Socio-Economic Background of Women Hawkers in Bangalore City

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Abstract: Informal sector plays a very prominent role in the socio-economic development of a country by contributing significantly to employment generation and poverty alleviation. More than 94% of the working population in our country are concentrated in this sector. According to the latest estimation of a Sub-committee of the National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganized Sector (NCEUS), the contribution of unorganized sector to GDP is about 50% (NCEUS 2008). Women in the informal sector are an important segment on the labour force in India. Street vending is an important activity of informal sector involving street vendors as the key players. Poverty and lack of gainful employment in the rural areas and in the smaller towns drive large numbers of people to the cities for work and livelihood. Street vendors are regularly victimised and subjected to mental and physical torture by the police and the municipal officials, as their job is considered illegal. The planners remain oblivious to the role of vendors who harassed, marginalized and pushed from one area to another. Women hawkers face more problems than men such as eve teasing, sexual harassment, Rapes, etc. The objective of this paper is to examine the socio-economic profile of women street vendors in Bangalore city and to draw the attention of the policy makes towards the deplorable conditions of the women street hawkers.

Keywords: Informal sector, Hawkers, marginalized, sexual harassment

I. INTRODUCTION

Women in Indian society have so far been accorded secondary status, due to their economic dependence upon men. Though Indian society is witnessing progressive transformation in the status of women in workplace, still the trends in this direction are not satisfactory. Despite the fact that women have proved themselves in every walk of life, their contribution is not given due credit in most cases. In India women constitute nearly half of the total population and they play a vital role in domestic sphere, in the rural field and also in urban economy. Yet, their economic status is still low as it reflects from the census data, particularly of those who are engaged in the informal sector of urban economy (Tripathy and Das 1991). Women in unorganised sector struggle with the harsh realities of discrimination, exploitation and violence at workplace. They suffer from the bitter effects of the balancing act between work place and household chores. The National Commission for Women estimates that 94 percent of the total female workforce is found in the unorganized sector. In the unorganised sector workers are exploited, irrespective of sex, women suffer more by the fact of their gender.

In the unorganized sector women are overrepresented, their work is invisible, unrecognized and unremunerated. According to an estimate of the National Commission of Self Employment of women, 94% of the total female work force operates in the unorganized sector. They do laborious work as wage earners, piece rate workers, casual labour and paid family labour. The labour laws has not benefitted these women workers in many areas of wages, working conditions, maternity benefits and social security. The employment of women is high in the unorganised sector such as part time helpers in households, construction centre, tanneries (setting, parting and drying), match and beedi industries, street vendors etc. Woman are pushed as the Hawkers by the way of broken family, divorced or separated from husband, insufficient income, below poverty line, etc. these type of Women Hawkers who have less skills and poor economic conditions in the society. It is one of the easy way to enter the new trade for every poor woman in India. Basically Women face more and more problems as a Women hawker than men. Street vending is an important domain of poor women’s economic activity that requires endless juggling between family and work responsibilities.

About Street Vending

Street vending is the most visible aspect of the informal sector, where thousands of people earn their living by selling goods on streets, sidewalks and other open public places. (Shrestha, Neera 2013). Street vendors constitute an important segment at the bottom of the pyramid of the informal economy in cities. Street vending provides a source of self-employment, and acts as a measure of urban poverty alleviation. Street vending also has a prominent place in the urban supply chain, and provides inexpensive and convenient access to goods and services to all segments of the population including the poor. Street vending is therefore an integral part of the economic growth process in urban areas (NULM). Street vendors are a large and very visible.
workforce in cities, yet it is difficult to accurately estimate their numbers. Official statistics are available for some countries, though they may underestimate the population engaged in street vending. (WEIGO)

