

Socio-Economic Status, Health Condition and Working Profile among Street Vendors (Hawkers) in Malda district of West Bengal: A Study of Unorganized and Informal Sector Economy and Livelihood Opportunity

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Abstract:

Street Vendors or Hawkers constitute the most significant and deprived segment of the country which comes under an unorganized and informal sector economy. According to a survey by NASVI in our county India, there are near about 15 Crores of Indian people who are directly or indirectly related to this Street Vendors or Hawking profession. This profession is a boon to the rural poor for generating ample self-employment with a low cost of investment. Street vendors or hawkers profession is an important segment and backbone for business in Malda district of West Bengal. The main objectives of this research paper are to examine the socio-economic profile, health status and working profile among Street Vendors, to highlight the major problems and challenges faced by Street Vendors and give valuable suggestions for better improvement of the working profile and standard of living among Street vendors. Malda district of West Bengal has been selected as a study area. The study is based on both primary and secondary sources of data. The result of the study shows that 74.84 per cent of respondents are male, 51.81 per cent of respondents age-group are 36-59 years which is the maximum, 56.97 per cent of the respondents are earning daily Rs INR 300-500 daily, 22.42 per cent of respondents are street food seller which is the maximum profession types, 38.48 per cent of respondents are taking this profession due to self-employment, 31.21 per cent of the respondents are facing the problem of threat of evacuation and extortion by local police and local Scoundrels, 32.42 per cent of the respondents are affected in dust allergies. The study also reveals that Prime Minster Street Vendor's Schemes Atma Nirbhar Nidhi (PM SVANidhi) scheme is not successful in the study area due to the illiterate and unaware about of this scheme. The majorities of the Street vendors is self-independent and generate self-employment which promotes Atmanirbahar Bahart, a part of the new India vision.

Key Words: Street Vendors, Livelihood Opportunity, Informal Economy, Extortion, Self Employment, Poverty,

Introduction:

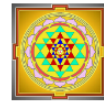
Any type of work for earning bread and sustaining of life is called a profession or livelihood. Street vendors or hawkers constitute the most significant and deprived segment of the



country in the unorganized or informal sector. It provides self-employment for the poor and marginalized community. This low-income profession is also known by different names such as hawkers, salespersons, street sellers, street vendors, travelling merchants, peddlers, street criers, itinerants, vagrants, costermongers, packmen, pack carriers, hucksters, suppliers, Footpath Seller etc. Most Street Vendors' or Hawkers' professional conditions are hand-to-mouth. According to a survey by NASVI in our county India, there are approximately 15 crores of Indian people directly or indirectly related to this Street Vendors or Hawking profession. However, the majority of vendors or hawkers do not take advantage of government schemes or loans from financial institutions. According to the Ministry of Labour and Employment report, 93 per cent of the labour workforce comes under the informal or unorganized sector, among them, Street Vendors or Hawkers play a vital role. Currently, the informal or unorganized sector contributes 65 per cent of our country's GDP. Street vendors contribute a significant share to state and national economic growth, they are not considered workers. Street Vendors or Hawkers mostly sell products or goods from large-scale industries, medium-scale industries, small-scale industries and household cottage industries.

According to the Ministry of Labour and Employment, Government of India, there are approximately 12 million street vendors in India (2021, June). A state of condition in which things are taken into account qualitatively in a positive manner is called development. Development is defined differently in terms of social, monetary, political, biological and technological aspects. Socio-economic development refers to the development of social and economic sectors. The standard of living of the people of any region can be improved through socio-economic development. There are various aspects of socio-economic development such as caste, religion, educational background, income level, housing condition, profession type, family size, availability of toilet and sanitation facilities etc.

