



Substance Abuse among the Manual Scavengers: A Study in a Slum of Cuttack City.

Amit Kumar Mohanty

Ph.D. Research Scholar, (Social Work) National Institute of social work and Social Sciences, NISWASS, Utkal University, Vanivihar Bhubaneswar

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ABSTRACT:

Manual Scavenging is a caste-based occupation which practiced in our Indian society for a

Abstract

Manual scavenging, a caste-based occupation deeply rooted in India's rigid social hierarchy, involves the manual removal of human excreta from insanitary latrines, septic tanks, and sewers. This study examines the prevalence of substance abuse among manual scavengers, focusing on the socio-economic and health impacts of this practice. Conducted in the Raja Bagicha Sweeper Colony of Cuttack City, the research employed a qualitative methodology, utilizing structured interviews and focus group discussions with a sample of 60 respondents selected through random sampling.

Key findings reveal that substance abuse, including alcohol, ganja, and injectable drugs, is pervasive within this community. Factors contributing to substance use include social stigma, psychological distress, and hazardous working conditions. Substance abuse significantly affects their health, leading to chronic illnesses, and exacerbates socio-economic challenges such as poverty, domestic violence, and social exclusion.

This study underscores the urgent need for targeted rehabilitation programs, stricter enforcement of safety regulations, and community-based interventions to address the root causes of substance abuse and improve the well-being of manual scavengers.

Keywords: Scavengers, Drugs, substances, health.

I. Introduction:

Manual scavenging refers to the practice of manually cleaning, carrying, disposing, or handling in any manner, human excreta from dry latrines and sewers (UN, 2014). This inhuman practice is deeply associated with the rigid caste system of Indian society some particular scheduled castes engaging in this practice in a hereditary manner who suffered

from a low socioeconomic position and severe health hazards., There are 7.4 lakh households across the country where human excreta is removed by a person from a dry latrine (Census 2011). Same time there are also septic tanks, sewers, and railway platforms from where human excreta is cleaned manually. Due to direct contact with the night soil, the worker faced many health issues like constant nausea and headaches, respiratory and skin diseases, anemia, diarrhea, and vomiting, same time the rate of consumption of Substances is very high among these communities which leads different physical and mental health issues such as chronic liver diseases and TB due to intoxicant consumption with poor working and living condition make them more vulnerable.

The Database regarding the existing number of Manual Scavenger is full of doubt and mystery as per the SECC Survey in 2011 there was 182505 household practicing manual scavenging in the country same time as per the survey done by NSKFDC under the Ministry of social justice and Empowerment to identify and rehabilitate manual scavengers in 2013 February there was 13600 manual Scavenger and 1.30 lakh dependents exist same time after implementation of MS Act 2013 another survey was carried out by NSKFDC in 2018 and found 87913 Manual scavengers exist the survey was conducted only in 18 States same time A National Survey was conducted under NITI AYOJ in 18 states and found 54130 manual scavengers exist in the country in 2019. So, the above database which creating great confusion in itself regarding the identification of Manual scavengers because yet no proper survey has been done in uniformity manner all over the country. same time SKA Safari Karmachari Andolan claimed that at present near about 12 lacks Manual Scavengers exist in the country but Government tries to hide the exact number so it's very difficult to say the exact number of Manual Scavenger present in the country same time in our State Odisha the scenario almost same no proper survey done yet to identify this



community only some few data available as per the survey report of NSKFDC (2013) 237 Manual Scavenger exist in the State but in the 2018 Survey there was no Data available of Odisha as it is carried out only in 18 States and our state was not included. There was only an initiative taken by Odisha Housing and Urban Development Department, Govt of Odisha to identify Manual Scavenger and conducted a survey in 7 District only which are Keonjhar, khordha, Mayurbhanj, Koraput, Puri, Raygada, and Subarna pur and found 233 Manual Scavenger, it was a matter of joke the most urban developed city like Cuttack, Berhampur, Rourkela was left during the study where a large number of scavengers exist in different Slum. So, in this study, the researcher worked with so-called sweepers who are somehow practicing Manual scavenging which is not an official record. District Administration very frankly said that there is no Manual Scavenger exists without any survey.

