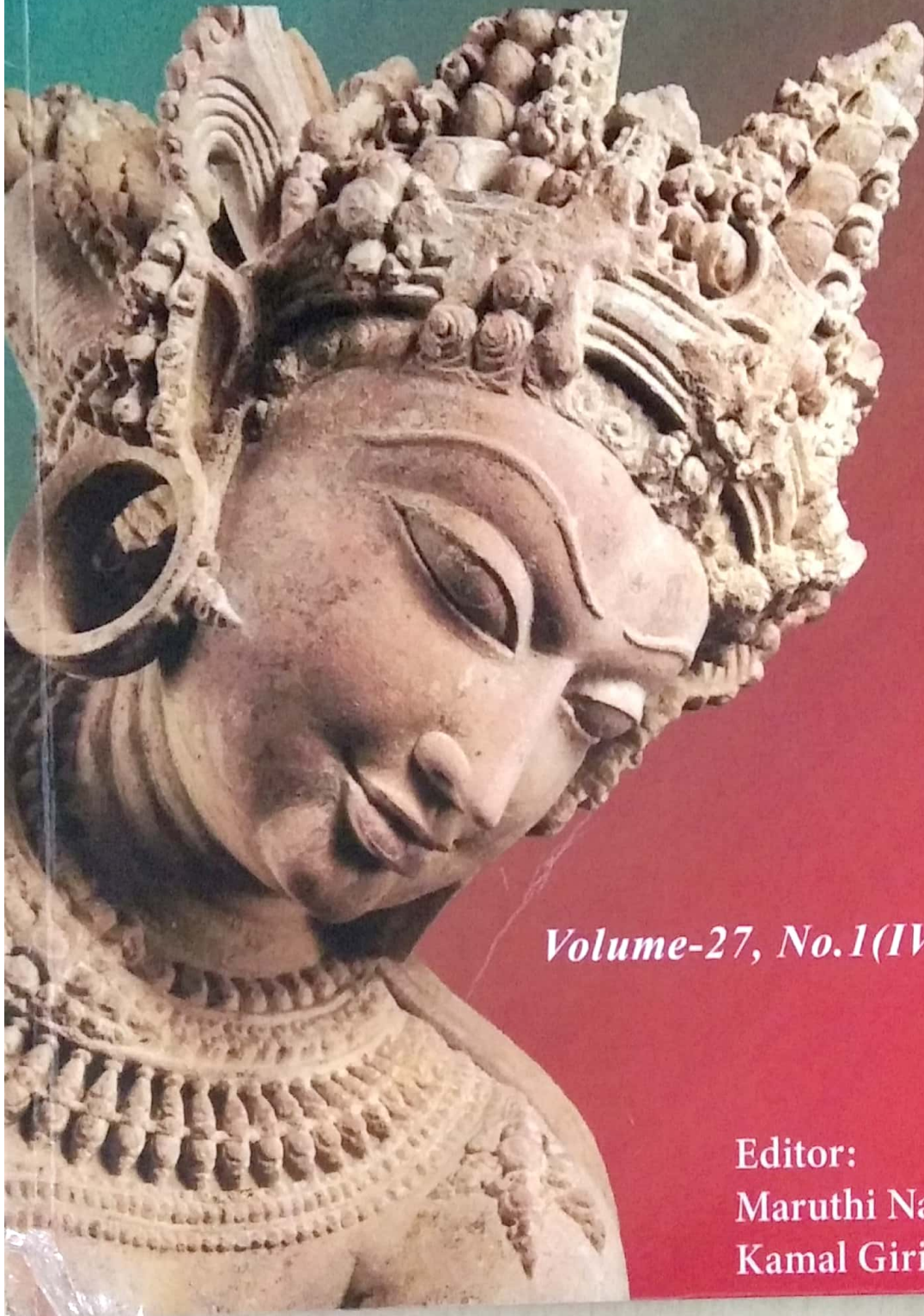


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**A STUDY ON THE STATUS OF SANITARY WORKERS IN TIRUPPUR DISTRICT**

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**ABSTRACT**

The sanitary workers' own health and working conditions are often ignored by the people. Sanitary workers are often seen as the bottom level of the urban residents. They work in the situation of wind, cold and heat for a long term. They are affected by dust, poison, noise and other factors for long years. In addition, because of the traditional practice, sanitary workers are often considered to be of low birth, dirty in appearance and illiterate, by urban residents. Moreover, some persons call them "second-class citizens". Sanitary workers do not have a sense of belonging to the society. They are ill-treated and discriminated by birth and moreover, they struggle for social justice. At the bottom are the untouchables who are regarded as unclean, base and impure, a status which affects all their social relationships. They must be segregated from members of the caste system and live on the outskirts of villages or in their own settlements.