Vending and hawking have been integral parts of West Bengal and Malda district trade and shopping since ancient times. This profession is a boon to the rural poor for generating ample self-employment at a low investment cost. Street vendors or hawkers are one of the most important segments and the backbone of business in the Malda district of West Bengal. Market crowding and disturbance caused by Street Vendors or Hawking. Thus Street Vendors or Hawkers are not only the backbone of the business market but also play an important role in attracting customers to the study area. Thus big shopping malls, Multiplex bazaars, big bazaars, and supermarkets also give some front space to Street Vendors or Hawkers. Thus we should not forget the contribution of Street Vendors or Hawkers in promoting and selling household products to smooth nation-building. This is the vision of a new India. A **famous Australian politician has said, "Everyone is a buyer, everyone's a potential buyer, and everyone's a potential vendor."**



Definition of Street Vendors or Hawking:

According to Section 2 (1) of Street Vendors Act 2014, “**Street Vendors**” means a person engaged in vending of articles, goods, products, food items or merchandise of everyday use or offering services to the general public’s in a footpath, roads, public places. Street Vendors are generally classified as Mobile vendors and Static Vendors. Mobile vendors move from one place to another place and sell their goods and Commodities. The static vendors remain in a fixed place and sell their valuable products to the people. The Government of India, to protect and promote the rights and interests of the street vendors had enacted “Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014”.

Literature Review: The review highlights the distinction areas covered by the many researchers and academicians which may be helpful to understand the issues relating to the present study and it also helps to find out the research gap. The basic sources of literature review of my study areas are- published research papers, articles in the journal of national and international repute, books, Government reports, Research agencies reports etc.

Joseph Assan and Thomas (2014) examined that how street vendors in Delhi capital city sustaining their livelihood. Their study also reveals that most of street vendors are faces various problems like forcefully removals from their places, exploitation and extortion. The researcher suggested that central government as well as concerned authority must recognize and protected by their laws of such informal sector people profession.

Dhamodharan K (2019) observed that street vendors are unorganized workers offering goods and valuable commodities to the public. Street vendors are pursuing self-employed category contributing a significant role in the economy of the country. Their study reveals that in Pondicherry city most of the street vendors are women. The results of study shows that most of the women street vendors are facing various problems among them sexual harassment, physical evacuation by the enforcement authority etc.

Nitya Maniktala and Tanisha Jain (2021) insisted that street vendors in metro cities are very common phenomena. The main causes to taken this profession due to poverty, lack of job security, unemployment, effect of Covid-19 etc. Their study reveals that due to covid-19 arrival and nationwide lockdown in phase wise the street vendors peoples economic condition become pathetic because they did not have enough savings and their profession is hand to mouth. The results of their study shows that street vendors play a prominent role in supply chain by providing convenient and inexpensive goods and services to everyone and therefore contributing to India’s economic progress.

Jyothsana (2021) identified that street vendors are self-employed workers in the informal sector who are selling their goods and products on the street without having any permanent built up structure. Their study reveals that now a day’s street vendors or hawking is an important source of employment for a large number of urban poor as it requires less skills and financial inputs.



The result of their study shows that street vendors are faces various problems such as obtaining licence, insecurity of daily income, insecurity of places of hawkers, threat of evacuation, extortion by local scoundrels, fines, limited space to run their business, tough competition in business, long working hours, weather fluctuation (heavy rainfall, dense fog), problems of storage, harassment by local place etc.

Amrutha and Ibrahim (2021) expressed their view that street vendors are important segment of urban informal economy, attraction of large number of people due to low level of financial investment, easy access to entry, low education and low skill oriented profession. Their study reveals that street vendors are provided goods and products at very reasonable price. Most of the consumer prefers street vendors because they provide services at convenient places such as near railway station, bus stand, footpath, outside of Govt. offices, outside of historical monuments.

Areful Hoque (2018) examined the socio-economic condition, housing environment and health status among female bidi workers in Malda district of West Bengal which is mainly comes under the unorganised and informal sector. The study reveals that most of the female bidi workers are working daily 12 hours in a day for earning the bread which is very arduous and monotonous work. Moreover most of the female bidi workers are suffered from major disease such as Tuberculosis, Asthma, Cough and Cold due to long years of practice of tobacco related raw materials and also suffered minor disease such as eye problems, backache and headache due to long hours of sitting at one place. The researcher suggested that there is an urgent need to issue the health card to the female bidi workers for treatment and curing of various diseases at government and private hospital at subsidy rate.

