

Social Laxity and Discrimination Against Sanitary Workers – A Case Study Analysis

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A. Sathishwaran

*Part-Time Research Scholar, Department of Sociology
Periyar University, Salem, Tamil Nadu, India*

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6557-9664>

P. Sethurajakumar

*Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology
Periyar University, Salem, Tamil Nadu, India*

Abstract

Background of the Study

The social recognition of sanitary workers is in very poor condition in our country. Due to their nature of work as well as their working environments, they are having very pathetic response from the public. Our society is being functioned by the Varna system, obviously we can refuse it, but when we make a deep analysis about the social stratification in the contemporary era, it should be related with the caste, rural and urban category, socio-economic parities and eventually the working category. Though we are having plenty of constitutional enactments which focus the equality among the people in our society, till today we have having the practice of social stratification. With the above said views the research paper has been conducted with the assistance of case study method to elucidate the social condition of the sanitary workers in the urban areas.

Objectives

- To study the social recognition of the sanitary workers from their working fields
- To analyze the working environments and its consequences on their health
- To provide the effective supportive mechanisms to solve the issues of the respondents

Materials and Methods

To find the condition of sanitary workers, the case study method has been adopted. Due to the time constraints and work nature of sanitary workers, the researcher could not able to find more respondents. Hence the case study method has been adopted by the researcher. Totally five case studies prepared by the researcher.

Results

The technical assistance of the government towards the sanitary field shall be implemented. They are having some health issues due to the work nature. Regarding society, in some places the ideology of caste and stratification are existing, this has led to the social laxity of the sanitary workers. The public and government shall provide the better appreciation and social approval to the sanitary workers.

Conclusion

The recognition of health workers not only related with the praise of individuals also connected with the ideological change of the public. The work of vulnerable and marginalized communities for the welfare of the public shall be recognized, otherwise there shall be a gap between the developed and underdeveloped communities.

Keywords: Sanitary Workers, Social Laxity, Public Health, Social Negligence, Social Recognition

The social recognition of sanitary workers is in very poor condition in our country. Due to their nature of work as well as their working environments, they are having very pathetic response from the public. Though they are involving clean and the work of health promotion it seems to be very low grade one by the societal view. This types of ideologies and attitude makes the sanitary workers as a vulnerable and also in the condition of discriminated.

Our society is being functioned by the Varna system, obviously we can refuse it, but when we are make a deep analysis about the social stratification in the contemporary era, it should be related with the caste, rural and urban category, socio-economic parities and eventually the working category. In our present research paper the working category of the respondents is purely correlated with their social conditions. The condition of illiteracy, the transformation of work category from generation to generation, living away from mainstream of the society, having low self-esteem and poor self confident makes them the position of social laxity.

The social laxity and social discrimination emphasizes that the social justice and the social approval of sanitary workers are not being served in a proper manner. Though we are having plenty of constitutional enactments which focuses the equality among the people in our society, till today we have having the practice of social stratification, which makes the vulnerable group becomes more vulnerable and stronger people becomes strongest than ever.

Historical Conditions

The concept of purity and pollution which was propounded by the sociologist Louis Dumont, explicates the status of the Indian society. Not only in the lower stratification, are they also facing all types of discrimination in their social as well as public aspects. Their social and civil rights were not served in a proper manner due to their brand of caste and working category.

The activities of the denial of getting water from public well's in the villages, restrictions in temple entry, used to remove chappals while walking in the main streets of the villages, practicing two tumbler systems and lower wages for their employment were degrading the social life of the lower caste people in our Indian society. After independence we have established the constitutional provisions which reduce the atrocities against the scheduled caste people as well as tried to form the egalitarian society.

Modern Discrimination

Modern discrimination is nothing but they are being discriminated by their nature of work.

The sanitary workers they are responsible for the promotion of the cleanliness than others. They used to involve the collecting garbage from door to door, cleaning the sewages, sweeping streets, drainage channel desilting works, garbage segregation and public toilet cleaning work. None of the others involve these types works than the sanitary workers. Due to their nature of work they are being insulted by the working places and also receiving less social recognition from the public.

Due to their dedicated service, the government of Tamilnadu had changed the nomenclature from the scavengers to the sanitary workers in the year of 2020. This is the honour from the side of the government towards the sanitary workers. It reveals that the sanitary workers they are the part of the savior of the environment and also the contributor of the health promotion among the public.

Review of Literature

The following review of literatures has explained the condition of the sanitary workers in their working environment.

Balasubramanian (2021) in his study of "Working conditions of Sanitary workers in Nagercoil Municipal corporation" it reveals that the stigmatization and discrimination are being followed by the people against the sanitary workers. It also added their health condition is little bit poor due to the work of the cleaning as well as poor hygiene conditions. The study concluded that the government as well as social support should be made combine for the welfare of the sanitary workers.

