



## Women street vendors and social equity: A study of gender inclusion of women community in Varanasi city

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### Abstract

Street vending is an important source of livelihood in India's urban development, especially for women who lack access to formal employment opportunities. Female street vendors currently bear the socio-economic responsibility of their families and also earn a livelihood for their families. Women street vendors strengthen the local economy by providing affordable and essential goods and services to the urban population. The aim of this research is to understand the extent to which current urban policies and social security of women and in which areas the Indian central and state governments need to make improvements. Despite this, they are grappling with numerous problems such as social inequality, gender discrimination, unsafe working conditions, limited financial access, and policy neglect. The study is based on primary and secondary data. Using primary data collected from 100 respondents across key market areas. Secondary data used in this study includes reports from the Ministry of Urban Development, NSSO, ILO, NITI Aayog, Ministry of Women and Child Development, and other ministries. This research paper analyzes the socio-economic status, gender inequality, and the level of social equality and gender inclusion among female street vendors in Varanasi. The study concludes that female street vendors make a significant contribution to the urban informal economy. However, imagining inclusive development without providing them with equal opportunities, decent working conditions, and social security is incomplete. Therefore, gender-sensitive urban policies and social justice-based interventions are extremely necessary.

**Keywords:** Women street vendors, social equity, gender inclusion, socio-economic status

### Introduction

India is one of the world's fastest growing economies. In a changing environment and facing a self-reliant target, middle-class men are serving as partners in the marriage process. After 76 years of independence, women's progress is improving. In accordance with egalitarian principles, the gender gap is steadily decreasing. Women today are engaged in all types of work. Informal service sector is the largest sector of employment in India, employing 90% of the total work force. A significant segment of the informal sector is street vending, which provides livelihoods for lower-income families. Women street vendors are becoming an increasingly important segment of this sector. Street vendors are self-reliant women who support their families by selling vegetables, fruits, street food, meat, fish, and household items on the streets, footpaths, and in residential markets. For a long time, street vendors have been an important but marginal part of the industry. According to government data, over 6.8 million street vendors have benefited from schemes related to this profession, with the participation of women street vendors. Women street vendors are also benefiting from government schemes, which demonstrate the effectiveness of government initiatives for equal and inclusive development. Uttar Pradesh leads the state with the highest number of street vendors engaged in this profession, with over 8.49 lakh registered.

In Varanasi district, U.P., 40,707 street vendors are registered with the Municipal Corporation. The participation of women in Varanasi is well-positioned for equal and inclusive development in society. The work of women street vendors is not just an economic activity but also involves

social and gender issues. Compared to male vendors, women face lower incomes, less secure housing, socio-economic exploitation, and less protection. Social equality is not only economic equality but also self-sufficiency there is freedom to do business, freedom to do any work as per one's wish, and equal access to resources and policies. Gender inclusion means that the benefits of all government schemes reach men and women equally, ensuring equal benefits reach the lowest strata of society. This ensures equal participation in the development of a self-reliant India.

### Review of Literature

1. B. Amarendra Reddy and Pushpalatha Polu (2021), PM SVANidhi scheme, problems faced by street vendors in Hyderabad a Government policy process- post COVID-19 crisis. Their research, they studied the benefits and consequences of the PM SVANidhi scheme in Hyderabad district of Telangana.
2. Shamit Bhowmik and D. Saha (2011), examined the difficulties faced by street vendors in accessing financing from traditional financial institutions in 15 Indian cities. According to the study, self-help groups and financial institutions have been crucial in helping street vendors obtain the necessary funding. However, most street vendors take loans at high interest rates. There is no need for this, the government should make policies and provide relief on this issue.
3. Shenath A.M. (2016), conducted an economic analysis of street food vendors with special reference to Durgigudi Street, Shivamogga City. 56% of street food vendors live in their own homes. Approximately 52% of vendors have an annual income of 1 lakh or more,

reflecting the socio-economic status of the informal sector in the city. This analysis shows that the economic condition of Durgigudi street vendors is stable.

4. Martha Alter Chen (2001), Women in the informal sector: A Global Picture, The Global Movement Chen argues that women in informal street vending face layered structural exclusion where gender inequality and informality intersect, requiring rights-based inclusion rather than welfare-based support.
5. Naila Kabeer (2008), Paid Work, Women's Empowerment and Inclusive Growth. Women's work becomes empowering only when it enhances their access to resources, strengthens agency, and leads to meaningful social and economic achievements.

### Objectives of the Study

1. To identify the socio-economic condition of women street vendors.
2. To study gender-based discrimination, harassment, and safety issues at the workplace in Varanasi district.
3. To study the current status of street vendors in Varanasi.

### Statement of the Problem

Women street vendors in Varanasi, a crucial role in the informal urban economy by providing affordable goods and supporting household livelihoods. They face persistent challenges such as insecure vending spaces, low income, and harassment, lack of formal recognition, and limited access to credit, poor sanitation facilities, and vulnerability to eviction drives. Gender-specific barriers, including safety concerns Varanasi. Therefore, there is a pressing need to examine the socio-economic conditions, institutional challenges, and gender dimensions affecting women street vendors in Varanasi to develop inclusive and sustainable policy interventions.

