

Unveiling the Shadows: An In - Depth Examination of Manual Scavenging

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Abstract: *This paper aims to provide an exhaustive analysis of the practice of manual scavenging, focusing on its legal aspects, social implications, and human rights violations. Manual scavenging, involving the manual cleaning, carrying, disposing, or handling of human excreta from dry latrines, continues to persist despite global outrage against this inhumane practice. This study delves into the historical roots of manual scavenging and its prevalence in underdeveloped and developing countries, with a specific focus on India, which boasts the title of the world's largest democracy but faces challenges in upholding the human rights of its manual scavengers. The authors undertake a primary survey and interview to understand the perceptions and realities of manual scavengers in modern day India.*

Keywords: Manual Scavenging, Human Rights Violation, Social Implications, India, Legal Aspects, Health Hazards, Judicial Recklessness

1. Introduction

The United Nations Charter proclaims that "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood." These lofty ideals resonate with the principles of justice and equality that form the foundation of human rights. However, translating these ideals into tangible realities poses significant challenges.

One such persistent challenge is the practice of manual scavenging, a degrading occupation involving the manual handling of human excreta from dry latrines. Despite progress in various areas, manual scavenging continues to plague many societies, particularly in underdeveloped or developing countries. This paper delves into the multifaceted aspects of manual scavenging, exploring its historical roots, the violation of human rights it entails, and the social stigma that perpetuates this practice.

India serves as a prominent case study for this analysis. Although recognized as the world's largest democracy with commendable economic growth, India faces the unsettling reality of manual scavenging persisting within its borders. The Indian Constitution, with its lofty ideals of "Equality" and "Fraternity," appears unable to eradicate this caste-based profession that perpetuates a vicious cycle of social marginalization for manual scavengers and their families.

This research endeavors to shed light on the various dimensions of manual scavenging through a thorough examination of legal frameworks, judicial judgments, and social factors contributing to its persistence. Combining primary data, including interviews, surveys, and firsthand observations of manholes, with secondary data from reputable media organizations, think tanks, and official government documents, this paper aims to provide a comprehensive and well-rounded analysis of the issue.

Ultimately, the goal of this research is to emphasize the urgency for action and the need for a concerted effort from governments, institutions, and society to protect the human rights and dignity of manual scavengers. The recommendations derived from this study call for effective research, education, government aid, and a renewed commitment to providing manual scavengers with their natural and inalienable rights. Only through collective efforts can we truly strive towards a society where all individuals are treated with respect and humanity, as envisioned by the United Nations Charter.

2. Legal Aspects in India:

The Indian Constitution and International Resolutions

The practice of manual scavenging stands in clear violation of Article 21 of the Indian Constitution, especially after the Court's interpretation that includes the 'right to a dignified life.' However, this violation extends beyond the confines of the Indian Constitution; it also breaches various international human rights treaties and resolutions. The concept of human dignity, a universally accepted right enshrined in Article 1, 22, and 23 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and guaranteed by the National Commission on Human Rights, is central to the issue at hand.

The Employment Of Manual Scavengers And Construction Of Dry Latrines (Prohibition) Act, 1993

Passed in 1993 and implemented in 1997, the Employment of Manual Scavengers and Construction of Dry Latrines (Prohibition) Act marked a crucial milestone in prohibiting the employment of manual scavengers after five decades of Indian Independence. However, despite its enactment, there was no significant decline in the number of manual scavengers in India.

The primary objective of this act was to eradicate the employment of manual scavengers by empowering state governments, executive authorities, inspectors, officers, and

other employees to devise schemes for the conversion of dry latrines, construction, and maintenance of water seal latrines, as well as registration and rehabilitation measures. The act imposed penalties, including imprisonment for up to one year and/or fines, on employers of manual scavengers or those involved in the construction of dry latrines.

Nonetheless, the Act faced a critical flaw as it was left to the discretion of individual states whether to implement the legislation or not, leading to inconsistent enforcement across the country.

Safai Karamchhari Andolan & others V. Union of India & others

The case of Safai Karamchhari Andolan & others v. Union of India & others revolved primarily around the implementation of existing laws related to manual scavenging. The Supreme Court was presented with various statistics highlighting the continued existence of manual scavenging, despite the legislative mandate to end the practice.

In response, the Supreme Court directed the government to introduce various rehabilitation programs and relief funds for those affected by manual scavenging. This included compensation packages comprising one - time cash assistance, scholarships for the education of scavengers' children, and a compensation of 10 lakhs for scavengers who lost their lives during sewer work. The Court also acknowledged the use of manual scavengers by the Indian Railways and called for government support to provide livelihood options to women safai karamchharis based on their preferences.

Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act of 2013

The Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act of 2013 defines a "manual scavenger" as a person engaged or employed, at the commencement of this Act or thereafter, in manually cleaning, carrying, disposing of, or handling human excreta in insanitary latrines or open drains or pits where such excreta is disposed of.

The Act prohibits the employment of manual scavengers, mandates the use of protective equipment for manual cleaning of sewers and septic tanks, and prohibits the construction of insanitary latrines. However, the Act has been criticized for its limitations in abolishing manual scavenging completely. It focuses primarily on addressing unhygienic latrines, open drains, and pits, while ignoring extensive manual scavenging resulting from open defecation in many metropolitan areas due to inadequate sanitation.

Furthermore, the Act's definition of unsanitary latrines, manual scavengers, and the method of conducting surveys have been found to be flawed, along with ambiguities regarding the implementing authority's role and responsibilities. It does not outline actions to be taken against the implementing authority if the Act's requirements are not followed. Critics argue that the Act should

unequivocally prohibit manual scavenging in all its forms and at all locations, without consideration for safety equipment, as it is inherently undignified work.

The Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013 (Amendment Bill)

In an effort to strengthen the existing legislation, the government introduced the Amendment Bill to The Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013. The Amendment Bill aimed to address the limitations and flaws identified in the original Act. It focused on expanding the definition of manual scavengers and including those engaged in hazardous cleaning of sewers and septic tanks without protective gear. Additionally, the Amendment Bill sought to provide comprehensive rehabilitation measures for manual scavengers and their families, along with stricter enforcement mechanisms to ensure the eradication of manual scavenging.

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), 2005

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) guarantees 100 days of wage employment to rural households in India. This Act can play a significant role in rehabilitating manual scavengers and providing them with alternative livelihood opportunities. By offering guaranteed employment, the Act can reduce dependency on manual scavenging and help uplift the socio-economic status of affected individuals and communities.

National Commission for Safai Karamchharis

The National Commission for Safai Karamchharis, established under the 'National Commission for Safai Karamchharis Act 1993,' operates as a non - statutory body under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment. It is responsible for recommending specific programs of action to the central government aimed at eliminating inequalities faced by safai karamchharis, especially manual scavengers. The Commission assesses the implementation of social and economic rehabilitation programs and schemes for safai karamchharis, monitors their working conditions under various employers, and prepares reports on matters concerning safai karamchharis to present them to state and central governments.

The Global Situation on Manual Scavenging:

Bangladesh

The People's Republic of Bangladesh, a densely populated country in South Asia, faces severe challenges in eradicating the deplorable practice of manual scavenging. With nearly half of its population living in poverty, the situation of manual scavengers in Bangladesh is dire and condemnable.

The city of Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh, highlights the distressing reality of manual scavenging in the country. According to a report published by the Dhaka Water Supply and Sewerage Authority, only 20% of the city is served by a piped sewer network. Consequently, the city relies heavily on individuals and private contractors to manually remove

septic tank sludge. These manual scavengers undertake the hazardous task of swimming through populated waters, jeopardizing their health and well - being every day.

Despite the perilous nature of their work, manual scavengers in Bangladesh receive meager compensation, with some earning as little as INR 300 - 500 per day. Such paltry sums are grossly inadequate considering the health risks and dehumanizing conditions they endure.

Racial and caste - based discrimination, reminiscent of the situation in India, also persists in Bangladesh. After partition, Bangladeshi Hindus, particularly those from the Dalit community, faced ill - treatment and marginalization. As a result, a majority of the sewage workers in the country are Hindus from the Dalit community, who are often forced into menial jobs, including manual scavenging.

One of the most alarming aspects of manual scavenging in Bangladesh is the lack of even basic safety equipment, such as masks and gloves, for the sewer workers. These essential protective measures are consistently denied to them, exposing them to harmful pathogens and toxic substances. Consequently, manual scavengers in Bangladesh suffer from various health issues, including asthma, acute bronchitis, and other life - threatening diseases. Tragically, when these hazardous conditions lead to fatalities, the affected families receive no compensation or support.

To address the deeply entrenched issue of manual scavenging in Bangladesh, comprehensive measures are urgently needed. This includes investing in modernizing sanitation infrastructure, providing proper protective gear to sewer workers, and implementing policies that eradicate caste - based discrimination. Additionally, there should be efforts to uplift the socio - economic status of manual scavengers and provide alternative livelihood opportunities, breaking the cycle of exploitation and poverty.

