

A Study on the Impact of Pandemic on Street Food Vendors in Bangalore City

Elangovan V, Aishwarya H, Sowmya B

Abstract:

This paper focuses on the impact of pandemic on street food vendors in Bangalore city, in order to understand the challenges faced by the street food vendors during the lock down, and to evaluate the progress of partial opening and post lock down period. The street vendors is a common sight across the country, these includes many but our study is limited to the tiffin centres, fruits and vegetables sellers, the famous chat shop across the road and the numerous juice/chai/coffee points. Spotted selling on the street corners, footpaths and local markets situated in East Bangalore region. In the Pandemic scenario when the whole world has to stay at home, these vendors on road are among the groups that are worst affected, the livelihood of the majority is critically hit; the impact of COVID-19 has been very harsh on street food vendors. Thus, our study concentrates in understanding the background of street vendors how they manage their livelihood during the lock down period by sustaining with this critical situation and what's the response from customers post lock down.

INTRODUCTION:

Like every city in India, Bengaluru also provides a glimpse of street vending; selling everything from fruit salads to biryanis, vinyl discs to latest software CDs, soft toys to rare coins, name it and the hawkers seem to have it all. The middle classes and people on the move from all sectors having a taste for street food relish on these roadside stalls for daily eatables and their cheap meals. The terms "Street foods" as used in this study refers to the vending of ready-to-eat foods in semi-permanent structures, mobile units or 'Semi-Mobile', and fresh fruits, vegetables which are sold outside authorized market areas for immediate consumption.

The number of street vendors in Bangalore has reduced by 34% during the pandemic, disrupting the sale of essential commodities at affordable rates for residents in many zones.

According to data compiled by Greater Bangalore Corporation during the COVID-19 pandemic, 7,965 street vendors, who had been selling essential commodities such as vegetables and fruits, and fast food, have stopped their business in the past few months.

Street food vendors are the one's worst-hit by the Covid Pandemic lockdown restrictions and even after it was sought to reopen, but still some curbs on street trade remain and many customers are staying away. It is taking a heavy toll on the Bangalore's ubiquitous street vendors. Thus, we analysed a need for the study to understand the different challenges faced by the street food vendors during the lock down, and to evaluate the progress of partial opening and post lock down period, Primary data was used to conduct a Survey by

Questionnaire method, where the questionnaire were circulated by Random Sampling Method to 100 respondents, street food vendors in an around East Bangalore.

Objectives of the study:

- 1) To understand at large the Bangalore street vendors.
- 2) To find out the Bengaluru vendors struggle to earn a living during the lock down period.
- 3) To study the progress made by the street vendors during the partial opening period.
- 4) To evaluate the situation of street vendors, post complete opening and two months post opening.

SCOPE OF OUR RESEARCH:

Our scope of the research is to basically find out the challenges faced by the street food vendors during the lock down, and to evaluate the progress of partial opening and post lock down period. By understanding the background of street vendors how they manage their livelihood during the lock down period by sustaining this critical situation and what is the response from customers post lock down.

Livelihood promotion for all vendors, including those selling non-essential goods: The impact of COVID-19 has been very harsh on informal workers who have exhausted their capital and earnings in trying to feed themselves during the extended lockdown period. Vendors need to be able to resume vending for survival and the government should take steps to begin to reopen markets and allow vendors back on the streets.

Reopening of Markets keeping in mind social distancing and hygiene: Delhi has many different types of traditionally crowded markets including weekly markets (for fresh food, cooked food and essential household items) and daily markets that operate on the sides of roads. These markets will need to resume keeping in mind the need for social distancing and the government should release guidelines for the same. Going forward, vending zones must also be designed keeping in mind the need for social distancing and for sufficient hygiene facilities (running water, washing stations and toilets). The authorities should work with Town Vending Committees (TVCs) for the same.

