

WOMEN VEGETABLE VENDORS IN URBAN INFORMAL SECTOR: A RESEARCH PROPOSAL

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Abstract: Vending local produce is an important economic activity for the Mizo women. Some of the women in this field are single mothers who support their families. Some married women bring their kids to their vending place because their husbands are alcoholics. The government and bank implemented several development and financial support schemes for women's upliftment, but they were unaware of them due to their illiteracy and ignorance. Therefore, the state government must take steps to raise awareness and conduct extensive outreach regarding the policies and programs available for vendors. Although DAY-NULM takes care of the vegetable vendors, they still need proper care, awareness, and development for their security. Therefore, this study aims to highlight the issues faced by women vegetable vendors and promote their empowerment in Aizawl City, located in Mizoram State of Northeast India. The present study is, thus, an approved research proposal submitted to the author's university for pursuing a doctoral degree. Accordingly, the proposal starts off with a general outline entitled The Introduction. Next, an attempt is made to consolidate a detailed review of literature classified under three major heads, such as theoretical perspectives, methodological review of studies, and the review of thematic domains. The review concludes by identifying the research gap and explaining the rationale for the study. The next section narrates the objectives of the study and the study methodology. The study methodology covers the research design, the operationalisation of concepts, the universe and samples, the principles of inclusion and exclusion, the sources of data classification and tabulation, and data analysis and interpretation. Next, we analyse the proposal's ethical considerations. The penultimate section discusses the possible limitations of the study. The proposal in its accepted format closes with a tentative chapter plan before listing out the references.

Keywords: Informal Sector; Empowerment; Mizo Women; Vegetable Vending; Socio-Economic Status; Work-Life Balance.

INTRODUCTION

As indicated by the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the informal sector is made up of very small-scale units producing and distributing goods and services owned and operated by largely independent, self-employed producers, employing mostly family labour or a few hired workers. Many populations find employment opportunities in the informal sector due to its accessibility and low financial input requirements. Despite its significant contributions to the economies of developing countries, many perceive it as troublesome and unmanageable. Nonetheless, the informal economy offers hope to the impoverished who are facing dire financial circumstances. The informal sector's operations were not counted towards a nation's GDP or Gross National Product (GNP), in contrast to the official economy. This is one of the reasons the informal sector is unrecognised, generally undervalued, and not properly represented.

Women played a giant role in the informal sector occupations and occupied half of the total world's employed populations (ILO, 2008). The working poor, especially women, are concentrated

in the informal economy, and they rely on this sector to earn their livelihood. Among men and women in the informal sector, men were in the top segment of the pyramid, while women dominated the bottom segment. Men usually sell goods that are non-perishable, while women sell. The informal economy is the most flexible and versatile occupation for women, who are expected to do housework and care for children.

In India, the expression "agribusiness, industry, household, and service sectors" refers to workers who are either casual or temporary. Poor urban dwellers in the majority of Indian cities make their living by working in the informal economy. Due to a lack of education, which necessitated better occupations and inadequate skills, the majority of people worked in the informal sector (Bhowmik, 2000). Street sellers and hawkers occupied a prominent place at the base of the urban informal economy pyramid within this unorganised sector.

Food goods, fruits, vegetables, clothing, handicrafts, snacks, and other items are sold by street vendors. There are three basic categories of street vendors: stationary, peripatetic,

and mobile (National Policy on Urban Street Vendors, 2009). Street vending provides affordable and convenient access to goods and services in India. The Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Urban Livelihood Mission (DAY-NULM) was implemented under the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs to address the urban street vendors by promoting access to vending spaces, improved skills, institutional credit, and social security linkages.

Policies and regulations were implemented to follow the formalities, but they were not properly carried out because the population was illiterate and awareness was not properly broadcast. They faced many problems and issues regarding saturated and stagnant markets, inadequate access to credit and savings services, weak technical skills, inadequate information, and poor infrastructure. In view of these situations, in 2012 StreetNet International, which backed putting together street vendors all throughout the world to address their normal requirements and difficulties, observed 14th November as International Street Vendors Day since 2012.

In Mizoram, women form the majority of vegetable vendors. In a state where few employment opportunities are available, vegetable vending provides employment to many women. The Mizo grew their food and cotton in the past, and they traded with the plains for salt and rice. However, the advancements in transport and communication led to the cheaper import of products from outside states, which in turn captured the local markets. Basic food crops like rice and vegetables are sold at a lower price than the local produce. So, the local trade was dominated by outside traders, but the local products were still sold by the locals, who were mainly women. But the state and the people must protect the job, as there are no other options. Also, sustaining these spaces will protect the local vegetables from extinction. In Mizoram, there is one unique vegetable vendor that is gender-free; it is called 'Nghahloh dawr' (shops without shopkeepers), which was usually set up on the major highway. In this shop, vegetables and fruits for sale were displayed, and selling prices were mentioned. Usually, travellers will pick up what they need and put the money in the box that was placed on the stall. The stall was performed on the principle of trust.