Definition

- According to National Commission on Labour, street vendors are identified as self-employed workers in the informal sector who offer their labour for selling goods and services on the street without having any permanent built-up structure.
- ILO 2002, Street Vendors may refer to vendors with fixed stalls, such as Kiosks, Vendors who operate from semi fixed stalls like folding tables, crates, collapsible stands, wheeled push carts that are removed from the streets and stored overnight, vendors who sell from fixed locations without a tall structure, displaying merchandise on cloth or plastic sheets, or mobile vendors who walk or paddle their bicycles through the streets as they sell.
- The National Policy for Urban Street Vendors, 2004 defines a street vendor as “a person who offers goods or services for sale to the public without having a permanent built up structure but with a temporary static structure or mobile stall (or head load). Street vendors may be stationery by occupying space on the pavements or other public/private areas, or may be mobile in the sense that they move from place to place carrying their wares on push carts or in cycles or baskets on their heads, or may sell their wares in moving trains, bus etc. The term urban vendor in the policy includes both traders and service providers, stationary as well as mobile vendors and incorporates all other local/region specific terms used to describe them, such as, hawker, pheriwalla, rehri-patri walla, footpath dukandars, sidewalk traders etc.
- The revised National Policy for Urban Street Vendors, 2009 defined a street vendor as „a person who offers goods or services for sale to the public in a street without having a permanent built-up structure.’ There are three basic categories of street vendors: (a) stationary; (b) peripatetic and (c) mobile. Stationary vendors are those who carry out vending on a regular basis at a specific location, e.g. those occupying space on the pavements or other public places and/or private areas either open/covered (with implicit or explicit consent) of the authorities. Peripatetic vendors are those who carry out vending on foot and sell their goods and services and include those who carry baskets on their head/slung on their shoulders and those who sell their goods on pushcarts. Mobile street vendors are those who move from place to place vending their goods or services on bicycle or mobile units on wheels, whether motorized or not. They also include vendors selling their wares in moving buses, local trains etc. The term ‘Urban Street Vendor’ incorporates all other local/regional specific terms used to describe them, such as hawkers, pheriwallas, rehri-patri wallas, footpath dukandars, sidewalk traders, etc.
- The Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014 defines street vendor as a “person engaged in vending of articles, goods, wares, food items or merchandise of everyday use or offering services to the general public, in a street lane, side walk, foot path, pavement, public park or any other public place or private area or by moving from place to place and includes hawker, peddler, squatter and all other synonymous terms which may be local or region specific”. Street vendors constitute a subset of those engaged in retail trade, even a subset of those who are self-employed in retail trade. These self-employed vendors can be considered as micro-entrepreneurs.

Statement of the problem

Street vendors constitute an important segment of the urban population. Street vendors are those who are unable to get regular jobs in the remunerative formal sector on account of the low level of education and skills. Street vending provides a source of self-employment, and thus acts as a measure of urban poverty alleviation without Government intervention. It is also acts as investment to provide affordable as well as convenient services to a majority of urban population. Women’s participation in the development of economy has been neglected and has often been invisible as they have been working primarily in the informal economy. Lack of exposure to the formal economy and the job market has kept their status in society also low despite their contributing substantially to the labour force. There have been many reasons why women’s work has been restricted to the informal sector wherein the work does not come under the purview of economic activities. As a result of this most of these women do not even realize their skill levels and competence. Even today more than 80 per cent of the women workers are engaged in the informal sector which does not offer fair wages or even decent terms of work. Another important concern is the under-enumeration of women’s work in India. Some of the significant reasons for women entering into street vending are poverty, low barriers to entry, limited start-up costs, unemployment, low skill and flexible hours are some of the factors that draw street vendors to the occupation. Many people enter street vending because they cannot find a job in the formal economy. Women street vendors face many challenges and constraints as they are vulnerable population. The problems faced by them are in fact multifarious and of a multidimensional nature. Women street vendors face unique kinds of livelihood risks because of the legal, physical and socio-cultural environment in which they work. Women Street Vendors are also prone to exploitation, appalling working conditions and high risks of health hazards. Hence it is significant to study socio-economic status and suggest the measures to improve their status.
Scope of the study

Bengaluru formerly known as Bangalore the capital of the Karnataka, is fifth largest city in India. It is the principal administrative, cultural, commercial and industrial centre of the South India. It is a major hub for information technology and other allied services. Such as Business Process Outsourcing (BPO). With increase in the economy the city is witnessing an enormous spatial change along with changes in local culture and society. Investment on public infrastructure are changing the face of the city. Street are being widened at the cost of lives and livelihood, new roads, express ways, signal free roads, flyovers, underpasses and the metro rails are the new feathers in Bangalore’s cap. With such a plethora of projects to cater to the new emerging middle class and the elite, the urban poor are completely forgotten. These mega plans have taken away the basic rights of urban poor, especially the street vendors.

Objectives of the study

- To examine the socio-economic, demographic and occupational aspects of the sample women street vendors.

