

# Socio Economic Background of Women Street Vendors in Ongole Prakasam District

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**Abstract:** Unorganised sector plays an important role in the socio economic development of a country. By contributing significantly to employment generation and poverty alleviation, more than 94 percent of the working population in our country are concentrated in this sector. Street vending is an important activity of unorganised sector, involving street vendors as the key players. Street vendors are continuously victimised and subjected to mental and physical torture by the police and municipal employees, as their job is considered illegal. Women hawkers face more problems than men like eve teasing, sexual harassment, physical torture etc. The objective of this paper is to examine the socio economic profile of women street vendors in Ongole town of Prakasam district of Andhra Pradesh.

**Keywords** — Unorganized, women, vendors

## I. INTRODUCTION

In every society women hold a unique position. But still, they belong to a disadvantaged loss of society due to various social barriers and impediments. Women are most the exploited and least privilege members of society and are more common to face humiliation and exploitation. According to UNICEF 2007 women represent 91 percent of the population in the unorganised sector, and contribute 66 percent of the world work, produce 50 percent of the global food. But receive only 10 percent of the income output and own one percent of property. The United Nations statistics on women indicate that globally majority of the women work force is involved in family work, few of them work as employees, and very few are self employed or employers. An overall representation of women in the labour force remains low. As per the country report represented at fourth World conference in Beijing in 1985, only 4 percent of women are in the organised sector. Participation of women in the process of economic development is greatly acknowledged even though its degree varies from country to country. Yet, their economic status is still low as it reflects from the census data, particularly of those who are engaged in the unorganised sector of urban economy. Women in unorganised sector struggle with harsh realities of discrimination, exploitation and violence at work place. They suffer from the bitter effects of the balancing act between work place and household chores. In the unorganised sector workers are exploited, irrespective of sex, women suffer more by the fact of their gender.

In the unorganised sector women are overrepresented; their work is invisible, unorganised and unremunerated. According to an estimate of the National Commission of

self employment of women, 94 percent of the total female workforce operates in the unorganised sector. They do laborious work as wage earners, piece rate workers, casual labour and paid family labour. The labour laws had 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, match and beedi industries, street vendors etc. Women 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 ways 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 domine of poor women's economic activity that requires endless juggling between family and work responsibilities.

## II. STREET VENDING

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. Most street vendors provide the main source of income for their households, bringing food to their families. Street trade can offer a viable livelihood, but earnings are low and risks are high for many vendors, especially those who sell fresh fruits and vegetables. Despite their contributions, street vendors face many challenges, are often overlooked as economic agents and unlike other businesses, are hindered rather than helped by municipal policies and practices. Having an insecure place of work is a significant problem for those who work in

the streets. Lack of storage, theft or damage to stock is common issues.

### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In the urban areas of the district, women run road side stalls like vegetable and fruit stalls. They are also engaged in street vending retailing in cotton garments, utensils etc. a large number of women petty grocers are also found in the district. The women also work as dry cleaners, tailors and clay work retail traders. Those who are unable to get regular jobs in the remunerative organised sector on account of the low level of educational skills, Street vending provides a source of self employment and thus acts as a measure of urban poverty elevation without government intervention. It is a fact that the self employed women workers are a major part of the unorganized sector in the district. The self employed poor women mostly belonging to scheduled and backward class are engaged in street vending. Street vending activity has no barriers with respect to access because street provide free open space for them. They also sell their goods from door to door in colonies. Vending in the streets requires very small capital.

The women hawkers on the streets of the urban and semi urban residential areas, selling flowers, vegetables, fruits etc are very prominent. These hawkers are confined to the lowest range of the trading hierarchy. It was found during survey that they are in debt to money lenders or to wholesale suppliers. Thus they spend much of their earning in payment of exorbitant weekly interest charges. There are so many reasons for women entering into street vending are poverty, ease of entry, limited stock of costs, low skill and flexible hours. They face several challenges and constraints as they are vulnerable population. Women street vendors face different kinds of risks because of legal, physical and socio cultural environment in which they work. These type of vendors also prone to exploitation, appalling working conditions and high risks of hazards. Hence it is necessary to study the socio economic conditions and suggest the measures to improve their conditions.

### SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Ongole town in Prakasam district is one of the divisions of Andhra Pradesh. Ongole is the administrative, cultural and industrial area in the district; it is a head quarter of the district, with a population of 2, 08,344. It is one of the divisions of Prakasam district, well connected national highways and railways. Ongole is one of the main stations of district under Vijayawada railway zone. Streets are being widened at the cost of lives and livelihoods, new roads, signal free roads, flyovers etc. Hence I would like to find out socio economic conditions of women street vendors in Ongole town.

### OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To examine the socio economic status of women street vendors.
2. To study the occupation aspects of sample women street vendors.

### III. METHODOLOGY

The present paper was based on primary data. The schedule has been constructed on the basis of existing knowledge, previous research and initial investigations of population of street vendors in Ongole town. The primary data had been collected from a sample size of 120 women street vendors belonging to different categories street vending in Ongole town. The samples were selected according to simple random and convenience methods. The collected data had been processed and the output in the form of tables. Apart from primary data, information had been collected from a wide range of secondary source like journals, books and internet sources published by various institutions.

#### Sample design

The collection of primary data, the sample design depends on nature and pattern of sample frame and it is required to have a list of women vendors in Ongole town. The selection of data was mainly based on the socio economic status of women vendors in Ongole. The information gather from cross section of vendors, classified into vegetable/fruit vendors and fish vendors. Only women involved in the vending category were chosen for study. In all 120 respondents from Ongole town collected data through structured schedule.

### IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Table 1: Age Composition of the sample Respondents

Age	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Below 18	4	3.33
19-28	26	21.66
29-38	48	40
39-48	36	30
Above 49	6	5
Total	120	100

Source: Primary data

The above table shows age composition of the respondents. It defines that very young group below 18 years constitute 3.33 percent, followed by the group of 19 to 20 years who constitute 21.66 percent, on the other hand majority of respondents, 40 percent belong to the middle aged group being in the age group of 29 to 38 years. The remaining are 30 percent belong to 39 to 48 years and 5 percent belong to

above 49 years age group. The above analysis reveals that predominant size of respondents belongs to middle aged women in the age group of 29 to 48 years. Since street vending involves enormous physical labour, middle aged women prefer to take up this job.

**Table 2: Caste Composition of the sample Respondents**

Caste Composition	No. of Respondents	Percentage
S.C	36	30
S.T	14	11.66
B.C	62	51.66
O.C	8	6.66
Total	120	100

Source: Primary data

Table 2, shows that backward class (BC) constitute 51.66 percent followed by scheduled caste (SC) 30 percent and scheduled tribe (ST) 11.66 percent and the remaining 6.66 percent of respondents from other community.

Caste distribution of sample respondents reveals that the concentration of backward class is predominant in street vending activity. Earlier most of the men were dedicated to their traditional caste related jobs, such as sweeping, scavenging and leather work, are now adopting new forms of occupation.

**Table 3: Religious composition of the Respondents**

Religious Composition	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Hindu	92	76.66
Muslim	18	15
Christian	10	8.34
Total	120	100

Source: Primary data

Table 3 shows that the religious composition of respondents is divided into three groups i.e. Hindu, Muslim and Christian. The data shows that 76.66 percent of the respondents are Hindus, Muslims and Christians constitute 15 and 8.3 percent respectively. It shows that the majority of street vendors are Hindus. Various factors like lack of employment opportunity in the village, seasonal agriculture, poverty, financial crises have compelled them to migrate urban areas to take up this job.