Vending of local produce is an important economic activity of the Mizo women. Some of the women in this field are single mothers who support their families. Some married women bring their kids to their vending place because their husbands are alcoholics and can't care for them.

Despite its immense contribution to the state's employment opportunities and economy, there are many problems faced by the Mizo women vegetable vendors. They have no access to toilets, no refrigerated containers for leftover vegetables, price fluctuations, spatial issues, and disputes between local and migrant vendors. The migrant workers from Myanmar set new trends in marketing the vegetables; they were more innovative, they sold them at a cheaper price, and the presentation of their vegetables was more captivating. This causes a disputes between the native vendors and the migrant workers, as there is no proper rules and regulations

The government and bank implemented several development and financial support schemes for women's upliftment, but they were unaware of them due to their illiteracy and ignorance. So, the state government has to take steps to raise awareness and make wide propaganda regarding the policies and programmes for the vendors. Although DAY-NULM takes care of the vegetable vendors, still they need proper care, awareness, and development for their security. Therefore, the present study proposed to highlight the issues concerning women vegetable vendors and the empowerment of women in Aizawl City of Mizoram State in Northeast India. The present study is, thus, an approved research proposal submitted to the author's university for pursuing a doctoral degree.

Accordingly, the proposal starts off with a general outline entitled Introduction. Next, under the heads, an attempt is made to consolidate a detailed review of literature classified under three major heads: theoretical perspectives, methodological reviews of studies, and thematic domains. The review terminates with locating the research gap and describing the rationale of the study. The next section narrates the objectives of the study and the study methodology. The study methodology covers the research design, the operationalisation of concepts, the universe and sample, the principle of inclusion and exclusion, the sources of data classification and tabulation,

and data analysis and interpretation. Ethical considerations of this proposal are analysed next. The penultimate section discusses the possible limitations of the study. The proposal in its accepted format closes with a tentative chapter plan before listing out the references.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A literature review is a survey of scholarly works to situate a research theoreticalation to existing methodological review studies, a thematic review under three heads: theoretical perspectives, methodological reviews of studies and thematic reviews.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

A theoretical perspective is a lens through which we look and serve to intersectionality, transgenderism, and make labour clear to others. The theoretical perspectives include intersectionality, gender division of labour, labour theory, labour market segmentation theory, empowerment theory, the misfit theory of entrepreneurship, and work-life balance theory. Three theories were reviewed, namely spill-over theory, instrumental theory, and inter-role conflict theory.

Intersectionality

A sociological idea known as intersectionality describes how a person may experience several forms of overlapping discrimination based on their race, gender, age, ethnicity, physical appearance, or any other notion. A terrorist feminist might place them in a minority concept of In 1989, at the University of Chicago Level Forum, Black feminist Kimberle Crenshaw offered the concept of "intersectionality" as a metaphor in her seminal paper, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics." In 1991, she refined this concept to explain the approaches that separate the system of oppression and to focus on highlighting the overlapping of oppression and discrimination that was faced by women at the time. She further stated that the experience of being Black and a woman is considered independently but must include the interactions, which frequently overlap each other. Crenshaw identifies three dimensions of intersectionality: structural intersectionality, political intersectionality, and representational intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991).

Davis argues that intersectionality presents a theoretical and political answer to the challenge that contemporary feminism faces, namely, the long and painful legacy of exclusion. Feminist theory asserts that women's lives are shaped by various oppressive systems that interact. That is to say, oppression is a confluence of several interconnected oppression systems rather than a single process. Collins (2003) states that intersectionality can be utilised to analyse micro-, meso-, and macro-level social phenomena, according to. She emphasised that intersectionality reveals "the workings of power at all levels of social relations, which is understood as both pervasive and oppressive".

Gender Division of Labour

The way work is split between men and women according to their gender roles is referred to as "gender division of labour". It does not only concern paid employment, but it also includes all the work, tasks, and responsibilities that are assigned to women and men in their daily lives and which may, in their turn, also determine certain patterns in the labour market. It is assumed that gender division in labour is a result of biological traits. However, it is perceived in some In societies where women perform tasks and jobs traditionally considered to be men's, men also take on roles typically assigned to women. So, the division of labour varies with each society (ILO, 2008).

Labour Theory

Labour theory was based on Marxist economics, which was originally used in the theories of earlier classical economics by Adam Smith and David Ricardo. In a capitalist economy, the market was under the private ownership of productive enterprise, which is basically exploitative. The purpose of production is to ensure that the value of the product exceeds the cost of production, including the cost of labour. This surplus value that goes to the capitalist results in the chain of inequality and poverty, which is reflected in a hierarchy at work, in earnings, and in society (1776). Employers in the labour market exhibit stratification by paying women workers less than their male counterparts. This approach creates a group of flexible, low-paid workers who can be moved in and out of employment when needed.

