



## **Full Length Research Article**

### **SELF EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN VEGETABLE VENDORS IN KOLHAPUR CITY**

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#### **ABSTRACT**

The present paper examines the role of Self Employment and the social empowerment of women working in the informal sector, with special reference to vegetable vendors in Kolhapur City. Informal sector provides self employment to the majority of women. Majority of Women are working as Vegetable Vendors. They are either street vendors or selling the vegetables by sitting in one place. Empowerment of women has emerged as an important issue in our society in recent years and it has been recognized as the central issue in determining the status of women. Hence in the present study an attempt has been made to study the social empowerment of women vegetable vendors in Kolhapur city.

#### **INTRODUCTION**

In most Indian cities the urban poor survive by working in the informal sector. 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. These people generally possess low skills and lack the level of education required for the better paid jobs in the organised sector. Besides, permanent protected jobs in the organised sector are shrinking; hence even those having the requisite skills are unable to find proper employment. For these people work in the informal sector are the only means for their survival. This has led to a rapid growth of the informal sector in most of the larger cities. For the urban poor, hawking/street vending is one of the means of earning a livelihood, as it requires minor financial in put and the skills involved are low (Sharit K. Bhowmik, 2000). Street Vending is an import activity related to informal sector and provides livelihood to urban poor. But Urban Local Bodies consider it as illegal activity so far. In 2004, first time, Government of India recognizes vendor's role in local economy after so many litigations and Supreme Court's verdict in the favour of Street Vendors. (Ray and Mishra: 2011). Street Vendors are the seller of food products, vegetables, fruits, clothes, handicraft, snacks etc. Majority of street vendors are vegetable vendors.

In cities we find either stationary vegetable vendors sitting in one place or mobile vegetable vendors who are selling the vegetables through the roads. Women have been taking increasing interest in recent years in income generating activities. Majority of women are working in informal sector. Informal sector provides employment opportunities and livelihood for survival. Vegetable vending activity present from centuries and provides Self-employment to majority of women in India in general and in Kolhapur City in particular. to many women which Vegetable vending provided the Self-employment makes women socially and economically empower. Therefore present study highlights the issues concerned with women vegetable vendors and empowerment of women in Kolhapur City.

#### **Self employment and empowerment**

Self employment provides an opportunity to make the women economically empowered and they are in position to face any challenges in their lives. Women have been taking increasing interest in recent years in income generating activities, self employment and entrepreneurship that also lead to property rights, political representation, social equality, personal right, family development, market development, community development and at last the nation development (Dr.T. Palaneeswari and Ms.S.V.Sasikala: 2012), Self-employed women, largely engaged in the agricultural and tertiary sectors, can be grouped as: (a) home-based producers, who

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weave, make pottery, bidi, agarbati, papad and, produce ready-made garments, weave fabric, spin yarn, and do embroidery work; (b) petty vendors and hawkers, who sell vegetables, fruits, and other household items from their carts or makeshift stores; and (c) service providers: manual labourers such as agricultural labourers, construction workers, contract labourers, laundry and domestic workers. They also include rag-pickers and workers who gather forest products. (Rekha Dutta, 2003).

### Concept of Self-Employment

According to free Dictionary, Self-employment means, 'Earning one's livelihood directly from one's own trade or business rather than as an employee of another. Self-employment is an occupation in which an individual employs himself either in producing and marketing. SEWA defines self-employed women to include workers who earn a living through their own small businesses or wage labor and do not receive regular salaries like formal sector workers. Self-employment provides a plenty of opportunities for earning money independently. It is the individual pursuit of capitalism. Self employed women in India have now started breaking the beaten track and are exploring new scenario in economic participation. Large numbers of them were engaged in unorganized sector activities such as handicrafts, tailoring, petty shop, preparing snacks or food products etc. street vending has been one of the easiest ways to survive for working poor and is wide spread in the urban informal sector (Debdulal Saha:2011).

into all languages. These terms include self-strength, control, self-power, self-reliance, own choice, life of dignity in accordance with one's values, capacity to fight for one's rights, independence, own decision making, being free, awakening and capability. World Bank defined "Empowerment is the expansion of assets and capabilities of poor people to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control, and hold accountable institutions that affect their lives". The four key elements of empowerment that must be access to information, inclusion/participation, accountability and local organizational capacity. (P.B.Desai:2014)

*The most comprehensive definition of empowerment is given by Batliwala. She defined empowerment as "the process, and the outcome of the process, by which women gain greater control over material and intellectual resources, and challenge the ideology of patriarchy and the gender-based discrimination against women in all the institutions and structures of society (Kamla Gupta 1 and P. Princy Yesudian:2002)*

### Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study are as follows.

