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# STATUS OF WOMEN SANITARY WORKERS IN MUNICIPAL CORPORATION – A STUDY OF GREATER WARANGAL MUNICIPAL CORPORATION



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**Abstract:** *The research focuses on the status, challenges, and well-being of female sanitary workers in the Greater Warangal Municipal Corporation (GWMC), a city undergoing rapid urbanization. The study encompasses their socio-economic profile, working conditions, and health status, aiming to provide insights into their lives and contribute to improvements in their working and living conditions. Key findings highlight diverse demographics, challenging working conditions, and health concerns, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions. The study's significance lies in addressing the pressing issues faced by female sanitary workers and proposing recommendations for policy changes and practical interventions.*

**Keywords:** *Status Women Sanitary Workers, Greater Warangal Municipal Corporation*

## Introduction

The city of Warangal, historically significant as the capital of the Kakatiya Dynasty, is experiencing a transformation into an industrial and IT hub while preserving its rich heritage. It is the fourth-largest city in its former boundaries, known for its agricultural economy, historical attractions, and educational institutions. The Greater Warangal Municipal Corporation (GWMC) is central to this development, focusing on infrastructure projects, cleanliness, and environmental initiatives. The city's future vision includes becoming an economic hub with an emphasis on tourism, cleanliness, and good governance.

Warangal's waste management system, producing 360 tons of waste daily, includes door-to-door collection, source segregation, street sweeping, and secondary collection. Efforts are underway to enhance waste collection efficiency, improve transportation, and transition to scientific disposal. Additionally, the city is addressing challenges in the waste management system, such as inadequate primary collection, waste treatment, and disposal practices. Furthermore, the GWMC faces resource limitations, which hinder its ability to achieve higher levels of waste management efficiency. Addressing these challenges and securing more financial resources will be crucial in achieving effective and sustainable solid waste management in the GWMC area.

The phrase "sanitation workers" encompasses individuals, whether employed or not, who bear the responsibility for various tasks within the sanitation process. This encompasses toilet maintenance personnel and attendants in a range of settings, including homes, public facilities, and institutions. It also includes those engaged in the emptying of cesspools and septic tanks once they reach capacity, as well as other individuals involved in the handling of faecal sludge. Furthermore, it extends to those tasked with the cleaning and maintenance of sewer systems, manholes, and individuals employed at sewage and faecal waste treatment and disposal sites.

According to the National Urban Sanitation Policy, Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) bear the responsibility of mitigating health risks related to factors within the urban environment that can contribute to health issues. Sanitation workers play a pivotal role in upholding cleanliness and hygiene across various settings, including offices, residential areas, and public spaces. Their contributions are essential for safeguarding people's well-being and curbing the transmission of diseases.

Within the GWMC, this responsibility is shouldered by a workforce of 3,515 employees, with a notable majority of 3,000 being female sweepers. These women sanitary workers diligently clean a substantial daily stretch of 4,940.2 kilometres of roads. This extensive road maintenance includes 1,400 kilometres of Cement Concrete (CC) Roads, 600 kilometres of Bituminous (BT) Roads, 660 kilometres of Water-Bound Macadam (WBM) Roads, and 1,100.2 kilometres of unpaved Katcha Roads. Their efforts significantly contribute to maintaining the city's overall sanitation and public health.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The Greater Warangal area, which is home to the Warangal Municipal Corporation (GWMC), is currently witnessing rapid urbanization and growth. This expansion has resulted in a significant increase in waste production originating from various sources such as households, street cleaning, commercial establishments, and more. On average, each person in this region generates approximately 400 grams of waste per day, with 60% of this waste being non-biodegradable. To uphold the city's sanitation and public health standards, GWMC employs a substantial workforce of 3,515 individuals. Out of these, 3,000 are female sanitary workers, responsible for the daily maintenance and cleanliness of extensive road networks across different categories.

