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A study of Socio-economic condition of vendors in the small village market (Hat) of Hariharpara Block, Murshidabad district (West Bengal): A village-level analysis.

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Abstract

Agriculture is one of the most important livelihood occupations for the majority of the people of India. Various peoples are selling their vegetables, cotton garments, electronic equipment, fast food, leather products, fruits, and flower in the village and urban markets. Village market (Hats) vending is an important activity related to the informal sector in rural areas. The present work comprehensively covers the social, economic, and spatial issues of village market (Hats) vendors in the selected villages of Murshidabad district. The present study confines to six sampled village markets (Hats) such as Hariharpara, Baruipara, Choa, Tajpur, Rukunpur, and Ramkrishnapur. The total sampled size of the village market (Hats) vendors are 210 respondents, comprised of 35 respondents from each village market. Among them 30 respondents are male and 05 respondents are female. The primary data is collected through a field survey based on a questionnaire, personal observation, group discussion, and cell phone survey. The study reveals that maximum vendors are illiterate and low education levels, unskilled, and low levels of income. They particularly get this job because they are unable to work in other sectors, coming from a very poor background and have insufficient income.

Keywords: Village market, Vendors, Informal sector, Urban markets, Agriculture

Introduction

India is one of the fast-developing countries in the world. Maximum people have engaged in agriculture and allied activities in India as well as West Bengal. Besides cultivating the land, many people are engaged in the informal sector as vendors of small village markets (Hats) to sell vegetables, various fast food, agricultural inputs, and so on. Vegetable constitutes an essential part of the daily diet in every area (Trivedi, 2019). These types of vendors are identified as self-employed workers in the informal sector who offer their labour to sell their goods in the village markets (Saha, 2011).

The term informal sector means a large number of people who are engaged in different forms of employment without any registration (Unnamalai, T. 2017). It forms home-based work, self-employment, employment in household enterprises, small units, agricultural workers, labour on construction works, cultivators, and other forms of temporary activities. The village market is also known as public markets which are located in public space in the community. It refers to vegetable markets that offer fresh fruits and vegetables. These markets can be permanent, semi-permanent (morning-evening shift), and mobile vendors (RECPHEC, 2016).

West Bengal is an agrarian state where all the crops and vegetables are cultivated in every district. Murshidabad is one of the important districts of West Bengal. All the essential crops such as rice, wheat, jute, and vegetables are sown here. Due to the Bhagirathi river, the distributaries of the Ganga river, the soil is fertile and the rainfall and irrigation are available in every block of Murshidabad. Recently, for the increase of crop production and productivity and to supply of agricultural equipment such as seeds, pesticides, fertilizers, Krishak Bazar, Regulated market, etc are present there. To fulfil human needs, all the vegetables are selling in particular areas in every village or gram panchayats. This place is called a hat. This is a very important place because all human beings are met here and fulfilled their basic need.

Study Area

Murshidabad district is situated in the middle of West Bengal. The district is covering an area of 5341 sq. km. and the total population is 71.03 lakh persons (Census 2011). This district is very densely populated where the density is 1334 persons per sq. km. There are 26 blocks and Berhampore is the headquarter of the study area. The land is very fertile due to presence of various distributaries of the Ganga river. Bhagirathi river is an important river of Murshidabad district. Besides, there are some other rivers such as Jalangi, Bhairav, Gobranala, Bhandardaha bill, etc. The Bhagirathi river is divided the Murshidabad into two parts, to the west lies the **Rarh**, a high, undulating continuation of the Chotanagpur plateau, and the eastern portion is called **Bagri** is a fertile, low lying alluvial tract. Agriculture is one of the important activities where rice, jute, wheat, legumes, and mangoes are cultivated.

Hariharpara is a block of the Murshidabad district of West Bengal. It lies in the bagri region of the Ganges-Bhagirathi basin. The area of the Hariharpara block is 253 sq. km (97.61 sq. miles). This block consists of 100 percent rural areas with a total population of 2.58 lakh persons among them 1.32 lakh (51 percent) and 1.26 lakh (48 percent) are male and female population (Census 2011) respectively. There are

63 inhabited villages and total 62,609 households in the Hariharpara block. Rukunpur (18663 households) is the largest village of Hariharpara block, followed by Choa (17672 households), Kishmat Imadpur (16604 households), Biharia (12282 households). According to the 2011 census, the total density is 1000 persons per sq. km (2600 populations per sq. miles) which is low as compared to the average density of the district. The total literacy rate of Hariharpara block is 69.20 percent out of which 69.97 percent of males and 68.39 percent of females (Census 2011). So, the gender disparity of literacy rate is 1.58 percent. The decadal growth of the population in the Hariharpara block in 2001-2011 is 16.16 percent. In the 2011 census, the total Muslim population is 80.70 percent followed by 19.04 percent of Hindu, and others population is 0.26 percent.

