Impact of Informality in Street Markets : Analysis of the Street Vendors of Janpath Market, New Delhi

Abstract: There has been a rise in the literature surrounding informal economies and their importance. In this context, this paper aims to understand the extent and implications of informality in the Janpath market of Delhi. Janpath, which is centrally located, is a famous street market attracting a large number of domestic and international consumers. However, this made it particularly vulnerable to the lockdowns imposed in the last few years in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Through field visits in the market and 32 interviews with street vendors, we find that much of the market's popularity is upheld by the different unions there that tackle the disadvantages of informal markets. The paper provides an avenue for further research to understand the policy implications for the market.

Keywords: Janpath, informality, street vendors, market, unionisation

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1 Introduction

Scholars have characterised the informal economy by its ease of entry, dependence on local resources, family ownership, small-scale operations, skills acquired outside of the formal sector, and unregulated and competitive market [1]. Analogously, informal employment is marked by low earnings, precarious working conditions, weak or absent social protection, and, at the extreme, a dependence on day-to-day earnings for sustenance [2]. In the past, research focusing on informality has primarily concentrated on two aspects - the effect of institutional policy on economic activity, and the motivations and characteristics of those engaged in the informal economy [3]. Our study concentrates on the latter aspect, primarily analysing the demographics, motivations and urban characteristics of street vendors - characterised as micro-entrepreneurs – in a particular informal market; Janpath Market in Delhi. Furthermore, the analysis also focuses on the impact of COVID-19 on the livelihoods of the street vendors and the role of unionisation in the functioning of the market.

Why street vending? Street vending is a source of livelihood for a large population in India. Fourteen per cent of the informal workforce is engaged as street vendors while the informal sector in itself comprises 90 per cent of the workforce. We analyse the business of street vending in Janpath by

(a) Collecting oral account(s) from vendors selling in the market
(b) Documenting the different markets that exist as subsets of the larger market, Janpath, and their respective unions and individualised functioning.

Why Janpath? The Janpath market is located centrally in New Delhi, in the vicinity of Connaught Place, a commercial hub, always hustling and bustling with visitors. Connaught place (popularly known as CP) is in close proximity to foreign embassies, political houses and offices of multinational corporations. Due to its central location, Janpath is well frequented by tourists, domestic as well as international. The vendors in Janpath mostly engage in selling handicrafts and clothes. The market comprises permanent shop owners, hawkers and street vendors.

This paper focuses its analysis on the Janpath market for primarily two reasons - its centrality and rich history, and its heterogeneity. The market is central to Delhi and has been running for almost a century, allowing for a comprehensive examination that captures a dynamic history of street vending in Delhi. Additionally, Janpath comprises a number of sections, each with its own history, culture and wares. Each section is also organised through a different association with distinct heads and practices. This allows us to compare data across these sections, incorporating a range of perspectives and experiences. The market is considered a 'foreigners market' due to the high frequency of foreigners it attracts. The pandemic and the decline of international tourism affected the market gravely. Janpath's dependence on international customers allowed us to capture the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on informal markets, which was one of the primary goals of our research.

The structure of the paper is as follows: Section 1.2 provides a brief theoretical background of street vendors as micro-entrepreneurs, Section 1.3 discusses how unions organise and the function they perform within the informal sector and Section 1.4 compiles research on the effects of the pandemic on the informal sector. Section 2 lays out the methodology adopted to obtain our

primary data, Section 3 introduces Janpath's history and layout, and Section 4 provides a detailed profile of the vendors analysed against their gender and hometown. The next two sections, 5 and 6 provide a detailed breakdown of the operating costs of the vendors and how the division of labour takes place between vendors working within the same store respectively. The final analytical sections, 7 and 8, then collate our data and observations of the effect of the pandemic and unionisation within Janpath.

1.2 Street Vendors as Micro-Entrepreneurs

Street vendors are broadly defined here as individuals that provide products for sale without necessarily having a permanent structure to conduct their business [4]. Vendors can either be stationary - occupying a specific section of the pavement or space - or mobile - moving across the street carrying their wares either on a cart or their body [5]. They operate with limited capital, set up their business in strategic locations, and meet the specific needs of consumers [4]. Previously, research characterised street vending as being based on necessity, highlighting that it is usually taken up by financially weak and marginal populations as the 'only means of survival [4]. Individuals engaging in street vending were here considered to have done so because of a lack of opportunity within the formal economy or out of a distrust of institutional policies. Theories characterising street vendors as micro-entrepreneurs instead analyse informality as a choice, examining the opportunities that make the sector attractive to entrepreneurs [3]. This paper instrumentalists the entrepreneurial perspective to build its analysis.

The entrepreneurial approach describes street vendors through their willingness to take on risks, confident and persuasive personality and ability to solve problems intuitively [6]. The presence of unpredictability and high risk in the informal sector guides the actions of those involved [3],

requiring the entrepreneur to remain enthusiastic and self-assured consistently [1]. The entrepreneur creates value for customers through strategic and marketing decisions made based on insights from past experiences and uses intuitive techniques to achieve sales targets while maintaining the ethical and social considerations governing the marketplace [6]. Demographic characteristics - such as age, gender, education, and work experience - and the entrepreneurs' personal traits also influence their intuitions and activities.

In the informal economy, the entrepreneur is influenced by two principal factors - the laws and regulations that govern activities within the marketplace and the common culture built within the group of entrepreneurs. This culture is built through a network of interactions based on competition, trust and kinship [7]. Entrepreneurs must ensure that their activities remain in accordance with not only the regulation of the governing authority but also the informal business customs - in relation to price-fixing, inter-vendor relationships and competitiveness - of the specific marketplace. Attention has been drawn by previous research to the blurring of business and friendship relationships and the importance of community solidarity and reciprocity among informal entrepreneurs. Previous research by Williams and Gurtoo has highlighted the importance of trust-building between the customer and the entrepreneur. As a result of the informality of the market, there is no legal contract that the customer can hold the vendor to if the product is revealed to be defective in some way. Thus, the vendor must earn the trust of the customer in order to be able to make the sale. Previous research in Janpath has also emphasised the role of both earnings and business motivations, as well as kin and caste networks within the market [9].

