

## Exploring Health Conditions of Female Street Vendors in Prayagraj city

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### **Abstract**

*In present days, people tend to purchase a lot through street vendors or hawkers as they serve us with necessary items at affordable prices and at convenient places. But these street vendors especially female street vendors encounter many grave problems be it social, economical or health related issues. This study aims to know the health conditions and occupational vulnerabilities experienced by women working in this occupation. For collecting primary data field survey was opted & limiting our study to 100 respondents only. For the selection of respondents convenient sampling & purposive sampling was adopted. Data gathered was analyzed & represented through pie chart, bar diagram and percentage analysis. Key findings shows that women predominantly are suffering from one or the other health issues, work for long hours, misbehave by government employees & tend to utilise more private health care compared to public health services which restricts them buying other basic things due to decreased purchasing power and ultimately deplete their standard of living. It also discusses the factors responsible for under utilisation of public healthcare services. Therefore, it is advised so-that government must emerge with superior rpolicies & programmes which caters their need of funds for businesses in turn improving their standard of living, policies which grants adequate access to education for the children of women working in this field. Targeted health programmes for female street vendors, attention should be made on maintaining hygiene at public toilets and awareness programmes should be launched.*

**Key Words:** *Women Streetvenders, Health Conditions, Occupational Vulnerabilities, Prayagraj, Public Healthcare Services*

## **Introduction**

Street vendors are independent sellers who can be seen operating businesses on roads, streets and tourist spots. They contribute to urban informal economy in many ways, i.e. supporting formal enterprises, creating jobs for transport operators, storage provider, etc. or by generating revenue through permits, fees & fines, payment for licenses. According to a report released by National Policy on Urban Street Vendors (2006), almost 93% of workforce is employed in unorganised sector only. Women street vendors also do not lag behind to their male counterpart in this field. They are showing rising trend in count and contribution to the urban informal economy. They keep urban life very vibrant from selling delicious street foods like Chaat, Samosa and Paani-Puri, to providing fruits, vegetables and household items at affordable prices. For many women vending is adaptable source of income which helps them in balancing work with family responsibilities. It empowers them through providing them economic independence, decision making rights and financial strength. But these women vendors continually struggle due to lack of legal support, societal norms, harassment in public spaces, limited access to capital & basic amenities.

Biologically women are known as weaker section, hence are more prone to bad health conditions. This profession requires hard labour and physical work as they are forced to work in polluting environment, extreme weather conditions and unhygienic working conditions, which directly affect their health. Bad health conditions affect their productivity in work. Thus, due to their occupation, they are exposed to serious health conditions. Being an important segment of our economy, it becomes responsibility of the government to safeguard them from daily haphazard they are facing through suitable policy and programmes. Therefore, this paper seeks to know their actual health conditions & occupational vulnerabilities in Prayagraj city.

## **Review of Literature**

Din & Farhad (2023), in their paper on “women workers in informal sector in Kashmir: understanding the reproductive health and occupational vulnerability of women street vendors in Srinagar” discusses that women vendor because of their job type they face number of vulnerabilities which directly affect their health conditions. Except vegetable women vendors, they were found working overtime. Thus, additional to the adversity they suffer for being on streets, lack of basic amenities and extreme weather conditions particularly impact their health. They undergo through consequences of diseases like hypertension, musculoskeletal ailments, headaches, etc., further their work environment severely impacts their reproductive health too.

Amrutha p, Cholakkal I, (2021), discusses in their paper on “Socio-Economic and Health Conditions of Street Vendors in Kozhikode” that despite being an important section in the society, they face many problems on daily base to survive and earn money from vending. Mostly vendors earn low incomes and have no other source of income, so they work hard without

considering their health conditions and other strains. Therefore, government authorities should take their issues seriously and work favourably for them.

Meher & Ghatole (2020), in their study on “Common health problems and utilization of healthcare facilities among self-employed street vendors of Chandrapur district of Maharashtra” shows that mostly diseases they suffer from is related to their occupation. Majority street vendors preferred private healthcare for the treatment which increases their pocket expenditure. Hence, it is advised to maintain proper healthcare services for the low-income group so that there saved money could be used for enriching their lifestyle instead of spending them on medicines majorly.