In recent times, based on the broad ideas of feminist schools, several theories have emerged in an attempt to capture the experiences of women in the labour market. These theories on the labour market focus on the status of women and emphasise diverse aspects of discrimination in the labour market on the basis of gender. The status of women in society determines their entry into the labour market, as well as their earnings and status. On the other hand, radicals and proponents of dual-system theories believed that political forces play a significant role in establishing women's labour roles. Another group of economists believes that cultural variables such as the process of socialisation determine women's and men's employment status. However, feminist economists consider patriarchy to play a crucial role in governing women's positions in the labour market. Feminists argue that it is women who occupy the lowest rank in the stratification process and are the most vulnerable resource in the labour market (Ormazabal, 2006).

Labour Market Segmentation Theory

Labour market segmentation theory is the outcome of the segmentation process. The fragmentation of the employment market into segments, each differentiated by distinct labour market features and behavioural regulations, is encouraged by political and economic pressures, it was stressed. (Reich and others, 1973). The occupational hierarchy may be divided into segments that run both vertically and horizontally.

Two stages of segmentation—primary and secondary segments—have resulted in the current state of the employment market. These two segments are distinguished by stability characteristics. While jobs in the secondary segment lack skills and frequently discourage stable working habits, jobs in the primary segment require skills and foster stable working habits; job ladders are present and wages are relatively high (Reich et al., 1973).

Empowerment Theory

Individual and societal empowerment is defined as the degree of autonomy and self-determination. Such autonomy enables an individual to act independently and responsibly represent their interests. It assists the individual in taking charge of their lives and asserting their rights. Empowerment as action encompasses both

professional assistance and individual empowerment. It enables people to get past their sense of helplessness and inefficiency. American community psychology coined the word "empowerment," which is associated with social scientist Julian Rappaport (1981). In contrast, empowerment theory has historical origins and is associated with the philosophy of Marxist sociology. Neo-Marxist theory helped to develop and enhance these sociological theories (also known as critical theory).

Zimmerman (2000) proposed one of the most commonly accepted empowerment ideas. In this context, he defined empowerment as the control of one's own life by two or more people, allowing for effective involvement in which people, communities, and organisations acquire control over their affairs. Gender empowerment refers to women's empowerment in terms of development and economics from a gender viewpoint. In a political or social context, it also refers to uplifting other oppressed genders. Feminism inspired this approach to empowerment, which used legal empowerment based on international human rights. For the global development agenda, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 5) emphasise gender equality and women's empowerment (United Nations, 2017).

Misfit Theory of Entrepreneurship

Hofstede et al. (2004) indicate that misfit individuals are those individuals who do not share the dominant cultural values and attempt to start a new journey. It is believed that misfit individuals are more likely to engage in entrepreneurial activity as alternatives because they are dissatisfied with their job prospects. We used the misfit theory of entrepreneurship to explain why the majority of immigrants were more engaged in entrepreneurial careers than native-born populations. Immigrants' credentials were usually disrespected, considered invalid, and undervalued in their new home countries. This situation makes it easier for immigrants to integrate but more difficult for them to find lucrative employment (Kahn et al., 2017).

In short, all this imperfect information and education, coupled with lingual and cultural differences, makes it more difficult to enter the workforce as salaried employees. This results in an alternative occupation like entrepreneurship. (Kahn et al., 2017).

Work-life balance theories: It refers to a well-integrated work-life relationship and a scenario in which the individual is actively involved in both spheres (Frone, 2003). The research will highlight the following three theories:

Spillover theory: This theory asserts that work and family life are inextricably linked and impact one another. As a result, both great and bad professional experiences can translate into positive or negative home experiences, and vice versa (al., 2003).

Instrumental theory: According to this theory, people choose to behave in one field in order to influence the other field. For example, an employee may decide to work harder at their job in order to earn more money so that they may save more money so that they can afford a fridge or television (Gimmon and Levie, 2014)

Inter-role Conflict Theory: Holahan and Gilbert (1979) established the Inter-role Conflict Theory, which focuses on the issues that might result from opposing interests in various domains. It is proposed that these competing interests cause individual role conflict, affecting the individual in both fields. A late arrival at work, for example, may coincide with a family birthday celebration, resulting in a conflict between work and home life.

For the purpose of the study, theories such as intersectionality, gender division of labour, labour theory, labour market segmentation theory, empowerment theory, the misfit theory of entrepreneurship, and work-life balance theory (namely, spillover theory, instrumental theory, and inter-role conflict theory) were reviewed and examined. Yet, these theories need to be contextualised to analyse the conditions of Mizo women vegetable vendors and to locate the level of relevance of theories for the proposed study. The next section deals with the methodological review.

REVIEW OF METHODOLOGY IN STUDIES

Methodological review provides a review of the framework of research, approaches, data collection, and analysis techniques found in the literature. The previous researchers employed the following accounts of methodology in their study.

Samarpitha (2019) used an interview schedule to research "Fruit and Vegetable Street Vendors in

the Urban Informal Sector in Hyderabad, India". To acquire information from the selected street vendors, the personal interview approach was used with the assistance of a pre-tested complete interview plan. Pawar (2016) obtained the data using an interview schedule and observation in studying the self-employment and social empowerment of women vegetable vendors in Kolhapur city. A sample of 100 women vegetable vendors was selected as respondents using a convenience sampling technique.