Habitually, the informal sector involves family businesses passed down through the generations. The skills and knowledge gained by the entrepreneurs are also inherited. Previous research by Dr Pravati Dalua & Dr Archana Prasad has recorded this being true for Janpath as well with the market - especially the Gujarati Lane - being occupied predominantly by family-owned businesses. They describe the Gujarati Lane of Janpath as a "site of economic activity as well as cultural production where traditional ties with family and community get produced and reproduced" [9].

1.3 Unions and Informality

The informal economy tends to be marginalised by policy and institutional frameworks. The access of informal entrepreneurs to government facilities and entitlements has been impeded by institutional barriers. In India specifically, street vendors have been marginalised and denied the rights given to workers in the formal sector [5]. Research has shown that strong, independent and democratic membership-based organisations are integral to helping informal actors acquire greater autonomy, equitable allocation of resources, hold the local government accountable and shape policy for greater social and economic integration [10]. Street vendor associations pursue the interest of the vendors as a group and serve as a platform to further dialogue with the local government. They habitually emerge as a result of the vendors finding limited representation in, and receiving limited support from, other organisations. A primary tenet of street vendor organisations is protecting the vendors from harassment or eviction by local authorities, who often consider them a nuisance. Post the COVID-19 Pandemic in 2020, informal street vendor unions have also taken on the role of ensuring that safety practices - such as social distancing, masking, etc - are being followed within the market.

1.4 Informality and the pandemic

In 2020, the world was hit by COVID-19, an airborne disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, [11] the consequences of which have been far-reaching and unprecedented. COVID-19 was declared a pandemic on March 11, 2020, by the World Health Organization (WHO). As a response to the spread of the pandemic, most countries imposed a complete lockdown. The lockdown caused a global economic crisis, affecting mostly low-income groups. About 1.6 billion workers in the informal economy faced turmoil due to COVID-19 and About 60 per cent experienced a drastic drop in their earnings. Globally, 42 per cent of female informal workers and 32 per cent of male informal workers, besides those working in the micro-industries (employing less than 10 persons), were the hardest hit [12].

The Indian government also announced a full lockdown on March 24, 2020, giving just four hours' notice to the citizens to make preparations. The extremely short notice wreaked havoc on the public, especially the informal sector which comprises the majority of the workforce (more than 90 per cent) [12]. 14 per cent of the informal workforce is engaged as street vendors [ILO. 2014. Women and Men in the Informal Economy: A Statistical Picture. Publication. January 23, 2014]. Touted as one of the most stringent lockdowns imposed, the resultant pause on economic activities led to a slip in GDP by 23 per cent in the first quarter of 2020–21 and a further slip by 7 per cent in the second quarter [13]. There was panic amongst migrant workers who had to leave their source of livelihood and rush back to their respective hometowns. The impact of the lockdown on them was brutal as they had neither economic nor food security. After the lockdown, the government imposed several restrictions on economic activities. A central aim of

our research study is to assess the impact of COVID-19 on the livelihoods of street vendors in the informal market of Delhi, Janpath.

2 Methodology and Limitations

The study follows a mixed methods research design in order to study the informal street market of Janpath. The Centre for New Economics Studies, O.P Jindal Global University conducted field visits to Janpath and interviewed sellers across the market over a period of two weeks in April 2022. Owing to the informality and centrality of the market, it is very diverse in terms of the types of shops that conduct their business there. Therefore, in order to collect a more representative outlook, our sample was chosen from each type of seller and location. The table below provides the breakup of the type of shop under the total sample of 32.

Table 1 - Breakdown of the Sample

Defining Feature of Shop	Number of Interviews
Sellers in Lane B	7
Sellers with Independent Stalls or Street Hawkers	6
Sellers from the front-facing lane	6
Sellers in the Mini Market	5
Sellers in the Gujarati Market	4

Sellers in the Tibetan Market	4

Apart from the survey questionnaires that were taken for individual sellers and shops, our team also spoke with a few union leaders and secretaries in order to understand their relationship and perception of the market. All surveys (qualitative and quantitative) were taken in the vicinity of the respective shops during business hours. Interviews with union leaders were conducted either outside the market or in the parking space of the neighbouring offices. This was done to avoid constant interruptions from the busyness of the market. While union leaders were willing to step aside from their stalls for the interviews, general sellers were more comfortable within their stall spaces.

It is important to understand that Janpath is a highly politicised place with several market administrations, unions and government authorities working within it. On disclosing our identities as researchers and clarifying our research question, we set up the risk of receiving filtered information, also known as the reactive effect. There was a sense of caution while talking about the negatives of the market, in case that would get leaked to the media and immediately hamper the reputation of the market among consumers.

The lingering effects of the pandemic and rising heat only added to the difficulties of speaking to the vendors. Many vendors did not agree to be interviewed since that would take away their time to engage in the business and make a sale. A direct impact was seen during our last visit where we faced the strongest resistance from them. After many rejections, we realised that it was due to the recently announced COVID-19 alert which may roll Janpath back into the odd and even

policy. This had left vendors anxious as they impatiently tried to make sales. Lastly, we had to adjust our interview timings according to the temperature of the day. Vendors were less friendly and not willing to interact during peak afternoon hours due to the intensity of the heat.

3 Introduction to the Market

CP has a rich history and is symbolically significant. When the capital of India under British rule was moved from Kolkata to Delhi, a plan was laid down for the construction of New Delhi (located south of the old city) to symbolise the grandeur of the British Empire. CP was named after the Duke of Connaught and was created by Edwin Lutyens as a demarcation of the divide between North and South Delhi. It was created as a geological buffer zone between the Indians and British, the “coloniser” and “colonised” [14]. The construction was started in 1929 and wrapped up in 1933. CP was in a way a continuation of the division already created in the old city by the secured walls of Shahjahanabad, a walled city built by the then Mughal Emperor Shahjahan. The Britishers maintained it to keep the local population away from the areas of colonial establishments prior to the construction of South Delhi [14]. Janpath was formerly called the Queen’s Way and it was only during the 1990s that the market got its name as Janpath (meaning people’s path).

