



# KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDE AND PRACTICE ON OCCUPATIONAL HAZARDS AMONG SANITARY WORKERS

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## ABSTRACT

Sanitary workers are the backbone of the health status of the country. Since the sanitary workers are the lower line of the health care setting, the awareness regarding their occupational hazards were poor among them. The researcher aimed to assess the knowledge, attitude and practice among sanitary workers towards occupational health hazards. Full time sanitary workers were selected who were working under Swachh Bharath Mission at Puducherry by simple random sampling technique. The data collection tool consists of four sections to assess demographic data, knowledge, attitude and practice. The results show that, the majority of sanitary workers had Poor knowledge (58%), 39 % of them were had average knowledge and only 3% of them had excellent knowledge towards occupational health hazards. While assessing the attitude 47% of samples having unfavourable attitude and 53% of the samples having favourable attitude towards occupational health hazards. The practice results show that, 61 % of them were bad practice and 39 % of them were had good practices. These results clearly indicate the level of knowledge, attitude and practice need to be improve among sanitary workers. The researchers recommended the future research on educational interventions in order to improve knowledge, attitude and practice. This help to success of the health nation also success of sanitation programme implemented in India.

**Keywords :** knowledge, attitude, practice, occupational hazards, sanitary workers

## INTRODUCTION

Since the 18th century, administrators have proposed drainage systems and construction of public latrines to avoid the public's exposure to human waste. However, manual handling of human faeces by workers called scavengers, was central to sanitation systems. Sanitation workers bridge the gap between sanitary requirements and the existing sanitation infrastructure. They include all those involved with sanitation work, cleaning, maintaining, operating or simply being the sanitation system for many communities in India.

The working conditions of sanitation workers have remained practically unaltered for longer than a century. Aside from the social barbarities that these workers face they are presented with certain medical issues by their occupation. These health dangers incorporate exposure to unsafe gases, for example, methane and hydrogen sulfide, cardiovascular degeneration musculoskeletal issues like osteoarthritic changes and intervertebral disc herniation, disorders like hepatitis, leptospirosis, and helicobacter skin issues, respiratory issues, and altered respiratory parameters.

When it comes to street cleaners, they have to overcome many issues revolving around sanitation infrastructure and the arrangement of services related to sanitation. Sanitation workers offer fundamental public support yet regularly at the expense of their pride, security, wellbeing, and lifestyle. They are the absolute most weak and vulnerable workforce. They are extremely undetectable, unquantified and segregated, and face considerable difficulties which come from this major absence of affirmation. Sanitation workers are exposed to occupational and environmental hazards possibly resulting in health ailments, injury, and even death.

A cross-sectional study was conducted by **Gada et.al., (2023)** to Assess the occupational health hazards and associated morbidities in sanitation workers of a metropolitan city in India. The participants in this retrospective observational research from Mumbai, India, included 793 sanitation employees in total. Age, gender, and tobacco/alcohol use were among the participant variables and targeted results that we looked at. The significant results obtained were cataract on one side 17/793, erythroplakia 1/793 and leukoplakia 26/793.

There were less studies related to the knowledge, attitude and practice among sanitary workers. The present study was conducted to reveal the knowledge, attitude and practice among sanitary workers in Puducherry.

## METHODOLOGY

This descriptive study was aimed to assess the knowledge, attitude and practice among sanitary workers towards occupational health hazards. Full time sanitary workers were selected who were working under Swachh Bharath Mission at Puducherry Union territory. The researchers met the authority to get permission to conduct study. The samples were selected by simple random sampling technique with inclusion and exclusion criteria. the purpose of the study was explained to each sample and consent to participate was obtained from them. The data was collected by interview method via structured questionnaires. The data collection tool consist of four sections. Section one consists of demographic characteristics of the samples like, age, educational status, year of work experience, previous knowledge on occupational hazards etc. Section two consisted knowledge questionnaires regarding occupational hazards. Section three consist of five-point Likert scale questions to assess the attitude. The last section four was checklist to assess the practice of the sanitary workers in order to avoid occupational hazards. This practice section was observed by the researchers. The data were collected, tabulated and interpreted based on the objective of the study.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The demographic distribution of samples by age, majority of the samples 81% were belong to the age group of 30-40 years, 73 % were Male, 48 % samples were school drop outs. Regarding working experience, among 200 samples, 72% samples had more than 5 years of experience, 37 % were already exposed to information of Occupational health hazards and 40% samples were going for periodical health checkup. Among 200 samples, 27% samples had history of occupation related health issue and importantly, 50% of them get answered regarding occupational hazards queries.

The majority of sanitary workers had Poor knowledge (58%), 39 % of them were had average knowledge and only 3% of them had excellent knowledge towards occupational health hazards. While assessing the attitude 47% of samples having unfavourable attitude and 53% of the samples having favourable attitude towards occupational health hazards. The practice results show that, 61 % of them were bad practice and 39 % of them were had good practices. These results clearly indicate the level of knowledge, attitude and practice need to be improve among sanitary workers.

**Degavi G et.al., (2021)** conducted a study to assess knowledge, attitude, and practice and associated factors regarding prevention of occupational risks and health hazards among sanitary workers in Ethiopia. It was found that 64% of study samples stated good knowledge of the prevention of occupational health risks. About 76.4% of solid waste collectors had a good attitude and only 8.9% showed good practice regarding prevention of occupational health hazards. Job dissatisfaction was found to be a statistically significant factor along with the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) in implementing good practice work patterns among sanitation workers, even though they had been provided with basic personal protective equipment.

While associating the level of knowledge, attitude and practice with demographic variables of the samples, the level of knowledge was associated with the educational status, previous exposure of information regarding occupational health hazards at the p level 0.005 and 0.001 respectively. The level of attitude was not associated with any of the demographic variables and level of practice was associated with previous exposure of information regarding occupational health hazards and history of occupational health illness at the p level 0.005 and 0.001 respectively. The researcher found that years of experience of the samples were not associated with any of the variable which explains the bitter truth, the experience was not the part to improve knowledge, attitude and practice unless there was a history of hazard. People learns by mistakes less from the teaching programmes.

## CONCLUSION

The results of the current study show that, the knowledge, attitude and practice was poor among the sanitary workers. The researchers recommended the future research on educational interventions in order to improve knowledge, attitude and practice. This help to success of the health nation also success of sanitation programme implemented in India. The researcher planned for educational intervention for the sanitary workers community in Puducherry.

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