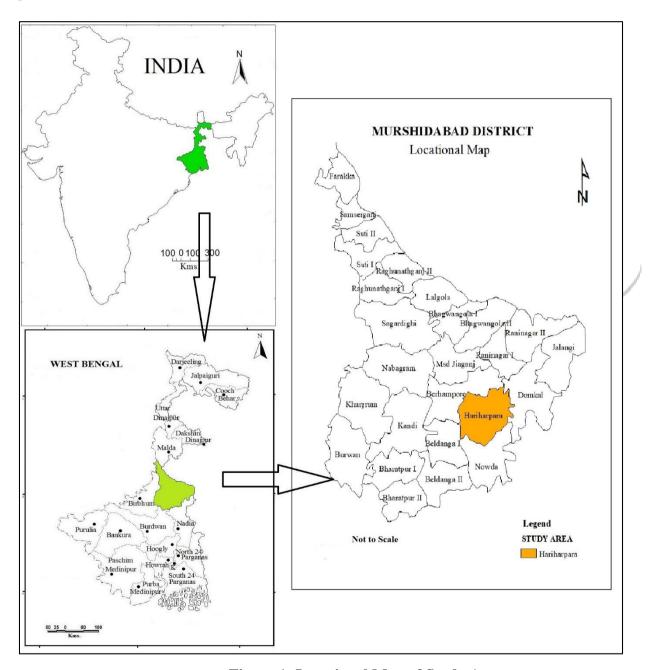


Figure 1: Locational Map of Study Area

Statement of the Problems

Village market (Hats) vendors constitute an important pillar in the rural areas. These vendors are those who have unable to work in the formal sector because of a low level of education, unskilled behaviour to the other work (Shashikala, T. 2018). In developing countries like India, the informal sector including village market vendors is high to create earning of money among the marginalized groups of people. There is no proper attention by the way of the policymakers, decision-makers, and planners to solve the various problems comes in their activities. Therefore, the focus of this study is to access the socio-economic conditions and their running issues of village market vendors in the selected village of Murshidabad district.

Objectives of the study

The present study focuses on a small village market (Hats) vendor in the Hariharpara block of Murshidabad district which is undertaken with the following objectives.

- a) To find out the socio-economic conditions of the small village markets (Hats) vendors in the selected block.
- b) To study and understand the existing problems of the selected village markets.
- c) To suggests suitable recommendations that would minimize their problems in the study area.

Database and Research Methodology

The present work has been analysed to know the socio-economic condition of vendors of small village markets (Hats) in the selected village of Hariharpara block, Murshidabad district, where many vendors are sitting on a particular place to sell their goods such as vegetables, fruits, flowers, leather products, cotton garments, electronic gadgets, household utensils, fast food, etc. The study is based on primary sources of data which are collected through a well-prepared questionnaire, telephone survey, formal interview, group discussion, case history method, and personal observation method. For conducting a survey, we have taken the Hariharpara block as a study area. Simple random sampling and multi-stage sampling has been used to draw sample villages. A total of six village markets are selected for the study such as Hariharpara, Baruipara, Tajpur, Rukunpur, Choa, and Ramkrishnapur (Table.1). For the present research work, 210 respondents have been taken for the study, based on the following criteria.

- a) Three village market has been selected along the main road. These three village markets are Baruipara, Hariharpara, and Choa.
- b) The rest of the village market has been selected away from the main road. These three village markets are Tajpur, Rukunpur, and Ramkrishnapur.

Table 1: Selection of Markets and respondents in Hariharpara block

Sl. No.	Selected	Gram Panchayat	Male	Female	Total Respondent
	Markets/Villages				
1	Hariharpara	Hariharpara G.P.	30	5	35
2	Baruipara	Khidirpur G.P.	30	5	35
3	Choa	Choa G.P.	30	5	35
4	Tajpur	Jagannathpur G.P.	30	5	35
5	Rukunpur	Rukunpur G.P.	30	5	35
6	Ramkrishnapur	Ramkrishnapur Biharia G.P.		5	35
	Total			30	210

Source: Based on a field survey, 2020.

