



SOCIO-ECONOMIC DYNAMICS OF FLOWERS AND VEGETABLE VENDORS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO MADURAI

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ABSTRACT

The study explores the socio-economic dynamics of unorganized flower and vegetable vendors in Madurai, focused on their challenges and the impact of their work on their lives. Unorganized workers, included flower and vegetable vendors, constitute a significant portion of India's labor force; operate in informal sectors with limited access to social security and stable income. The research aimed to understand the socio-economic conditions, challenges, and coping mechanisms of these vendors, and to identify potential strategies to improve their livelihoods and working conditions. The study utilized primary data collected through questionnaires from flower and vegetable vendors in Madurai. The findings reveal that vendors face financial instability due to fluctuating incomes, lack of access to credit, and the perishable nature of their goods. Vendors also endure poor working conditions, included inadequate infrastructure and health hazards, and often lack social security benefits. The research highlights the need for interventions to support these vendors, such as facilitating access to financial services, improve working conditions, and to implement social protection measures. It also emphasizes the importance to recognize the vital role flower and vegetables vendors play in the local economy and the need to empower them for a more stable and secure livelihood.

KEYWORDS: Challenges, Flower Vendors, Financial Instability, Health hazards, Income fluctuations, Social security, Socio-economic dynamics, Unorganized workers, Vegetable Vendor

1.INTRODUCTION

Unorganized workers form a vital yet vulnerable section of the labor force in India. They operate in informal sectors with little to no access to social security, stable income, or institutional support. These workers, often engaged in daily wage or seasonal activities, include construction laborers, domestic workers, street vendors, and agricultural laborers. These workers often face challenges such as low income, lack of health benefits, poor working conditions, and vulnerability to economic fluctuations risks and occupational hazards. Additionally, Unorganized Workers struggle with financial difficulties due to a lack of access to formal banking and credit. These workers are often not part of trade unions, have limited access to job benefits like Health Insurance or Retirement Plans, and usually face insecure working conditions, low wages, and exploitation.

Flower vendors, a subset of unorganized workers, play a significant role in Madurai's socioeconomic and cultural landscape. Known as the "City of Jasmine," Madurai has a rich tradition of flower trade, with jasmine and other flowers serving as essential commodities for religious rituals, festivals, and personal adornment. Flower vendors form a significant part of the unorganised workforce, particularly in countries with strong cultural and religious traditions involving flowers. Flower vendors usually operate in Markets, Temples, Streets, or near Event Venues. Flower vendors are an essential part of the informal economy, supplies fresh flowers for Religious Offerings, Festivals, Weddings, and other Cultural events. Flower vendors typically operate in Markets, Temples, and Roadside Stalls, relying on daily sales for their livelihood. However, their work comes with significant challenges, includes unstable income due to fluctuation demand, competition from other vendors, and financial struggles as flower vendors often lack access to formal credit or business support.

Vegetable vendors are individuals or Businesses involved in sale of fresh vegetables to customers. Vegetable vendors typically operate at Local Markets, Grocery Stores, or through Mobile Stalls, offer a wide variety of product, range from Leafy Greens, Root Vegetables, and to Seasonal Specialties. The vendors play a vital role in local food Supply Chains, Provide fresh Healthy options to communities while often to build relationships with customers through personalized service and knowledge of the product they sell. Some vegetable vendors also grow their own produce, offering farm-to-table experiences to the customers.



It is an attempt to study on the socio and economic background of Unorganized Vegetable Vendors and Vegetable Vendors in Madurai City.

2.STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The socio-economic dynamics of unorganized Flower and Vegetable vendors in Madurai reflect a complex interplay of challenges and opportunities in a sector that significantly contributes to the local economy. Despite being a hub for floriculture and trade, flower vendors in Madurai often operate in informal settings with limited access to financial security, social protection, and organizational support. Along with that, their socio-economic status is influenced by factors such as gender roles, education levels, and the absence of formal training or market linkages. These challenges are further exacerbated by external factors like fluctuating market demands, seasonal variations, and competition from organized retail markets.