They are normally working in Cuttack Municipal Corporation, S.C.B Medical College and Hospital, and City Hospital as sweepers under government setup. At the same time, large numbers of scavengers are presently working in different private nursing homes, shopping complexes, schools, colleges, and offices in the private sector also there is a population of about 10000 who are living in 20 numbers for Slum for more than 40 years.

Present legislative safeguard:

The Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and Their Rehabilitation Act, 2013:

The prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavenger and their Rehabilitation Act also popularly known as MS Act 2013 which was implemented throughout the country from 6.12.2013 with the objective of not only banning all forms of Manual scavenging but also providing rehabilitation to the identified Manual scavenger According to the MS Act 2013 No person or agency can employ Manual scavengers the present law banned all form of manual scavenging whereas the previous 1993 Act only restricted with the dry latrine some of the important section of the laws are: under the section 4 and 5 protective gears and safety device should provide to the worker at the work site for their safety same time as per section 6 all these devices should check on regular intervals, body suits should provide them and supervisor should present at the work site and checking for oxygen level to avoid asphyxia. similarly, as per section 7, any emergency precaution should be taken prior such as an emergency service like an ambulance should be

available at the work site but in a real sense the implantation of the laws is not effective as per the report of Rashtriya Garima Abhiyan there was 97 deaths occurred in 51 accident and it has been found there is no use of safety tools. The existing law not only banned Manual Scavenging but also provision for the rehabilitation of this community under the SRMS scheme through which a one-time cash assistant of 40000 provides to Scavenger and their dependents, subsidiary credit lineage, skill training which helps them to adopt an alternative livelihood. But still, the outcome at the implementation level of the act is not satisfactory.

II. Review of literature:

Slave Pradeep, Chokhandre Praveen, and Bansod. W Dhananjay (2019) Substance use among municipal solid waste workers in Mumbai: a cross-sectional comparative study.

Consuming Substances including Alcohol, tobacco, and Smoking has directly affected one's health and same time adverse impact on socioeconomic life. This study aims to assess the present status of substance abuse among the municipal solid waste worker of Mumbai. The researcher used the survey method to gather data and the sample size was 540 all are engaged in the Municipal the collected data related to their substance abuse practice and socioeconomic aspect of life.

It has been found from the statistical analysis that street sweepers and garbage/ waste carriers consume more alcohol and tobacco than they also smoke. Same time the municipal worker takes alcohol daily as a part of their daily common diet. The researcher concludes that their socioeconomic condition promotes this substance abuse and their unhygienic occupation also enhances the risk of consuming substances which need to be addressed.

Mohammad Amiri (2017) Factors Related to Drug/Alcohol Addiction amongst School Going Students in Pune, India.

Drug Addiction is now a day's one of the major social problems in our society, mostly the youth became the victim of this evil practice. This paper focused on the cause of addiction among school-going children & its impact on their physical and psychological health. Researchers try to change the notion that normally street children consume substances whereas school-going children can also fall into this ill habit its mostly observed in different Metropolitan Cities of our country. The study was undertaken in Pune City and mostly found that the age between (13- 16) age group children consume



different drugs'. The researcher tries to explore different sites like the socioeconomic condition of these addicted students, the primary cause and impact, different types of drugs they consume, and same time the effort made by the teacher for the eradication.

The sample size was 106 teachers and 122 students from 24 school selection of sample by using the simple random method. It has been found that most of the parents of addicted children belong to self-employment categories and 4th class employees of Pune Municipal like a sweeper and watchmen. The common types of Drugs the child consume are tobacco, Gutkha, cigarette, and also Beer, and alcohol. Most of the students were lived in the slum area where environmental factors like peer group pressure and influence make them more addicted and same time lack of parental guidance also an important factor.

Sarangli Lisa, Acharya Himansu P, Panigrahi Om (2008) Substance Abuse Among Adolescents in Urban Slums of Sambalpur.

