

SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE OF MIZO WOMEN VEGETABLE VENDORS IN AIZAWL

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Abstract: The present study aims to examine the socio-economic profile of Mizo women vegetable vendors in Aizawl. Aizawl is divided into four zones, from which 50 vendors were selected from each zone, resulting in a total sample size of 200 vendors, using purposive sampling. Data were collected through an interview schedule, and the data analysis was conducted using SPSS. The findings show that most of the vendors (84.5%) are between the ages of 31 and 60. A large number of the vendors (58%) are married, which means they have to sell vegetables to make ends meet. The educational qualifications of Mizo women vegetable vendors are generally low, with most having completed high school; 21 vendors were reported to be illiterate. However, in comparison to vendors in other states of India, Mizo women vendors possess slightly higher educational qualifications. Furthermore, it was observed that Mizo women vendors work long hours, with 70% working for 12 hours each day, and their monthly income ranges from Rs. 10,000 to Rs. 20,000. The results show that selling vegetables is not just a way to make money, but also a way to stay alive that is affected by things like age, marital duties, lack of education, and need for money. This shows how important it is to quickly set up programs that help women in the informal sector by giving them access to training, financial services, healthcare, and social programs.

Keywords: Socio-Economic; Age; Marital Status; Educational Qualification; Working Hours; Income.

INTRODUCTION

Socio-economic status (SES) serves as a multifaceted indicator that encapsulates an individual's professional background alongside the economic and social position of their family relative to others. This measure is shaped by various elements, including income, education, and occupation (Directory, 2025). When analysing the correlation between family income and individual income, it is essential to include not just the characteristics of the person but also the overarching context of household income, educational achievement, and work conditions. Socio-economic variables significantly influence individuals' lifestyles by determining their educational achievements, skill acquisition, and financial situations (Devi and Sachdeva 2022). Women do not possess equal status inside society structures. Religious and socio-cultural customs have limited the ways that women can go forward in the world. As a result, they find themselves in a position of disadvantage concerning their social standing. Women depend on men for financial support and do hard, never-ending housework. However, women were not appreciated or recognised though they help and care their family without any expectation in return. a woman devotes her whole life for the existence of her family.

Women were good in managing the finance though they can't read or write, this is because they have deep understanding of the fundamentals of economic (Laxmidevi and Athani, 2018). Women demonstrate remarkable economic acumen within the domestic sphere, yet their invaluable contributions often go unrecognised. Women vendors are recognised as autonomous agents operating within informal sectors. Women who were deprived of expertise and knowledge frequently found themselves in positions such as housemaids or street vendors, engaged in the sale of vegetables, fruits, fish, ornaments, or nuts (Anjaria, 2006 and Devi et al., 2024). The rise in female engagement within the informal sector, exemplified by women vending, is predominantly motivated by economic imperatives rather than alterations in employment dynamics. Furthermore, elements influencing women's engagement in unorganised labour encompass familial disintegration resulting from bereavement or divorce, the unemployment of spouses, instances of domestic violence, and the coercive expectations from in-laws to provide financial support to the household.

Nisbet (1967) observes that the words 'formal' and 'informal' were utilised in anthropological discourse throughout the 1960s, embodying connotations that align with their contemporary interpretations in development studies and

employment policy (Devi et al., 2024). Keith Hart originated the concept of the informal sector in his 1973 study of Ghana, performed under the auspices of the ILO in Geneva. In urban economy, the street vendors represent an important sector for the development of economy (Devi et al., 2024). Street vending represents a widespread occurrence and constitutes a significant aspect of the informal sectors within our country. The National Policy of Urban Street Vendors, established in 2006 by the Government of India, articulates that a street vendor is characterised as an individual who provides goods for sale to the public without the possession of a permanent built structure, instead utilising a temporary static structure or a mobile stall (or head load). Street vendors can be either fixed, meaning they stay in one place, like on sidewalks or in other public or private spaces, or they can be mobile, meaning they move around with their goods on push carts, bikes or even on their heads (Reporter, n.d.). Additionally, they may engage in commerce within the confines of moving trains or buses.