Areful Hoque, Naved Ansari and Raisul Bari (2021) expressed their view that E-Rickshaw vehicles or battery rickshaw are boon to the common man (middle class peoples) for the short distance travelling. In this research paper researchers highlighted the socio-economic problems and Health status among the E-Rickshaw puller drivers in Malda district of West Bengal. Their study reveals that most of the E-Rickshaw drivers are earns daily INR 500-1000. Moreover most of the E-Rickshaw puller drivers are facing various problems like financial debt problems to recover the loan, extortion by local scoundrels and policeman, traffic congestion, health related problems etc.

Statement of problems:

Street vendors (hawkers) along the roadside are a significant activity related to the informal and unorganized sector in the Malda district of West Bengal. The majority of street vendors (hawkers) are illiterate or less educated, poorly skilled, and in poor socio-economic conditions. In urban and rural areas, street vendors (hawkers) provide ample livelihood opportunities. As most of them do not have a valid trade license and inhabit public places like footpaths, bus stands, outside of government offices, and railway stations, it is often considered an illegal profession. In the Malda district of West Bengal street vendors (Hawking) is the main

distribution channel for a large variety of products for daily consumption like vegetable items, fruits, readymade garments, shoes, household utilities, toys items, stationery, fast food items, newspaper, magazine and so on.

Most of the street vendors (Hawkers) are facing numerous problems and challenges such as financial crisis, social insecurity, working instability, lack of awareness about their legal rights, weathering conditions (heavy rainfall, cyclone, extreme hot and cold temperature), harassment by local police, extortion by anti-social peoples, non-availability of basic amenities and facilities, insecurity of daily earnings, problems involved in obtaining a trade license, fines, limited space for running the business, long working hours, throat cut competition from other hawkers in terms of selling goods and products, health condition, stress, occupied space on the footpath along with the road creates traffic congestion, Womens Street vendors (Hawkers) are harassed and abuse, etc. **These combined basic problems and challenges faced by Street vendors (Hawkers) provoked the researcher to undertake this study in particular.** The outcomes or findings from this study will be very helpful for administrators, policymakers, economists, sociologists, Researchers, Academicians, Journalists, NGO workers, and the Ministry of Labour and Employment, Ministry of Law and Justice, Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of West Bengal as well as the Central Government of India for their policy making.

Research Objectives:

Keeping in the view of the socio- economic status, health condition and working profile among the street vendors (Hawkers) in Malda district of West Bengal in particular, the following objectives have been taken into consideration:

1. To examine the socio-economic profile, health status and working profile among the Street Vendors (Hawkers) in Malda district of West Bengal.
2. To highlighted the major problems and challenges faced by Street Vendors (Hawkers) in the study area.
3. To give valuable suggestion for better improvement of working profile and standard of living among the Street vendors (Hawkers) in Malda district of West Bengal.

A Geographical outline of the study area:

Malda district of West Bengal has been selected as research study area. Malda district is entirely located in North Bengal, it is also known as Gateway of India. It lies in North Bengal on lower Indo-Gangetic plain. The latitudinal range of Malda lies between 24°40'20" North and 25°32'08" North, and the longitudinal range is 87°45'50" East and 88°28'10" East. For administrative purpose the district has been divided into 15 Community Development Block and two sub-division namely Malda Sadar and Chanchal Sadar. The district is very much famous for

Mango Production, Litchi production, Jute Production and Sericulture activity (Raw Silk production) and notorious for fake currency making, illegal weapons making. Majority of the male population of this district are migrants labour, agricultural labour and Hawkers due none availability of any large scale, medium scale industries, majority of female population in rural are engaged in bidi making household industries. According to 2011 Census of India still 86.14 per cent population are belong to rural area.