### Limitations of the Study

1. The study is based on reference to Varanasi district.
2. The study is based only women street vendors in Varanasi district.
3. The study is based on women street vendors facing day-to-day problems.
4. Data collected is fully based on primary data given by respondents.
5. To asking a survey 100 respondents, there was limited response only.

### Research Methodology

Research methodology is the way to solve the research problem systematically in this study, various steps were followed to conduct the research.

### Sources of Data

The study consists of primary and secondary data based.

**Primary data:** Fresh-hand information collected through questionnaires.

**Secondary data:** Data already available and published, collected from books, journals, magazines, government data, Budget of India, websites, and the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA), etc.

### Sample Size

The sample size consists of 100 respondents from Varanasi city. The respondents are only women street vendors from different castes, ages, and religions.

### Area of Study

The survey was conducted in Varanasi city with 100 respondents.

### Sampling Tools

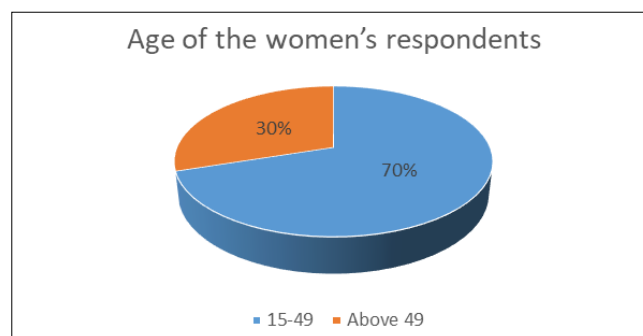
1. Simple average method
2. Weighted average method

### Analysis and Interpretation

The study was conducted in Varanasi district with a total sample of 100 respondent's interpretation is not just the repetition of the data in the table; it is drawing inference, insights and relationship between the variable. In this chapter the data collected through the questionnaire is analyzed and inferences are drawn with the help of the table and chart

### Age of the women's respondents

Age	No. of respondents	Percentage
15-49	70	70
Above 49	30	30
Total	100	100

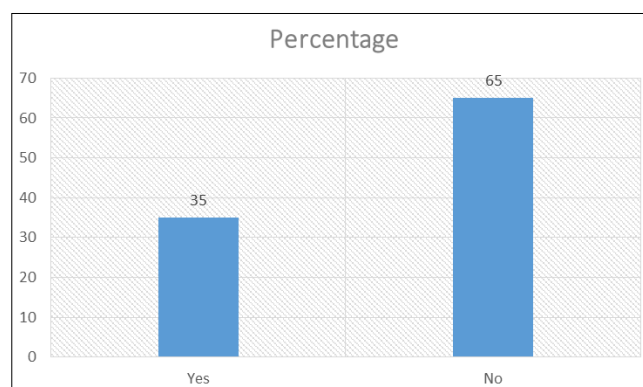


The above chart shows that 70% of working female population is between 15-49 years of age and 30% of the working women are above 49 years of age

### Education Equality

#### Did you receive equal education opportunities?

Respondents	Number	Percentage
Yes	35	35
No	65	65
Total	100	100

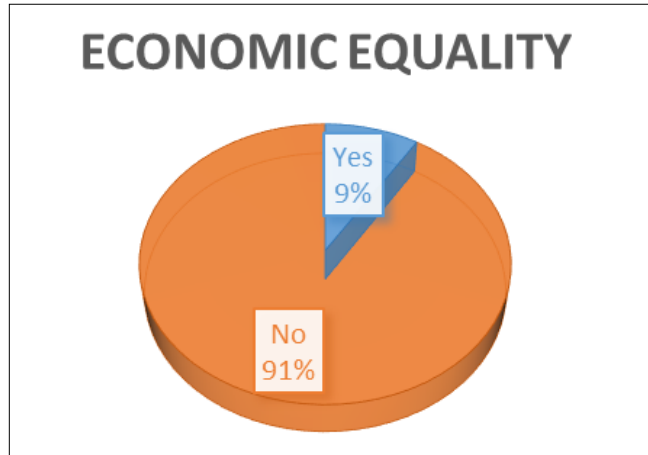


This chart shows that equal education opportunities are not available to 65% of women street vendors. Only 35% have access to equal education.

### Economic Equality

Do women get equal pay for work?