Nowadays Substances abuse among adolescents is a threat to a country like India which is a big hindrance on the way of progress for a nation. The present paper highlights the current social problem and the objective of this study is to assess the cause and different types of substance abuse among the adolescent in the Slum area of Sambalpur.

It was a community-based study and the sample size was 489 from both the gender Male and Females who are residing in the slum area of Sambalpur it has been found 45% of respondent abuse different substances. The simple random method was used to select of sample and through pre-designed question data collected by scheduled interview technique. During the study most commonly consume substances were Gutkha (91.7%), and smoking (35.4%) among boys and 8.5 % among girls also. The findings of the study are very useful such as most of the children from the broken home (51.2%) same time children from the family of Drug abuse were (46.7%) and the most common factor for drug abuse among these adolescents was peer group pressure and influence.

Pradyumna Adithya (2012) Perception of Conservancy workers and Manual Scavengers on their occupation and Health – a qualitative preliminary Study.

The study is an attempt to understand the (pourkarmika) Scavenger population and their work, their socio-economic aspect of life, and how all these influences their health status and healthcare-seeking practice. This study was conducted at Chitradurga of Karnataka.

The study was conducted through the FGD Focus Group Discussion method and most of the participants were elder/ retired workers, female workers, Male both young and unmarried workers it covered all generations and age groups. (18-60) the common area of study was to find out the socioeconomic profile, their perception and nature of work, perceived health risk and concern, available and accessibility of health care services. During the FGD it has been found that Alcohol Consumption is a common practice among worker in all age group except women most of them replies that it is necessary to entries before the septic tank which help them reduce pain from minor injuries which is a big question mark upon their working environment and culture.

The Objective of the Study:

The main aim of the study is to

1. Find out the different factors of substances abused among the scavenger community
2. Assessed the impact of this practice upon their health and socio-economic aspect of life.

III. Methodology

The study is empirical with qualitative by nature in this study, the data have been collected using both primary and secondary sources. The study is set in Schedule caste scavenger Slum Rajabagicha Sweeper Colony of Cuttack City. Primary data has been collected through a structured interview schedule and focused group discussions method. Sampling has been used to identify the primary and secondary units of the study. The total universe is 317 and the sample size is 60 the simple random method is used to select the respondents who have been engaged in the sanitation work of the city so called sweeper

Socio-Demographic Profile of the Study Area

The concerned slum comes under ward no 31 of Cuttack City and with comprised of 80 households with 317 populations all belonging to Schedule caste and the most local sub-caste isHADI.



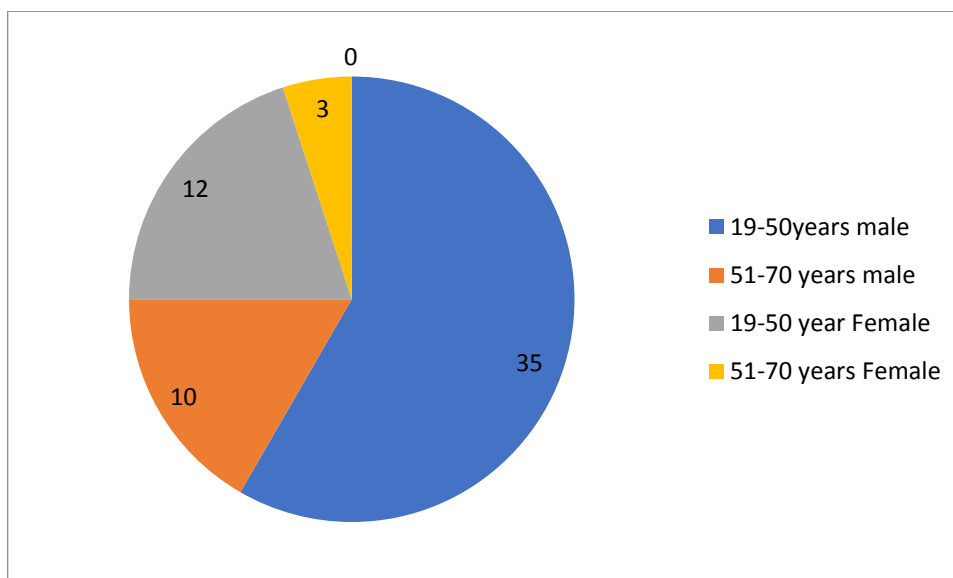
Distribution of the population

sex		Age 19-50	51-70	0-18
male	160	82	32	46
female	157	79	28	50
Total	317	161	60	96

