

**Wellbeing and Livelihood Dynamics among Local Food Sellers in the Unorganised Sector: A Thematic Analysis**

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**Abstract:**

Local food is popular irrespective places in India, but in Kolkata, local food represents another dimension for food lovers, tourists, travellers and others. But well-being and livelihood of local food sellers are under tremendous conditions pressure for their survival. The study applied a qualitative approach in the Kolkata metropolitan city in India, with 50 local food sellers, collecting data through scheduling, in-depth interviews, and focus groups for data triangulation. Males (60%) dominate the market, while female make up 40% of participation in food selling business. Well-being and livelihood are closely related. They are surviving, but several problems have been identified, such as health issues, weather conditions affecting their business, and the instability of their income, which creates problems for their well-being and livelihood. Proper institutional benefits may be implemented for their survival and also societal benefits.

**Keywords:** Local Food, Social protection, well-being, Informal Sector, Demand

**1. Introduction:**

The unorganised local food sector plays an important economic role in urban and region, contributing, and generating employment, supporting livelihoods, and preserving local food culture. It has socio-economic importance, but local food sellers often work under precarious conditions which are characterised by income insecurity, lack of social protection, inadequate infrastructure, health risks, and policy exclusion. Existing studies largely focus on economic survival, governance issues, or crisis-related vulnerabilities, particularly the COVID-19 pandemic. Limited attention has been given to the interconnected relationship between wellbeing and livelihood among local food sellers and also the existing literature remains fragmented, with insufficient qualitative thematic synthesis of recent studies addressing social, occupational, and economic dimension together. There is also a lack of updated Scopus-based thematic reviews integrating issues; resilience, gender vulnerability, sustainability, and digitalisation within the unorganised food sector. This study seeks to examine the wellbeing and livelihood dynamics among local food sellers through a thematic analysis of recent literature to develop a comprehensive understanding of their challenges, coping mechanisms, and lived experiences.

In this context, the present study addresses the following research questions:

1. What are the major themes related to wellbeing and livelihood dynamics of local food sellers who are directly or indirectly associated?
2. How are wellbeing and livelihood conditions interconnected among local food sellers in the unorganised sector?
3. What key challenges, coping strategies, and research gaps are identified in recent literature on local food sellers in the unorganised sector?

The present study, examine the major themes associated with wellbeing and livelihood dynamics among local food sellers in the unorganised sector through a thematic analysis of recent literature, aims to find and association between wellbeing and livelihood of the unorganised sector. It also seeks to explore the interrelationship between livelihood conditions, wellbeing, resilience, and informal sector challenges affecting local food sellers. The study intends to identify key research gaps, coping strategies, and emerging issues in the existing literature to provide a comprehensive understanding of the unorganised local food sector.

**2. Literature Review:**

For the literature review purpose, Scopus data have been used, selecting the years 2024-2026 for the recent studies on the subject of matter, selecting only articles.

