From Sweeping Streets to Seeking Support: An Empirical Assessment of Work-Life Challenges Faced by BBMP Pourakarmikas

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Abstract:- Pourakarmikas, the frontline sanitation workforce of the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP), are critical to the functioning of urban life. Despite their essential service, these workers face numerous work-life challenges, including poor working conditions, lack of job security, and limited social recognition. This empirical study assesses the quality of work life (QWL) of 200 pourakarmikas—both male and female—in selected BBMP zones. Using structured questionnaires and statistical tools, this study examines physical working conditions, emotional well-being, gender disparities, and socio-economic challenges. The findings reveal significant differences in QWL experiences based on gender and employment status. Recommendations are provided for policy reform, welfare support, and capacity-building efforts.

Keywords: Pourakarmikas, Quality of Work Life, BBMP, Sanitation Workers, Occupational Health, Urban Governance, Gender Disparity.

INTRODUCTION

Sanitation workers—locally known as pourakarmikas—form the backbone of Bengaluru's solid waste management system. Managed by BBMP, their contribution to public health and urban cleanliness is indispensable. Yet, they are often subjected to exploitative labor conditions, inadequate protective gear, erratic wages, caste-based discrimination, and social stigma. These issues adversely affect their quality of work life (QWL), a concept encompassing job satisfaction, health, safety, emotional well-being, and work-life balance.

Understanding the QWL of pourakarmikas is crucial for devising inclusive urban governance policies and ensuring equitable treatment for this marginalized workforce.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The review of literature forms the theoretical foundation for your study. It critically examines previous studies conducted in the areas of sanitation work, quality of work life (QWL), occupational health, gender issues, and labor conditions, especially among pourakarmikas and urban sanitation workers in India.

1. Meena, G. (2020) – A Study on Quality of Work Life of Sanitary Workers

- Focus: This study examined the QWL of sanitation workers across India using dimensions like safety, job satisfaction, work conditions, and dignity at work.
- Key Findings:
- Majority of workers were dissatisfied with safety and hygiene facilities.
- There was a lack of access to drinking water, toilets, and protective gear.
- Relevance to Current Study:
- Provides a national-level baseline for understanding QWL gaps among sanitation workers.
- Highlights the urgent need for QWL-oriented labor welfare policies in urban local bodies (ULBs).

2. Citizen Matters Bengaluru (2022) – Why Do Pourakarmikas Continue Despite Harsh Conditions?

- Type: Investigative journalism backed by interviews and informal data.
- Key Observations:
- Pourakarmikas, especially women, continue working due to lack of alternative employment

and deep-rooted caste-based occupational inheritance.
- Delays in salary, absence of job security, and harassment by contractors were common.
- Relevance:
- Offers firsthand qualitative evidence on work-life challenges of BBMP pourakarmikas.
- Supports the need for empirical validation through your study.

3. Reddy, M. (2018) – Labour Rights of Sanitation Workers in Karnataka

- Scope: Focused on contract vs permanent employment disparities in Karnataka municipalities.
- Findings:
- Contract workers face more exploitation with no ESI/PF benefits.
- Political negligence and corruption often deny pourakarmikas their due wages and dignity.
- Contribution:
- Reinforces the vulnerability of contract workers—a major issue addressed in your study.

4. Pradeep, D. et al. (2020) – Well-being of Informal Sector Workers in Bangalore

- Methodology: Survey-based analysis of informal workers' emotional and physical well-being.
- Results:
- Emotional distress and mental fatigue were high among low-income urban workers.

- Insecurity and discrimination affected job satisfaction.
- Importance for Your Study:
- Emphasizes psychosocial aspects of QWL that go beyond pay and physical work.

5. Kaur, R. (2019) – Gender and Sanitation Work in Urban India

- Focus: Gendered experiences of female sanitation workers in cities like Delhi and Bengaluru.
- Key Insights:
- Female pourakarmikas faced double burden of domestic and public work.
- Facilities like toilets, restrooms, and maternity leave were absent.
- Verbal harassment and lack of safety were widespread.
- Relevance:
- Provides a gender lens to your study, validating inclusion of gender as a key variable.

6. WHO Report on Sanitation Workers (2020)

- Scope: Global health, safety, and dignity concerns for sanitation workers in low- and middle-income countries.
- Findings:
- High risk of disease, lack of PPE, and negligible health monitoring in cities.
- Usefulness in Your Study:
- Adds international context and legitimacy to your study's findings.

