



Navigating the Unorganised Economy: “An Exploratory Study on the Struggles and Survival Strategies of Street Vendors in Patna District, Bihar”

• Mridul Mishra • Preety Singh • Ishitta Singh • Sujata Kumari

Received : October, 2025
Accepted : January, 2026
Corresponding Author : Mridul Mishra

Abstract: Street vending is a primary source of income for many low-income families in Patna's unorganised economy. Despite their contributions, they face challenges like a lack of legal representation, insufficient vending spaces, poor infrastructure, and limited access to government welfare programs. So, this study focuses on the Patna District to examine their socio-economic conditions, livelihood challenges, and awareness and access to government

schemes. Using a quantitative research design data was collected from 200 vendors using semi-structured interview schedule. The aim of this study is to know the challenges faced by street vendors so that future urban planning and policy measures can better protect their rights, improve livelihood conditions, and promote economic security.

Keywords: Street Vending, Unorganised Economy, Livelihoods, Government Programs.

Mridul Mishra

Head, Department of Social Work
Patna Women's College (Autonomous),
Bailey Road, Patna-800 001, Bihar, India
E-mail: mridul.msw@patnawomenscollege.in

Preety Singh

M.A. Social Work
Patna Women's College (Autonomous),
Patna University, Patna, Bihar, India

Ishitta Singh

M.A. Social Work
Patna Women's College (Autonomous),
Patna University, Patna, Bihar, India

Sujata Kumari

M.A. Social Work
Patna Women's College (Autonomous),
Patna University, Patna, Bihar, India

Introduction:

Background: The term “Street Vendor” is commonly used with the expressions such as “Peddler,” “Street Seller,” and “Hawker,” among others. “Street Vendor means a person engaged in vending of articles, goods, wares, food items or merchandise of everyday use or offering services to the general public, in a street, lane, sidewalk, footpath, pavement, public park or any other public place or private area, from a temporary built-up structure or by moving from place to place” (The Street Vendors Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending Act, 2014). Chapter I, Section 2(1) (I). Given Bihar's high urban informal workforce and limited alternative employment opportunities, understanding the socio-economic conditions, livelihood challenges, and awareness of government provisions among street vendors is crucial for framing inclusive urban policies.

Statement of the Problem: Though vendors have got legal recognition under the Street Vendors Act, 2014, street vendors in Patna continue to face livelihood insecurity due to increasing urban development, inadequate vending zones, and limited awareness of welfare schemes have contributed in this problem.

Prevalence and Magnitude: The PM SVANidhi Scheme identifies 49.5 lakh vendors nationwide with Bihar accounting 1.57 lakhs vendors (around 3.2%) (Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs. (2024). *PM SVANidhi Scheme*, Government of India)

The data of International Monetary Fund shows that 60% of the workers globally are in unregulated, informal jobs.

Rationale: Street vendors are a key part of Patna's urban economy, yet they work under difficult conditions. Their contributions and coping strategies are under-researched, and the current policies often fail to meet their needs. This study is important as it will provide evidence on the challenges they face, evaluate the current support systems, and shed light on the areas where policies can be improved.

Scope: This research focuses into the challenges and daily struggles of street vendors in Patna district, Bihar. It seeks to understand the practical coping strategies adopted by them and understand the ground realities of it. The study aims to propose practical, evidence-based solutions to strengthen welfare initiatives, Policy-making and resilient urban development.

Objectives:

1. To understand the socio-demographic characteristics and socio-economic profile of street vendors.
2. To identify the critical challenges and structural barriers affecting street vending.
3. To examine the influence of socio-economic status on livelihood practices and living standards.
4. To assess the awareness and utilisation of government schemes and welfare provision.

Hypotheses:

1. Street vendors in Patna District face significant challenges or structural barriers affecting their work.

2. Socio-economic status has a significant influence on the livelihood practices and living standards of street vendors.
3. Awareness and utilisation of government schemes significantly influence the work and livelihood of street vendors.