Other Countries

The challenge of manual scavenging is not limited to India and Bangladesh; it persists in several other countries across different continents. Some of the countries where this degrading practice prevails include:

Pakistan: Similar to India and Bangladesh, manual scavenging is a grim reality in Pakistan. The country has a significant number of manual scavengers who are forced to undertake hazardous tasks without proper protective gear or adequate compensation. The practice is often associated with the marginalization of minority communities.

Nepal: Despite significant progress in sanitation and development, manual scavenging continues to persist in some regions of Nepal. The lack of modernized sanitation facilities and the existence of dry latrines contribute to the perpetuation of this inhumane practice.

Afghanistan: Inadequate sanitation facilities and poverty have led to the prevalence of manual scavenging in some parts of Afghanistan. The practice poses serious health risks

to the scavengers and perpetuates a cycle of exploitation and discrimination.

Mauritania: In some areas of Mauritania, manual scavenging is prevalent due to the existence of unsanitary latrines and a lack of proper waste management systems. Those engaged in this work face discrimination and often belong to marginalized communities.

South Africa: In some regions of South Africa, particularly in informal settlements, manual scavenging is practiced due to the absence of proper sanitation infrastructure. This practice disproportionately affects vulnerable communities, exposing them to health hazards

3. Health Hazards of Manual Scavenging:

With a distressing statistic of a manual scavenger dying every five days, the occupation's health hazards are stark and concerning. Sanitary workers engaged in cleaning latrines and sewers face extremely hazardous working conditions, often without proper safety equipment such as gloves, masks, and goggles, making them susceptible to numerous health issues.

Exposure to Toxic Gases

Manual scavengers are exposed to a deadly combination of toxic gases present in septic tanks, including methane, ammonia, sulphur dioxide, carbon monoxide, and hydrogen sulphide. These gases can cause choking and unconsciousness, and in severe cases, they may even lead to fatalities. Chronic ailments such as asthma and bronchitis are common consequences of inhaling these toxic gases. Hydrogen sulphide, when inhaled, causes headaches, leg pain, and, in extreme cases, asphyxia leading to loss of consciousness and death. Hypoxia, a condition where the body's tissues are deprived of oxygen, can also occur due to exposure to these toxic gases, resulting in rapid fatality.

Leptospirosis

Manual scavengers face the risk of contracting leptospirosis, a disease caused by coming in contact with the discharge of animals, especially rodents. The sewers, being home to a large number of rodents, pose a significant threat of infection for these workers.

Alcohol Addiction

The extreme stress, fatigue, and lack of basic amenities such as potable water and proper toilets drive many manual scavengers to cope by resorting to alcohol consumption. Their irregular and harsh working schedules exacerbate the issue, leading to alcohol addiction. Many of them consume alcohol, sometimes even in hazardous quantities, to numb their senses before entering the sewer for cleaning. This reliance on alcohol becomes a root cause for a plethora of health hazards, ranging from liver and kidney diseases to gastrointestinal problems and cancer. Additionally, their meager income and lack of awareness about the implications of excessive alcohol consumption make it difficult for them to seek proper medical help, perpetuating the cycle of addiction and health problems.

Alcohol addiction among manual scavengers is a pressing concern, and its impact is sometimes even more fatal than the hazards they face while cleaning sewers. The addiction not only affects their physical health but also takes a toll on their overall well-being, further exacerbating the challenges they already endure.

Addressing the health hazards associated with manual scavenging requires urgent attention and comprehensive solutions.

4. Compensation

Self - Employment Scheme for the Rehabilitation of Manual Scavengers (SRMS)

The Self - Employment Scheme for the Rehabilitation of Manual Scavengers (SRMS) was introduced in January 2007 with the aim of rehabilitating the last remaining manual scavengers and their dependents by facilitating their transition into new occupations. The original target for completion was March 2009, but due to delays, it was extended to March 2010. The program saw active implementation in 18 states and Union Territories, where 1.18 lakh manual scavengers and their dependents were identified for inclusion. The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment took on the responsibility of implementing the SRMS and overseeing the rehabilitation efforts.

Objective of SRMS

The primary objective of the SRMS is to support manual scavengers, identified through various surveys, in finding alternative livelihoods. Operationalized in November 2013, the scheme aligns with the "Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013." The SRMS introduced significant enhancements to address the needs of manual scavengers:

- **Revised Definition:** The scheme adopts the definition of manual scavenger as defined in the Manual Scavenger Act, 2013.
- **Financial Assistance:** One-time financial assistance of Rs.40,000 is provided to beneficiaries to aid them in starting their new ventures.
- **Enhanced Sanitation Projects:** The overall costs for sanitation-related projects have been increased to Rs.10 lakhs and Rs.15 lakhs from the previous Rs.5 lakhs.
- **Capital Subsidies:** Improvements have been made to capital subsidies, with funding dependent on project costs, ranging from Rs.20,000 to a maximum of Rs.3.25 lakhs.
- **Monthly Stipend:** During the training term, which lasts for 1-2 years, beneficiaries receive an increased monthly stipend of Rs.3,000, up from the earlier Rs.1,000.