Chakraborty & Koley (2018), in “Socio-Economic View on Street Vendors: A Study of a Daily Market at Jamshedpur” reveals that number of street vendors is increasing day by day and they are mainly migrants to city area of Jamshedpur from the rural parts. Majority of them were unskilled & uneducated. Their study shows they have to work in unsafe, unhygienic, insecure conditions for long hours.

### **Objectives**

- To identify major problems or challenges faced by women street vendors during vending.
- To explore about the health conditions of female street vendors.
- To understand Role of public healthcare in improving health status of female vendors.

### **Significance of the Study**

Women street vendors constitute an important segment of urban informal sector in Prayagraj city. But their contribution in the informal economy remain neglected until recently “Street Vendors act 2014” was passed, through rigorous efforts of associations like NASVI and SEWA. But it is still pending to get implemented in some states and where implemented, it seems unable to solve all problems of street vendors and especially female street vendors. Many studies kept coming up revealing precarious working conditions of street vendors, challenges faced by them while working, their health getting affected due to their occupation, in different location even after the passage and implementation of acts & programmes. Therefore, this study was conducted to understand the major problems and health conditions of the women street vendors in Prayagraj city. Thus, outcome of this research would enrich us with greater awareness of their real-life conditions and problems from the ground level, definitely it will facilitate legislators to design effective strategies for the improvement of the livelihood of women street vendors & advancement of informal economy. It may also assist those who wish to conduct any research on street vending.

## Research Methodology

The research was performed in areas of the Prayagraj city, which was convenient for the researcher to reach and where women street vendors were present in large quantity. It is the most populous district of the Uttar Pradesh. Purposive and convenient sampling method was used for the respondents selection from these localities of the city i.e., Phaphamau, Teliyarganj, Shantipuram, and Sangam. A fraction of 100 women street vendors was taken for the primary study. It was observed during the field survey that female vendors were present in small number in contrast to the male vendors in the town. Most of the Women vendors were seen present in the vegetable market and Sangam area of the city. For gathering data, a schedule of questions and observation method was followed. Close ended as well as open ended questions both were utilized for the response. For the secondary sources already published journals, government websites and authentic articles were used for the study.

## Results and Discussion

This section covers the findings and discussions related to our study of women street vendors.

**Demographic profile:** The table no.1 below reveals socio-demographic profile of the female vendors. Age distribution of the respondents shows that majorly females performing vending were part of the age bracket 51-60 years at 33%, followed by women who were above 60 years of age at 25% and most of these women were widows, and 24% were discovered under the age group of 41-50 years. A decent number of respondents of age group 31-40 years were also found vending followed by below 30 years age group at 3%. It could be inferred that women in their early age do not prefer vending but at their later stages of life which could be probably.

**Table No. 1: Socio-Demographic Profile of the Women Vendors**

Indicators	Category	Percentage (%)
Age distribution (years)	Up to 30	3
	31-40	17
	41-50	24
	51-60	33
	Above 60	25
Caste status	General	14
	OBC	64
	SC	20
	ST	2
Educational status	Illiterate	55
	Primary	18
	Upper primary	19

	High school	10
	Intermediate	2
	Above intermediate	1
<b>Marital status</b>	Married	63
	Unmarried	2
	Divorced	1
	Widow	33
	Other	1

*Source: Primary Data*

Due to increasing responsibility or old age when no one will be around for financial support. Aged women find street vending probably an easy option as a source of income considering their physical capability.

Above table exhibit that largely respondents in street vending are from backward classes (OBC) in about 64%, followed by SC category at 20% and General category at 14%. Only 2% (ST) category women were also found vending. This section tells us about their caste composition & also reveals preference towards this activity depending on their caste.

Educational level of respondents was found to be generally low, out of total 55% respondents were illiterate, 19% did upper primary level schooling, 18% completed primary level & only 10% completed high school. But only 2% passed intermediate and 1% above intermediate. It shows that literacy level is very bad among respondents and this factor is not very important factor for engaging in vending activity. In fact, they find it an easy alternative available for employment when they don't have any degree or skill, or high education.