Nath (2019) conducted a study on the income, vulnerability, and empowerment of women street vendors in Haflong town, Assam, using interview schedules and observations. The respondents were selected purposely from the daily market of Haflong town. The interview schedule is the most common technique used in studying vegetable vendors, as most of them were illiterate, and it was convenient for getting the data in spite of their busy schedule. Observation helps in understanding the real conditions of the vegetable vending as the researcher experiences the real-life situations of the vendors. Doibale et al. (2019) investigated the socio-demographic profile and factors that influence street vending in Aurangabad, Maharashtra. The poll was conducted using a pre-tested questionnaire, and it included all street sellers in Shahagunj.

In Yogyakarta, Indonesia, Brata (2010) used a survey to investigate the vulnerability of the urban informal sector: street vendors. The survey included 122 street sellers from various streets, and it was discovered that the majority of street vendors in Yogyakarta are vulnerable on a medium level. Usually, questionnaires complemented the survey as the primary method. These techniques were associated with the quantitative methods, and the findings were analysed using quantitative tools like SPSS and Microsoft Excel. Patil et al. (2019) conducted a study on street vendors in the Central Market area of Yeola, Maharashtra, India, and their integration in the market. architecture. Adopting a questionnaire and fieldwork for the collection of data, 85 vendors from various locations were selected randomly for the study.

THEMATIC REVIEW

Thematic review focuses on examining themes within a topic by identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns within the research topic. It was

classified into 7 themes, namely family, relationships, childcare and work, the urban informal sector, socioeconomic status, self-employment and empowerment, vulnerability, policy, and women's entrepreneurship.

Family, Relationship, Childcare, and Work

Wharton and Erickson (1995) found out that married women's involvement in emotional work does result in lower job-related well-being, which stems from the family emotion work women perform rather than from their performance of emotional labour on the job. On the other hand, women's job-related well-being is not as much at risk from women's performance of emotional labour at work.

Craig et al. (2012) argue that among the self-employed males and females, females give more time for the family and childcare as compared to males. Male self-employment is more likely to involve full-time work hours, while female self-employment is more likely to facilitate maximum time for childcare. They further emphasised that the self-employment of both husbands and wives tends to reinforce traditional gender roles. Gurley-Calvez et al. (2009) found out that self-employed women spend more time providing childcare and spend less time at work as compared to employed women. In Europe, aside from the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, Hildebrand and Williams (2003) report that self-employed women spend more time at work and less time caring for children than employed women. This study shows that mothers' use of self-employment for child care is more salient in some countries than others.

According to Hundley (2000), self-employed men's incomes increased with marriage and family size, but self-employed women's salaries declined with marriage, family size, and home hours. Self-employed women focused more on housekeeping and childcare, whereas self-employed males focused on market labour. Traditional gender segregation in labour was strengthened when both partners were self-employed. Crompton and Lyonette's (2008) research revealed that households with children induced higher family demands that resulted in higher levels of conflict, particularly for women. Martinengo et al. (2010) also highlighted that younger children are the predictors of family-to-work conflict as they demand more time for caring.

Urban Informal Sector

Bhowmik (2000) states that there are two reasons for increasing hawking: the large-scale layoffs in the organised industry in the city. Hawking can easily establish with low investment and no requirement of special skills, which can be easily set up, especially for the low-skilled migrants and urban poor. The second reason is that it provides cheap commodities to the retrenched workers in the city. These people can easily procure their needs at a low price from the hawkers. Hawkers were seen as victims of the law because they were viewed as the main obstructers to urban governance. Bhowmik concluded his study by saying banning hawking is not the solution, but legalising or regulating it is. 'Hawkers exist only because the consumers want them to exist.'

Khan and Khan (2009) concluded that women as the heads of the family had a positive effect on their contributions, and the burden of the family was shared by these informally employed women. The age of the women relates to their contributions; i.e., the older they are, the lesser their contributions. Informally employed women, married women, and women living in nuclear families pay more to the home budget, implying that the fewer adult male members in the household, the greater the burden on women.

Indon (2002) argues that the urban informal sector serves as a nursery for the poor and jobless, providing social protection and employment to those on the margins of society. This sector gives opportunities to those societies where the formal sector has failed to provide employment opportunities, so it plays an important role in the development and upliftment of the poor. However, it is wrong to see it as a 'panacea'—a cure for the ills of urban poverty; rather, it is the duty of the government and the private sector to rethink their economic contributions to the country's economy and to prepare them for their entry into the modern economic sector. Kalpagam (1984) says the informal sector arose from strict controls in the formal sector, thanks to public authority arrangements. Second, the identification of the informal sector as 'petty commodity production' led to an incomplete transition to capitalist development.