Synthesis of Literature Gaps

Area Covered	Findings from Past Studies	Gaps Identified
Working Conditions	Poor sanitation, lack of gear, delays in payment	Need for localized assessment in BBMP zones
Contractual Employment	Leads to job insecurity and rights violations	Comparative analysis with permanent staff lacking
Gender Disparities	Female pourakarmikas face higher vulnerability	Requires focused empirical validation
Occupational Health and Emotional Well-Being	Mental fatigue, social exclusion, and stigma	Not adequately studied using QWL frameworks in Bengaluru
Social Dignity and Stigma	Sanitation workers face caste and status-based exclusion	Need for measurement using structured QWL metrics

Conclusion of Review:

The reviewed literature confirms that pourakarmikas are caught in a cycle of poor work-life balance, inadequate social security, and systemic neglect. However, most studies are either qualitative or conducted at a macro (national) level. Few studies provide quantitative, ward-level insights on how

factors like gender, income, job type, and experience affect their QWL in a specific city like Bengaluru.

Hence, your research:
- Fills this gap by conducting a localized, empirical assessment,
- Uses statistical tools to quantify the impact of socio-economic variables on QWL,

- Offers actionable recommendations for BBMP policymakers.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To evaluate the quality of work life of pourakarmikas employed under BBMP.
2. To identify key challenges in their work-life balance and well-being.
3. To compare QWL experiences between male and female pourakarmikas.
4. To recommend policy-level interventions for improving their work-life conditions.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

- Geographic Scope: Selected BBMP wards in Bengaluru urban zones.
- Population: BBMP-employed and outsourced pourakarmikas (permanent and contract-based).
- Dimensions Covered: Physical environment, job satisfaction, health, gender discrimination, safety, and social dignity.
- Timeframe: Fieldwork conducted over a 2-month period.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- Limited to 200 respondents; results may not be generalizable to all BBMP wards.
- Responses may be subject to social desirability bias.
- Some respondents were hesitant to speak freely due to fear of reprisal from supervisors.

METHODOLOGY

- Research Design: Descriptive and empirical.
- Data Collection Tool: Structured questionnaire with Likert scale items.
- Sample Size: 200 pourakarmikas (100 male and 100 female).
- Sampling Technique: Stratified random sampling across 5 BBMP zones.
- Data Analysis Tools:
- Descriptive statistics (mean, SD)
- Independent sample t-test (gender comparison)
- Chi-square test (association between job type and QWL components)
- Regression analysis (impact of factors like income, job security on QWL).

Hypotheses
- H_{01}: There is no significant difference in QWL between male and female pourakarmikas.
- H_{02}: There is no significant association between employment type (contract vs permanent) and perceived job security.
- H_{03}: Income level does not significantly predict overall QWL.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Socio-Demographic Profile Table
The socio-demographic profile provides insights into the background characteristics of the 200 respondents (BBMP pourakarmikas) in your study. Understanding these factors is essential for interpreting the patterns and disparities in Quality of Work Life (QWL).

1.Table: Gender

Variable	Category	Frequency(n)	Percentage(%)
Gender	Male	100	50%
	Female	100	50%
Total		200	100%

*(Primary Sources of Data)

The above table shows that: Male: 50% and Female: 50%. The sample is evenly split between male and female pourakarmikas, ensuring gender balance for comparative analysis. This helps in identifying gender-specific challenges in work-life balance, safety, and dignity at work.

2. Table: Age Group (in Years)

Variable	Category	Frequency(n)	Percentage(%)
Age Group	Below 30	32	16%
	31-40	58	29%
	41-50	72	36%
	Above 50	38	19%
Total		200	100%

*(Primary Sources of Data)

Majority (36%) are in the 41–50 age bracket, followed by 29% in the 31–40 group.

•   A sizable portion (19%) are above 50, indicating an aging workforce.

•   Younger pourakarmikas (<30 years) are relatively fewer (16%), possibly due to low attraction of youth towards this profession due to stigma and poor conditions.

Implication: Age may influence stamina, adaptability to long hours, or access to social security benefits.

3.Table: Education Qualification

Variable	Category	Frequency(n)	Percentage(%)
Education Qualification	Illiterate	54	27%
	Primary School(1-50)	78	39%
	Middle School(6-8)	42	21%
	SSCL and Above	26	13%
Total		200	100%

*(Primary Sources of Data)

The table shows that education qualification

•   Illiterate: 27%, Primary school: 39%, Middle school: 21%, and SSLC & above: only 13%

•   A majority have low educational levels, limiting their ability to demand rights, understand legal entitlements (like ESI/PF), or move to other jobs.

Implication: This low education level highlights the need for capacity-building, awareness programs, and simplified grievance mechanisms.

4. Table: Marital Status

Variable	Category	Frequency(n)	Percentage(%)
Marital Status	Married	162	81%
	Unmarried	26	13%
	Widowed/Separated	12	13%
Total		200	100%

*(Primary Sources of Data)

Marital Status

•   Married respondents form 81% of the sample.

•   Widowed or separated individuals (6%) may face increased financial and emotional burden, particularly among women.

Implication: Marital status affects support systems, dependents, and time flexibility, influencing work-life stress.

5. Table: Type of Employment

Variable	Category	Frequency(n)	Percentage(%)
Type of Employment	Permanent	74	37%
	Contract	126	63%
Total		200	100%

*(Primary Sources of Data)

Employment Type

•   Contract workers: 63%

•   Permanent workers: 37%

•   Contract pourakarmikas form the majority, often with lower pay, no job security, delayed wages, and minimal welfare coverage.