Marital status, reveals that about 63% women doing this activity were married, followed by a good percentage of widows about 33%. There is very less involvement of unmarried and divorced women in this activity, which reflects it is because either they don't have any support that this job requires or they don't prefer it as a good profession.

**Table No. 2: Income of the Respondents**

S. No.	Daily Income (in Rupee)	Percentage (%)
1	Up to Rs.300	43
2	301-Rs.600	47
3	601-Rs.900	6
4	901-Rs.1000	4

*Source: Primary Data*

Income of the respondent is very important indicator to know economic condition of any entity. **Above table no. 2**, showing daily income of the respondent reveals that 47% respondents are able to earn between 300 Rs. to 600 Rs. and 43% earn less than 300Rs. on daily basis. Only a few percent (10%) of women vendors are earning above 600 Rs., it means that 90% of the respondent is earning below 600Rs. in which a good percentage (43%) of respondent earn below 300 Rs.

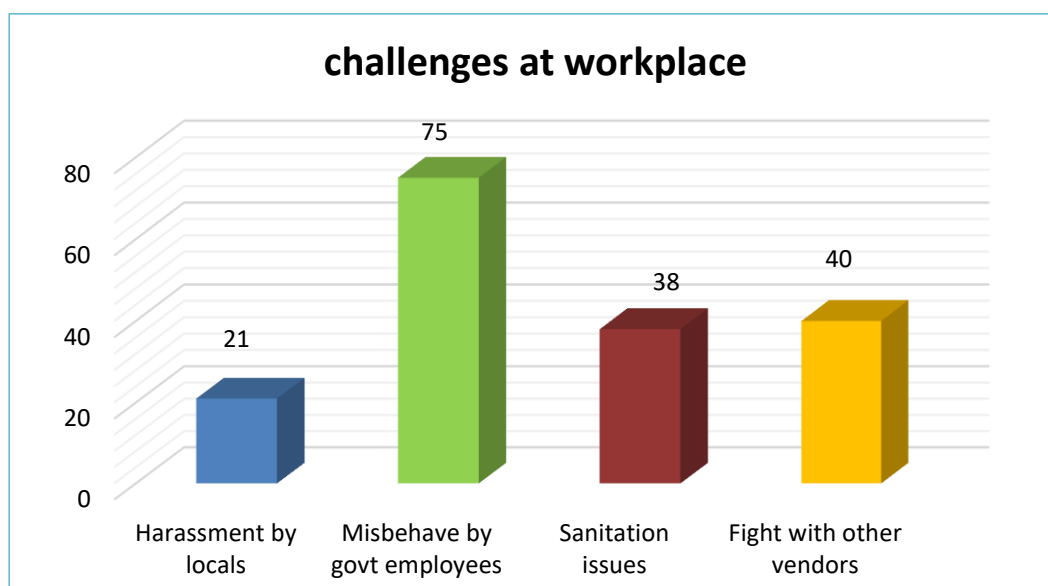
**Table No.3: Working Hours**

S. No.	Working hours of respondents	Percentage (%)
1	4-6 hours	9
2	6-8 hours	43
3	8-10 hours	15
4	Above 10 hours	33

*Source: Primary Data*

**Table no.3** represents that Most of the vendors (43%) work for 6-8 hours, followed by working above 10 hours long about 33% &15% working for 8-10 hours a day. Proportion of 6-8 working hours among respondents is large as they were predominantly vegetable vendors reflecting their major proportion in our samples who work afternoon period till night.