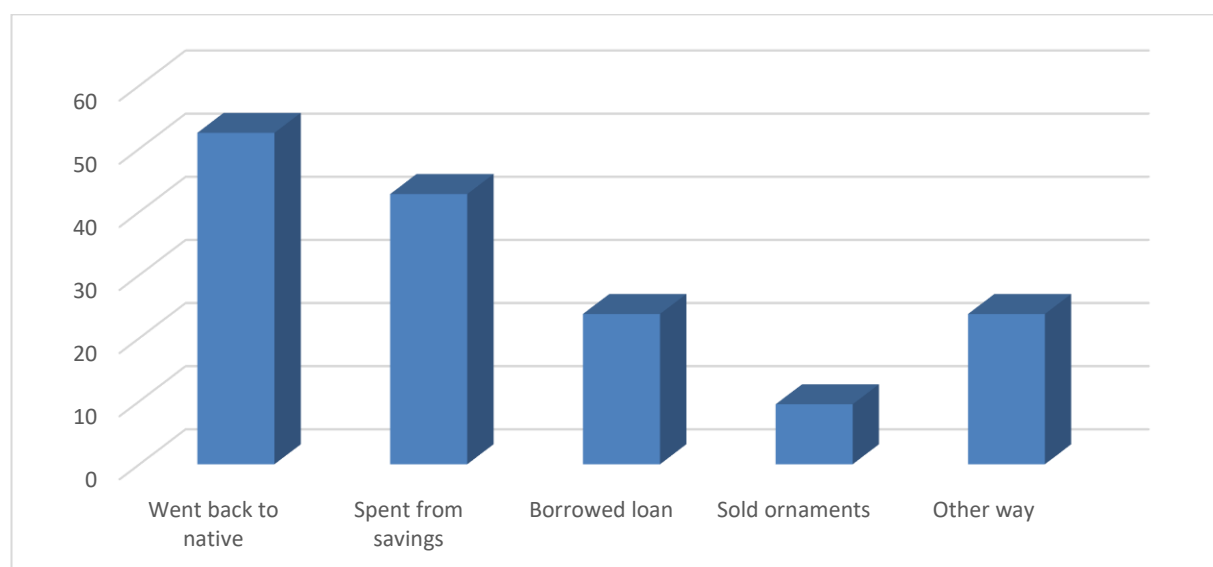
Provide direct support which is de-linked from existing registration requirements: As lockdown is lifted and vending resumes, vendors who have been at home for months will need direct income benefits to resume their work. The government stimulus package, while a welcome step, is insufficient in the nature of relief (credit not direct cash transfer) and eligibility (only registered vendors are eligible, which leaves out the majority of vendors in the country). In addition, government relief and support need to be de-linked from very rigid registration requirements, as very few vendors have been registered in India. In Delhi, out of roughly 300,000 street vendors, only about 131,00 have some form of occupational identification. If the criteria for any kind of cash grant or livelihood support is linked to occupational identification by the state, then the government should also accept registration with a workers' organisation/union as a proxy for government-issued vending passes.

Ensuring hygiene and social distancing at sites of vending: The government needs to take steps for provision of running water and soap/sanitiser for street vendors at their place of work. Additionally, vendor organisations should work with food safety authorities in the country to train vendors (especially cooked food vendors) in ways to maintain hygiene while working.

Taking steps to survey and register more vendors for access to government benefits: As mentioned earlier, the number of vendors who have some form of identification are a fraction of the actual population of vendors in Delhi. Before the crisis and subsequent lockdown, the Town Vending Committees (TVCs) were supposed to start surveying and registering vendors. As we get used to the new normal, the process of survey and registration should also begin to ensure that all vendors are able to access social security benefits and financial aid during this period of crisis.

