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Impact of covid-19 on the street food vendors: An empirical study

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Abstract
The informal sector has a vital role in the shaping of cities. Bengaluru being cosmopolitan in nature has been an employment source for various people across various groups especially, the migrant from the rural areas. The low level of absorption in the formal sector has led to the informal activities engagement in the city of Bengaluru. The reduced shelf space, no rental obligations, flexibility and the like has led to enormous push to the informal food stalls and vending in Bengaluru. The present research is introspection into the impact of Covid-19 on the street food vendors in the city of Bengaluru.

Keywords: Street food vendors, covid-19, safety

Introductions
Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome coronavirus-2 (SARS-CoV-2), also called coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), has taken the world by storm. World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 as a pandemic on March 11, 2020 (WHO 2020). More than 200 countries are affected by this first non-influenza pandemic. The cumulative number of cases exceeded 13 million as of July 31, 2020. India is one of the severely affected countries with the number of cases rising every day and situation worsening rapidly.
The informal sector is diverse and has absorbed the major chunk of population. The unavailability of the formal jobs, low skill sets, easy entry, low capital intensiveness, flexible operation scales, diverse set of employment types and the like have made the employment in the informal sector lucrative and more so with food vending business in the Bengaluru city.
Despite the industrial growth, the unorganised sector has sustained and was able to progress. The India uninc was true in many ways in many ways to be most prevalent in various types of job and work. The street vending is pursued as a gainful economic pursuit in the city of Bengaluru.
The cosmopolitan culture of the city of Bengaluru houses people from diverse backgrounds. Street food has always been a part of Indian culture. It makes the every nook and corner of the towns and cities vibrant. Street food has its own charm; the poor to the most affluent relish it. The sheer popularity of this food attributes to the unique tastes that satisfy the taste buds and comes at pocket friendly price. Earlier, only traditional recipes were prepared and sold by the vendors. With urbanization and increased demand for variety in foods, western recipes have been included in menus. The transformation is also evident in the way of preparation and selling of these foods. Street food industry has been a very profitable option for the informal labourers.
Mushrooming of street food vendors on roadside has become a very common site. However, the major concern associated with the present scenario is hygiene and quality of food served. The present status of food hygiene among street food vendors of India is dismal. Poor hygiene of street food has been implicated in more than 90% of the food borne outbreaks in the past. The city with more than One crore population exhibits features of young population, diverse cultural backgrounds, floating population, the weekend culture, habituated eating at eat joints the food street vending is not only popular but also income generating.

Definition of informal sector
The ILO defines informal sector as "consisting of units engaged in the production of goods or services with the primary objective of generating employment and incomes to the persons concerned. These units typically operated at a low level of organization, with little or no division

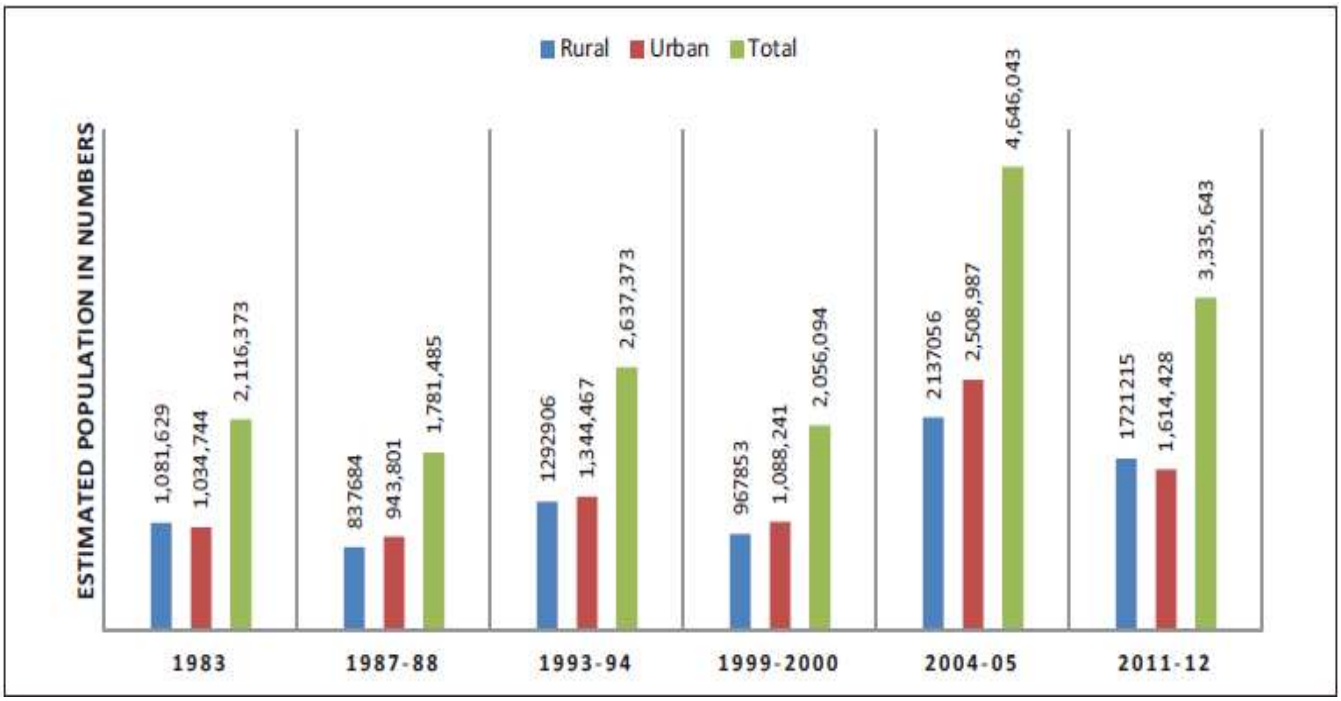
between labour and capital as factors of production and on a small scale. Labour relations - where they exist - are based mostly on casual employment, kinship or personal and social relations rather than contractual arrangements with the formal guarantees."