Hariharpara Hat is situated in the proper area of the Hariharpara block. The total area of this village is 1204.5 hectares and the total population is 14827 persons. There are about 3615 households in the village. Hariharpara market is the largest market in this block where many people are coming to sell and buy their surplus and needy products. Many villagers coming to this market from various villages such as Swaruppur, Sripur, Sarbangapur, Saharbasa, Sahajadpur, Rukunpur, Pratappur, Nasipur, Choa, Dasturpara, HariharparaDharampur Ramna, Lochanmati, etc.

Baruipara Hat is situated under the Khidirpur Gram Panchayat near Baruipara Telcol. The total area and population are 436 hectares and 7663 persons. It is one of the important markets in the Hariharpara block. Buyer and seller coming from a different village such as Khosalpur, Bainpur, Pradipdanga, Tajpur, Khidirpur, Khalshi, Jamalpur, Masurdanga, Baruipara, Kismat Imadpur, etc.

Choa Hat is one of the important markets after Hariharpara, situated in Choa Gram Panchayat. Peoples are coming from Choa, Dasturpara, Dharampur, Fatehpur Gobindapur, Gaznipur, Hariharpara, Mamdalipur, Lochanmati, Padmanabhpur Sahajadpur, etc.

Tajpur Hat is the also important market because many people's comes from the different corner of the block. It comes under the Jagannathpur Gram Panchayat. Lalnagar, Humaipur, Pradipdanga, Rampara, Mahishmara, Tekpara, Jagannathpur, Daspara, Beltalapara, are the important village from where many vendors and villagers are coming to sell and buy the important products.

Rukunpur Hat is situated far away from the main road about 8 kilometres to the Hariharpara block. Important villages are Rukunpur, Bhabanipur, Pratappur, Jhanjha, Nasipur, Kedartala, Hariharpara, etc.

Ramkrishnapur Hat is the lowest populated and small market among these six sampled markets. It is situated in the remote area under Biharia Gram Panchayat. Peoples are coming from Ramkrishnapur, Biharia, Jagannathpur, Haritala, Sonadanga, etc.

Results and Discussion

This paper discusses the socio-economic condition of the village market (Hats) vendors in the study area. The socio-economic condition means the measure of one's combined economic and social status and tends to be positively associated with better health. It focuses on the three most important measures of socio-economic status such as education, income, and occupation (Rahman, M.S. 2019). In this paper, we have taken 13 variables to analyse the various sectors. The following sections show the possible outcomes of the present work along with their percentages for a better understanding.

Table 2: Variables of the study area.

Indicators	Variables				
	X1- Gender				
	X2- Age Structure				
	X3- Marital Status				
Social and Damagraphic Profile	X4- Educational Status				
Social and Demographic Profile	X5- Religion				
	X6- Caste				
	X7- Family Type				
	X8- Family Size				
	X9- Income (monthly)				
	X10- Expenditure (monthly)				
Economic Characteristics	X11- Saving (monthly)				
	X12- Working hours				
	X13- Experience				

Source: Computed by Authors.

Social and Demographic profile

To study the socio-economic conditions of the vendors, it is necessary to know the age group, educational level, status of the family, nature of the family, marital status, religion, and caste of the vendors. The study shows that the village market vending is a male-dominated occupation but in the urban areas, the engagement of women is increasing as compared to the rural women. The present study demonstrates that around 86 percent of the vendors are male and 14 percent are female. The age group distribution of the village market vendors shows that in the age group of 30-50, the total vendors are 48.57 percent (40.48) percent male and 8.10 percent female) and above the 50-age group have 16.67 percent vendors (12.38) percent male and about 4.29 percent female) whereas below the age group of 30 have 34.76 percent vendors (32.86 percent male and 1.90 percent female).

Table 3: Social and Demographic characteristics in the sampled villages (2020)