Respondents	Number	Percentage
Yes	9	9
No	91	91
Total	100	100

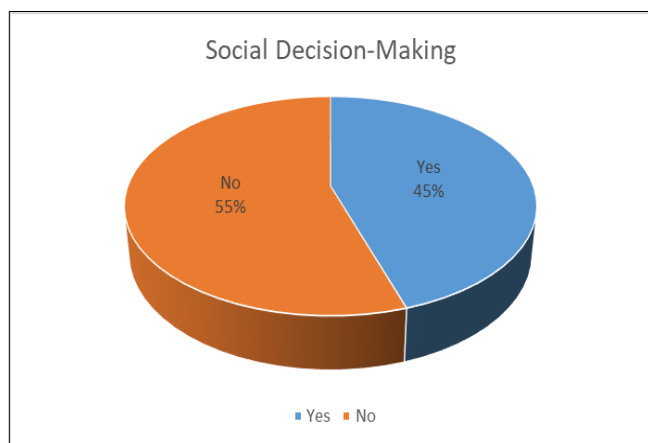


This Chart shows that 91% of women do not get equal pay for equal work. Only 9% of women are able to get equal pay for equal work.

### Social Decision-Making

Do you have freedom to choose work/career?

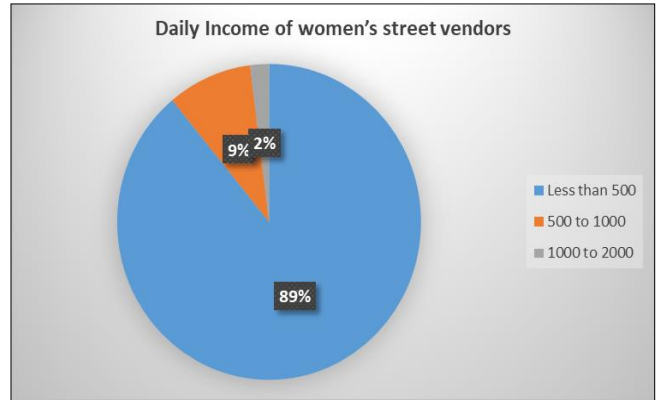
Respondents	Number	Percentage
Yes	45	45
No	55	55
Total	100	100



This graph shows that 45% of respondents are working voluntarily, while 55% are not working voluntarily.

### Daily Income of women's street vendors

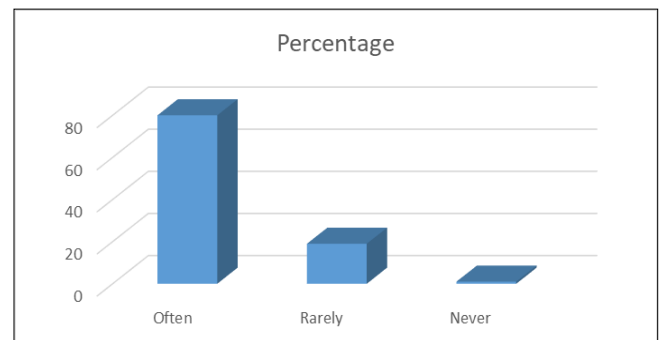
Daily Income	No. of respondents	Percentage
Less than 500	89	89
500 to 1000	9	9
1000 to 2000	2	2
Total	100	100



Women's engaged in street vendors do not have daily income, it keeps changing some days, they have very little income, whereas next day, they may get more income. Most of women's street vendors had daily income less 500.

### Gender Discrimination

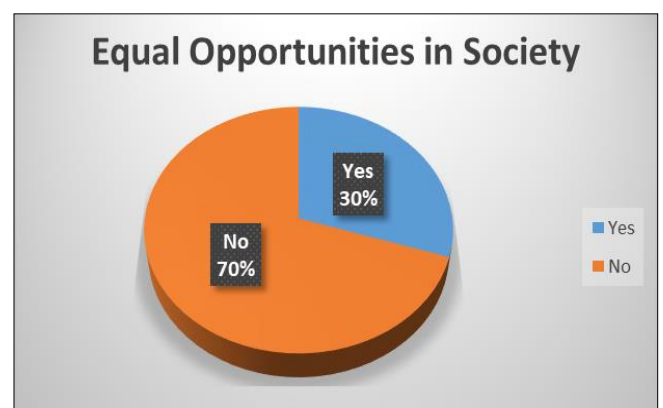
	No. of respondents	Percentage
Often	80	80
Rarely	19	19
Never	1	1
Total	100	100



This table shows that 80% of women street vendors face gender discrimination. 19% of women sometimes face gender discrimination and 1% of women never face it.

### Equal Opportunities in Society

Respondents	Number	Percentage
Yes	30	30
No	70	70
Total	100	100



30% of women get equal opportunities to work and 70% of women do not get the opportunity to do normal work.

### **Suggestions**

1. For equality in society, women street vendors should get equal benefits of every scheme.
2. Their employment is insecure and irregular.
3. Incentives should be provided to women street vendors to bring them into the mainstream of inclusive development.
4. Safe street vending zones should be provided to women.

### **Conclusion**

As my research shows has shown women street vendors facing a lot of problems such as lack of safe street vending zones, social security, and equality. For inclusive development and mainstream inclusion, the government should make policies for women street vendors. These women should be respected by providing a safe environment, encouragement, and self-confidence.

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