

Educational Aspirations of Slum Children in Agra City

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Abstract:

This research explores the dreams of slum children to get an education and the challenges they face due to their family and community conditions. It looks at how factors like income, jobs, parents' education, living conditions, and access to basic needs shape their lives. The study highlights the barriers that prevent these children from going to school, including poor access to good schools, limited family support, and strict school rules. It also discusses how parents' financial struggles, time, and involvement affect their children's ability to learn and stay in school. Education is seen as more than just learning; it's a way to break free from poverty, gain better jobs, and earn respect in society. The study also showcases the collective efforts of governments and NGOs in bridging the gap. Government schemes like the Right to Education Act, Sarva Siksha Abhiyan, and the Mid-Day Meal Scheme aim to make education accessible and inclusive. NGOs complement these efforts by addressing ground-level challenges such as poverty, poor infrastructure, and discrimination. Together, these initiatives are vital in giving slum children a chance to rise above their circumstances and build a brighter future.

Keywords: Slum children, education, parental support.

Introduction:

As economic disparities grow between rural and urban areas in developing countries, many poor families migrate to cities seeking better opportunities. This rapid influx often overwhelms cities, leading to the formation of slums—densely populated areas with poor housing, unsafe conditions, and limited access to basic amenities like water and electricity. Life in slums is tough, with families struggling to make ends meet and children growing up in challenging environments. Despite these hardships, some children dream of a better future through education, but they need guidance and support to break free from the cycle of poverty and realize their potential. Children living in slum areas encounter numerous socio-economic challenges that severely limit their ability to improve their lives. Poverty is a pervasive issue, as families often struggle to meet basic needs such as food, shelter, and healthcare, leaving little room for educational expenses. Families in slum areas often live below the poverty line, struggling to meet basic needs such as food, shelter, and healthcare. This financial insecurity forces many children into labor to supplement family income, compromising their education and overall development. And one major issue is the lack of awareness about population control. In these communities, it is common to find families with more than eight members. Many people living in slums are not educated about the impact of having large families, which can put a strain on their resources. With so many mouths to feed, it becomes difficult to provide

basic needs like food, education, and healthcare for each family member and this leads to the unsafe and overcrowded living conditions in slums which contribute to poor health and psychological stress, impacting their ability to focus on and benefit from education. These children face social stigma and discrimination, which can diminish their self-esteem and restrict their opportunities for social and economic advancement. Many slum children grow up in households where education is not prioritized due to parents' own illiteracy or preoccupation with survival. This lack of a supportive and encouraging home environment can diminish children's motivation to pursue education and develop aspirations beyond their immediate circumstances. These interconnected challenges create a cycle of disadvantage that is difficult to break, making it imperative to address these issues comprehensively to support the potential of slum children. By recognizing and tackling these issues, societies can break the cycle of poverty and inequality, paving the way for a more inclusive and equitable future. Ensuring that slum children receive the support and opportunities they need is not only a moral imperative but also a crucial investment in the collective progress and prosperity of humanity. Education is a powerful tool that can transform lives, especially for children in slums who face poverty, discrimination, and limited opportunities. It equips them with knowledge, life skills, and confidence to break free from the cycle of poverty and build a brighter future. For girls, education is particularly important, empowering them to achieve their dreams and improve their families' well-being. Beyond academics, education fosters resilience, promotes healthier choices, and combats social stigma, uplifting individuals and entire communities for lasting progress and prosperity. Education has the power to break the cycle of poverty, but children living in slums often face significant challenges in accessing quality education. Negative stereotypes and low expectations from society can undermine their confidence and aspirations, making success seem out of reach. These perceptions also limit access to essential resources, as slum areas are often seen as unworthy investments. Without support from schools, communities, or even their families, these children may lose motivation and feel discouraged from pursuing their dreams, further widening the gap between them and their more privileged peers.

Significance of Study:

Children are the future. As they grow, they learn and adapt new things with the help of society. When these children are given a chance of learning, they often feel scared and believe they cannot succeed. Despite existing laws and special programs to support them, they often start school but then they drop out. This situation makes it difficult to ensure that all children benefit from educational opportunities. This research aims to understand how education can improve their lives and also parents play the biggest role in this process. This study also looks at different parenting styles and how much parents support their children's education. This growth helps society developed by investing in the education of some children, we are creating a smarter and more skilled future generation, which in turn will drive societal advancement and prosperity.