Table 1. PRISMA-Based Thematic Literature Review Matrix

Sl. No.	Author(s) & Year	Paper Title	Study Context / Location	Objectives	Methodology	Key Themes	Theme Relationship	Theme Frequency*	Main Findings	Research Gap	Relevance to Present Study
1	(Amin et al., 2026)	Beyond access: Understanding digital platform adoption in Indonesia's informal economy	Indonesia	Examine OFD adoption among street food vendors	Cross-sectional survey	Digital inclusion, livelihood, inequality	Digital access affects livelihood opportunities	High	Younger vendors benefit more from digital systems	Limited wellbeing analysis	Supports digital livelihood dimension
2	(Akuoko & Amacker, 2026)	Informal Women's Work in Public Spaces	Global South cities	Explore women's informal work experiences	Qualitative comparative case study	Gender, livelihood, empowerment	Informal work supports social identity and survival	High	Informal work enhances autonomy despite precarity	Food vending context absent	Supports gender and wellbeing themes
3	(Owuor et al., 2026)	COVID-19 Struggles and Coping Strategies of Women Food Vendors	Nairobi, Kenya	Examine pandemic impacts on women vendors	Quantitative survey	Resilience, coping, livelihood	Crisis intensifies livelihood vulnerability	Very High	Vendors adopted survival strategies amid instability	Limited long-term wellbeing focus	Direct relevance to resilience and wellbeing
4	(Muñoz et al., 2026)	Kahulugan ng Kabuhayan	Philippines tourism sector	Explore meanings attached to informal tourism work	Ethnography	Identity, dignity, livelihood	Work creates collective social meaning	Medium	Informal labour linked with identity and dignity	Limited focus on food vendors	Supports subjective wellbeing analysis
5	(Lopes dos Santos & Antipon, 2026)	Feeding the enclave	Ghana	Examine interaction between firms and street vendors	Qualitative fieldwork	Urban economy, food vending	Formal and informal economies are interdependent	High	Vendors sustain industrial labour systems	Wellbeing dimension underexplored	Supports livelihood dynamics
6	(Fourie et al., 2026)	Informal street traders in tourism sector	South Africa	Investigate resilience among traders	Mixed methods	Tourism livelihood, resilience	External shocks affect vendor survival	High	Migrant traders rely on resilience strategies	Mental wellbeing not deeply explored	Relevant to tourism-linked livelihoods
7	(Sia & Singh, 2026)	Suicidal ideation of helpless COVID affected street vendors	Chennai, India	Examine stress and suicidal ideation	Quantitative	Mental health, stress, coping	Pandemic stress leads to helplessness	Medium	Religious coping reduces stress impacts	Limited qualitative insights	Supports wellbeing dimension
8	(Bhattacharjee et al., 2025)	Survival to Dignity?	Mumbai, India	Explore decent work among vendors	Mixed methods	Dignity, livelihood, resilience	Social networks support survival	Very High	Vendors seek dignity beyond survival	Limited thematic synthesis	Strong relevance to present title
9	(Mir & Wani, 2025)	Street Vendors Using Smartphones	Kashmir, India	Examine digital	Qualitative interviews	Digitalization, inequality	Technology improves business	Medium	Vendors adopt m-payments	Wellbeing implications absent	Supports digital