This policy document defines the term urban vendor to encompass both traders and service providers, including both stationary and mobile vendors. There are also a lot of local and regional words used to describe them, like hawker, sidewalk shops, and pavement traders, to name a few. A significant portion of employment within the unorganised economy is occupied by street vendors (Saha, 2011 and HOUSING & URBAN DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT, 2012). Women vending is a common activity since it has low earning potential, is easy to get into, doesn't require many skills, and is a kind of self-employment. In countries with weak economies, like India, many people, notably in the state of Mizoram and its capital, Aizawl, make a living by selling a wide range of goods and services through female vendors. A female seller talked about her views on the social and political scene, which is interesting and shows how many factors affect her life and how she makes a living. Thus, it indicates that participation in these occupations is not limited to those lacking literacy; at times, individuals with education also opt for these roles. Notwithstanding this, members of the local government, along with existing governmental rules and regulations, present numerous challenges and biases against women vendors. The women vendors, especially those selling vegetables on Saturdays, predominantly hail from outside Aizawl city.

Nonetheless, they strive to lead lives of dignity and respect through their diligent efforts. Consequently, Aizawl is emerging as a developing city. Many people from rural regions have moved to the city since it is the capital and there are many good job prospects. This influx has led to a large workforce and more pressure on the market, in line with how a market changes over time.

This study aims to investigate the socio-economic situation of Mizo women vegetable vendors in Aizawl. The socio-economic status can help determine their eligibility and improve comprehension of their circumstances. Different socioeconomic groups face different problems, needs, and priorities that need to be understood. In social science research, it is important to look at the socioeconomic backgrounds of the people who answer questions. This helps us understand their social and economic situations and adds to the study of their personality traits. This study will concentrate solely on Mizo women vendors, despite the existence of male vendors, as the predominant vendors are women.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Ray and Mishra (2011) say that vendors are an important aspect of the unorganised economy since they give impoverished migrants and those with low incomes jobs. The vendors said that although offering low-cost goods to the urban poor, they were viewed as criminals and that the selling areas were not controlled to accommodate their requirements. Khan and Khan (2009) stress that women's contributions are reduced and their responsibilities are lessened when there are more adult male family members. In the informal sector, unemployed husbands frequently rely on their wives. Additionally, they don't put up any effort to get work, which leads to ongoing unemployment. They see their wife's job as a substitute. The children's ages demonstrated how involved mothers were in the workforce. Maternal labour engagement is influenced by the presence of newborns, school-age children, and prime-age persons. In contrast to school-age children, who require less care, infants require a lot of attention and nurturing, which limits the mother's capacity to participate fully in the economy. This gives the mother more possibilities to work. Prime-aged children are more mature and able to help their moms with work-related duties.

Chakraborty and Koley (2018) investigate the socioeconomic circumstances of street vendors in a Jamshedpur daily market. The socioeconomic position of women street vendors was illustrated in the study, showing that their financial situation is quite poor. The study found that the majority of respondents were from poor scheduled tribal households, and that the illiteracy rate among female salespeople reduces their earnings. Saikia (2019) examined how socioeconomic variables affected women's employment in Assam's unorganised sector. She claims that rather than being incorporated into modern formal wage employment, it is clear that the Indian workforce is becoming more and more informal. Changes in the job market may show how globalisation has made things more competitive, risky, and unpredictable for both businesses and people. This is a common thing to do in Assam and all-around India. The National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) says that even though more women are working in India and Assam, most of the occupations are still informal. Informality is common since people don't have much authority to negotiate, can't move around much, and a lot of women can't read or write.

Trivedi et al. (2020) examined the social and economic circumstances of female vegetable vendors. It was revealed that the vegetable vending sector is dominated by the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) group. Since it is their family company, women continue to work in this field after marriage. Even though female vegetable vendors have low literacy rates, they can nevertheless make more money than Gujarat's minimum wage for unskilled labour. They have their own home, but it is not quite complete. A persistent lack of funds might occur from avoiding regular savings or borrowing from financial institutions due to ignorance or financial illiteracy. As a result, women who sell vegetables make up a sizable portion of the nation's unorganised economy, providing affordable and practical services to the public while also acting as a source of self-employment.