Review of Literature

United Nations Human Settlements Programme (2003) studies a comprehensive examination of the state of slums across the globe on "The Challenge of Slums: Global Report on Human Settlements 2003," studied that slums are characterized by inadequate access to safe water, sanitation, and other infrastructure; poor structural quality of housing; overcrowding; and insecure residential status. The living conditions in slums are linked to severe social, economic, and health challenges, including high rates of communicable

diseases, malnutrition, and violence. The report provides detailed case studies from cities across Africa, Asia, and Latin America, illustrating the diverse nature of slum conditions and the varying responses by local governments.

Morrish (2019) introduced the sociological aspect of education. Morrish explores the role of education in the socialization process, discussing how schools are not just places of learning but also institutions where societal norms and values are imparted. It discusses the involvement of the state in education, including policy-making and funding.

Khan (2019) discussed the challenges faced by children living in the slum areas of Islamabad, Pakistan, when it comes to accessing education. Many children in Islamabad's slums have limited access to schools due to their remote locations and inadequate infrastructure. This situation often forces children to travel long distances to reach the nearest school, leading to irregular attendance and increased dropout rates. The quality of education is often compromised due to overcrowded classrooms, a shortage of trained teachers, and insufficient educational materials.

Bhatia (2024) explains in his book "Children's Digital Experiences in Indian Slums: Technologies, Identities and Jugad" studied an ethnographic exploration of how children in Three Indian urban slums engage with digital technologies. It highlights opportunities and challenges faced by these children in accessing digital resources. It provides a view of how technology can empower, educate, and entertain and also raising questions about digital inequality and the digital divide. A valuable contribution to understanding the role of technology in marginalized communities and offers insights into the broader implications for education and social development in similar contexts.

Objectives of the study

- To identify the socio-economic background of slum children's families.
- To study the educational barriers of slum children.
- To analyse the role of parents for slum children.
- To know the consciousness level of the slum children in slums towards education.
- To study the role of Governmental and Non-governmental organization for slum children's.

Research Methodology is a study of research methods, tools and techniques in a systematic way. It can be understood as the science of studying how research is conducted scientifically. In it, we will research about the problem along with the logic behind them. The methodology includes design of study, selection of research area and universe, sampling techniques also.

Research Design: The research design of the present study was descriptive and explanatory.

The Universe: The present study was focused on children residing in the slums of Sikandra area, located in the Agra district.

Research Area: In Agra city, a total of 417 slum areas have been documented, representing 56% of the city's population. Among these slums, 213 (51%) are formally identified, while 204 (49%) remain unidentified. The area of present study was focused on unidentified slums of Sikandra area of Agra

Sampling: The representative proportion of the population is called sample. In the view of fulfill the objective of present study, the researcher decides to collect by using non-probability sampling method. Samples have been selected from 2 unidentified slum areas which are Nanak Nagar and Sector 13 Avas Vikas of Sikandra area Agra. The total population is of 200 children's out which we have taken 30 children's. The purposive sampling will be used for the study.

Unit of the study: The unit of the present study was conducted on slum children come under the age of 5 to 17 years old.

Sources of data collection

Primary data: - Collection of primary data was done with the help of interview schedule, observation and field work.

Secondary data: - Secondary data was collected from books, magazines, journals, articles, research papers, internet web sites, government records, other official records etc.

Data analysis and graphical presentation: Primary data has been collected through field work; interview schedule and non-participant observation and secondary data has been collected from secondary sources. Graphical tools (Pie chart) & Tabular representation have been used for the presentation of the data.

S.NO	Statement	Variables	Percentage
1	Age Group	5 to 7	17
		8 to 10	37
		11 to13	33
		14 to17	13
2	Gender Based Category	Male	40
		Female	60
3	Caste Based Category	General	0
		OBC	37
		SC	30
		ST	0
		Minority	33
4	Religion Based Category	Hindu	33
		Muslim	47
		Sikh	20
5	Nature of Family	Nuclear Family	37
		Joint Family	63
6	Father's Occupation	Skilled Labour	16
		Unskilled Labour	40
		Self employed	17
		Unemployed	27
7	Number of Family Members	Less than 4	7
		4 to 6	23
		6 to 8	30
		More than 8	40
8	Monthly Income of Respondent's Family	Less than 5,000	37
		5,000- 10,000	56

