



SOCIO-ECONOMIC VIEW ON INFORMAL SECTOR: A STUDY OF WOMEN VEGETABLE VENDORS IN ITANAGAR CAPITAL REGION, ARUNACHAL PRADESH

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Abstract: In Arunachal Pradesh, the reality of most women in the informal sector is that their financial condition has urged them to look for earnings mainly as the household's breadwinner. This paper examines the socio-economic status of women in informal sectors specifically the vegetable vendors in the Itanagar Capital Region of the state. This study uses a purposive random sampling method to select 50 respondents, collectively from the Itanagar Capital Region. It has been observed that the majority of the women workers engaged in the informal sector; the quality of implementation is poor with no to minimal skill or access as many a time it is stigmatized as troublesome and unmanageable.

Key Words - Informal sector, women, vegetable vendors, socio-economic status.

I. INTRODUCTION

Advancing the development of a nation remains the utmost goal of any country which can be achieved through positive growth in the economic and socio-cultural sectors. In a developing country like India, the survival of the urban poor greatly depends on the informal sector. The term Informal sector refers to the part of the economy, comprising activities that have market value yet neither taxed nor monitored by any form of government. The major proportion of urban informal employment falls under street vendors, food and flea markets, etc. (Muna, 2016). The informal sector comprises a large proportion of the economy in our country but it is sometimes stigmatized as troublesome and unmanageable. In recent years women have been showing increasing interest in income-generating ventures. Women in great number are involved in the informal sector as it provides employment opportunities and livelihood for survival. It is true to say that in any socio-economic developmental strategy consideration of women's contribution is of great significance. There has been to be a rise in female participation as street vendors in the country (Pratima, 2016). Street vendors are the most visible section of the informal sector and are an integral component of urban economies (Jaishankar, 2016). Almost all of these people are not well educated or skilled enough hence they are deprived of getting into highly-paid jobs in the formal sector (Samarpitha, 2019). They depend on the informal business by and large for their subsistence. For a large section of the urban poor, street vending remains an important source of financial support as it requires little financial input and low skills to run the business (Trivedi, 2019). According to 'National Policy on Urban Street Vendors' (NPUSV, 2006), in the informal economy, street vendors are recognized as self-employed workers who extend their labor to sell goods and services on the street besides having no lasting built-up structure. As specified by the Indian government, there are three basic classifications of street vending: Stationary, peripatetic, and mobile. Where; 'stationary vendors' refers to those who carry out vending on a regular basis at a particular location with implicit or explicit approbation of

the authorities. ‘Peripatetic vendors’ are those who carry out vending on foot and ‘mobile vendors’ are those who tend to move from one place to another vending their goods on wheels. There are about 10 million street vendors in India, as claimed by the ‘Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation’. Women in street vending businesses had to operate their tasks with many limitations as they share no proper social protection from the government (Vijaya, 2016). They face reliability issues and are often considered a public nuisance. These vendors usually endure competitiveness with other street vendors due to alterations in prices and irregular employment. They have to deal with fluctuations in sales every other season and hence their earnings often remain minimal (Chandralekha, 2021). The present research work made an attempt to study the problem faced by women street vegetable vendors in the Itanagar Capital Region, Arunachal Pradesh. Itanagar Capital Region lies in the central part of Arunachal Pradesh (figure 1). The total population of ICR as per the 2011 census is 122523, among them about 62151(51%) are male and about 61372(50%) are female. According to the 2011 census, the total number of main and marginal workers of ICR is 38129, where 25018 are male and 13111 are female. A large number of women section are involved in vegetable vending in order to generate financial support for the family. The reality of most women in this sector is that their financial condition has urged them to look for earnings mainly as the breadwinner of the household. Their rise in participation in the informal sector is more of a financial obligation rather than any amelioration in work ethos. The women vegetable vendors in the Itanagar Capital Region have a pattern of selling the goods in sitting position and working hours stretch up to 12-14 hours daily (Primary source). The present study concentrates on 50 women vegetable vendors in ICR. These 50 respondents were selected by using a purposive random sampling technique. They were contacted in the market place and by using an interview schedule data were collected. The main objectives of the study are;

1. To study the socio-economic condition of women vegetable vendors and the problems encountered by them during their working hours.