**Keywords:** Sanitary Workers, Scheduled Caste, Environmental Health, Urbanization.

**INTRODUCTION**

Environmental health cannot be ignored in social sustainable development. Sanitary workers are the "beautician of the city" has already contributed a lot to our construction of a harmonious society. Sanitary workers have played an important role in improving the urban and semi-urban ecological environment and the urban modern civilization, meeting the needs of people's desires for physical, spiritual, political, ecological civilization and implementing the social sustainable development. The name 'scavenger' was replaced by sanitary workers as the Government order was called from 1995. In Tamil Nadu after independence especially the government introduced change stating that all community people may join in this occupation. But those individuals from other communities engaged in sanitary work ask the Scheduled Caste instead people to work in these places and pay them an amount. Among the Scheduled Caste people who are engaged in the occupation like sweeping and scavenging and those who are bonded labours, tribes and nomadic tribes are classified as vulnerable groups. The sanitary workers' own health and working conditions are often ignored by the people. Sanitary workers are often seen as the bottom level of the urban residents. They work in the situation of wind, cold, heat and ram for a long term. They are affected by dust, poison, noise and other factors for long years. In addition, because of the traditional practice, sanitary workers are often considered to be of low birth, dirty in appearance and illiterate, by urban residents. Moreover, some persons call them "second-class citizens". Sanitary workers do not have a sense of belonging to the society. They are ill-treated and discriminated by birth and moreover, they struggle for social justice.

**REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

**Anant Suchitra (1999)** in her study about sanitary workers on economic Status and found that majority (90%) of the respondents were below the poverty line.

**Borman (1999)** pointed out that the sanitary worker's backwardness in education and income plays a major role in their economic conditions.

**Singh (2000)** in his study on dalit women in Uttar Pradesh highlighted the issues of socioeconomic conditions of scheduled caste female sweepers and scavengers in the municipal bodies of Uttar Pradesh. He lamented upon the poor status of scheduled castes females and recommended **rehabilitation** of Scheduled Caste female sweepers and scavengers in the state.



Appadorai (2001) in his study on sanitary workers found that majority of the respondents are illiterate. It is also found that there is a relationship between education and employment.

### OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

➤ To study the socio- economic characteristics of the sanitary workers in the study area.

### METHODOLOGY

This research work is a descriptive study based on the primary data.

#### Sample design:-

The researcher used simple random sampling method to collect the data from the respondents. 400 sample respondents were interviewed with the help of interview schedule.

#### Data collection:-

The present study is based on primary data. The researcher collected the data by interviewing the respondents directly. For this purpose interview schedule was developed by the researcher and it was pre-tested to examine the appropriateness of the variables included in the interview schedule. The result of the pre-test was used to fine tune the interview schedule before it was used for the data collection.

### STATUS OF SANITARY WORKERS

The status of the sanitary workers employed in the Tiruppur District either permanently or temporarily was considered for the analysis. The data collected for this purpose are classified and tabulated on the basis of the profile variables relating to the status of the respondents.

#### Gender of the Respondents:-

Gender of the respondent is one of the important variables to know about their status. The gender of the respondents is confined to male and female in this study. Gender is an integral and inseparable part of any society. In India gender discriminations play greater role. Women may have lower education due to discriminatory access as children, and their access to productive resources as well as decision-making tend to occur through the mediation of men. In almost all the countries in world, the sex ratio is favorable towards women except in India. The distribution of respondents on the basis of gender is presented in Table: 1 below.

**Table: 1 The Gender Influences the Living and Working Environment of Sanitary Workers**

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Male	224	56.0
	Female	176	44.0
	Total	400	100.00

Source: Primary Data

Out of the total respondents 224 (56.0 per cent) respondents were male and 176 (44.0 per cent) of the respondents were female. Majority of the respondents (56 per cent) of the respondents were male. In a Indian social conditions the households are normally headed by the males and head of the household was the unit for data collection, from the given sample very few households are headed by the females and that too, due to various unavoidable and unique conditions and not because of any attitudinal change hence large number of respondents are males by gender in this study.