#### Major Problems Faced by Female Vendors at Workplace:



*Source: Primary Data*

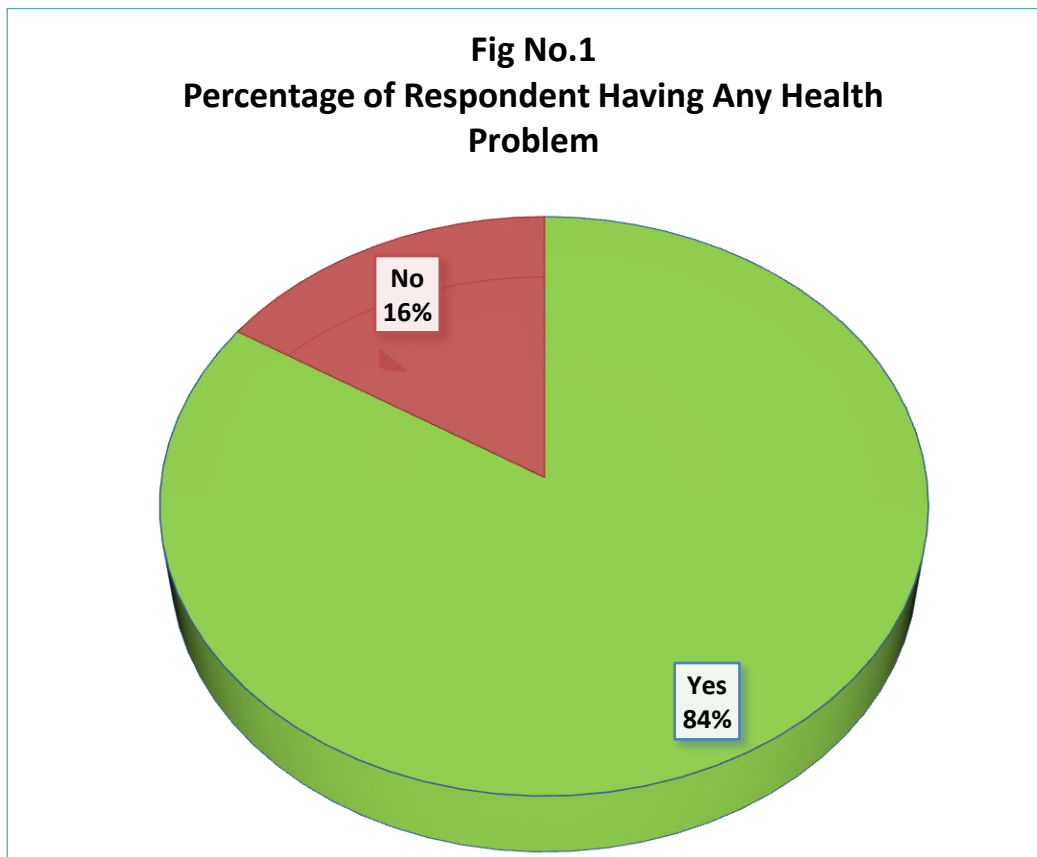
Women at workplace face many problems on daily basis in which mostly (75%) face misbehave by government authorities on daily basis for vending activity. Mostly women do not face only

one problem but combined, they face misbehave by employees & sanitation issues or sanitation issues and fight with other vendors or all the above represented issues together. After government authorities create problems to vendors, they have to fight with other vendors on daily basis to sell their product (40% responded) and sanitation issues (38% also responded), some (21%) also said they get harassed by locals during vending.