IV. Result and Discussion:

The data has been analysed and interpreted through the use of Excel, percentages, averages, tables, and graphical presentations also made through different graphs and charts.

In the research out of 60 respondents, 45 were male and 15 were women and all belong to the Hadi community and were married the age, sex, caste will be given in below graphically in Figure .1



The above figure show that the Male respondent was from the age group (19-50) 35 and (51-70) 10 same time the number of Female respondents were 12 and 3 from the age group (19-50) and (51-70) respectively.

All 60 respondents were engaged in sweeper jobs under Cuttack Municipal Corporation out of them 43 numbers are working in contractual mode through third-party outsourcing way and only 17 were regular sweepers. But there is no big gap found among both categories of sweepers in their level of education and awareness of food and drinking habits only a few differences were observed in possessing some assets like bikes, Tv, and ornaments.

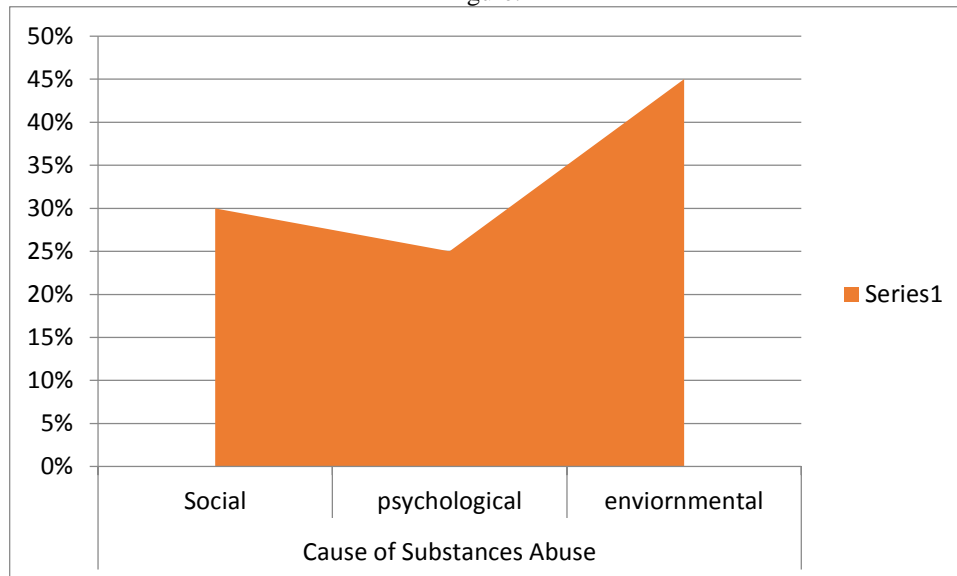
Major Causes of Substance abuse practice among the respondents.

From the analysis, it has been found that all the 45 Male respondents from different age groups consuming alcohol, and ganja, and some of them took an illegal drug injection named fort win, morphine. And even some of them take all three categories of narcotics. Tobacco and smoking are very common among even children around under 18 years of age.

Same time another interesting fact is that the husbands of the rest 15 female respondents were also consuming substances so overall it has been concluded that all the respondents were found to be addicted. The study tries to find out some broad factors for this drug abuse among the scavenger community which are given in the below figure .2



Figure.2



Social Factors:

The above figures clearly show how the social, psychological, and environmental factors are jointly responsible for the substances abused among the scavenger community.