Study on the Socioeconomic Background of Ongole, Prakasam District's Female Street Vendors. They claim that street vendors are the main players in the unorganised economy and that street vending is a prominent activity within it. Street vendors were frequently victimised by police and local officials. They were physically and psychologically tortured as their job is considered

illegal. This kind of physical violence, sexual harassment, and eve teasing are more prevalent among women vendors than male vendors. Kumar and Bharathi (2022) study on the socio-economic circumstances of street food sellers in Salem City, Tamil Nadu and found out that the street food industry greatly lowers the cost of living in cities and provides a number of employment opportunities (Krishna Kumar & Bharathi, 2022).

RESEARCH GAP

Most previous studies concentrated on economies of scale and the informal economy's role in contributing to national growth. The preliminary investigation concentrated on the economic dimensions of job creation expenses, labour absorption, and revenue potential. Previous research on the informal sector is inadequate because it insufficiently addresses the social dimensions of the study. Prior research on the urban informal sector has primarily emphasised macro-level analysis, overlooking the distinct characteristics and developments associated with small-scale informal activities, such as vegetable selling. Furthermore, previous studies have primarily examined the informal sector in general, rather than concentrating specifically on women, despite their considerable contributions to this area. Previous research was conducted in various countries and different states within India. The unique culture and lifestyle of Mizo society require contextualisation. Within the context of Mizo society, there has been limited research conducted in Mizoram that clarifies their economic conditions from an economic perspective. This study seeks to analyse vending from a sociological perspective, thereby contributing to the body of research for future scholars in this field.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

- To study the socio-economic milieu of the Mizo women vegetable vendors.
- To illustrate the demographic view of the Mizo women vegetable vendors

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive research design and a non-probability sampling approach, namely purposive sampling. The study's universe encompasses Aizawl, specifically focusing on marketplaces and street vegetable vendors within its regions. A sample of 200 merchants was selected from four zones of Aizawl: east, west, north, and south. Fifty sellers from each zone were selected using purposive sampling. The sample comprises exclusively female vegetable merchants, both stationery and itinerant. The research excludes mobile vendors who sell veggies from trucks or on foot. Both primary and secondary sources of data were utilised. Data was gathered utilising a self-created interview schedule, and the obtained data was processed and evaluated employing SPSS.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the present study undertaken to find out the socio-economic status of the Mizo women vegetable vendors in Aizawl will be presented below.

AGE COMPOSITION

Age denotes the duration of an individual's existence on Earth, from birth to death (Wright, 2025). Human age is often categorised into five stages: infancy, adolescence, early adulthood, adulthood, and old age (Mariamc_Teacher, n.d.). The significant diversity in age grading throughout human societies underscores its relevance. The respondent's age categories have been delineated into 16-30, 31-45, 46-60, and over 60 years. The age distribution of the responders is presented in the table below:

Table 1: Age Composition

Age	Frequency	Percentage
16-30 years	7	3.5
31-45 years	83	41.5
46-60 years	86	43.0
Above 60 years	24	12.0
Total	200	100.0

Source: Field data

The age composition of the respondents is presented in Table 1. The results show that most respondents fall within the age range of 31 to 60

years. Among the participants, 7 (3.5%) are in the age range of 16-30 years, while 83 (41.5%) vendors fall within the age range of 31-45 years. Among the age group of 46-60 years, there are 86 vendors, accounting for 43%, while 24 vendors, representing 12%, are above the age of 60 years and are also involved in vegetable vending. This is due to the absence of a defined age for retirement or superannuation. A comparable finding is observed in the study of women street vendors in Bihar, where it was reported that the majority of the women vendors fall within the age range of 35-65 years. This demographic prevailed as a result of economic necessity, familial obligations, and the scarcity of alternative job prospects for women within this group (Meghna et.al., 2023). Christella's research on female street vendors in Chengalpattu District, Tamil Nadu, revealed that the majority of the vendors are middle-aged women. This demographic trend is due to their low levels of formal education, which makes them more likely to sell things on the street (Christella, J. 2024).