6. Research data analysis and interpretations:

Table 6.1 (How did they manage their livelihood without income)



Since the lockdown had a massive hit to the economy of the country in which street vendors who are farming part of unorganized sectors were hit very hard from the root. From the above table, the primary data which we collected in part of Bangalore city it was found that 52% of them have decided to go back to their native as many are a migrant worker, 42.8% of the street vendors managed to spent from their savings, 23.8 % of the street vendors were forced to borrow loan from the money lenders with high rate of interest, around 9% of the street vendor decided to sell their ornaments as this method of balancing were used very regularly by the street vendors, and finally 23.8% of the street vendors were able to find some possible way to meet their basic need for daily life.

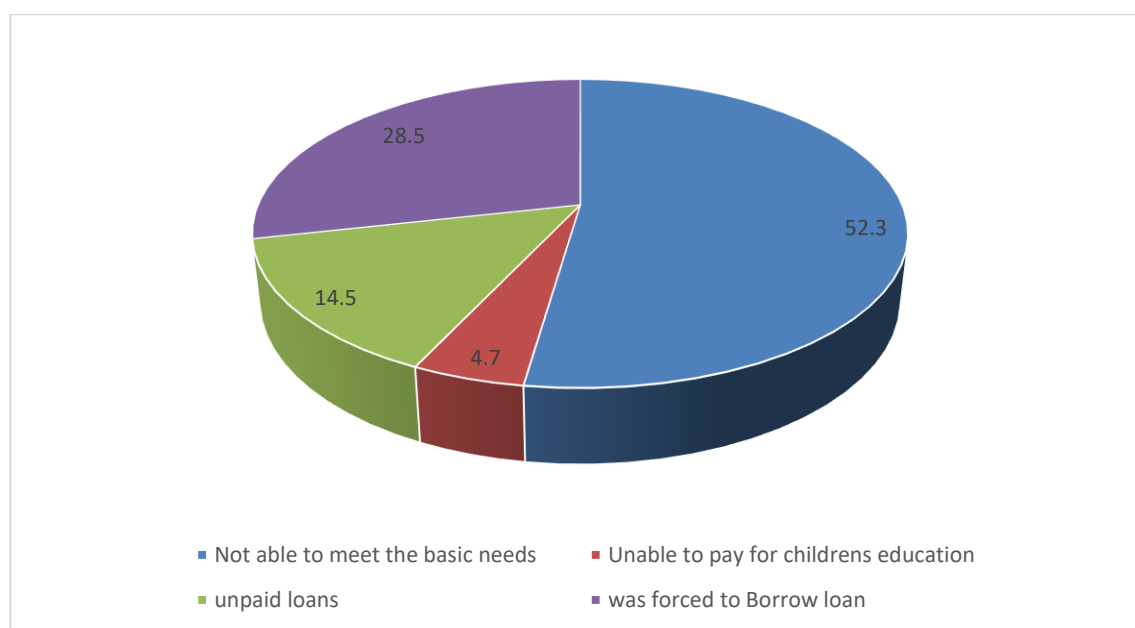
There is no doubt that the pandemic has affected almost the formal and informal sector. Researcher in India have shown that the pandemic impact on the major sectors and its drawbacks. We also found that the most of the street vendors are migrant, who's contribution towards economy of the of the country is very vast.

Much of the economic impact of the COVID-19 unorganized sector comes from the 'aversion behaviour'. Aversive behaviours are the actions people are taking to prevent themselves from being infected with the virus, such as reduced going out and the government ban on 'non - essential' shops, etc. These actions affect all sectors of the economy and in turn, translate into lower incomes, both on the supply side and the demand side.

Even if the pandemic subsides, we cannot expect things to return to their pre-pandemic state even in the medium run. Although there is much talk about what policy actions developing countries like India can undertake to mitigate the economic costs of the pandemic, in reality, outside a handful of middle-income 'emerging' countries endowed with the

appropriate infrastructure. Some countries are taking steps to strengthen health systems and expand social safety nets, as well as offer tax relief measures and credit guarantees, but meaningful action requires that there are efficient government agencies that can implement these measures.

