



Problems faced by the footpath vendors in Ranchi City (Jharkhand) of India during COVID-19

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ABSTRACT

This study is an attempt to understand Problems faced by the footpath vendors specially taking the sample from Ranchi city (Jharkhand State) of India. It also gives special focuses on the living standard affected during the covid-19 of these type of vendors. The study promotes the need of social dialogue to understand them and come closer to the solution of the problems they face. The footpath vendors in Ranchi city are one of the most deprived sections of the urban working poor, deprivation results from their low negotiating control. The paper also emphasis the collective bargaining of the vendors to reach the decent working conditions. It also promotes the rights of workers and reveals the rate of unionization among the vendors is low in Ranchi city. The study promotes the social dialogue and mobilizes the vendors towards realizing their rights at work.

KEYWORDS: Footpath vendor, Urban Street, Social dialogue, vendor rights, Collective bargaining, Deprivation

1. Introduction

Coronavirus pandemic a transferable sickness which prompted extreme lockdown over the nation from March 2020 to June 2020 and still is affecting everyone's life in different ways. Lockdown in India limited development of individuals, businesses, governments and also had major influence on the economy however unfavorably impacted the most unfortunate and hindered segment of the country. Road merchants are one of the most distraught areas of society. They have a place with the casual area of society that battles consistently to procure and meet their everyday requirements and can be arranged as one of the most impeded areas of society. The pandemic deteriorated the states of the road merchants as their work was shut and no pay drove them into more profound neediness. The road merchants merit unique consideration from the local and the state government, as they have a place with the oppressed and lower-pay gathering of the general public with no monetary assistance/support and are likewise helpless due to the absence of information, and lack of education.

The research has been done to know the problems and opportunities of footpath vendors in the Ranchi city of Jharkhand. The outcome of the research will help the government and the authorities to make an ideal development programme that will work in an effective and efficient manner for the overall development of the income earning capacity of footpath vendors and make street vending a good source of livelihood. This research will also prove to be the great help for those who have keen interest in studying street vending.

Moreover, the summary of the research will help the government and the concerned authorities about the problems related to street vending and what are the problems faced by the footpath vendors in their day-to-day life.

Objectives of Study

1. The objective of the study is to explore the problems faced by the footpath vendors and identify the prosperity of the street vending business in Ranchi.
2. This project mainly focuses on the reasons why footpath vendors chose the job of street vending instead of having any other means of employment.
3. The objective of the research is to analyze the general status and livelihood opportunities of the footpath vendors of the Upper Bazar area of Ranchi city.
4. To identify the type of business activities of the footpath vendors.
5. To analyze the financial aspects of the business of street vendors.
6. To identify the risks associated with the footpath vendors in the study area.
7. To suggest policy intervention that helps to mitigate the challenges of street vending.

2. Footpath Vendors and tier Challenges in Ranchi City of Jharkhand:

Ranchi is the capital of Jharkhand, India, formed on November 15, 2000 by separation from the Chhotanagpur and Santhal Parganas divisions of Bihar. Ranchi was selected as a city to be developed as a smart city as part of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's smart city mission. The economy of Ranchi is growing rapidly, and certain SEZs and industrial areas are also being developed. Ranchi is a significantly populated city with more than 10 lakh people residing here and depends on the limited resources that the city offers. Since Ranchi is surrounded by other cities like Bokaro, Dhanbad, Jamshedpur, and so on, there are various employment opportunities as there are significant mining hubs in India.

Majority of the footpath vendors in Ranchi are migrants from rural areas where poverty as well as lack of opportunities for gainful employment has pushed them to look for better opportunities in the cities. Footpath vendors in Ranchi are a major contributor to local economic growth and development of urban economies. Footpath vendors at Ranchi provide valuable services to urban masses by providing items at cheap rates and while making out their living through their own enterprises. They sell everything from building materials to Garments and craft, from consumer electronics to auto repairs to haircuts, from fresh vegetables to prepared food, etc. Footpath vendors are common sight to see during the fulfilment of our daily errands.