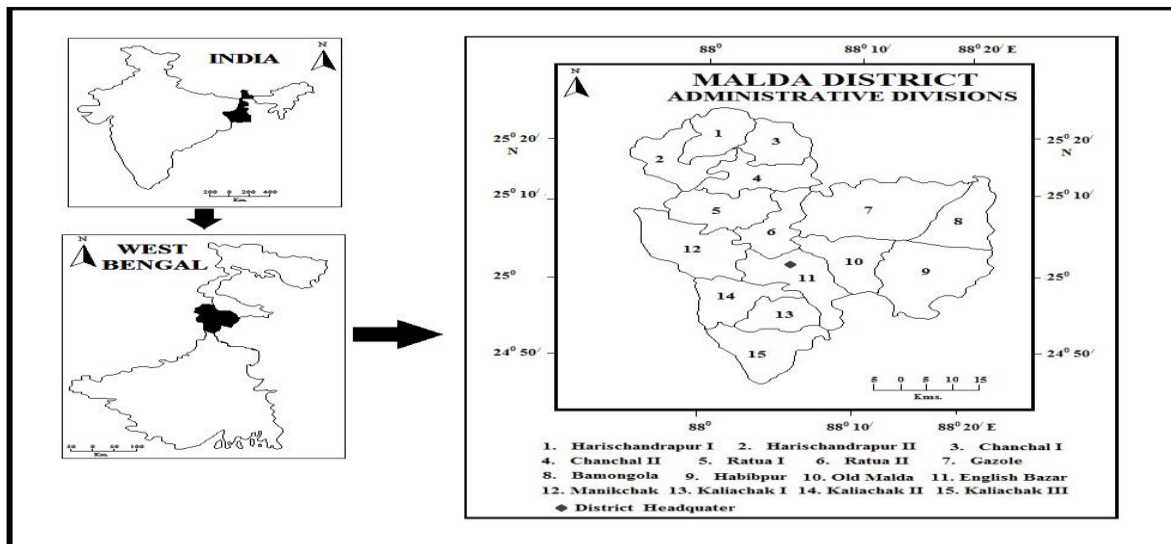


Figure 1: Location map of the Study Area

Database and Research Methodology:

The current research work is analytical, descriptive and empirical type of research work. The present study is based on both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data were collected through interview schedule based on well structured questionnaire with regards to objective in mind. For the collection of primary data a near about 330 Street vendors or hawkers (respondents) at different place of Malda district has been selected based on simple random and convenience sampling method. The Survey was conducted during April 2021 to May 2021. The survey has been conducted at Bus Stand, Weekly Rural Market (Haat), Railway Station, outside of College, School, University, Government Offices, Religious gathering places, Outside of Public Parks and Forest, Footpath of Central Business District (CBD) at Malda Collectorate, Historical Monuments places, Outside of Restaurant and Dhaba of 15 Community Development Block of Malda district.



The secondary data has been collected from Bureau of Applied Economics and Statistic Government of West Bengal, District Statistical Handbook, Malda Collectorate, Books, Research Paper, Journals, Newspaper, Researchgate, Google Scholar etc. After the collection of data for showing the result Simple Percentage Method and Computer Cartography has been used to making of bar and pie diagram.

Table 1.1: List of Sampled Street Vendors or Hawkers (Respondents) at different places of Malda district, West Bengal

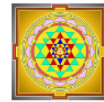
Name of the Places	Sampled Street Vendors or Hawkers Selection (Respondents)
Kaliachak Bus Stand and Babur Haat	15
Mothabari Bus Stand and Haat	15
Jalalpur Bus Stand and local Bazar	15
Sujapur Bus Stand and local Bazar	15
Rathbari Malda Bus Stand	15
Khaltipur Railway Station	15
Malda Towns Junction Railway Station	15
Malda Collectorate Outside	15
District Court Malda Outside	15
Gour Banga University Outside	15
Malda College Outside	15
Malda Medical College Outside	15
Chanchal Bus Stand local Bazar	15
Harishchandrapur Bus Stand local Bazar	15
Manikchak Bus Stand local Bazar	15
Gour Tourist and Historical Ancient place	15
Adina and Pandua Tourist Place	15
Gazole Bus Stand local Bazar	15
Ratua Bus Stand local Bazar	15
Bamongola Bus Stand local Bazar	15
Habibpur Bus Stand local Bazar	15
Cinema Hall Outside 420 More Malda Town	15
Total Number of Sampled Street Vendors or Hawkers Selected (Respondents)	330

Source: Computed by Researcher, 2022

Result and discussion:

Table 1.2: Gender wise Sampled Street Vendors / Hawkers in Malda district, West Bengal

Sl. No.	Gender Wise	Sampled Street Vendors / Hawkers (Respondents)	Per Centage
1.	Male	247	74.84
2.	Female	83	25.16
	Total	330	100.00



Source: Computed by Researcher from Field Survey, April to May Month, 2021

Table 1. 2 show that 74.84 per cent Sampled Street Vendors or Hawkers (Respondents) are Male and only 25.16 Respondents are female during the primary field survey data collection in the study area.