Judiciary's Role and Challenges:

The landmark judgment of the Supreme Court in *Safai Karamchari Andolan v. Union of India* mandated the permanent eradication of manual scavenging and the provision of rehabilitation to affected individuals. However, despite such proactive judicial interventions, the government's response has been lacking in effective implementation. This highlights the need for coordinated

efforts between different branches of the government to address the issue comprehensively.

The SRMS serves as a significant step towards the rehabilitation of manual scavengers and breaking the vicious cycle of social marginalization and poverty they face. However, sustained efforts and cooperation from all stakeholders are essential to ensure the success of the program and the ultimate elimination of manual scavenging from society.

Survey on Reality and Perception of Manual Scavenging in India:

We undertook a two-pronged approach to assess the reality and perceptions associated with manual scavenging. This included:

- 1) Undertaking a comprehensive survey of awareness of manual scavenging (*Refer Annexure - 1*)
- 2) A comprehensive interview with a subject matter expert - the chairman of the Delhi Commission for Safai Karamcharis Mr Sanjay Gehlot (*Refer Annexure - 2*)

Here are our key findings (*for details refer Annexure - 1 & 2*) that crystallize the caste-linked bias to this work and the social stigma associated with it.

5. Key Findings

- **High Representation of Dalits in Manual Scavenging:** Official statistics reveal that a staggering 97% of manual scavengers in India belong to the Dalit community. Additionally, an estimated 40 to 60 percent of the 6 million households from Dalit sub-castes are engaged in sanitation work, reflecting the disproportional representation of Dalits in this dehumanizing occupation.
- **Perception of Caste's Role in Manual Scavenging:** In our survey, 63% of respondents believed that caste plays a significant role in determining who ends up as a manual scavenger. This finding underscores the deep-rooted influence of caste-based discrimination in shaping occupational choices and opportunities for Dalits.
- **Gender Dynamics in Manual Scavenging:** Surprisingly, despite the perception that manual scavenging is male-dominated, our research revealed that 90% of manual scavengers are women. This trend can be attributed to households with dry latrines preferring women to clean the excreta due to the location inside the house.
- **Limited Interaction with Manual Scavengers:** Our survey indicated that a majority of respondents had not personally encountered a manual scavenger. It is noteworthy that this survey was conducted online, and most participants were likely members of civil society. Such limited interactions could contribute to a lack of understanding about the challenges faced by manual scavengers.
- **The Urgent Need for Empathy and Integration:** A poignant encounter with a manual scavenger outside the Delhi Commission of Safai Karamchari exemplified the harsh realities of this occupation. The individual's plea for help highlighted the dire situation faced by his

family members forced into manual scavenging at a reputed hospital in Delhi. Understanding the daily struggles and hardships of manual scavengers can lead to greater empathy and pave the way for their integration into society.

- **Fostering Change through Increased Interaction:** When asked if they would befriend a manual scavenger, the majority of respondents expressed hesitancy. The findings suggest that integration and increased interaction with manual scavengers could play a transformative role in shifting societal attitudes and dispelling social stigmas associated with this occupation.

Our research survey and interview shed light on the deep-rooted influence of caste and social stigma in perpetuating manual scavenging in India. The disproportionately high representation of Dalits in this degrading occupation underscores the urgent need for social and legislative interventions to break the vicious cycle of marginalization. By fostering empathy, increasing interactions, and promoting integration, we can work towards dismantling social barriers and pave the way for the dignity and rights of manual scavengers to be upheld.

In order to provide a solution that helps solve this challenging issue we have proposed an educational workshop with manual scavengers. The form and content of the workshop (Refer Annexure - 3) has been vetted and approved by the Delhi Commission of Safai Karamchari - the representative body of the Govt of Delhi to handle issues related to sanitation workers including manual scavengers.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, the practice of manual scavenging in India remains a deeply entrenched and appalling issue that demands urgent attention. Despite being outlawed by the Prohibition of Employment of Manual Scavengers Act, 2013, this inhumane practice continues to persist, trapping thousands of individuals, mostly from the marginalized Dalit community, in a vicious cycle of social marginalization and poverty.

Our research has shed light on the grim realities faced by manual scavengers, exposing the hazardous working conditions, lack of awareness, and the systemic discrimination they endure. It is disheartening to see that even in the educated sections of urban India, there exists a lack of awareness and empathy towards the plight of manual scavengers.