Variable	Category	Male		Fe	male	Total		
		No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	
Gender		180	85.71	30	14.29	210	100	
Age structure	Below 30	69	32.86	04	1.90	73	34.76	
	30-50	85	40.48	17	8.10	102	48.57	
	Above 50	26	12.38	09	4.29	35	16.67	
Marital	Married	126	60.00	10	4.76	136	64.76	
Status	Unmarried	49	23.33	05	2.38	54	25.71	
	Divorced	02	0.95	07	3.33	9	4.29	
	Widow	00	0.00	11	5.24	11	5.24	
Educational	Illiterate	58	27.62	13	6.19	71	33.81	
status	Ability to sign	28	13.33	08	3.81	36	17.14	
	1-4	37	17.62	05	2.38	42	20.00	
	5-10	36	17.14	03	1.43	39	18.57	
	Above 10	21	10.00	01	0.48	22	10.48	
Religion	Hindu	39	18.57	05	2.38	44	20.95	
	Muslim	130	61.90	23	10.95	153	72.86	
	Others	11	5.24	02	0.95	13	6.19	
Caste	General	33	15.71	05	2.38	38	18.10	
	OBC	122	58.10	15	7.14	137	65.24	
	SC	17	8.10	06	2.86	23	10.95	
	ST	08	3.81	04	1.90	12	5.71	
Family type	Nuclear	7 5	35.71	26	12.38	101	48.10	
	Joint	105	50.00	04	1.90	109	51.90	
Family Size	1-5	60	28.57	18	8.57	78	37.14	
	6-10	95	45.24	10	4.76	105	50.00	
	Above 10	25	11.90	02	0.95	27	12.86	

Source: Calculated by authors based on a field survey, 2020

Table 3 shows that about 64.76 percent (60 percent male and 4.76 percent female) vendors are married whereas 25.71 percent (23.33 percent male and 2.38 percent female) vendors are unmarried. Similarly, 5.24 percent vendors (only female 5.24 percent) are the widow and 4.29 percent are divorced/separated. The educational level among village market vendors is generally low. Out of the total respondents 33.81 percent vendors (27.62 percent male and 6.19 percent female) are illiterate, 20 percent (17.62 percent male and 2.38 percent female) vendors are complete their education up to four class, 18.57 percent (17.14 percent male and 1.43 percent female) vendors have passed tenth class, 10.48 percent vendors (10 percent male and less than 1 percent female) comprises those who are above the high school education, and 17.14 percent vendors (around 13.33 percent male and 3.81 percent female) can only sign their names.

Among the total respondents of 210, 72.86 percent are Muslim vendors (61.90 percent male and 10.95 percent female), 20.95 percent (18.57 percent male and 2.38 percent female) are Hindu vendors, and the rest of the respondents are from other religion. In terms of caste composition, 65.24 percent of respondents (58.10 percent male and 7.14 percent female) belong to the Other Backward Castes (OBCs) category, more than 18 percent (15.71 percent male and 2.38 percent female) from the General category, 10.95 percent (8.10 percent male and 2.86 percent female) from Scheduled Caste (SCs) and 5.71 percent vendors from Scheduled Tribe (STs). The joint family is mostly found in the rural areas, about 52 percent of

vendors belong to the Joint family and 48 percent of vendors are from nuclear family type. The family size is also high in the vendors community. About 50 percent vendors (45.24 percent male and 4.76 percent female) belongs to the range of 6-10 family members. Similarly, 37.14 percent of vendors come from 1-5 members family. The rest of the vendors are belonging to above 10 members of the family.

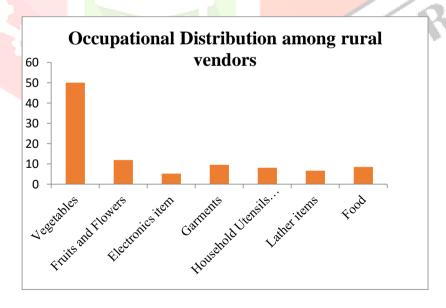
Types of Occupation

Table 4: Types of Occupational Distribution (2020)

Occupation	Male		Female		Total	
Occupation	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent
Vegetables	92	43.81	13	6.19	105	50.00
Fruits and Flowers	20	9.52	5	2.38	25	11.90
Electronics item	10	4.76	1	0.48	11	5.24
Garments	17	8.10	3	1.43	20	9.52
Household Utensils & Stationary	12	5.71	5	2.38	17	8.10
Lather items	14	6.67	0	0.00	14	6.67
Food	15	7.14	3	1.43	18	8.57
Total	180	85.71	30	14.29	210	100

Source: Calculated by authors based on field survey, 2020

The village vending profession is not evenly distributed in character and the present work considers only seven types of occupations (Table 4 and Figure 2). After the deep study, it is observed that most of the vendors belong to vegetable category i.e. 50 percent, out of which nearly 43.81 percent are male and around 6.19 percent are female. Besides, Fruits and flower vendors stands at second position (about 11.90 percent), followed by garments (around 9.52 percent), Food (nearly 8.57 percent), Household utensils and stationery (8.10 percent), Lather items (around 6.67 percent) and electronic items (about 5.24 percent).



