

A Study among the Problems Faced By Women Rag Pickers

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Abstract – Millions of individuals throughout the globe earn a career by collecting, sorting, recycling, and selling goods that someone else has discarded. Rag picking is referred to in a variety of ways. It is more generally referred to as a rag picker. Most rag pickers are impoverished, uneducated and from rural immigrant households, which is a commonality around the globe. It is common for migrants to come to the city in search of a better life by picking up trash. Rag pickers in Maharashtra's capital city are living in appalling circumstances, according to recent research. Disgusting living conditions are the norm here. There is a pressing need to ensure that rag pickers have adequate working conditions and basic amenities so that their contribution to social progress may be properly recognised. In order to make a meaningful shift in income and wealth disparity, one must look at the long term. Either an increase or reduction in inequality may be caused by changes in the employment structure of an economy.

Key Words – Women Rag Pickers, Economic Contribution, Environmental Contributions, Municipal Benefits

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1. INTRODUCTION

When we hear the word "rag-pickers," what comes to mind? Images of underprivileged children or women scavenging for food from rubbish littering the streets of so-called modern towns spring to mind. Women and children are the primary rag pickers, and they tend to gather rubbish from streets and dumps in an informal manner. Rag pickers don't only pick up rubbish from landfills; they also pick it up from bins, streets, waterways, and even the trucks of municipal waste management services in cities and metropolitan towns throughout the country. The word "scavenging" is often used in academic literature to describe the practise of scavenging discarded clothing. To describe rag picking, some scholars use phrases like "(informal) waste collecting," "scrounging," "trash picking," or "waste recycling." The phrase "rag pickers" is the most widely used to describe those who work in the garbage collecting industry. As far back as 1985-60, the word "rag picker" was used to describe someone who collects discarded clothing and other debris from the streets, garbage piles, and other locations for a living. The phrase "rag-picker," or "chiffonnier," was used in the early 20th century to describe someone who worked as a garbage collector in the streets of the 19th and early 20th centuries. People living off of the garbage of others is nothing new. [1]

Instead, the practise of collecting other people's trash has a long history throughout Europe. As an example,

one might think of the German "Lumpenkremer" (rag men), the Luxembourgish "Lompekréimer," and the French "chiffonniers" that were all commonplace approximately two centuries ago. Traveling rag men exchanged rags for everyday home goods like soap and toothpaste. In the end, the rags gathered by rag pickers were sold and used to make paper. As a general rule of thumb, rag picking is defined as the gathering of any solid garbage by human beings in an unofficial manner. In order to make a living, rag pickers often strive to gather as much trash as possible from diverse sources. This material is subsequently sold to intermediaries as secondary raw material that may be reused in the industrial process on a daily basis. Cardboard, for example, is a commonly acquired item by rag pickers. Because cardboard is so often gathered, rag pickers are sometimes referred to as "cartoneros" in some areas. According to popular belief, rag pickers don't often seek for recyclable or reusable goods. Rag pickers, on the other hand, are interested in whatever they can sell for a profit, even household rubbish.

1.1 Rag Pickers Women

Rubbish bins and dumping grounds are frequent destinations for rag pickers. The majority of children's fly fields are currently located on garbage dumps. As a result, children are at danger of being exposed to needles, condoms, saline bottles, filthy

gloves, and other medical trash. There are several ailments that rag pickers get, including respiratory disorders, worms, anaemia and fever as well as wounds, rashes, and dog bites. Globally, the average individual created around two-thirds of a kilogramme of garbage every day. However, the compositional differences between high- and low-income nations were striking. Paper, cardboard, plastic, and heavier organic materials make up the majority of solid waste as the economy improves. To put it another way: The World Bank projects that our worldwide garbage generation will rise by 70 percent by 2050 unless we take immediate action. Two billion tonnes of garbage are produced each year by 7.6 billion people. Population growth may be a contributing factor. As a result, this environmental crisis has been caused by the consumption levels of just a few wealthy countries, as well as their severe mishandling of garbage.[2]