However, amidst these challenges, there is hope for change. Our findings show that a significant portion of the population acknowledges the need for abolishing manual scavenging and is willing to support its eradication. But mere awareness is not enough; concerted efforts must be made at all levels of society, government, and judiciary to enforce strict laws, provide better alternatives for livelihood, and uplift the lives of manual scavengers.

To combat this deeply rooted issue, we propose the implementation of educational workshops and skill

enhancement programs for manual scavengers, enabling them to break free from this dehumanizing occupation. Additionally, collaboration between civil society organizations, government bodies, and the public is essential in fostering a supportive environment that advocates for the rights, dignity, and well-being of manual scavengers.

The Constitution of India, which begins with the powerful words "We the people of India," reminds us of our collective responsibility to protect the fundamental rights of all citizens, including manual scavengers. It is our duty as a society to dismantle the discriminatory caste-based notions that perpetuate this practice and to create an inclusive environment where manual scavengers are treated with respect and provided with equal opportunities.

Let us join hands in solidarity to work towards the complete eradication of manual scavenging in India. Only by recognizing and addressing this grave issue can we truly uphold the principles of justice, equality, and dignity for all citizens and build a society where no one is forced to live a life of indignity and peril.

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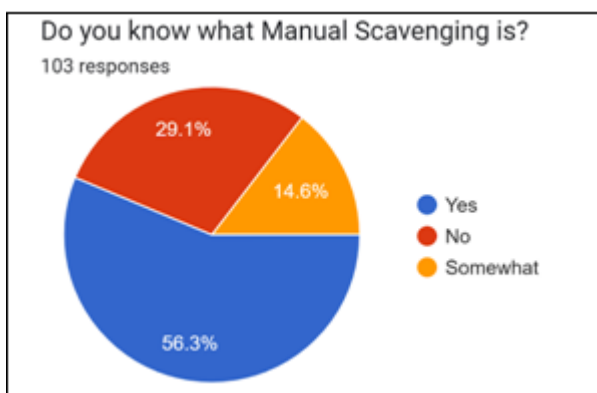
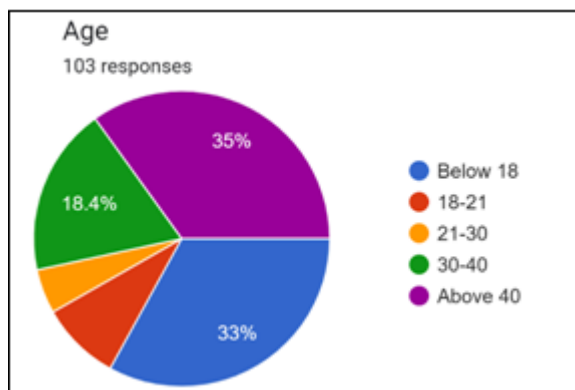
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Annexure 1

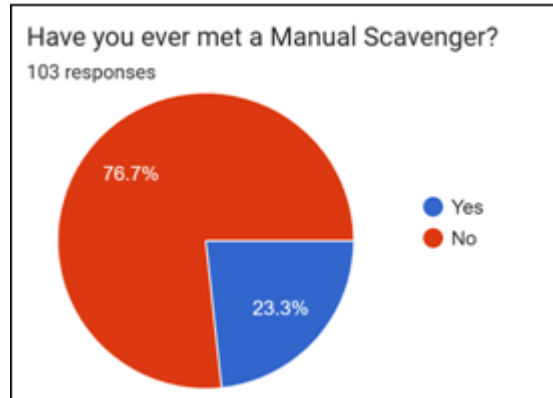
Survey on Awareness about Manual Scavenging in Urban India

Survey Link: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeojO_QNTfgJJ1bsydBxeWJB4sCiASCI0Jss_BirzKAaylEw/viewform?usp=sf_link

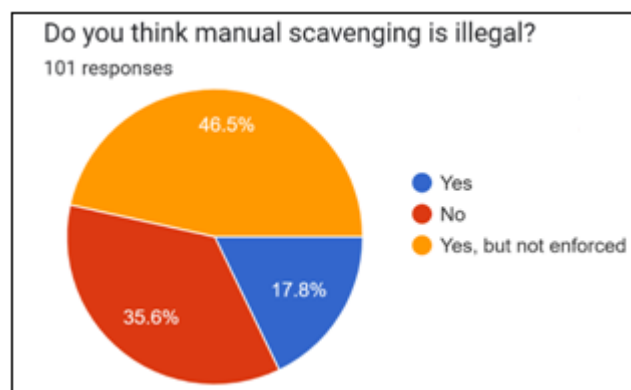
Our research involved conducting an online survey aimed at comprehending the perceptions and awareness of manual scavenging among various age groups in urban India. The outcomes of this survey are presented in the subsequent section, where we observed numerous anticipated findings, but there were also some astonishing results, particularly concerning the social and legal aspects of the subject.