- To understand the socio-economic background of women vegetable vendors in Kolhapur city
- To understand the social empowerment of women vegetable vendors by assessing various indicators of empowerment.

### Distribution of Respondents' Socio-Economic Background

**Table 1. Age and Education**

No	Age Group	Frequency	Percentage	No	Education	Frequency	Percentage
1	20 to 40	41	41.0	1	Illiterate	41	41.0
2	41 to 60	42	42.0	2	Upto 10th	58	58.0
3	61 to 80	17	17.0	3	Above 10th	01	01.0
	Total	100	100		Total	100	100

**Table 2. Caste Category and Religion**

No	Caste Category	Frequency	Percentage	No	Religion	Frequency	Percentage
1	Open	37	37.0	1	Hindu	68	68.0
2	OBC	07	07.0	2	Jain	04	04.0
3	SC/ST/NT/DNT/VNT	26	26.0	3	Muslim	20	20.0
4	Others (Muslim,Jain/Bouddha and Christian)	30	30.0	4	Bouddha	05	05.0
	Total	100	100	5	Others	03	03.0
					Total	100	100

**Table 3. Marital Status**

No	Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage
1	Married	75	75.0
2	Unmarried	01	1.0
3	Widow	24	24.0
	Total	100	100

### The concept of empowerment

Empowerment a concept was first brought at the International Women's Conference in 1985, at Nairobi. The term empowerment has different meanings in different socio-cultural and political contexts, and does not translate easily

The present study is undertaken to assess the social empowerment of women vegetable vendors through self employment. The study has been conducted in Kolhapur City. The present study is based on primary as well as secondary data. The primary data were collected by using interview

schedule and observation. A sample of 100 women vegetable vendors as a respondents from Kolhapur City was selected by using accidental / convenience sampling technique for the study. Descriptive as well as empirical research design is adopted for the present study. Single frequency tables are used for data analysis and interpretation.

### Socio-economic background of women vegetable vendors

The socio-economic background of selected sampled respondents has been analysed in terms of age, marital status, religion, caste-category, education etc.

**Age-wise distribution of the respondents:** Above Table no.01 shows that out of 100 respondents 41 (41%) belong to the age- group of 20-40, 42 (42%) belong to the age-group of 41-60 and 17(17%) belong to the age-group of 61-80. Majority of women are belonging to the age-group of 41-60. This may be because women can enter into an independent activity after growing-up of their children.

**Distribution of respondents by education:** Out of 100 respondents, 41(41%) are illiterate, 58(56%) have education upto 10<sup>th</sup> std and only 1(8%) have education above 10<sup>th</sup> std. This is because informal sector provides the job opportunities to majority of uneducated and unskilled women.

**Caste-category wise distribution of the respondents:** Above Table no.02 shows that out of 100 respondents, 37(37%) respondents are from open category, 7(7%) are from OBC category, 26(26%) respondents are from SC/ST/NT/DNT/VNT category and 30(30%) is from others i.e., (Muslim,Jain, Boudha & Christian).

**Religion-wise distribution of the respondents:** Table no. 02 shows that out of 100 respondents, 6 (68%) are found to be hindu, 4(4%) are found to be Jains, 20 (20%) are found to be Muslims and 3(3%) are found to be other religion i.e., 50% (Christian etc).

**Distribution of the respondents by marital status:** Table no.03 shows that out of 100 respondents 75(75%) respondents are found to be married, 1(4%) are found to be unmarried and 24(24%) are found to be widow. It is revealed from the data that majority of the respondents are found to be married. It was also observed in a study that more number of widows have entered in a vegetable vending activity because it is easy source for livelihood which need not require much finance.