Suganya Rangamani et.al., (2015) conducted a research study entitled "Health Issues of sanitation workers in a Town of Karnataka", it stated that the sanitary workers used to get more injuries and illness due to their work nature. Due to their poor economic condition they do not want to lose their job and self medication was common one among the respondents. Used to involve alcoholism due to the poor sewage works and they did not offered any types of proper safety mechanisms in their working field. The social approval is very poor and the public did not involve any type of social awards or rewards against the sanitary workers.

Sophia (2017) in her study entitled “A study on sanitary workers in Trichirappalli”, it reveals that the sanitary workers in their working places used to have more physical and mental problems. The stigmatization and discrimination are faced by the respondents in their working places as well as from their office premises. It also suggested that providing safety environment, proper modern equipments, awareness promotion among public about sanitation work and the role of non-governmental mechanisms should be solved the issues of sanitary workers.

Baskar (2018) in his study entitled “A study on health hazards of Coimbatore corporation sanitary workers, Tamilnadu, India”, stated that the sanitary workers they used to face very difficult working conditions in their working places. It delivers that they used to involve medical checkup’s, having moderate workload and they are working six working days in a week. Respiratory disease covered nearly 70 per cent of the sanitary workers. Though they are having less level of health issues, they are having more social negligence in their working fields.

Objectives

- To study the social recognition of the sanitary workers from their working fields
- To analyze the working environments and its consequences on their health
- To provide the effective supportive mechanisms to solve the issues of the respondents

Research Design, Tools and Sampling Procedure

The research study has been conducted to examine the recognition of the society among the sanitary workers. The research also emphasizes that the contribution of the sanitary workers towards the society through their work nature. It also highlights that the challenges faced by the sanitary workers in their social settings. The social recognition and the appreciation is always needed to any type of employees, the same things is needed in the part of sanitary workers. But due to social structure and their work nature no one is willing to praise them though they are involving the risky jobs to make the hazardous society.

The research has been conducted in Hastampatty Zone of Salem Municipal Corporation. Totally there

are 14 wards and it has 120 permanent sanitary workers. Apart from that 301 sanitary workers are working in the temporary under the control self help groups. Due to the time constraints and work nature, the case study method has been adopted by the researcher. Totally five case studies prepared by the researcher.

Case Study One

The respondent name is Saradha. Her husband name is subramani and her age is 45. She belong the Scheduled caste. In the year of 2013 she had been appointed as sanitary worker in permanent under the compassionate ground. She has crossed nearly nine years in her service. She is a third generation sanitary worker from her family. Her grandfather, father and husband also involved the duty of scavenging at Municipal Corporation. She has two children, one has completed under graduate and another child is studying tenth standard. She is residing nearby village due to the non-availability of quarters.

She used to work eight hours per day. In between she used to take rest for two hours. She used to collect garbage from 400 houses in the kannankurichi area coming under eight ward. In addition with that she used to clean ditch work, street sweeping and garbage segregation. Talking about the working environment, she told that she had been offered gumboots, gloves and face mask by her employer. She was satisfied with the supportive mechanisms but there are some of the abuse activities against the respondents from the side of her immediate superior as well as from the general public. But it mainly related with their absence of duty.

The respondents used to collect the garbage in the regular manner, but she feels there is no good response from the public. They just deal the respondent with the attitude of sanitary workers. Apart from that there is no respect or recognition from the public. Sometimes she faced the verbal abuse by the public due to her work nature. She told that she is expecting more response from the public, she also added she involve a better work which creates a better life to the public. She felt that the social stratification and work nature was acting as a important source which hinders the respondents social recognition.

Case Study Two

The respondents name is Leela w/o Kandasamy, age in 58 and she is working in eight ward of Hasthampatty zone. She got the appointment in the year of 1983. She is one among the most senior sanitary workers in the municipal corporation. She got permanent status in the year of 1999. Her husband was working as a sanitary worker in Indian railways. Traditionally they are involving the scavenging work, she is third generation.

She used to involve the sweeping the streets, public toilet cleaning and door to door collection of garbage. In the beginning of her work in 1980's, she used to carry the human excreta, because of the existence of open defecation system. Now there is no manual scavenging work she added. She used to work eight hours. She also added during the time of VIP visits they used to work more hours. She told that she is receiving good support from the higher authorities as well as her colleagues due to her working seniority.

She is having more experience with the general public in the field. She told that in the beginning days of her work she faced lot of discriminated activities and disapproval from the general public. They treated very poor in those days, but now it become reduced due to the awareness of public she added. Regarding the public view about the scavenger and sanitary workers has not been changed. She told that the nature of work, caste identity, female gender and low strata of stratification has led the poor recognition of the sanitary workers in the contemporary field. But she did not accept that all the general public view is like that, some few who is very affiliated with their caste identity they used to degrade the sanitary workers.