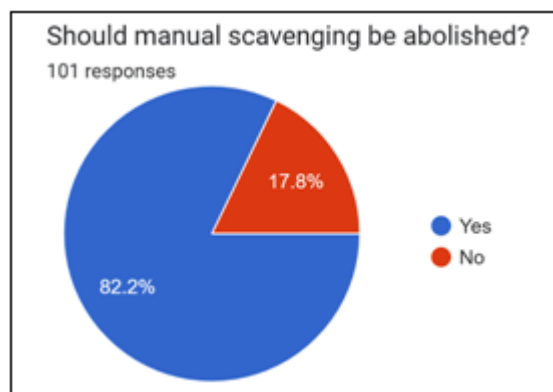
Findings: Among the 103 respondents to this question, merely 56.3% demonstrated a clear understanding of what manual scavenging entails. This starkly illustrates the lack of awareness, even within the educated strata of urban India, concerning this critical issue. The prevailing ignorance becomes a significant factor contributing to the absence of concrete protests or actions taken against this problem.



Findings: The lack of awareness was evident as a majority of the respondents had never encountered a manual scavenger, leading to limited opportunities for interaction and understanding of their dire circumstances.



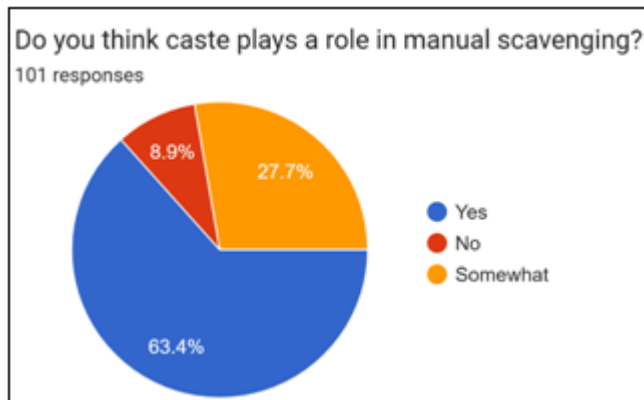
Findings: A significant portion of the population, upon learning about manual scavenging (as provided in the section description in the survey) believed that this form of employment is illegal. However, their disappointment arose from the fact that despite being outlawed, manual scavenging continues to persist with little to no strict actions taken by the relevant authorities. As highlighted earlier in the judgment of Safai Karamchari Andolan v. Union of India, although the judiciary established stringent laws, the executive and legislature have failed to enforce them, resulting in a lack of positive change.



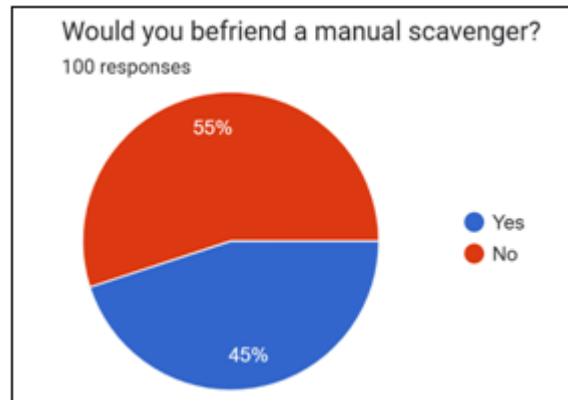
Findings: We were encouraged to observe that 82% of our respondents were in favor of abolishing manual scavenging. However, it was disheartening to see that 18% still did not believe in its abolition. This highlights the mindset of certain individuals in the educated sections of urban India, who

continue to support this profession despite the blatant disregard for human rights, health, dignity, and other essential aspects. Their support provides a reason for manual scavenging to persist despite its harmful consequences.

