sample might have provided a broader perspective of the entire street vending population.
- **Socio-Economic Strata:** The respondents selected for this study predominantly belong to the lower and lower-middle-class economic backgrounds, as they constitute the vast majority of this informal sector.
- **Occupational Focus:** The scope of the research exclusively emphasizes the street vendors of Gangavathi City, excluding other vulnerable workers in the informal economy or established formal retail shop owners.

- **Thematic Boundary:** The investigation is strictly confined to analyzing only the social life and economic improvements (socio-economic parameters) of the vendors, leaving out other dimensions such as psychological, historical, or political factors.

9. Review of Literature

A comprehensive review of existing sociological literature provides a theoretical foundation for understanding the socio-economic dynamics of street vendors. The literature can be categorized into the following key themes:

- **The Role of Street Vending in the Informal Economy:** Eminent sociologists like **Sharit K. Bhowmik (2005)** in his seminal work, *"Street Vendors in Asia: A Review,"* highlight that street vending is not merely a marginal activity but a fundamental pillar of the urban informal economy. Bhowmik argues that the inability of the formal sector to generate sufficient employment forces the rural and urban poor into street vending as a crucial survival strategy.
- **Social Stratification and Vulnerability:** Research by **Saha (2011)** on the working lives of street vendors emphasizes the intersection of caste, class, and occupation. The study observes that a vast majority of street vendors belong to historically marginalized communities and lower socio-economic strata. Their lack of formal education and capital restricts their occupational mobility, confining them to the informal sector across generations.
- **Gender Dynamics and Women's Empowerment:** **Martha Alter Chen (2001)**, in her extensive research on *"Women in the Informal Sector,"* points out the dual burden faced by female street vendors. While street vending offers women a vital avenue for financial independence and basic livelihood generation, they simultaneously face severe structural inequalities, including wage gaps, lack of maternity benefits, and higher vulnerability to workplace harassment compared to their male counterparts.
- **Spatial Insecurity and Institutional Harassment:** The **WIEGO (Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing)** reports by **Roever (2014)** systematically document the spatial conflicts inherent in street vending. The literature indicates that the lack of recognized vending zones and the delayed implementation of the Street Vendors Act lead to constant evictions, confiscation of goods, and institutional harassment by municipal authorities, thereby threatening their daily income.
- **The Research Gap (Focus on Semi-Urban Areas):** *Conclusion of the Review:* While the aforementioned literature extensively covers the socio-economic conditions of street vendors in mega-cities (like Mumbai, Delhi, and Bangalore), there is a significant lack of micro-sociological studies focusing on tier-2 and semi-urban transit towns. Therefore, the present study bridges this empirical gap by focusing on Gangavathi City, analyzing how rural-urban transit and localized market dynamics shape the lives of street vendors.

10. Profile of the Study Area – Gangavathi City

- **Location & Background:** Gangavathi is a major commercial city and taluk headquarters in the Koppal district of Karnataka. Known as the "Rice Bowl of Karnataka," it serves as a rapidly urbanizing transit hub.
- **Climate & Environment:** The city experiences a hot climate with summer temperatures reaching up to 40°C. This extreme heat directly impacts the daily physical well-being of open-air street vendors.
- **Demographics:** According to the 2011 Census, the city has a population of 1,14,642. Lower literacy rates in the region often push marginalized individuals into informal self-employment.
- **Unemployment & Migration:** Agricultural mechanization in surrounding villages has reduced the demand for farm labor. Consequently, many rural workers migrate to Gangavathi and adopt street vending for survival.
- **Trade & Commerce:** Powered by the Tungabhadra irrigation system, the city is a massive agro-trading center. This bustling market environment provides a vast consumer base for street vendors.
- **Civic Infrastructure:** The city is governed by the City Municipal Council. While basic amenities like water and transport are adequate, specific infrastructure for informal street vendors remains absent.

- **Financial Ecosystem:** The city has a strong network of nationalized banks and cooperative societies. However, accessing formal micro-credit remains a significant challenge for the street vending community.