Socio-Economic Status

Ray and Mishra (2011) viewed vendors as a significant part of the informal sector, and it gives employment opportunities to poor migrants as well as lower-income groups. They also stated that even though the vendors offered affordable prices of goods to the urban poor, they were treated as lawbreakers, and the selling space was not regularised according to their requirements. Khan and Khan (2009) highlight that having more adult male members in the family reduces the amount of contribution by women and eases the strain on women. Unemployed spouses in the workers in the informal economy frequently rely on their wives for support. They also do not make an effort to get work and hence remain unemployed. They take their wife's employment as a substitute. The children's age reflected the participation of women in the workforce. The infant, the school-age, and the prime-age affect the participation of the mother in the workforce. The infant needs caring and nurturing, so the mother cannot fully participate in the workforce; school-age children need less care and attention, so the mother has more time to participate in the workforce. Prime-age children were more grown-up; they could even help their mother at her work.

Naqvi and Shahnaz (2002) found that more educated women are bound to take part in the labour force. Gonzalez (2004) highlights that married women were more devoted to work than unmarried women. La Ferra (2002) argues that there is a negative association between age and the amount of time women devote to work. He went on to say that while women's salaries grow with age and work experience, their returns decrease. Mazhambe (2017) found out that vending activities play an important socio-economic role for large numbers of urban poor households. Through the profits generated by street vendors, the standard of living for many urban poor households also improved. According to the report, laws and regulations that acknowledge street sellers as important contributors to the national economy should be implemented by the government and regulatory bodies. However, in order to legalise their operations, the vendors must register and pay for a hawker's licence. Lockshin et al. (2000) have uncovered that the mother's group of 26-35 years is bound to be economically dynamic when contrasted with the other age groups. Formal sector

employees attain their highest wages between the ages of 35 and 45, whereas informal sector employees reach their maximum earnings between the ages of 35 and 54.

Khan and Khan (2009) discovered that a woman's personal traits influence the extent of her contribution to the family budget. Education is seen to be the most important component that will impact women's engagement. It has a two-fold effect on contributions: if education increased her productivity in home tasks, she would choose to stay at home; yet, if the opportunity cost of being at home is higher, she would devote time in the market to earn and contribute to the household budget. Jones et al. (2003) have highlighted that married and single women have different approaches to work hours and income rates. We hypothesised that women contributing to the family budget in the urban informal sector would have a distinct pattern in terms of marital status. Women in this class rarely work before marriage, and if they do, they take a casual approach. They usually assist their mothers with household projects and home-based contract employment. They do, in fact, occasionally go out for factory employment if they are skilled. All of their labour is done to obtain the dowry. They are not obligated to work, but their circumstances force them to search for a job after marriage to support their expanding family.

Ray (2002) concluded that female-headed families are really poorer in South Africa; but, in Pakistan, in the presence of economies of family size and adult/child consumption relativities, female-headed households are less fortunate than others, but not in terms of per capita income. Female heads are identified as signs of family dissolution. Life is challenging for them due to societal stigma and the need to support their family. They are more widespread in Latin America. Africa and the Caribbean, where widows, divorcees, and single mothers are more likely to be integrated into extended family units. In Pakistan, traditional customs prevent women from remarrying, although families often support widows and abandoned women, even when their economic conditions are not ideal.

Self-Employment and Empowerment

Datta (2003) argues that although SEWA (Self-Employed Women Association) makes so much difference to poor families and women, the real

development for the associations is to get government assistance for the strengthening of the grassroots activities. Pawar (2016) revealed from the study that the women vegetable vendors definitely increased their social status, and they are socially empowered because of their engaging in self-employment.

Singh (2007) found out that the condition of women in India, especially in the rural areas, is deplorable, but their participation has increased in the informal sector. The rural women are now, with the help of self-efforts, being uplifted by coming out of their houses and working and earning a livelihood for their families, specifically in the informal sector. There should be efforts to empower women, especially in the rural areas. Many government laws and schemes provide strong support for women workers, encouraging them to leave their homes and establish their identities in society. But still, their implementation and administration are questionable. However, the informal sector also contributes to women's empowerment. Palaneeswari and Sasikala (2012) argue that women have been increasingly engaged in self-employment and entrepreneurship, which leads to property rights, political representation, social equality, personal rights, family development, market development, community development, and, at last, nation development. Nath (2019) found that the decision-making power among Haflong women street vendors in their households was highly satisfactory. Some recommendations were made by the researcher that the government needs to engage in tackling the problem and issue faced by the women vegetable vendors, and the development of the market infrastructure is highly necessary.

Taniguchi (2002) finds that having sufficient work experience and being married both significantly increase the rate of self-employment, while educational qualifications do not correlate with them. She also found out that having small children slows down the entry of women into self-employment as compared to women having young children. Craig et al. (2012) highlight that self-employment is useful for managing the 'time economy' of the family by scheduling available time for a family relationship, but the results suggest that self-employment of both husband and wife tends to reinforce traditional gender roles, which means gender inequality was maximised.

