

Sanitation Work for Sustenance-Condition of Women Sanitary Workers in Erode City Municipal Corporation

Author:

Dr. B.Vijay Kumar

Assistant Professor

Department of Social Work

School of Social Sciences

Tamil Nadu Open University

Saidapet, Chennai – 600 015

e-mail: vijaybabujirao@gmail.com

Mobile: 9445271098

Co-author

Ms. J. Renee Arathi

Assistant Professor

Department of Social Work

School of Social Sciences

Tamil Nadu Open University

Saidapet, Chennai – 600 015

e-mail: reneeathij@tnou.ac.in

Mobile: 97909 17825

Abstract

Globally Sanitation workers fill the gap between sanitary standards and the current sanitation system. They encompass everyone working in sanitation, whether it be cleaning, operating, or just being a part of the sanitation system especially in developing countries like India. Nevertheless, the Socio Economic Condition and their working condition are matters of inquiries. The purpose of this article is to examine in detail the socio Economic Condition, Salary and working conditions for female sanitation workers at Erode City Municipal Corporation. The conclusions are supported by the primary data, which was gathered from 30 respondents by convenience sampling in four Erode city Municipal Corporation zones.

Key notes: women sanitary workers, socio-economic, types of sanitary worker.

Introduction

Sanitation is a difficult idea to grasp. It is described as having "conditions that affect hygiene and health" in the dictionary. The provision of facilities and services for the safe disposal of human urine and faeces is what the World Health

Organization defines as sanitation. Sanitation is typically viewed as a system that encourages the removal of human and animal wastes, correct toilet usage, and avoiding open defecation. It is frequently used as an umbrella term for a variety of services and sanitation tasks. This includes both personal hygiene and public hygiene work. Menstrual waste management, toilet cleaning, and domestic rubbish management are all examples of personal sanitation tasks. Performing public sanitation labor entails gathering trash from residences around a municipal region, disposing the Garbage from the city is dumped in designated zones, roads are swept, drains are cleaned, sewage treatment plants, septic tanks, and faeces are removed from train tracks, platforms, and bathrooms on trains and platforms. Without addressing the individuals who perform the sanitation labor, any understanding of sanitation is incomplete. The roles of sanitation workers are viewed as inevitable especially during emergency or pandemic situations. However, their work life and socio economic condition are not given due importance at all levels. Hence this paper intends to throw light upon the facts of socioeconomic condition and work life of women sanitary workers in Erode city Municipal Corporation.

Sanitation Work Life in India and Tamil Nadu

In modern India, a group of workers often referred to as sanitation workers handle the majority of the sanitation job, particularly in public areas. Nearly 5 million sanitation employees were anticipated to be employed in India in 2017 according to a report by Dalberg Advisors; 2.5 million of these workers confront significant occupational risks and hazards.⁹ urban areas employ about 45% of sanitation personnel. Despite being less numerous than sanitation workers in rural areas, they perform riskier tasks including cleaning septic tanks and sewers. The majority of women employed in urban sanitation, or close to 50%, clean school restrooms. ⁰¹

The lowest Dalit sub-castes make up almost all of the sanitation employees. Different names for the over 6 million Dalit sub-caste households Among the many names used throughout the nation are Valmiki, Bhangi, Mehtar, and Chooda in the north and west; Bassfor, Dom, and Ghaasi in the east; and Thotti, Arunthathiyar, and Madiga in the south. Of these 6 million homes, between 40%

and 60% are involved in sanitation labor. They work in positions across the sanitation value chain, but there is little chance for them to advance professionally or socially.⁰²

Sanitation work is the task of disposing of garbage in a sanitary manner in order to avoid disease transmission. Sanitary workers were those who worked in the sanitation industry. Scavengers were the moniker given to them in the past. According to a government directive issued in 1995, it has been transformed into sanitary workers. Despite the fact that persons from other communities are welcome to apply, the majority of those who do are from the scheduled caste. Despite the fact that other members of the community participated in the task, they sent SC workers to do it for a pittance. Under the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and Rehabilitation Act, the work of manual scavenging has been eliminated in Tamil Nadu. Act, 2013. A program called Project New Wings was launched in the Tirunelveli District of Tamil Nadu State in January 2018 to help the children of sanitation workers by providing them with support in the form of education, skill development, business, and healthcare (The Hindu, 2018).⁰³ Street sweepers, informal waste pickers, domestic waste collectors, institutional waste collectors, latrine cleaners, open drain cleaners, septic tank de-sludge's, sewage network maintainers, and treatment plant employees are among the sanitary workers in this category.