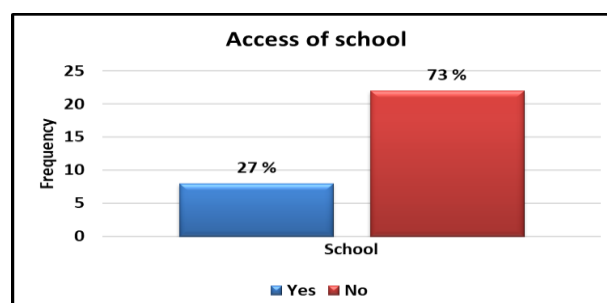
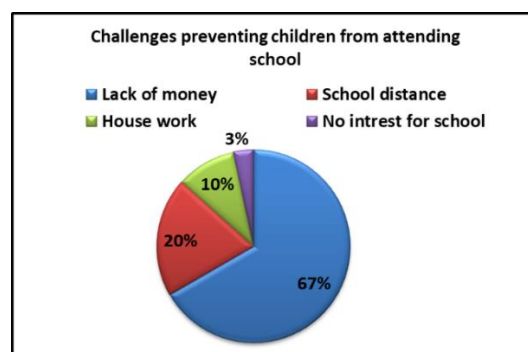
		10,000- 20,000	7
		More than 20,000	0

9	Nature of House	Kaccha Pakka Jhuggi/Jhopadi Rental	7 20 47 26
10	Availability of Water and Electricity	Both available Water Electricity Nothing	26 17 7 50
11	Educated Family Members	No one One Two More than three	53 17 17 13
12	Challenges preventing children from attending school	Lack of money School distance Housework No internet in school	67 20 10 3
13	Access of School	Yes No	27 73
14	Support of family for their children's education	Yes No	93 10
15	School rules and regulations ensuring discipline	Yes No Depends upon child No believe	80 0 13 7
16	Impact of school on upbringing on responsibility in children	Yes No Depends upon child	83 0 17

Socio-economic Background of Slum children's Families The socioeconomic status of families living

in slums is shaped by poverty, limited resources, unstable employment, and social marginalization. Overcrowded living conditions, inadequate infrastructure, and a lack of basic services perpetuate a cycle of disadvantage. Most households earn below the poverty line, limiting access to essentials such as nutritious food, clean water, healthcare, and education. Parents often work in informal sectors like construction, domestic work, or waste collection, where jobs are irregular and poorly paid. This financial instability forces many children to contribute to the household income, often leading to school dropouts or irregular attendance, thereby restricting their educational prospects. Overcrowded and substandard housing, often lacking sanitation and clean water, exposes children to health risks, including infectious diseases. Bureaucratic barriers and insufficient government programs hinder access to welfare schemes, healthcare, and education subsidies, exacerbating these challenges. Even when available, poorly funded public schools and unqualified teachers contribute to the substandard quality of education. The chapter analyzes these socio-economic conditions through research-driven data, using visual aids like tables and pie charts to illustrate aspects such as income levels, parental employment, educational background, living conditions, and access to basic amenities, providing a comprehensive understanding of the factors affecting slum children’s lives.

Educational Barrier Among Slum Children Education is a fundamental right, yet children in slums face significant challenges in accessing quality education due to interconnected barriers rooted in poverty, inadequate infrastructure, cultural norms, and systemic inequalities. Many families prioritize basic survival needs over education, often requiring children to work instead of attending school. Even those who do attend face resource shortages, overcrowded and poorly equipped schools, and long, unsafe commutes. Social and cultural factors, such as gender discrimination, early marriage, and household responsibilities, further restrict educational opportunities, particularly for girls. A lack of parental awareness about the benefits of education, along with linguistic barriers in schools, exacerbates the issue. This chapter examines these multifaceted struggles and highlights how they hinder slum children from consistent school attendance and equitable learning opportunities.



Consciousness Level of Slum children towards education The consciousness of slum children toward education reflects a dynamic blend of aspirations, socio-economic challenges, and cultural influences. Despite facing hardships, many recognize education as a pathway to breaking free from poverty, improving their living conditions, and securing stable employment. However, their awareness is often hindered by financial constraints, lack of parental support, and limited access to quality resources. The absence of successful role models in their communities can diminish their understanding of education's long-term benefits, leading to irregular attendance or dropouts. Nonetheless, many slum children nurture aspirations inspired by their hardships, dreaming of becoming professionals like doctors, engineers, or social workers to uplift their communities. Efforts by NGOs, local volunteers, and community initiatives play a vital role in nurturing this awareness through alternative educational support, scholarships, and counseling. Skill-based and vocational training further enhances their commitment by linking education to practical, real-world outcomes. Ultimately, education is seen as more than academic learning—it is a tool for empowerment, offering an escape from poverty, better job opportunities, and societal respect.