1.2 Economic Contribution of Rag Pickers

Solid waste is any material or item, solid or semi-solid, that is wasted because it is no longer useful or desired as a consequence of human activity. It is an enormously diverse mass of garbage that originates from a wide range of sources, including households, businesses, industries, and agriculture. ISWA, despite environmental and human health concerns, unregulated open dumping is occurring in underdeveloped countries. Because India is transitioning into an industrialised country, the amount of municipal solid garbage is expected to rise dramatically in the future. The most common obstacle to providing public services in metropolitan areas is the lack of financial resources of local governments. Municipal solid trash may be broken down into many categories, such as food waste, commercial garbage, street sweeping waste, construction and industrial waste, and so on, depending on the source. In addition to recyclable materials like paper and plastics, municipal solid trash also includes hazardous materials like paint, insecticides, and pharmaceuticals. [3]

1.3 Environmental Contributions of Rag Pickers

In WIEGO, there is a rising appreciation for the value of garbage pickers to the local economy, public health and safety, and the environment. They also endure low social standing, poor living and working circumstances, and limited help from local governments. Rag pickers contribute to the sanitation and aesthetics of cities and towns by collecting up abandoned garbage from public areas. A considerable amount of rubbish is diverted into the recycling process because to the efforts of waste pickers. Approximately 20% of total waste material was retrieved by rubbish pickers in three of the six cities investigated. Researchers discovered that the six cities in the study had more than 80,000 individuals who recycled an average of 3 million tonnes of rubbish every year. Greenhouse gas emissions may be reduced at a low cost via recycling. While recycling

decreases emissions 25 times more than burning, private incineration is progressively displacing rag pickers across the globe, despite their great contribution. When materials are repurposed and recycled, the manufacturing of new ones is cut in half, which conserves natural resources and energy while lowering pollution levels in the air and water.[4]

1.4 Municipal Benefits of Rag Pickers

One of India's most hazardous and degrading activities is rag picking. With no gloves or shoes on, these children have to rummage through dangerous debris in filthy environs while accompanied by scavenging birds or dogs. When they're hungry, they'll consume everything they can get their hands on, including rubbish. There is a chance that children will come across needles, syringes and other medical garbage, as well as plenty of plastic and iron things, if they play on the dumping site. In addition to respiratory issues, worms, anaemia and fever, they often have a variety of minor issues, including wounds, rashes and dog bites¹. Globally, the average individual created around two-thirds of a kilogramme of garbage every day. However, the compositional differences between rich and low-income nations were significant. Paper, cardboard, plastic, and heavier organic materials make up the majority of solid waste as the economy improves. Developing nations, on the other hand, have substantially greater waste densities and moisture content.[5]

1.5 Socio Economic Characteristics of Rag Pickers

All countries are striving to become more developed in their own unique ways as the world becomes more interconnected. These advancements were increased throughout the Industrial Revolution and Modernization Era of 19th century. Thousands of people moved from rural areas to cities in search of work. Those who are illiterate and lack skills are unable to find work that pays the bills. These individuals work in low-paying positions. Various types of rag picking have been around for a long time. However, throughout the 19th century, it grew rapidly. It was via the middleman or recycler that rag pickers sold their recyclable garbage that they had accumulated. As a result, they were referred to as a "binner," "recycler," "poacher," "salvager," "rag picker," or "trash picker." However, for the first time, a global conference for rag pickers was conducted. Colombia. To describe those who gather garbage from landfills and then resell it, the attendees of this conference coined the phrase "trash pickers". In lieu of terms like scavenger, rag picker is the new phrase. Rapid urbanisation in developing nations has led to a rise in the number of rag pickers, which has led to an increase in the number of urban slums. It is not only a problem in India.[6]

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Asim, Muhammad Batool, Syeda Adila (2012) The scavengers of Southern Lahore are the focus of this investigation. From 325 various scavengers, trash merchants, and intermediaries, information was acquired. The town of Allama Iqbal has a daily waste production rate of 0.80 kg per inhabitant. Scavengers play a significant role in rubbish sorting in the studied region and other Pakistani cities since the official waste management system does not exist. The scavengers include Korreywalas, Pheriwalas, rubbish pickers, street pickers, and dumpsite pickers. There is a wide range of socioeconomic and sociodemographic differences among scavengers. Recovering recyclable garbage involves men and women of all ages, as well as destitute immigrants, migrants, and other marginalised groups. As far as piriwalas are concerned, they buy recyclable goods from the home or business and other piriwalas collect them from rubbish. They all sell their recyclables for profit to junkshops or contractors, who then resale them to middlemen or recyclers.[7]