In both the sector whether it may be a rural or urban these street vendors contribute the maximum for the welfare of the society. Still in some places prosecution is made to them stating that they are unethically using the public places for their own need. These street vendors have a lack of basic infrastructure, hygiene facilities, sanitation, basic needs and also there are lots of huddles which arise in their way while earning their livelihood likewise- government facilities, lighting, lack of awareness etc. Many people find it difficult to survive because if they are selling their goods on the footpaths or on the nearby roads then heavy fine is taken from them. When the COVID-19 cases arrived in our country then they were suffering many difficulties like lack of income source was there, they did not have enough money for having meal in a day and they have to borrow money from their relatives, friends or neighbors for living their life. Though government has taken many initiatives against the welfare of the street vendors like construction of vending zones where they can easily sell their goods. According to Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014 these street vendors are given the opportunity to move a bit further in their life by improving their economic and social status in the society.

Thus we can conclude from the above findings that there are lot of challenges which these street vendors face & specially during the pandemic period and to sort out their problems strict laws should be made on behalf of them so that they can lead a sustainable life.

3. Literature of city life

Footpath vendors are an integral part of the urban economy around the world as they offer easy access to a variety of products and services in the communal space. They sell everything from fresh fruits to prepared foods, from raw materials to clothing, crafts, durable consumer goods to car repairs, haircuts, and many more. Footpath vendors are a primary part of urban economies all around the globe. They offer easy access to an extensive range of goods and services in communal places. They sell everything from fresh fruits to prepared foods, from raw materials to garments and crafts, from consumer durables to auto repairs to haircuts, etc. Footpath vendors are a common sight to see during the fulfilment of the daily errands of our lives. We often visit them and interact with them because their services are priceless. They generally have temporary built-up structures or move from one place to another frequently.

To understand better about the issue of the study, the literature review has run through the various literatures. Street vendors are most important but invisible sections of India Society. **Debdulal Saha** explains the role of collective bargaining for street Vendors as the power voice for their rights. He identified them as some self-employed workers in the informal sectors who offer their labour to sell goods and service on the street without having any permanent built-up. It is found that urbanisation is a recent phenomenon in the most of the developing nations. Here, **Prakasam Seepana** gives the outlook of urban street vendors of India. The research highlights the urban poverty of India. The subject matter in the paper were arranged in very logical manner to understand the vendors' situation. Pre-migration economic problems are observed by **Prakasam Seepama**. It was found that migrant who are working in the vendors' street are landless labourers. **Sharit Bhowmik in 2001**, conducted study in 7 cities and it was found that in cities other than Kolkata, every city has provisions for providing license to street vendors, it also disclosed corruption in the form of bribery, and used as a tool used by street vendors to protect themselves from harassment and prosecution of police and municipal corporation and other problem of vendor's low level of income. **Helen R. Shekhar (2008)**, conducted survey on 518 street vendors of Noida, the result cited majority of them were illiterate and 70% of vendors income ranged between ₹5000 to 7000 and about 73% of them living in rented accommodation, 97% being migrants, migrated as a result of poverty and unemployment. **Sharit Bhowmik and Debdulal Saha** in 2012, conducted study for NASVI in 10 major cities on living and operating condition of street vendors and results showed a disparity of capital investment in trade between men and women, and importance of small member groups. **Karthikeyan R. And R. Mangleshwaran** in 2013, conducted study of standard of living of street vendors. Study concluded that for improving their quality of life, psychological and physical need should be considered important and should be given due attention. **Review of literature** concludes that study about street vendors have been mostly conducted before covid. They do not include hardships faced during covid and mainly deal with problem regarding education, income, inequality among themselves and corruption and unfair treatment by Local Authorities. The Shutdown of work had it's own toll on the street vendors various parts of which is significantly undisclosed, which is to be disclosed through our survey.

This was an unexpected announcement for the country as the Prime Minister announced a complete lockdown in March, 2020 as the number of cases of COVID-19 surged across the country. It was a different feeling for everyone, as most countries around the world had never faced a total lockdown. In India, this announcement was unexpected and the very next day everyone quarantined themselves in their home. This new normality lasted about six months until the restrictions were lifted one after another. The biggest problem people faced during the lockdown was hunger. Many people cannot get enough food even on normal days. This lockdown completely petrified them, and with the government, it was the youth and NGOs that helped them. Due to lockdown, people faced so many problems when they lost their jobs and when many businesses were closed.