According to Hundley (2000), women and men have distinct motivations for going into self-employment; women go into self-employment to help with household production and to spend more time with their families, whereas men go into self-employment to make more money. When both the couples were engaged in self-employment, the gender division of labour was reinforced and maximised, which leads to maximising gender inequality. The earning differences between males and females in self-employment are one of the factors that result in gender inequality. After marriage and having children, self-employed women's wages often decrease, whereas self-employed men's incomes typically rise under comparable conditions. The significant disparity in the commitments of self-employed spouses to market and family activities may be the cause of the comparatively wide male/female wage discrepancy among self-employed individuals.

Vulnerability

Brata (2010) found out that among the street vendors from his universe, the vulnerability was highly experienced by the food seller (fruits, vegetables, drinks, and snacks). He also argues that vulnerability varies across the location of vending. Becker (2004) contends that efforts to reduce poverty will fail if vulnerable people in the informal economy and their employment needs are not addressed. Furthermore, the vulnerability of the poor is linked to changes in global functioning. With a high incidence of vulnerability, street vendors' capacity to maintain their survival ability would dwindle. Nath (2009) highlighted in his study that the women vegetable vendors are highly vulnerable on the ground of carrying or head-loading their vegetables, especially in the hilly regions of the Northeast India region.

Bullying, according to Dabir-Alai (2004), is the most susceptible aspect of vendors, accounting for almost 73% of respondents. Meanwhile, just 1% of sellers have relationships with suppliers or creditors, indicating that the majority of street vendors self-fund their businesses. According to Vijaya (2016), the primary concerns of women street sellers are insecurity and uncertainty due to the illegal nature of their businesses. Because they are women street vendors, they are victims of crimes such as eve-teasing, sexual harassment, transportation, financial concerns, and spatial issues.

Policy

Tholkappian (2014) argues that the unorganised sector workers are the backbone of the country, which needs further initiatives for the welfare of the unorganised sector. Though the government implements certain schemes and acts for the protection and upliftment of unorganised sector workers, it still needs to take further initiatives for welfare. He highlights that the expansion of globalisation is likely to intensify the ruthless exploitation of women who do not receive adequate compensation for their services. Due to globalisation, the unorganised sector is vulnerable and should be concerned about issues like food security, health, jobs, wage security, and accident security through a well-planned, comprehensive strategy. Mazhambe (2017) emphasised that although the informal sector, particularly street vendors, makes significant contributions to the Zimbabwean economy, the government and relevant authorities have not established regulations and policies for these vendors.

Women Entrepreneurship

Agrawal (2018) revealed that women entrepreneurs faced multifarious constraints and challenges during their entrepreneurial journey. In the current study she tried to classify these constraints into four broad categories: socio-cultural issues, economic issues, psychological issues and managerial issues. According to Majumdar and Khumukcham (2021), the norms and customs of an indigenous society may allow "only female members" to participate in particular entrepreneurial activities and make money. This study also emphasises the cultural orientation perspective when comprehending the interaction between family and the female entrepreneur.

The RESEARCH GAP AND The RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

Based on the aforesaid review of literature, the research gap and the rationale for the study are listed as under.

Numerous scholars have conducted studies on women's vegetable vendors in various regions of the world. Generally, the studies emphasised

difficult work conditions that required attention. But the conditions of the Mizo Women Vegetable Vendors are different from the previous studies. Instead, the majority of vegetable vendors in Mizo society was female. Therefore, a study on the factors that led to the majority of women entering the vegetable vending industry and their working conditions is required.

The previous studies were conducted in different countries and other states in India. In Mizo society, having a culture and way of life that are different requires contextualisation. Few studies have examined Mizoram from economic perspectives, shedding light on their economic conditions within the context of Mizo society. The study is proposed to be made from a sociological perspective, which may add more perspectives for future researchers who are interested in this field.

The specific study on women vegetable vendors in relation to their family and work balance is near nil, and most of the previous studies on this relationship were mainly related to self-employed women in general. As a result, an in-depth study of the link between women vegetable sellers and the management of their job and family life is strongly desired.

Mizoram is a landlocked state that shares its borders with the neighbouring countries of Bangladesh and Myanmar. Numerous migrant workers from Myanmar settled in Aizawl and engaged in vegetable vending as it was easily accessible. The study on the conditions of migrant vegetable vendors is very rare. Therefore, an in-depth study on the causes and problems faced by the migrant women vegetable vendors needs consideration.

The need for the study of women vegetable vendors is highly crucial, as it will bring to light the sections of society who have been voiceless and largely invisible in society and whom we have taken for granted.

THE OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Following are the objectives of the proposed study.

1. To study the socio-economic conditions of women vegetable vendors
2. To analyse the causes of taking up the vegetable vending by natives and migrants
3. Studying the management and balance of their work and their family life is a key focus.
4. To understand the social empowerment of women vegetable vendors by assessing various indicators of empowerment.
5. To find out the problems faced by women vegetable vendors and to make recommendations as necessary

METHODOLOGY

An outline of research methodology demonstrates the process of conducting a specific piece of research. It scrutinises the data related to a particular research topic and elucidates the methods and strategies employed to pinpoint it.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The proposed study will be exploratory in nature, using a mixed method. Exploratory research is a methodological approach that investigates research problems lacking past data or having only a few studies for reference. It serves as a tool for the initial research problem. This research is This research was conducted to define the nature of the study and to enhance understanding of the problem. Exploratory research is flexible and unstructured. It requires the researcher to investigate different sources, such as published secondary data, survey data from surveys and research items.