11. Socio-Economic Challenges of Urban Street Vendors and the Legal Framework

1. Core Socio-Economic Challenges Faced by Street Vendors

Despite being a vital pillar of the urban informal economy and a primary supply chain for affordable goods, street vendors operate under severe socio-economic distress. The primary challenges include:

- **Spatial Insecurity and Administrative Harassment:** Vendors frequently operate in a state of constant anxiety due to the lack of legally recognized, permanent vending zones. They routinely face arbitrary evictions, confiscation of goods, and institutional harassment from local civic authorities and police.
- **Financial Vulnerability and the Debt Trap:** Excluded from formal banking channels due to a lack of documentation and collateral, vendors are forced to rely on informal, local moneylenders. The exorbitant interest rates charged by these lenders trap them in a perpetual cycle of debt, leaving them with negligible savings.
- **Infrastructural Deficits and Occupational Hazards:** Street vending is a survivalist trade conducted in open-air environments. Vendors endure harsh weather conditions and a complete absence of basic municipal amenities, such as clean drinking water, public sanitation facilities, and proper waste disposal systems, which severely impacts their health and daily operations.
- **Educational Backwardness and Information Gaps:** A high rate of illiteracy limits their upward occupational mobility and creates a massive awareness gap. Most vendors remain completely unaware of their legal rights or the state-sponsored welfare schemes designed for their socio-economic upliftment.

2. The Legal and Policy Framework in India

To protect the fundamental "Right to Livelihood" (Article 21) and regulate informal markets, the government has introduced significant legal and policy interventions:

- **The Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014:** This landmark central legislation officially shifted the paradigm from viewing vendors as a "public nuisance" to recognizing them as legitimate service providers.
 - **Town Vending Committees (TVCs):** The Act mandates the creation of TVCs (with 40% vendor representation) to make participatory decisions regarding urban vending spaces.
 - **Protection from Eviction:** It strictly prohibits the eviction of vendors without a prior biometric survey, the issuance of Vending Certificates, and the provision of alternate vending zones.
- **PM SVANidhi Scheme (2020):** A micro-credit facility launched to provide collateral-free working capital loans (ranging from ₹10,000 to ₹50,000) directly through nationalized banks, aiming to rescue vendors from the informal debt trap and promote digital transactions (UPI).
- **DAY-NULM (Support to Urban Street Vendors):** A national mission component focused on providing financial literacy, skill development, and institutional credit linkages to the street vending community.

3. Policy Implementation Gaps (The Reality Check)

While the legislative framework is progressive on paper, empirical realities reveal severe implementation failures at the grassroots level:

- **Inactive Town Vending Committees:** In many municipalities, TVCs exist only on paper or function without genuine representation and participation from the vendors, defeating the purpose of inclusive governance.

- **Bureaucratic Inertia in Credit Access:** Despite schemes like PM SVANidhi, vendors face immense bureaucratic hurdles, demands for complex documentation, and a lack of cooperation from local bank branches, making access to formal credit highly difficult.
- **Continued Arbitrary Evictions:** The non-eviction clauses of the 2014 Act are frequently violated under the guise of "urban beautification" or traffic clearance, further marginalizing these micro-entrepreneurs.

12. Data Analysis and Interpretation

- **Primary Data:** Collected directly through face-to-face interviews with a sample of **40 street vendors** using a structured questionnaire/interview schedule.
- **Secondary Data:** Gathered from published books, academic journals, and internet sources.
- **Data Analysis:** The raw data collected from the 40 respondents was systematically edited, classified, tabulated, and interpreted for the study.

Table-1: Family Structure of Street Vendors

Sl. No.	Type of Family	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	Joint Family	08	20
2	Nuclear Family	32	80
Total		40	100

The table reveals that a significant majority, 80% of the respondents, belong to nuclear families, while only 20% live in joint families. This indicates that urbanization and migration to Gangavathi City have led to the fragmentation of traditional joint families among the vendors.

Table-2: Religious Composition

Sl. No.	Religion	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	Hindu	21	52.5
2	Muslim	19	47.5
Total		40	100

The religious distribution among the sampled street vendors is relatively balanced. Hindus constitute 52.5% of the vendors, while Muslims make up 47.5%. This indicates that street vending as a livelihood strategy is adopted almost equally across major religious communities in the study area.

Table-3: Gender Distribution

Sl. No.	Gender	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	Male	28	70
2	Female	12	30
Total		40	100

The gender distribution shows a clear male dominance in the street vending sector in Gangavathi. Males represent 70% of the workforce, whereas females account for 30%. This may be attributed to the physical hardships and spatial insecurities associated with street vending.