Table 6.2 – Challenges faced by street vendors during lockdown

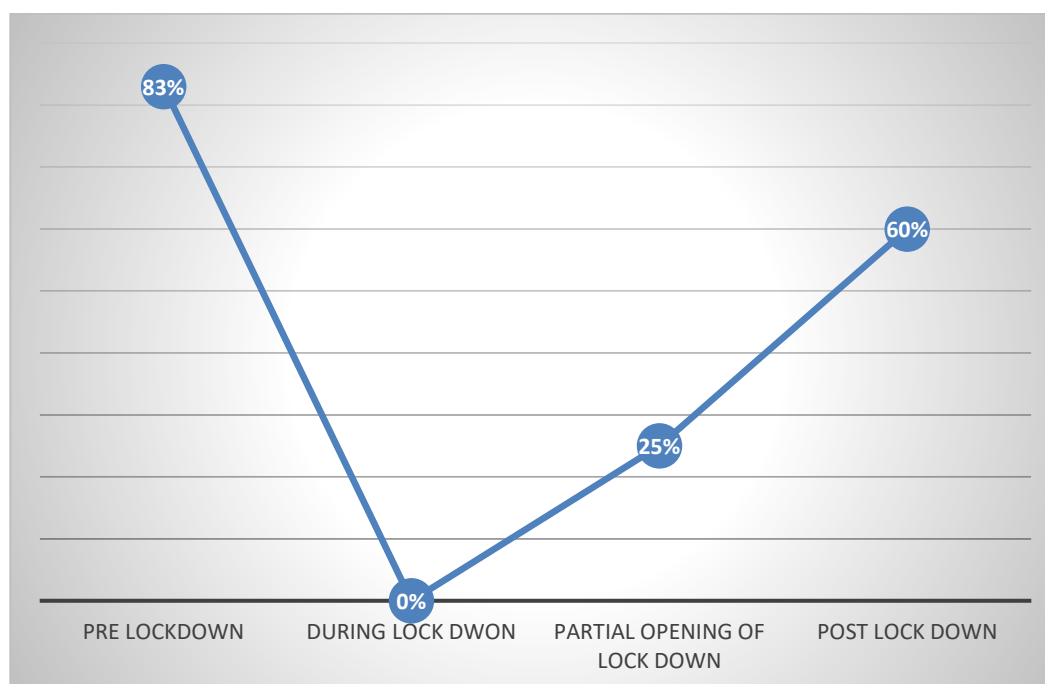


Every individual routine has been disturbed terribly by the pandemic and it was found by the live survey from our study that 52.3% of the street vendors were not able to meet even their basic need to survive as their daily wages will decides their day. 14.5% of the people in the Bangalore city were able to find their basic need but unable to pay back the loan, then 4.7% of the street vendors were finding it difficult by not able to continue with the financial support to their children for those education institutions during the post lock down period, and then just 28.5% of them were forced to borrow loan even though there was no any source of income for them repay to meet all such basic needs to survive in Bangalore.

Cut down in supply of goods, especially for vegetables street vendors, they get vegetables majorly from other states, the pandemic outbreak has even stopped supply of vegetables as transport department were also shut down. The impact of which affected the street vendors in all the possible way.

As the street vendors are not prepared for the lockdown, many of the street food sector forming part of street vendors were forced to shut down and as a result of partial lock down and over a period of time the people started coming out to be normal, with respect to street food sellers, customers are not enjoying the food as before confidently. It was found that even though the fear of covid is slow, people still fear for street foods as its intaking without knowing the hygiene source.