Sl. No.	Author(s) & Year	Paper Title	Study Context / Location	Objectives	Methodology	Key Themes	Theme Relationship	Theme Frequency*	Main Findings	Research Gap	Relevance to Present Study
				payment adaptation			but deepens skill gaps		despite illiteracy		livelihood dynamics
10	(Moreira et al., 2025)	Access to water and toilets	Brazil	Explore sanitation access among vendors	Ethnography	Health, sanitation, dignity	Lack of WASH affects wellbeing	Medium	Informal networks support survival needs	Limited economic analysis	Supports wellbeing and occupational health
11	(Zhai et al., 2025)	Urban vending zones in China	China	Investigate environmental governance	Mixed methods	Sustainability, livelihood	Spatial governance improves vendor stability	Medium	Self-management enhances sustainability	Human wellbeing less discussed	Supports sustainability linkage
12	(Vy et al., 2025)	Vulnerability and coping strategies amid climate shocks	Vietnam	Examine weather impacts on vendors	Qualitative thematic analysis	Climate vulnerability, health	Extreme weather harms health and business	High	Vendors remain highly vulnerable	Longitudinal adaptation absent	Direct thematic relevance
13	(Sarkar et al., 2025)	Resilience in the informal economy	Dhaka, Bangladesh	Examine vendor resilience during COVID-19	Narrative qualitative analysis	Resilience, vulnerability	Financial instability weakens resilience	Very High	Vendors partially resilient initially	Lack of wellbeing-centered framework	Supports resilience and livelihood
14	(Ibrahim et al., 2024)	Urban livelihoods and food security	Kumasi, Ghana	Explore regulation impacts on food security	Cross-sectional study	Governance, food security	Regulations affect vendor income and food access	High	Compliance costs reduce vendor earnings	Vendor wellbeing absent	Relevant to governance dimension
15	(The Duy & Tien Thanh, 2024)	Economic challenges faced by migrant street vendors	Vietnam	Examine crisis impacts on migrant vendors	Qualitative and descriptive	Vulnerability, inclusion	Women disproportionately affected	High	Coping strategies insufficient	Long-term livelihood analysis absent	Supports vulnerability themes
16	(Lyngwa & Sahoo, 2024)	COVID-19 and Street Vending in Tribal Areas	Mizoram, India	Examine resilience during lockdown	Qualitative case study	Resilience, survival	Social networking aids recovery	High	Vendors adapted through entrepreneurial strategies	Wellbeing dimension limited	Supports coping and resilience
17	(Ekobi & Tanga, 2024)	Challenges of street food vending	South Africa	Explore challenges in vending	Qualitative thematic analysis	Harassment, poverty, livelihood	Lack of policy support affects business growth	Very High	Vendors struggle with finance and regulation	Mental wellbeing ignored	Strong relevance
18	(Mramba, 2024)	Work-Life Balance among Women Entrepreneurs	Africa	Explore work-family dynamics	Qualitative research	Work-life balance, wellbeing	Family responsibilities affect wellbeing	Medium	Women rely on coping mechanisms	Informal food economy less explored	Supports wellbeing analysis
19	(Arreza, 2024)	Informal Economy Eatery Owner's Resilience	Philippines	Explore recovery strategies	Qualitative thematic analysis	Resilience, community support	Social support enhances recovery	High	Faith and family strengthen resilience	Limited policy focus	Relevant to thematic analysis
20	(Pulliat et al., 2024)	Governing the nurturing city	Multiple cities	Examine vending regulations	Qualitative interviews & ethnography	Governance, exclusion	Regulations shape livelihood access	Very High	Uneven enforcement harms vulnerable vendors	Wellbeing implications limited	Supports governance and livelihood themes

Source: Scopus Data, year 2024-2026.

\* DetailTheme Frequency- Table 2

Table 2. Frequency of the themes

Major Theme	Frequency Across Studies
Livelihood Vulnerability	18
Wellbeing & Mental Health	11
Resilience & Coping Strategies	15
Informal Economy Dynamics	20
Governance & Regulation	12
Gender Issues	9
Digital Inclusion	4
Sustainability & Urban Space	6
Food Security	5
Occupational Health & Dignity	8

Source: Scopus Data Base

Table 3. Research Gaps

Sl. No.	Condensed Research Gap	Present Study Contribution
1	Existing studies focus more on economic survival, governance, and resilience, while holistic wellbeing of local food sellers remains underexplored.	Examines multidimensional wellbeing and livelihood experiences of local food sellers.
2	Current literature is fragmented and lacks integrated qualitative thematic synthesis on the relationship between livelihood and wellbeing in the unorganised food sector.	Uses thematic analysis to identify recurring themes and relationships from recent Scopus literature.
3	Limited recent (2024–2026) Scopus-based studies synthesize gender, sustainability, digitalisation, and post-pandemic informal food sector challenges together.	Provides an updated thematic review integrating contemporary challenges and dynamics of the unorganised local food sector.

**3. Proposed Conceptual Model Based on Thematic Literature Analysis**

The wellbeing and livelihood dynamics of local food sellers in the unorganised sector are shaped by multiple interconnected socio-economic, occupational, institutional, and environmental factor as per the thematic review of recent Scopus-indexed literature. As per reviewed studies, livelihood insecurity, informal working conditions, governance challenges, lack of social protection, gender vulnerability, and occupational risks significantly influence the overall wellbeing of local food sellers. At the same time, resilience mechanisms, digital adaptation, community support, and sustainability practices act as coping and adapting dimensions within the informal food economy. The literature also demonstrates that livelihood conditions and wellbeing are not isolated constructs; rather, they are interdependent and dynamically connected. Economic instability, poor infrastructure, and exclusionary governance negatively affect social, psychological, and occupational wellbeing. Other way, resilience, informal social networks, and adaptive livelihood strategies contribute positively to wellbeing outcomes. Based on these recurring themes and identified research gaps, the present conceptual model proposes an integrated thematic relationship among livelihood conditions, informal sector challenges, resilience mechanisms, and multidimensional wellbeing outcomes among local food sellers.