Recently, Women in Informal Employment Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO) with a group of researchers and activists, worked with ILO to broaden the earlier concept and definition of the "informal sector" to incorporate certain types of informal employment that were not included in the earlier concept and definition. They wanted to extend the focus to include not only enterprises that are not legally regulated but also include employment relationship that is not legally regulated or protected. (Darshini Mahadevia, 2016) [2].

Magnitude of street vending in Indian cities

There are conflicting figures on the magnitude of vending in India's cities. The Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014 calculates a maximum of 2.5 percent of a city's population as street vendors. The National Census 2011 put the national urban population at 377 million. Assuming that the urban population now stands at around 430 million, there will currently be approximately 10 million hawkers. This is also a number that the National Policy for Urban Street Vendors (2009) suggested. However, this figure seems to be on the higher side, considering the results of successive rounds of census conducted by the National sample survey Organisation (NSSO).

Notwithstanding the variations in the successive NSSO rounds since 1983, the urban population with street hawking as their primary occupation has grown from 1.03 million in 1983 to 1.61 million in 2011-12. This is not close to even half of the calculations under the Street Vending Act and the number presumed by the National Policy. The data shows 3.33 million persons (urban plus rural) involved in hawking/street vending as their primary occupation, which too, is significantly less than the estimated mark. The NSSO data reveals that nearly 200,000 women and 21,500 children are engaged in street vending. Around 1.18 million households are dependent on this informal sector as their primary source of income.



(**Source:** NSSO data, subject coverage: Employment and unemployment of 1983 (Round 38), 1987-88 (Round 50), 1999-00 (Round 61), 2004-05 (Round 61) and 2011-12 (round 68).

Note: National classification of occupation codes: 431 (NCO, 1968) for 1983 to 2004-05 covering street vendors, canvassers and news vendors and 911 (NCO, 2004) for 2011-12 covering street vendors and related workers.

Fig 1: Number of street vendors, all-India (1983-2012)

NSSO does not provide informal and formal sector classification in all-India figures. This data contradicts the estimates of the National Street Vending Act. With more urbanization likely to happen across India, the number of street vendors is likely to rise substantially. Given the ambiguity in available official data, this brief takes the figure of 10 million hawkers as per the Street Vending Act as the credible benchmark, without challenging the accuracy of the NSSO data. Courts and cities have contemplated an average area of one square metre of space for each vendor. Irrespective of the NSSO claims regarding the number of persons involved in street hawking in urban areas, this may prove insufficient.

The average space that ought to be taken into account so that the business becomes a well-planned civic activity should be larger.

This will require some calculations. If an average space of five sq. m is allocated to each vendor, then around the same measure of space is to be set aside to provide for accompanying facilities. The total space nationally required would be 10 million hawkers x 10 sq. m or 10,000 hectares or 100 sq. km. This is 0.04 percent of the total geographical

area of urban India that would support 40 million people or 11 around 10 percent of the urban population.

