

**THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA ACKNOWLEDGES
ALL THE TRADITIONAL OWNERS OF LANDS ACROSS
AUSTRALIA, INCLUDING THE WHADJUK NOONGAR PEOPLE AT
THE BOORLOO (PERTH) CAMPUS AND THE MENANG NOONGAR
PEOPLE AT THE KINJARLING (ALBANY) CAMPUS. WE
RECOGNISE AND CELEBRATE THAT TRADITIONAL OWNERS
REMAIN THE CULTURAL CUSTODIANS OF THEIR LANDS, AND
CONTINUE TO PRACTISE THEIR VALUES, LANGUAGES, BELIEFS,
AND KNOWLEDGE.**



INTRODUCTION



CAN STREET VENDING REDUCE MULTIDIMENSIONAL POVERTY? EVIDENCE FROM COLOMBO, SRI LANKA

Caspersz, D., Karunaratna, A. C., & Premaratna, S. P.
(2026). The entrepreneurial experience of street vendors in
Sri Lanka: a solution to multidimensional
poverty. *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, 1-25.

STREET VENDING IS A GROWING NOT SLOWING PHENOMENON

Street vendors have seen growth over the past five years because of heightened consumer demand for unique food products and more outdoor gatherings post-pandemic. Industry revenue is expected to expand at a CAGR of 4.6% to reach \$4.1 billion over the five years to 2026. The food truck craze began to take hold just prior to the current period and has since outperformed the broader food service sector. Further, rising inflation has reduced disposable income, prompting customers to frequent street vendors for their low prices. This steady expansion will continue, with revenue anticipated to boost 0.9% in 2026 alone (Re, V, 2026, Street Vendors in the US Industry Data and Analysis, US NAICS 72233, <https://www.ibisworld.com/united-states/industry/street-vendors/1683/>)



AUSTRALIA: ANZSCO STREET VENDORS (621713)

Street Vendors and Related Salespersons



INFORMALITY, JOB QUALITY AND WELFARE IN SRI LANKA

Informal employment remains a salient and persistent feature of Sri Lanka's labour market.

- **Around 70% of the workforce is employed informally.**
- **This proportion has changed little since 2006.**
- Research on informal employment remains limited despite its significance.
- Development policies should address the causes and consequences of informality.



PROBLEM AND RESEARCH GAP

STREET VENDING AS NECESSITY ENTREPRENEURSHIP



Role in Informal Economy

Street vending is a key form of necessity entrepreneurship supplying affordable goods and services in urban areas worldwide.

Drivers of Necessity Entrepreneurship

Vendors operate due to limited access to formal jobs, capital, and social protection, often in family-run micro enterprises.

Livelihood Strategy and Challenges

Street vending provides daily income for marginalized groups despite uncertain, competitive environments and limited long-term security.

Broader Economic Impact

While vending delivers income and employment, its role in improving long-term well-being and reducing poverty remains debated.

LIMITS OF INCOME-FOCUSED APPROACHES



Income Focus Limitations

An income-focused view overlooks the precarious nature of street vending and its unstable earnings.

Challenges Beyond Income

Vendors face harassment, insecure tenure, and regulatory crackdowns, limiting their future planning abilities.

Multidimensional Poverty

Income alone does not reflect poverty fully; issues like housing, education, and public services are critical.

Research Shift

Research shifts focus from income poverty to multidimensional poverty for better insights.



RESEARCH DESIGN AND FRAMEWORK

CONCEPTUAL MODEL AND METHODOLOGY



Conceptual Framework

The study uses a framework identifying business support, socioeconomic status, vendor status, and demographics as key poverty determinants.

Multidimensional Poverty Definition

Poverty is viewed beyond income to include housing, education, and access to essential services.

Quantitative Analysis Method

Partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) analyzes Likert-scale quantitative survey data from 105 vendors.

Qualitative Insight Approach

Leximancer analysis of open responses provides qualitative insights into vendors' experiences and poverty impact.



KEY FINDINGS

Key Findings

1. Street Vending Alone Has Limited Effect

Street vending alone has a limited impact on poverty reduction.

2. Socioeconomic Conditions Influence Outcomes

Education, health, housing, and income shape wellbeing outcomes.

3. Business Support Matters Most

Training, finance, networks, and government support drive the strongest gains.

4. Significant Gender Differences

Women face greater barriers and depend more on vending for livelihood support.

Key Takeaway: Street vending contributes to poverty reduction when supported by institutional assistance, favourable socioeconomic conditions, and gender-sensitive interventions.

Gender Differences in the Street Vending Experience

WOMEN VENDORS

REGULATIONS

- Limited awareness
- Few links with authorities

INCOME

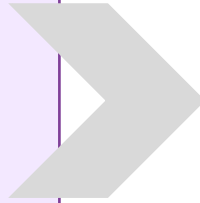
- Lower earnings
- Income often insufficient

LOCATION

- Near home
- Supports household duties

POVERTY ROLE

- **Helps them live**
- **Survival focused**



MEN VENDORS

REGULATIONS

- Aware of constraints
- Authorities seen as obstacles

INCOME

- Higher earnings
- Concerned with profit

LOCATION

- Strategic locations
- Customer focused

POVERTY ROLE

- **Helps manage poverty**
- **Livelihood focused**

Key Insight: Street vending serves as a survival strategy for women but a poverty-management strategy for men, highlighting the need for gender-sensitive support and resource access.