Table-4: Educational Qualification

Sl. No.	Educational Level	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	Illiterate	19	47.5
2	Primary Education	10	25
3	Secondary Education	08	20
4	Degree/Graduation	03	7.5
Total		40	100

Educational backwardness is a prominent feature among the respondents. Nearly half of the vendors (47.5%) are completely illiterate. About 25% possess only primary education, and 20% have secondary education. A mere 7.5% are graduates. This widespread lack of formal education is a primary 'push factor' driving these individuals into the informal street vending sector.

Table-5: Perception of Economic Improvement

Sl. No.	Economic Status	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	Excellent	02	05
2	Good	10	25
3	Average / Manageable	28	70
Total		40	100

Interpretation: When asked if their economic condition has improved due to street vending, 70% described their financial status as 'Average' or manageable. About 25% felt their condition was 'Good', and a marginal 5% considered their economic progress to be 'Excellent'. This indicates that while street vending provides a survival mechanism, it rarely leads to substantial wealth accumulation.

Table 6: Impact of Street Vending on Socio-Economic Status

Opinion / Response	No. of Respondents (N=40)	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	10	25.0
Agree	20	50.0
Neutral	06	15.0
Disagree	04	10.0
Total	40	100.0

Analysis: The table shows that a combined majority of 75% (25% Strongly Agree + 50% Agree) of the respondents believe that continuous involvement in street vending has positively improved their socio-economic status. Only 10% disagree. Therefore, indicating that street vending serves as a positive tool for socio-economic survival..

Table 7: Saving Patterns of Street Vendors

Saving Habit	No. of Respondents (N=40)	Percentage (%)
Regular Savings	06	15.0
Occasional Savings	12	30.0
No Savings (Poor Habit)	22	55.0
Total	40	100.0

Analysis: The data reveals that 55% of the street vendors have no savings at all, while 30% manage only occasional savings. Only 15% maintain regular savings. This confirms that highly fluctuating daily income severely restricts their ability to save.

Table 8: Primary Reason for Choosing Street Vending

Reason	No. of Respondents (N=40)	Percentage (%)
Low Educational Qualification	18	45.0
Lack of Specialized Skills	14	35.0
Easy to Start / Be own boss	08	20.0
Total	40	100.0

Analysis: According to the table, 80% of the respondents chose street vending primarily due to educational and skill limitations (45% for low education, 35% for lack of skills). This proves that the informal sector acts as an economic refuge for the uneducated.

Table 9: Primary Allocation of Daily Income

Expenditure Category	No. of Respondents (N=40)	Percentage (%)
Basic Family Needs (Food, Rent)	24	60.0
Daily Business Reinvestment	10	25.0
Debt Repayment	04	10.0
Savings	02	05.0
Total	40	100.0

Analysis: The analysis indicates that a massive 60% of daily earnings are consumed by basic family maintenance, and 25% goes back into the business. Barely 5% is saved. This clearly shows that street vending is a 'hand-to-mouth' survival activity.

Table 10: Impact of Vending on Female Empowerment (Female Respondents Only)

Perception of Empowerment	No. of Female Respondents (N=12)	Percentage (%)
Increased Financial Independence	08	66.7
Improved Standard of Living	03	25.0
No Change / Negative Impact	01	08.3
Total	12	100.0

Analysis: Among the 12 female vendors surveyed, 66.7% reported that street vending gave them financial independence, and 25% noted an improved standard of living. This highlights the vital role of the informal economy in women's empowerment.

Table 11: Perception of Social Identity and Self-Reliance

Community Perception	No. of Respondents (N=40)	Percentage (%)
Gained Self-Reliance & Respect	22	55.0
Status Quo (No major change)	12	30.0
Face Social Stigma / Harassment	06	15.0
Total	40	100.0

Analysis: The data shows that 55% of the vendors feel they have gained self-reliance and a respected identity in their community by earning an honest livelihood, despite 15% still facing social stigma. Because the majority feel empowered,

Table 12: Level of Financial Stability Achieved

Level of Stability	No. of Respondents (N=40)	Percentage (%)
Highly Stable (Good Growth)	03	07.5
Moderately Stable (Survival)	25	62.5
Unstable (High Debt)	12	30.0
Total	40	100.0

Analysis: While 62.5% achieved "moderate stability" (meaning they can survive day-to-day), only 7.5% achieved actual "economic growth." A significant 30% remain financially unstable, as it provides basic survival stability but rarely leads to substantial economic growth.