Lessons can be drawn from Mumbai, the Indian city with the maximum number of hawkers. If the same presuppositions are used, there would be 311,000 hawkers in Mumbai. The total space requirement would be 10 square metres per hawker, which would be equivalent to 311 hectares or 3.1 sq. km. This is 0.8 percent of the city's total geographical area. Since this can support 1,244,000 people or 10 percent of Mumbai's population, allocating 0.8 percent of geographical area is not significant. While it will be difficult to allot fresh spaces in a city like Mumbai, it makes sense for cities with more free space available to find adequate spots for vendors.

Initially, the Street Vending Act was formulated with the intention of protecting vendors. However, the enormity of numbers and the fear of bringing cities to a halt by aggressively playing the vending card forced them to include tough regulatory provisions. Given the national population growth and urbanisation trends, and the limited ability of the formal sector to create jobs, it would do well for cities to facilitate as many informal job opportunities as possible, including street vending.

The street vending economy approximately has a parallel turnover of Rs 80 crore a day and every street entrepreneur/ trader support an average of three others as employees or partners or workers on commission. All of them earn a livelihood, bare but sufficient. National Hawkers Federation estimates say that 50% of the street vendors sell food. At least 35% of the fruits and vegetables sold in urban areas and in for-flung remote rural corners are also sold by vendors. The remaining 20% of vendors sell clothes, plastic goods, unbranded crockery, cutlery and household goods. The economic impact of the lockdown has been extreme on the supply chain and the informal sector production lines that have shut down as the hawkers have gone off the streets. As self-employed entrepreneurs, street vendors are part of a 'low circuit' economy and the lockdown has brought a complete break in this circuit'.

Street vending in Bengaluru

The city of Bengaluru has seen a sudden spurt in the population with more than one crore population. Consequently, the demand for the fast food increased because floating population, the tendency to eat during evening by the school children, has various very popular old food joints existing from very long time, the active night life, both the couple working, increased women working and many others have led to increased dependence on the food joints for the food. These have been a source of primary occupation for many food hawkers.

Covid-19 pandemic and impact on the street vending

The COVID-19 pandemic has widely impacted the businesses- big and large. Street food vending was majorly hit during and post pandemic. The fallout of contagion and repurcussions, customer shock and sudden change in the consuption pattern, the preventive measures were all taken to be really difficult to be met by the food vendors operating on the streets.

Review of literature

Bart Minten (2020) [1] finds that most food vendors indicated overall that few impacts have been seen on the availability, prices, and quantities purchased compared to normal years. However, close monitoring of price movements and factors contributing to those price changes is paramount. This is especially important now in the middle of the monsoon season, given that this period is normally the most difficult period of the year with higher food prices and increased levels of food insecurity. Changes in consumer prices are sometimes linked to predatory behavior among traders, motivating government intervention to curb down trading activity, as has already been witnessed during the COVID-19 pandemic in several other countries (Bart Minten, 2020) [1].

Dr. Sonu Meher [3] contends that Lockdown affected street vendors multi-dimensionally. Many street vendors stopped working and many had to change their profession to selling fruits and vegetables within a limited time zone which had its repercussions. Some participants have shared experiences of being helped in the form of free rations by the government. Along with bearing monetary loss, street vendors also had to undergo mental stress due to restrictions imposed by the local authorities. Participants expressed their expectations of receiving aid in the form of direct financial aid and protective equipment to practice their work safely.

Dr. Sonu Meher [3] observe that Lockdown has hit the street vendors distressingly. They have lost all their earnings and lockdown will have a long-term impact on their livelihood. Hence, for the policymakers, it is important to formulate the evidence based schemes after taking proper consultation with street vendors' representatives across India. Also, there is an urgent need for the proper execution of the street vendors (protection of livelihood and regulation of street vending) act by compelling the local authorities to comprise the TVCs with fair representation of street vendors**.** (Dr. Sonu Meher) [3].

Research methodology

This paper is basically descriptive and analytical in nature. In this paper an attempt has been made to analyze the Impact of Covid-19 on the food street vendors in Bengaluru city. The data used in both the primary and secondary sources according to the need of this study.

Analysis and interpretation of primary data

The primary data is collected from 50 sample respondents who are into Street Food Vending in the city of Bengaluru.

Table 1: Cross tabulation of Age and Gender of the Respondents

Age	Gender		
	Male	Female	Total
Below 25 years	11	2	13
25-30	8	2	10
30-35	6	2	8
35-40	5	4	9
40-45	4	2	6
45 and above	2	2	4
Total	36	14	50

The age and gender composition of the sample respondents indicate that male respondents outnumbered the female respondents. Majority of the sample street vending respondents are young population in the age group of Below 25 years and 25-30 years. The female employment is comparatively less because of the lack 1 of flexibility of time in the street vending business. The nature of employment is mainly washing utensils, clearing and the like.