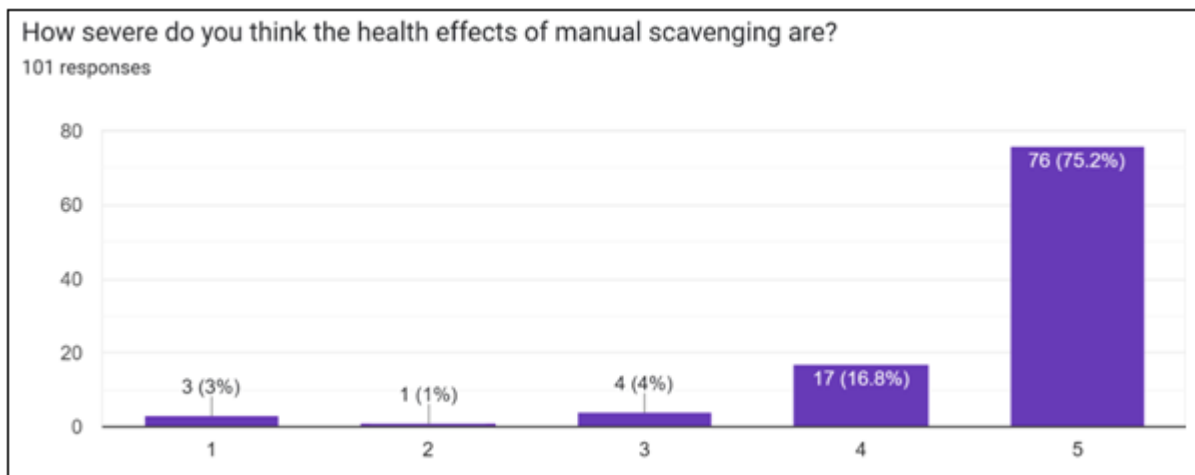
discrimination influences the employment of manual scavengers by exploitative contractors.



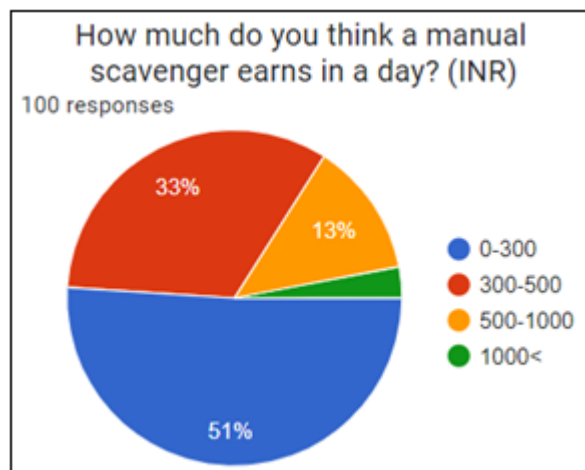
Findings: Despite the lack of awareness about manual scavenging, a significant 91% of respondents believed that caste plays a role in this matter. The perception stems from the prevailing belief that manual scavenging is associated with menial labor, leading people to assume that it is primarily the marginalized sections of society, such as SCs and STs, who are engaged in this profession. This finding not only reflects the social status of these communities in our country but also highlights how caste - based



Findings: One of the most shocking and disappointing responses was that more than half of the population (55%) claimed that they would never befriend a manual scavenger. This mindset poses a significant challenge to the efforts of integrating manual scavengers into society as respected individuals deserving of dignity. Our interactions with some other adults in urban areas further emphasized this prevailing sentiment.



Findings: Surprisingly, 75.2% of the respondents were able to deduce that the health effects of manual scavengers are adverse based solely on their basic knowledge or, in some cases, just knowing the definition of manual scavenging. This indicates that the actual in - depth effects must be even more tragic, as elucidated in the health hazards section of this paper.



Findings: The average PayScale for manual scavengers in reality falls in the range of INR 160 - 200, and interestingly, 51% of the respondents correctly perceived this range. However, it is concerning that 3% of respondents believed the PayScale to be above INR 1000, and 13% believed it to be above INR 500. This disparity highlights the lack of awareness about the harsh conditions and low wages that manual scavengers actually endure.

Annexure - 2

Interview

(Interviewer - Aarav Gupta): Good day, I am Aarav Gupta, and today, I have the privilege of interviewing Mr. Sanjay Gehlot, the Chairman of Delhi Commission for Safai Karamcharis. We will be discussing important topics related to manual scavenging, including the lack of safety equipment and human rights concerns among manual scavengers. Mr. Gehlot, thank you for being here today.

(Interviewee - Mr. Sanjay Gehlot): Thank you, Aarav. I am glad to be here to shed light on this crucial subject.

(Interviewer): To begin, my first question pertains to safety measures for manual scavengers. Despite the use of candle tests, the number of manual scavenger deaths persists. What further steps do you think should be taken to prevent these fatalities, and could you provide examples of ongoing efforts in this regard?