Juan Carlos Perez De Mendiguren Et Al (2013) While the Abbé Pierre movement in France in 1949 served as a source of inspiration for the ragpickers' movement, today's ragpickers vary significantly. This article seeks to categorise the major groups in the state of Spain and examine if their unique qualities have led them to suggest alternative ways for dealing with the current economic crisis. Here we first suggest, to aid in the development of organisational models for the various Emaus groups in the state, a typology built on the analysis of five variables (legal form of life on community leadership and participation; growth; action orientation). Based on this, we can divide them into four groups: (Community Foundation, Social Enterprise, Mixed). However, we've seen that these models' reactions to the current economic crisis are different from one another.[8]

George, a. (2015). Using the capacity method, we may measure happiness by focusing on people's ability to select the important aspects of their lives. Capability, which encompasses the issue of what is of value to the subject, is analysed in this research by looking at how the impoverished perceive and pursue some of the key themes of development. How despised are some largely bad circumstances (e.g., their living in an unequal society and working in low-wage employment) as well as how cherished are certain widely positive functionings (e.g., schooling for upward mobility), in the lives of the poor, in this study? Capability is understood in a more complex and nuanced way by the results.[9]

Basheer Ahamed Khan (2012) Most research on the feminization of employment in export-oriented employment has focused on the percentage of female employees in a certain industry. To put it another way, if we see a rise in the number of women employed in this way (or even if we see an increase in the percentage of women employed in this way within the

overall female labour force), we don't need to know anything about a special preference for women employees. In the Export Processing Zones (EPZs) and export-oriented manufacturing businesses, the percentage of female employment in overall employment often topped 70%. [10]

Farole, Thomas Akinci, Gokhan (2011) Three diverse views of a special economic zone (SEZ) may emerge if you ask three different individuals to describe it. Workers at garment factories in developing countries may be described as "footloose multinational companies (MNCs) enjoying tax benefits" in a fenced-in industrial estate. It's possible to recall the "miracle of Shenzhen," the transformation of a small fishing hamlet into an international metropolis of 14 million people and a 100-fold increase in per capita GDP since it was declared a SEZ 30 years ago. A third option is to consider ports in cities like Dubai or Singapore, which serve as the foundation for a broad variety of commerce and logistics-related operations.[11]

Vinoj Abraham (2011) Farmers and hired labourers still make up more than two-thirds of rural India's workforce. A movement from farm to non-farm vocations and businesses has been seen in recent times, at a greater scale than in the last 30 years. Economic observers have expressed confidence that a fundamental change in employment is finally taking place. In spite of this, it must be acknowledged that this change happened at a moment of acute agricultural distress. The structural shift's tendencies and patterns support the claim that this was primarily a reaction to the crisis.[12]

3. OBJECTIVE

1. To know the reasons behind joining the occupation of rag picking among women labours
2. To understand the migratory pattern among women rag pickers.

4. METHODOLOGY

The role of labour in economic growth cannot be overstated. The quality and quantity of labour effect specialisation and division of labour as well as the market for products and services. When it comes to how much labour is used, supply and demand have a major role. Women's employment has taken centre stage in the country's economic landscape and on a worldwide scale. Increasingly, it has been understood that women play a significant role in the country's economic growth and in rising living standards. Women's engagement in economic activities is not just a question of human fairness, but also a means of accelerating and sustaining growth. Women all throughout the globe have made a significant contribution to economic progress.

Study Area and Sampling

The Gandhinagar district, which contains the four sub-districts of Kalol, Mansa, Dehgam, and Gandhinagar, is the focus of this investigation. Due to a lack of data on the district's female rag pickers, proportionate sampling techniques were used. The overall population of each sub-district was taken into consideration while selecting a sample. Here are the overall population and sample sizes for each sub district.

Method of Data Collection

Methods for obtaining data on the sociology of rag pickers, including their living and working situations, were utilised in a variety of ways. The structured questionnaire was used to obtain primary data. Before finishing the questionnaire, the questionnaire was pilot tested on a group of 25 people. The questionnaire was revised based on the results of the pilot testing in order to arrive at the final version used for data collecting. The questionnaire includes questions on demographic information, income and spending, living circumstances, working conditions, health status and difficulties, problems are work place and place of living, decision-making process at home, etc.