Review of Literature

1. Bhowmik S.K. (2001) "*Hawkers and the Urban Informal Sector: A Study of Street Vending in Seven Cities in India*" studied the legal stand, economic contribution, of street vendors across cities. The study indicates that street vendors make many contributions by providing services still they continue to face several challenges, like underrepresentation and livelihood insecurity.
2. Padmegowda, A. (2011) "*Informal Sector in Karnataka: A Case Study*." The study sheds light on the importance of street vending in daily life and their livelihood conditions. It was observed that a majority of the vendors come from lower socio-economic backgrounds and many of them have limited access to credit facilities and government welfare schemes.
3. Muthuswamy R. (2013) "*A study on social security and welfare schemes of the unorganised workers in Namakkal district*" examined the standard of living and social insecurity among unorganised workers. It was revealed that the majority of respondents were aware about the Labour Welfare Schemes and most of the respondents who utilized these welfare provisions had secondary education. It also showed that although there are several welfare measures still the workers continued to face vulnerabilities such as unstable income, job insecurity, and limited social protection.
4. Karthikeyan R. (2015) "*A Study on Living Conditions and Working Patterns of Street Vendors In Tiruchirappalli City Tamil Nadu India*". focused on the working patterns of street vendors in Tamil Nadu. The study shows that due to financial instability and long work duration, the vendors suffered from health issues and also struggled with limited vending spaces.
5. Manikandan M. (2020) "*Socio Economic Status and the Problems of the Authorised Street Vendors in Tiruppur District*". The study analysed the difficulties faced by licensed street vendors and found that many of them

face the continuous risk of eviction by officials and authorities.

6. Nkosi T. (2024) *“Strengthening Urban Informal Trading and Improving the Health of Vendors: An Integrated Management Model”* examined the health risk among street vendors due to infrastructural failures. It was found that vendors who were exposed to environmental hazard like, limited vending spaces, sanitation and hygiene suffered from various chronic illness.
7. Reddi S. (2024) *“A Study on Quality of Life among Street Vendors in Hyderabad City”*. The study shows that respondents with higher educational level had better overall well-being. It also indicated that environmental factors such as lack of vending spaces, pollution primarily affects the quality of life and their well-being.

Research Gap: The existing studies focus on general informal economies or larger cities, leaving a lack of empirical evidence on the socio-economic profiles, survival strategies, and effectiveness of government schemes at the grassroots level in Patna. This gap limits informed policymaking and urban planning tailored to protect and empower street vendors in rapidly growing cities like Patna.

Research Methodology:

Research Design: The study adopted a descriptive research design within a quantitative research framework.

Universe of the Study: The universe of this study were the street vendors operating in the Patna district including both male and female.

Research Area: The study focuses on Patna District including areas like Kankarbagh, Patna City, Gandhi Maidan, Bailey Road, and Boring Road.

Period of the Study: It was a 6 month study from the period of July 2025 to December 2025.

Sample Size: This study has 200 street vendors as the sample size. i.e., (n=200).

Sampling Technique: The study adopted a Stratified Random Sampling which is a type of random sampling in which the population is divided into different strata and the data is collected randomly from each stratum.

Tools of Data Collection: Semi-Structured Interview Schedule was used for data collection. It is a set of questions prepared by the investigator which are filled by themselves during face-to-face interaction with the respondents.

Sources of Data Collection: The study utilized both Primary and Secondary sources of data collection.

Primary Data: First hand data was obtained from the respondents directly through interview schedule and observations technique.

Secondary Data: Information was also obtained from various journals, government reports and other research studies.

Data Management: The research data were carefully maintained to ensure privacy and ethical handling.

Ethical Considerations:

Informed Consent: Participants were provided with detailed information regarding the aim, process, and potential implications of the study, and their consent was secured prior to data collection.

Confidentiality: The privacy of the respondents was maintained by securing the data with restricted access.