Entering Urban Local Body(ULB) sanitary work

Caste, poverty, and marriage are the three access points via which a woman can enter the field of sanitation labor. In India, caste-based occupations guarantee that lower castes perform sanitation chores. Our study demonstrates that caste-based jobs are passed down across generations. Many women acknowledged that they learned about sanitation labor by observing their parents perform the task. Some women received this position as compensation when their husbands, who worked for the municipality, passed away while performing his duties. All of the women discussed their gendered upbringing in their parents' homes, where they were expected to do all the cooking and cleaning while their brothers were sent to

school or worked odd jobs. Women sanitation workers are extremely susceptible as a result of gendered and caste-based experiences. Women who work in sanitation are particularly vulnerable because their chances of entering other occupations depend on their level of education.

Review of Literature on Women Sanitary Workers

According to **Singh (2000)**, In his study on dalit women in Uttar Pradesh, brought attention to the socioeconomic challenges faced by women from scheduled castes who work as sweepers and scavengers in the state's municipal organizations. He bemoaned the subpar situation of women from scheduled castes in the state and suggested their rehabilitation as sweepers and scavengers.

According to **R. Selvamani and D. Rajan (2015)**, the position of women in India has undergone numerous significant shifts over the centuries. In India, women are less powerful than men on the social, political, and economic fronts. According to the 2011 census, 15.4% of Indian women are employed. Sanitary work is the primary occupation of dalit women. Sanitary a sanitary worker's life is also susceptible to unhealthy circumstances. Additionally, they lack sufficient diet and education, which has a negative impact on sanitary workers, particularly women. The current study aims to investigate the socioeconomic situation of female sanitary employees in this environment. The study was carried out in the Tirupur Municipal Corporation, which employed 257 female sanitary employees. 154 of the women sanitation workers were chosen at random from this group. Kuppuswamy Information was gathered using a socioeconomic status scale and through personal interviews with the respondents. According to the analysis, more than 74% of the respondents did not have their own bathrooms, were married during the previous 11–17 years, belonged to a nuclear family, and had a family monthly income of more than Rs. 30,000. More than 47% of respondents were illiterate, their wives drank, they were single, they didn't practice saving, and they had between 11 and 20 years of experience, respectively. Only 4% of respondents' relatives have post-graduate degrees, and 34% of respondents have worked in the sanitation industry for three generations. At 0.05 levels, there is a significant difference between socioeconomic position and education. According to the

current study, social work practice would raise people's quality of lives. Life among female sanitary professionals.

According to Sherin et al. (2017) the universe for the current study is comprised of the sanitation workers of Sengulam Colony in Tiruchirappalli. Purposive sampling was used to gather the data from the sixty respondents. The respondents' information was gathered using an interview schedule that I had created on my own. According to the research, 63% of employees reported being harassed by their managers. 55% of respondents claimed to have encountered discrimination in society. Alcohol is consumed by 68%. 70% of people had a variety of health problems, including asthma, orthopaedic, skin-related, and gastrointestinal illnesses. The only way to improve their quality of life is to offer specialized medical clinics, safety precautions, and robust welfare programs. The level of infections and mortality would be higher in a society with fewer sanitation employees.

Ramalingam (2020) discusses In light of the COVID-19 epidemic, members of the Tamil Nadu Sanitary Workers and Overhead Tank Operators Welfare Association have called for prompt payment of salaries to sanitary workers in rural areas. A. Kondavellai, the association's state organizing secretary, claimed that local officials were using the workers' foot washing as a ruse in place of paying conservancy staff their legal salary. According to Mr. Kondavellai, a number of villagers' workers have gone without pay for up to a quarter or a half year. The fear of losing their jobs prevents the workers from raising their voices and asking questions about payment, he claimed. At the moment, sanitary workers make 5,570 a month. According to Mr. Kondavellai, sanitary workers, who are mostly from Scheduled Caste communities, need greater wages in order to pay for their children's education, their own healthcare, and other personal expenses. "Workers handle all of your household waste and collect up the trash. Giving them respect and paying them well is the least you can do.

It would be quite helpful, so we ask that the government pay those 18,700 each month," he said. He continued by saying that workers should always have access to masks, shoes, and gloves, not just during pandemics. The local government is required to clean water tanks twice a month, but according to him,

this only happens once every three years. "Diseases have a lot to do with this. Tank operators will clean the tanks as well if they are paid a fair price, he claimed.