**Exhibit – 1 The Gender Influences the Living and Working Environment of Sanitary Workers**





Source: Primary Data

**Age**

Age is an important variable because it has direct relation with one's mental maturity and the consequent awareness about what is going on this society and understanding their views about the particular problems. By and large age indicates level of maturity of individuals in that sense age becomes more important to examine the response.

**Table: 2 The Age Influences the Living and Working Environment of Sanitary Workers**

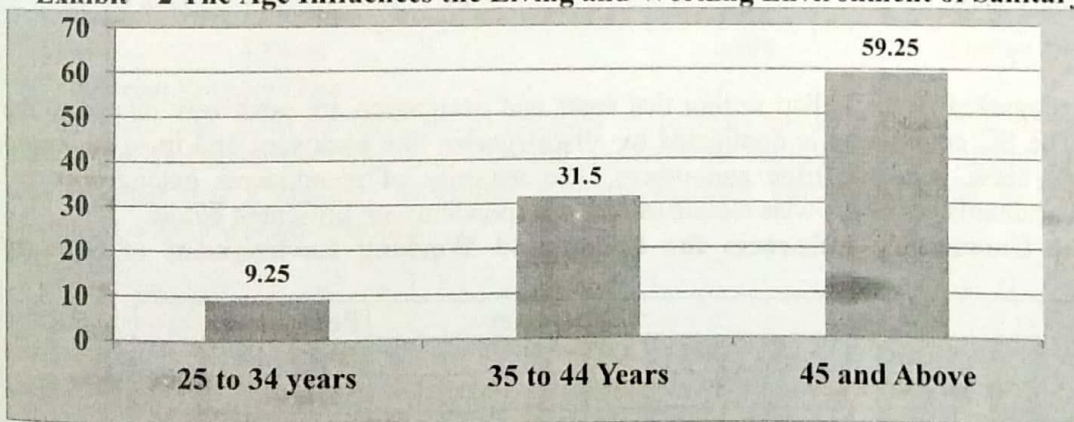
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	25 to 34 years	37	9.25
	35 to 44 Years	126	31.50
	45 and Above	237	59.25
	<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Source: Primary Data

It is found that majority of the respondents (59.25 per cent) found under the age group of 40 and above years, (31.50 per cent) of the respondents were in the age group of 35 to 44 years and 37(9.25per cent) of the respondents found 25 to 34 years. It is found that half of the respondents 45 and above age group. On the basis of their age levels, 37 (9.25 per cent) belong to the age group of up to 25 to 34 years, 126 (31.50 per cent) come under the age group of 35-44 years and 237 respondents (59.25 per cent) come under the 45 and above age group.

This suggests that overall, 59.25 per cent of the respondents belong to the age group of above 45 years, which is 56.0 per cent among the male workers and 44.0 per cent in the case of the female respondents. Hence, the proportion of young workers is marginally less in this occupation. This is graphically shown in following Chart

**Exhibit – 2 The Age Influences the Living and Working Environment of Sanitary Workers**



Source: Primary Data

**Educational Status**

The level of education has close relationship with the behaviour of the workers. The level of education impacts on respondents to develop the standard of living and well known about safety measures.. Education might affect the person's attitudes and the way of looking and understanding any particular social phenomena. In a way the response of an individual is likely to determine by his educational status and therefore it becomes imperative to know the educational background of the respondents. The levels of education of the sample respondents are examined on the necessary data are presented in Table: 3.