Vegetable vendors, face difficulties to ensure the freshness and quality of their vegetables, rely on Traditional Marketing Methods, and to access modern digital platforms. Inefficient supply chains, limited financial support and business training, and intensified competition from supermarkets and online platforms. Vendors also struggle to comply with local regulations and lack bargaining power with suppliers, leading to higher costs and lower profit margin. These challenges threaten the livelihood of traditional Vegetable Vendors and underscore the need for targeted support and innovative solution. The study seeks to understand the challenges, Socio Economic conditions of unorganised Flower and Vegetable Vendors in Madurai.

3.REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Dr. R. Senthilkumar, (2019), the study investigated “A case study of cultivation and marketing of jasmine in Tamil Nadu with reference to Dindigul district- An economic analysis”, in south India jasmine is the main cultivation and marketing flower in Tamil Nadu. Main investigation has been taken up expense and returns structure of jasmine development, surveying the advertising cost and different advertising channels and issues of creations and demonstration of jasmine in Dindigul local. The information gathered from 120 jasmine producers. The gathered information was exposed to different money related investigation, undiscounted systems. The blossoms are promoted through agriculturists, wholesaler’s commission, purchasers and retailers. Jasmine cultivators are facing production, marketing and transportation problems. The commission operator charges, absence of maker cooperatives and shortage of work amid wedding and gathering seasons were the real issues of generation and advertising of jasmine.

Rajesh Patel and Ananya Iyer (2020) This study explores the business practices of 55 flower vendors in Bengaluru, highlighting their challenges and growth strategies. Most vendors started their businesses with a small capital investment (Rs. 1200–2500) and faced issues such as high competition, middlemen exploitation, and seasonal price fluctuations. To manage unsold stock, 60% of vendors converted flowers into garlands or incense materials, while 40% sold them at lower prices to bulk buyers. Vendors employed strategies such as sourcing fresh flowers daily, establishing partnerships with event planners, and offering doorstep delivery to increase sales. Despite these strategies, they faced challenges like inadequate storage facilities, lack of Government support, and rising transportation costs. Vendors suggested improvements such as setting up cold storage units, providing direct market access, and introducing digital payment systems for better customer convenience. While 68% of vendors aimed to expand their businesses by opening small retail outlets, 88% preferred to remain in Bengaluru, emphasizing the potential for business growth if proper infrastructure and financial support were provided.

Dr. A. Amutha Nandhini: “Problems of Street Vendors during Covid-19: A Study in Erode District” - The objective of the study was to study the business profile of Street Vendors and their behaviour during Covid-19 pandemic situation, to find out the factor influencing customers during the time of purchase, to sort out the problems faced by the street vendors in study area and to offer suggestions to improve the business strategy of Street vending. The author suggested the authorities should provide permanent sheds for vendors and minimum facilities such as first aid, drinking water, restroom facility, garbage collection and solid waste disposal.

Ashmitha.V, Rubashree.J (2023) “A Study on Socio Economic Conditions and Challenges Faced By Vegetable Vendors in Uzhavar Sandhai, B.B.Kulam, Madurai”- The objective of the study is to assess the socio-economic conditions and challenges faced by vegetable vendors operating in the Uzhavar Sandhai (Farmers' Market) at B.B. Kulam, Madurai. The study surveyed 90 vegetable vendors and employed various analytical tools, including Percentage Analysis, Likert Scale, SWOT Analysis, and Paired Comparison, to evaluate the vendors' satisfaction with the facilities provided and to identify the challenges they encounter.



4.OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To study the Socio and Economic Conditions of Flower and Vegetable Vendors in Madurai.
- To identify the challenges faced by Flower and Vegetable Vendors.
- To suggest various Schemes offered by the Government to the Flower and Vegetable Vendors

5.SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Unorganized flower vendors, a significant part of the informal sector, face numerous challenges despite their vital role in society. Flower vendor's work conditions are demanding, with long hours, physical strain and that cause health problems. Market dynamics, included price fluctuations, competition, and seasonal variations, further complicate their livelihoods. To address these challenges, a multi-faceted approach is needed, involving Government interventions, civil society organizations, and community-based initiatives.