MARITAL STATUS

Marital status pertains to an individual's relationship with their partner. Marriage serves as a framework that brings men and women together within the context of family life. A stable partnership exists where a man and a woman are socially permitted to procreate; this right to procreation includes the right to partake in sexual interactions. The respondent's marital status includes the categories of married, unmarried, divorced, and widowed (Sanli et al., 2025).

Table 2: Marital Status

Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage
Married	116	58.0
Unmarried	09	4.5
Widow	40	20.0
Divorce	35	17.5
Total	200	100.0

Source: Field survey

Table 2 shows that 116 (58%) vendors are married, whereas a mere 9(4.5%) vendors remain unmarried. A total of 40 respondents, representing 20%, have been identified as widows, while 35 respondents, accounting for 17.5%, are classified

as divorced. This is due to the fact that marriage entails the responsibility of nurturing the family, which often necessitates participation in the informal sector for the family's survival. The income generated by a single spouse would not be adequate for the entire family to rely upon. Married women with dependents see the opportunities presented by vegetable vending for economic advancement, given its accessibility and low capital requirements. Shweta Sharma's research on female street vendors in Delhi also indicates the high incidence of marriage within this cohort (Shweta, 2024). Guha's study indicated that a considerable percentage of the women street vendors are married (Guha et al., 2021).

EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION

Education is described as the process of obtaining or imparting structured instruction in schools, colleges, or universities. Education is progressively intertwined with work, establishing it as a fundamental aspect of the economic foundation of society (Burton, 1962). Understanding the respondents' educational attainment facilitates the identification of whether the uneducated or the highly educated individuals had more challenges in their working conditions within society. The interview schedule used for this study ask about the respondents' levels of formal education attained at various institutions, including elementary, middle school, high school, graduate, and illiteracy. The interview schedule is employed in order to get comprehensive information, as some participants are illiterate and possess minimal educational credentials.

Table 3: Educational Qualification

Educational Qualification	Frequency	Percentage
Primary level	36	18.0
Middle school	71	35.5
High School	60	30.0
Higher Secondary	11	5.5
Graduate and above	1	.5
Illiterate	21	10.5
Total	200	100.0

Source: Field Survey

Table 3 indicates that the majority of vendors possess middle school and high school educational

qualifications. The elementary level has 36 vendors (18%), whereas 71 vendors (35.5%) have achieved a middle school educational certification. Sixty (30%) merchants completed their education up to the high school level, and eleven (5.5%) vendors attained the upper secondary level. Only one seller (0.5%) possesses a graduate credential, whilst 21 merchants (10.5%) are illiterate. The sellers mostly originate from rural backgrounds or have relocated from rural regions where education was deprioritized in favour of everyday survival. The majority participated in agricultural cultivation as soon as they were capable, leading to a diminished educational background. The primary reason for not pursuing education is poverty; they originate from a financially disadvantaged household that cannot prioritise education due to several other essential needs for survival. The study indicated that Mizo women vegetable vendors possess low educational qualifications. The similar finding was found out by Sharma that a significant proportion of women street vendors in Delhi possess low educational qualifications (Sharma, S. 2024). Mc Kay and Osborne's (2021) exploration of the everyday lives of women street vendors in India revealed that the educational attainment among these vendors is predominantly poor, with a majority being illiterate or possessing just a lower basic education (Mc Kay and Osborne, 2021).

WORKING HOURS

Working hours are the total number of hours a person works for pay or the hours a business is open to the public and doing business. Previous research on women street vendors show that they work long hours, often all day, and in some circumstances, these hours get longer over time because of economic needs and competition. In this scenario, the available options for working hours included 10 hours, 11 hours, 12 hours, and more than 12 hours.