Table 2: Social and Economic Profile of the Respondents

Caste	**Number**	**Percentage**
SC	6	12
ST	7	14
OBC	33	66
General	4	8
Total	**50**	**100**
Marital Status	**Number**	**Percentage**
Never married	13	26
Married	15	30
Unmarried	6	12
Widowed	12	24
Separated/deserted	4	8
Total	**50**	**100**
Dependents in the family	**Number**	**Percentage**
Children below 14 years	15	65.2
Elderly above 60 years of age	2	8.7
Disabled and unemployed members	6	26.1
Total	**23**	**100**
Household Size	**Number**	**Percentage**
1-3 members	15	30
4-5 members	19	38
5-7 members	16	32
Total	**50**	**100**

The data is collected regarding the marital status of the sample respondents. The data reveals the five respondents are never married 9 respondents are separated / deserted, 30% of the sample respondents are married. 6 respondents are unmarried. The marital status is very important in indicating the necessity and the need of employment.

The data regarding the household size of the respondents reveals that 30% of the respondents have 1 to 3 members in the family. 38% of the respondents are from the family with 4-5 members. 23 respondents have the dependents in the family in identified three segments. 15 respondents have the children in the age group of below 14 years.

Table 3: Food products sold

Food products	**Number**	**Percentage**
Fish and Fish Products	8	16
Meat and Other Products	5	10
Golgappa, Masala Puri and others	16	32
Poultry	4	8
Milk and Milk Products	8	16
Cooked Rice and Pasta	17	34
Total	50	100

The street food vendors selling different food products are contacted and the data collection is done such that there is a fair representation across the identified food products.16% of the respondents is into selling fish and fish products. 10% of the respondents are selling Meat and Other Products. Golgappa, Masala Puri and Others are sold by 32% of the respondents. Milk and milk products are sold by 8 respondents.

Table 4: ANOVA test for Repercussions of Covid-19 on the sales

Model		**Sum of Squares**	**d.f.**	**Mean Square**	**F**	**Sig.**
1	Regression	13.140	4	3.285	1.742	.000
	Residual	84.860	45	1.886		
	Total	98.000	49			
a. Dependent Variable: Food Products						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Reduced scale of operations, Reduced number of days of operation, Reduced number of hours of operation, Selling over the counter						

There is significance of the Repercussions of Covid-19 on the sales at 5% level (F=1.742, P<0.05). This indicates that there is high degree of positive correlation between the set of independent and dependent variables.

Table 5: Coefficients for Repercussions of Covid-19 on the sales

Variables	**Unstandardized Coefficients**		**Standardized Coefficients**	**t**	**Sig.**
	B	**Std. Error**	**Beta**		
(Constant)	-.612	1.221		-.501	.619
Reduced scale of operations	.182	.162	.159	1.122	.000
Reduced number of hours of operation	-.045	.184	-.036	-.245	.808
Selling over the counter	.251	.213	.174	1.179	.000
Reduced number of days of operation	.355	.154	.325	2.310	.026

a. Dependent Variable: Food Products

Hypothesis: There is no relationship between the Covid-19 outbreak and the sales of the street Food vendors

The regression coefficient shows the relationship between the Reduced scale of operations, Selling over the counter and Reduced number of days of operation (p=<0.05) on the sales of the street Food vendors. Hence, the formulated hypothesis is rejected.

Table 6: Impact of the Covid-19 on the business operations

Total Variance Explained						
Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative%	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative%
Effect on the business	1.328	33.203	33.203	1.328	33.203	33.203
Decline in the profits	1.103	27.583	60.786	1.103	27.583	60.786
Less often visits by the customers	.960	23.994	84.780			
Difficulty in the supply	.609	15.220	100.000			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis

The factor analysis by principal Component method with Varimax Rotation has revealed Four Eigen values as 1.328 and 1.103 respectively. This indicated that the Eigen values are greater than 1 which led to the Existence of three main factors with 60.786 percent of variance.

Table 7: Association between the One-Sample Statistics for the Short Term Measures

One-Sample Statistics				
Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Water points and soap at the selling point	50	3.58	1.295	.183
Safer market infrastructure/layout	50	3.40	1.370	.194
Essential worker designations for food vendors	50	3.02	1.220	.173
Exemption from utility payments and rent	50	3.66	1.022	.145
Priority attention in health centers	50	3.46	.930	.132

Hypothesis: There is no relationship between the short term measures and revival of food street vendors

The mean Score of short term reveals that Exemption from utility payments and rent followed by Water pointes and soap, Priority attention in health centers and Safer market infrastructure/layout have mean scour 3.66, 3.58, 3.46 and 3.40 respectively.