Vegetable Vendors plays a crucial role to meet the daily needs of the society to provide fresh vegetables to households and local market. Despite their essential contribution, many of these vegetable vendors struggle to improve their financial status and remain in poverty. The scope of the study is to find the challenges faced by the Flower and Vegetable Vendors in Mattuthavani, Simmakal, Ulavar Santhai in Madurai.

6.RESEARCH DESIGN

SOURCE OF DATA: The Primary Data was collected from the Flower and Vegetable Vendors through questionnaire. Secondary Data: The Secondary Data was collected through books and websites.

SAMPLING DESIGN: Respondents are from Flower and Vegetable Vendors in Mattuthavani, Simmakal, Ulavar Santhai in Madurai City

SAMPLE SIZE and TECHNIQUES: 62 Flower Vendors, 65 Vegetable Vendors by using Convenient Sampling method the data was collected.

PERIOD OF THE STUDY: The period of the study was from November 2024 to February 2025.

FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS: The data collected thus have to be analyzed through various statistical tools to take the study further more. In the study researcher used the following statistical tools:

- Percentage calculations
- Correlation
- One way - ANOVA

7.LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- Researchers may face difficulties in data collection as vendors are reluctant to share their personal details.
- Trust and response bias may affect the study, as vendors might provide inaccurate information due to mistrust or fear of legal consequences.
- Time and resource constraints can limit the researcher's ability to conduct large-scale or long-term studies.
- Sampling bias and inaccurate self-reported data affect reliability.
- Social stigma limits vendors' openness.

8.TYPES OF UNORGANISED WORKERS: The Ministry of Labour, Government of India, has categorized the Unorganised labour force under four groups in terms of:

CATEGORY	EXAMPLES
Terms of Occupation	Small and Marginal Farmers, Landless Agricultural Labourers, Sharecroppers, Fishermen, Animal Husbandry Workers, Beedi Rollers, Labelling and Packing workers, Construction workers, Leather workers, Weavers, Artisans, Salt Workers, Brick Kiln and Stone Workers.
Terms of Nature of Employment	Agricultural Labourers, Bonded Labourers, Migrant Workers, Contract and Casual Labourers.
Terms of Specially Distressed Category	Toddy tappers, Scavengers, Head load carriers, Drivers of animal-driven vehicles, Loaders, Unloaders.
Terms of specially distressed category	Midwives, Domestic workers, Fishermen and Women, Fruit and Flower vendors



9. CHALLENGES FACED BY FLOWER AND VEGETABLE VENDORS

- **Market Access:** Market access is also a challenge, with high fees, Transport Costs, and Regulatory Expenses making business difficult. Solutions include alternative Selling Methods, Government support, and Cooperatives to stabilize prices and improve vendor earnings.
- **Financial Instability:** Vendors face daily income fluctuations, depending on factors like weather, festivals, and market demand. They often lack savings or access to credit, making them vulnerable to financial shocks.
- **Lack of Infrastructure:** They often lack basic amenities like proper storage, shade, and sanitation. Perishable goods require proper storage, and the lack of it causes great financial loss.
- **Health Hazards:** Prolonged exposure to the sun, dust, and pollution poses health risks. Handling products and being in contact with potentially contaminated water can also cause skin irritations and other health problems.
- **Market volatility:** The prices of products fluctuate greatly depending on festivals and seasons, which makes it very hard to have a stable income.
- **Social stigma:** Street vendors are often looked down upon, which can lead to social isolation and discrimination.
- **Price Fluctuations:** Vendors struggle with price fluctuations due to seasonal changes, Oversupply, and Middlemen Control, which reduce their profits. Perishable goods force quick sales at low prices, while competition further drives prices down.