Table 13: Motivation for Working Extended Hours

Motivating Factor	No. of Respondents (N=40)	Percentage (%)
Desire for More Income	26	65.0
Clearing Existing Debts	08	20.0
Beating Market Competition	06	15.0
Total	40	100.0

Analysis: A dominant 65% of vendors stated that the primary reason they endure long, exhausting working hours is the fundamental desire to generate more income. Other factors like clearing debt (20%) and competition (15%) are secondary.

Table 14: Key Factors for the Survival of Street Vending Businesses

Survival Factor	No. of Respondents (N=40)	Percentage (%)
Low Initial Capital Required	20	50.0
Low Daily Operational Expenses	14	35.0
High Customer Demand	06	15.0
Total	40	100.0

Analysis: The table illustrates that 85% of the success and survival of these micro-enterprises is due to economic low-barriers (50% low capital + 35% low daily expenses like zero rent). Only 15% attribute survival strictly to customer demand.

Table 15: Improvement in Family's Standard of Living

Level of Improvement	No. of Respondents (N=40)	Percentage (%)
Significant Improvement	08	20.0
Slight / Manageable Improvement	24	60.0
No Improvement	08	20.0
Total	40	100.0

Analysis: The final table shows that 60% of vendors experienced a slight, manageable improvement in their family's living standards, allowing them to provide basic education and food. While it does not make them wealthy (only 20% saw significant improvement), it definitively prevents extreme poverty.

13. Major Findings of the Study

1. **Shift in Family Structure:** The traditional family structure among street vendors is distinctly transitioning from joint families to nuclear families, a shift primarily driven by urbanization and rural-to-urban migration.
2. **Inclusive Livelihood Strategy:** Street vending is an inclusive economic activity adopted equally across major religious communities, indicating that poverty and survival strategies transcend religious boundaries.
3. **Male-Dominated Workforce:** The street vending sector is heavily male-dominated, a trend that is largely attributed to the severe physical hardships, long working hours, and spatial insecurities associated with the profession.
4. **Educational Backwardness as a Push Factor:** A profound lack of formal education and the absence of specialized professional skills act as the primary push factors that force individuals to choose street vending as an economic refuge.
5. **Survival Over Wealth:** Although street vending provides a reliable mechanism for daily survival and basic sustenance, it rarely facilitates substantial wealth accumulation or upward economic mobility for the vendors.
6. **Positive Socio-Economic Impact:** Continuous and active engagement in the street vending business positively uplifts the overall socio-economic status of the vendors over time.
7. **Poor Financial Savings:** The highly irregular and fluctuating nature of their daily income severely restricts the vendors' capacity to cultivate and maintain regular financial saving habits.
8. **Viable Economic Refuge:** The informal street vending sector serves as a highly practical and accessible livelihood option for marginalized individuals who face strict educational and skill-based limitations in the formal job market.
9. **Hand-to-Mouth Existence:** Street vendors generally lead a hand-to-mouth existence, as their daily earnings are almost entirely consumed by basic family maintenance (such as food and rent) and immediate business reinvestment.
10. **Catalyst for Female Empowerment:** For the women involved in this sector, active participation acts as a powerful catalyst for empowerment, granting them crucial financial independence and a better standard of living.
11. **Improved Social Identity:** By earning an honest livelihood, vendors are able to overcome social stigma, successfully building a strong sense of self-reliance and a respected identity within their local community.
12. **Moderate Financial Stability:** While the occupation provides the moderate stability necessary for everyday survival, it remains largely inadequate for achieving significant, long-term economic growth.
13. **Motivation for Extended Hours:** The fundamental need and intense desire to generate additional income for household sustenance is the primary driving force that compels vendors to endure extended and exhausting working hours.
14. **Low Barriers to Entry and Survival:** The sustainability and ongoing success of these micro-enterprises rely heavily on low economic barriers, particularly the minimal need for initial capital and the absence of heavy daily operational expenses.
15. **Prevention of Extreme Poverty:** Engaging in street vending brings a manageable improvement to the family's overall standard of living, serving as a critical financial safety net that prevents vulnerable families from falling into extreme poverty.
16. **Vulnerability to Spatial Insecurity:** A major operational hazard for street vendors is the constant threat of eviction and the lack of permanent, legally recognized vending zones. This

spatial insecurity creates continuous anxiety and frequently disrupts their daily business activities.