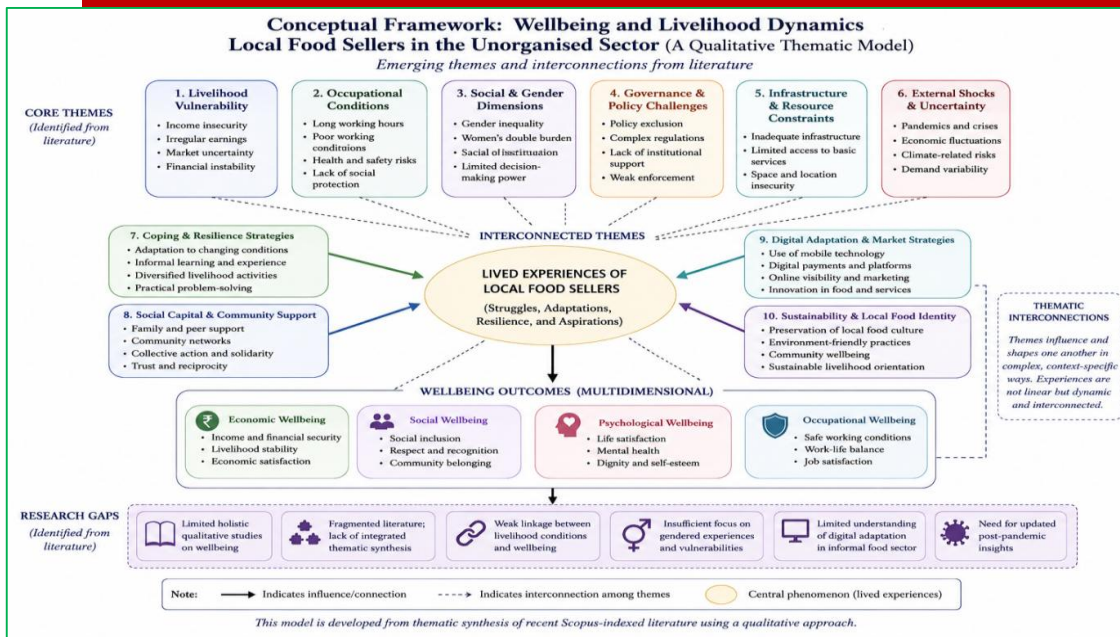


Fig. 1. Theme-Based Conceptual Framework

#### 4. Methodology:

The present study area was Kolkata, the “City of Joy.” Which has vibrant street food culture, dense informal food economy, and significant dependence of urban populations on local food vending activities for livelihood and daily food consumption. This metro city also represents a diverse socio-economic environment where local food sellers contribute significantly to informal employment generation and urban systems.

The study adopted a qualitative research approach due to obtain an in-depth understanding of the wellbeing and livelihood dynamics of local food sellers. A qualitative design was considered appropriate because the study aimed to explore lived experiences, occupational challenges, coping mechanisms, and social realities within the informal food sector. The interpretive nature of qualitative inquiry enabled the researcher to capture participants’ perceptions, meanings, and experiences in their natural settings. We used a purposive sampling technique to identify who possessed direct experience and knowledge related to local food vending activities. The sample consisted of 50 local food sellers engaged in different forms of informal food selling across selected locations in Kolkata. Participants were selected based on factors; involvement in local vending, years of experience, willingness of participate, and operational continuity within the informal sector.