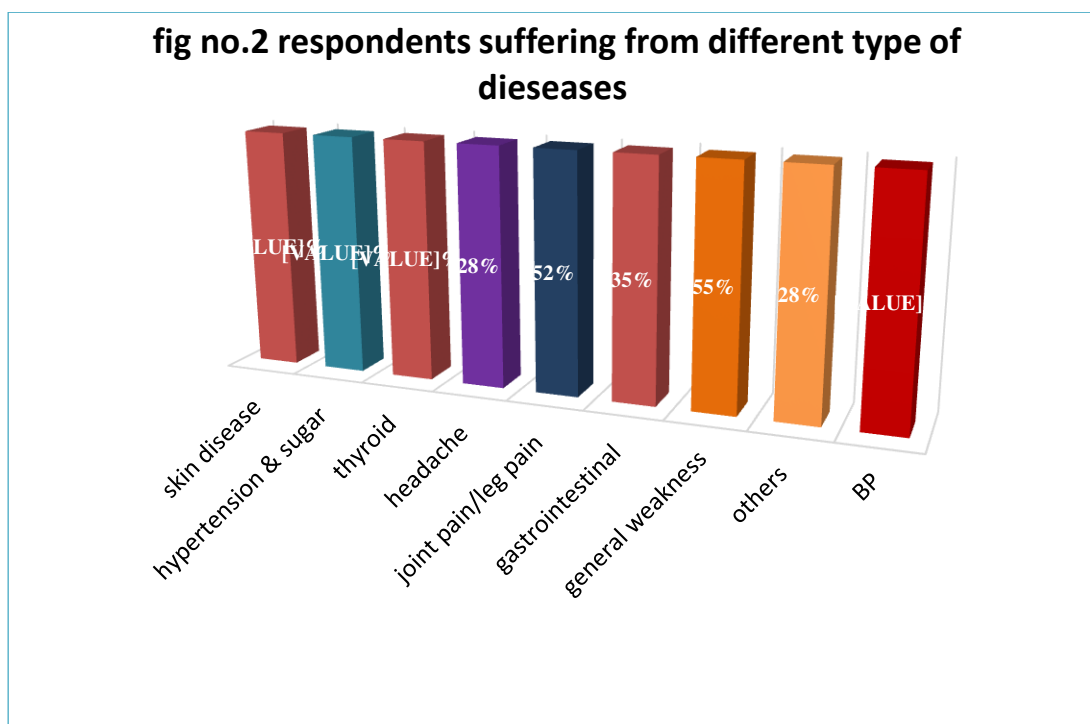
### Health Conditions of Women Street Vendors

To know the actual ground level conditions of women vendors it is also very important to know their health problem along with the major problems they face.

Figure No. 1 below shows that 84% of respondents have some or the other health issues, only 16% responded don't have any health issues on permanent base or recently as they can recall.



*Source: Primary Data*



*Source: Primary Data*

Above figure no.2 shows different type of diseases women street vendors suffer from, the foremost problem women vendors face is joint pain/ legpain (52%) & gastrointestinal (35%). General weakness (55%) topped among all might be due to unnutritional food consumption or working for long hours leading to exhaustion. In a good percentage women are also suffering with headache (28%) and BP (24%) issue. Other (28%) in this section represents any surgery, failure of organs or injury that took place in their life time till now. Hypertension and sugar disease also covers 17% of women, which may be result of financial burden or stress at job or family stress.

One women vendor had to change from her cooked food shop to vegetable shop because of her health issues. Her earlier cooked food shop required long hours of standing which caused severe pain in leg and waist, eventually caused some severe problem in her bones because she had to carry heavy loads also during the process. Further, it developed various health issues her increasing health expenses. Then she shifted to vegetable shop so that she can sell by sitting at one place.



**Table No. 4**

S. No.	Monthly expenses on health problems (in rupee)	Percentage (%)
1	Less than 500	49
2	501-1000	16
3	1001-1500	21
4	Above 2000	14

*Source: Primary Data*

Above table no.4, gives an idea about monthly expenditure of respondents on their health problems, 49% respondents expend below Rs.500 on it, followed by 16% saying that spend only 501-1000 Rs., 21% says to spend 1000-1500 rupees and 14% agrees to pay above 2000 Rupees.

**Table No.5**

S. No.	Toilet near work place	Percentage (%)
1	yes	68
2	No	32
S. No.	Medical facility nearby	Percentage (%)
1	Yes	76
2	No	24