30 percent of respondents reveal that due to social factors, they became addicted. They openly admitted that due to improper or defective socialization, they are habituated with such bad habits. The researcher further in-depth analysis the social factor from the socialization point of view and observed that the primary socializing agent such as family, school, and peer groups which are playing a very crucial role in the formation of individual behaviour and attitude, but in the case of scavenger these agents just carry negative values. Most of the scavengers admitted that they learn taking drugs and alcohol from their father and other elder members of the family same time peer group is another important agency where a child learns lots of social values and norms whereas, in a scavenger community, a person learns how to consume different drugs with the effect of peer group pressure they started to consume the drug from an early age of life. Same time education and religious institution like Schools, temples, Church, etc are one of the major areas where a person learns social ethics and mannerism but these institutions are very less accessible by the scavenger community as the literacy rate is very poor among the community and even those are enrolled in the educational institution, they became dropout soon due to lack of interest of parents and low economic condition which drag them into wrong track. Same time due to

their impure occupation they were still treated as untouchables and not allowed to enter into the religious space like temples where they get some good values of life same time teachers in the school were not given attention to the children of these Dalit communities, they never bother whether they came to school regularly or not whether the child engaged in different illegitimate activities like consuming tobacco and smoking, etc.

Psychological factors:

Psychological factors of drug abuse among the scavenger community are also somehow connected with the social background it has been found that **25 percent** of respondent replied that they consume drug due to psychological and mental trauma to get relief from these anxieties they used to consume alcohol, ganja, and even drug injection. So the researcher tried to explore the exact cause of such mental depression and it has been found that most of the scavengers take substances due to their untouchability status in society they are neglected by all the other communities in society even though they have no social position however they born to do only such menial job like cleaning the toilet, carrying human excretes, removing the dead animal, etc, much time they abused by the general community. Due to social stigma and discrimination in accessing public places like temples, hotels, public ponds, and local health centres, everywhere they faced discrimination due to their caste and caste-based occupation which leads a great frustration among them and they take help of these



substances to get relief for few moments to forget everything.

As ignorance and illiteracy were the best friend of this community domestic violence, Adultery is a very common problem in every house of this scavenger community which also boosts this mental depression during the research one Scavenger named *Kalia Naik said that my wife is run away with another man so I missed her and taking alcohol.*

Environmental factor:

The living and working environment of the scavengers is an important factor for these substances abuse this study explores some interesting facts as the scavengers' community is generally set up in a slum area with the unhygienic condition the basic amenities are mostly absent in these areas. During the study, 45 percent of respondents replied they consume drugs due to environmental factors both living and working. The researcher first discussed the living condition and how responsible substances abuse most of the scavengers' slums are the hub of criminals and space for trafficking all types of drugs so that the scavenger could be easily trapped. Same time the working environment played a major role in this ill practice among the community most of the sweepers (male) reveals that they took alcohol due to heavy manual work while cleaning the septic tank, and pit and working at the dump yard site mostly they work manually and very rarely used of machinery so after returning from the job they feel very tired and pain to get relief from this pain they like to take alcohol in other sense they treated it as medicine and gradually they became addicted one of scavenger Anam Naik Stated that *due to heavy manual work I can't sleep in night without taking alcohol. Same time women scavengers consume tobacco in their workplace to avoid intolerable Odors while cleaning the pit and toilet etc. As per the MS Act 2013, adequate safety equipment should provide to the sanitation worker at their workplace such as protective gear like gloves, masks, shoes, etc but in practice in not implement properly neither protective tools nor machines provide to the worker properly they used a broom, basket, bucket to carry night soil from the septic tank and manhole same time use normally cloth cover to their face to avoid the furious smell. And many sweepers reveal that it was almost impossible to work with full of sense in such a horrible situation so they consume drugs to make themselves subconscious which helps them to accomplish this menial and human job.*

V. Findings of the study:

From the above discussion following major findings have been drawn which are stated below