Despite their essential role in maintaining public sanitation, the status and working conditions of these female sanitary workers have remained relatively unexplored. This research initiative is aimed at investigating the challenges, working conditions, and overall well-being of these women sanitary workers within the GWMC. Emphasis will be placed on aspects like their health, safety, and socio-economic status. Furthermore, the study seeks to identify areas where improvements can be made in the management and welfare of these workers, considering the unique challenges they face in ensuring the city's cleanliness and public health. This research endeavour addresses the pressing need for a comprehensive understanding of the status of women sanitary workers in the rapidly growing urban area of GWMC. It intends to shed light on the issues they encounter and propose potential solutions to enhance their lives and working conditions.

The sanitation employees are tasked with the unenviable job of collecting waste from streets, drains, municipal bins, open dumping sites, and landfill areas. None of these tasks are conducive to good hygiene, yet the sanitation workers often lack protective gear, such as gumboots or gloves. This exposes them to frequent injuries, including cuts from glass pieces and metals. Their work is unpleasant, and they are often forced to operate in areas where waste is also used for public defecation. The health and safety concerns associated with their work are numerous and centre around the collection and handling of waste generated within GWMC's jurisdiction.

When it comes to socio-economic status, it is typically measured using various factors like income, occupation, educational qualifications, employment, age, religion, category, family type, marital status, family size, housing conditions, and expenditure. In practice, sanitation employees face numerous challenges in their daily work, often experiencing discrimination, humiliation, and harassment from society. Surprisingly, no study has previously examined the socio-economic status of sanitation employees in GWMC. Therefore, this research aims to fill this gap by conducting a thorough investigation into the **"Status of Women Sanitary Workers in Municipal Corporation—A Study of Warangal Municipal Corporation"**.

### **Objectives of The Study**

For this purpose, the study framed the following research objectives to conduct an in-depth study to know the status of women sanitary workers in GWMC:

1. To assess the working conditions and safety concerns of women sanitary workers in the GWMC.
2. To investigate the health status of female sanitary workers about their job-related challenges.
3. To examine the socio-economic factors affecting the lives of women sanitary workers, including income, occupation, educational qualifications, and housing conditions.

4. To provide recommendations for improving the management and welfare of female sanitary workers in GWMC based on research findings.

### **Research Questions**

1. How do the working conditions of female sanitary workers in the GWMC impact their health?
2. What socio-economic factors affect female sanitary workers?
3. To what extent do female sanitary workers in the GWMC experience discrimination?

### **Significance of the Study**

The present study primarily focuses on the status of women sanitation workers in the GWMC. It endeavours to shed light on and improve several crucial aspects concerning this workforce. One major facet of the research involves examining and enhancing working conditions and safety for female sanitary workers within the GWMC. By identifying the challenges, they encounter in their line of work, this study aims to pave the way for better working conditions and safety measures, significantly impacting the well-being of these workers.

Furthermore, the research delves into the physical and mental health status of female sanitary workers, considering the specific challenges associated with their jobs. Understanding and addressing their health concerns are vital not only for their well-being but also for maintaining public health standards.

Socio-economic empowerment is another key focus of this study. By investigating the socio-economic factors affecting female sanitary workers, it aims to discover ways to improve their socio-economic status and efficiency. This is particularly significant for reducing economic disparities and promoting social equity.

The study also has a critical objective in assessing the extent of discrimination, humiliation, and harassment faced by female sanitary workers. This information is pivotal for fostering an inclusive and supportive work environment while addressing issues of social discrimination.

In the study of rapid urbanization in the GWMC area, the maintenance of public sanitation is of paramount importance for public health. This study's findings on the challenges faced by female sanitary workers in this study can provide valuable insights for enhancing sanitation efforts in rapidly growing urban areas.

Moreover, the research offers an opportunity to identify areas where improvements can be made in the management and welfare of female sanitary workers. It holds the potential to inform policy changes and practical interventions that can enhance the lives and working conditions of these workers.

This study carries significant importance as it addresses working conditions, health, socio-economic status, and discrimination experienced by female sanitary workers in the study of rapid urbanization. Its findings can contribute to improving the lives of these workers and support endeavours to maintain public sanitation and health standards in the GWMC area.