Statement of problem

Research studies on women sanitary workers prove that they are one of the most vulnerable groups in India. The study discovered a significant relationship between castes, illiteracy, also lacking in all three sites is professional representation for women working in sanitation. Women are particularly vulnerable because they are frequently hired as temporary and contract employees who receive no benefits. Employers were not held responsible for their bodily or emotional well-being. There is virtually little knowledge of legislation, regulations, or programmes aimed at defending the rights of female sanitation employees. (Report of SLH,2019)

Objectives

- To investigate the socioeconomic circumstances of female sanitary employees.
- To research women's sanitary workers' working conditions

Methodology

The Universe of this study constitutes the four Zones, of Erode Municipal Corporation, which is a combination of both commercial and residential area. A total of 260 women sanitation workers were in the universe from which 100 respondents were selected. To gather information about the respondents' socio demographic characteristics and work lives, an interview schedule was used. The respondents were chosen through convenience sampling and Primary information from 100 women sanitary workers (SHG members) in the Erode city municipal corporation was collected and analyzed using statistical techniques.

Result and discussion

Table: 1

Distribution of Respondents according to their social demographic profile

Category	Type of sanitary worker				Percentage
Age	Street cleaner	Garbage collector	CT/PT cleaner	Public place sweeper	
21-40	18	10	10	5	43
41-60	18	23	7	9	57
Total	36	33	17	14	100
Education					
Illiterate	10	10	5	3	28
Primary	19	14	7	4	44
Secondary	6	7	4	6	23
Higher secondary	1	2	1	1	5
Total	36	33	17	14	100
Community					
SC	22	22	10	8	62
ST	11	6	6	6	29
MBC	3	5	1	0	9
Total	36	33	17	14	100
Religion					
Hindu	20	17	9	9	55
Christian	14	14	7	5	40
Muslim	2	2	1	0	5
Total	36	33	17	14	100
Marital status					
Husband Alive	25	26	8	11	70
Divorce	4	1	3	2	10

Widow	7	6	6	1	20
Total	36	33	17	14	100
Family size					
Small	9	4	5	2	20
Medium	17	16	4	8	45
Big	10	13	8	4	35
Total	36	33	17	14	100

Table No: 1 Portrays the social demographic profile of the respondents i.e., age group, education community, marital status and family size.

57 percent of the total respondents belonged to the age group of 41–60, while the remaining 43 percent were in the 21–60 age groups. These data shows that the majority of them were in late middle age. None of the respondents had crossed the higher secondary level of education. 44 percent of them had studied up to primary level, 28 percent of them were illiterate, and 23 and 5 percent of them had studied up to secondary and higher secondary levels of graduation. A majority 62 percent of the respondents belonged to a schedule community, 29 percent were a schedule tribe, and 1 percent was from the most backward community. It has been proven by many research studies that the majority of sanitary workers are from scheduled communities. With respect to the religion of the respondent, 55 percent of them were Hindus, 40 percent were Christians, and 5 percent were Muslims, respectively. This table shows that 70 percent of the respondents were married, 20 percent were widows, and 10 percent were divorced. The family size of the respondents was categorized; 45 percent of the respondents have a medium-sized family. Then, 35 percent of them belonged to big families, and finally, 20 percent of the respondents had small families. It is inferred that the highest educational qualification of women sanitation workers is higher secondary level. Majority of the women sanitary workers were from Scheduled caste, which was observed in the study by **Singh (2000)**.

The table No: 2

Distribution of Respondents according to their generation, the designation, experience, shift and income

Category	Type of sanitary worker				Percentage
	Street	Garbage	CT/PT	Public	
Generation of					

work	cleaner	collector	cleaner	place sweeper	
First Generation	15	10	7	4	36
Second Generation	11	12	6	8	37
Third Generation	10	11	4	2	27
Total	36	33	17	14	100
Designation					
Worker	31	30	15	12	88
Supervisor	5	3	2	2	12
Total	36	33	17	14	100
Experience					
Below 5 years	14	10	6	5	35
5- 10 Years	22	23	11	9	65
Total	36	33	17	14	100
Shift of Work					
Shift 1 Morning	31	30	12	11	84
Shift 2 afternoon	1	2	4	1	8
shift 3 knights	4	1	1	2	8
Total	36	33	17	14	100
Income(M)					
Below 10000	30	27	12	10	79
10000-40,000	6	6	5	4	21
Total	36	33	17	14	100

The table No; 2 portrays the designation, experience, shift and income of the respondents.