10. DATA ANALYSIS

PERCENTAGE CALCULATION

Age	Percentage of Respondents	
	Flower Vendors	Vegetable Vendors
21-30	7	3
31-40	16	23
41-50	26	34
Above 50	51	40
Educational Qualification		
No Formal Education	44	34
Primary Education	33	42
Secondary Education	13	22
Higher Secondary Education	3	2
Graduate or above	7	--
Number of years Working as Vendors		
Less than a year	2	8
1-5 years	23	36
6-10 years	27	42
More than 10 years	48	14
Size of the Family		
1-2 Members	13	19
3-4 Members	53	62
5-6 Members	19	17
More than 6	15	2
Earnings Per Day		
Less than Rs.300	8	--
Rs.301-Rs.500	36	--
Rs.501-Rs.1000	30	80
More than Rs.1,001	26	20
Monthly Income of Family		
Below Rs.5,000	21	39
Rs.5,001-Rs.10,000	23	31
Rs.10,001-Rs.15,000	25	25
Above Rs.15,000	31	5



Working Hours Per Day		
Less than 6 Hours	5	8
6-8 Hours	32	30
9-12 Hours	56	53
More than 13 Hours	7	9
Have Bank Account		
Yes	35	45
No	65	55
Legal Issues Faced by Vendors		
Yes	29	39
No	71	61
Family Member Involved in Work		
Yes	44	52
No	56	48
Own Vehicle		
Yes	56	68
No	44	32
Primary Expenses by Vendors		
Purchase of flowers	63	51
Transportation cost	26	43
Stall rent /Storage cost	8	6
Other	3	--
Challenges faced by Vendors		
Fluctuating Prices of Flowers	32	23
Poor Infrastructure	29	11
Insufficient Space	24	51
From other vendors	15	9
Legal issues	--	6
Health Problem Faced By Vendors		
Joint or back pain	69	78
Allergies	15	12
Respiratory Disease	5	5
None	11	5
Maintenance of Unsold Products		
Discard them	45	17
Sell them at Discounted Price	32	66
Use for Compost	16	17
Other	7	--
Seasonal Variations in Demand		
Yes Moderately	48	45
Yes Significantly	50	43
No	2	12

CORRELATION ANALYSIS – FLOWER VENDORS

Null Hypothesis (H₀): There is no relationship between Income Earned per day and the Number of Hours Worked.

Alternative Hypothesis (H₁): There is a relationship between Income Earned per day and the Number of Hours Worked.



Particulars		Income Earned per Day	No. of Hours Worked
Income Earned per Day	Pearson Correlation	1	0.133
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.300
	N	63	63
No. of Hours Worked	Pearson Correlation	0.133	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.300	
	N	62	62

Interpretation: The Pearson correlation coefficient is 0.133, with a p-value of 0.300. Since the p-value is greater than 0.05, the correlation is not statistically significant. This suggests that there is a weak, positive correlation between the number of hours worked and the income earned per day.

Null Hypothesis (H0): There is no relationship between Awareness of Government schemes and the number of respondents benefitted.

Alternative Hypothesis (H1): There is a significant correlation between Awareness of Government schemes and the number of respondents benefitted.

Particulars		Awareness about Government Schemes	Benefitted from the Schemes
Awareness about Government Schemes	Pearson Correlation	1	0.387**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.002
	N	62	62
Benefitted from the Schemes	Pearson Correlation	0.387**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.002	
	N	62	62

Interpretation: The Pearson correlation coefficient is 0.387, with a p-value of 0.002. Since the p-value is less than 0.01, the correlation is statistically significant at the 1% level. This indicates that there is a moderate positive correlation between awareness of Government schemes and the likelihood of benefiting from them.

CORRELATION ANALYSIS – VEGETABLE VENDORS

Null Hypothesis (H0): There is no significant relationship between Awareness on Government Schemes and benefiting from the Schemes.

Alternative Hypothesis (H1): There is significant relationship between Awareness on Government Schemes and benefiting from the Schemes.

Particulars		Awareness about Government Schemes	Benefitted from the Schemes
Awareness on Government Schemes	Pearson Correlation	1	0.474**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	65	65
Benefitted from Schemes	Pearson Correlation	0.474**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	65	65

Interpretation: The correlation coefficient of 0.474 indicates a moderate positive correlation between Awareness of Government Schemes and Benefitted from those Schemes. The p-value is less than 0.01, so H0 is rejected and H1 is accepted.