### **Scope and Limitation of the Study**

The scope of this study is limited to the Greater Warangal Municipal Corporation in Warangal. Consequently, the study has excluded all other employees of the GWMC from this investigation. This study exclusively focuses on women sanitation employees and workers, involving them in a detailed discussion of the research's objectives and findings.

### **Research Methodology**

This study draws upon a combination of primary and secondary data sources. In the case of primary data, the research employs a survey methodology. To facilitate this, a structured questionnaire was developed after extensive consultations with experts in the field. The survey encompasses a total of 300 women sanitary worker respondents selected from the GWMC area. The sample is comprised of two categories: regular employees and those engaged through outsourcing or contractual arrangements. Data collection utilizes a random sampling method to ensure a representative and unbiased selection of respondents from various areas and job roles within the GWMC.

Complementing the primary data, secondary data is also incorporated into the research. This secondary data is collected from a variety of sources, including journals, books, government documents, reports, existing research works, and online resources. This combined approach allows for a comprehensive and well-rounded analysis of the study's subject matter.

### **Research Tools**

To conduct a thorough analysis of the study, the study has employed a range of research tools and methods, including:

1. **Survey Method with Questionnaire:** The study utilizes a survey method, which involves the administration of a structured questionnaire to gather data from the sample respondents. This method is essential for collecting quantitative data and allows for systematic analysis.
2. **Interview Schedules:** The study, conducts interviews with selected respondents to extract their opinions and gather qualitative data. This provides valuable insights into the subject matter and complements the quantitative data collected through the survey.
3. **Simple Percentage and Tabulation Methods:** To analyse the collected data, the study applies simple percentage calculations and tabulation methods.

These techniques are useful for summarizing and presenting the data in an organized and comprehensible manner, making it easier to draw meaningful conclusions from the research.

By employing these research tools and methods, the study ensures a comprehensive and robust analysis of the data, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches to gain a deeper understanding of the research subject.

## **Findings of the Study**

### **Socio-economic Profile of Women Sanitary Workers:**

#### **1. Employee Distribution in GWMC**

- 73% of female sanitary workers are employed through outsourcing agencies or on a contractual basis.

#### **2. Religious Affiliation**

- 48% of the workers identify as Hindu.
- 30% as Christian.
- 18% are categorized under "Other" without specifying their faith.

#### **3. Caste Distribution**

- 83% of the sanitary workers belong to the Scheduled Caste (SC) category.
- 14% belong to Backward Castes.
- 3% belong to the Scheduled Tribe (ST).

#### **4. Age Distribution**

- 41% are in the age group of 41-50 years.
- 25% are 50 years and above.
- 22% are between 31-40 years.
- 12% are below 30 years old.

#### **5. Marital Status**

- 82% of the sanitary workers are married.
- 14% are widowed.
- 2% are unmarried.
- 2% are divorced.

#### **6. Educational Attainment**

- 73% of the workers are illiterate.
- 27% are literate.

#### **7. Family Structure**

- 86% come from nuclear families.
- 14% are part of joint families.



**8. Housing Conditions**

- 40% of SSWs live in asbestos houses.
- 29% in brick-walled pucca houses.
- 26% in thatched houses.

**9. Amenities in Homes**

- 100% have access to electricity and drinking water.
- 92% have a bathroom.
- 74% have a toilet in their homes.

**10. Ownership of Household Items**

- 74% have a refrigerator.
- 29% have a washing machine.
- 89% have an iron.
- 94% own a mixer grinder.

**11. Media and Communication**

- 28% have a radio.
- 99% have a television.

**12. Transportation**

- 83% of SSWs own bicycles.
- 96% own motorcycles for travel.
- 6% operate auto-rickshaws or have four-wheelers.

**13. Technology and Computing**

- 6% have personal computers.
- 2% have laptops for their children's education.

**14. Land Ownership**

- Only 13% of SSWs have their own land.