Mixed-method research includes both the quantitative and qualitative strands in a single study. In a single study, researchers gather, analyse, and interpret both quantitative and qualitative data.

OPERATIONALISATION OF CONCEPTS

Operationalisation of concepts refers to the process of transforming abstract concepts into measurable observations. For the purpose of the study, seven concepts will be operationalised, namely: the informal sector, women vegetable vendors, gender, entrepreneurship, empowerment, work-life balance, and migrant workers.

INFORMAL SECTOR

The term informal sector was coined by Keith Hart, a British anthropologist, in 1972 while studying the economic activities of rural migrants engaged in informal activities having the autonomous capacity for generating incomes in Accra, Ghana (Hart, Keith. 1972). The informal economy corresponds with low levels of organisation, small-scale production, casual employment, and a lack of protection without job security or health insurance.

Limited employment opportunities in the formal economy result in many people seeking alternative employment in the informal economy. The informal sector has a gender bias, with women being more likely than men to be involved in the informal economy but much more likely than men to work as informal workers in the formal sector.

WOMEN VEGETABLE VENDORS

In the informal sector, vendors are recognised for having self-employed employees. According to the National Policy of Urban Street Vendors (2004), a street vendor is "a person who distributes products or services to the public without having a permanent seat/structure but with a temporary one. Street vendors can either be fixed, occupying static structures or seats, or mobile, travelling from place to place. Stationary vendors occupy space on pavements or other public locations, while mobile vendors travel from place to place, bringing their products on pushcarts, bikes, or baskets on their heads." Under this category, women vegetable vendors are defined as those who sell vegetables both in the market and on the street. The vegetables are locally grown, and some are taken from neighbouring states, like Assam. In Mizoram, we have stationary vendors and peripatetic vendors. Stationary vendors are those who were registered under the state government and hold licences, while peripatetic vendors are those vendors who are temporary and do not occupy permanent space. They are usually villagers and migrants from nearby towns and states.

GENDER

It refers to behaviours, personal traits, and social positions that society attributes as female or male. Gender is a social and legal status that encompasses a set of expectations from society

regarding behaviour, characteristics, and thoughts. Each culture has its sets of norms about the way that people should behave based on their gender.

Gender includes gender roles, which are societal expectations about how men and women should act based on their assigned sex. For instance, women are expected to be polite, accommodating, and nurturing, whereas men are generally expected to be strong, aggressive, and bold. In the field of occupation, there is a general consensus in managerial and sociological research that certain occupations are gendered. For instance, public relations, nursing, and teaching are considered "female gendered" occupations, whereas stock trading, engineering, and construction are considered "male gendered."

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

This refers to the process of creating a business enterprise and managing the associated uncertainties in order to generate a profit. Based on the business activity chosen, the uncertainties faced by the entrepreneur are more or less. In particular, the vegetable vendors, who sell perishable goods, lack a refrigerated container to store their leftovers. This results in reduced profits and increased uncertainties in their business activities.

EMPOWERMENT

Empowerment is an act of empowering someone or the granting of the power, right or authority to perform various acts or duties. Women's empowerment may be characterised in its context as supporting women's feelings of self-worth, their capacity to make their own choices, and their right to influence societal change for themselves and others. Women have been increasingly engaged in self-employment and entrepreneurship, which leads to property rights, political representation, social equality, personal rights, family development, market development, community development, and, at last, nation-building. Engaging in vegetable vending positively affects women's status within the family by providing them with income, which contributes to their empowerment.

WORK-FAMILY LIFE BALANCE

It describes a situation when a person is actively involved in both areas and has a well-integrated link between job and home life. Children are

effectively socialised when job and home life are balanced. It is seen that among the self-employed women and men, women spend more time with their children than their spouse; they give more time to their children.

MIGRANT WORKERS

A person who moves to another country hoping to get a job. Before and after the military coup in Myanmar, many migrant workers from that country settled in Mizoram. The most easily available and accessible occupation for women is vegetable vending. As a result, many women engaged in vegetable vending and occasionally encountered problems with local vendors.

UNIVERSE AND SAMPLE

The study will be conducted in Aizawl, the capital city of Mizoram. Aizawl, being the capital of Mizoram, houses around 45% of the total population, which attracts most farmers to invest their products in the city. We will select Aizawl New Market, Vaivakawn Bazar, Chanmari Bazar, Tennis Court Bazar, Thakthing Bazar, and Bawngkawn Bazar to represent the stationary vendors. For the peripatetic vendors, we will select 5 vendors each from the Saturday morning bazaar across 19 AMC wards using purposive sampling. The growing city of Aizawl serves as an appropriate place of study because it has the largest vegetable market, with the majority of the keepers being female.