(Interviewee): As per the Supreme Court's orders, manual scavenging is banned, but unfortunately, some desperate manual scavengers, living hand - to - mouth, agree to enter manholes for a mere payment of 200 - 300 Rupees. Private contractors are responsible for exploiting them. While the government has introduced machines to replace manual scavenging in some areas, certain locations like malls and narrow streets still require manual work, and this is where contractors take advantage of these vulnerable individuals. Proper safety equipment must be made available to those entering manholes, especially considering the presence of toxic gases that can cause fatalities due to hypoxia. In cases like the recent tragedy at 'Pearl Grand Restaurant', where workers were blackmailed into entering a manhole without proper training, those who force manual scavengers into such dangerous situations should be charged with murder.

(Interviewer): Your insights are truly important. Regarding the funding for Delhi Commission for Safai Karamcharis, if the government significantly increases the budget, where would the additional funding be allocated?

(Interviewee): The increased funding would primarily be directed towards helping the dependents of manual scavengers who have lost their lives. Rehabilitation and providing alternate means of livelihood for these individuals would be a crucial focus.

(Interviewer): The issue of caste plays a significant role in manual scavenging, with 99% of manual scavengers belonging to the Dalit community. How would you describe

the relationship between caste and manual scavenging in today's world?

(Interviewee): Caste discrimination is deeply rooted in our society, and historically, Dalits have faced mistreatment and marginalization. The introduction of reservation aimed to provide better and more dignified livelihood opportunities for Dalits. Members of upper castes have access to generational family businesses, while Dalits, at the bottom of the social ladder, often lack alternatives and resort to manual scavenging for employment. It is essential to provide equal opportunities for upward mobility to ensure they are not forced into such degrading work.

(Interviewer): Safety equipment, such as masks and helmets, is crucial when it comes to manual scavenging. Could you shed some light on the other safety equipment necessary for manual scavengers?

(Interviewee): Besides masks and helmets, manual scavengers require safety belts and ropes with harnesses. These safety measures are critical in case of a slip or fall into a manhole, allowing them to be easily pulled back up using the harness. Additionally, helmets equipped with torches help improve visibility within the manholes, while litmus tests can indicate the presence of gas and its pH value.

(Interviewer): Thank you for sharing this essential information, Mr. Gehlot.

(Interviewee): You're welcome, Aarav. It was a pleasure discussing these vital matters with you.

(Interviewer): Likewise, sir. Thank you for your time and insights into the challenges faced by manual scavengers.

Annexure: 3

Empowering Manual Scavengers: An Educational Workshop to Break Barriers

Introduction:

The constitution of our country, which begins with the words 'We the people of India, ' guarantees fundamental rights to all citizens, regardless of their caste, creed, gender, or occupation. However, manual scavengers, too, are people of India who are deprived of these rights despite their profession. It is time for us to take action and address this issue from the grassroots level. Our research has highlighted the grave challenges faced by manual scavengers, including increasing mortality rates, a vicious cycle of poverty for their families, and a lack of knowledge to escape from these barriers.

The Workshop Initiative:

To tackle this issue, we have designed a comprehensive workshop to educate and empower manual scavengers. We will collaborate with Mr. Sanjay Gehlot (Chairman of the Delhi Commission for Safai Karamcharis) whose valuable insights have guided us throughout our research.

Curriculum Highlights:

The workshop's curriculum, approved by Hon'ble Ravi Shankar of the Delhi Commission of Safai Karamchari, aims to address key areas to improve the lives of manual scavengers.

Health Hazards:

- Understanding the health problems faced while working in sewers and manholes.
- Awareness of available free healthcare services and other benefits at government clinics and hospitals.
- Preventive measures to avoid health hazards.

Primary First - Aid Skills:

- Basic CPR techniques, checking pulse rate, and reviving a collapsed person.
- Performing Heimlich Maneuver in case of choking.

Alternate Livelihood:

- Skill enhancement workshops for semi - skilled or manual labor professions.
- Awareness about compensation provided under the Self - Employment Scheme for Rehabilitation of Manual Scavengers and the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013.
- Promoting cottage industries, such as weaving and handicrafts, for self - employment, especially for women.

Rights of Manual Scavengers:

- Understanding legal recourse against exploitation by government and private contractors.
- Awareness of laws in favor of manual scavengers.
- Guidance on filing complaints in a court of law or approaching someone to file a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) on their behalf.

Alcohol and Drug Awareness:

- Understanding the harmful effects of alcohol and drug addiction.
- Group meetings and counseling sessions to combat addiction.

Our workshop aims to empower manual scavengers with essential knowledge and skills, fostering their rights and providing them with alternate livelihood options. Education is the key to breaking the barriers that hinder their progress, and we are committed to promoting inclusivity and dignity for all citizens of our great nation. Together, we can work towards a more just and equitable society for every individual, including manual scavengers, as they too are the people of India.