- It has been observed that 30, 25, and 45 percent of respondents consume substances for social, psychological, and environmental factors respectively.
 - Out of them, 60 percent consume alcohol only where as 20 percent consume alcohol along with ganja same time 20 percent of respondents consume alcohol, ganja, and drug injection. As per the report of OMRAH a civil society, there are 32 injecting drug users (IDU) living in this concerned slum.
- The effect of this substances abuse is widespread it not only directly negatively impacts health but also indirectly damages their socio-economic life which is discussed below briefly:
- It has been found in the last five years there was 15 percent of death occurred in the community due to liver (hepatize), kidney, and respiratory-related diseased which are only due to excess consumption of these substances.
 - Another major finding is that the injecting Drug users usually take these injections in a group and share a common needle and syringe which make them more vulnerable and chances to infected with HIV and AIDs as per the data of ICTC centre there are few PLHIV available in this community due to these habits but the identification will be confidential as per norms.
 - Respondents generally spend 30 to 40 percent of their monthly income consuming substances, leading to acute poverty and indebtedness in the community.
 - Due to the regular consumption of drugs in most of the family, domestic violence cases are being observed which influence their social life to a large extent which leads to divorce and adultery, and broken homes.
 - Children from this community are not getting proper education due to a lack of awareness and the poor economic condition of parents and at the same time the toxin environment turns them into juvenile delinquents during the study it has been found that 10 children were arrested in the last one year in illegal drug trafficking cases those are now conflicting with laws.
 - Most of the scavengers are not allowed to public places due to their drug-abusing habits and are expelled from the mainstream of society.
 - Another important fact that come out from the study is that during the workplace, many times



different accidents happened with these sweepers due to only consuming alcohol and other drugs at the work site, and many times they were injured due to this reason and in last one year even one death case reported at work site due to heavy consumption of alcohol.

- Information gathered from 6 women sweepers that they are working in daily wages mode cause their husbands were taking the drug at the time of duty and they retrench from the authority, this way livelihood was also influenced by the drug abuse.

VI. Suggestion and conclusion:

1. Awareness and Education Campaigns:
 - Conduct mass sensitization programs in collaboration with local self-governance bodies, NGOs, and civil societies to educate the community about the adverse effects of substance abuse.
 - Establish community libraries, learning centres, and vocational training hubs to enhance educational opportunities for both adults and children.
2. Rehabilitation Programs:
 - Set up free rehabilitation centres with trained professionals to support individuals struggling with substance addiction.
 - Offer skill development programs to enable alternative livelihoods for manual scavengers and their dependents.
3. Policy Implementation and Monitoring:
 - Enforce the provisions of the MS Act 2013, ensuring access to protective gear and regular safety checks at workplaces.
 - Form district-level committees to monitor rehabilitation programs, ensuring accountability and measurable outcomes.
4. Improved Living Conditions:
 - Upgrade infrastructure in scavenger slums, including proper sanitation, water supply, and housing, to reduce environmental factors contributing to substance abuse.
 - Strengthen law enforcement in these areas to curb the trafficking of drugs.
5. Social Inclusion Measures:
 - Promote school retention among children of manual scavengers by providing scholarships, mid-day meals, and free uniforms.
 - Facilitate entry into public spaces, including religious institutions, to mitigate social stigma and foster inclusivity.
6. Workplace Reforms:

- Ensure the availability of mechanized tools for manual scavenging to reduce physical strain and health hazards.
- Prohibit the consumption of alcohol or drugs at the workplace through strict regulations and penalties.

Conclusion

The study highlights the alarming prevalence of substance abuse among manual scavengers in the Raja Bagicha Sweeper Colony of Cuttack City. Contributing factors include hazardous working conditions, social stigma, and psychological distress, which not only deteriorate the physical and mental health of the community but also exacerbate their socio-economic vulnerabilities.

Addressing these challenges requires a multi-pronged approach involving awareness campaigns, rehabilitation efforts, policy enforcement, and social inclusion initiatives. Only by fostering a supportive environment and empowering the community with alternative opportunities can the cycle of marginalization, substance abuse, and poverty be broken. Collaborative efforts from the government, civil society, and the community are crucial to ensuring a dignified life for manual scavengers, free from substance dependency and societal exclusion.

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