Data Analysis

Various statistical approaches were used to analyse primary data gathered via a structured questionnaire. In order to provide an overall picture of the findings across variables, a frequency distribution was utilised. In order to make the findings easier to grasp and explain, graphical tools were utilised. Two variables were compared using cross tabulations and other data analysis techniques. For the purposes of data analysis, statistical software such as SPSS and excel was used

5. DATA ANALYSIS

5.1 Age Profile of Women Rag Pickers

Table 1 show the breakdown of survey participants by age group. A large majority of respondents (55, 2 percent) fall within the bracket of 36-45 years old, as can be seen from the statistics. Nearly one-fifth of those polled are under the age of 35. This demonstrates that women begin choosing rags at a young age.

Table 1: Age Profile of Women Rag Pickers

Age	Frequency	Percent
Up to 35	36	14.4
36 to 45	138	55.2
46 to 55	68	27.2
Above 55	8	3.2
Total	250	100

5.2 Religious Profile of Women Rag Pickers

All the women rag pickers studied were found to adhere to the Hindu faith, according to their categorisation in the research. The survey did not find any instances of women from other religions participating in rag picking. This might be because the Hindu majority in Maharashtra district is so strong.

5.3 Profile of Women Rag Pickers by Caste

The job of rag picking is believed to be the lowest on the social ladder. People from lower castes are drawn to this profession since there are no other options for employment in the area. Table 2 show how women rag pickers are classified based on the circumstances of their employment. A total of 96.4 percent of respondents were from scheduled caste. Only a small number of people from different social classes participated in the survey. This reflects the reality that most rag pickers are women from lower-class backgrounds.

Table 2: Classification by Caste

Caste	Frequency	Percent
SC	241	96.4
ST	3	1.2
Other	6	2.4
Total	250	100

5.4 Profile of Women Rag Pickers by Marital Status

Women rag pickers' social position is influenced by a variety of factors, including their marital status. After marriage or the death of their spouse, many women begin picking rags as a way to supplement their income. They have no choice but to get into this line of work because of their mounting financial obligations. Table 3 show the breakdown by marital status of the rag pickers' women respondents to the survey. 76 percent of rag pickers women are married, and over 20 percent are widows, according to the research. There are divorced women and tyakta ladies (left by husband). The number of single women is really low. This indicates that most rag pickers are married or widowed. Rag picking became a necessity for them after marriage or the death of their husbands because of their financial responsibilities.

Table 3: Classification by Marital Status

Marital Status	Frequency	Percent
Married	191	76.4
Unmarried	4	1.6
Widow	49	19.6
Divorced	3	1.2
Tyakta	3	1.2
Total	250	100

5.5 Profile of Women Rag Pickers by Mother Tongue

An understanding of a language is critical in every career. Table 4 show the categorization of women rag pickers in the research by their native language.

Table 4: Classification by Mother Tongue

Mother Tongue	Frequency	Percent
Gujarati	244	97.6
Hindi	4	1.6
Other	2	0.8
Total	250	100

According to the research, 97 percent of rag picker women speak Gujarat as their first language. Only a small percentage of rag picker women speak other languages. For one thing, many of these ladies have come from other areas of Gujarat. Only a few ladies from other regions of the nation moved to Maharashtra.

5.6 Profile of Women Rag Pickers by Educational Qualification

A person's education is a significant factor in determining what kind of work they can do and where they can do it. An person who lacks education is forced to choose low-paying occupations. There are tables 5 containing educational information on the women rag pickers who participated in the research.

Table 5: Classification by Educational Qualification

	Frequency	Percent
Illiterate	120	48
Read and Write	66	26.4
Primary	59	23.6
Secondary	5	2
Total	250	100

It may be demonstrated from statistics that the majority of female rag pickers are uneducated. Roughly 48 percent of women in the poll were found to be illiterate, while nearly 26 percent claimed to be able to read and write without any formal schooling. Women make up only 2% of those who have finished at least a secondary level of education.. Due to a lack of formal education, they were forced to take up the rag-picking job since they couldn't find work in the official labour market.