The study will select 200 vendors through purposive sampling. For stationary vendors, 55 vendors will be selected from the Aizawl New Market, as it has the highest number of women vegetable vendors, and 10 vendors each from 5 markets, namely Vaivakawn, Chanmari, Bawngkawn, Thakthing and Tennis Court Bazar, as they are relatively small. Another 95 vendors will be collected for the purpose of peripatetic vendors, out of which 5 Saturday morning peripatetic vendors will be collected from each of 19 AMC wards. We will select 6 respondents for the case study, with 2 vendors from each category: stationary, peripatetic, and migrant vegetable vendors. The sample for peripatetic vendors will be collected in all wards of Aizawl municipality to maintain the fair distribution of the sample.

PRINCIPLE OF INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION

For the purpose of the study, the Aizawl Municipal Corporation (AMC) area will be the universe of the study, and the rest of the districts and localities will be excluded for convenience's sake. For the stationary vendors, only the selected 6 markets, namely Aizawl New Market, Vaivakawn, Bawngkawn, Thakthing and Tennis Court Bazar, will be included, as they contribute the highest number of vegetable vendors and are the hotspots for vegetable vending. All the other markets with stationary vendors will be excluded from the study, as they do not have enough vendors to represent the research need. In the case of peripatetic vendors, only the selected 5 vendors each from 19 AMC (Aizawl Municipal Corporation) wards will be included for the study in which all the remaining peripatetic vendors from these wards fall under the criteria of exclusion. Therefore, the research will include only the selected 200 women vegetable vendors from the mentioned locality markets and wards. Moreover, for the purpose of review of literature, international and national journal publications were included since they were accessible and available. Since publications in the context of Mizoram were limited, they have been excluded for the purpose of review.

SOURCES OF DATA

Secondary sources shall include published and unpublished theses, books, articles, journals, newspapers, census reports, etc. Collect primary data from the field using methods such as The research methods include interview schedules, key informant interviews (KII), observations, and case studies. The questions in the interview primarily focus on the problems and context outlined in the objectives. Key informant interviews (KII) will be used to get insight from association leaders, NGOs, and government officials.

CLASSIFICATION AND TABULATION

The respondents will be classified into 2 types: Stationary and Peripatetic Vendors. Stationary vendors are those who hold proper registrations and licences from state municipal corporations. The data will be collected from the state

government, and it will be classified and tabulated accordingly. Peripatetic vendors are street vendors who are temporary and not registered under the state government; they do not have permanent seats or places. They sell their goods on the streets and on the pavements on Saturday morning.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATIONS

The collected data will be classified and analysed with the help of SPSS, KII (Key Informant Interview), and a case study, which will be followed by findings, conclusions, and suggestions from the study. Social mapping will be done to have a better understanding of the study area and location of the types of vendors and their seating arrangements within the geographical boundary of Aizawl city and Aizawl Municipal Corporation area.

RESEARCH ETHICS TO BE FOLLOWED

We will base the research ethics on the norms observed and followed in most social science research.

1. The suggested study will be conducted solely for academic objectives, and the researcher will do his or her best to adhere to it.
2. The respondents shall not be coerced into providing information against their will in any way. All responders will be forced to answer willingly and will be treated with the highest care.
3. The researcher would welcome the respondents with humility and respect.
4. The responders will schedule the interview session, including the date, time, and location, at their convenience.
5. Following each interview session, respondents will be acknowledged for their participation.
6. The respondents will be made aware of the need for confidentiality throughout the study and fieldwork process, and their privacy will be scrupulously protected.
7. During the interview sessions, the researcher will maintain strong discipline, be prompt, and endeavour to keep a caring attitude. Transparency and honesty shall be upheld at all times.

8. The researcher will always acknowledge the contributions of writers and academics to the population involved in this research.
9. While collecting primary data, the researcher will aim to avoid any type of misleading or erroneous information, as well as any type of prejudice.
10. The researcher will attempt not to exaggerate the goals and objectives of this research investigation.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Following are the possible limitations of the proposed study.

1. Since the study will cover only the vegetable vendors of Aizawl city, the findings cannot reflect the entire population of vegetable vendors.
2. Knowledge of the exact numbers of vendors is impossible.
3. It may also be difficult to get the information, as the vegetable vendors are usually busy.

4. It is not possible to conduct a survey on women vegetable merchants in all areas of Mizoram.
5. Time, manpower, and resource constraints prevent covering the total population of female vegetable vendors in Aizawl City.
6. There was not enough literature to contextualise the study of female vegetable vendors in Aizawl.
7. Due to the pandemic, close contact is to be used under state guidelines.

TENTATIVE CHAPTERISATION

1. Introduction
2. Review of Literature
3. Methodology
4. Socio-economic profile of the Respondents
5. Job Entry and Work Culture
6. Work-family life balance and Empowerment Issues
7. Summary, Conclusion and Recommendation

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Received on 20-06-2024

Accepted on 01-07-2024

Published on 15-07-2024

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