II. METHODOLOGY

The present paper was based on a qualitative approach using interview schedule method. Interview schedule had been constructed on the basis of existing knowledge, previous research and initial investigation of the population of street vendors in Bangalore city. The primary data had been collected from a sample of 150 women street vendors belonging to different range of business in and around Bangalore city. The respondents were selected according to random and convenience methods. The data collected had been processed through SPSS research software and the output in the form of frequency tables, bivariate tables had been obtained. Apart from primary data, information had been collected from a wide range of secondary resources like NEWS papers, magazines, books, official documents, internet sources and research reports published by various institutions.

Socio-Economic Background of Women Street Vendors

Socio-economic and demographic plays a very important role in the social science research. It is imperative to look at the social variable of the respondents because, the social factors such as the family and communities have a bearing on attitude, the quality of life and state of wellbeing of the respondent. The economic factors serve as a base for financial support to raise necessary fund to set up business and also determines the economic status of the respondents. The demographic profile provide information on demographic factors such migration rate. An attempt has been made in this article to analyse the socio-economic and demographic background of 150 sample respondents in Bangalore city. On the basis of primary data this chapter describes the factors such as age composition, religious composition, caste composition, education, marital status, family size, earning members, occupational background, personal income, family income, family expenditure, economic conditions and details of husband.

Age Composition of the Sample Respondent

Age of the respondent has generally been represented as one of the most important independent variable in social science research. Age determines the productivity of the respondent and also helps in understanding their views about the particular problems, their attitude towards work, level of maturity, hence it is a very important component to examine the response. The age profile of the respondent shows that very young group below 18 years constitute 3 percent. Followed by a young group between the age group 19 to 28 years who constitute 18 percent. On the other hand majority of the respondents 72 percent belong to the middle aged group being in the age bracket of 29 to 48year. The remaining 07 percent of the respondents are above the age group above 49 years. The above analysis reveals that predominant size of the respondents belong to middle aged women in the age group of 29 to 48 years, because this group has been found carrying street vending more frequently. Since street vending involves enormous physical labour middle aged women prefer to take up this job.

Caste Composition of the Sample Respondent

Caste acts as the most powerful determinant of individual status and role in the Indian society. It guides the behaviour of an individual, his conduct, his association and interaction. In Indian society there is a significant connection between the caste status and job status, because castes have traditionally been associated with occupations. The data shows that SC and ST together constitute 32 percent, followed by OBC who constitute 22 percent and Cat-IIA, Cat-IIB, Cat-III, and Cat-IIIIB together comprise 45 percent and the remaining 1 percent of the respondents are from the Brahmin community.

Caste distribution of sample respondents reveals that the concentration of Scheduled Caste is predominant in street vending activity. Since independence there has been considerable relaxation of rules related to the caste system. There is a significant change in occupational goals and pursuits among men. Earlier, most men were dedicated to their traditional caste related jobs, such as sweeping, scavenging, and leatherwork, are now adopting new forms of occupation. The ethnographic studies have documented the changes in occupational structure and occupational mobility among low castes over time.
Religious Composition of the Sample Respondents

Religious composition is an important aspect of socio-economic background of the sample. The respondents are divided into three groups i.e. Hindu, Muslim and Christian. The data shows that 88 percent of the respondents are Hindus, Muslims and Christians constitute 7 percent and 5 percent respectively. It is a striking feature that majority of the street vendors are Hindus, various factors like lack of employment opportunity in the village, seasonal agriculture, poverty, financial crisis, family pressure, children’s education have compelled them to migrate to the urban areas and take up this job.

Marital Status of the Sample Respondent

Marriage is one of the most important social institutions. Marital status determines the attitude and perception of a person towards work. Work for some could be for making profit or raising the standard of living but, for some it could be the matter of survival, hence it is one of the most important variable. The data shows that overwhelming number of the respondents 85 percent were married, whereas 5 percent of the respondents were unmarried, 6 percent of the respondents were found to be widows and remaining 4 percent of the respondents were separated. Since the majority of the respondents were from middle age group, this is the age at which, normally, a person gets marry and shoulders the responsibility of a household.

Educational Background of the Sample Respondent

Educational is crucial indicator for knowing the educational attainment of the people. Education is universally recognised as an effective instrument or empowerment of weaker section in general and women in particular. It is important because it is used to mitigate most of the challenges faced in life. The knowledge that is attained through education helps open doors to a lot of opportunities for better prospects in career growth. The data shows that the educational level among street vendors is generally low. Out of the total, around 54 percent of vendors are illiterate, about 31 percent have acquired primary level education, relatively lesser number of them 14 percent were educated up to secondary level. Only 1 percent of the respondents were educated up to the pre-university level. It has been observed that a greater number of women vendors are illiterate and less educated, which denotes their poor literacy level and economic status. Patriarchy also is another explanation of the positive relation between the proportion of unorganized women workers and low level of education. As the society prefers male to female, a household invests less on female education than male. Familial patriarchal interests profoundly affect women’s access to education.