Voluntary Participation: The respondents voluntarily participated.

Conflict of Interest: None

Data Analysis and Interpretation: Microsoft Office and SPSS Software was used for the data analysis and interpretation.

Results:

Table 1. Socio-Demographic Profile

Indicators		No. of Respondents (n=200)	Percentage %
Age Distribution	-20-40 years	128	64%
	- 40-60 years	60	30%
	- 60-80 years	12	6%
Gender	- Male	110	55%
	- Female	90	45%
Marital Status	- Married	166	83%
	- Unmarried	20	10%
	- Others	14	7%
Level of Education	- Primary Education	60	30%
	- Secondary Education	130	65%
	- Graduation & Above	10	5%
Religion	- Hindu	130	65%
	-Muslim	50	25%
	- Others	20	10%
Types of Family	-Nuclear	88	44%
	-Joint	100	50%
	-Extended	12	6%
Socio-Economic Class	-Upper	None	None
	-Middle	88	44%
	-Lower	112	56%

The above Table 1 presents the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. The findings indicate that majority of the respondents i.e., 64% belong to the age group of 20–40 years, also 55% of the respondents were male. Majority i.e., 83% of the respondents were married, and 65% of the respondents were from secondary-level education. 50% of the respondents reported living in joint families, and majority i.e., 56% belonged to the lower socio-economic class.

Table 2. Socio-Economic Indicators

Indicators		No. of Respondents (n=200)	Percentage %
Nature of Goods Sold	-Fruits and Vegetables	64	32%
	-Food and Beverages	70	35%
	-Garments and Clothing	30	15%
	- Household Goods	36	18%
Types of Vending	- Fixed Stall	156	78%
	-Mobile Vending	20	10%
	- Seasonal Vending	24	12%

The above Table 2 presents the socio-economic indicators of the respondents in terms of the nature of goods sold and types of vending. The results indicates that Majority i.e., 35% of the respondents sold food and beverages, followed by 32% who sold fruits and vegetables, while 18% of the respondents sold household goods and only 15% sold garments & clothing goods. Majority of the respondents i.e., 78% had access to fixed stall, 12% had access to seasonal vending and only 10% did mobile vending.

Table 3. Critical Challenges and Structural Barriers of the street vendors

Indicators		No. of Respondents (n=200)	Percentage %
A. Economic Challenges			
Average Monthly Income	-Rs 5,000- 10,000	62	31%
	-Rs10,001-Rs 15,000	64	32%
	-Rs15,001- Rs20,000	36	18%
	-Above Rs 20,000	38	19%
Sources of financial Support	-Family/Friends	114	57%
	-Moneylenders	28	14%
	-Banks	54	27%
	-None	4	2%
Difficulty	- Disagree	52	26%

accessing loans & other government facilities	-Neutral	38	19%
	- Agree	110	55%
Seasonal Fluctuations in Income	-Yes	118	59%
	-No	16	8%
	-Sometimes	64	32%
	-Rarely	2	1%
B. Legal & Administrative Challenges			
Have vending License	-Yes	72	36%
	-No	128	64%
Awareness on Government Schemes & Legal Provisions	-Yes	144	72%
	-No	56	28%
C. Health Challenges			
Health issues due to vending	-Yes	156	78%
	-No	44	22%
Experience stress and anxiety due to work	-Always	120	60%
	-Sometimes	50	25%
	-Rarely	15	7.5%
	-Never	15	7.5%
D. Coping & Support Mechanism			
Member Street Vendor Union	-Yes	18	9%
	-No	182	91%

The above Table 3 shows critical challenges and structural barriers of street vendors. Over 32% of the vendors earn monthly incomes around ₹15,000, and 57% of them depended on family and friends for financial support. 55% of the respondents reported difficulty in accessing loans and government facilities, while 59% experienced seasonal income fluctuations. Majority i.e., 64% of vendors operated without a vending license. 78% of the respondents reported work-related health problems and 60% experienced constant stress and anxiety. While only 9% of the respondents were members of any street vendor unions.