Source: Based on Table 3.

Figure 2: Occupation among village market (Hats) vendors in the selected village markets.

Economic Profile

The earning of village market vendors depends on the goods they sell from market to market. Table 5 shows that 42.38 percent (37.62 percent male and 4.76 percent female) vendor's per month income ranges between Rs. 4000 and Rs. 8000 while 31.90 percent (30.48 percent male and 1.43 percent female) vendor's per month income fall into Rs. 8000-12000. It also found that there are few vendors whose income is high as compared to other vendors, 10 percent vendors (9.05 percent male and less than 1.43 percent female) comes under the income of above Rs. 12000. There is only 15.71 percent of vendors who have falls under low-income group e.g. below Rs. 4000 per month.

The expenditure to raise the standard of living also met from the personal income. Table 5 shows that around 58 percent of vendors are expending their capital between Rs. 3000-8000 per month, among them 52 percent are male and 6 percent are female. Likewise, around 32 percent (23 percent male and 9 percent female) vendors are consuming their income below Rs. 3000 per month. Some of the vendors who have large or joint family system, consume their income about 10 percent (mainly male about 10 percent) i.e. above Rs. 8000 per month.

After the expenditure, it is important to know about the savings of income of every vendor because it identifies the life of vendors. About 61 percent (around 53 percent male and 8 percent female) vendors are saving their income between Rs. 2000 and Rs. 5000 while about 23 percent of vendors (22 percent male and 1 percent female) are saving their income above Rs. 5000.

Table 5: Economic profile in the sampled villages

Variables	Category	Male		Fei	male	Total	
BE		No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent
Income	Below 4000	18	8.57	15	7.14	33	15.71
(Monthly)	4000-8000	79	37.62	10	4.76	89	42.38
	8000-12000	64	30.48	03	1.43	67	31.90
	Above 12000	19	9.05	02	0.95	21	10.00
Expenditure	Below 3000	49	23.33	18	8.57	67	31.90
(monthly)	3000-8000	110	52.38	12	5.71	122	58.10
	Above 8000	21	10.00	00	0.00	21	10.00
Saving (monthly)	Below 2000	21	10.00	11	5.24	32	15.24
	2000-5000	112	53.33	17	8.10	129	61.43
	Above 5000	47	22.38	02	0.95	49	23.33
Working Hours	1-3hours	04	1.90	08	3.81	12	5.71
_	3-5 hours	138	65.71	19	9.05	157	74.76
	Above 5 hours	38	18.10	03	1.43	41	19.52
Experience	Below 5 years	07	3.33	06	2.86	13	6.19
	5-10 years	21	10.00	13	6.19	34	16.19
	10-15 years	57	27.14	06	2.86	63	30.00
	Above 15 years	96	45.71	04	1.90	100	47.62

Source: Based on a field survey, 2020

The average number of working hours per day for the village market vendors varies from 1 hour to around 7 hours. Nearly 75 percent of the vendors are working for 3-5 hours, among them around 66 percent are male and 9 percent are female, around 20 percent (around 18 percent male and 2 percent are female) vendors are working for above 5 hours and about 6 percent (nearly 2 percent male and 4 percent are female) vendors are worked for 1-3 hours.

Maximum vendors have very much experienced. About 48 percent of vendors have experienced above 15 years, among them 46 percent are male and nearly 2 percent are female. While 30 percent of village vendors have experienced about 10-15 years, out of which 27 percent are male and 3 percent are female. More than 16 percent of vendors have experienced 5-10 years and nearly 6 percent of vendors less than 5 years' experience.

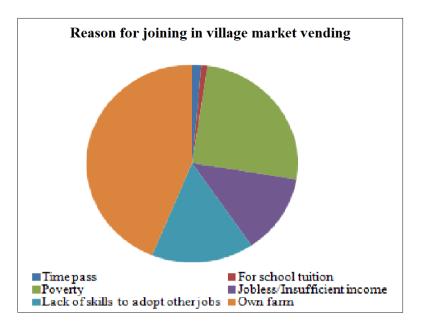
Reasons for joining as a village market vendor

Village market vendors in the selected village met various problems which are shown in table 6 and Figure 3. The data confirmed that rural vendors sell various agricultural products which are produced on their farm. About 44 percent of vendors are selling their farm products, among them 43 percent are males and less than 1 percent females. Due to the poverty in the selected villages, 25.24 percent of vendors come to sell the products to the village market, where 16.67 percent are male and 8.57 percent female. Due to the lack of education, rural vendors have a low level of skills so that they are unable to adopt other jobs, about 15.71 percent of vendors comes under this category. We know that the availability of employment is low in the rural areas that's why about 12.86 percent (around 9.52 percent are male and 3.33 percent female) vendors are selling their goods in the village market.

