



## Quality of Work Life of Cleanliness Workers in Tamilnadu

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**ABSTRACT:** This study explores the working conditions of sanitary workers in Tamil Nadu Municipal Corporation, highlighting their daily challenges, occupational health risks, and socio-economic status. Sanitary workers play a critical role in maintaining public health and hygiene, yet they often work under precarious conditions with minimal recognition and support. The research employs a mixed-method approach, combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews to gather comprehensive data on their work environment, safety measures, health issues, and job satisfaction. Findings reveal significant gaps in safety protocols, inadequate protective gear, and frequent exposure to hazardous materials, leading to a range of health problems. Additionally, the study uncovers the social stigma and economic hardships faced by these workers, which compound their occupational struggles. The paper concludes with recommendations for policy improvements, enhanced safety measures, and initiatives to uplift the socio-economic status of sanitary workers, aiming to foster a safer and more equitable working environment.

**INDEX TERMS:** sanitary workers, working conditions, occupational health risks, socio-economic status, safety measures, health issues, job satisfaction, social stigma, economic hardships, policy improvements, protective gear.

### I. INTRODUCTION

Sanitary workers are the unsung heroes of urban environments, ensuring public health and hygiene through their indispensable services. Despite their crucial role, these workers often endure harsh working conditions, face significant health risks, and struggle with socio-economic challenges. In Tamil Nadu Municipal Corporation, the plight of sanitary workers reflects broader issues of labour rights, public health, and social

justice that demand urgent attention. This article delves into the working conditions of sanitary workers in Tamil Nadu, offering a detailed examination of their daily experiences, occupational hazards, and the socio-economic factors influencing their lives. Sanitary workers, including those involved in waste collection, street cleaning, and sewer maintenance, frequently encounter unsafe work environments with limited access to essential protective gear and safety protocols. This study employs a mixed-method approach, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews, to provide a comprehensive understanding of their work environment, health issues, and overall job satisfaction. By highlighting the systemic issues faced by sanitary workers, this article aims to raise awareness and prompt policy changes that can lead to safer and more equitable working conditions. The findings and recommendations presented here are intended to inform municipal authorities, policymakers, and civil society organizations about the urgent need for improvements in the welfare and protection of these essential workers.

### II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In another study, **Rajan D (2019c)** examined the perception of sanitary workers in private multi-specialty hospitals in Tirunelveli city regarding shift work-related factors causing heavy workloads. The majority of respondents strongly agreed that factors such as long 12-hour shifts, sudden extensions of duty, continuous **day or night shifts, and rigid shift schedules** without employee consent contributed to heavy workloads. Other issues included **lack of cooperation among** co-workers, inadequate breaks between shifts, and managers' autocratic approach to scheduling.

**Mohammed Peer (1992)** conducted a study to assess the **socioeconomic status of scavengers** and the effectiveness of welfare programs. The



study also explores progress made and measures taken to improve scavenger conditions and address sanitation issues.

**Narmadha S (2015)**<sup>2</sup> conducted a study among sanitary workers in Trichy. The sanitary workers have no promotions and job enrichment till their retirement. The study was to know the reasons. The main barrier was their complacency. They were happy with what they possess. The municipal corporation has the policy to promote the lower-level workers to the higher-level jobs, if the employees are **equipped with training and additional qualifications**. However, the sanitary workers are not willing. On the other hand, they want to be skilled workers.

**Gomathi P. and Kamala K.** published a paper on October 12, 2020, titled "Threatening Health Impacts and Challenging Life of Sanitary Workers" in the Journal of Evolution in Medical and Dental Sciences. The study focuses on **the health problems** faced by sanitary workers.

**Patwary et al. (2021)** stressed the urgent need for comprehensive policies safeguarding these workers, including provisions for **personal protective equipment, training, health insurance, and robust regulations**.

### III. METHODOLOGY

To understand the working conditions of sanitary workers in the Municipal Corporation, we used a simple but thorough approach involving surveys and interviews. We created a straight forward questionnaire about their daily tasks, safety measures, health problems, and job satisfaction, distributing it to many workers to gather measurable data.

### IV. DATA ANALYSIS

This research used both primary and secondary data to explore factors affecting the work life quality of cleanliness workers. The study's theoretical framework drew from existing literature and government data on workplace conditions, labour rights, and employee well-being. Primary data was collected through a structured questionnaire method, segmented into sections for different geographical areas within the study region (north, south, east, west, and central), ensuring clarity and comprehensive responses from cleanliness workers to gather detailed insights into their work life quality.