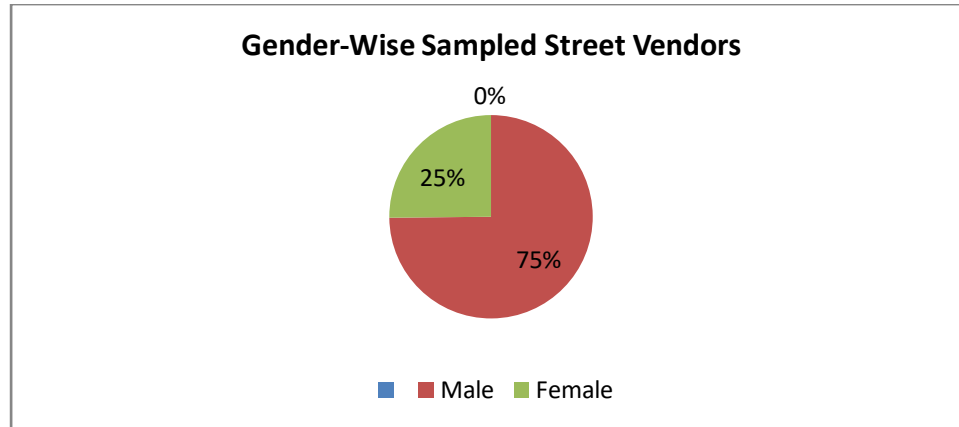


Table 1.3: Age-Group of Sampled Street Vendors / Hawkers in Malda district, West Bengal

Sl. No.	Age-Group	Sampled Street Vendors / Hawkers (Respondents)	Per Centage
1.	18-25 Year	34	10.30
2.	26-35 Year	93	28.18
3.	36-59 Year	171	51.81
4.	Above 60 Year	32	9.70
Total		330	100.00

Source: Computed by Researcher from Field Survey, April to May Month, 2021

Table 1. 2 shows that 51.81 percent of the Street Vendors are belongs to age group between 36-59 years old that is highest percentage and 9.70 per cent of the Street Vendors are belongs to age group between above 60 years that is lowest percentage.

Table 1.4: Educational Level of Sampled Street Vendors / Hawkers in Malda district, West Bengal

Sl. No.	Educational Level	Sampled Street Vendors / Hawkers (Respondents)	Per Centage
1.	Illiterate	107	32.42
2.	Primary Level	143	43.34
3.	10 th	56	16.97
4.	12th	19	5.75
5.	Graduation / Diploma Level	5	1.52



Total	330	100.00
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Source: Computed by Researcher from Field Survey, April to May Month, 2021

Table 1.4 shows that 43. Percent of the Street Vendors are to primary level that is highest percentage among respondents and 1.52 percent of the Street Vendors are graduated that is lowest.

Table 1. 5: Income Level of Sampled Street Vendors / Hawkers in Malda district, West Bengal

Sl. No.	Income Level Daily / Per Day (Indian Rupees)	Sampled Street Vendors / Hawkers (Respondents)	Per Centage
1.	INR 100-200	94	28.48
2.	INR 300- 500	188	56.97
3.	INR 600-900	34	10.30
4.	More than INR 1000	12	3.64
Total		330	100.00

Source: Computed by Researcher from Field Survey, April to May Month, 2021

Table 1.5 depicts that 56.97 percent of the Street Vendors are earning daily Rs. INR 300-500 from their hard profession and only 3.64 percent of the Street Vendors are earning more than Rs INR 1000 because they have good investment in their business.