4. Survey Outcome of Ranchi City

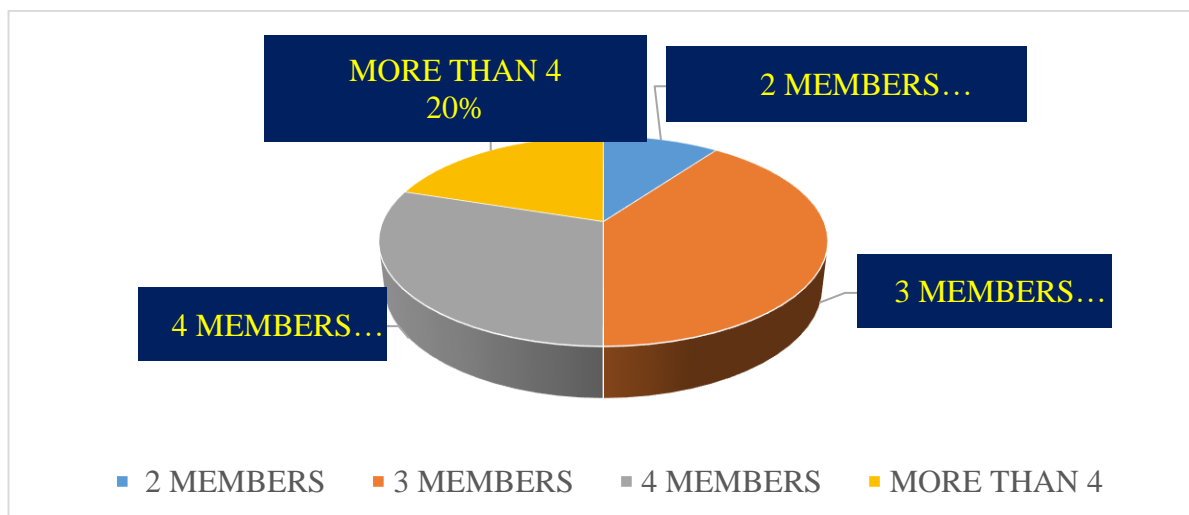
In the survey conducted, 10% of the vendors were illiterate. Most among them had received primary education and only 25% of them had studied matriculation and above. We saw that the ones educated up to higher-level were more informed about different business activities and government schemes; also they were

the ones more active in vendor union committee and non-government organizations. We also saw that the ones not educated or illiterate could not avail of any benefit offered by the government or any other organization, they were the ones most affected by the lockdown situation as they could not avail the benefits offered to them because of their lack of knowledge.

5.1 Impact of Family size on Footpath vendors

In the survey conducted, the number of family members was mostly three. The average income of such vendors, during the outbreak fell to nil and they survived mostly on savings. We saw that the vendors were the sole earner of their family irrespective of the size of their family. The vendors worked from morning 8'o clock to evening 6'o clock, generally following the St. Xavier's College timing because their main customers were the students to that college. Being the sole earner of the family they did not get much time to do anything extra for alternate source of income. By this we concluded that it was important for the family members of the vendors to earn money so that they could save some money for unfavorable time.

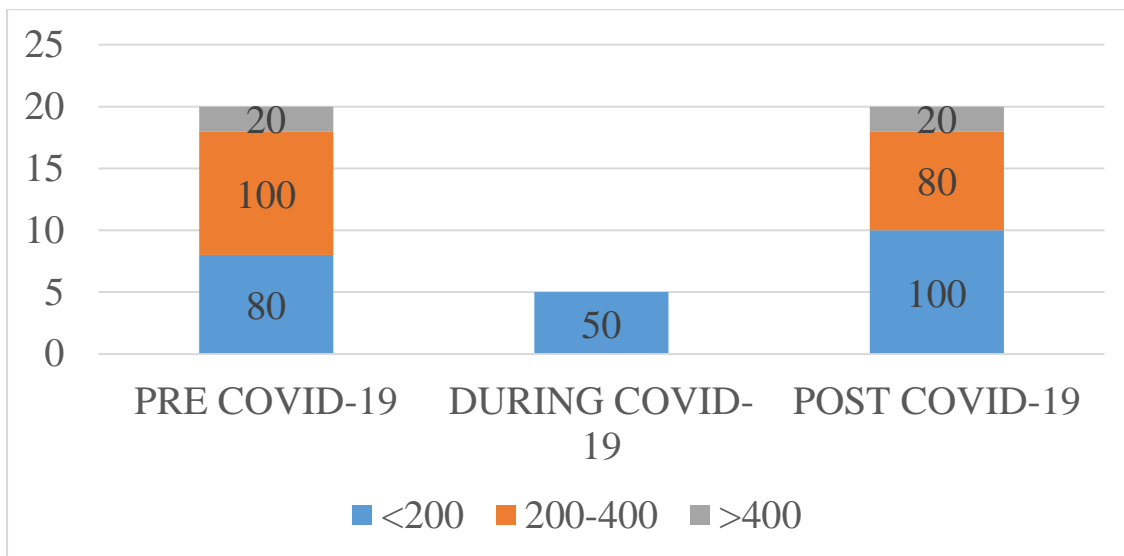
Figure-1
Impact of Family size on Footpath vendors
(Primary Source: Field Survey)