**TABLE: 1 AGE WISE SANITARY WORKERS**

		18-28		29-39		40-49		50-59		Above 59		Total	% age
East	P	7	9.72	20	27.78	22	30.56	20	27.78	3	4.17	72	100
	OS	10	17.86	18	32.14	10	17.86	15	26.79	3	5.36	56	100
West	P	3	5.36	18	32.14	19	33.93	15	26.79	1	1.79	56	100
	OS	4	4.08	28	28.57	42	42.86	20	20.41	4	4.08	98	100
North	P	2	9.09	15	68.18	3	13.64	1	4.55	1	4.55	22	100
	OS	10	14.71	19	27.94	23	33.82	14	20.59	2	2.94	68	100
South	P	2	16.67	4	33.33	3	25.00	2	16.67	1	8.33	12	100
	OS	4	13.33	8	26.67	10	33.33	6	20.00	2	6.67	30	100
Centre	P	5	13.16	12	31.58	11	28.95	8	21.05	2	5.26	38	100
	OS	5	10.42	11	22.92	21	43.75	8	16.67	3	6.25	48	100
Permanent		19		69		58		46		8			
Out Sources		33		84		106		63		14			
Total		52		153		164		109		22		500	
Percentage		10.4		30.6		32.8		21.8		4.4		100	

The Table 1 provides a detailed breakdown of sanitary workers categorized by age group and region, focusing on percentages of opportunities for growth (P) and security (OS). Across age groups

ranging from 18 to above 59 years, workers are distributed across regions including East, West, North, South, and Centre within the Tamil Nadu Municipal Corporation. It highlights varying



percentages of workers in each age bracket who perceive their opportunities for growth and security differently based on their regional assignments.

Overall, the data underscores the diverse distribution and perceptions of job aspects among the 500 surveyed workers.

**TABLE: 2 GENDER WISE SANITARY WORKERS**

		Male		Female		Total	% age
East	P	52	72.22	20	27.78	72	100
	OS	46	82.14	10	17.86	56	100
West	P	45	80.36	11	19.64	56	100
	OS	63	64.29	35	35.71	98	100
North	P	10	45.45	12	54.55	22	100
	OS	45	66.18	23	33.82	68	100
South	P	8	66.67	4	33.33	12	100
	OS	20	66.67	10	33.33	30	100
Centre	P	30	78.95	8	21.05	38	100
	OS	40	83.33	8	16.67	48	100
Permanent		145		55			
Out Sources		214		86			
Total		<b>359</b>		<b>141</b>		500	
Percentage		<b>71.8</b>		<b>28.2</b>		100	

The above Table 2 provides a gender-wise distribution of sanitary workers categorized by region, showing percentages of opportunities for growth (P) and security (OS). It highlights those male workers, totalling 359, are more predominant across all regions—East, West, North, South, and Centre—compared to female workers, who total 141. The data

illustrates varying perceptions of job aspects such as growth and security among male and female workers within the Tamil Nadu Municipal Corporation. Overall, it reflects the gender disparity in occupational perceptions among the 500 surveyed workers.

**TABLE: 3 - EDUCATIONAL WISE SANITARY WORKERS**

		Illiterate		Primary Level		High School		Higher Secondary		UG and above		Total	% age
East	P	31	43.06	16	22.22	16	22.22	9	12.50	0	0.00	72	100
	OS	12	21.43	17	30.36	19	33.93	6	10.71	2	3.57	56	100
West	P	22	39.29	26	46.43	6	10.71	2	3.57	0	0.00	56	100
	OS	20	20.41	29	29.59	27	27.55	16	16.33	6	6.12	98	100
North	P	11	50.00	6	27.27	3	13.64	1	4.55	1	4.55	22	100
	OS	15	22.06	20	29.41	19	27.94	8	11.76	6	8.82	68	100
South	P	4	33.33	7	58.33	1	8.33	0	0.00	0	0.00	12	100
	OS	12	40.00	6	20.00	9	30.00	3	10.00	0	0.00	30	100
Centre	P	18	47.37	5	13.16	11	28.95	3	7.89	1	2.63	38	100
	OS	12	25.00	12	25.00	3	6.25	14	29.17	7	14.58	48	100
Permanent		86		60		37		15		2			
Out Sources		71		84		77		47		21			
Total		<b>157</b>		<b>144</b>		<b>114</b>		<b>62</b>		<b>23</b>		500	