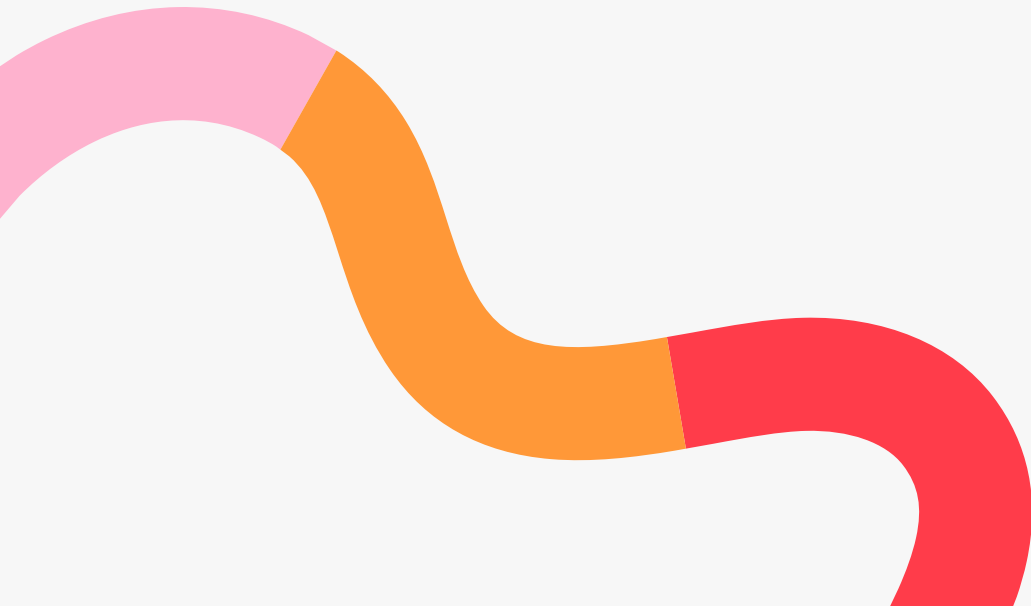


CONCLUSIONS AND TAKEAWAYS

CONCLUSION 1: STREET VENDING REDUCES POVERTY THROUGH MULTI- LEVEL REFORM

Street vending alone is insufficient to reduce multidimensional poverty.

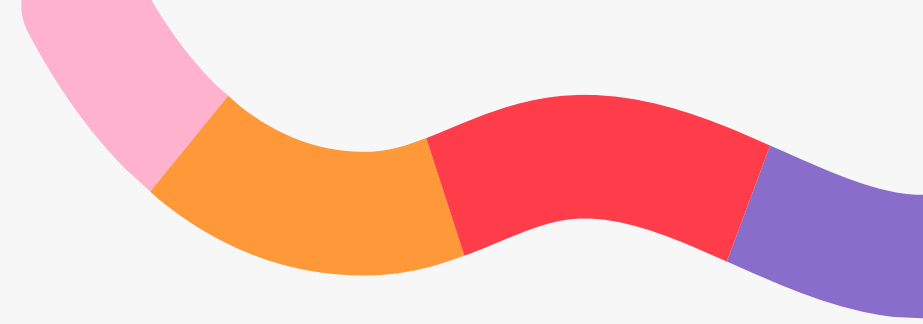
- Poverty reduction depends on support across macro, meso, and micro levels.
- Macro: business support, finance, training, and institutions enable outcomes.
- Meso: local policies and market opportunities help vendors sustain livelihoods.
- Micro: community attitudes, norms, and social acceptance shape success.



CONCLUSION 2: GENDER HIGHLIGHTS LIMITS OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP AS A POVERTY SOLUTION

Gender differences reveal unequal access to opportunities and resources.

- Male vendors often use vending to manage poverty; female vendors rely on it for survival.
- Persistent social constraints limit women's ability to benefit from entrepreneurship.
- Education, learning, and capability development are essential for female vendors.
- Entrepreneurship can reduce poverty, but only when ecosystems provide equitable access to resources



POLICY RELEVANCE AND TAKEAWAYS



Role of Street Vending

Street vending sustains livelihoods but alone cannot fully reduce multidimensional poverty.

Need for Institutional Support

Supportive policies and institutional frameworks are essential to unlock poverty reduction potential.

Inclusive and Gender-sensitive Policies

Gender-sensitive and inclusive policy interventions address specific challenges faced by women vendors.

Limits and Opportunities

Grassroots entrepreneurship offers opportunities but requires structural support for socio-economic transformation.

A STREET VENDOR'S STORY
HAVE YOU EVER TRULY SEEN
ME?
MINAHAL FATIMA

You've seen me.
But have you *really* seen me?

I dream of sending them to school.
I want to see them dressed
in those grey and white uniforms
that the village children wear
as they walk toward classrooms and futures.

So, if you ask what I truly want to say,
it's this:
Don't argue over the price if you have the means to pay.

What is nothing to you —
a coin, a note, a moment —
is everything to someone else.
It's hope.
It's a wish fulfilled.
It's a dream kept alive.



THANK YOU

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