



## WOMEN IN UNORGANISED SECTOR – WOMEN VEGETABLE VENDORS IN TIRUCHIRAPPALLI – A SOCIO ECONOMIC STUDY

### KEYWORDS

**S. Vijaya Rani**

Associate Professor, Department of sociology, Seethalakshmi Ramaswami College, Tiruchirappalli.

### ABSTRACT

Indian economy is characterised by unorganised sector. Almost 400 million people - more than 85% of the working population in India - work in the unorganised sector. Of these, at least 120 million are women. Unorganized sector contributed significantly and expanded rapidly in the Indian economy. The term 'unorganised' is often used in the Indian context to refer to the vast numbers of women and men engaged in different forms of employment. These forms include home-based work, self-employment, employment in household enterprises, small units, on land as agricultural workers, labour on construction sites, domestic work, and a myriad other forms of casual or temporary employment. Street vendors are the most visible section of the informal economy. Street vending as a profession has been in existence in India since times immemorial. Street vendors are an integral part of urban economies around the world, offering easy access to a wide range of goods and services in public spaces. Today, vending is an important source of employment for a large number of urban poor as it requires low skills and small financial inputs. According to the Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation, there are 10 million street vendors in India. The population of Street Vendors in the study area Tiruchirappalli is expected to be around 3500 (Mr. Maheshwaran, secretary of Tamil Nadu, NASVI, Trichy, said that all of the 3,500-odd vendors who operate within the 65-ward corporation limits). Street vendors have poor social protection and their working conditions on the streets expose them to a variety of safety and health issues. Women vendors earn less, on average, than men vendors: their earnings range from 40 to 60 rupees per day. In order to bring to limelight the problems faced by the women street vendors a study was conducted in Tiruchirappalli.

### Objectives of the Study:

1. To study the socio economic conditions of street vendors
2. To analyse the causes responsible for street vending
3. To find out the level of earning
4. To find out the problems faced by them during their business hours

Methodology used for this study is purposive sampling method to select 50 respondents were selected for the present study. The street vendors in this study belonged to the category of vegetable street vendors who are moving by walk with head load. The information related to the present study was collected through structured interview schedule. On the basis of the collected data analysis and simple classification is made and conclusions are drawn out of that.

### Introduction:

Women are almost half of the adult population. They contribute two third of the world's working hours and yet earn only 1% of the world's property. In developing countries the reality of most women is that they are compelled by poverty to seek and income, either as the sole earner of the family or to supplement income of the family. For most women workers, the quality of employment is poor without any skill or access. The rise of female participation in the informal sector is more due to economic compulsion than any change in work ethos. Indian economy is characterised by unorganised sector. Almost 400 million people more than 85% of the working population in India work in the unorganised sector. Of these, at least 120 million are women. Unorganised sector was coined by the British Economist Keith Hart in 1971, which emerged as one of the dynamic and vibrant sector. The term unorganised sector is originally used by W.Arthur Lewis which basically applied for referring to the employment generation in the developing countries. The term informal sector has been used to describe the working culture of a particular section of the people who are marginalised from the mainstream trading business as a result of modern industrial sector.

The term unorganised is often used in Indian context to refer to the vast number of women and men engaged in different forms of employment. These forms include home-based work, self-employment, employment in household enterprises, small

units, on land as agricultural workers, labour on land as agricultural workers, labour on construction sites, domestic work and myriad other forms of casual or temporary employment. Street vendors are the most visible section of the informal economy. Self-employed or own account workers are those who do not have any permanent place for carrying out their activities. In this category of workers include street vendors, hawkers, rag pickers, rickshaw pullers, sex workers etc.

Street vending is a profession has been in existence in India since time immemorial. Street vendors are an integral component of urban economies around the world since ancient times. In all civilisations one reads, accounts of travelling merchants who not only sold their goods in footpaths but also going from door to door in the nearby villages. In Indian cities urban sector survive as a result of the work in informal sector. The poverty and lack of profitable employment in the rural area drive the people to move towards urban centres. These people are not educated or skilled so they cannot get into the highly paid job in the formal sector. They depend on the informal job mainly for their survival.

Vending is an important source if employment for a large number of urban poor as it requires low skills and small financial inputs. Street vendors are identified as self-employed workers in the informal sector who offer their labour to sell goods and services on the street without having any permanent built up

structure.(National Policy on Urban Street Vendors (NPUSV2006). These people comprise one of the most marginalised sections of the urban poor. Women constitute a large number of street vendors in almost every city.

According to the Indian government, there are three basic categories of street vendors: stationary, peripatetic and mobile. Stationary vendors are those who carry out vending on a regular basis at a specific location with implicit or explicit consent of authorities. Peripatetic vendors are those who carry out vending on foot, mobile street vendors are those who move from place to place vending their goods or services on bicycles or motorized vehicles.