Primary data were collected using multiple qualitative tools to ensure depth and credibility of findings. Semi-structured interview schedules were used to gather detailed information regarding livelihood conditions, wellbeing experiences, occupational risks, social support, resilience strategies, and challenges faced by the participants. The semi-structured format provided flexibility for probing and allowing participants to express their experiences freely while maintaining alignment with the objectives of the study. In addition to individual interviews, we conducted ten focus group discussions (FGDs) to facilitate collective interaction and thematic exploration among participants. Each focus group comprised five members representing different categories of local food sellers. The FGDs helped in understanding shared experiences, community perspectives, informal support systems, and common livelihood challenges within the unorganised food sector. Group interactions also enabled the emergence of additional insights that may not have been captured through individual interviews alone. To enhance the trustworthiness and comprehensiveness of the findings, triangulation was applied through the use of multiple data collection methods, including interviews, focus group discussions, and field observations. We maintained field notes throughout the data collection process to document contextual details, participants interactions, behavioural observations, and environmental conditions associated with local vending activities. We applied thematic analysis for this study of the collected qualitative data. The analysis, using NVivo-12, followed a systematic coding process involving data familiarisation, initial code generations, categorisation of recurring concepts, identification of thematic patterns, and interpretation of interrelationship among themes. Similar responses and recurring narratives were grouped into broader thematic categories related to livelihood vulnerability, wellbeing dimensions, occupational challenges, resilience strategies, governance issues, and sustainability concerns. The thematic approach facilitated an interpretive understanding of the interconnected experiences of local food sellers.

To ensure credibility and validity, participant validation (member checking) was undertaken during the interpretation stage. We shared preliminary findings and thematic interpretations to the selected participants to confirm the accuracy and authenticity of the interpretations. Their feedback helped refine the thematic categories and strengthened the reliability of the study findings. Ethical considerations were also maintained throughout the research process by ensuring voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymity of the respondents.

The study primarily relied on qualitative insights generated from local food sellers and therefor provides context-specific understanding rather than statistical generalisation. The findings offer meaningful conceptual and practical insights into the wellbeing and livelihood dynamics of local food sellers within the unorganised sector and contribute to the growing discourse on informal food economies, urban livelihoods, and social wellbeing.

#### 5.Results:

Table 4. Demographic Profile of the Participants

Variables	Categories	Frequency (N=50)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	30	60.0
	Female	20	40.0
Age Group (Male Participants)	30–45 Years	30	60.0
	Age Group (Female Participants)	40–55 Years	20
Occupation Type	Local Food Sellers in Unorganised Sector	50	100.0
Study Area	Kolkata, West Bengal	50	100.0
Sampling Technique	Purposive Sampling	50	100.0
Data Collection Method	Semi-structured Interviews and Focus Group Discussions	50	100.0

As per table 4, male percentage and female percentage in engaged food businesses are 60, and 40, respectively and their age group is 30-45, 40-55 years. This distribution reflects the active involvement of economically productive middle-aged population in informal food vending activities. Both male and female vendors are engaged in unorganised food businesses for livelihood experiences and well-being dynamics.

