

Quality of Life of Manual Scavengers in India –A Case Study from Prambur Block, Chennai District, Tamilnadu

Dr. Y. Ebenezer¹, Dr. N. Periasami², Dr. L.N. Jayanthi³, A. Lilly Victora⁴, S. Sandhiya Devi⁵

¹Assistant Professor of Economics, School of Law, Vel Tech, Rangarajan Dr.Sagunthala R&; D Institute of Science and Technology (Deemed to be University), Chennai, Tamilnadu.

²Assistant Professor of Agriculture Economics & Head of the department (school of social science), college of agriculture sciences, SRM Institute of Science and Technology (SRMIST) (Deemed to be University), Chengalpattu, near Chennai, Tamilnadu.

³Associate Professor of Commerce, Department of Commerce, Saveetha College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, SIMATS, Thandalam, Chennai, Tamilnadu.

⁴Assistant Professor of Law, School of Law, Vel Tech, Rangarajan Dr.Sagunthala R&; D Institute of Science and Technology (Deemed to be University), Chennai, Tamilnadu.

⁵VTA1653, BA.,LLB (HONS) 4th Year Veltech School Of Law Vel Tech, Rangarajan Dr.Sagunthala R&; D Institute of Science and Technology (Deemed to be University), Chennai, Tamilnadu.

Quality of life refers to the overall well-being of persons and citizens. Moreover, it is the individual fulfilment or unhappiness (dissatisfaction) of society that matters to the cultural situation in which they live. This paper focuses on the objectives of arriving at a perfect image of the tendency of quality of life of manual scavengers in Prambur block, Chennai city, Tamilnadu. It is a case study research paper. The study was conducted among 50 manual scavengers by a convenient sampling method. Based on the field study, the manual scavengers' quality of life is not up to the mark. Hence, the study explores the challenges and government constitutional responses to ensure a good quality of life and rehabilitation of respondents' life.

1. Introduction

The concept of Quality of life is a multidimensional concept and thus it shows the standard of life led by a population or an individual at a specific point in time, it can be either negative or positive elements. The quality of life or standard of living also includes wealth, physical or mental health, leisure time, employment, education, security, and freedom. According to the WHO, "Quality of life is an individual's perception of their position in life in the context of culture and value systems in which they live and about their goals, expectations, standards and

concerns”. Further, the right to food, shelter, and clothing, a clean environment, reputation, health care facilities, social security, and livelihood are the important aspects of the standard of living. Our constitution ensures the standard of living under the Indian Constitution Article 21. According to Article 21 of the constitution, “no person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to procedure established by law”. The Supreme Court in numerous cases has upheld the right to life as the important fundamental right which ensures the quality of life to the citizens as well as non-citizens residing in the country.

People in the country should have a good quality of life and that is why the welfare government aims to provide a good ambiance and standard of living to the citizens of India. According to an Economic perspective, Quality of life is termed as improving the standard of living and reducing the disparities among various groups. But before providing the required standard of living to the masses the government needs to conduct research and analyze the changes that are to be performed to provide quality of life to the people who need it and the Government should be assisted with that research which indicates the problems related to the quality of life.

2. AIMS AND METHODS OF THE STUDY

2.1 Objectives of the Study:

- 1) To explore the recent scenario of manual scavenging workers in Tamilnadu and India
- 2) To examine the status of the quality of life of manual scavengers in the prambur block.

2.2. METHODOLOGY AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The main aim of the study is to bring the quality of life of manual scavengers into common society. To execute the same, the study has applied primary and secondary data. The primary data is composed from fifty respondents in the Perambur area. It is one of the Municipalities in Chennai city, Tamilnadu. The study has used the convenient sampling method and it is a descriptive study. Moreover, the simple random model method was adopted to select the separate respondents. The facts linked to primary data was composed over a designed interview plan in during the year 2022. It consists of socio, demographic, and economic data. The qualities of life scale have been taken from the WHO. This scale has more than 26 queries and 4 magnitudes such as physical health, psychological, social relationship, and environmental features. Finally, collected data were fed into the SPSS 20th version to make a simple and two-way table prepared statistically.

3. SCENARIO OF MANUAL SCAVENGING WORKS IN INDIA:

Manual scavenger means an individual engaged by local authority or private organisation for manually clean, remove or dispose of human excreta from insanitary latrines or from the open drains or railway tracks before the human excreta decomposes itself. The manual scavenging refers to the person who are involved or working in a contract basis. The persons will not be considered as manual scavengers if they are employed by the central government and uses modern techniques to clean the excreta. The manual scavengers are those who uses their hands or brooms or age-old devices to clean the latrines manually and thus they are in danger of poor

health care. According to the Rashtriya Garima Abhiyan, 2011, mostly the SC community is involved in the cleaning of dry latrines by carrying them in tins or buckets and disposing of them. The manual scavengers are a caste-based organization and the manual scavengers are made to work in inhumane conditions and they are paid less.