There is substantial increase in the number of street vendors in the major cities around the world, especially in the developing countries of Asia, Latin America and Africa. As per ILO 2002 report street vendors account for 14.6 percent of total non-agricultural employment in South Africa, 3 percent in India. According to the Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation, there are 10 million street vendors in India. The Indian women live and work under many constraints. Street vendors have poor social protection and their working conditions on the street expose them to a variety of safety and health issues. Women vendors earn less, on average than men vendors. They face security issues. Vendors are often regarded as public nuisance.

Street vendors face many problems as they are vulnerable population, who are neither protected by government NGO's labour union nor by any labour law. They always suffer competition with other street vendors because of fluctuation in prices and irregular employment. Their income is often minimal and their sales fluctuate. Another problem is police, the local police ask them to pay 15 to 20 percent of their daily income as bribes. The basic problems of women street vendors are insecurity and uncertainty as their profession is considered illegal. Being women street vendor, they become the victim of the crimes like eve-teasing, sexual harassment, rape, human trafficking. Besides lack of support from family, dual role, transportation, finance problems also. The present study made an attempt to study the problems faced by women street vegetable vendors in Tiruchirappalli city.

Tiruchirappalli lies at the heart of Tamil Nadu. It is administered by Municipal Corporation established as per the Tiruchirappalli City Municipal corporation act 1994. The total population of Tiruchirappalli as per 2011 census is 2,713,858. The population of street vendors is expected to be around 3,500 operate within the 65 ward corporation limits. Most of the street vendors are selling goods like fruits, vegetables, flowers etc. They have a pattern of selling the goods in sitting position, bicycle, trolley walking and door to door. They sell their goods and spend 12 to 14 hours daily. The present study concentrates on 50 women vegetable vendors in Tiruchirappalli city. These 50 respondents are selected by using purposive sampling technique. The respondents daily come to the market in Palakarai, which is a centralised market for getting vegetables. They were contacted in the market place and data were collected by using interview schedule. The main objectives of the study are,

5. To study the socio economic characteristics of street vendors
6. To analyse the causes responsible for street vending
7. To find out the level of earning
8. To find out the problems faced by them during their business hours

#### Findings of the study:

Data collected for this study was analysed and explained through simple table. 50 women respondents were interviewed

and 100 percent of the respondents are married and 7 of them are widowed. Regarding the age wise distribution of the respondents, the study shows that the largest concentration of vendors are in the age group of below 45 which indicates that vending involves enormous labour. 60 percent of them were in the age group of below 45 and 40 percent of them belong to the age group of above 45.

Regarding the educational profile of the respondents most of them were from poor educational background. 70 percent of them belonged to the category of below 5th standard and the remaining 30 percent of them belonged to the category of above 5th standard.

The community wise distribution of the respondents clearly denotes that 55 percent of them belonged to the most backward community and 45 percent of them belonged to scheduled caste and scheduled tribe.

The familial background of the respondents reveal that, 75 percent of them live in nuclear families and remaining 25 percent of them live in joint families. Regarding the nativity of the respondents 70 percent of the respondents are coming from rural areas and 30 percent of them are coming from various parts of the urban centres.

All the respondents said that they start very early in the morning that is around 4 o'clock to buy vegetables in the centralised market in Palakarai, and go to their respective areas for selling the vegetables. After the sales they returned to their native place. This is the routine life of all women vegetable vendors.

Majority of the respondents find it difficult to cope up with family and the work simultaneously. They have to prepare food for their children and make other things ready for the other members before they start for their business and after the completion of their work they have to return to their home and do the remaining household work. It becomes a double stress for them. The respondents added that majority of them face harassments in the family situation. Most of their husbands are addicted to alcoholism and harass them daily. This gives additional stress to them.

The journey of the women vegetable sellers began from the poverty which forces them to work for the livelihood of themselves and their families. Factors which force the women to engage in such kind of unorganized work are like breakup of the family owing to death or divorce, unemployed husband, domestic violence and pressure of in laws to earn for their family. One school of thought argues that many of the working poor who enter street vending do so because they cannot find jobs in the formal economy. Thus vending serves as a refuge occupation, where low barriers to entry, make it possible to earn a sustainable income. Another school of thought argues that people choose this occupation because it offers a more flexible or otherwise attractive employment option than other blue collar workers. In several cases women are also required to supplement the efforts of men in earning for the family. The women carry out their Bread winning roles and large in addition to their normal role of looking after the household. Economic compulsion is an important cause for entering the labour market. In this study all the respondents are of the opinion that they are forced to do this work, because of their family situation, especially to support their family's economic condition. Nobody is willingly engaged in this work; circumstances force them to do this work. Due to very low income majority of them are in the condition of getting loan from private money lenders which finally leads to loss of their property and everything.