One Way ANOVA - VEGETABLE VENDORS

Null Hypothesis (H0): There is no significant difference between the Number of Hours Worked per Day and the Average Income Earned per Day.

Alternative Hypothesis (H1): There is significant difference between the Number of Hours Worked per



Day and the Average Income Earned per Day.

Particulars					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	0.436	1	0.436	2.938	0.091
Within Groups	9.349	63	0.148		
Total	9.785	64	9.785		

Interpretation: Since the p-value (0.091) is greater than 0.05, H₀ is accepted and H₁ is rejected. So, there is no significant difference between the Number of Hours Worked per Day and the Average Income Earned per Day.

11.FINDINGS

- The Flower Vendors are unaware of Government Schemes, and those who are aware often avoid them due to complex procedures.
- 63% of the respondents are women vendors, indicates female dominance in the flower vending sector.
- 80% of vendors reside in urban areas, and 65% are illiterate, limiting their ability to access financial and Government Support.
- 50% of vendors earn over Rs.10,000 per month, but income is highly unstable.
- Vendors work over 10 hours daily to sustain their earnings, often under harsh conditions.
- Their income fluctuates based on flower supply, demand, and seasonal variations.
- 50% vendors lack proper financial planning due to unpredictable earnings.
- High dependence on daily sales makes their livelihood highly uncertain.
- 60% vendors are unable to save money, making them vulnerable to financial crises.
- Limited access to banking services forces them to rely on informal lenders, increasing their debt burden.
- Vendors face financial struggles, made it difficult to afford education for their children.
- Heavy workloads lead to health problems, included fatigue and physical strain.
- The 55% of vendors suffer from poor Working Environments, includes lack of Shade, Seating, and Sanitation Facilities.
- The vendors face competition from larger flower retailers, reduces their earnings.
- Seasonal fluctuations impact their business, with some months bringing high demand and others leading to surplus stock wastage.
- 45% of vendors discard unsold flowers, leading to losses, while 32% sell them at discounted prices.
- Lack of cold storage facilities results in quick spoilage of flowers, further increasing wastage.
- Poor infrastructure, such as lack of proper market spaces, affects their ability to conduct business efficiently.
- Limited transportation options increase operational costs, reduces overall profits.
- Rise in flower prices make it difficult for small vendors to compete with large wholesalers.
- Vendors struggle with fluctuated rent and space fees for their stalls.
- Financial support and subsidies are minimal, leaves vendors without assistance during tough times.
- The vendors prefer financial aid from the Government rather than training programs.
- 50% of respondents believe financial assistance is the most beneficial Government Support.
- 37% of vendors demand better infrastructure to improve their business conditions.
- A lack of proper legal recognition affects their ability to access formal business benefits.
- Vendors working in informal markets often face eviction threats from authorities.
- Due to financial constraints, the vendors cannot invest to expand the businesses.
- The 53% of respondents have 3 to 4 family members, while 19% have 5 to 6 members. Only 13% have small families of 1-2 members.
- 55% of respondents work 9-12 hours daily, while 35% work 6-8 hours. Only 4% of the Respondents work less than 6 hours.
- 45% of respondents discard unsold flowers, 32% sell them at a discounted rate, 16% use them for composting, and 7% have other methods.
- 89% of respondents are not registered in any Government schemes. 6% have enrolled in Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana, and 3% in additional schemes.
- 50% of respondents prepare significantly for seasonal changes in demand, while 48% prepare moderately.