Table 1. 6: Types of Profession of Sampled Street Vendors / Hawkers in Malda district, West Bengal

Sl. No.	Profession Types	Sampled Street Vendors / Hawkers (Respondents)	Per Centage
1.	Vegetables Seller	41	12.42
2.	Fruits Seller	23	6.96
3.	Shoes Seller	12	3.64
4.	Readymade Garments	52	15.76
5.	Household Utensils / Stationary	23	6.96
6.	Flower Sellers	27	8.18
7.	Street Food / Chat Vendors	74	22.42
8.	Electronics Items Sellers	36	10.90
9.	Others Profession	42	12.72
Total		330	100.00

Source: Computed by Researcher from Field Survey, April to May Month, 2021

Table 1.6 shows that 22.42 percent of the Street Vendors are found street food sellers in primary data collection survey and only 3.64 percent of the Street Vendors are shoes seller.

Table 1. 7: Causes of Pursuing Street Vendors / Hawkers Profession in Malda district, West Bengal

Sl. No.	Causes of Taking Hawkers Profession	Sampled Street Vendors / Hawkers (Respondents)	Per Centage
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1.	Poverty	26	7.88
2.	Less Investment	23	6.97
3.	Loss of previous job due to Covid-19	58	15.58
4.	Family Business	25	7.58
5.	Suggestion by relatives and friends	31	9.40
6.	Self Employment / To be Independent	127	38.48
7.	Less Competition in Hawking	12	3.64
8.	No Education level and skills required	28	8.48
Total		330	100.00

Source: Computed by Researcher from Field Survey, April to May Month, 2021

Table 1.7 shows that 38.48 percent of the Street Vendors are taken this profession due to self employment or to be independent and only 3.64 percent of the Street Vendors are taken this profession due to less competition in hawking because most of the people are not interested to taken up this profession.

Table 1. 8: Problems and Challenges faced by Street Vendors / Hawkers in Malda district, West Bengal

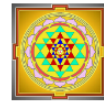
Sl. No.	Problems facing by Hawkers	Sampled Street Vendors / Hawkers (Respondents)	Per Centage
1.	Tough competition in Market	34	10.30
2.	Problems of Storage and Stock	25	7.58
3.	Threat of evacuation and Extortion by local police and local Scoundrels	103	31.21
4.	Disrespect and cheated by public	29	8.79
6.	Long Working Hours	66	20.00
7.	Problems of Toilet facility	38	11.52
8.	Others Various Problems	35	10.61
Total		330	100.00

Source: Computed by Researcher from Field Survey, April to May Month, 2021

Table 1.8 shows that 31.21 percent of the Street Vendors are faces continuous threat of evacuation by local police, scoundrels, PWD officers and 7.58 percent of the Street Vendors are faces problems of stock and storage.

Table 1. 9: Health related Problems faced by Street Vendors / Hawkers in Malda district, West Bengal

Sl. No.	Health related Problems by Hawkers	Sampled Street Vendors / Hawkers (Respondents)	Per Centage
1.	Dust Allergies	107	32.42



2.	Cough and Cold	65	19.70
3.	Backache	31	9.40
4.	Asthma	46	13.94
5.	Eye Irritation	34	10.30
6.	Hypertension	47	14.24
Total		330	100.00

Source: Computed by Researcher from Field Survey, April to May Month, 2021

Table 1.9 depicts that 32.42 percent Street Vendors are affected in dust allergies related due to continuous sitting at roadside place for selling the foods and product and 9.40 percent Street Vendors are faces backache problems.

Table 1. 10: Social Security and Challenges faced by Street Vendors / Hawkers in Malda district, West Bengal

Sl. No.	Social Security and Problems by Hawkers	Sampled Street Vendors / Hawkers (Respondents)	Per Centage
1.	Unable to bear children Education	65	19.70
2.	Daughter Marriage	32	9.70
3.	Unable to Health Treatment and medicine	45	13.64
4.	Unable to consumption nutritious foods	95	28.79
5.	No Savings for future	93	28.18
Total		330	100.00

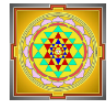
Source: Computed by Researcher from Field Survey, April to May Month, 2021

Table 1.10 shows that 28.79 percent of the Street Vendors are unable to consumption the nutritious foods due to less income and 9.70 percent of the Street Vendors are unable to performs their daughter marriage due to poverty and less income.