5.2 Comparative Income: Pre-During-Post Covid-19:

In Pre Covid-19 the average income per day of the vendors were divided and noted in three categories; below 200, 200-400 and above 400. Pre-COVID-19, 80 out of 200 vendors earned less than 200. 100 of them earned between 200 and 400, and only 20 of the vendors earned more than 400. **During Covid-19** the average income per day decreased to almost nil. Vendors survived on their savings and most of them took loan from friends and family. This happened because of shut down of business, effect of lockdown, etc. Only a few of the vendors, such as those who chose to work as coolie and whitewasher on some days, could earn that too below 200 per day. Most of the vendors who had resources for subsistent farming, relied on it for survival. **Post-Covid-19** the income of few vendors has declined as compared to pre-Covid-19. On surveying one of the major reasons for this was lack of willingness to purchase among the customers. Those vendors who worked at food stalls did not notice much of change in income pre and post the outbreak.

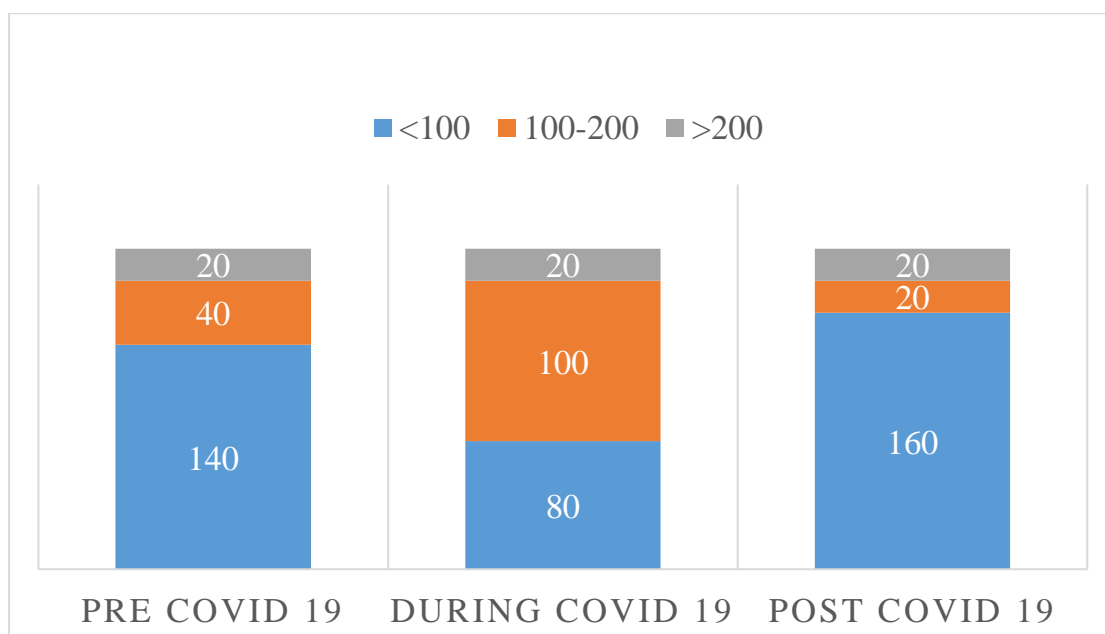
Figure-2
Comparative Income: Pre-During-Post Covid-19
 (Primary Source: Field Survey)



5.3 Comparative Expenditure: Pre-During-Post Covid-19:

On surveying about the expenditure of the vendors in the three periods; pre, during and post outbreak, we can reflect on certain points. In **pre-Covid-19**, most of the vendors spent less than 100 per day. Only few of the vendors spent more than 200 per day. **During Covid-19 phase**, 180 out of 200 vendors’ expenditure had increased. On further interviewing, it was observed that the reason for this increase was majorly illness and increased purchase of masks and sanitizing tools. There were major problems of financing to meet the daily expenditure and pay-off existing liabilities. A few of the vendors had to sell their belongings to meet the daily needs and pay-off their debts. It was seen that loans from Vendor Union were taken to meet the needs. In **Post-Covid-19**, the expenditure has declined comparatively, as people are willing to save more for unforeseen situations like Covid-19.