**15. Spouse's Employment**

- 45% of SSWs' spouses are employed as drivers.
- 28% work in the unorganized sector.
- 7% are involved in small-scale businesses.
- 4% have similar positions within GWMC as contractual employees.

**16. Monthly Income**

- 38% of SSWs have a monthly income between Rs. 20,001 and Rs. 30,000.
- 37% earn between Rs. 30,001 and Rs. 40,000.
- 18% have a monthly income of Rs. 40,001 or more.
- 17% earn between Rs. 15,600 and Rs. 20,000.

**17. Loan Usage**

- Loans are commonly used for purposes like purchasing new two-wheelers (59%), house construction and repairs (48%), building new houses (35%), and healthcare expenses (33%).

**18. Healthcare Access**

- 70% of SSWs have Ayushman Bharath Yojana cards.

**19. Community Experiences**

- 82% of SSWs report not encountering negative experiences within their own communities.
- Most positive experiences belong to the Scheduled Caste community.

**20. Public Attitudes**

- 30% of SSWs have reported less than polite attitudes from the public while carrying out their duties.

**21. Family Support**

- 85% of SSWs have supportive and cooperative family members when making decisions within the family.

**22. Aspirations for Children**

- 32% of SSWs aspire for their children to become Class One Officers.
- 13% as Teachers/Professors.
- 17% wish for their children to establish small businesses.

**23. Children's Career Aspirations**

- 12% hope their children become Software Engineers/Engineers.
- 9% as doctors.
- 6% as Clerks.
- 5% as Peons.
- 3% want their children to follow in their footsteps.
- 2% envision their children as political leaders.

These findings provide insights into the living conditions, socioeconomic situations, aspirations, and challenges faced by female sanitary workers in the Greater Warangal Municipal Corporation.

**Working Conditions****1. Working Conditions and Employment Status:**

- Sanitary workers often face challenging working conditions, including health risks and physical demands.
- Many lack proper protective gear.

- Low wages, limited job security, and inadequate benefits are common.
  - Efforts are being made to improve conditions, including training and protective equipment.
  - A significant percentage of sanitary workers (23%) work on a contractual or outsourcing basis for less than five years, and 22% work in such roles for 6 to 10 years.
  - 51% of sanitary workers are part of the first generation, and 31% are part of the second generation.
  - 59% of contractual/outsourcing sanitary workers have worked for 6 to 20 years without achieving regular employment status.
- 2. Tasks and Protective Gear:**
- Female sanitary workers primarily engage in tasks like sweeping, cleaning open areas, garbage collection, and waste loading.
  - All 300 sanitary workers reported receiving Night Reflecting Radium Jackets, handwash/sanitiser, PPE Kit (during the COVID-19 pandemic), and raincoats.
  - Gloves are provided to 70% of sanitary workers, followed by masks (22%), boots (8%), and aprons (4%).
- 3. Working Hours:**
- 51% of sanitary workers are required to work all seven days of the week.
  - 57% work for 7-8 hours per day, 30% work for 9-10 hours per day, and 13% work more than 10 hours per day.
  - Working hours may increase during festivals and occasional days.
- 4. Relationships with Co-Workers:**
- 93% of sanitary workers reported positive experiences with male co-workers.
  - 83% expressed positive experiences with senior colleagues.
  - 67% reported negative experiences with administrative staff.
- 5. Union Membership and Leave Facilities:**
- All sanitary workers are active members of the GWMC union.
  - Only 18% of regular SSWs have access to leave facilities, while 82% of contractual/outsourcing SSWs are entitled to casual leave.
  - SSWs working on a contractual basis may face wage loss when taking sick leave.
  - SSWs do not have the privilege of enjoying festivals and occasional holidays due to their roles being considered essential services.
- 6. Compensation for Injuries and Deaths:**
- Compensation for injuries and deaths depends on the administrators of GWMC.

- The availability and accessibility of compensation may vary based on administrative decisions and policies.
7. **Awareness of Welfare Measures:**
- Only 10% of sanitary workers are informed about welfare and legal measures; 90% are unaware due to illiteracy.