The market is currently divided into 4 distinct sections, each with its own characteristics. Please refer to the satellite image attached below that has all the four sections distinctly marked in yellow. The first two - the Tibetan Market and the Gujarati Lane - both have vendors that predominantly sell handicrafts. On the main front-facing lane, the sidewalk is primarily populated by established permanent stores that sell both handicrafts and clothes. Perpendicular to

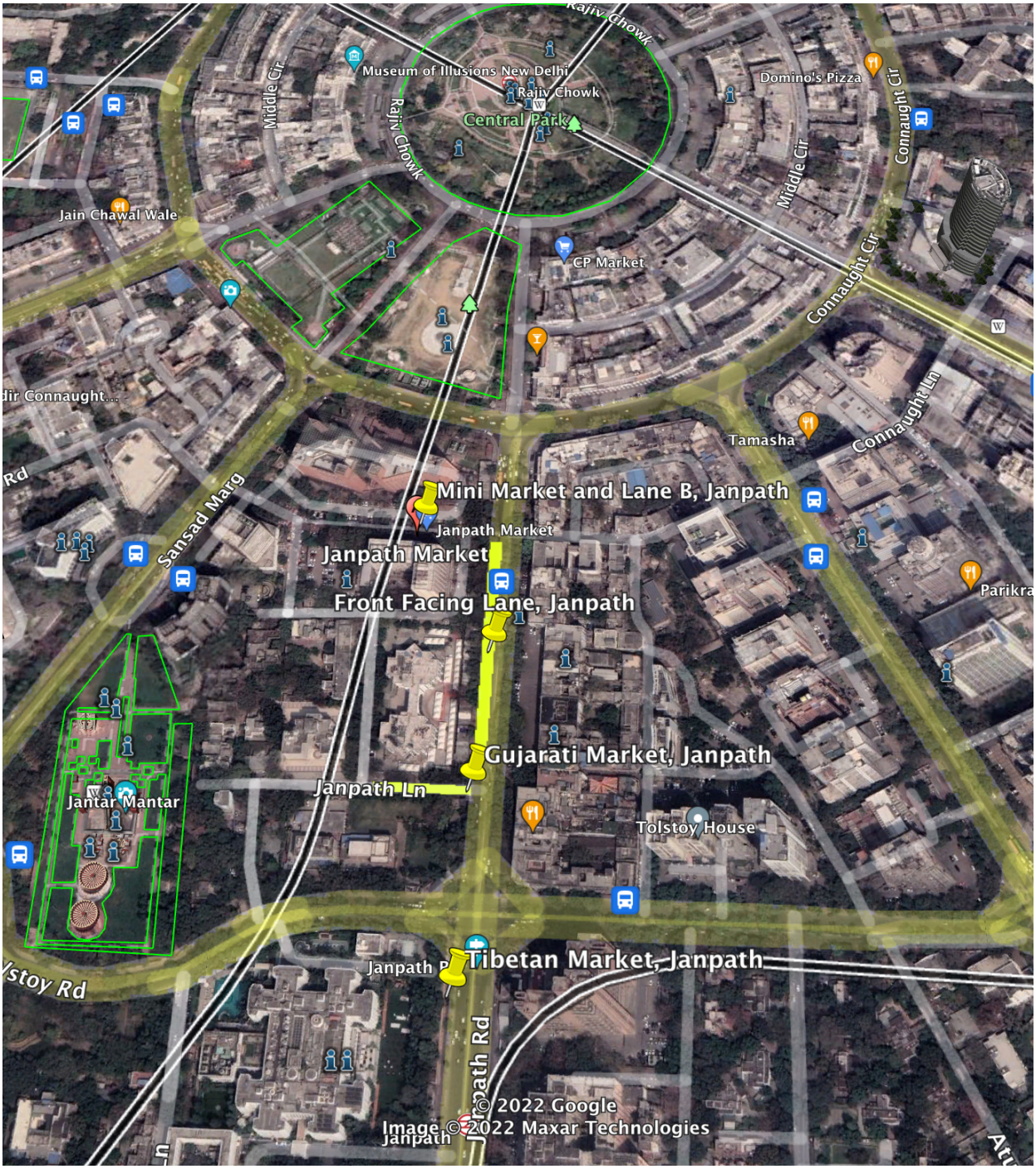
the main road, the final section of the market comprises two rows of stalls facing each other, selling clothes and accessories such as belts, bags, etc. One of the rows contains stalls under the Mini Market and the other stalls under the Janpath Lane Tehbazari Association (referred to as Lane B in the paper).

Table 2: Overview of the Market and Unions

S.No.	Location	Prevalent Unions	Type of Stores
1	Mini Market	Mini Market Janpath Association	Established stores with space for storage
2	Lane B opposite to the Mini Market	Janpath Lane Tehbazari Association	Established stores with space for storage, independent stalls
3	Gujarati Market	Gujarati Market Welfare Association	Established stores with space for storage, designated space on the sidewalk.
4	Tibetan Market	Tibetan Market Association	Permanent Shops
5	Front Facing Lane	Janpath Traders Association	Permanent Shops, designated space on the sidewalk

The Tibetan market was originally set up by Tibetans who came to India from Tibet before its invasion by China. The Gujarati lane was created by the New Delhi Municipal Corporation (NDMC) when they relocated 40 Gujarati women who were originally selling their wares outside a hotel on Janpath. The other sections of the market were originally made up of refugees who fled from Pakistan during the partition. They were given temporary stalls through the drawing of lots in 1950. The sections have often retained their cultural/ethnic origins as - being family businesses - they are passed down from one generation to the next. However, each section also contains vendors that chose Janpath, and started stalls or stores more recently, because of its central location and high footfall.

Figure 1: Overview of the different sections of Janpath[2]



Source - Google Earth

[2] This figure has been mapped by the authors themselves

Figure 2: Snapshots of the Different Sections of the Market[3]

Entry to the Mini Market and Lane B (synonymous to the Janpath Market Entry)