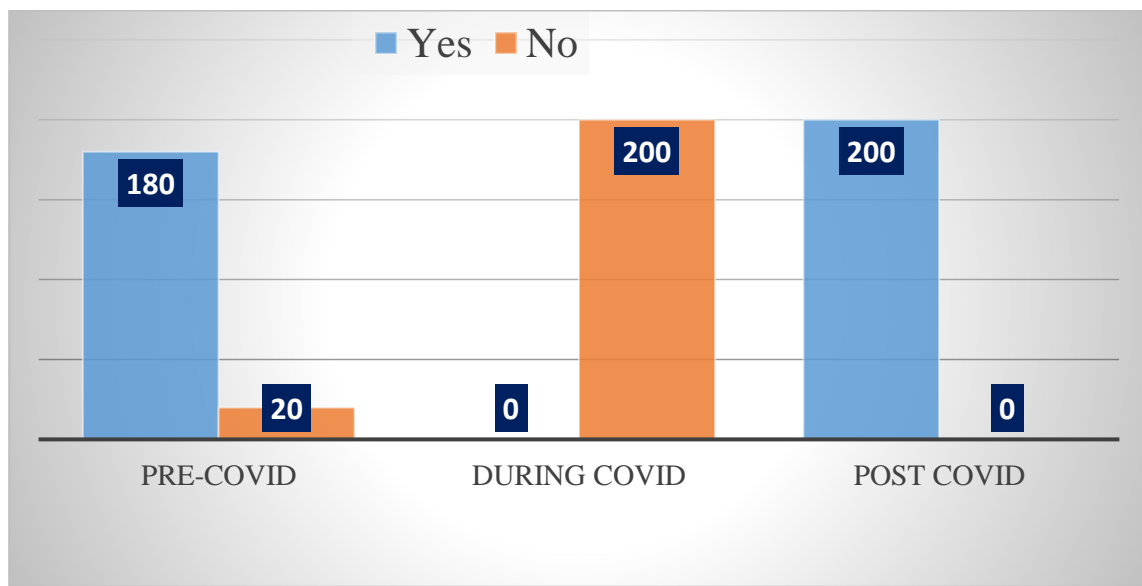
Figure-3
Comparative Expenditure: Pre-During-Post Covid-19
 (Primary Source: Field Survey)



5.4 Comparative Saving: Pre-During-Post-Covid-19:

In the survey, it was found that in pre-Covid-19 period, 90% of the vendors saved from their income. During the outbreak none of the vendors could not save as there was no income. The vendors stated that all of their savings were almost exhausted during the outbreak. Post-Covid-19, it was seen that vendors had inculcated the habit of saving more for unforeseen situations. There has been a comparative increase in no. of vendors who save. Also, during the survey we came to know from the vendors that the purchasing power of the general public has reduced and now people don't want to expend on unimportant things like photo frame, sun glasses, costly watches etc., from this it was also assumed by them that people nowadays are saving more as compared to pre Covid times.