Table 4. Association between Working Hours of the respondents and Stress/ Anxiety

Working hours	High Stress (Always)	Low/Moderate Stress	Total	P Value
<10 hours	40(20%)	70(35%)	110(55%)	0.001
>10 hours	80(40%)	10(5%)	90(45%)	
Total	120(60%)	80(40%)	200(100%)	

The above Table 4 indicates a significant association between the number of working hours and the stress levels experienced by street vendors. Majority i.e., 40% of the respondents who worked more than 10 hours consistently reported high stress,

while only 5% of the respondents experienced low or moderate stress

Table 5. Socio-Economic influence on Livelihood Practices & Living Standards

Indicators		No. of Respondents (n=200)	Percentage %
A. Livelihood Practices			
Average working hours	-7-8 hours	60	30%
	-9-10 hours	66	33%
	>10 hours	74	37%
Product Pattern	-Same product	110	55%
	-Season/ Demand	80	40%
	-Frequently Change	10	5%
Factors influencing vending location	-High customer footfall	150	75%
	-Less police interference	34	17%
	-Availability of space	16	8%
B. Living Standards			
Type of house	-Kaccha	36	18%
	-Pucca	68	34%
	-Rented	96	48%
Work Satisfaction	- Satisfied	50	25 %
	- Neutral	68	34%
	- Dissatisfied	82	41%

The above Table 5 shows socio- economic influence on livelihood practices where majority i.e., 37% of the respondents worked more than 10 hours. Majority i.e., 55% of the respondents sold the same product, while 40% adjust products based on seasonal demand. 75% of the respondents stated high customer footfall to be the primary factor influencing vending location. 48% of the respondents live in rented houses. While only 25% of the vendors were satisfied with their work.

Table 6. Association of Socio-Economic Class of the respondents with the Barriers and challenges faced

Socio-Economic Class	Faced Barrier	No Barrier	Total	P Value
Middle (88)	60(30%)	28(14%)	88(44%)	0.04
Lower (112)	90(45%)	22(11%)	112(56%)	
Total	150(75%)	50(25%)	200(100%)	

The above table 6 shows a statistically significant association between socio-economic class and the barriers experienced by street vendors. Majority i.e., 45% of the respondents who experienced barriers were from the lower socio-economic class.

Table 7. Awareness and Utilization of Government Schemes for Street Vendors

Indicators		No. of Respondents (n=200)	Percentage %
Source of information.	-Television	36	18%
	-Newspaper	86	43%
	-Friends/Relatives	76	38%
	-Government Officials	2	1%
Awareness & Utilization of Govt Schemes (Loan benefits)	-Yes, availed loans	20	10%
	-Not availed loans	46	23%
	-Not aware	134	67%
Barriers faced while accessing government schemes	-Lack of awareness	126	63%
	-Complicated procedures	52	26%
	-Bribe demand	10	5%
	-Lack of documents	12	6%

The above Table 7 displays the awareness and utilisation of government schemes. It has been observed that Majority i.e., 43% of the respondents relied on newspaper and the remaining 38% on friends and relatives for information about government schemes. While Awareness and Utilization remain low, as majority i.e., 67% of the respondents were not aware of any schemes and only 10% have availed loan benefits. The major barriers identified include lack of awareness where majority i.e., 63% of the respondents stated this barrier.

Table 8. Association of Socio-Economic Class of the respondents with the Awareness about Government Schemes

Socio-Economic Class	Aware (Yes)	Aware (No)	Total	P Value
Middle	40(20%)	48(24%)	88(44%)	0.001
Lower	26(13%)	86(43%)	112(56%)	
Total	66(33%)	134(67%)	200(100%)	

The above Table 8 indicates a statistically significant association between socio-economic class and awareness of government schemes among street vendors. Majority i.e., 43% of the respondents who remained unaware of government schemes and benefits were from lower socio-economic class while 20% of the respondents who had awareness were from middle class.