Mini Market Lane in Janpath

[3] All pictures have been clicked by Jignesh Mistry

Lane B opposite to the Mini Market Lane

Gujarati Market Lane in Janpath

Tibetan Market in Janpath

Front Facing Permanent Shops in Janpath

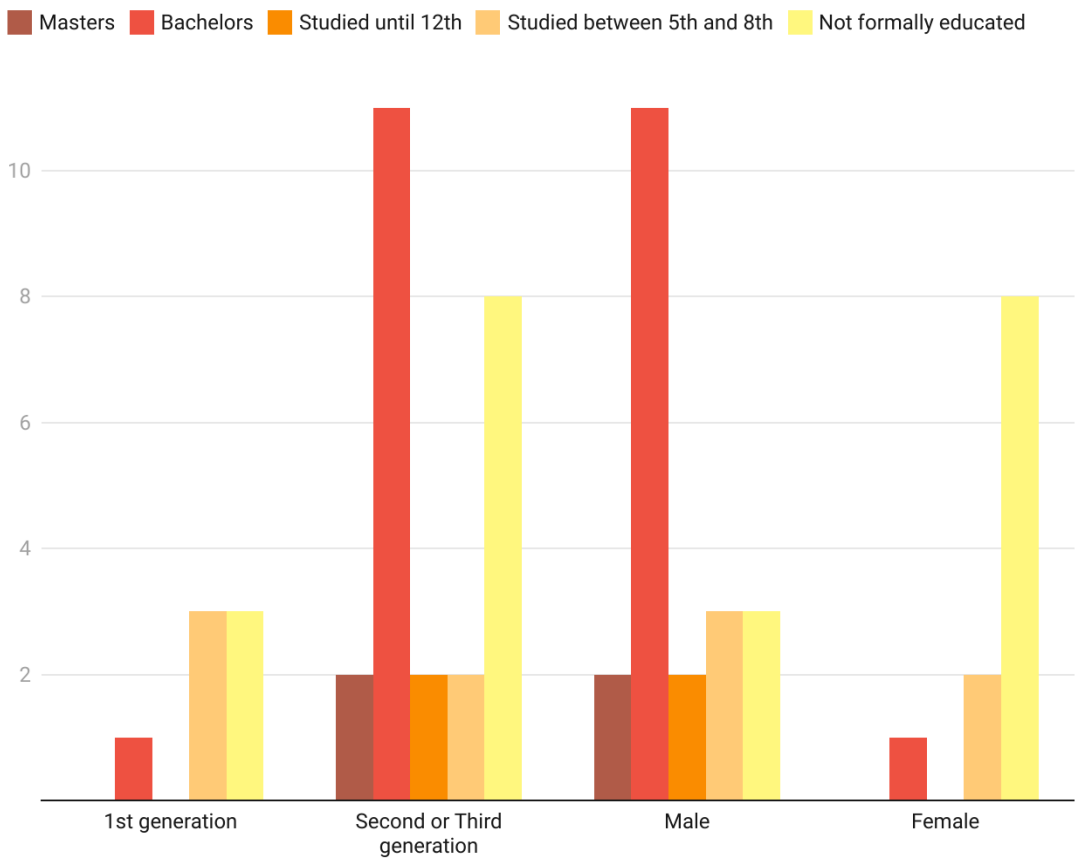
4 Introduction to the sellers

4.1 Profile

Our sample consists of 21 males and 11 females. The average age of the sellers in the sample is 44, which remains consistent across male and female vendors. An interesting observation is an average age at which one begins to work in the market. For our sample, we find that almost all sellers come to Janpath for business in their early 20s. This is homogeneous even among male-female groups and first-generation and other generation sellers.

It is worth mentioning that despite the market having a disproportionately high number of male vendors, the women feel safe and included in the market. The Gujarati lane, for example, comprises the majority of women sellers and is in fact, popular for being a female-driven market. When we asked Sujata, one of the sellers from the lane, why she joined Janpath as a first-generation entrepreneur, she responded by saying "*I feel safe in this market and since we are all women here, we take care of each other*".

Figure 3: Generation and Gender Wise Average Level of Education[4]



This graph provides an overview of the generation and the gender-wise breakup of the level of education of our sample. While we do see a rise in the education levels when we move the lens from the first generation to the second generation, the effects are crowded out by the males in the sample. This can be understood simply by seeing the number of people that have completed their Bachelor's or that have not received any formal education.

72.73% of the female sellers have not received formal education. The sample reflects that all of the vendors belonging to this category either have a designated space on the sidewalk or an

[4] All figures hereon are based on the authors' calculations and made by them

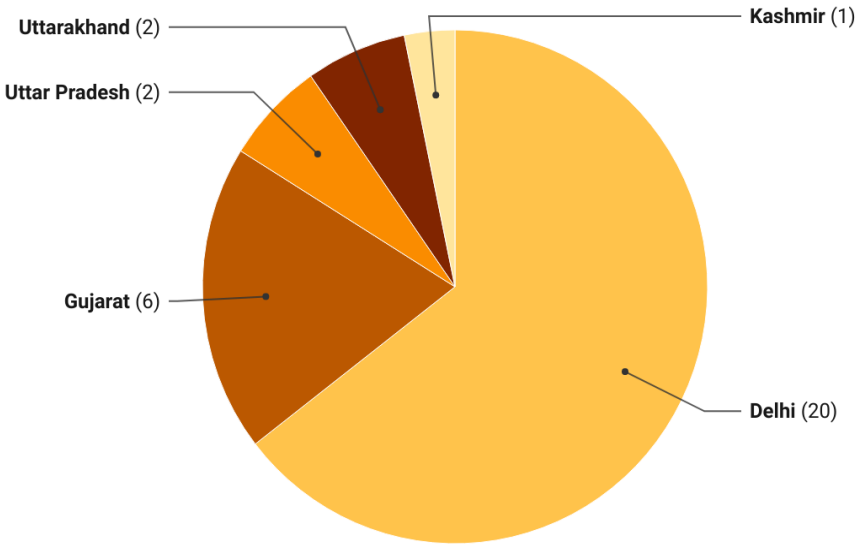
independent stall for their business. Access to mobility can be one of the reasons contributing to the statistics on female vendors' education [15]. This is mainly because women are restricted from travelling far away from their homes in order to ensure their 'safety'.

A strong correlation exists between the level of education and the nature of the store. 50% of the sellers who have completed their Bachelor's degrees have permanent shops. On the other hand, 80% of the people who have an independent stall on the street are not formally educated.

It is also interesting to note that a small percentage of male sellers who have completed their Master's degree are not first-generation sellers here. When comparing the opportunity cost of being in a corporate job, their inclination towards Janpath can be traced back to two reasons – high profitability or strong commitment to the family business.