Table 6: Reasons for joining in village market vending

Catagory	Male		Female		Total	
Category	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent
Time pass	03	1.43	00	0.00	03	1.43
For school tuition expense	01	0.48	01	0.48	02	0.95
Poverty	35	16.67	18	8.57	53	25.24
Jobless/Insufficient income	20	9.52	07	3.33	27	12.86
Lack of skills to adopt other jobs	30	14.29	03	1.43	33	15.71
Own farm	91	43.33	01	0.48	92	43.81
Total	180	85.71	30	14.29	210	100

Source: Based on Field Survey, 2020



Source: Based on table 5.

Figure 3: Reasons for joining in village market (Hats) vending

Problems faced by village market vendors

The various problems faced by the village market (hat) vendors are mentioned in Table 7. It is observed from the table that the majority of the respondents are facing the problems of high levels of time-consuming (48.57 percent). About 41.43 percent of the respondents are facing the low levels of physical and mental strain. Similarly, 57.62 percent of the total respondents are facing the problem of high level of price fluctuation. In every village market, about 64.29 percent of vendors are facing high levels of shortage of cold storage, Go down, warehouse. Due to the poor standard of living, maximum vendors are facing the problems of capital i.e. 53.81 percent vendors. The population density is low in rural areas as compared to urban areas. So, there is a low buyer that's why 68.10 percent vendors facing the high levels of marketing competition in the village market. Maximum products are vegetables in the village market, so Due to the seasonal variation, the supply of some vegetables is fluctuating from time to time, e.g. 46.67 percent of respondents are suffering from this problem.

Table 7: Problems faced by the village market (hats) vendors.

Problems	High level	Medium level	Low level	Total	
Time consuming	102 (48.57)	72 (34.29)	36 (17.14)	210 (100%)	
Physical and mental strain	56 (26.67)	67 (31.90)	87 (41.43)	210 (100%)	
Price fluctuates	121 (57.62)	57 (27.14)	32 (15.24)	210 (100%)	
Lack of cold storage, godown,	135 (64.29)	42 (20.0)	33 (15.71)	210 (100%)	
warehouse for perishable goods	, ,	,	,	, ,	
Lack of capital	113 (53.81)	23 (10.95)	74 (35.24)	210 (100%)	
Marketing competition	143 (68.10)	39 (18.57)	28 (13.33)	210 (100%)	
Seasonal conditions	98 (46.67)	71 (33.81)	41 (19.52)	210 (100%)	

Source: Based on a field survey, 2020.

Besides, there are other important problems of village market vendors which are given below-

- Issues of Hygiene and Sanitation.
- **Issues of Electricity**
- No insurance for their goods and services.
- No linkages with the bank.
- No Schemes, policies, programs for village market vendors.

Conclusion

Village market (Hat) vendors are the most visible section of the informal economy in rural India (CCS). From the overall study, it is concluded that the medium age (30-50 years) vendors are high as compared to other age groups. The maximum numbers of vendors are illeterate but there are some vendors who have education up to upper primary level. The maximum vendors belong to OBC caste and their religion is Islam. More than 50 percent vendors are from the joint family in study area. Poverty and lack of insufficient income are the main problems that force them to work for the livelihood of themselves and their families. Many women of the study area are coming to sell their goods because of the domestic violence, drunken husband, divorce, and widow who have no other option to fulfil their needs and survival.

Suggestions:

After the analysis of the study, the following suggestion can be made to improve the socio-economic conditions of the vendors of small village markets (Hats).

- 1. There are no specific guidelines or policies that directly address village markets as a part of rural development.
- 2. The government should make welfare schemes, policies, and programs to improve the health, education, employment generation, and infrastructural facilities of the vendors who are backward.
- 3. Go down, warehouse and cold storage facilities can be provided to every market to preserve their perishable goods.
- 4. The government can financially support them by giving loans at a low-interest rate.
- 5. Access to the major markets (wholesale market) from production areas should be improved.
- 6. The organic waste generated from the market should be reused and recycled (Devkota, 2014).

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