‘The Employment of Manual Scavengers and Construction of Dry Latrines (Prohibition) Act, 1993’ and ‘The Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013’ defines: According to section 2 (1)(j) “Manual Scavenger” means a person engaged or employed by an individual or a local Authority or an agency or a contractor, for manually cleaning, carrying, disposing of, or Otherwise handling in any manner, human excreta in an insanitary latrine or in an open Drain or pit into which the human excreta from the insanitary latrine is disposed of, or On a railway track or in such other spaces or premises before the excreta fully decomposes in such manner as may be prescribed”.

The ratio of manual scavenging in India is higher than the ratio in other countries. The people involved in the manual scavenging are basically from lower caste hence making it a caste-based profession. These people are threatened in different ways by the people from the higher caste communities to carry out the work. The manual scavengers are lowly paid and it also causes many health problems which even lead to the death of manual scavengers. There are 7,70,338 manual scavengers and their dependents in India as per the report of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (Government of India, 2009). The same 2009 report shows that under the National Scheme of Liberation and Rehabilitation of Scavengers (NSLRS) almost 4, 27,870 manual scavengers were assisted and 342468 scavengers are not yet to be rehabilitated under the scheme. But the studies of Safai Karamchari Andolan and the Gita Ramaswamy report shows that state like Andhra Pradesh, Punjab, and Chhattisgarh are hiding the inhumane environment against the manual scavengers. Most of the manual scavengers are employed in the railways, department of defence and the ministry of industry all over India.

3.1 Scenario of manual scavengers in Tamil Nadu:

According to the Census taken in 2011, there are more manual scavengers in Tamilnadu who clean and dispose the human excreta from latrines and open defecation spots and they clean the underground sewage waste and blocks and also clean the septic tanks and grounds. The most common people or communities that have been complicated in manual scavenging are the Pallars, Paraiyars and Chakiliyar. The civil societies organisation have tried their best to rehabilitate the manual scavengers and upgrade their lives but they didn’t succeed.

In Tamilnadu, the six districts like Chennai with 170, tiruchirapalli with 102, Thanjavur with 28, Nagapattinam with 6, Pudukkotai with 13 and Ariyalur with 141 and remaining districts didn’t have any manual scavengers. According to the MS Act 2013, there are 2, 03,134 insanitary latrines in Tamilnadu of which 1, 49,455 have night soil that is disposed of directly into an open drainage 27,659 are cleaned by men and 26,020 are serviced by animals. The 26,020 unhygienic latrines that require manual cleaning indicate that require manual cleaning indicate that someone is cleaning each one by hand. The number manual scavengers data when compared to the amount of insanitary latrines built, the data seems irrational. Some districts have data on insanitary latrines, but officials are not trained to undertake manual scavenging surveys. The TN government is having trouble locating manual scavengers for rehabilitation. The manual scavengers are still using outdated instruments to clean the human

excreta and thus they face social and economical problems. The inhumane behaviours towards the manual scavengers in India results in their low social interaction, low income and poor health status. The women manual scavengers are larger than men in India occupying 95% of the total ratio and thus it shows the poor quality of life of persons who comes from the poor background and backward classes.

3.2 Manual Scavengers in Chennai District:

The deaths by manual scavenging in Chennai is increasing day by day. It has been stated that in 2019, there were 3 deaths in Chennai which happened due to the manual scavenging. The three people who died involved in the cleaning of septic tanks in the private apartments and they belonged to SC community and were below the age of 35. These deaths took place in two different days i.e., January 15 and 19. On January 15, Dravida Kathiravan died at thoraipakkam and on January 19, Rajesh and Ezhumalai died at Tambaram. These deaths were due to the cause of lack of rehabilitation measures by the government concerning the problem of physical scavenging.

According to the report by Safai Karamchari Andolan, an NGO, there were 55 deaths reported in India due to the manual scavenging. The state convenor of Safai Karamchari Andolan (Dr. Velanganni Samuel) has stated that there can be more such deaths which could have been unreported. One of the core member of the safai Karamchari Andolan, Deepthi Sukumar stated that state government saying almost 3000 people had submitted they are engaged in manual scavenging. She also stated that if the declarations were verified and validated by the government, then these 55 deaths could have been prevented and even though FIRs have been filed regarding these deaths in the police station, the police did not submit any charge sheets and hence the zero conviction rate continues in Tamil nadu under the act which governs the manual scavenging.