**Table 4: Marital status of the Respondents**

Marital Status	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Married	86	71.66
Unmarried	18	15

Widows	16	13.34
Total	120	100

Source: Primary data

The table shows that overwhelming number of the respondents 71.66 percent was married, where as the 15 percent of the respondents were unmarried, 13.34 percent of the respondents were found to be widows, since the majority of respondents were married.

**Table 5: Number of dependents**

Size	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	15	12.5
2-3	18	15
4-5	62	51.66
Above 6	25	20.83
Total	120	100

Source: Primary data

The above table shows that number of dependents in the family of respondents, 51.66 percent of respondents have four to five dependents, 20.83 percent have above 6 dependents, and the remaining percent of respondents are in 1-3 dependents. The above data reveals that in every household there are dependents.

**Table 6: Type of housing**

Type	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Rented	96	80
Own	24	20
Total	120	100

Source: Primary data

The table shows that a majority of 80 percent of respondents was residing in rental houses and very few of the 20 percent were residing in their own. The possession of a house is a status symbol in our society.

**Table 7: Earnings per month of the respondents**

Earnings	No. of Respondents	Percentage
0-999	11	9.16
1000-1999	26	21.66
2000-2999	20	16.66
3000-3999	32	26.66
4000-4999	22	18.33
Above 5000	9	7.5
Total	120	100

Source: Primary data

Table 7 presents that a significant number of respondents 26.66 percent of them earned between Rs 3000 - 3999. The respondents who earn above 5000 were 7.5 percent and other lesser number of respondents 9.16 earned below Rs 999. The data reveals that the income of street vendors depends on the products they sell, and it varies from product to product, from location to location. Interestingly, the data shows that the income of vendors selling perishable goods differ from those of non perishable goods. Most of the women vendors are vegetable vendors because their occupation requires very low investment as compared to other activity.

**Table 8: Educational background of the respondents**

Qualification	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Illiterates	62	51.66
Primary	32	26.66
Secondary	18	15
Intermediate	8	6.66
Total	120	100

Source: Primary data

Table 8 shows that education level among street vendors is generally low. Out of the total, 51.66 percent of vendors are illiterate, about 26.66 percent have acquired primary level of education, relatively lesser number of them 15 percent were educated upto secondary level. Only 6.66 percent of respondents were educated upto intermediate. It has been observed that a greater number of women vendors are illiterates and less educated.

### V. FINDINGS

1. The study reveals that more than 50 percent of vendors related to backward class.
2. In the marital status 71.6 percent of respondents are married, followed by unmarried 15 and 13.34 percent are widows.
3. As per the study 80 percent of vendors residing in rented houses.
4. The above study says that 32 respondents earn Rs 3000 to 4000 per month, only 9 respondents earn above Rs 5000 per month.
5. The study reveals that more than 50 percent of vendors are illiterates. Due to this reason the unskilled and uneducated women enter into this field.

### VI. RECOMENDATIONS

The following suggestions can be made to improve the conditions of the women street vendors.

- The government should make efforts to improve health and education of the vendors through welfare schemes and policies.
- Warehouse facilities can be provided to the vendors to preserve their unsold products.
- Pre- education can be given to the children of the vendors.
- Efforts to strengthen the voice of the women street vendors should be organised by member based organisations. NGO’s should undertake initiatives to improve the status of street vendors.

### VII. CONCLUSION

Street vendors play prominent role in unorganized sector in the country. In every city and towns the street vendors are very prominent. It is not a source of employment in the small cities and towns but also provide affordable as well as convenient services to the urban population. Those who are unable to get regular jobs due to their low level of skills and education, they enter in this category of street vending. These are the main distributors of products of daily consumption like fruits, vegetables, fish, news papers, and magazines and so on. The importance of this sector can’t be undermined. Due to several reasons the illiterate, unskilled, below poverty line, unemployment are entering into this profession. The government does not have the capacity to provide the jobs to the millions of unemployed and under employed women in India.

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