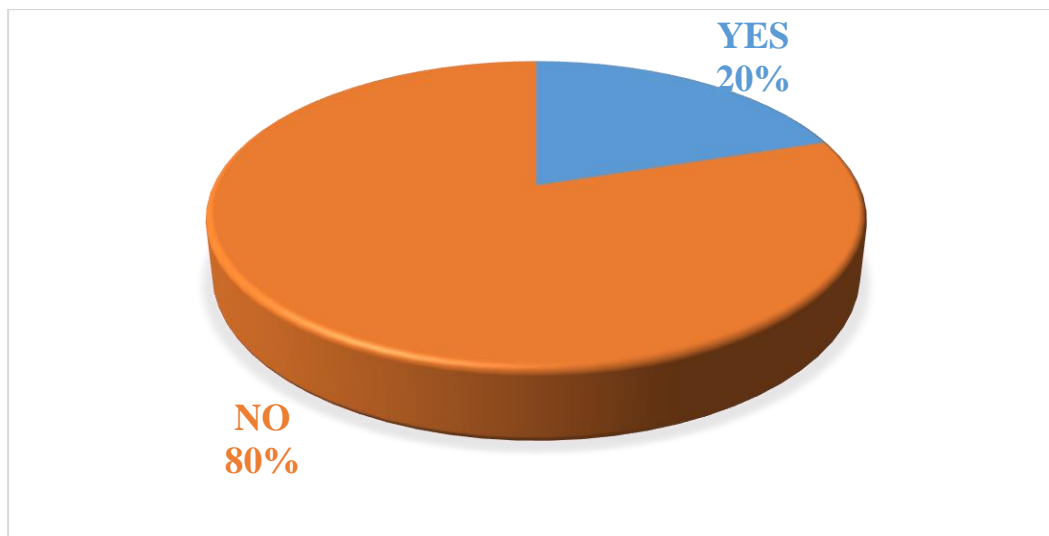
Figure-4
Comparative Saving: Pre-During-Post-Covid-19
 (Primary Source: Field Survey)



5.5 Government/ NGOs' support during lockdown phase of Covid-19:

In the survey, it was found that only 20% of the vendors received help/support from the government during the outbreak. Few of the vendors received help in the form of Public Distribution System. The BPL card holders were helped with food distribution. As stated by the vendors, they expected more personal help from the government. Those in possession of bank accounts received loans from the government at low interest rates.

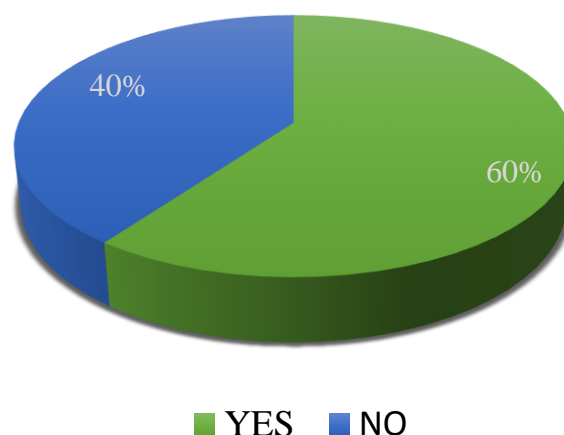
Figure-5
Government/ NGOs' support during lockdown phase of Covid-19
(Primary Source: Field Survey)



5.6 Possession of Bank Account

During the survey we observed that few vendors possessed bank accounts and were using banking services in their day-to-day activities like UPI Payments, internet banking, bank loans, etc. It was also observed that the ones having a bank account was able to access different government schemes during the lockdown phase, they even got Rs. 10,000 interest free loan from the government, which was to be repaid after one year. To this we concluded that it is very important for the vendors to have bank account to avail different government schemes or else they will be left behind.

Figure-6
Possession of Bank Account
(Primary Source: Field Survey)



6. FINDINGS AND OUTCOMES

The survey conducted brought light to various issues that were faced by the vendors due to Covid-19. It was observed that most of the vendors survived on their existing savings. The expenditure had comparatively increased mainly due to increased purchase of safety and sanitization tools and medicines. Even after the lockdown, the business of vendors did not take much of flight as they had exhausted all their savings in the pandemic. A few of the vendors had to change their field of work to survive. Most of the vendors conduct

their business in the city, which compelled them to use masks and sanitizers. These vendors worked with the constant fear of being affected by the virus. 100% of the vendors interviewed, were vaccinated with both dosages.

20/200 vendors surveyed, were non-resident who returned to their home cities and survived on subsistent farming. No vendor could conduct their business from home. They expected government to support but they accepted noting but discouragement. Payment of fees for their children's education seemed a burden on them as full amount of fees was charged even when the classes were not running. Few of the vendors stated about the medical facility available to them, was poor. 10% of the vendors lost their close ones in pandemic as no proper medical facility was available to them. Initially many were not aware of the pandemic and treated it as malaria which led them to suffer.