These findings provide insight into the challenges and disparities in the working conditions and employment status of sanitary workers, as well as their relationships with co-workers and access to benefits and compensation.

### Health Status

1. **78% of the 300 SSWs surveyed have faced health issues in recent years, while 22% have not reported any health problems.**
  - Respiratory Problems: 64% of SSWs.
  - Infections: 36% of SSWs, including common infections like leptospirosis and hepatitis-A.
  - Orthopaedic Problems: 25% of SSWs.
  - Nerve-Related Issues: 25% of SSWs.
  - Muscular Ailments: 23% of SSWs.
  - Gastric Concerns: 22% of SSWs.
  - Blood Pressure Issues: 12% of SSWs.
  - Dengue: 11% of SSWs.
  - Malaria: 5% of SSWs.
  - Diabetes: 3% of SSWs.
2. **Utilization of Health Services:**
  - 100% of the SSWs utilize Employee State Insurance.
  - Only 18% make use of the government-provided health card.
3. **Frequency of Health Check-ups:**
  - 70% of SSWs undergo regular health check-ups within a year.
  - 30% do not pursue regular check-ups over the same period.
  - 92% of SSWs prefer annual health check-ups.
  - 6% have health check-ups twice a year.
  - 2% have health check-ups three times a year.
4. **Waste Management and Disposal:**
  - 67% of SSWs agree that waste management and disposal in the city are properly managed by GWMC.

- 33% of SSWs believe that waste management and disposal processes are not adequately maintained by the corporation.

These findings highlight the significant health challenges faced by sanitary workers and the importance of regular health check-ups. Additionally, it sheds light on their views regarding waste management and the need for improvements in waste collection processes to meet community expectations for cleanliness and hygiene. Top of Form

### **Suggestions**

Based on these findings, the following suggestions are made to address the challenges and disparities faced by female sanitary workers in GWMC:

1. **Employee Distribution:** Explore opportunities for converting outsourced or contractual positions into permanent employment to provide more job security and benefits.
2. **Religious Affiliation:** Promote diversity and inclusion within the workforce by fostering an inclusive environment for workers from different religious backgrounds.
3. **Caste Distribution:** Implement affirmative action policies to ensure equitable representation of different castes within the workforce.
4. **Age Distribution:** Consider age-specific support and training programs, especially for older workers, to ensure their well-being and skill development.
5. **Marital Status:** Address the unique needs of widowed and divorced workers by providing appropriate support services.
6. **Educational Attainment:** Implement adult education programs to improve literacy rates among the workers.
7. **Housing Conditions:** Work on improving housing conditions, especially for the 26% of workers living in thatched houses.
8. **Amenities in Homes:** Ensure that 100% of workers continue to have access to basic amenities such as electricity and drinking water.
9. **Transportation:** Provide support for workers who rely on bicycles or motorcycles, possibly by improving public transportation options.
10. **Technology and Computing:** Promote digital literacy by providing access to computers and laptops for workers and their families.
11. **Spouse's Employment:** Explore opportunities for the spouses of sanitary workers to improve their employment conditions and income.
12. **Monthly Income:** Work on increasing the income of workers earning below Rs. 20,000 per month through fair wage policies.

13. Loan Usage: Provide financial education and support for workers to manage loans effectively.
14. Healthcare Access: Raise awareness about healthcare benefits available through Ayushman Bharath Yojana cards.
15. Community Experiences: Promote positive interactions between workers and the community, particularly addressing issues faced by those who encounter negative attitudes.
16. Working Conditions: Improve working conditions by providing proper protective gear, increasing wages, and offering job security.
17. Tasks and Protective Gear: Ensure that all sanitary workers have access to essential protective gear and appropriate training.
18. Relationships with Co-Workers: Address the negative experiences with administrative staff and promote a more harmonious work environment.
19. Union Membership and Leave Facilities: Ensure that all sanitary workers, regardless of their employment status, have access to leave facilities.
20. Compensation for Injuries and Deaths: Work on standardizing compensation policies to ensure fairness for all workers.
21. Health Status: Establish a comprehensive health program to address the specific health issues faced by sanitary workers.
22. Utilization of Health Services: Promote the use of government-provided health cards to improve healthcare access.
23. Waste Management and Disposal: Address the concerns of workers regarding waste management processes, and improve waste management practices to enhance worker and public health.