*Source: Primary Data*

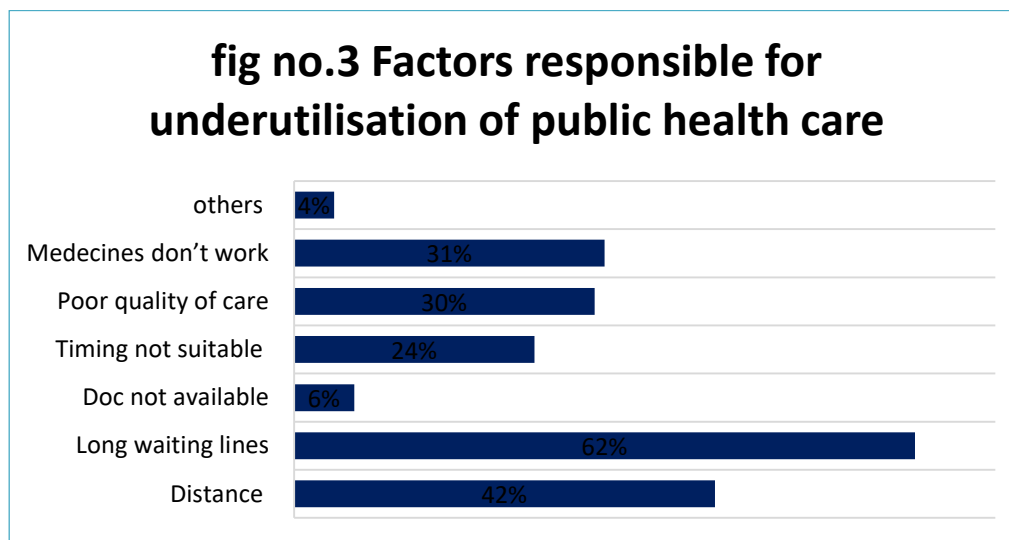
Above table no.5, reveals that 68% says that there is washroom near their working place but 32% told for nowashrooms nearby. But those who responded against the availability of toilets are those actually who do not prefer going to the public toilets because there is charge for using it, instead they prefer any corner openly near to the selling area. They responded (76%) that there is medical facility available near their vending area but 24% also told that there is no medical facility nearby.

**Table No. 6**

S. No.	Healthcare facility preferred by women vendors	Percentage (%)
1	Public	24
2	Private	51
3	Both	23
4	Other	02

*Source: Primary Data*

Above table no.6,tell us about healthcare services preference of respondents which reveals that they prefer more to private hospitals(51%),compare to public hospitals (23%) and a few (23%)prefer both healthcare facility (public and private) according to their need and type of problem.



*Source: Primary Data*

Above figure no.3 represents that mostly women avoid using public health services firstly due to long waiting lines and secondly due to distance from home. Poor medicines and low quality of care at government hospitals has also been dominant factors for underutilized services. Public healthcare system has not been much helpful in improving their health issues except in some emergency conditions.

### Limitation of the Study

- It was not possible to select all the women street vendors in the city for the study purpose, limiting our study to 100 respondents only.
- It was not possible to spend a long time with all the vendors for the best quality response.

### Suggestions

1. Government can launch awareness programme for street vending women to adopt precautionary measures related to health while performing their job.
2. Even Proper footpaths not developed in many areas of the city where they can do vending if not space on roads which causes and exposes them to more chaos.

3. Proper sanitation facilities with regular cleaning activity will help in maintaining their health.
4. The idea of collecting revenue through washroom utility by women vendors is not fulfilling its objective because charge on the toilets prevent them from using it contrary it leads to open defecation. This particular idea should be reviewed.
5. Underutilisation of public healthcare also reveals that its welfare purpose is not being fulfilled as this vulnerable section of our economy has to spend much of their saving during emergency when they opt for private healthcare, therefore improvement in quality of public healthcare will help much.
6. Until suitable policies and programmes do not get formed & implemented local authority should be more cooperatives towards them knowing their importance to the economy and society.

## **Conclusion**

The most common health issues found among female vendors were musculoskeletal problems, gastrointestinal, headache, BP, hypertension & sugar other than general weakness experienced by them. Their occupations tend to increase the health issues they face. Most of the vendors prefer private healthcare in general except in some case they choose for government healthcare facilities owing to low cost. Major factor causing underutilisation of public healthcare services were long waiting lines, distance from home, poor quality of care, not working medicines and many others. When they use private health facility instead of public healthcare it causes extra burden on their low income, putting constraint on their purchasing power. Hence, making more rigorous efforts by government is urgent requirement in this regard and be more attentive towards their health improvement strategies and also maintain quality of public health facility.

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