4.2 Hometown

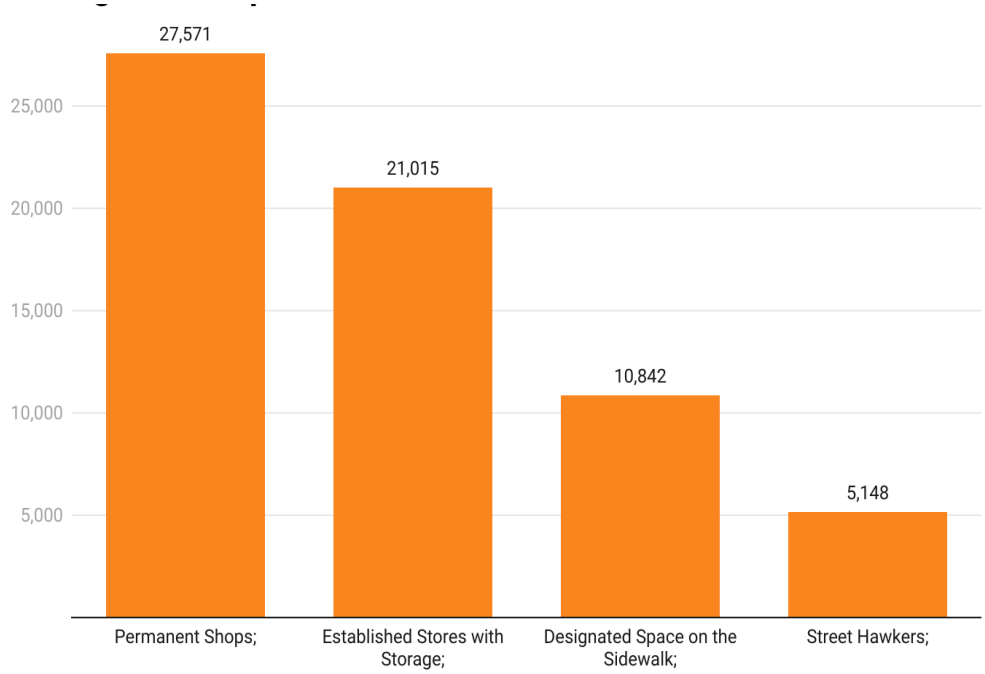
Figure 4: Hometown of the Sellers



A large proportion of sellers – 62.5 per cent – are from Delhi itself. Others come from states such as Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Gujarat and Kashmir. Interestingly, all sellers from states apart from Delhi move away from the popular commodity of readymade garments and engage in the business of handicrafts, accessories, cushion covers, jewellery, denim or traditional clothing items. A possible reason behind this could be the differential access to supply chains that sellers from different states have. This is also what makes each market within Janpath unique as we see that populations are more concentrated in certain markets.

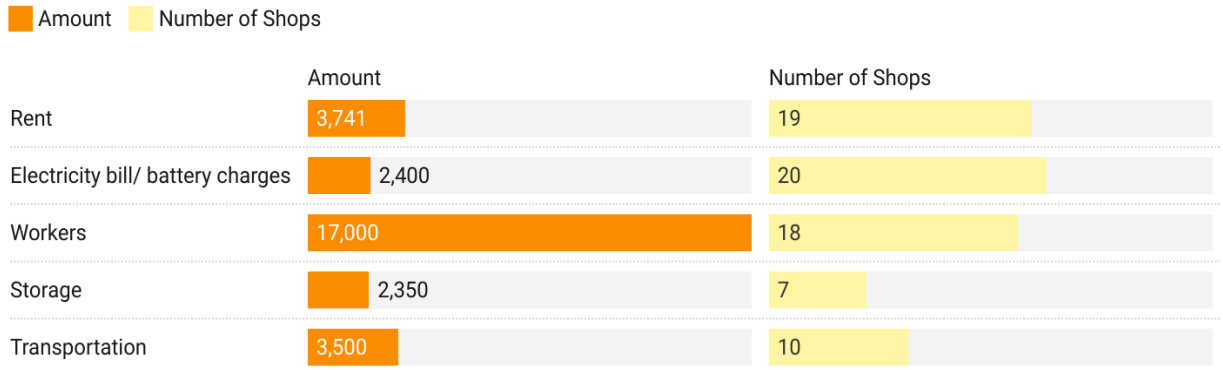
5 Operating Costs

Figure 5: Average Total Expenses



The average operating costs of our sample[5] is 16,860 rupees. As a matter of course, the nature and size of a business directly impact the scale of expenses incurred. The same has been graphed above as we see that it costs permanent shops the most, approximating 27,000 rupees. Then there are established stores with storage, designated space on the sidewalk and street hawkers in respective descending order.

Figure 6: Average Expenses and Number of Shops that Reported It



The nature of expenses within the market are more or less fixed costs. According to the interviews, there is no subsidy provided by the state on any of the expenses incurred here. It is, however, interesting to note that due to the informality induced, there is no uniformity across the different stores in this regard. Due to this, the number of shops for each expense changes and is mapped next to the respective expense on the graph above in yellow. As can be seen, the major and common expenses are rent, electricity and labour/workers with labour/workers holding the largest share.

[5] The sample for this section is 29 since three permanent stores refused to disclose any figures (for operating costs) in their interviews

Rent: 19 shops reported paying an average rent of 3741 rupees. 63.15 per cent of this subset owns their space and yet pays an average rent of 2900 rupees to the NDMC. On the other hand, the remaining 36.85 per cent that does not own the space either pays private landlords or the government. The average rent for this is 5100 rupees varying between the different kinds of shops. NDMC does not have any public notice available on the nature of rent charged in the market.