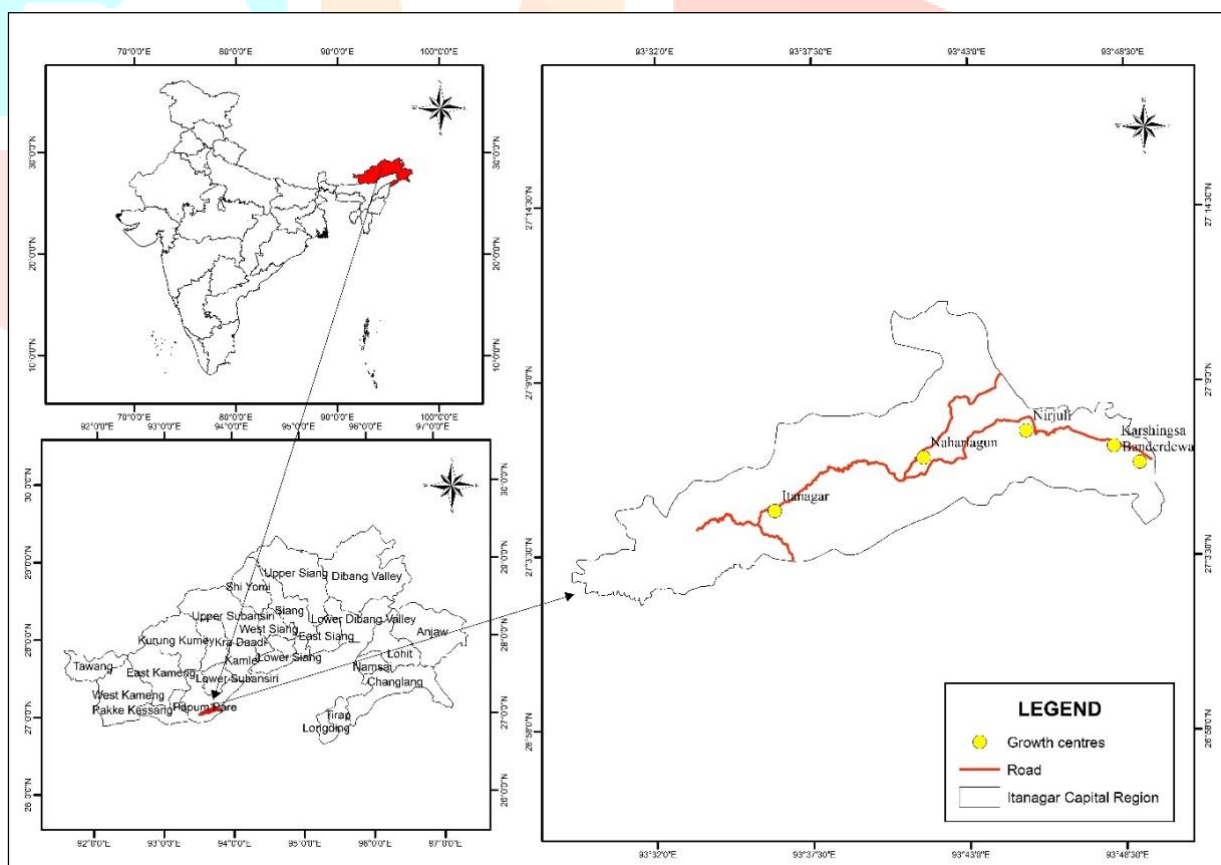


Figure 1: Location of study area.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study was confined to five wards of the Itanagar Capital Region viz. Itanagar, Naharlagun, Banderdewa, Nirjuli and Yupia. Both primary and secondary sources were used. The data of the selected women vegetable vendors were obtained through personal interviews and observation methods with the assistance of a well-structured Interview schedule. The interview was done in the month of September 2022. For Sample selection, a purposive random sampling method was used. A total sample size of 50 women vegetable vendors comprising 10 from each ward has been considered in the study. The evaluation of the assembled data is done through descriptive table and graphical classification while computation of means and percentages was engaged to present the data.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Socio-Economic Status Of Women Vegetable Vendors