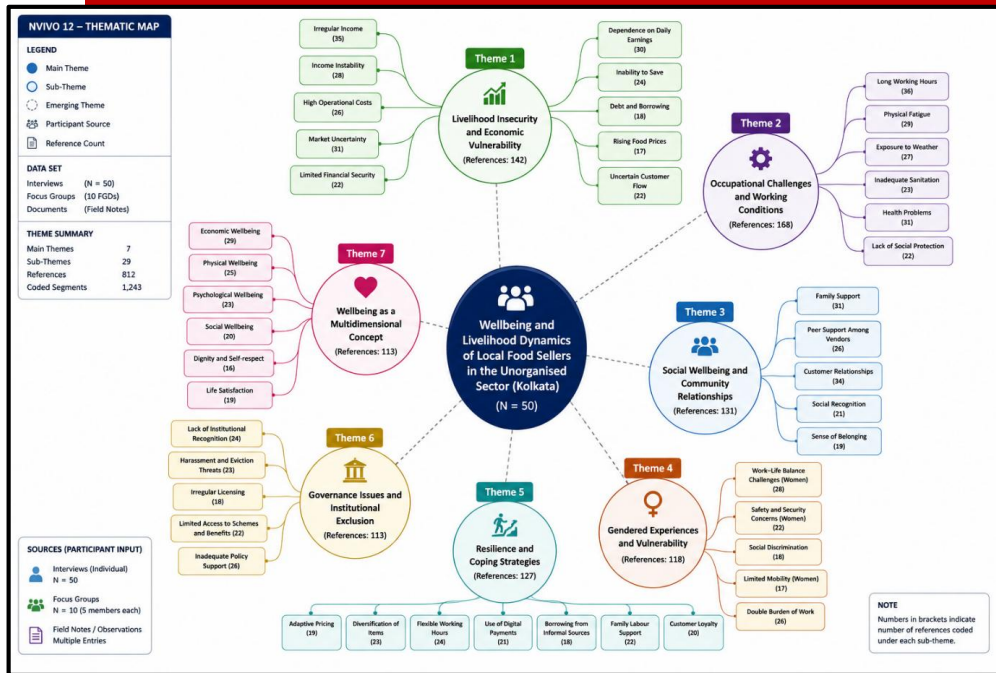


Fig. 2 Thematic Map of Local Food Seller

**Description and Interpretation of the Thematic Map**

The thematic map presents a comprehensive qualitative representation of the wellbeing and livelihood dynamics experienced by local food sellers operating within the unorganised sector in Kolkata. Developed through thematic analysis of interviews, focus group discussions, and field observations, the map visually demonstrates the interrelationship among major themes, sub-themes, and lived experiences of the participants. The central theme, “Wellbeing and Livelihood Dynamics of Local Food Sellers,” functions as the core phenomenon around which multiple interconnected dimensions are organized. Livelihood insecurity and economic vulnerability is the first major theme, which has emerged as one of the most dominant concerns among participants. As per thematic connections, there is irregular income, financial instability, debt dependence, and uncertain customer flow affect livelihood sustainability, associating economic instability with stress, insecurity, and reduced future planning capacity. This theme highlights the precarious nature of informal food-related occupations within urban economies. Occupational challenges and working conditions are the second theme which reveals the difficult physical and environmental realities of local food vending. Long working hours, health-related risks, inadequate sanitation, and exposure to harsh weather conditions were repeatedly discussed by participants. They are facing hardship directly both physical and psychological wellbeing, which are output of the result through thematic analysis. There are negative impacts as per the interconnected structure of the map, indicating poor workplace conditions intensify economic vulnerability and occupational stress simultaneously. Social wellbeing and community relationships as an important supportive dimension within the informal food sector, which was identified, creates to unfold their realities. Informal support networks, family cooperation, peer relationships, and customer trust emerged as important social resources contributing to emotional stability and occupational continuity. These findings demonstrates that social wellbeing within informal occupations extends beyond financial income and includes dignity, belongingness, and social recognition.

There is another important theme within the map, which is gendered experiences and vulnerable as female food sellers described greater challenges related to work-life balance, safety concerns, mobility restrictions, and dual domestic responsibilities. Gender influences access to livelihood opportunities, occupational well-being, and social security within the unorganised sector as per the thematic relationships. The findings emphasise the gendered nature of informal livelihood experiences.

The map further identifies resilience and coping strategies as adaptive responses developed by participants to sustain their livelihoods under uncertain conditions, and flexible pricing, diversified food items, customer loyalty, digital payment use, and informal borrowing systems emerged as practical survival mechanisms. These adaptive strategies reflect the experiential knowledge and social resilience developed within informal economic systems.