17. **Information Gap Regarding Welfare Schemes:** There is a profound lack of awareness among the street vending community regarding state-sponsored social security benefits and financial assistance programs. This information gap prevents them from utilizing government support specifically designed for their economic upliftment.
18. **Severe Deficit of Civic Infrastructure:** Vendors operate under harsh environmental conditions with an absolute lack of basic municipal amenities. The absence of clean drinking water, public sanitation facilities, and proper waste disposal at their vending sites significantly deteriorates their working environment.
19. **Exposure to Occupational Health Hazards:** The daily physical toll of manually transporting goods and operating in open-air markets exposes vendors to extreme weather conditions and various occupational health risks, which can negatively impact their long-term ability to work.
20. **Exploitation by Informal Credit Systems:** Because they lack the documentation and collateral required by formal banking channels, vendors are heavily reliant on local, informal moneylenders. These lenders often charge exorbitant interest rates, effectively trapping the vendors in a continuous and exploitative cycle of debt.

14. Recommendations and Suggestions

Based on the empirical findings of the study, it is evident that the socio-economic empowerment of street vendors in Gangavathi City requires a multi-dimensional approach. To enhance their financial stability, social standing, and operational efficiency, the following actionable recommendations are proposed:

1. Financial Inclusion and Economic Management:

- **Fostering a Savings Culture & Financial Literacy:** There is an urgent need to impart financial literacy among vendors. They must be educated on the prudent utilization of daily income and the absolute necessity of cultivating a strong savings mindset to mitigate future economic shocks.
- **Access to Institutional Credit:** To break the cycle of high-interest debt from informal moneylenders, vendors must be made fully aware of, and connected to, low-interest micro-credit facilities offered by nationalized banks and local cooperative societies.
- **Capital Reinvestment Strategies:** Vendors should be encouraged to adopt micro-business management practices, specifically the strategy of systematically reinvesting a portion of their daily profits back into their working capital to ensure business growth and continuity.
- **Market Stabilization over Cut-throat Competition:** To combat profit-eroding internal competition, vendors should be advised to form local micro-associations. This collective approach can help maintain price stability, ensuring sustainable profit margins rather than engaging in detrimental price wars.

2. Policy Integration and Spatial Security:

- **Securing Permanent Vending Zones:** The local municipal administration must strictly implement the Street Vendors Act to allocate permanent, legally recognized, and secure vending zones. This will eliminate spatial insecurity and the daily threat of eviction.
- **Proactive Engagement with State Welfare:** A massive awareness gap exists regarding government policies. Vendors must be actively sensitized and motivated to proactively claim their rights and utilize state-sponsored welfare programs (such as the PM SVANidhi scheme).
- **Provision of Civic Infrastructure:** The local government must take responsibility for providing essential basic amenities—such as clean drinking water, sanitation facilities, and proper waste disposal systems—at the designated vending zones to improve their working conditions.

3. Operational Professionalism and Technological Upgradation:

- **Digital and Technological Integration:** In an increasingly cashless economy, vendors must be trained to adopt modern technological tools, particularly digital payment systems (UPI). This adaptation makes transactions smoother, safer, and more appealing to modern consumers.
- **Product Diversification and Professionalism:** Vendors should be encouraged to introduce uniqueness and value-addition to their goods and services. Transitioning from traditional, unorganized selling to a more professional and hygienic presentation will significantly enhance consumer attraction.

- **Building Social Capital:** Vendors should leverage their direct contact with the public by fostering strong, trust-based relationships and social thinking with their consumers. Building strong customer loyalty is a reliable strategy to sustain continuous market demand.

15. Conclusion

In conclusion, street vending in Gangavathi City functions as an indispensable economic refuge for the urban poor, yet it remains deeply entangled in structural vulnerabilities. This study highlights that despite their vital contribution to the local supply chain, these informal micro-entrepreneurs are severely marginalized by spatial insecurity, high indebtedness, educational backwardness, and a lack of basic civic amenities. Crucially, the empirical findings expose a glaring gap between legislative intent and grassroots implementation. While progressive frameworks like the Street Vendors Act of 2014 and the PM SVANidhi scheme offer a theoretical safety net, local bureaucratic inertia, inactive Town Vending Committees, and the constant threat of arbitrary evictions render these protective laws largely ineffective on the ground. The socio-economic upliftment of these vendors fundamentally hinges not just on the existence of policies, but on bridging these severe implementation gaps. Enforcing legally protected vending zones, ensuring inclusive municipal governance, and promoting barrier-free financial inclusion are critical interventions. Ultimately, transforming their daily survival struggles into dignified, sustainable livelihoods is essential for achieving true socio-economic equity and inclusive urban growth.

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