In general, the age of women vegetable vendors was between 20 and 65 years. The study of age groups demonstrates the human resources at different stages of vegetable vending. It is seen from the table that the major proportion (56%) comes under the middle age group, i.e. 36-50 years, followed by the old age group, > 50 years, (28%), and the age group from young up to 35 years (16%) recorded minimum. Across the markets, the maximum percentage of young (30%), middle-aged (70%), and old (50%) were found in Nirjuli, Banderdewa, and Itanagar, respectively. The marital status of women vegetable vendors in ICR shows that 64 percent of respondents were married 17 percent were widows. Among the respondents, only 2 percent of women were unmarried. Education being a pivotal indicator of development, the literacy status of women vegetable vendors has been taken into consideration. The data revealed that the literacy level in the selected wards of the Itanagar capital region was 22 percent only. This is much lower than the female literacy rates at the national level (65.46%) and state level (57.70%). Across the selected wards, Nirjuli literacy level is the highest(50%) followed by Itanagar (30%). The lowest literacy rate is observed in Karshingsa (10%). Regarding the level of literacy, only 4 percent of the respondents were able to reach the secondary level. The details regarding the average daily income and the working experience of the respondents in vegetable vending are given in Table – 1. The results highlighted that the average net earnings of women vegetable vendors in ICR is Rs.970. The maximum average daily income was at Itanagar (Rs.1670), followed by Naharlagun (Rs.1200), Banderdewa (Rs. 800), and Nirjuli (Rs.680). The minimum average daily income was at Karshingsa (Rs.500). The result revealed that the majority of the respondents (52%) fall under the category of 6 to 10 years of experience followed by (38%) respondents under the category of < 5 years. The remaining (10%) respondents revealed that they have been in the business for more than a decade now. The details of Socio- economic condition of women vegetable vendors are given in Table 1

Table 1: Socio-economic characteristics of the sample women vegetable vendors n=50

Particulars	Itanagar	Naharlagun n	Banderdewa	Nirjuli	Yupia	All
Age group						
Young Age - upto 35	02(20)	02(20)	00(0)	03(30)	01(10)	08(16)
Middle Age 36 to 50	06(60)	05(50)	07(70)	06(60)	04(40)	28(56)
Old Age Above 50	05(50)	03(30)	03(30)	00(0)	03(30)	14(28)
Marital status						
Married	05(50)	06(60)	07(70)	08(80)	06(60)	36(64)
Unmarried	01(10)	00(0)	00(0)	00(0)	00(0)	01(02)
Widow	04(40)	04(40)	03(30)	02(20)	04(40)	17(34)
Education						
Illiterate	07(70)	08(80)	08(80)	06(0)	09(90)	39(78)
Up to primary	03(30)	02(20)	02(20)	03(30)	01(10)	09(18)
Up to secondary	00(0)	00(0)	00(0)	02(20)	00(00)	02(04)

Per day average income (per person)	1,670	1,200	800	680	500	970
Experience in Vegetable vendors						
< 5 years	01(10)	03(30)	03(30)	05(50)	07(70)	19(38)
6 – 10 years	07(70)	05(50)	06(60)	05(50)	03(30)	26(52)
>10 years	02(20)	02(20)	01(10)	00(0)	00(0)	05(10)
Note: Figure inside parentheses indicates percentage						