In order to rehabilitate manual scavengers, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K.Stalin noted the February MoU inked between Chennai Metro Water and the Dalit India Chamber of Commerce and Industry to mechanise septic tank and UGD cleaning. M.K.Stalin, the Chief minister of tamil Nadu also cited the Ambedhkar tholil Munnodigal Thittam, in which approximately Rs 100 crores was allocated to transform manual scavengers into entrepreneurs and the CM requested that the additional chief secretary of MAWS department implement the entrepreneurship program covering Chennai. The CM also warned the harsh action would be initiated against the authorities involved in cases of manual scavenging deaths occurring due to non-adherence to guidelines and preventive measures.

In 2022, four manual scavengers died in a span of four days in Tambaram and Injambakkam. There were more deaths concealed from the public's view. In this study, I have used primary data from 50 respondents in the Chennai district of Perambur taluk to detail their quality of life. Through this survey, it was discovered that the government of tamil nadu does not maintain a proper list of manual scavengers, that the public and appropriate government plays a significant role in the failure to eradicate manual scavenging. Three factors are crucial to comprehending and resolving the situation of manual scavengers, taking into account both their quality of life and work life. These consist of their identification, emancipation (from the task that dehumanizes them), and recovery. All three demand a commitment of time, energy, and resources.

4. QUALITY OF LIFE OF MANUAL SCAVENGERS IN PERAMBUR

**TABLE 1.1 QUALITY OF LIFE OF MANUAL SCAVENGERS IN PERAMBUR TALUK,
CHENNAI DISTRICT, TAMIL NADU.**

S.No	AGE	NO OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
1.	20-35	15	15%
2.	35-50	25	25%
3.	50-75	10	10%
S.No	SOCIAL CATEGORIES	NO OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
1.	SC	21	21%
2.	ST	18	18%
3.	MBC	06	6%
4.	BC	05	5%
5.	OC	0	0%
S.No	MARITAL STATUS	NO OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
1.	Single	13	13%
2.	Married	15	15%
3.	Widow	10	10%
4.	Others	12	12%
S.No	PEOPLE IN OTHER JOB	NO OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
1.	Full Time	11	11%
2.	Part Time	22	22%
3.	Day Shift	09	9%
4.	Night Shift	08	8%
S.No	NATURE OF JOB	NO OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
1.	Permanent	22	22%
2.	Temporary	28	28%
S.No	TYPE OF HOUSES	NO OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
1.	Hut	30	30
2.	Sheet	15	15%
3.	Cement	05	5%
S.No	HEALTH STATUS	NO OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
1.	Good	10	10%
2.	Minor	12	12%
3.	Severe	28	28%
S.No	EDUCATIONAL LEVEL	NO OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
1.	< 7	12	12%
2.	> 7 - >12	08	8%

3.	Illiterate	20	20%
S.No	INFRASTRUCTURAL SATISFACTION	NO OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
1.	Highly Satisfactory	06	6%
2.	Satisfactory	14	14%
3.	Not Satisfactory	30	30%
S.No	LEISURE HOURS	NO OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
1.	2 – 5 Hrs	28	28%
2.	5 – 8 Hrs	14	14%
3.	> 8 Hrs	08	8%
S.No	PERSONAL SECURENES	NO OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
1.	Highly Secure	10	10%
2.	Secure	16	16%
3.	Unsecure	24	24%
S.NO	ENTERTAINMENT	NO OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
1.	Daily	06	6%
2.	Weekly Once	16	16%
3.	Monthly Once	24	24%
4.	Yearly Once	04	4%

Source: computed from primary data

In term of cast of the respondents out of 50 respondents the majority 25% of SC caste of the respondents. The moderate 18% are at from the caste of ST and the least are from the caste of MBC and BC were MBC holds 6% and BC holds 5% it is found that the category of OC is placed at null in the above group. The marital status of manual scavengers were 15% are married, 13% are single, 10% are widow and 12% are others.

The job done by manual scavengers other than scavenging were the work done by the respondents in full time is 11%, part time is 22%, day shift is 9%, and night shift is 8%. The above criteria indicates that the nature of job of the respondents were 22% of manual scavengers holds permanent position in their job and 28% respondents are temporary it is observed that percentage of temporary worker is higher than permanent workers. The types of houses of the respondents 80% manual scavengers lives in hut, 15% lives in sheet and 5% lives in cement. The health status of the respondents in above table indicates that 28% of respondents are suffering through severe health problems like diarrhoea, shortness of breath, headache and back pain and 12% of respondents have minor health issues and remaining 10% of respondents has good health status. The illiteracy level of education is greater with 20% of respondents and 8% of respondents are with the rank of Secondary School of education and 12% of respondents where incomplete in their elementary school of education. The job satisfaction of respondents were 30% are not satisfied and 14% are upto the satisfaction and other 6% of respondents are highly satisfied.

