

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT THROUGH STREET VENDING BUSINESS— A FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

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ABSTRACT

Empowerment is a relatively new concept in the realm of development. It is a process which changes the existing power relation in favor of the poor and marginalized and women. It is a long term process that requires change in the behavior and attitudes of women and men. Women are responsible for bearing children, yet they are malnourished and in poor health. Women are also overworked in the field and complete the all of the domestic work and they are sacrificing by their ambitions. Some of the women are trying to getting the self dignity and self respect through their self-employment and daily earning the more money from their occupation. The present study is analyzed the women empowerment through the street vending business. The study conducted the survey among women street vendors in Tiruchirappalli city and selected two different types of vending (flower vendors and fruits vendors) groups for Focus Group Discussion. The findings of the study are elaborated in the full paper. The government and non-governmental organization and family members also play a crucial role for the development of women empowerment.

Keywords: Street Vendors, Street Vendors Policy. Self Help Group, Women Empowerment

INTRODUCTION

India is a society where the male is greatly sacred. Therefore women, particularly the young girls, get very little respect and standing in this country. The women of the household are compulsory to prepare the meal for the men, who eat most of the food. Only after the males are finished eating, can the females eat. Typically the leftover food is meagre, considering the families are poor and have little to begin with. This creates a major problem with malnutrition, especially for pregnant or nursing women. Very few women seek medical care while pregnant because it is thought of as a provisional condition. This is one main reason why India's maternal

and infant mortality rates are so high. Starting from birth, girls do not receive as much care and commitment from their parents and society as a boy would.

MEANING OF EMPOWERMENT

Empowerment of women is the development by which women achieve power and manage over their own lives and acquire the capability to make strategic choices. Women's empowerment has five components: women's sense of self-worth; their right to have and to determine choices; their right to have access to opportunities and resources; their right to have power to control their own lives, both within and outside the home; and their ability to influence the direction of social change to create a more just social and economic order, nationally and internationally.

In this context, education, training, awareness raising, building self-confidence, expansion of choices, improved access to and control over resources, and actions to transform the structures and societies that reinforce and constant gender discrimination and inequality are important tools for empowering women and girls to claim their rights (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2008).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Helen R. Sekar, (2004) conducted a study on "Vulnerabilities and Insecurities of Informal Sector Workers" to capture and identify better working conditions and other characteristics related to street vending in the city of Noida. The broad objectives of the study are specifically to identify and highlight the special needs of vendors, especially women and child vendors, with a view to advice possible strategies to address their vulnerabilities and insecurities, as well as needs for support in the area of market access, vocational and life skills development for the enhanced employability, improving working conditions. The study made an attempt to capture the perceived skills of street vendors. A similar proportion of respondents felt that they should not only respect the customers but also be patient with them.

An article entitled "Street Vendors: Exploitation by the State" written by Shailly Arora and Aoneha Tagore (2010) explored the street vendors exploitation. Data were collected from 10 years experienced street vendors at Paharganj and the Case study method was used to analyze the data. Majority of the small vendors paid money between Rs.500 and Rs.800 per month to the Municipal Corporation and Delhi police. It results in a major loss of their income. Also the study found that these constant economic and physical assaults destroy their dignity and conviction. This growing violence and insecurity is an important reason why very few women take to vending and hawking in cities like Delhi. The authors appealed to the citizens of Delhi, whether policy-makers or administrators, help to make Delhi a bribe-free, terror-free city.

Balasubramanian. B, Srinivasan. R and Vaidhyasubramaniam. S (2012) in their paper on ‘Being powerless’ or ‘To be empowered’: A Case of Women Street Vendors at Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu” taken a sample of 68 women street vendors in Thanjavur. Correlation and regression analysis were employed on the data for the analysis. The study on women in Street Vending profession at Thanjavur reveals the poor economic condition of women engaged in Street Vending. The study suggested that there is a possibility to see some good to this community if they follow with certain regularization as suggested in the National Policy on Urban Street Vendors, 2009.

Goswami and Kumud Chandra (2012) in their research paper on "Empowering Women Street Vendors Through Micro- Financing: A Study in Sivasagar Town of Assam" analyzed the women street vendors. This study focused the problem faced by them in procuring financial resources. The researchers used snowball sampling method and selected 50 vendors. This study explained that the most of the women invested own money for their business and 30 per cent of the vendors are saving money in bank accounts to other financial institutions. This study suggested that the vendors can improve their business if the vendors are given the formal education.

Karthikeyan, R., and Mangaleswaran, R. (2014) conducted a study on “A study on socio-economic conditions and working patterns of Street Vendors in Tiruchirappalli City, Tamilnadu, India. The study analyzed the socio-economic conditions and working patterns of street vendors particularly in Tiruchirappalli city. It is found that they are affected by health issues viz., skin allergy, respiratory problems and vomiting. Because they are working in open places and polluted environment. Finally the researchers suggested that street vendors must go for monthly health checkup and should take treatment in hospital.

