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## SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY ON WOMEN VEGETABLE VENDORS IN DHARWAD DISTRICT

**Smt. Megha. S.Chalwadi,**

Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Smt G.B.Ankalkoti Government First Grade College Shiggaon.

**Prof.M.P. Baligar**

Chairman, Department of Studies and Research in Sociology, Karnataka State Akkamahadevi Women University Vijayapura District

### Abstract

This study explores the sociological dimensions of women vegetable vendors contribute a significant role in the informal sector in building up a stronger economy. Street vending is a profession and the source of livelihood, which is the way of life for the millions of marginalized people in India. The sociological dimensions of women vegetable vendors, the research also focuses on their socio-economic status, daily challenges, and the cultural dynamics that shape their lives. This study draws on the in-depth interview of the research aims to analyze the socioeconomic status of women vegetable vendors, and understanding the economic conditions of these women their financial vulnerabilities and the sustainability of their livelihoods and to identify and document the daily challenges faced by women vegetable vendors in their work environments provide an in-depth understanding of the factors influencing their work and social interactions. For this purpose, primary data was collected from 100 respondents. Data was tabulated and analyzed with the help of statistical tools to achieve the objectives of the study.

**Keywords:** *Women Vegetable Vendors, Socio-economic Status, Vulnerable to Diseases and Gender Roles etc.,*

### INTRODUCTION

The Indian economy is characterized by the existence of a vast majority of informal or unorganized labour employment. The increase of workforce in the unorganized sector has become a significant feature of Indian economy. The Ministry of Labour, Government of India has categorized the unorganized labour force into four groups based on the occupation, nature of employment, especially distressed categories and service categories. Firstly, the unorganized labourers in terms of service categories are those labourers who are midwives, domestic workers, fishermen and newspaper vendors, barbers, women vegetable and fruit vendors, come under this category. Women vegetable vendors play a crucial role in the informal economy, especially in developing countries. Despite their significant contribution to local food systems and economies, they often face numerous challenges, including economic insecurity, social marginalization, and gender-based discrimination. This study seeks to understand the lived experiences of these women, their coping mechanisms, and the societal attitudes toward them. Women vegetable vendors belong to the unorganized sector which requires less investment and less skill which makes women to be more innovative, an entrepreneur to earn her

daily livelihood. According to the government sources there are 40 million women street vendors in India but civil societies and other organizations claim that their proposition is higher. The recent scenario of pandemic has made their livelihood more vulnerable to carry out their business due to financial needs. The challenge of satisfying the family needs many had a shift in their occupation to other unorganized sector like construction, domestic, daily wagers, contractual, sanitary workers, etc.

### STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Women vegetable vendors play a critical role in the informal economy, particularly in urban and peri-urban areas. Despite their significant contributions to local food systems and economies, they face a myriad of challenges that hinder their economic stability, health, and overall well-being. These challenges are exacerbated by the intersection of their gender and socioeconomic status, placing them in a vulnerable position within society. This study tries to identify the various problems faced by Women vegetable vendors.

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Primary data conducted from women vegetable vendor through an interview schedule. Secondary Data: The various secondary information sources used for the present research include the journals and magazines and websites. Tools used for Data Analysis: The data collected was analyzed through percentages, frequencies and Chi-square tests are applied for the analysis of data undertaken in Dharwad district. Sampling Design: The study covers selected Women Vegetable Vendor. In this study convenient in-depth interview technique has been used to collect the data from 100 respondents.

### OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To analyze the socio-economic status of women vegetable vendors
2. To identify the problems faced by women vegetable vendors in their work environments
3. To suggest the recommendations for uplifting the status of among women vegetable vendors.

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The literature on informal sector workers highlights the precarious nature of their employment, lack of social security, and exposure to exploitation. Women vendors, in particular, encounter additional burdens due to traditional gender roles and responsibilities. Previous studies have examined various aspects such as economic contributions, health risks, and policy implications but have often overlooked the intersectional challenges faced by women.

- **Chinchilla, et al, 1993; Lund, 1998, 1997;** Conducted a study regarding the role and participation of women in street vending and suggests that women, constituting a prominent disadvantaged social group, tend to be particularly attracted to street vending because a significant portion of the women belonging to the weaker and deprived section of the population who look for employment in the informal sector as because of lack of skill, maximum flexibility in terms of combining work and child care.