The vendors had to adapt to the new cashless environment in the business. With handful no. of vendors knowing to conduct online transactions, many of them faced issues of fraud and lost customer base. Few of the vendors stated that their children have gone ten generations back because of the pandemic. The pandemic has left the street vendors with low or no savings and higher liabilities.

In connection to the primary data collected by us during the survey of street vendors of Ranchi city, we found that most of the footpath vendors were aware of the Covid norms and followed Covid guidelines during strict lockdown period. Being adjacent to college premise and a hospital, we found that the vendors there mostly sold items which were attractive or useful to college students and hospital patients.

It was also found that; The vendors were unaware of many government schemes like PM SVANidhi or Vendors Act 2014, because of which they couldn't avail the benefit offered from the state and central governments. Many Vendors didn't possess bank accounts due to which they could not get the interest free loan which were given by governments during the lockdown period. Almost all the Vendors were aware of the Vendor Union of Ranchi, but we found that being the members of the union, was not useful to them. There were few vendors who were educated and learned. They knew the basics of running a business and also about different government schemes. To this we found that the uneducated were the ones who were most devastated during and after Covid lockdown. The vendors seek for the government's support their business to lead their lives and support their families.

Most of the footpath vendors don't understand and are unaware of the government programs available to them that can be of great help in such a devastating event. The footpath vendors don't get the monetary support that they needed the most during and after lockdown because they had no income, but somehow, they were able to survive using their lifetime savings and loans from private lenders at extraordinarily high interest rates.

Maximum of the respondents are under the moderate level perception towards opinion of problems. The footpath vendors don't have conclusive place for opportunity of operation and expansion of trading activity. Hygiene and safety standard requirements are very minimal and basic. Maximum of the vendors don't have access to formal credit as reported by several studies.

RECOMENDATIONS

Promote various government programs to improve the living conditions of the footpath vendors, to bridge the knowledge gap that exists between footpath vendors and banks or governments. This gives you awareness and knowledge of programs or loans or laws and regulations. Educate footpath vendors about government-provided and delegated rights and obligations to prevent anyone from manipulating them. To make easy and quick programs, loans, and government-related work without delaying work so that the footpath vendors don't suffer from daily income losses and run out of money to earn daily wages. It is very important to assess the impact of government policies in order to properly maintain data on footpath vendors, government plans, and their payments.

SUGGESITONS

It is a well-known fact that footpath vendors are facing a lot of problems and drawback due to their choice of business. The whole structure of footpath vending has to undergo tremendous changes in order to

have a harmony in business. Initially, to create a legal support system which would ensure that all roadside vendors are registered shops with secure place on locality.

It is the role of government to make footpath vendors' life decent one. Government should also provide training & education service.

7. CONCLUSION

The widest lockdown at any point forced throughout the entire existence of India devastatingly affected the existence of everyday pay workers concerning lost livelihoods, lack of food and convenience. The significant effect has happened to the employment activities. Since the vast majority of these workers are migrants, a few had been left abandoned on the streets. Despite the fact that the government authorities in its undertakings has sent off work plans for the people who have lost their occupation during the nationwide lockdown, we just expect that the planned alleviation brings these workers out of their drawn out pain and misery decently.

This study reveals the best way for the planners to address their issues is to formalise the footpath vendors by issuing license. This will go a long way to giving the footpath vendors a space within the legal framework as well as easing the regulations of street vendors for the government itself.

Finally, it is vital to recognize their rights as citizens and provide basic amenities for them to carry on a livelihood that significantly contributes to the working of the economy. The government is indifferent to the specific need of this sector. Footpath vendors provide an important service to the population of every country.

Acknowledgement

Finally, it is a matter of great privilege for me to present the paper on the topic “**Problems faced by the footpath vendors in Ranchi city during COVID-19.**” I am grateful to all the street vendors who cooperated with my students during the survey and enhanced them with their vendor experiences answering their all queries and questions pleasantly. I also thank them for the information they shared with my students and helped them to become more learned than before. I offer my heartiest gratitude to the department of commerce, St. Xavier's College, Ranchi who provided the students of VI Semester Section –A (Class Roll 1-65) with such valuable opportunity to learn the research methodology and have field experiences with different kinds of street vendors of Ranchi city, by which they were inspired, guided, and encouraged in doing the work efficiently in team. The honest research survey of my students and their self-management skills were praiseworthy to grow in my research findings.

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