METHODOLOGY

The street vendors are most important part of the urban economy. For the purpose of the study, researcher conducted Focus Group Discussions (FGD) in Tiruchirappalli City especially women street vendors and it was conducted in Chathram bus stand. In the first group, 11 respondents were participated and they are all flower vendors. The second FGD was conducted at Salai Ora Siru Matrum Kuru Viyaparigal Sangam at Mannarpuram including 12 respondents are fruits vendors. The researcher explained the purpose of the FGD and obtained the consent from the respondents. The major points are articulated by the participants were:

Focus Group Discussion I

- ❖ The respondents’ age group was in between 25 and 35. They are from different areas and all the respondents were selling the flowers in bus-stand sides. They are not the owner of the goods. They are working for daily wages of around Rs.250.

- ❖ Half of the sample respondents are living in the rental houses. They are spending amount from Rs. 1,500 to Rs. 2,000 and spending the money for the school children and saved through the post office for future. They gathered information daily through television. Around 60 percent of the respondents liked to watch TV serials and a very few per cent of the respondents liked to go for cinema and a very few of per cent of the respondents are spending time in chatting with neighbors.
- ❖ The respondents are working for the whole day in an unsafe open environment. So they are affected by sun heat and dust pollutions. Less than half of the respondents are using the safety measurements. Most of the respondents are working for 12 to 14 hours (7 a.m. to 8 p.m.). Sometimes they get support from their family members for their business.
- ❖ Half of the respondents are aware of the Street Vending policies and they joined the vending organization (Puspaa Viyaparikal Sangam). If the police personnel give some trouble to the Vendors, the vending organization usually comes to solve their problems.

Focus Group Discussion II

The second Focus Group Discussion was conducted at Mannarpuram, Salai Ora Siru Matrum Kuru Viyaparigal Sangam. This organization was started in 2003 and it is registered with National Association of Street Vendors in India (NASVI). Salai Ora Siru Matrum Kuru Viyaparigal Sangam is organized and it frequently conducted the meeting for the street vendors. This organization gives support to the street vending business and gives the loan facility on low interest. Totally 12 respondents were participated in this session and discussed for more than 35 minutes.

- The respondents' age group was in between 28 and 45. They are selling different types of goods in Tiruchirappalli city. They are selling things like banana, apple, grape and orange, and etc...
- Few of the respondents are living in rental house and they migrated from rural to urban. They spent Rs. 1,000 to Rs. 3,000 for rent. Most of the respondents are married, and they are having children.
- Large number of the respondents' home has electricity, water facility, television, radio, washing machine and refrigerator. Majority of the respondents are using Gas and kerosene oil for cooking.
- Majority of the respondents are using the safety equipments of stored water, umbrella and 60 micron plastic bags. Their entertainment is watching television, cinema and talking with neighbourhood.

- Some of the respondents travel daily from their home to work place around 15 to 18 km. They purchased goods from wholesale dealers in the market. All the respondents joined the Salai Ora Siru Matrum Kuru Viyaparigal Sangam.
- Few respondents are saving their money in Bank and also in Self Help Group. They get money from this organization and sometime from their relatives.
- Majority of the street vendors know well about the Street Vendor's Policy and the Street Vendors Act 2014. If they faced any problem, the organization involves and solves it.
- The respondents suggested that the government should buildup toilet in all streets. This may improve the street vendor's health and hygiene.

FGDs were conducted from two different groups. It clearly reveals the street vendors' home status and working patterns. They have stated that customers and consumers are bargaining with them. They said that they have joined in vending organization. Every month the organization is conducting the meeting to get the vendors' opinion about the problems faced by them during their working hours. The vendors are getting loan from the vending organization at low interest.

SUGGESTIONS

At the past concept of women are vulnerable group. Still the women are trying to developing their dignity and self-respect through their hard work in the field of education, occupation, economically and political. The educated and illiterate women are doing the self employment for earning money for running their family. The women street vendors are not expecting support from the family members and they are achieving goals through street vending. The researcher recommended the women street vendors are properly taking the food and nutrition particular time. It is improving their health conditions and avoids the disease. The saving patterns should important for future. Because , the street vendors monthly or weekly save the money through bank, post office or Women Self Help Group. Skill training is needed for the illiterate women to develop their skills. The bank provides the loan to started small business for develop economic status and also occupational development. Mostly women street vendors are regularly keeping the closing time as per the Town Vending Committee norms; it is avoiding family problems and social issues.

CONCLUSION

FGDs were conducted from two different groups. It clearly reveals the home status and working patterns of sample street vendors. They have stated that customers and consumers are bargaining with them. Also they stated that they have joined in vending organization and every month the organization is conducting the meeting to get the vendors' opinion about the problems faced by them during their working hours. The vendors are getting loan from the vending organization at

low interest. The study concluded that women street vendors are facing so many problems by doing this business. Government may take necessary steps to protect and save their life of women street vendors.

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