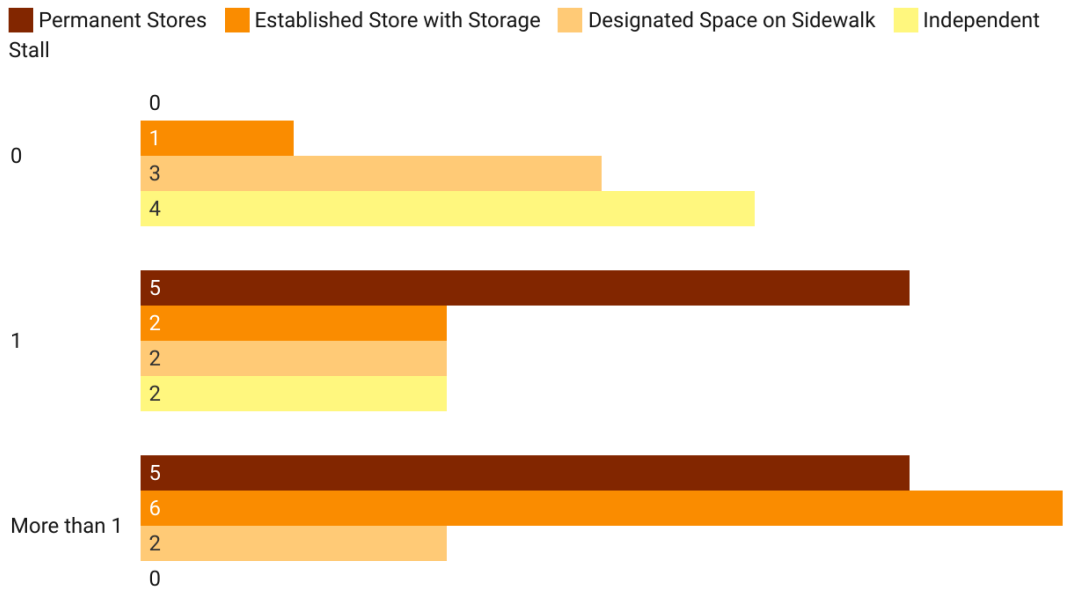
Electricity: Permanently established stores have legal electrical connections for fans, light bulbs and air conditioners but independent stalls and designated sidewalk spaces use personal batteries as they do not have access to electricity from the NDMC. *"We would save on the battery expenses if the state could provide us with electricity", said Rahul who has an independent stall in Lane B.* Sellers that did not report any electrical costs mainly composed of the same category implying that many have neither electricity nor battery in the market despite closing hours stretching late until 10 pm.

Storage and Transportation: Very few sellers incur storage costs in Janpath. It is important to note that this does not imply that the space allotted is enough for business purposes but the small-scale nature of the trade has led many sellers to make required adjustments. They manage by either storing products at home or actively seeking exports and wholesale (as seen above, these are commonly practised). 6 out of the 7 stores that reported the average storage costs of 2350 were independent stalls or designated sidewalk spaces. Apart from the storage, transportation costs were reported by 10 shops for an average of 3500 rupees. No other miscellaneous costs were reported.

Labour: Hiring workers is the largest cost for the sellers in Janpath. While only 15.6 per cent of the sample stated that their prices are dependent on the price prevalent in the market, street markets such as Janpath are very competitive. Shops that attract instant attention of the consumers, therefore, have an advantage. This means that workers have to aggressively market and engage with the consumers in order to motivate a purchase. Some popular methods adopted by street market sellers include an attractive display, personal selling and shouting. This has resulted in shops hiring more than one worker apart from the owner themselves at Janpath.

6 Division of Labour

Figure 7: Number of Hired Workers by The Type of Shop



Naturally, bigger businesses such as those with permanent and established stores have more incidents of multiple workers excluding the owner who also regularly sits at the store and is often

present. One of the sellers interviewed said that he usually employs one person but during the festive season, that number goes up to 2 to 3. Few sellers also reiterated that the NDMC mandates the owners to be present at the store. All permanent shops have at least one employee while no independent stall has more than one employee. It can also be seen that established stores with storage facilities are more competitive and hire more workers than every other type of store. Considering that the market opens every day of the week, the average daily wage of a worker here is approximately 560 rupees.

The division of labour within the market seems to be based on seniority and ownership. While it is mainly the workers' responsibility to fetch consumers and catch their attention, many owners engage in interactions with them, personalising conversations in order to convince them. 75 per cent of the sample had one person responsible for looking after the accounts, usually the owner themself or their son who inherited the business. This also shows that the workers are rarely from the same family. find themselves constrained to certain activities within the business.

59.37 per cent of the sellers hire these workers as opposed to them being family members. Furthermore, most of the functions relating to the shop are conducted from Janpath itself. Only 1.25 per cent of the sellers reported any work done at home which primarily included designing the products and activities involved in the manufacturing process such as stitching.

