Chapter 12
Household Waste and Everyday Practices: Understanding Rural–Urban Differences in Kitchen Waste Disposal in Kerala

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ABSTRACT

Kerala's waste management practices, this research shedding light on significant rural-urban disparities and emphasizing the importance of targeted interventions in rural regions, particularly addressing kitchen waste disposal. Drawing from a robust dataset of 46,334 respondents in Kerala, sourced from NFHS 5, the study uncovers a compelling commitment to responsible waste management. Both rural and urban areas exhibit a shared dedication to sustainability, with a consistent preference for closed drain disposal and reusing kitchen waste for gardening or farming. Result: Encouragingly, urban regions show higher levels of awareness and engagement in sustainable waste management, reflected in the prevalence of manual collection. However, nuanced variations in less eco-friendly methods require vigilant attention. This research underscores Kerala's resolute commitment to responsible waste disposal, buoyed by the success of eco-conscious initiatives, and highlights the necessity of tailoring strategies to address local variations for a more sustainable future for all residents.

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INTRODUCTION

Effective waste management is a global imperative, and it holds particular significance in regions like Kerala, India, known for their environmental consciousness and unique waste disposal practices. Kitchen waste, comprising organic materials like food scraps and peels, represents a substantial portion of household waste (Nguyen et al., 2022). Sustainable management of kitchen waste is crucial not only for environmental conservation but also for public health and resource optimization. Kerala's waste management practices have garnered attention for their eco-friendly and community-driven nature. However, understanding the variance in these practices between rural and urban regions is vital for tailoring effective waste management policies and interventions. The state of Kerala, nestled in the southwestern part of India, is celebrated for its lush green landscapes, rich biodiversity, and a culture deeply rooted in sustainable living. As Kerala continues to experience urbanization and population growth, the dynamics of waste generation and disposal are evolving. Urban areas are expanding, and lifestyles are changing, influencing how residents dispose of their kitchen waste. In this context, it becomes imperative to assess the variations in approaches to kitchen waste disposal between rural and urban regions within Kerala.

Against this backdrop, the present study seeks to systematically investigate how rural and urban households in Kerala differ in their kitchen waste disposal practices, and what socio-economic, infrastructural, and spatial factors account for these variations. Specifically, it explores whether differences in wealth quintile, educational attainment, sanitation access, and housing type influence the choice of disposal method across districts. The central hypothesis guiding this research posits that urban households are more likely to adopt municipal or manual collection systems owing to better infrastructure and awareness, whereas rural households tend to rely on open or closed drains due to limited access to waste management facilities. Furthermore, it is hypothesized that higher education, improved sanitation, and greater household wealth significantly increase the likelihood of adopting environmentally sustainable disposal methods. By addressing these questions through a combination of descriptive, bivariate, and multivariate analyses using NFHS-5 data, the study aims to contribute a nuanced, evidence-based understanding of Kerala’s evolving household waste practices within a broader sustainability framework.

NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This research is of paramount importance due to the pressing need for sustainable waste management practices in Kerala, a state renowned for its environmental con-