Table 1. 11: Benefitted by PM SVANidhi Scheme among Street Vendors / Hawkers in Malda district, West Bengal

Sl. No.	PM Street Vendor's Atma Nirbhar Nidhi (PM SVANidhi) Benefited	Sampled Street Vendors / Hawkers (Respondents)	Per Centage
1.	Yes	56	16.97
2.	No	274	83.03
Total		330	100.00

Table 1.11 shows that 83.03 percent of the Street Vendors are unable to take benefit the scheme of Prime Minster Street Vendor's Atma Nirbhar Nidhi (PM SVANidhi) due to illiterate and unaware about of this scheme.

**Major Findings of the study:**

1. Most of the Street Vendors or Hawkers performs daily long hours of work for earning the bread and sustaining their life in the study area.
2. Majority of the Street Vendors or Hawkers are earning Rs. INR 300-500 from their hard work profession in the study area.
3. Majority of the Street Vendors or Hawkers are faces various problems such Problems of Storage and Stock, Transportation of goods, Threat of evacuation by municipal and PWD authority and Extortion by local police and local Scoundrels etc in the study area.
4. Most of the women's Street Vendors or Hawkers are sexually harassed and abuse by the customers, local police and local Scoundrels in the study area.
5. Majority of Street Vendors or Hawkers are taken this profession due to poverty, less investment in this profession, no skilled requires etc.
6. Most of the Street Vendors or Hawkers are affected in many more diseases such as Dust Allergies, Cough and Cold, Asthma, Backache and Eye irritation etc.
7. Majority of the Street Vendors or Hawkers are occupies the footpath and road thus peoples are walking along the road, happenings road accident and heavy traffic congestion in the study area.
8. Child Labours are also engaged in Street Vendors or Hawkers profession in the study area.

Suggestion and Policy Implication:

1. The Ministry of Labour and Employment Central Government as well as State Government should provide licence to all the Street Vendors Hawkers.
2. The Ministry of Labour and Employment Central Government as well as State Government should fixed the place for Vending Zone or hawking Zone, Vendor Street, Vendor Complex Mall at village market, block level, district level and should be given permission to from their own Union Trade Union .
3. The Ministry of Commerce and Industry and various financial institution, Banks should provide loans with less interest for the financial support of Street Vendors or Hawkers peoples.

**Conclusion:**

Socio-Economic condition, Health status, and Working Profile of the street vendors or hawkers in Malda district of West Bengal is a very pathetic and contemptible state. There are a large number of people who work as street vendors or hawkers in rural and urban areas who are marginalized and illiterate. Most street vendors face various problems in their day-to-day lives, including inadequate social protection and working conditions pathetic safety and health issues, and all other strains in the Malda district of West Bengal. They help many small-scale industries, and household cottage industries flourish by marketing and selling their products.

It is mainly due to poverty in this study area that there are people who pursue this profession. Street vendors or hawkers are not considered workers as there are no employer-employee relations. Transport and storage are big issues for street vendors or hawkers in the Malda district of West Bengal. The working hours are long and they have no toilet facilities. Women street vendors or hawkers are sexually harassed and abused in the study area. The women's street vendors or hawkers are to be sensitized to various issues through awareness building. This will empower them in combating sexual harassment and other violence against them. Regular barbing and extortion by local scoundrels and policemen are occupational hazards. Despite all these problems, Centre of Indian Trade Unions like CITU and the National Association of Street Vendors (NASVI) play an important role in solving the various issues and problems, aware the street vendors or hawkers of their legal rights, helping them obtain trade licenses, etc. In the study area, most street vendors or hawkers have not joined the union. Moreover, the state government must ensure the PWD officers, municipal authorities, and concerned department officers that they should not disturb or forcefully evacuate the poor street vendors or hawkers. This is because they only pursue their livelihood to sustain their life and dependent family members. The study also reveals that Prime Minister Street Vendor's Schemes Atma Nirbhar Nidhi (PM SVANidhi) scheme is not successful in the study area due to the illiterate and unaware about of this scheme. Almost all street vendors are self-employed and generate self-employment, which contributes to Atmanirbahar Bahart. Last but not least we should always remember this famous quote **"Please don't bargain hard with small vendors like this. They do business not to build shopping malls but to Live, Survive and Eat!"**

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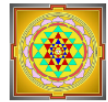
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