Percentage	31.4	28.8	22.8	12.4	4.6	100
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This Table 3 categorizes cleanliness workers by education level and region, presenting percentages of opportunities for growth (P) and security (OS). It shows that a significant portion, 31.4%, are illiterate, with varying distributions across East, West, North, South, and Centre regions within the Tamil Nadu Municipal Corporation. Primary level education holders constitute 28.8%,

followed by high school (22.8%) and higher secondary (12.4%) education levels. Workers with undergraduate (UG) and higher education levels represent a smaller percentage, at 4.6%. The data highlights educational disparities among the 500 surveyed workers and their perceptions of job aspects in different regions.

**TABLE: 4 - COMMUNITY WISE SANITARY WORKERS**

		ST		SC		BC		Other		Total	% age
East	P	28	38.89	41	56.94	3	4.17	0	0.00	72	100
	OS	13	23.21	36	64.29	3	5.36	4	7.14	56	100
West	P	18	32.14	34	60.71	4	7.14	0	0.00	56	100
	OS	11	11.22	72	73.47	7	7.14	8	8.16	98	100
North	P	4	18.18	16	72.73	2	9.09	0	0.00	22	100
	OS	11	16.18	41	60.29	8	11.76	8	11.76	68	100
South	P	3	25.00	9	75.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	12	100
	OS	9	30.00	16	53.33	4	13.33	1	3.33	30	100
Centre	P	8	21.05	24	63.16	4	10.53	2	5.26	38	100
	OS	3	6.25	34	70.83	11	22.92	0	0.00	48	100
Permanent		61		124		13		2			
Out Souces		47		199		33		21			
Total		<b>108</b>		<b>323</b>		<b>46</b>		<b>23</b>		500	
Percentage		<b>21.6</b>		<b>64.6</b>		<b>9.2</b>		<b>4.6</b>		100	

This Table 4 categorizes cleanliness workers by community and region, highlighting percentages of opportunities for growth (P) and security (OS) within the Tamil Nadu Municipal Corporation. The majority of workers belong to Scheduled Castes (SC), comprising 64.6% of the total, with significant representation across East, West, North, South, and Centre regions. Scheduled Tribes (ST)

make up 21.6%, while Backward Classes (BC) constitute 9.2%. Workers from other communities represent 4.6%. The data underscores the community-based distribution of opportunities perceived by 500 surveyed workers, reflecting varying perceptions of job aspects across different regions and communities.

**TABLE: 5 APPOINTMENT OF CLEANLINESS WORKERS: COMPARISON BETWEEN MUNICIPALITY AND CONTRACTOR**

		Municipality		Contractor		Self-help Group/ NGO		Total	% age
East	P	72	100	0	0	0	0	72	100
	OS	0	0	56	100	0	0	56	100
West	P	56	100	0	0	0	0	56	100
	OS	0	0	98	100	0	0	98	100
North	P	22	100	0	0	0	0	22	100



	OS	0	0	68	100	0	0	68	100
South	P	12	100	0	0	0	0	12	100
	OS	0	0	30	100	0	0	30	100
Centre	P	38	100	0	0	0	0	38	100
	OS	0	0	48	100	0	0	48	100
Permanent		200		0		0			
Out Sources		0		300		0			
Total		200		300		0		500	
Percentage		40		60		0		100	

This Table 5 categorizes cleanliness workers based on their appointment types within the Tamil Nadu Municipal Corporation, showing percentages across different regions. The majority, accounting for 60%, are appointed through contractors, while 40% are directly appointed by the municipality. There are no

workers appointed through self-help groups or NGOs in this context. This data underscores the distribution of appointment types among the 500 surveyed workers, reflecting how different employment arrangements may influence perceptions of job aspects across various regions.