The leisure period of the respondents were measured in hours and here only 8% of respondents have leisure more than 8 hours and 28% of respondents couldn't find a leisure period for more than 2-5 hrs and the remaining 14% of respondents reported that they could find 5-8 hrs as leisure. Most of the manual scavengers with 24% are with personal unsecureness, 16% of respondents are secured and only 10% of respondents were highly secured in personal in the society. The Entertainment range were the 6% of respondents spent in their daily life , 16% of them once in a week , the high range of respondents with 24% have entertainment once in a month and the time spent for entertainment by once a year is only by the 4% of respondents.

Table -2 Respondents based on their satisfaction with family life

S.NO	Satisfaction Family life	No of Respondents (50)	(%)
1	Unhappy	16	32
2	To some extent happy	11	22
3	Not certain	8	16
4	happy	15	30

Source: calculated from primary data

Table 2 reveals the respondents' satisfaction with family life level, which is 16(32%) unhappy of the respondents. more than 15(30%) of happy of the respondents, almost 11(22%) of to some extent happy of the respondents and less than 8(16%) of Not definite of the respondents.

TABLE – 3 Respondents based on their types of disease

S.NO	Types Of Disease	No of Respondents (50)	(%)
1	Tuberculosis	10	20
2	Breathing Trouble	40	80

Source: calculated from primary data

Table 3 indicates the types of disease levels of the respondents. The majority of 40 (80%) breathing trouble of the respondents and 10 (20%) of the respondents have tuberculosis disease.

Table -4 Respondents based on their level of quality of life

S.NO	Level of quality of life	No of respondents (50)	(%)
1	Low	14	28
2	Normal	27	52
3	Great	10	20

Source: calculated from primary data

Table -4 shows the level of quality of life of the respondents, it was noted that half of the respondents almost 52% have an average level of quality of life, and nearly 28% of the respondents maintain a low level of quality of life. Moreover, the remaining 20% of the respondents have a high level of quality of life.

Table -5 Gender Based Quality Of Life in Study Area

The Gender based quality of life

VARIABLE	CATEGORY	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION	STATISTICAL INFERENCE
Quality of life	Male	80.16	4.100	Z = 5.74
	Female	73.68	3.728	df = 41.046 P<0.001 Highly significant

Source: calculated from primary data

Table 5 It has found to be a high level of statistical significance between the gender of the respondents and quality of life using an independent sample t-test ($Z=5.74$, $df=41.046$ $p<0.01$). It confirmed that male respondents are possessed a higher quality of life as compared to female respondents

Table -6 Disease of the Respondents and Quality Of Life

Association between the type of disease of the respondents and quality of life

TYPES OF DISEASES	LEVEL OF QUALITY OF LIFE			STATISTICAL INFERENCE
	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	
BREATHING TROUBLE	1	5	5	$X^2 = 5.276$
	8.5%	44.6%	44.6%	df = 2 $P>0.05$ No significant
TUBERCULOSIS	6	13	20	
	15.4%	33.3%	51.3%	

Source: calculated from primary data

Table 6 the chi-square test established that there is no significant relationship between the types of diseases of the respondents and quality of life

4.2 RECOMMENDATION OF THE STUDY

- The government should be responsible for special health care, welfare schemes, and livelihood programs exclusively for the manual scavenges family. Moreover, as the worker's level of education is very poor, the government and non-government organizations have to take their welfare scheme more seriously without misusing responsibilities to ensure a healthy life for the family members.
- The common civil society people should be positively motivated to enhance saving habits and maintain health insurance cards to ensure safe economic conditions.
- Government and NGOs can take exclusive frequent health care measures to maintain good mental health and physical health to ensure the healthy life of workers. In addition, the government should implement exclusive scholarships for scavenging workers' children's higher education as a way to reduce the number of generational workers.
- The government should be given special facilities and incentives to enhance new skills for the non-scavenging jobs to the low-education family members as much as possible to

implement capital capital-intensive model (machine) for scavenging jobs in the future. In this connection, the mutual societies should deject and discontinue renting services.

➤ Government officials should make bold decisions and implement policies with good vital power to ensure the Indian constitution's vision, particularly for the weaker section of India.

5. CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY

In our society, the manual scavengers are the integral of our communities. While interacting with respondents, it is observed that there is poor social status and low quality of life in the study area. Particularly, their occupational activities are not safe in terms of mental and physical. The government should take an active role in implementing the existing welfare policy more effectively and consider the ground study recommendation to bring appropriate policy to ensure their quality of life. Especially, most of them do manual scavenging as their work and sometimes attend multi-task work, and most of them are not aware of the purpose of the “Prohibition of Employment of Manual Scavengers and Their Rehabilitation Act, 2013”. Since the whole communities have to be taken initiation for eliminating manual scavenging. Therefore, publics should deject and stop renting the services. Moreover, as a moral society, it is our duty and the Indian constitution's commitment to work for the well-being of the manual scavengers (weaker section).

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