Table 8: One-Sample Test for the Short Term Measures

Variables	Test Value = 0					
	t	d.f.	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Water points and soap at the selling point	19.547	49	.000	3.580	3.21	3.95
Safer market infrastructure/layout	17.546	49	.000	3.400	3.01	3.79
Essential worker designations for food vendors	17.498	49	.000	3.020	2.67	3.37
Exemption from utility payments and rent	25.313	49	.000	3.660	3.37	3.95
Priority attention in health centers	26.295	49	.000	3.460	3.20	3.72

The values of the variable relating to the Short Term Measures are statistically Significant at 5 percent level. All the variables regarding the Short Term Measures have shown consistency in the sample respondents.

Table 9: ANOVA test for the Long Term Measures for the Street Food Vendors

ANOVA						
		Sum of Squares	d.f.	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Universal Health coverage	**Between Groups**	**2.994**	**4**	**.748**	**.737**	**.000**
	Within Groups	45.726	45	1.016		
	Total	48.720	49			
Support for the development of mutual social solidarity funds	Between Groups	1.049	4	.262	.251	.000
	Within Groups	46.971	45	1.044		
	Total	48.020	49			

The ANOVA result indicates that Long Term Measures for the Street Food Vendors and revival of Street Food Vendors such as Universal Health coverage and Support for the development of mutual social solidarity funds do not differ significantly ($p>0.05$) with respect to frequency of orders at 5 percent level. The long term measures definitely impact the revival of street food vendors.

Table 10: One-Sample Test for COVID-19 Prevention Measures Taken by the Vendors

Variables	Test Value = 0					
	t	d.f.	Sig.	Mean Difference	95% CI of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Mask wearing for the customers and food vendors	27.810	49	.000	3.280	3.04	3.52
Personal kit containing apron, cap and hand gloves	20.139	49	.000	2.840	2.56	3.12
Regularly disinfecting the high-touch surfaces such as counters and customer payment areas	22.429	49	.000	3.140	2.86	3.42
Clean and sanitize the cooking utensils	18.846	49	.000	3.500	3.13	3.87
Adhere to employee health and hygiene practices	17.090	49	.000	3.460	3.05	3.87

The values of the variable relating to covid-19 Prevention Measures Taken by the Vendors are statistically Significant at 5 percent level. All the variables regarding the Covid-19 Prevention Measures Taken by the Vendors have shown consistency in the sample respondents.

Table 11: Correlations for the Other Efforts by Food Street Vendors

		Spraying	Provision hand washing units	Maintaining social distancing
Spraying	**Pearson Correlation**	**1**	**.573**	**.683**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001	0.001
	N	50	50	50
Provision hand washing units	Pearson Correlation	.573	1	.415
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001		.001
	N	50	50	50
Maintaining social distancing	Pearson Correlation	.683	.415	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	0.001	
	N	50	50	50

The results of Karl Pearson's coefficient of correlation depicts that the Other Efforts by Food Street Vendors are related with the revival of Street Food Vendors. It infers that Other Efforts by Food Street Vendors influences revival of Street Food Vendors.

Key findings

- The stringent measures are taken yet the confidence from the customers is nor upto the mark.
- The post Covid-19 scenario has seemingly lowered the profits for the food vendors.
- The sales and profits have substantially reduced and less compared to the same period last year
- The demand has drastically reduced because of the schools not reopened, work from home options for the employees, less movement of people, unemployment of the unorganized labour class

Policy recommendations

1. Making it mandatory to have license to run the business would ensure dignity and uncertain evictions.
2. Integrating food joint points with the Urban Planning. This would ensure avoiding the interruptions in the livelihood of people.
3. Making available the institutional credit to the street vendors
4. Ensuring the maintenance of hygiene practices in the preparation of food, disposal of wastes and also serving of the customers.

Conclusion

Street Vendors in the city of Bengaluru are struggling for the sustenance. The pandemic Covid-19 has impacted it in many ways. The fact in case is that the women are employed in more numbers than men. Even otherwise, they face a lot of problems but still continue. The convenience of time and place has largely employed the illiterate and people from the lower strata and castes. Sometimes, the family run food vending businesses help the living to a large extent.

Pandemic had far reaching impact on the street vendors in the city of Bengaluru. The eviction in some cases was only option than voluntary. Many migrated to their native places. The absence of social security and lack of institutional credit has discouraged many food street vendors to discontinue their operations. Many of these street vendors lost their source of livelihood during the crisis situation of Covid-19. Though some of them restarted their business after the lockdown was relaxed, they received very less income.

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