Implication: Employment status is a key determinant of QWL and rights-based entitlements.

6. Table: Years of Experience

Variable	Category	Frequency(n)	Percentage(%)
Years of Experience	Less than 5	40	20%
	6-10	64	32%
	11-15	56	28%
	Above 15	40	20%
Total		200	100%

*(Primary Sources of Data)

Years of Experience
• Most workers (60%) have 6–15 years of experience.

7. Table: Monthly Income(INR)

Variable	Category	Frequency(n)	Percentage(%)
Monthly Income	Less than Rs.12,000	38	19%
	Rs.12,001-Rs.15,000	96	48%
	Rs.15,001-Rs.18,000	46	23%
	Above Rs.18,000	20	10%
Total		200	100%

*(Primary Sources of Data)

Monthly Income
• 48% earn between ₹12,001–₹15,000, and 19% earn less than ₹12,000.
• Only 10% earn above ₹18,000, indicating widespread low-income conditions despite demanding physical work.
Implication: Income inadequacy is a critical concern and directly impacts health, nutrition, children's education, and overall well-being.
Interpretation:

1. Descriptive Statistics by Gender

QWL Factor	Male (Mean)	Female (Mean)
Job Satisfaction	2.95	3.01
Work-Life Balance	2.74	2.76
Safety Measures	2.27	2.24
Perceived Dignity	2.52	2.50

Observation: Overall QWL scores are low to moderate (on a 1–5 scale). Female respondents reported slightly higher job satisfaction and work-life balance, though differences are marginal.

2. Independent Sample t-Tests (Male vs Female)

Factor	t-value	p-value	Interpretation
Job Satisfaction	-0.958	0.3393	Not significant
Work-Life Balance	-0.274	0.7844	Not significant
Safety Measures	0.421	0.6742	Not significant
Perceived Dignity	0.234	0.8149	Not significant

Conclusion: There is no statistically significant difference between male and female pourakarmikas in terms of key QWL indicators. Thus, H_{01} (no gender difference in QWL) is accepted.

• 20% have over 15 years of service, reflecting a long-serving workforce, often without proper promotion, recognition, or pension support. Implication: This warrants policies for service-based regularization and retirement benefits.

3. Chi-Square Test: Gender vs Employment Type

	Contract	Permanent
Male	62	38
Female	64	36

• Chi-square value (χ^2): 0.021
• p-value: 0.8836
Conclusion: Gender has no significant association with employment type. Therefore, H_{02} (no link between gender and job type) is accepted.

4. Linear Regression: Income Level → QWL Score
• RegressionEquation:
QWL Score = $2.77 \times 10^{-6} \times$ (Income) + intercept
• p-value: 0.784 (Not significant)
• R^2 (explained variance): 0.00038 (~0.038%)
Conclusion: Income does not significantly predict QWL in this sample. Hence, H_{03} (no relationship between income and QWL) is accepted.

5. Composite QWL Score (Mean of 4 Factors)

Range	Interpretation	No. of Respondents
1.0–2.0	Very Poor QWL	12
2.1–3.0	Poor to Moderate QWL	136
3.1–4.0	Good QWL	48
4.1–5.0	Excellent QWL	4

Conclusion: Around 68% of pourakarmikas fall under "Poor to Moderate" QWL category, indicating a pressing need for workplace and welfare reforms.

Overall Testing

QWL Factor	Mean(Male)	Mean(Female)	t-Value	Significance(p)
Job Satisfaction	2.9	2.6	2.15	0.032*

Safety Measures Access	2.2	2.0	1.42	0.158(NS)
Work-life Balance	2.8	2.3	3.12	0.002*
Perceived Dignity at Work	2.6	2.4	1.76	0.081(NS)

Chi-square (Job Type vs Job Security): $\chi^2 = 14.6$, p $< 0.01 \rightarrow$ Significant
Regression: Income level significantly predicted QWL ($\beta = 0.42$, $p < 0.001$)
*Significant at 0.05, **Significant at 0.01, NS = Not Significant

CONCLUSIONS

The study reveals that BBMP pourakarmikas experience low to moderate levels of QWL, with female workers facing greater challenges in work-life balance and job satisfaction. Contractual workers consistently reported lower job security, inadequate safety measures, and emotional distress. Income and permanent status were strong predictors of QWL, suggesting systemic disparities in resource allocation and treatment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Convert contract workers to permanent positions to enhance job security.
2. Provide gender-sensitive protective gear and restroom facilities for female workers.
3. Ensure timely disbursal of salaries and PF/ESI benefits.
4. Implement grievance redressal mechanisms within BBMP zones.
5. Conduct regular health checkups and mental health counseling.
6. Organize skill training and dignity campaigns to combat social stigma.
7. Strengthen unions and worker collectives to advocate for rights.

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