She faced verbal abuse, social negligence and she did not rewarded from public. She never bother about the public negligence, because she says in the coming days the caste oriented thing may have the chance to getting changed. Due to her work nature she did not care about their children education. She told her three children were school dropout, because of their job. The child also faced abuse from their school environment by her mother's work she told.

Cast Study Three

The respondent name is jeyalakshmi w/o pananichamy, age is 56. She is living in corporation quarters at kakayankadu. She is working from the year 1990 onwards, but she became permanent only in the year of 2006. She belong the Scheduled caste, in that she comes under Arunthathiyar community. Her husband is also working the same sanitary worker in other zone of corporation. She told that she used to involve eight hours of working, the nature of work is that collecting garbage and public toilet cleaning. She used to involve the work nature of remove the dead animal carcass and disinfection work.

She told that she have had some bad experience with the general public especially in the time of pandemic. During the time of pandemic, the public never crosses or come near by the sanitary workers because they felt they may carry the infections. It makes her very bad about the public. She also added in some of the houses, they used to call by her working names. She remembered that she faced little bit of social avoidance by the public due to her work nature.

Talking about the caste and work nature, she emphasized its role on the discrimination practices. Caste and hierarchy are the important factors that bifurcates the social role and social respect of the people she added. Her children got only primary education. Due to this work nature the society also disturbs their children social life too. Though the sanitary workers are involving the divine duty it is not properly rewarded by the community she stated.

Cast Study Four

The respondent name is Kaliyammal. Her age is 56 working as sanitary worker. She is working from the year of 1986 as sanitary worker. She has crossed more than three decades of cleaning service. She has three children, among that two have completed their degrees. She is living in government quarters. She has got appointment due to her father sudden demise. She used to involve the work of the collecting garbage from the 450 houses in a week.

Talking about the safety mechanisms by the employer she is very happy with that. She has got her gloves, gumboots, jackets and overcoat from

her employer which makes her very comfortable in her unhygienic working field. She also added during the time of pandemic they had got their sanitizers, masks and soaps. The immunity tablets, herbal soups and health checkups also being conducted by the corporation among the sanitary workers she added.

Talking about the public opinion towards the sanitary workers, she told their perception becoming changed. Because during COVID19, she praised by many house owners in her working areas. She positively take the impact of pandemic, which turns much of respect towards the sanitary workers and their important contribution. During pandemic in some places the sanitary workers have been honored by offering cloths, things and gifts, she told.

Though the pandemic has created unbelievable impacts among the respect of the sanitary workers from public, she never forgets the past happenings which degrade her personality which was linked with their career. she also explained the caste and stratification can not be changed, every one face and accept the realities. She told that, she used to be happy, because she is cleaning the physical environment by that she is offering a better chance of healthy life for the general public.

Case Study Five

The respondent name is sumathi, age is 45. She has appointed as sanitary worker in the year of 1999. She belongs to Scheduled Caste, after the sudden demise of her husband her children become school dropouts. She is living in the government quarters of Municipal Corporation. She told that used to involve eight hours work. 500 houses have been allotted to her to collect the garbage with the assistance of pushcarts. Apart from that she used to involve street cleaning and cleaning the bus stand premises which comes under her working areas.

Working conditions of the respondent is very better, she used to enjoy her duty with the personal protective equipments. Sanitizers, uniforms, gloves and tablets have been provided by the employer to the respondents. Regarding safety in work, she is very convenient and the employer assistance to the employee was very excellence she added.

Regarding social recognition and social negligence she told this is inevitable. She also added

in the name of the caste and communities the society have been divided. she told that her working nature and caste identity sometimes make inconvenient to others. She also added it is not my mistake, they ideology and attitude should be changed. She believed that she is involving an important duty which makes the society as a clean one. but in some cases she got positive recognition from her field. They used to give some snacks or money to take tea or coffee she told. She also added during festival times the general public those who are living in her areas they used to share sweets, money and new cloths with the sanitary workers. She replied negligence and discrimination are derived from some others not by all.

Conclusion

The sanitary workers they are involving the important duty which protects the environment as well as human community. In some places the ideology of caste and stratification are existing, where as others they try to look out the benefits of sanitation duty. The public and government shall support the sanitary workers. The psychological support and counseling is to be needed towards the sanitary workers to hike their confident level and work productivity. The recognition is not a single term, it is related with the work productivity and having chance to hike the ability of its workers. This should be concentrated from the part of the public general towards the sanitary workers. The work of sanitary workers during COVID19 has been appreciated in all levels. Like that their regular work, if it is going to be praised or socially recognized it will make good impacts among the sanitary workers as well as the public.

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Author Details

A. Sathishwaran, Part-Time Research Scholar, Department of Sociology, Periyar University, Salem, Tamil Nadu, India, **Email ID:** sathishwaran@gmail.com

P. Sethurajakumar, Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Periyar University, Salem, Tamil Nadu, India **Email ID:** sethurajakumar@gmail.com