Major Findings:

1. **Long Working Hours & Physical Strain:** 37% of the street vendors work 10–14 hours daily without weekly breaks, leading to reduced well-being.
2. **Lack of Vending Licenses:** A majority i.e., 64% of the vendors do not possess authorized licenses.
3. **Economic Instability:** 59% of the vendors experience low and irregular incomes, largely affected by seasonal demand and high competition.
4. **Limited Social Security Access:** 67% of the respondents did not have any awareness on several government schemes exposing them to various vulnerabilities.
5. **Weak Collective Organization:** 91% of the vendors were not part of any union or vendor association.

General Findings:

1. **Exposure to eviction drives:** The study also finds that many street vendors often face eviction drive by municipal authorities and have to pay fine to the authorities in which they face certain challenges.
2. **Weather impact on income:** The study also found that most of the street vendors faced challenge due to changes in weather condition.
3. **Economic Dependency:** Majority of the street vendors are dependent on some or other source for financial support. The findings show the vendors relied mostly on their friends and relatives for economic support during instability.
4. **Mental Stress & Anxiety:** The study also found that majority of the street vendors faces the challenge of stress and anxiety while operating the business. Income instability, Police interference, harassment from authorities were some of the major key contributing factors.

Observations and Discussions:

The study observed that street vendors in Patna District mostly work in busy urban areas, with daily earnings dependent on customer and demand. Most

of them remain unregistered, limiting access to government welfare schemes and social security. Problems such as complex bureaucracy, limited awareness of schemes, and fear of fines keep many vendors outside the system.

Conclusions:

The study shows the challenges of street vendors in Patna district. The responses showed that vendors struggle with long working hours, lack of vending license, insufficient housing, frequent eviction. Limited awareness to schemes and policies show vulnerabilities. Hence, the study emphasizes the need for policy implementation and urban planning.

Limitations:

The study was limited to a specific geographic area only which may not fully represent the diverse conditions of street vendors in other regions of Patna.

Recommendations:

1. **Establishment of Supportive Vending Infrastructure:** Efforts should be made to create shaded vending spaces, resting areas, and seating arrangements within vending zones.
2. **Promoting Collective organisation:** To increase vendor's representativeness street vendor unions should be made.
3. **Awareness Generation:** Policies should be made to create awareness among the street vendors regarding government welfare schemes.

References:

- Bhowmik, S. K. (2001). *Hawkers and the urban informal sector: A study of street vending in seven cities*. Economic and Political Weekly, 36(40), 3640–3646.
- Government of India. (2014). *The Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014*. Ministry of Law and Justice.
- Karthikeyan, R. (2015). *A study on living conditions and working patterns of street vendors in Tiruchirappalli city, Tamil Nadu, India*. International Journal of Social Sciences, 4(9), 199–215.
- Manikandan, M. (2020). *Socio-economic status and the problems of authorised street vendors in*

- Tiruppur district*. International Journal of Research in Social Sciences,10(10), 150–158.
- Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs. (2024). *PM SVANidhi Scheme*, Government of India.
- Muthuswamy, R. (2013). *A study on social security and welfare schemes of the unorganised workers in Namakkal district*. International Journal of Management and Social Sciences Research,2(11), 45–52.
- Nayab, M. (2023). *A study of issues concerned with street vendors in Pune city*. International Journal of Social and Economic Research,13(2), 34–42.
- Nkosi, T. (2024). *Strengthening urban informal trading and improving the health of vendors: An integrated management model*. Journal of Urban Health Studies,8(1), 22–35.
- Padmegowda, A. (2011). *Informal sector in Karnataka: A case study of street vendors in Shivamogga district, Karnataka State*. International Journal of Development Studies,3(2), 78–86.
- Reddi, S. (2024). *A study on quality of life among street vendors in Hyderabad city*. Journal of Social Development Research,9(2), 55–67.