### Social empowerment of women vegetable vendors

Social empowerment of women vegetable vendors have been assessed by taking indicators such as freedom to take decisions, development of skill of taking independent decisions, decision taken by the women vegetable vendors, attitude of society towards their profession, violence faced by them in their family and nature of violence, competition at work place and social status, children's opinion about your work etc.

**Did you Get Freedom to Take Decisions:** In order to understand social empowerment of women vegetable vendors,

a question asked was, "Did you get freedom to take decisions? The answers are presented in the Table 4 below.

**Table 4. Did you get Freedom to take Decisions**

Did you get freedom to take Decisions	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	37	37.0
No	63	63.0
Total	100	100.0

The table no.04 indicates that an overwhelming majority 63% of respondents opined that they do not get freedom to take decisions and only 37% of respondents get freedom to take decisions. Women have been culturally moulded to depend on men for taking decisions. It is revealed from the present study that our patriarchal culture restricts women to take independent decisions.

### Respondent's Opinion about the Development of Skill of Taking Independent Decisions

In order to understand the development of decision making ability of the respondents after starting their profession, a question asked was; "Do you feel that after starting your profession have you developed the skill of taking independent decision"? The responses collected were presented in the Table 5 below.

**Table 5. Respondent's Opinion about the Development of Skill of Taking Independent Decisions**

Development of skill of Taking Independent Decision	Frequency	Total Percent
Yes	52	52.0
No	48	48.0
Total	100	100.0

It is revealed from the table no.05 that 52% of the respondents opined that they have developed the skill of taking independent decisions, while 48% of the respondents opined that they have not developed the skill of taking independent decisions. In our patriarchal society women always possess low decision making power because society restricts women to take independent decisions.

### Decision Taken by Women Vegetable Vendors

It is important to know what kind of decisions these women vegetable vendors take in respect of their family matters to understand the social empowerment of female vegetable vendors in Kolhapur city. In this regard a question asked was; "Which decisions you take in respect of your family"? The respondent's opinion in this regard is presented in Table 6 below.

**Table 6. Decision Taken by Women Vegetable Vendors**

Decision Taken by Women Vegetable Vendors	Frequency	Percentage
To Purchase House	04	04.0
Children's Education	45	45.0
To Purchase Cloths	14	14.0
Decision of Marriage of their Children	20	20.0
Other	10	10.0
No Idea	07	07.0
Total	100	100

The data presented in the table no.06 indicates that majority 45% of the respondents take decisions about the education of their children, 20% of the respondents take decisions about the marriage of their children, 14% of the respondents take decisions about purchasing cloths of the family members, another 10% of the respondents take decisions about celebration of festivals and functions in the family, purchasing of gifts, contribution for social activities etc, 07% of the respondents were answered no idea about it, it indicates that they are not indulged in taking decisions of their family and only 04% of the respondents take decisions about purchasing of a house. It is revealed from the present study that majority of the respondents found to be active in taking some kind of decisions in their family.

### Respondent's Opinion about Attitude of the Society towards Their Profession

Societal attitude towards women doing independent economic activity is still not so favourable; because tradition bound persons in society question women's independent abilities. Traditional societal outlook emphasised that a woman's domain should be restricted to the four walls of her house. Hence, an attempt has been made in this study to understand the respondents' perception regarding the societal attitude towards women vegetable vendors.

**Table 7. Attitude of the Society towards Their Profession**

Attitude of the Society towards Their Profession	Frequency	Percentage
Attitude favourable to a great Extent	31	31.0
Attitude favourable only to a some extent	62	62.0
Attitude is not favourable	07	07.0
Total	100	100

The Table no. 7 indicates that only 31% of the respondents have opined that the societal attitude towards women vegetable vendors is favourable to a great extent.

As against this an overwhelming majority 62% of the respondents opined that the societal attitude is favourable only to some extent and 07% of the respondents opined that the societal attitude is not at all favourable. It is revealed from the present study that in general, traditional bound unfavourable societal attitude still prevails in the small city like Kolhapur. And this unfavourable societal attitude towards women vegetable vendors could be regarded as an inhibiting factor for the empowerment of women in general and women vegetable vendors in particular.