Majority 36 per cent of them were from first generation, 37 per cent and 27 per cent of the respondents were from second and third generations respectively. This shows that women

engage in sanitation work generation by generation. 88 percent of the respondents were deployed in worker position only and 12 percent of them were working in supervisor hierarchy. With respect to the work experience of the respondents, the majority, 65 percent of them worked between 5 to 10 years, and the remaining 35 percent of them have been below 5 years. 84 percent of them were working in the morning shift (6.a.m to 2.p.m). 8 percent each were working in shift 2 (2.p.m to 8.p.m) and night shift 3 (8p.m to 6.p.m) respectively. The table shows that 79 percent of sanitary workers earn less than Rs 10000 per month., while 21 percent of them earned between 10000- 40,000. There were permanent and temporary workers. Permanent workers earned from 10000-40,000. The table shows majority of the respondents were temporary workers. It was also observed that permanent women workers were less in number when compared to men.

Table No:3

Distribution Respondents according to their Working Condition

Category	Type of sanitary worker				Percentage
	Street cleaner	Garbage collector	CT/PT cleaner	Public place sweeper	
Regularly using	19	12	9	4	44
Sometimes only	8	11	4	8	31
Rarely using	9	10	4	2	25
Total	36	33	17	14	100
Training					
Yes	22	17	10	5	54
some times	8	11	5	8	32
No	6	5	2	1	14
Total	36	33	17	14	100
Award/Reward					
Yes	35	6	8	5	54

No	1	27	9	9	46
Total	36	33	17	14	100
Working condition of Corona duty					
Hardly	12	13	7	4	36
Normally	24	20	10	10	64
Total	36	33	17	14	100
Corona remuneration					
Yes (collected)	29	24	11	8	72
No (not collected)	7	9	6	6	28
Total	36	33	17	14	100

The table No: 3 Defined about to the employee's security, training, compliments and types of sanitary workers. The majority 44 percent of the sanitary workers are using personal protection equipment during working hours. Though they have been provided with the protective equipments, many of them do not use them regularly. Then 31 percent of them were using the PPE occasionally, and 25 percent of them were using it too infrequently. 54 percent of the respondents had participated in work-related training programs in the last few years. Then another thing: 32 percent of them attended the program only once. 14 percent of respondents did not participate in any training program. The majority (54 percent) of the respondents got awards for best performance in the corporation, and 46 percent of them did not get any reward or award. 64 percent of the respondents answered that they did the work normal routine work during the period of corona duty. 36 percent of them were engaged in special duty during the pandemic situation. Finally, 72 percent of respondents have received financial benefits other than remuneration, from both the public and private sides.

Suggestion for Welfare Measures for Women Sanitary Workers

It was found during data collection that the women sanitary workers were working throughout the week. One day leave can be availed in a month. They have hectic shifts during weekends and festive seasons. This causes frustration among them and their work life balance is also affected to a greater extent. Hence leave procedures may be relaxed for women sanitary workers to enhance their quality of life.

Health insurance coverage is provided for the permanent workers and the temporary workers are not provided. Hence periodical health camps/check up may be organized with the support of local health centres. Many of the workers do not use their protective equipments; hence stringent orders may be issued to protect their safety. It is essential to engage Social Workers to create awareness on their physical and mental well being and special welfare schemes of Central and state Governments, and also to organize group counselling session to alleviate their stress and frustration by way of ventilation and further measures.

Conclusion

The results and discussion of this research paper shows that the women sanitary workers are in poor socio economic condition. Their health, work life balance, safety need focus by the government and non government organization. It was understood that the women sanitary workers socio economic condition and their day-to-day work burden. Education is most important needed of our lives. Muslim religious people a very small number of people are only involved in this work. Personal protection equipment was used too infrequently by 25% of them. Now, those people's children are studying well because they have to get a new social status and promote the upliftment of their future lives. During the COVID time, the government and private donors helped them because the ruling party had announced that they were steam line workers or front-line workers. Sanitation Workers are considered vulnerable and especially women need special attention for better quality of life.

References

Citation: Occasional Paper on Lived Realities of Women Sanitation Workers in India, June 2019, www.pria.org.

Citation: Report on Ensuring Safety of Sanitation Workers a Ready Reckoner for Urban Local Bodies by ministry of housing and urban affairs, government of India.

Selvamani and Drajan 2015, socio-economic status of dalit women sanitary workers: a social work perspective, Indian journal of applied research, X 110 Volume: 5.

Lourdes Poobala Rayen and T. Juliet Nisee, 2017, A Study on the Working Conditions of Sanitary Workers in Tirunelveli corporation, International Research of Trend in Scientific research and development (IJTSRD), pp:945, v:2.

Sherin sophia and pavithra “A study on sanitary workers in Tiruchirapalli” International Journal of Applied Research 2017; 3(4): 168-170

Ramalingam,2020, sanitary workers’ association calls for timely disbursement of salaries,the Hindu newspaper.15th april.

<https://sanitationlearninghub.org/resource/lived-realities-of-women-sanitation-workers-in-india/>