Age at Marriage

Age at marriage is a very factor in Indian society, as girls are seen as an economic burden and marriage transfers the responsibility to her husband. Family and parents play an imperative role in taking the decision regarding right age for marriage. Poverty and marriage expenses such as dowry may lead a family to marry off their daughter at a young age to reduce these costs. The data clearly indicates that majority of the respondents, 19 percent got married before 18 years of age, 46 percent of the respondents got married between the age 19-22 years, while 28 percent got married between 23-26 years and 07 percent got married after 27 years of age.

Rural-Urban Migration

Migration is a very important variable because when an individual migrates from one place to another will face certain problems in the new place and also there is influx of flow of young women to the urban areas which is leading to congestion in the urban areas. The data reveals that around 84 percent of the respondents are migrants from different parts of India, while 16 percent of the respondents are from Bangalore city. It is evident from the above table that the majority of the respondents were found to be migrants from rural-urban areas. Lack of gainful employment coupled with poverty in rural areas has pushed people out of their villages in search of a better existence in the cities. Women vendors mainly migrate after their marriages and then try to help their husbands who are pursuing this profession. It can be observed that the rate of migration is very fast and it may be because of urbanization and industrialization in the urban area.

Size of the Family

Size of family is an important indicator, which defines aspects of individual individual's family background and also represents a potential influence on the development and accomplishments of family members. The type of family in which a person lives and gets socialized has immense importance in deciding his values, beliefs and behaviour patterns which are likely to affects his or her attitudes towards a particular problem, hence the family type plays its own role in giving the response of an individual and therefore it was very important to understand the family type of the respondents. It is evident from the data that a large majority of the households 68 percent were joint households and remaining 32 percent of the total households were nuclear households. This shows the increasing trends in the changing families from joint family to the nuclear family and the change in family system can be attributed to the processes of urbanization, industrialization, migration and modernization.

Number of Dependents

Dependent family members could be unemployed spouse, unmarried children under the age of 18 and ageing parents. In a joint family system, the number of dependents living under the roof is much larger. Those living with a joint family may include, grandparents, married brothers, wives of sons, grandsons,
granddaughters, other dependents and relatives. Hence number of dependents in family plays a very important role in determining the socio-economic condition of the respondent. The data gives details of number of dependents of the respondents in their family, 48 percent of the respondents have 2-3 dependents, 30 percent have 4-5 dependents, 15 percent have less than 1 dependent and 3 percent have more than 6 dependents. The above data reveals that in every household there are dependents especially unmarried children and aged parents suffering from various physical ailments, who needs care and emotional support from the family members. Women have great deal of responsibility to balance both family and work.

**Reasons for Dependency**

It is evident from the data that 47 percent of the respondent are of the opinion that reason for dependency is children need support, as children are young and still pursuing education they need support. 24 percent of the respondents have said that their husbands are unemployed, hence they have to bear the responsibility of the family. 16 percent of them said that their husbands were alcoholic, so they had to work to run the family. 13 percent of the respondent husbands were suffering from serious illness.

**Type of Housing**

Housing is commonly referred to as shelter but it is more than a physical structure. In other words, housing includes the shelter, the environment and all necessary infrastructures to make life comfortable. Housing is a key determinant of quality of life that can be measured at individual, household, and community levels (Campbell, Converse, & Rodgers, 1976) and human rights in the cycle of human life. Efficient and effective housing provision has become the central focus and an integral component in national strategies for growth and poverty reduction. Decent and affordable housing is one of the basic needs of every individual, the family and the community at large. Housing as a unit of the environment has a profound influence on the health, efficient, social behaviour, satisfaction and general welfare of the community at large. Hence, the variable house type was investigated.

The data shows that a large majority 78 percent of the respondents were residing in rental houses and very few of the 22 percent were residing in their own. It can therefore be concluded that because of the economic backwardness and lack of materialistic resources the house type of a large number of respondents were rental type. The possession of a house is a status symbol in our society. The house ownership is likely to boost confidence of a person in understanding and handling of any situation or a problem. The house ownership is therefore likely to have an impact on the type of response given by the respondents and therefore the variable ‘house ownership’ was considered an important variable.