7 Export and Wholesale Trends

Figure 8: Number of Stores in Exports by Type of Shop

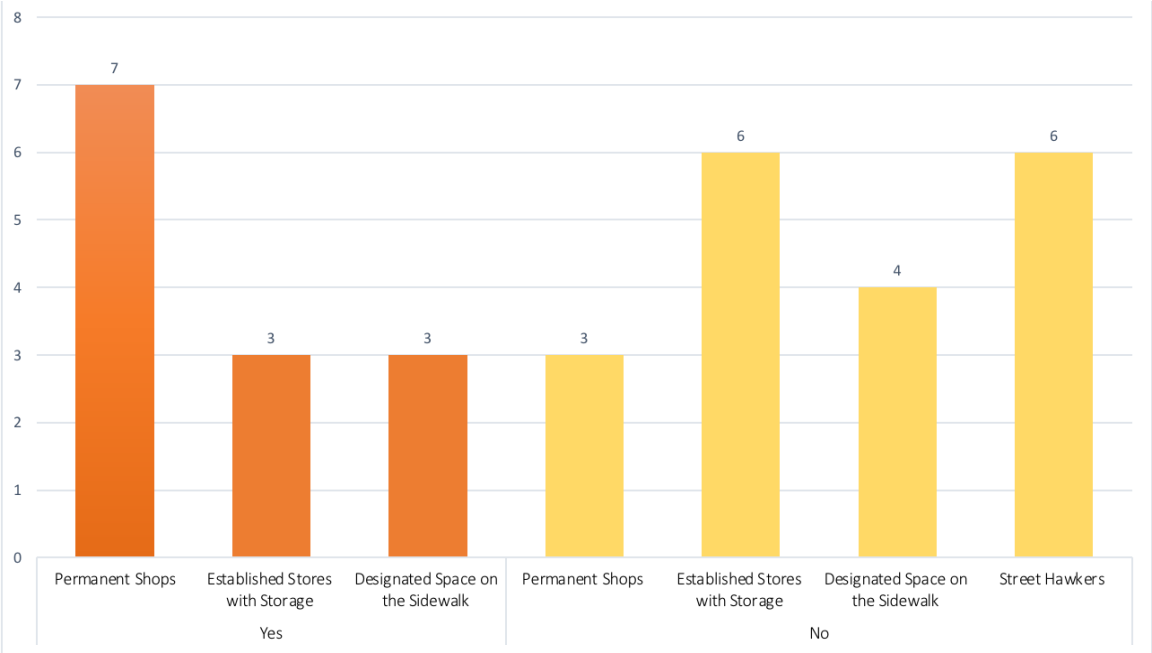
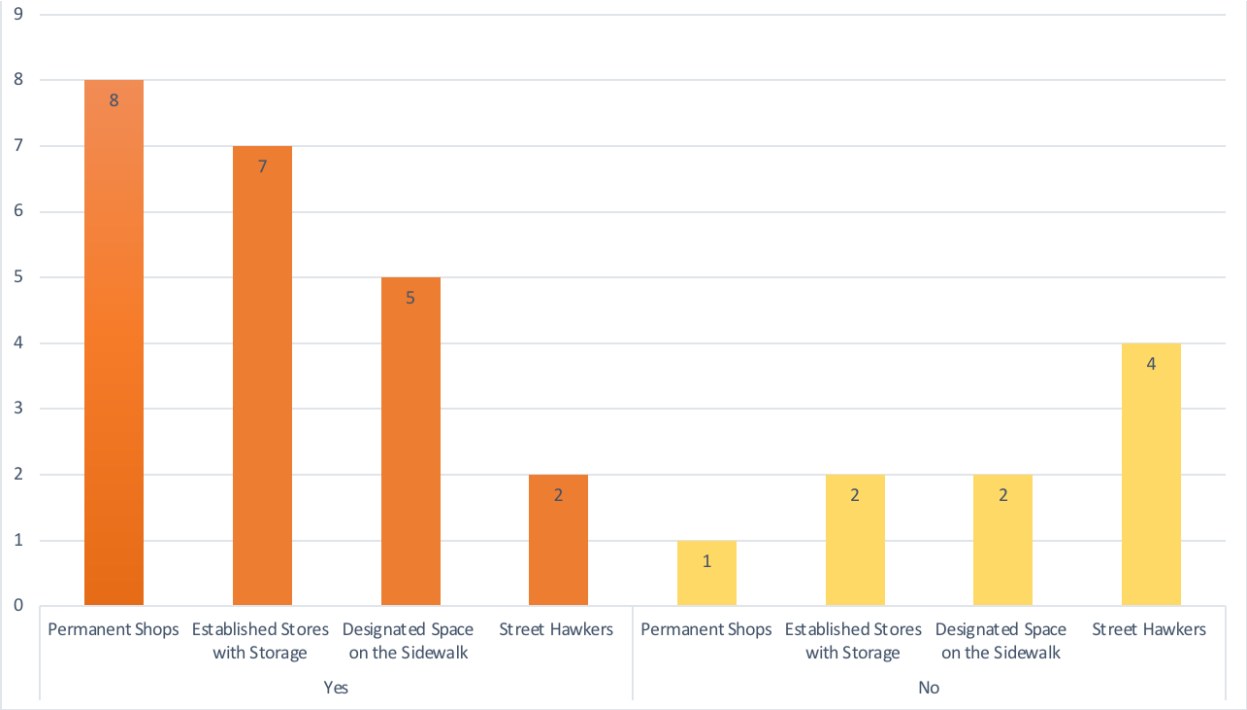


Figure 9: Number of Stores in Wholesale by Type of Shop



Despite being an informal street market, export and wholesale trade form an important part of Janpath's functions. As can be seen in figures 8 and 9 respectively, 40.62 per cent of sellers engage in exports and 68.75 per cent of sellers depend on wholesale for their livelihood. Figure 8 shows that almost all permanent shops from the sample export their products. On the other hand, it is not as easy for the independent stalls to penetrate into exports owing to the scale of their business. Sellers that have a designated space on the sidewalk (primarily in the Gujarati market), can be accredited to attract exports due to the unique traditional handicrafts that they sell.

A similar case can be seen in the case of wholesale selling. More permanent shops and established stores with storage facilities sell wholesale. We also see some street hawkers who engage in this. According to them, selling wholesale is more convenient for their stalls as it uplifts the burden of storing products. Through our interviews, many sellers informed us that they do not have access to the more formal export or wholesale channels and are contacted by individual agents who visit the market and make the purchase in person.

Many, however, expressed concern over the decrease in the volume of exports and wholesale post the pandemic. 15.62 per cent of the sellers explicitly mentioned that they used to export before COVID - 19 struck.

8 Impact of the Pandemic

The impact of the pandemic is not limited to a decrease in exports and wholesale only. Over the years, the market, just like the rest of the country, has withstood several phases of lockdown and

restrictions on mobility. Even in periods where strict lockdowns were not followed, government-mandated rules of masking and social distancing. The latter remains a privilege in informal spaces of urban areas. In order to implement social distancing amidst such congested design, the odd-even rule was introduced [16]. This further hampered the capacity to conduct sales for the sellers.

Past studies by McKinsey on consumer sentiment in India indicated that over 75 per cent of the respondents have become more cautious about spending in the near term primarily due to a fall in incomes and economic expectations. Another aversion towards the street market of Janpath for consumers is the conscious effort to avoid crowded places even after lockdowns have been lifted. This has not only rendered lesser consumers in the market but reduced spending even from those visiting it.

Personal anecdotes from sellers confirm that due to the central location of the market and the presence of several offices and colleges surrounding it, it has been a popular hub for office workers and college students. However, the work from home and remote learning models adopted by corporates and universities have taken away their regular consumers. Additionally, the loss of foreign tourists, that they earlier depended on, has heavily drained the market and left the sellers very vulnerable.

Most sellers also reported that their products are either produced by them locally or sourced from other parts of the country. A decrease in trade movements, therefore, has not impacted the supply chains for the sellers. The only reported change from the supply side was the rise in the prices of

raw materials which has led to an increase in the prices by the sellers too. In some cases, sellers were unable to increase prices which have drastically reduced their profit margins on the commodities. *"On one hand, the prices of materials are rising and on the other, consumers are not willing to pay more. This has rendered very low profits for us",* echoed Mamta, a 59-year readymade garments vendor.