Governance issues and institutional exclusion, which have emerged as critical themes, influence well-being and livelihood dynamics. There are inconsistent regulations, limited institutional recognition, licensing difficulties, and inadequate policy support. Local food sellers serve urban and semi-urban areas but they are facing problems due to institutional marginalisation, which shapes the vulnerability of local food sellers. Well-being is a multidimensional construct integrating economic, social, psychological, and occupational dimensions, which has societal benefits. Participant associate well-being not merely with income generation but also with dignity, social respect, family stability, life satisfaction, and mental peace for better productivity for their family and society. Well-being is shaped through continuous interaction among livelihood conditions, social relationships, occupational experiences, and resilience capacities. The thematic map also reveals several research gaps identified from the literature and field findings. These include limited qualitative understanding of wellbeing within the informal food sector, fragmented thematic synthesis, inadequate exploration of gendered experiences, and insufficient focus on post-pandemic livelihood transitions and digital adaptation among local food sellers.

An in-depth qualitative understanding of the well-being and livelihood dynamics of local food sellers operating within the unorganised sector in Kolkata was the study’s main aim which was conducted through thematic analysis, the study demonstrates that local food sellers experience complex livelihood realities shaped by economic uncertainty, occupational challenges, social relationships, institutional exclusion, and adaptive resilience strategies. According to the results, well-being within the informal food sector is multidimensional and cannot be understood solely through economic indicators, but well-being is closely linked with dignity, social recognition, occupational security, mental stability, and community support. Livelihood vulnerability, which remains a persistent challenge for local food sellers due to irregular earnings, inadequate infrastructure, lack of social protection, and governance-related barriers, was highlighted in this study and also female vendors experience additional gender-specific vulnerabilities associated with domestic responsibilities, safety concerns, and restricted mobility. These challenges exist, but participants demonstrate strong resilience capacities through social cooperation, adaptive business practices, and experiential coping mechanisms.

The thematic findings contribute to the growing discourse on informal economies, urban livelihoods, and qualitative well-being research by offering a context specific understanding of local food sellers in Kolkata, and also the study contributes methodologically by integrating thematic analysis, qualitative inquiry, and PRISMA-oriented literature synthesis within the realm of informal food systems. There is need for more inclusive urban policies, institutional recognition, social protection mechanisms, occupational health support, and gender-sensitive interventions for local food sellers. There is also a need for further research that may further explore longitudinal livelihood transitions, digital inclusion, sustainability practices, and comparative studies across different urban contexts within the informal food sector.

**6. Discussion:**

The present study explored the well-being and livelihood dynamics of local food sellers operating within the unorganised sector in Kolkata through a qualitative thematic approach, and the results of the study are that the experiences of local food sellers are shaped by interconnected economic, occupational, social, institutional, and gender-related factors. contributing to the growing body of literature on informal livelihoods by demonstrating that well-being among local food sellers extends beyond economic survival and includes multidimensional social and psychological dimensions. One of the most significant findings of the study is the prevalence of livelihood insecurity and economic vulnerability among local food sellers, describing irregular earnings, unstable market demand, rising operational expenses, and financial uncertainty as major challenges affecting their daily lives, which are as per previous studies on informal economies, emphasising workers in the unorganised sector often remain economically vulnerable due to the absence of stable income structures and formal employment protection. The present study further extends this understanding by

showing how financial insecurity influences not only economic conditions but also mental stress, family stability, and future livelihood planning, indicating livelihood vulnerability is closely associated with broader well-being outcomes.

There are difficult occupational conditions for local food sellers including long working hours, exposure to weather-related risks, inadequate sanitation, physical exhaustion, and a lack of healthcare support emerged as recurring concerns among participants. These conditions highlight the risky nature of informal labour environments within urban food systems. Well-being is largely neglected within informal food sector, which influences on physical health, work satisfaction, and psychological stability. This supports earlier literature arguing that informal workers often operate in environments characterised by limited occupational safety and insufficient institutional protection. Another important contribution of the study lies in its identification of social well-being and community support as critical dimensions of livelihood sustainability, emphasising the importance of family support, customer relationships, peer cooperation, and informal social networks in maintaining emotional stability and occupational continuity, and the findings indicate that social relationships function as informal safety mechanisms within the unorganised economy. In many cases, community-based support systems compensated for the absence of formal institutional assistance, which aligns with existing qualitative studies highlighting the role of social capital and collective solidarity in sustaining informal livelihood systems.