**Table: 3 The Education Influences the Living and Working Environment of Sanitary Workers**

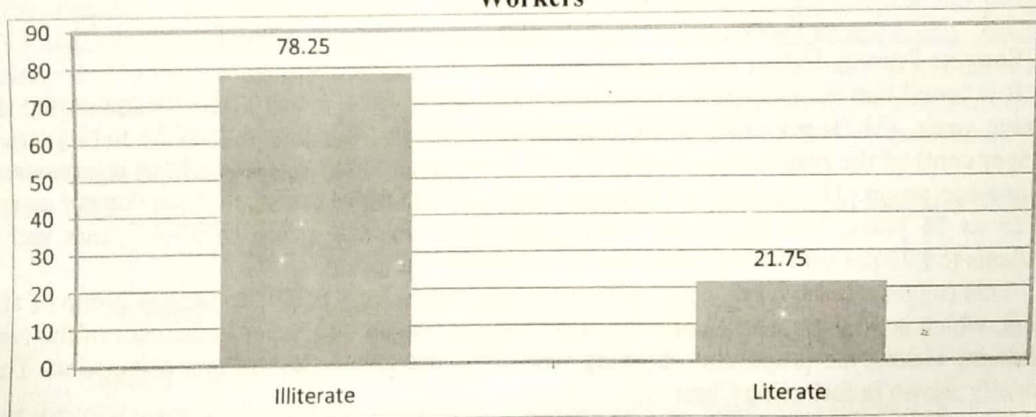
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Illiterate	313	78.25
	Literate	87	21.75
	Total	400	100.00

Source: Primary Data

The study shows that 313 (78.25 per cent) of the respondents were illiterate, only 87 (21.75 per cent) had reached the literate level. A majority (78.25 per cent) of the respondents were illiterate because of poverty.

This underscores the fact that the general level of education is quite low among the respondents, while the proportion of illiteracy is 78.25 percent, which is especially higher in a district like Tiruppur. The literacy level is particularly less in the case of the female workers; this brings out the fact that the spread of education is quite less among the municipal workers in the study area.

**Exhibit – 3 The Education Influences the Living and Working Environment of Sanitary Workers**



Source: Primary Data

**Community**

It is widely recognized in the Indian setting that caste and occupation are positively related to the rural India. The SC community is dominated by all categories like backward and most backward class, schedule class, schedule tribe and others. The majority of respondents belonged to SC community. The details of Caste –wise classification of respondents are presented below.

**Table: 4 The Community Influences the Living and Working Environment of Sanitary Workers**

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	SC	239	59.75
	SC - A	127	31.75
	ST	30	7.5
	MBC	04	1
	BC	-	-



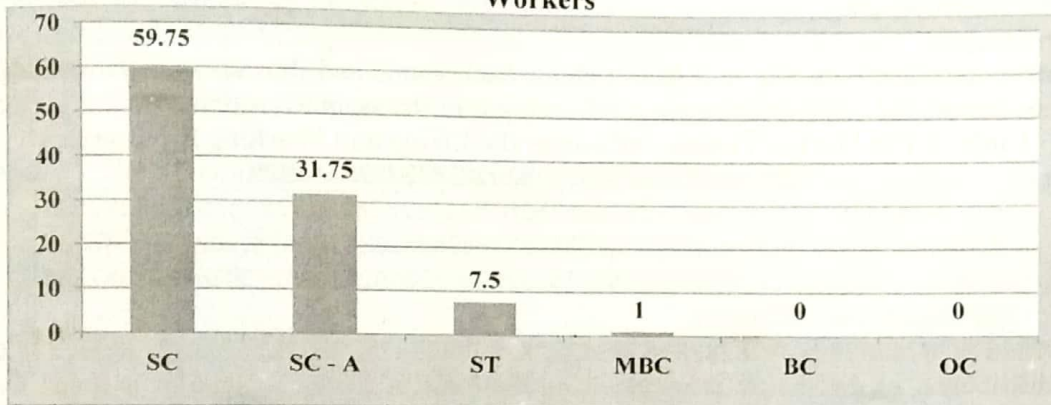
	OC	-	-
	<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Source: Primary Data

Scheduled Caste Community respondents were dominating (59.75 per cent) out of total respondents. While (31.75 per cent) of respondents were Scheduled Caste (Arunthathiyar).7.5 per cent respondents were Scheduled Tribe and 1 percent respondents were Most Backward Community and none of the respondent from Backward Community and other caste.

On the basis of their gender, in the case of the 239 (59.75 per cent) are SC respondents, 127 (31.75 per cent) are SC-A respondents, while 30 (7.5 per cent) are ST respondents and 4 respondents (1 per cent) belong to the MBC community. This underlines the fact that the occupation of sanitary activities is mostly carried out by downtrodden, in which the share of SC-A is quite considerable. Chart - 3.5 presents the graphical view of community of the sample respondents.