Table 6.3 – Business progress before and after lockdown



As we are aware of the lock down was so horrible that even a basic food was also made tend to be unavailable in few places where government and non-government volunteers tried providing few rations and other basic requirement to kill the days during lock down. We got this information by collecting primary data from the street vendors. From the above data collected from the street vendors, it was found that 83% of the street vendors business was almost equal to normal days (absence of covid), when compared to lock down times it was 0% as we all are aware that no street sellers were allowed to do business including vegetables, (allowed with restriction), later on when the government thought we van no longer wait for the pandemic to come down, it started allowing few business that including street vendors majorly vegetable vendors, so when there was a slight progress in the business it was found that just 25% of business progress was achieved. Further, it was found that still only 60% is the business progress from past 2 months after complete lifting of lockdown.

We have a record of many registered business, public service and other organized business. Its under a great challenge that unorganized sector was unaccounted and can't even predict to what extent they were hit under loss. By the experience of collecting data about their daily income, we also found that many of the street vendor are aware of the tax and understood that even a street vendor is ware of tax and what tax does to the country and also their impact on income.

Findings and Suggestion for further study:

- ❖ The study found that the most of the street vendors irrespective of the sector like vegetables, street foods, textiles and other hawkers are migrants and are from other states as most of the respondents were told that they went back to their native as the selling goods in streets was also not allowed. Hence, we suggest that most of the street vendors are not licensed sellers, can either provide them a shop by government authorized or many non-governments can undertake a project in providing them a push cart a place of which helps those migrant vendors to stay back in the city even if such pandemic arises in future. And also, can give them take over and merge their street selling business with company for supply of product on regular basis like big basket.
- ❖ Many have chosen their occupation as street vendor and most of them are illiterate. As many of their neighbours would already have been earning as street vendor and moreover, they found it profitable they even invite other farmers also those who are under loss in the village to city to do business in Bangalore as street vendors make more money than shop keeper.

We suggest that as we can many migrants can train them for affordable job and provide them a work which can eliminate them doing under a loss like we found in the data that many are forced to take loan and go under mental stress. If they are employed, they can get a minimal salary, bonus and also other government grants during such pandemic in future.

- ❖ As money plays a very vital role in the life of mankind, our study found that earning money was a great challenge faced by the street vendors, as impact of COVID virus, it forced as so many of the street vendors to take loan and also borrow from money lender and which leads their earnings are almost spent on repaying of such loan and borrowings. Such a difficult situation was faced by street vendors. Out of the study. We suggest that govt can make certainly provide funds for street vendors are a relief fund to pay back their loan which they have borrowed during lockdown for survival.
- ❖ Data on family size was obtained for approximately ninety percent of the total number of surveys done. When we think of street vendors and their families the common perception one has of street vendors is a huge family. However, the study indicates more than fifty percent (56%) households of street vendors have a family size between three and four. Twenty eight percent vendors have a family size five to six. There are a few vendors with huge families of nine to ten members, but the percentage is relatively small at eight percent of the total surveys done. We suggest that it's again a challenging task to feed their family with basic necessity during this no income lockdown.
- ❖ Another serious note we found about the street vendors in Bangalore is retaining their regular customer even after a lockdown was lifted especially street foods and other eatables. Most of the customer for a breakfast stall on the roadside's customer was daily worker in construction, PG students and migrant. Since many of the migrant daily workers are still not back as normal and also the existing customers are also not so confident enough to have as before. In such serious health note, we suggest that government can pass a circular to the public in a such a way that builds confidence in poor people depends on street foods for their survival.

Conclusion

The survey tried to look at the various aspects of street vending, the problems of street vendors during the lockdown to prevent the spread of covid virus. Firstly, we conclude after collecting a primary data from street vendor, we found that many of the street vendors are migrant from neighbouring state. Where they went back to their respective native as there is no financial benefit in Bangalore and almost across the country as they don't allow them to do any business.

Secondly, they are financial fallen down too low that influenced them to take loan for their daily bread which they never did for, and also the street vendors went unnoticed to government to provide some financial or non-financial support to such needy street vendors whose livelihood depends on daily business.

Finally, we suggest to the respective department to throw some light on street vendors by providing cart, capital to resume the business or loan at low rate.