3.2 Reasons To Take Up Street Vending

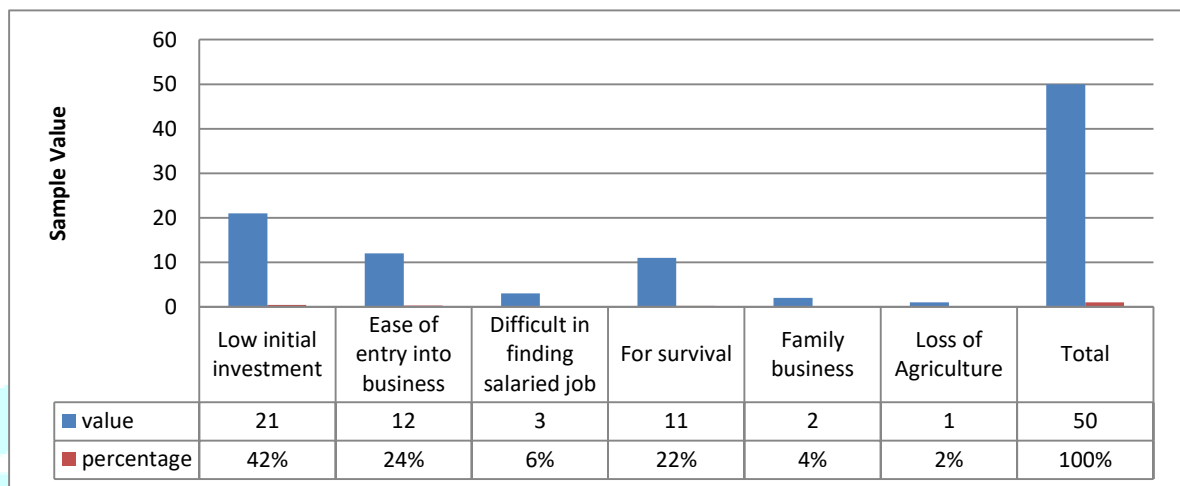


Figure 2: Reasons for taking up street vending

The reason reported by the majority of the respondents (42%) for taking up street vending was because this business requires a very low initial investment and 24% of them started vegetable vending because it is easy to enter. 22% of the respondents cited that they chose to become a vegetable vendor only to succumb to the need for earnings for survival.

Through interviews, it is revealed that a larger proportion of women vegetable vendors of ICR are sole earners of the family thus making it obvious that their engagement in the informal sector is more of a financial duty rather than any advancement in work ethos. About 4% of them started vegetable vending because this business was handed over by a family member while 2% of the respondents started due to failure of agriculture in their home village which then compelled them to take up street vending in ICR. And remaining 6% of the respondents mentioned hardship in getting a salaried job as their prior reason to take up vegetable vending as their source of earning to survive. It is also found that a large section of the women vegetable vendors migrated from other interior districts of the state solely to satisfy their financial requirements.

Table 2: Problems faced by women vegetable vendors n=50

Problems	Itanagar	Naharlagun	Banderdewa	Nirjuli	Yupia	All	Rank
Starts early in the morning	10(100)	10(100)	09(90)	09(90)	08(80)	46(92)	I
Shortage of fund	09(90)	09(90)	09(90)	08(80)	10(100)	45(90)	II
Bringing/loading/storing vegetables	08(80)	08(80)	09(90)	08(80)	08(80)	41(82)	III
Time consuming	08(80)	09(90)	07(70)	07(70)	06(60)	37(74)	IV
Price fluctuation	09(90)	09(90)	06(60)	06(60)	06(60)	36(72)	V
No social support/over bargaining	08(80)	08(80)	05(50)	05(50)	06(60)	32(64)	VI

Physical and mental strain	05(50)	05(50)	04(40)	03(30)	04(40)	21(42)	VIII
Competition from male vendors	04(40)	05(50)	03(30)	03(30)	03(30)	18(36)	IX

Note: Figure inside parentheses indicates the percentage

From Table 2, it can be observed that the most frequently faced problem mentioned (92%) by women vegetable vendors in the Itanagar Capital Region, were starting purchasing goods early in the morning from wholesalers, while for many (90%) shortage of fund remains a serious problem in running the business. As reported by 82% of the respondents the highly perishable nature of fruits and vegetables brings losses in the business, as the goods tend to deteriorate within a day or two. Thus these women vendors expressed that there is a requirement for storage facilities to prevent quantitative and qualitative losses in the business. Furthermore, the interview also highlighted that the time spent in the business ranged from a minimum of 8 hours to a maximum of more than 13 hours per day. The majority of the vendors start their business at around 7 a.m. and continue till 9 p.m. Hence, as stated by 74% of the respondents feel that the time consumption nature of the business is a limiting factor for them. Another problem faced by the women vegetable vendors in ICR, was the uncertainty in managing profits due to fluctuation in the price of fruits and vegetables as stated by 72% of them. Many (64%) of the respondents also reported that the lack of social support on many grounds limits their growth in the business for instance; over bargaining, cheating, verbal abuse, etc. Moreover, personal observation has revealed that many of these women's vegetable vendors are suffering from manhandling by their spouses over their daily earnings. As stated by 42% of the respondents they suffer both physical and mental strain during working hours. For some women vegetable vendors (36%) competition from male vendors is perceived as a threat.



Women vegetable vendors in business hour

IV. CONCLUSION

Women vegetable vendors in the Itanagar Capital Region hold a pivotal role in setting an example to be a source of self-employment. They are the medium to provide goods at low cost along with beneficial services to the majority of the town community. The idea of being employed and the daily sustenance of the family has led them to stick to the profession as the majority of them were the breadwinner of the household. It stands as a financial pillar in catering to numerous households in the region. Hence, the significance of this sector should not be compromised, as the state authority does not hold the capacity to provide thousands of jobs to the unemployed and underemployed women of the region.

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