Regarding the problems they faced during their working hour's majority of them especially those who are coming from rural areas said that they find it difficult to travel from their native place to city. A vendor starts early in the morning with the day's purchase. The marketing place is invariably far from their residence. Bringing large scales of vegetables loading them in buses or rickshaws is a tedious job. Arranging, cleaning, sorting, weighing and dealing with the customers is not easy.

They said that there was always competition with male vendors, they also said that they can easily manage women street vendors, but they cannot manage the men who come by vehicles. Regarding the working conditions they have to walk around the streets. They are on the move from one lane to another irrespective of the heat, wind, rain and cold. Calling out loud to attract buyers, consumes time and energy. This gives them a lot of problems in their health status.

Only some of the respondents said that they have faced verbal harassments during their selling process and all are of the view that they did not face any sexual harassment in their working places. All the respondents unanimously said that profit is very less for them because the customers buy vegetables only by bargaining which give them very meagre profit. Sometimes they have to give vegetables for debt which gives them additional problem.

Majority of the respondents added that they have allotted areas for each and every vendor and other vendors are not allowed to enter into their territory. They have said that they have regular customers.

They have also said that some days they have to take back some of the vegetables without selling which cannot be used for the next day, so it is also a great loss to them.

Regarding the health status of the respondents, all of them said that they are suffering from head ache because of head loading and joint pains because of continuous roaming. Majority of them said that they don't eat their breakfast because their working hours are early morning to afternoon. If they go late they may lose their customers, so they don't want to waste their time. This leads to so many health problems among them. Regarding toilet facilities, they have to use open toilet system, since they may not have public toilets in their working places. This causes them a lot of health problems.

Some of them said that modern technology disturbed their routine business very much. Nowadays advertisements attract the customers through phone calls and by issuing pamphlets. They sell vegetables and greens door to door sometimes they sell it as ready to cook (cut vegetables). So there are possibilities of changing the vendors by the customers.

They are also of the view that some rare products like greens and some particular vegetables for some religious rituals are demanded by the customers. This only helps them for sustaining the customer relationships. Likewise seasonal vegetables also give them a chance to build a good rapport between them and the customers.

Through the findings of the study it is concluded that the vegetable street vendors in Tiruchirappalli city face social, economic and health problems. Their family background is not supporting one; it won't support them psychologically, physically and economically. They don't even have the facilities to look after their health problems. They are totally ignored by the society and the government, their work is not recognised. But their contribution to workforce to the country is a lot.

Street vendors are the integral part of human society. These people are to be looked after by the individuals, group and communities. Government should take active roles to implement the policies effectively which they have formulated. There is a legal provision National Policy on Street Vendors 2009 to safeguard the rights of the street vendors. Recently the government has passed Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Bill 2012. It suggests that the vendors can register their names in the Town Vending Committee. Street Vendors Bill 2013 passed by the upper House of the Indian Parliament provides safeguards to the street vendors.

### Conclusion:

Women street vendors are very important part of the informal sector in the country; they are not only a source of self-employment to the poor cities and towns, but also a means to provide 'affordable' as well as convenient services to a majority of the urban population. The importance of this sector cannot be undermined, especially considering that the government does not have the capacity to provide jobs to the millions of unemployed and underemployed women in India. The efforts taken by the government is not enough, and also not reached the women vegetable vendors, because of their illiteracy and ignorance. So, the government has to take steps to make wide propaganda regarding the policies and programmes of the government.

"The secret to successful hiring is this: look for the people who want to change the world." - Marc Benioff

### REFERENCES:

- i. Primary Sources: Interview with 50 women vegetable vendors in Tiruchirappalli city
- ii. Secondary Sources:
  1. Anindita Mukherji and Neelam Verma – SOCIO ECONOMIC BACKWARDNESS IN WOMEN
  2. Kamala Singh – WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS
  3. Kapil Bhargav – MARKETING STRATEGIES OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS
  4. Mahajan V.S. – WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTION TO INDIA'S ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
  5. Shiela Lewen Hak – WOMEN AND WORK
  6. Soundarapandian . S. – WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP ISSUES AND STRATEGIES
  7. Vinze M.D. – WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN INDIA

### III JOURNALS

1. T.Vijayalakshmi & Dr.V.R.Palanivelu – A study of socio economic background of entrepreneurs in small scale industries with special reference to unorganised sector and organised sector – IJRESS
2. Debdulal Saha – Working life of street vendors in Mumbai – The Indian Journal of Labour Economics – 2011
3. R.Karthikeyan & R.Mangaleswaran – Quality of Life among street vendors in Tiruchirappalli city, Tamilnadu – International Research Journal of Social Science, 2013