There are further problems of gendered nature of well-being and livelihood experiences among local food sellers, reporting additional burdens associated with household responsibilities, safety concerns, restricted mobility, and social insecurity. These findings demonstrate that gender influences occupational experiences and access to livelihood opportunities within the informal economy and the study also contributes to gender-sensitive discussions on informal labour by illustrating how women experience layered vulnerabilities within food vending systems. The emergence of resilience and coping strategies as major themes indicates the adaptive capacities developed by local food sellers in response to uncertain working conditions, adopting various survival mechanisms, including flexible pricing practices, diversified food offerings, extended working hours, customer relationship management, and digital payment adoption for their survival. Informal borrowing systems and family labour participation also played important roles in sustaining business operations during periods of financial difficulty. These findings suggest that resilience within the informal food sector is shaped primarily by experiential learning, social adaptation, and community support rather than institutional interventions and the study therefore reinforces the argument that informal workers continuously negotiate uncertainty through practical and localized coping mechanisms. This study contributes several ways; methodologically by integrating thematic analysis, qualitative inquiry, and PRISMA-informed literature synthesis to examine the lived realities of the local food sellers who sell their food to urban and semi-urban customers for their needs and demand fulfilment. Triangulation, including interviews, focus group discussions, scheduling are applied for data authentication, and validation also strengthen the depth and credibility of the findings for the qualitative approach, which enables the identification of recurring patterns, interconnections, and experiential dimensions that are often overlooked in quantitative assessments of informal economies.

### 7. Conclusion:

The findings of wellbeing and livelihood dynamics of local food sellers operating within the unorganised sector in Kolkata through a qualitative thematic approach reveal that local food sellers experience multidimensional challenges associated with livelihood insecurity, occupational risks, institutional exclusion, and social vulnerability. Economic instability, irregular earnings, inadequate infrastructure, long working hours, and limited social protection emerged as major concerns affecting the daily lives and wellbeing of participants and at the same time, the study demonstrates that local food sellers rely heavily on resilience strategies, informal social networks, family support, and adaptive livelihood practices to sustain their occupations under uncertain conditions.

Well-being within the unorganised local food sector extends beyond financial survival and includes social recognition, dignity, psychological stability, occupational security, and community belonging, revealing the gendered nature of informal livelihood experiences, particularly among female food sellers who face additional burdens related to domestic responsibilities, mobility restrictions, and workplace insecurity. These observations emphasise the need for gender-sensitive and inclusive approaches in informal sector policy frameworks in the country for societal benefits. The thematic analysis contributes to the broader discourse on informal economies, urban livelihoods, and qualitative well-being research by offering context-specific insights into the lived experiences of local food sellers, addressing important research gaps by integrating livelihood conditions, well-being dimensions, resilience mechanisms, governance issues, and sustainability concerns within a single thematic framework. Methodologically, the research demonstrates the usefulness of qualitative thematic analysis in understanding complex social and occupational realities within informal economic systems. Well-being and livelihood sustainability of local food sellers require supportive urban governance, institutional recognition, occupational health measures, access to social protection, inclusive licensing systems, and financial support mechanisms. Community-based initiatives, digital inclusion, and gender-responsive interventions may further enhance the resilience and occupational security of local food sellers within the unorganised sector.

The study provides meaningful qualitative insights; it is limited to selected participants in Kolkata and therefore reflects context-specific experiences rather than broad generalizations. Future research may undertake comparative regional studies, longitudinal investigations, and mixed-method approaches to further explore evolving livelihood transitions, post-pandemic informal economies, digital adaptation, and sustainability practices among local food sellers across different urban settings.

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