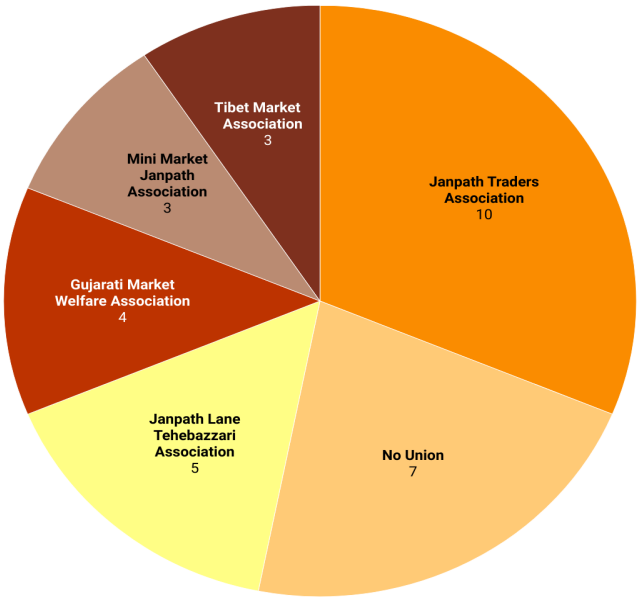
"The government has not given us a clear status, despite knowing that we're a proper market" – Ajay Kumar, secretary of Janpath Lane Tehebazzari Association, claimed while explaining how the informal status only makes combating such a crisis more difficult for Janpath. In order to continue their business, the market had to be fully vaccinated against the virus.

9 Unionisation in Janpath

Unionisation forms a core part of the identity and relations in Janpath. The different sub-markets within Janpath hold different histories and therefore are bound by different kinship associations. The market is home to refugees from both Tibet (currently in the Tibetan Market) from the invasion of Tibet and Pakistan (currently in the mini-market) from the partition. Another defining association in the Gujarati Market is that it is more women dominated than any other lane in Janpath. A female vendor from the Gujarati Market claimed that the same was the primary reason behind her choosing Janpath over other street markets in Delhi. This could be the possible reason behind the different unions in different lanes within the market (see Table 2 above).

While government records have documented four market associations in Janpath, the vendors informed us of five that are currently functioning including the Janpath Lane Tehebazari Association, Janpath Traders Association, Gujarati Market Welfare Association, Tibetan Market Association and Mini Market Janpath Association. Janpath Lane Tehebazari Association has not renewed its license deed, which is a requirement as per rules and Acts of NDMC, in recent years which is why it is not included in the list. Most union leaders and active members that we interacted with were first-generation sellers who are more attached to the market as compared to their second and third-generation counterparts. In our sample, we see that only 21.87 per cent of the stores are not registered under any union.

Figure 10 : Union Wise Breakdown



While close relations exist within the lanes of Janpath, interviews also hinted at possible sentiments of conflicts between different lanes. This was more prominent between authorised

and unauthorised sellers(sellers without a licence), as the latter are perceived as a group that adds to the informality of the market. Street Hawkers with independent stalls reported the presence of police harassment while not being authorised. However, they report minimal interruptions in business activities once they receive their license.

While different unions function independently and have different demands owing to the issues hindering their respective locations, they are united by some common agendas that direct toward the overall development of the market. For example, the Mini Market Association has requested the government for a public toilet to be built near the market for their utilisation while the Janpath Lane Tehebazzari Association is fighting for the provision of electrical access for all its vendors. Common demands, on the other hand, include designated parking space for the market, authorisation of all vendors, increase in the designated space, cleanliness and sanitation. According to union leaders, if these basic demands are met, the market will develop faster leading to an increase in the earnings of all the vendors.

While it is the government's responsibility to develop Janpath, the unions have taken it upon themselves due to the constant dismissal that authorities have expressed towards them. In the past, the government has proposed several plans for the development of the area, however, not much has been implemented amidst bureaucracy and corruption.

Even the vaccination campaign, as Mr Mishra, a board member of the Mini Market Janpath Association confirmed, was possible only due to the efforts of the unions collectively. In fact, unions volunteered to ensure that every seller followed the COVID-19 regulations such as

masking and social distancing along with the police personnel for seamless functioning [5]. In this manner, unions are to a certain extent holding the market together.

The first-generation sellers from our sample expressed two reasons behind choosing Janpath – a) it was relatively easier to find space in this market and b) the popularity of Janpath that attracts more consumers. While the latter remains, the former is challenged by the growing competition among sellers and the conflict between authorised and unauthorised sellers. Second and third -generational sellers expressed discontent with the market due to their opinion that it restricts one to a small-scale business. Therefore, while they have inherited a shop from their forefathers in the market, they actively seek other income channels. *"Janpath is a typical street market with very low market prices, there is no scope to increase the business here."* Manoj is a third-generation seller who sells occasion wear. He has started wholesaling via other channels since he believes that his family business has the potential to expand more.

With such dynamics present in Janpath, one realises that unions play a pivotal role in maintaining the market. They are the primary structures that highlight the issues of the vendors here and despite the government's disinterest, rightfully seek to resolve them.

11 Conclusion

While informality in itself is quite varied and complex, Janpath is a peculiar example of an informal market because of its structure and the way it functions. The different markets, as explained in the introduction to the market, are all part of the Janpath market but each market

functions differently from the others and has a separate association. The issues are also quite distinct. The permanent shop owners displayed strong disapproval for street hawkers because of the latter's bargaining tactics. One 74-year-old seller commented, *"because of these patri valas (street vendors), this market is infamous for bargaining and we don't talk to them"*. The street vendors too recounted the harassment faced by them at the hands of local authorities before they got designated places to sit and conduct their businesses from. Seniority is also a factor that plays a role in the treatment that is meted out to the vendors, as one seller said *"if you've been here longer, the rent is minimal"*. Certain sellers who had been selling in the market for numerous years were later upgraded to a permanent establishment within the market. The market, as stated earlier comprises the majority of male vendors but is still a conducive place for female vendors to conduct their business. Most sellers are second or third-generation entrepreneurs.

Just like other informal markets, the sellers in Janpath have also been greatly impacted by COVID-19 with most sellers complaining about a massive dip in sales. While many sellers refused to disclose their income figures, many were worried about their current earnings. Many were also worried about the increased expenditure on raw materials post COVID which has, in turn, increased the price of the finished product. In one interview, the vendor claimed that his current earnings are 5% of what they were 10 years ago. Almost every vendor interviewed decried the lack of government support in dealing with the pandemic. The absence of government intervention to support the vendors in any manner highlights the invisibilisation of informal sections in urban settings. Informality being a sector which accommodates the majority of the workforce needs more state support, especially during the pandemic. While vendors have formed unions that allow them to tackle rising issues to a certain degree, our paper highlights

their perception in the academic space in order to motivate policy recommendations that would improve their standard of living].

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