#### PERMANENT AND TEMPORARY SANITARY WORKERS

A Garret Rank Analysis was conducted to determine

the different types of work performed by Permanent Sanitary Workers. The results are presented below:

**TABLE 6: WORK PERFORMED BY THE PERMANENT AND TEMPORARY SANITARY WORKERS**

Sl.No.	Kind of Works	Permanent Sanitary Workers			Temporary Sanitary Workers		
		Total Score	Average Score	Rank	Total Score	Average Score	Rank
1	Cleaning Sewage	10008	50.04	IV	16350	54.5	III
2	Sweeping Street	13372	66.86	I	17253	57.51	I
3	Door to Door Collecting Waste	9541	47.71	V	13955	46.52	V
4	Sewage Removal	10291	51.46	III	16807	56.02	II
5	Cleaning of Septic Tank	9500	47.5	VI	13807	46.02	VI
6	Dead Animal Disposal	11241	56.21	II	15049	50.16	IV

Source: Computed Data

The above clearly indicates that the majority of the permanent sanitary workers ranked Sweeping Streets as their top task. Dead Animal Disposal received the second rank, followed by Sewage Removal in third place. Cleaning Sewage was ranked fourth, Door-to-Door Waste Collection fifth, and Cleaning of Septic Tanks was ranked sixth.

The analysis clearly shows that the majority of Temporary Sanitary Workers ranked Sweeping Streets as their primary task. Sewage Removal received the second rank, followed by Cleaning Sewage in third place. Dead Animal Disposal was ranked fourth, Door-to-Door Waste

Collection fifth, and Cleaning of Septic Tanks ranked sixth.

#### V. FINDINGS

➤ The study's age distribution analysis reveals that the largest group among the 500 participants surveyed was aged 40-49 years (32.80%), followed closely by the 29-39 age group (30.60%). Participants aged 50-59 years made up 21.80%, while those aged 18-28 years accounted for 10.40%. The smallest group comprised participants above 59 years old, at 4.40%. These findings highlight a predominant presence of



middle-aged participants (29-49 years old) in the study, offering crucial insights into age-related dynamics impacting the research outcomes.

➤ The study's gender distribution showed that out of 500 participants, 359 were male (71.80%) and 141 were female (28.20%). This indicates a significant male majority, which is crucial for understanding potential gender influences on the research outcomes.

➤ This study provides an overview of educational levels among 500 surveyed individuals across various regions. It shows that 31.40% are illiterate, indicating a significant educational challenge. About 28.80% have completed only primary education, while 22.80% have reached high school. Higher secondary graduates constitute 12.40%, and those with undergraduate or higher education are the smallest group at 4.60%. These findings underscore a need for enhanced educational opportunities to address the prevalent educational disparities in the surveyed regions.

## VI. SUGGESTIONS

➤ Providing medical facilities can significantly improve the health conditions of sanitary workers.

➤ Sanitary workers should attend legal awareness camps to understand and access legal protections.

➤ Government should offer low-interest loans to sanitary workers to meet family expenses, ensuring financial stability compared to high-interest loans from private agencies.

➤ Ensuring sanitary workers receive competitive salaries and benefits like Dearness Allowance (D.A.), Provident Fund (P.F.), House Rent Allowance (H.R.A.), and pension is crucial.

➤ Government initiatives should support opportunities for sanitary workers' children to access higher education in educational institutions.

➤ Upgrading equipment and providing modern mechanical devices for waste removal and sewer cleaning is essential for improving efficiency and safety.

➤ This study provides an overview of community composition among 500 surveyed individuals across different regions. It shows that Scheduled Castes (SC) constitute the largest group at 64.60%, followed by Scheduled Tribes (ST) at 21.60%. Backward Classes (BC) make up 9.20%, and "Others" represent 4.60%. These findings underscore the predominant presence of SC and ST communities within the surveyed workforce, highlighting their significant representation across the regions studied.

➤ This study examines how cleanliness workers are appointed across regions, focusing on appointments by Municipality and Contractors. Among 500 surveyed workers, 40.00% are directly employed by the Municipality, while 60.00% are contracted through Contractors. This highlights a predominant reliance on outsourcing in cleanliness services, impacting job security and working conditions.

## VII. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, while traditional reliance on manpower has been key to cleanliness efforts in Tamil Nadu, introducing advanced machinery can significantly enhance the quality of work life for cleanliness workers. By reducing physical strain and health risks, these innovations create a safer, more efficient, and dignified working environment. Embracing technology not only boosts operational effectiveness but also demonstrates a commitment to the well-being of these essential workers. Ensuring safety measures, regular medical camps, eliminating manual scavenging, and promoting awareness about government schemes are crucial steps to uplift the status and improve the quality of life for sanitary workers.

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