**Potable Water Connection**

Water is the most essential component of life and is vital for the survival of mankind. It is the key component in determining the quality of our lives and is a universal solvent. The data shows that 69 percent of the household do not have potable water connection, only 31 percent have potable water connection. Hence it is evident that majority of the respondents do not have access to municipal water supply, which is a very dangerous sign, because dirty water lead to the spread of many diseases, epidemics etc. Most of the respondents live in unhygienic place like slums, where municipal water supply is not available.

**Toilet and Bathroom**

Living conditions have a direct impact on health Availability of toilet is an important indicator of the sanitation. Toilet is one of the most serious and common problems among all urban poor. The data shows that, 66 percent of households did not have a toilet in their home and only 34 percent had toilets. Lack of proper toilet and use of open space by these deprived communities results in the outbreak of communicable illness and this account for hike in the morbidity, accelerating transmission of various diseases.

**Income per Month**

Street vending is related with uncertainty in income (Kumar, R., & Singh, A. 2013). The average earnings of street vendors are low - ranging between 60 and 80 rupees per day. They work under gruelling conditions for long hours and are frequently harassed by the municipal authorities and the police. A large part of the vendors’ income goes in bribes and ‘protection money’ (WEIGO). Sharit Bhowmik (2010) quotes the study on street vendors to estimate that the vendors pay between 10 to 20% of their earnings as rent.

The data shows that a significant number of the respondents that is 73 percent of them earned between 1000-2999, an average number of the respondents 42 percent earned between 3000-4999 mostly vegetable vendors. The respondents who earned above 5000 were 29 percent and relatively lesser number of respondents 6 percent earned below 999 rupees. The data shows that the income of street vendors depends on the products they sell, and it varies from product to product, from location to location, and also in terms of the volume and terms to trade. Few vendors earn quite a high income, reflecting the type of business, the age of the business, the location, and the products they sell. Interestingly, the data shows that the incomes of vendors selling perishable goods differ from those of non-perishable goods. Most of the women vendors are vegetable vendors because this occupation requires very low investment as compared to other activities.
Suggestions

In the light of the foregoing analysis, the following suggestion can be made to improve the conditions of the women street vendors.

- Welfare of the workers in the unorganised sector has been neglected, especially women. Hence the Government should make efforts to improve health, education and working conditions of the workers through welfare schemes and policies.
- Warehouse facilities can be provided to the vendors to preserve their unsold articles.
- The Government can financially assist them by giving them loan at nominal interest rate of interest. It can also extend subsidy to the vendors for vending perishable goods.
- Free education can be given to the children of the vendors and Pension scheme can be implemented to protect the aged vendors.
- The housing board can make allotment of houses to the street vendors with proper toilet and drainage facilities.
- Efforts to strengthen the voice of women street vendors should be organized by member-based organizations. NGOs should undertake initiatives to improve the status of street vendors.
- Public Toilets must be constructed across the city so that women street vendors are not put to difficulty. They must be provided access to garbage clearance facilities as well.
- Make street vendors a special component of the plans for urban development by treating them as an integral part of the urban distribution system. Set up a social security fund for street vendors.

III. CONCLUSION

Women’s participation in the economy has been neglected and has often been invisible as they have been working primarily in the informal economy. Lack of exposure to the formal economy and the job market has kept their status in society also low despite their contributing substantially to the labour force. There have been many reasons why women’s work has been restricted to the informal sector wherein the work does not come under the purview of economic activities. As a result of this most of these women do not even realize their skill levels and competence. Even today more than 90 per cent of the women workers are engaged in the informal sector which does not offer fair wages or even decent terms of work. The analysis of the socio economic facets of women street vendors of Bangalore city throws light on their deplorable conditions. Street vendors are among the most vulnerable workers group in the unorganized sector in any developing and undeveloped countries. They enjoy neither safety nor security at the workplace as they face constant harassment from the local authorities (Bhowmik, 2001; and Saha, 2011). The study shows that majority of the respondents are migrants who come from lower social economic background and their average monthly income levels are very low and uncertain. Most of their husbands were alcoholic and their income were also not sufficient to maintain the family expenditure. With increasing cost of life majority of the vendors reported to find it extremely difficult to meet both the ends. The street vendors are facing many problems because of the lack of formal recognition of the economic activities of the vendors. Thus, they needs to be imparted certain proper rights, to access better education for their children, to access the essay financial assets/credits, to remove the discrimination at workplace, to utilise the public areas and to participates activity in trade union activities, all of which help them achieve decent work and enjoy an adequate standard livelihood life style.

IV. REFERENCE