- Out of 62 Respondents, 35% of respondents have a bank account, while 65% do not.
- Among the 65 respondents, 23% fall within the 31-40 age group, indicated a notable representation of middle-aged individuals.
- It is found that 34% of the respondents have no Formal Education.
- 80% of the respondents earn Less than Rs.500 per day.
- 52% of the respondents work more than 8 hours in a day.
- 39% of the respondents Earn Less than Rs 5000 Per Month, so only the Respondents struggle to sustain their livelihood.
- Out of 65 respondents, 57 respondents do not have any alternative source of Income.
- The earnings of the respondents differ from day to day. One day the Respondent Earn Less and on other day it can be earn more. So it purely depends on the vegetable supply and demand.
- 45% of the vegetable vendors face financial issues to run their business.
- Among 65 respondents, 39% of the respondent avail loan from bank.
- The continuous price fluctuations in vegetables affect the business.
- 17% of the respondents discard the unsold vegetables, which leads to wastage of food.
- 88% of the respondents felt that the seasonal variations affect the sale of the business.
- 43% of vegetable vendors experienced losses often due to lack of customers.
- The vegetable vendors overcome the financial issues mostly by obtained bank loan. Because they save their income rarely as it is insufficient for their living.
- The major challenge faced by the respondents is access to the market.
- Climate change is one of the factors which affect the work.
- 77% of the respondents do not receive any support from local authorities because it required a lot of Legal Formalities.
- 89% of the respondents are not aware of the Government scheme available to them.
- Out of 65 respondents, 18 respondents disagree that the Vegetable vending provides a stable source of income.
- Out of 65 respondents, 34 respondents agree that the Respondents are satisfied with their working conditions.

12.SUGGESTIONS

To Flower Vendors

- Similar to vegetable vendors, flower vendors can rotate their special arrangements or flower types weekly or seasonally to keep customers engaged and interested in new offerings.
- Introduce subscription models where customers can sign up for regular deliveries of fresh flowers. This guarantees a steady income stream and builds customer loyalty.
- Partner with local businesses (like Cafes, Restaurants, or Event Planners) to showcase arrangements. This can enhance visibility and create mutually beneficial relationships.
- Utilize social media platforms to showcase floral arrangements, share care tips, and promote special offers. Engaging content can attract more customers and build a loyal online community.

To The Vegetable Vendors

- The vegetable vendors can offer discounts for customers who buys in larger quantities and can also provide customers eco-friendly bags for their purchases. It adds to the convenience and appeals to environmentally conscious buyers.
- The vegetable vendors can use the unsold vegetables for composting by reducing waste while create a valuable natural fertilizer which will add to the income of the vegetable vendors.
- The vegetable vendors can participate in local events or sponsor small community activities to increase visibility and build trust within the community.

To Government:

- The Government can provide training sessions focused on floral care, arrangement techniques, and sales strategies to help vendors improve their skills and increase their sales potential.
- Create platforms or marketplaces specifically for unorganized flower vendors, enable them to reach a broader audience and sell their products more effectively.
- Run campaigns to educate consumers about the benefits of purchase from Local Flower Vendors, Highlight the Freshness, Quality, and support for the local economy.
- The Government may increase the work time in Uzhavar Santhai, so that the vegetable vendors can earn more.



- The Government may introduce scheme which benefits the vegetable vendors for their future earnings.
- The Government can invest to improve Physical Infrastructure, such as stalls with proper Lighting, Roofs, and Flooring to protect vendors from weather conditions. It will make the vending experience more comfortable for both vendors and customers.

13.CONCLUSION

The study of flower vendors reveals that most respondents are over 50 years old with limited formal education and considerable experience in vending. They work long hours, earn modest daily and monthly incomes, and face challenges such as fluctuating flower prices, poor infrastructure, and significant health issues (mainly joint/back pain). Despite the challenges, most vendors do not face legal issues and primarily spend on purchasing flowers. Additionally, a large number lack bank accounts, and seasonal demand variations are common, highlighting the need for supportive measures to improve their livelihoods.

Vegetable Vendors, are the backbone of local economies, yet they continue to face significant hardships. They work long hours in unpredictable conditions, earning low and unstable incomes with little to no security. Vendors not only provide fresh product to communities but also build strong relationships with their customers. However, challenges like Price Fluctuations, lack of proper Market Access, and Financial Instability make their survival tough. The struggle to secure fair Wages, avoid Exploitation, and maintain a steady livelihood is an everyday battle. Despite the resilience and hard work, Vegetable Vendors remain vulnerable to Economic Shifts and External Pressures. To truly support them, there needs to be a collective effort to provide better Working Conditions, Fair Pricing, and recognition of their contribution to society. Only then the Vegetable Vendors can thrive, and to ensure both the own well-being and the continued availability of Fresh and affordable vegetables for communities.

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