**Exhibit - 4 The Community Influences the Living and Working Environment of Sanitary Workers**



Source: Primary Data

### Religion

Religion is one of the social variables that play an important role in shaping attitude and behaviour of the people. Ambedkar quoted that Dalits are under the category of out-caste most of them are like to follow the Hindu religion. In this sense, it is found in the study that majority of 257 of them belongs to Hindu religion. Table 3.4 shows Religious basis of distribution of sample respondents.

**Table: 5 The Religion Influences the Living and Working Environment of Sanitary Workers**

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Hindu	257	64.25
	Christian	140	35.00
	Muslim	03	0.75
	<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Source: Primary Data

It was found that, from the total, 64.25 per cent of the respondents were Hindu, 35 per cent of the respondents fall under the religion of Christian and 0.75 per cent of the respondents were Muslim. It was revealed that a majority of Hindu Sanitary Workers were dominating in the activities as compared with other two religions.







**Table: 7**

**The Marital Status Influences the Living and Working Environment of Sanitary Workers**

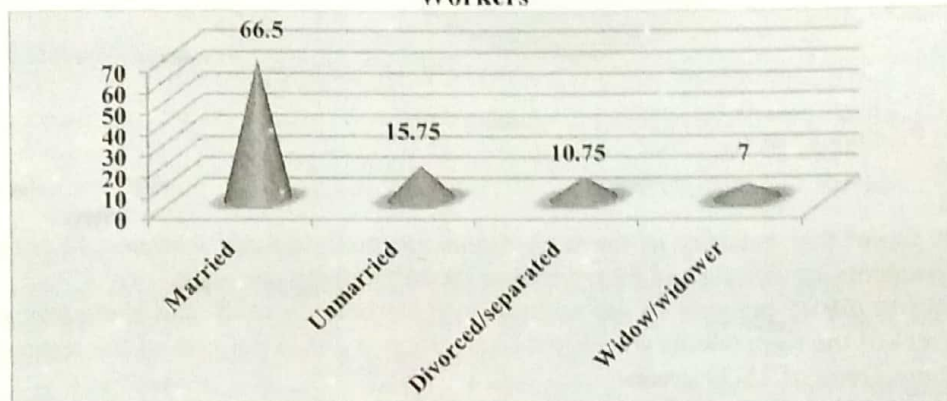
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Married	266	66.50
	Unmarried	63	15.75
	Divorced/separated	43	10.75
	Widow/widower	28	7.00
	<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Source: Primary Data

The data on marital status of the respondents revealed that 266 (66.50 per cent) of the respondents were married, 63 (15.75 per cent) were unmarried whereas 43(10.75 per cent) of the respondents were divorced/separated, 28(7 per cent) were widowed. Majority 66.50 per cent of the respondents were married.

The table indicates that among the 400 respondents, 266 (66.50 per cent) are married, 63 (15.75 per cent) are unmarried, while 43 respondents (10.75 percent) are divorced/separated. While there are 28 respondents (7.00 per cent) who are widowed. This indicates that the share of the married respondents is around 60 per cent overall. Moreover, the percentage of widowed respondents is also low.

**Exhibit – 7 The Marital Status Influences the Living and Working Environment of Sanitary Workers**



Source: Primary Data

**Type of Family**

Family is a social group which is the basic units in every society. There are two types of families like nuclear and joint. The nuclear family consists of husband, wife and children. The joint family has more than one primary family. In modern times the joint family system is disintegrating and giving rise to nuclear families. In urbanized India nuclear families are quite common in rural India joint families are still prevalent. In this background, an attempt has been made in the study to know the family structure. The size of the family refers to the number of members in the family. The social and economic changes, better educational facilities increased earning opportunities have affected the size of the family.