- **Lund Francie 1998**, studied on “Women Street Vendors in Urban South Africa: A Synthesis of Selected Research Findings” is based on the women street vendors. This study revealed that the level of education among the street vendors was very low. Gender disparity was found in the level of education.
- **Bhowmik 2005**, on “Street Vendors in Asia: A Review” and the study analyzed the magnitude of street vending in different countries. The assessment found that the number of street vendors in the countries was on an increase. This paper attempts to examine recent research done on street vendors in Asia with the aim of assessing the magnitude of street vending in different countries and the composition of the vendors. Further, it collates information on the extent of unionization of the vendors and other organizations, such as non-government organizations (NGOs), self-help organizations (SHOs), advocacy groups, etc, that work for their welfare.
- **After that, Harlan 2008**, studied on street vendors and wrote a paper entitled “Street Vendors: Urban Problem and Economic Potential” where he illustrated that street vendors were a big challenge for urban management. The city managers eliminated them as they defaced city sights<sup>7</sup>. The paper suggested a change in the mindset of urban decision makers.
- **Another study by Nidan 2010**, in his paper “Study on Street Vendors at Patna (Bihar)” was based on 600 street vendors in 72 wards in Patna. It found that most of the respondents chose vending as a profession because there were no other jobs available, entry was easier and investment was low.
- **Robert S.P 2012**, Conducted an in depth analysis of the socio economic conditions of the street vendors in the city Tiruchirapalli. The results concluded that Tamil Nadu Government despite having a strong social security net still majority of street vendors are reeling under acute poverty and deprivation. Their basic needs of food, clothing, shelter, education and alternate employment opportunities need to be accomplished in order to have a thriving and prospering informal sector.
- **Raghavendra R.H 2014**, Study report on unorganized retail in India, the paper provides a detailed information about the role of unorganized retailing industry in India. It examines why unorganised retail sector in India is dominating and what are the reasons for its dominance. It also provides an in depth study about the importance, opportunities and challenges of unorganized retail sector with comparison to organized retail sector in India. his paper provides detailed information about the role of unorganized retailing industry in India. It examines the why unorganized retail sector dominating in India and what are the reasons for its dominance in India. It also provides with in depth study about the importance, opportunities and challenges of unorganized retail sector with comparison to organized retail sector in India. Finally concludes with the mark of Indian consumers’ change of attitude towards organized retail sector.
- **Pavantika T Biradar, VaseemAnjum Sheriff 2016**, Conducted a study on sustainable urban development and street vending with particular reference to Bangalore metropolitan area .It was concluded that street vending street vending should be added as an important aspect of the street life as it brings vibrancy,

colour & liveliness. Millions of people are subsisting on it daily and that it stimulates economic growth by promoting social equity and accessibility which brings about sustainable urban development of street vendors.

## ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The socio-economic status of women vegetable vendors encompasses various dimensions, including their income levels, employment conditions, access to financial services, living standards, and social mobility. To thoroughly analyze their socio-economic status, the following aspects should be considered:

**Table 1: Problems and Challenges faced by Women Vegetable Vendors**

Sl.No.	Problems	Frequently	Rarely	Never
1	Low wages	82	17	1
2	Ignorance of Occupational safety	66	29	5
3	Insecurity in job	68	30	2
4	Exploitation	78	19	3
5	Seasonal employment	49	37	14
6	Excess working hours	81	15	4
7	Lack of Health security	84	13	3
8	Poor working environment	67	29	4
9	Poor employer employee relationship	79	19	2
10	Lack of social security measures	69	29	2
11	Vulnerable to diseases	72	19	9
12	Sexual harassment	22	63	15

Source: Primary Data

- **Economic Insecurity:** Women vegetable vendors often operate on thin profit margins, subject to fluctuating market prices and seasonal variations. Many lack access to formal financial services, such as credit and savings accounts, which limits their ability to invest in their businesses and secure their livelihoods. Economic instability is a persistent issue, leaving these women and their families in a precarious financial situation.
- **Health Risks:** The nature of their work exposes women vegetable vendors to various health risks. Long hours of physical labor, often in harsh weather conditions, combined with inadequate access to healthcare, contribute to a range of health problems. These issues are compounded by the lack of health insurance or other forms of social protection, making it difficult for them to seek medical attention when needed.

• **Table 2: Health Issues faced by Women Vegetable Vendors**

Sl.No.	Health Issues	No. Of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	Diabetes	12	12%
2	High/low blood Pressure	16	16%

3	Asthma	17	17%
4	Back/joint pains	19	19%
5	Allergy? Skin disease	13	13%
6	Anemia	12	12%
7	Depression	11	11%

Source: Primary Data

- **HARASSMENT AND SECURITY:** Women vendors face harassment from various quarters including customers, male vendors and local authorities. This harassment can range from verbal abuse to physical threats, creating an unsafe work environment. Lack of security measures and protections face these issues, making it challenging for women to work without fear of harassment or violence.
- **GENDER ROLES:** Gender roles and societal expectations place additional burden on women vegetable vendors. Many of these women are primary caregivers for their families, balancing domestic responsibilities with their work. Social norms often undervalue their economic contributions and reinforce gender-based discrimination, limiting their opportunities for growth and empowerment.
- **LACK OF INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT:** There is a important gap in policy and institutional support tailored to the needs of women in the unorganized sector. Existing policies often fail to address the unique challenges faced by women vegetable vendors, such as access to affordable childcare, financial literacy programs, and targeted health interventions. This lack of support perpetuates their marginalization and limits their potential for economic advancement.
- **SOCIAL NETWORKS AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS:** While women vegetable vendors rely on informal social networks for support, these networks are often inadequate to address their broader challenge. There is a need to support these networks and create formal support systems that can provide monetary assistance, business preparation, and encouragement for their rights.

## CONCLUSION

The study highlights the resilience and agency of women vegetable vendors despite significant adversities. Their role in the informal economy underscores the need for policies that address their specific needs, including social protection measures, access to credit, and healthcare services. The findings also call for broader societal change to challenge gender norms and improve the status of women in the workforce. Women vegetable vendors are integral to local economies but remain marginalized and vulnerable. Addressing their challenges requires a multifaceted approach, combining economic support, healthcare access, and social empowerment initiatives. Further research should explore the impact of specific interventions and the long-term changes in the lives of these women.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Policy Interventions:** Implement policies that provide social security, health benefits, and financial services tailored to the needs of informal sector workers.



- **Capacity Building:** Provide women vegetable vendors training programs to enhance their business skills, financial literacy, and awareness of rights.
- **Group of people Meeting:** Promote community-based support systems and activist for societal change to reduce gender-based prejudice and harassment.

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