

## Manual Pit Emptiers and Their Health: Profiles, Determinants and Interventions

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**Abstract :** The global sanitation workforce bridges the gap between sanitation infrastructure and the provision of sanitation services through essential public service work. Manual pit emptiers often perform the work at the cost of their dignity, safety, and health as their work requires repeated heavy physical activities such as lifting, carrying, pulling, and pushing. This exposes them to occupational and environmental health hazards and risking illness, injury, and death. The study will extend the studies by presenting occupational health risks and suggestions for improvement in informal settlements of Nairobi, Kenya. This is a qualitative study conducted among sanitation stakeholders in Korogocho, Mukuru and Kibera informal settlements in Nairobi. Data were captured using digital voice recorders, transcribed and thematically analysed. The discussion notes were further supported by observational notes made during the interviews. These formed the basis for a robust picture of occupational health of manual pit emptiers; a lack or inappropriate use of protective clothing, and prolonged duration of working hours were described to contribute to the occupational health hazard. To continue working, manual pit emptiers had devised coping strategies which include working in groups, improvised protective clothing, sharing the available protective clothing, working at night and consuming alcohol drinks while at work. Many of these strategies are detrimental to their health. Occupational health hazards among pit emptiers are key for effective working and is as a result of a lack of collaboration amongst stakeholders linked to health, safety and lack of PPE of pit emptiers. Collaborations amongst sanitation stakeholders is paramount for health, safety, and in ensuring the provision and use of personal protective devices.

**Keywords :** sanitation, occupational health, manual emptiers, informal settlements

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