



## **The social and livelihood implications of rising living costs for sanitation workers: A sociological investigation based on the University of Jaffna**

**G. Sarththiga**

Department of Sociology, University of Jaffna, Sri Lanka

\*Correspondence: sarthisarthi1995@gmail.com

### **Abstract**

The economic crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic means sanitation workers are already vulnerable to many risks, especially those whose livelihood relies mainly on sanitary work and those who are less likely to receive social and economic protection. The overall purpose of this study was to assess the social and livelihood issues of living costs for sanitation workers. According to a report issued by the Clean Well Company, there are 109 sanitary workers working at the University of Jaffna. This study utilized a mixed methodology. A questionnaire survey, key informant interviews, and case study methods were employed as the primary data. All 106 sanitary workers were included in this study. Research ethics were strictly followed by the researchers throughout the research. The quantitative data collected through the questionnaire method were analysed using descriptive statistical methods with the usage of SPSS version 21. Qualitative data obtained from the case study methods and key informant interviews were analyzed thematically. Results revealed that Hinduism (90.6%) was the predominant religion of the majority of the respondents, and 22.6 % of the respondents belonged to the age group of 21–25 years. The majority (85.8%) of the sanitary workers have completed their secondary educational qualifications. More than 26% of the respondents' monthly income was less than 20, 000 Sri Lankan Rupees. Results also highlight that sexual threats (8.5%), poor participation in social functions and neglect of social activities (24.1%), poverty and education-related problems of children (26.5%) were the significant social issues faced by sanitary workers. Results also indicate that daily living costs (59.4%), debt issues (58.5%), unemployment (9.4%), and lack of employability skills (0.9%), wage exploitation (10.4%), educational expenses for children (1.9%), and transport expenses (13.2%) were the major underlying livelihood issues of sanitary workers. The findings of the study revealed that sanitary workers encountered severe social and livelihood problems. This study strongly suggests that the government should provide employment opportunities and should enhance the quality of life and well-being for them.

**Keywords:** Corporation, Quality of life, Sanitation worker, Waste collection, Well-being