5.7 Migration Pattern among Women Rag Pickers

Women rag pickers are the most likely to migrate. Women, particularly, move from other regions of the nation to work as rag pickers. In many circumstances, individuals are forced to relocate because of marriage or economic need. They turn to rag picking as a

source of income since there are no other jobs available in the new location.

(a) Duration of Staying in Maharashtra

Table 6 demonstrate that roughly 34% of rag picker women in Maharashtra had been living there for less than 15 years. Thirty percent of the women who work as rag pickers in Maharashtra have lived there for 16 to 20 years. At the same time, 13 percent of the rag pickers women in the research had been living in Maharashtra for more than 30 years.

Table 6: Duration of Staying in Maharashtra

Duration	Frequency	Percent
Up to 15 years	86	34.4
16 to 20 years	76	30.4
21 to 30 years	57	22.8
More than 30 years	31	12.4
Total	250	100

(b) Belongs to Maharashtra (Migration Trend)

The migratory patterns of female rag pickers are also being studied in the current research. In the poll, the majority of female rag pickers were from outside Gujarat, according to an examination of where they came from. Only around 27% of the women rag pickers who took part in the poll said they were from Maharashtra, while 73% said they weren't (table 7).

Table 7: Belongs to Maharashtra

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	67	26.8
No	183	73.2
Total	250	100

(c) For how many years you came to Maharashtra?

Questioned about the length of time they want to remain in Maharashtra, rag picker ladies were quizzed about their arrival year. Table 8 show the outcomes of the answer.. More than 77% of the women rag pickers in Maharashtra said that they would prefer to remain in the city permanently, while just 10% stated that they were unsure of how long they would stay in Maharashtra.

Table 8: For how many years you came to Maharashtra?

	Frequency	Percent
less than one year	21	8.4
one to five years	11	4.4
Permanent	193	77.2
Not sure	25	10
Total	250	100

(d) Nature of Migration

Analysis of the rag picker women's migration is reported in table 9, respectively. Women rag pickers who have relocated permanently account for roughly 89 percent of the total, while nearly 11 percent have said that their migration is just temporary and they plan to return home at some point in the future.

Table 9: Nature of Migration

Migration	Frequency	Percent
Permanent	221	88.4
Temporary	27	11.6
Total	250	100

(e) With whom have you migrated?

When it comes to the situation of rag picker women, migration is a key factor. With whom they arrived in Maharashtra is also essential. More than seventy percent of the women rag pickers surveyed had fled with their families, according to an examination of the data. Women account for over 20% of all migrants to Maharashtra.

Table 10: With whom have you migrated?

	Frequency	Percent
Alone	49	19.6
With family	189	75.6
Other	12	4.8
Total	250	100

(f) Who helped in migration?

Using data from the migration of women rag pickers to Maharashtra, table 11 examine the assistance that these women have received. Women rag pickers, as seen by the statistics, are more likely to have gotten financial assistance from family members in order to migrate. The aid of friends, neighbours, and communities has helped some women migrate. More than a quarter (28 percent) of the women who work as rag pickers say they have received no assistance in their journey.

Table 11: Who helped in migration?

Helping hands	Frequency	Percent
Family members	139	55.6
Villagers	17	6.8
Neighbors	7	2.8
Friends	8	3.2
Other	8	3.2
No one	71	28.4
Total	250	100

6. CONCLUSION

Women's employment is seen as a critical first step in improving their economic well-being. As a result, a

number of young women are pursuing careers in the domains of public service, industry, and business. The importance of women's involvement in India's workforce and economy has been shown beyond a reasonable question. India's working-situation women's has become a lot better during the last several years. Despite the fact that their standing has improved, they still find themselves reliant on males. It's because, in patriarchal societies, men have traditionally been the ones with the money and the authority to make choices. It's not uncommon to see married women working in the study sector without any decision-making authority, despite the fact that they make money. Married women's work happiness isn't exactly as high as it should be. When it comes to home decision-making, it is evident that males still retain the upper hand. In the past, women in India were not expected to work outside the house. Due to financial hardship and a desire for a higher quality of life, women began working. However, since society lacks a normative framework, women are subjected to a variety of forms of harassment.

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