### Respondent's Opinion about the Violence Faced in the Family Due to Their Profession

Socially, economically and politically women lag far behind men. They are discriminated against at work and are denied their due in every field. At their home also, they are often maltreated in a hundred different ways. In this respect to understand the respondents opinion about violence they face in their family due to vending profession, a question asked was; 'Have you faced any violence in the family due to your profession?' The responses collected in this regard are presented in the Table 8 below.

**Table 8. Violence Faced in the Family Due to Their Profession**

Violence Faced in the Family Due to Their Profession	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	06	06.0
No	94	94.0
Total	100	100

The data in the table no.08 reveals that an overwhelming majority of the respondents 94% were at the opinion that they have not faced any kind of violence in the family due to their profession. Only 06% of the respondents were at the opinion that they have faced some kind of violence in the family due to their profession. Violence is one of the important indicators to measure the empowerment of women. In the present study it is revealed that majority of the respondents did not face any kind of violence in their family.

### Nature of Violence Faced by the Respondents

The data regarding violence faced by the respondents were collected and it is presented in the Table 9 below.

**Table 8. Violence Faced in the Family Due to Their Profession**

Violence Faced in the Family Due to Their Profession	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	06	06.0
No	94	94.0
Total	100	100

The table no.09 indicates that an overwhelming majority 94% of the respondents does not face any kind of violence in their family, remaining 6% of the respondents face some kind violence such as passing negative comments, forcefully snatching the earned money and beating etc. It is revealed from the study that majority of the respondents who are in vegetable vending profession do not face any violence in the family.

### Did you face competition at work place?

A question was asked to women vegetable vendors about the competition they face at their work place, and the responses collected from respondents were presented in the Table 10 below.

**Table 10. Competition Faced at Work Place**

No	Competition Faced at Work Place	Frequency	Percentage
1	Yes	73	73.0
2	No	27	27.0
	Total	100.00	100.0

It is revealed from the Table no. 10 that majority of the respondents 73% opined that they have faced competition while doing their profession and only 27% of the respondents opined that they did not faced any competition while doing their vegetable vending profession. It reveals that majority of these women vegetable vendors are accepting the challenge of the stiff competition in their profession which directly or indirectly helps them to become empower in the society.

## Opinion about Social Status

To understand the respondent's opinion about the Social Status, a question asked was, Do you feel that your social status has increased after entering into the profession? The responses collected from the respondents were presented in the Table 11 below.

**Table 11. Opinion about Social Status**

No	Opinion about Social Status	Frequency	Percentage
1	Yes	62	62.0
2	No	38	38.0
	Total	100	100

It is revealed from the data in the Table no. 11 that majority of the respondents 62% opined that they have improved their social status after entering into a vegetable vending profession whereas only 38% of the respondents opined that their social status has not improved. It indicates that improvement in the social status is a good sign or indicator of empowerment.

## Children's Opinion about Your Work

To understand the children's opinion of women vegetable vendors about the kind of work they are doing, a question asked to the respondents was, 'What is your children's opinion about your work?'. And the responses collected were presented in the Table 12 below.

**Table 12. Children's Opinion about Your Work**

No	Children's Opinion about Your Work	Frequency	Percentage
1	Good	83	83.0
2	Bad	17	17.0
	Total	100	100

It is revealed from the above table no.12 that an overwhelming majority of the respondents 83% opined that their children feel good about whatever their mother is doing and only 17% respondents opined that their children feel bad about whatever their mother is doing about the vegetable vending activity. The data clearly indicates that majority of women vegetable vendors receive support about their independent vending activity from their children. And to receive or to get a support from own children indicates that they are in the process of social empowerment.

## Conclusions

It is revealed from the present study that married, illiterate and women from joint family enters in the vegetable vending profession in Kolhapur city. Due to self employment of these women, they have improved their social status. Although Indian patriarchal culture restricts women to take independent decisions some of them have also started taking important decisions about their family. Unfavourable societal attitude inhibit empowerment of women in general and women vegetable vendors in particular. Although these women vegetable vendors are facing stiff competition in their profession, they remained in the profession to go ahead. The study indicates that these women vegetable vendors are facing number of problems while doing the profession, but the self employment has definitely increased their social status which also makes them socially empowered.

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