**Table: 8 The Type of Family Influences the Living and Working Environment of Sanitary Workers**

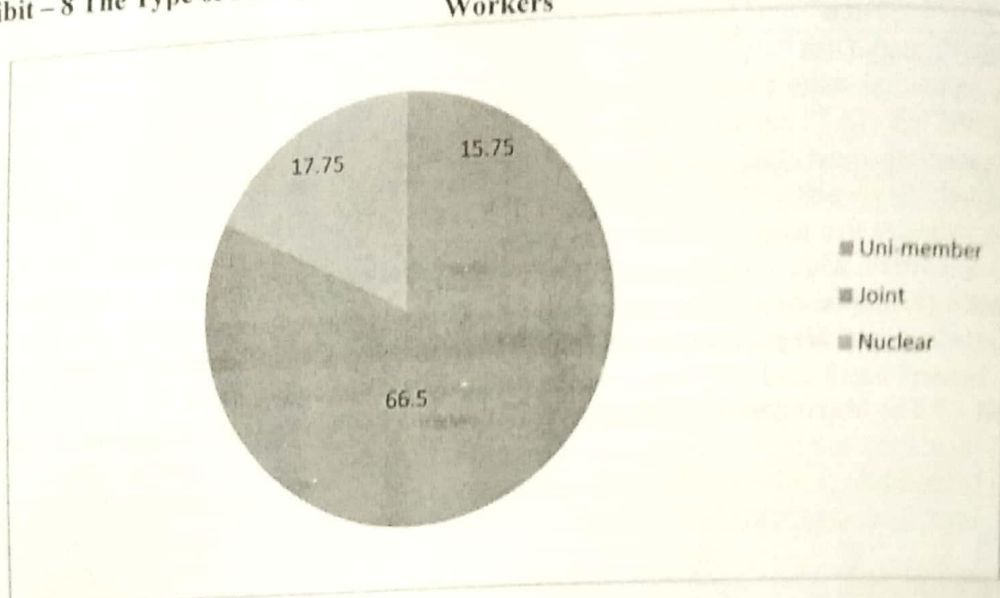
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Uni-member	63	15.75
	Joint	266	66.50
	Nuclear	71	17.75
	<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Source: Primary Data



It is found that majority of the respondents that is 66.50 per cent were in the joint family system. 17.75 per cent of the respondents were in nuclear family system and 15.75 per cent of the respondents were in unimember family system. These shows the increasing trends in the joint family system can be attributed to the processes of urbanization, industrialization, migration and modernization.

**Exhibit – 8 The Type of Family Influences the Living and Working Environment of Sanitary Workers**



Source: Primary Data

**FINDINGS**

- It is found that majority of the respondents are male sanitary workers, 44 per cent of the respondents are female and 56 per cent of the respondents are male.
- Majority (59.25 percent) of the sanitary workers belongs to 45 and above age group, 31.50 percent of the respondents are 35 to 44 age group and 9.25 per cent of the respondents are in the age group of 25-34 years.
- Among the sanitary workers 59.25 per cent of the respondents are in the age group of 45 years and above, 31.5 per cent of them are under the age group of 35-44 years illiterates and among the temporary workers, majority (53.1 per cent) of the respondents are illiterates. This shows, clearly that illiterate people lacking opportunities in other spheres of employment and forced to join in the sanitary work.
- It is found that the SC community dominates (59.75 per cent) in the sanitary work followed by SC-A (31.75 per cent).
- Majority (64.25 per cent) of the sanitary workers belongs to Hindus, the remaining 35 per cent of the respondents are Christians and 0.75 per cent of the respondents are belongs to Muslims.
- Majority of the sample respondents' mother tongue is Tamil, and a small portion of the sample respondents' mother tongue is Telugu.
- It is found that among the permanent sanitary workers, 66.50 per cent of the respondents belongs to joint family system, the remaining 17.75 per cent belonging to nuclear family system and 15.75 per cent of the respondents belongs to unimember family system.
- Majority of the sample respondents are strongly agree that they are working as a sanitary worker due to lack of education.
- Among the male sanitary workers the important reasons for working as a sanitary worker are 'lack of education' and 'family maintenance'. Among the female sanitary workers, the important reasons are 'lack of education' and 'government job'.



- The important reasons for working as sanitary worker among the permanent and temporary sanitary workers belonging to joint family are 'lack of education', 'family maintenance' and 'traditional work'. Among the temporary and permanent sanitary workers belonging to nuclear family, the important reasons are 'lack of education' and 'government job'.

### CONCLUSION

This study on the status of sanitary workers in Tiruppur District has helped the researcher to understand the status of the sanitary workers. The government should give priority to the sanitary workers in Tiruppur District to come up in life and offer them a dignified life in the society. Providing safety measures for sanitation workers, conducting regular medical camps, prevention of manual scavenging, creating awareness about government schemes will definitely improve their quality of life. Social Workers can be appointed to provide psychosocial help to the sanitation workers.

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