Table 4: Working hours

Time	Frequency	Percentage
10 hours	26	13.0
11 hours	9	4.5
12 hours	140	70.0
More than 12 hours	25	12.5
Total	200	100.0

Source: Field survey

The data presented in Table 4 indicates that 26(13%) vendors operate for 10 hours, whereas only 9(4.5%) operate for 11 hours. 140(70%) vendors work 12 hours a day, usually from 5:30 AM to 6:00 PM. This shows how hard it is to sell vegetables, which usually means getting up early to get them, transporting them, setting up the booth and selling them all day. Twenty-five vendors, or 12.5% of the total, work for more than 12 hours. They come from adjacent villages at midnight to sell their veggies until they run out. A majority of vendors work more than 12 hours a day, which likely causes a lot of physical and emotional stress. The vendors in issue probably have to be ready for unsold products, or work in busy regions for long periods of time.

It can be seen from the data that vegetable vending is not a simple job rather a job which requires time and hard-work with more than 80% of vendors working 12 or more hours a day. This shows how hard the women vendors work and how dedicated they are, as well as how important it is to work longer hours to make a living and earn more. Longer working hours resulted in work-life imbalance, health issue and occupational weariness. This calls for the need for help services like rest places, healthcare access, and financial security for women who work in the informal sector. Naz and Roy's studied and examine the health status assessment of female street vendors in Patna, Bihar, suggesting that the extended working hours of these vendors lead to several health problems (Naz and Roy, 2025).

MONTHLY INCOME

Income usually means the amount of money, property, and other valuable things that someone earns in exchange for goods or services during a certain period of time and get a profit. These studies show that the income of Mizo women who sell vegetables is greatly affected by things including how much money they start with, where their business is located, how they promote their products, and how good the vegetables are. Monthly revenue data is essential since it reflects the vendor's working conditions and the nature of their profits in proportion to their working hours. The interview schedule for monthly income was classified into four categories: below Rs 10,000, Rs 10,000 to below Rs 20,000, Rs 20,000 to below Rs

30,000, and over Rs 30,000. The collected data is presented below:

Table 5: Monthly Income

Income Per Month	Frequency	Percentage
Below Rs 10000	39	19.5
Rs 10000-Below 20000	93	46.5
Rs 20000-below 30000	62	31.0
above 30000	6	3.0
Total	200	100.0

Source: Field Survey

Table 5 indicates that 39 (19.5%) vendors make less than Rs 10,000 a month, while 93 (46.5%) sellers make between Rs 10,000 and Rs 20,000 a month. Sixty-two merchants (31%) make between Rs. 20,000 and 30,000 per month, while six sellers (3%) earn above Rs. 30,000. The majority of vendors make between Rs 10,000 and Rs 20,000 a month. Mizo women who sell vegetables work long hours, yet they don't make enough money each month to cover their costs. But they have no choice but to sell vegetables because they don't have any other skills or education.

CONCLUSION

The study indicates that Mizo women vegetable sellers primarily belong to the age range of 31–60 years, with numerous individuals persisting in this occupation beyond the age of 60 due to the lack of retirement provisions in the informal sector. The majority consists of married women who are often obligated to participate in vending to augment household income due to their spouse's inadequate salaries. A considerable number of the respondents is either widowed or divorced, hence emphasising their need on vending for their livelihood and survival.

Most vendors have a high school degree or a middle school degree. This is because many people come from rural areas where poverty and the demands of farm work make it hard to get an education and do well in school. Due to the absence of formal schooling has limited their options, relegating them to low-skill, accessible occupations like vegetable peddling.

The vegetable vending is exceedingly demanding, with more than 80% of participants working 12 hours or more daily. The extended

working hours, coupled with physical and emotional stress, illustrate the labor-intensive characteristics of the vegetable vending. Nevertheless, despite their commitment and level and hard work, income levels remain low, with the majority earning around Rs. 10,000–20,000 monthly. The gap between effort and compensation shows how financially unstable these women vendors are. However, they have to keep working in this field since they don't have many skills or choices.

The findings shows that vegetable vending is not only a means of income but a survival strategy influenced by age, marital obligations, educational limitations, and economic need of Mizo women

vegetable vendors. The conditions of these Mizo women vegetable vendors show how important it is to have programs that help these women vendors in the informal sector by giving them access to training, financial services, healthcare, and welfare programs.

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