These recommendations aim to improve the socio-economic conditions, working conditions, and health status of women sanitary workers in GWMC, ultimately enhancing their quality of life and well-being.

## **Conclusion**

The city of Warangal, historically significant as the capital of the Kakatiya Dynasty, is currently undergoing a transformative phase, evolving into an industrial and IT hub while diligently preserving its rich heritage. As the fourth-largest city within its former boundaries, Warangal stands out for its robust agricultural economy, historical landmarks, and educational institutions. Playing a pivotal role in this development is the Greater Warangal Municipal Corporation (GWMC), focusing on key aspects such as infrastructure projects, cleanliness, and environmental initiatives. The city's forward-looking vision encompasses becoming an economic hub with a strong emphasis on tourism, cleanliness, and good governance. In the realm of waste management, the

GWMC is actively addressing the challenge of handling 360 tons of waste daily through comprehensive strategies like door-to-door collection, source segregation, and improved disposal methods. Despite notable progress, challenges such as inadequate primary collection and resource limitations persist, necessitating ongoing efforts for sustainable solid waste management.

At the heart of this sanitation process are the invaluable sanitation workers, a term encompassing individuals responsible for maintaining cleanliness across diverse settings. These individuals play a crucial role in upholding hygiene and mitigating health risks, contributing significantly to public well-being. In the context of the GWMC, a dedicated workforce of 3,515 employees, predominantly comprising 3,000 female sweepers, diligently covers an extensive daily stretch of 4,940.2 kilometres of roads. These unsung heroes contribute immensely to the city's overall sanitation and public health, working towards the realization of the city's vision amidst the challenges posed by rapid urbanization.

However, this promising scenario raises critical questions about the status and working conditions of these female sanitary workers, prompting a comprehensive research initiative. Focused on the GWMC area, this study aims to delve into the challenges, working conditions, and overall well-being of these women, shining a light on aspects such as health, safety, and socio-economic status. With a set of defined objectives and research questions, the study seeks to provide valuable insights that extend beyond mere statistics, offering practical recommendations to enhance the management and welfare of female sanitary workers in the GWMC.

In understanding the significance of this research, it becomes evident that the findings will not only contribute to the improvement of the lives and working conditions of these workers but also play a crucial role in informing policy changes. By addressing challenges associated with rapid urbanization and social equity, the study aligns with broader efforts to ensure sustainable urban development. The scope and limitations of the study are clearly defined, focusing exclusively on the GWMC area and the female sanitary workers within it.

Methodologically, the study adopts a balanced approach, combining primary and secondary data sources, employing a survey methodology with a structured questionnaire for 300 female sanitary worker respondents. Secondary data enriches the analysis, drawing from diverse sources such as journals, government documents, and existing research works. The findings encapsulate a detailed socio-economic profile, working conditions, and health status, offering a nuanced understanding of the challenges and disparities faced by these essential workers.

As the study progresses, it uncovers a myriad of insights, from the distribution of employees to the health challenges faced by sanitary workers. The research not only identifies existing issues but also suggests tangible solutions to address disparities in job security, working conditions, and health concerns. By exploring avenues for

improvement, ranging from promoting diversity and digital literacy to enhancing housing conditions and healthcare access, the study puts forth actionable recommendations.

In essence, this research is poised to make a meaningful contribution to the ongoing discourse on urban development, social justice, and the well-being of those essential workers who contribute tirelessly to the cleanliness and health of our urban spaces. Through a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and potential solutions, this study is positioned to bring about positive change for female sanitary workers in the rapidly growing urban area of the GWMC.

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