

Problems of Education in Slums of Delhi

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ABSTRACT Education has been considered as one of the primary goals of the 'Millennium Development Goals'. In India, one is provided free and compulsory primary education, which helps in making it a literate nation. Primary schooling is the key to success for each developing country and covers the age category of 6-14 years. In India, this education is made free and mandatory to reach one hundred percent literacy. In Delhi, the capital of India, slums are usually located close to the railway paths and market locations. The children living in such regions suffer from several issues hampering their education as well as other comparative activities. Delhi being a metropolitan city is a huge source of attraction for people. Children of slums face many problems affecting their studies. The current study aims to find out the challenges faced by slum children in attaining education with the main focus on primary education.

INTRODUCTION

Urban cities have always been the hotspots of migration for rural migrants who are searching for better jobs and remuneration. Due to extremely limited resources, a good proportion of migrants end up living in slums of the urban areas. Housing problems result in overcrowding, inadequate dwellings, and outright homelessness (Sola 2013). Some major challenges exist in slums such as congestion, inadequate water supply, poor sanitation facilities, poverty and lack of awareness (Islam and Kibria 2020). The majority of studies characterize slums as health-damaging settings, where poverty and unfavorable environmental conditions pose threats to public health and safety (Alaazi and Aganah 2019). The amount of congestion is such that space constraints, violence, and overcrowding in slums made physical distancing and self-quarantine impractical, and the rapid spread of an infection highly likely since the start of the Covid 19 pandemic. Residents of informal settlements were also economically vulnerable during any COVID-19 responses (Corburn et al. 2020).

With migration comes the problem of overcrowding of cities, especially the slum areas. Slum dwellers are socioeconomically disadvantaged (Friesen and Pelze 2020). A slum is an extremely populated residential area comprising tightly knit, decrepit dwelling units of deteriorated or imperfect infrastructure, occupied mostly by the poor masses. It is part of any city where the quality of

life is reduced significantly, and the living conditions are adverse. Even though slums vary in size and other features, most lack dependable sanitation solutions, supply of fresh water, electricity, law enforcement as well as other necessary facilities. Providing affordable housing for the low-income population, who mostly live in slums, is an endemic challenge for cities in developing countries (Kshetrimayum et al. 2020). Slum homes differ from shanty structures to somewhat developed dwellings that due to poor quality structures or necessary upkeep have only deteriorated. The term 'slum' has originated from 'slump' that is ordinarily used by geomorphologists to explain "downward and irregular motion of stone debris". The derivation holds for the slums since they also have had a downward and irregular fall in their dwelling conditions as compared to the so-called developed areas.

According to the United Nations (2015) report on sustainable development, migration has resulted in a growth rate of the population of urban cities in developing countries by two percent. For well-developed countries, this percentage is only 0.5. The same report states that almost 1 billion people on this planet are slum inhabitants with most of them residing in underdeveloped countries and making up almost thirty percent of the urban population. Slums have had many researches done on them but the topics have always been limited to social constraints, economy and policy. Also, defini-

tions of slums usually take a dichotomous approach whereby a place is either a slum or not. Little attempt is made to go beyond this slum/non-slum dichotomy (Patel et al. 2014). Slum condition has an undeniable impact on the socio-economic lifestyles and the health of the residents, as well as the general outlook (Omole 2010). Phukan (2014) too talked about the slums of Jorhat in Assam. Aspects of slum livelihood are poor which generates several problems and especially, it degrades urban ecology (Phukan 2014). Housing, sanitation systems, and water facilities were discussed in the study but there was no discussion about education.

Characteristics of Slums

Slums, according to the UN Global Report on Human Settlements (2003), are in general, dirty localities within or outside cities settled by poor people. In these settlements, public urban facilities and civic amenities are not available. A few salient features of the slums as per the report are:

- 1) Slum areas are located mostly in the localities either around the central part of the city or near industrial establishments. Other locations may be any localities where vacant land is available at a low price or free of cost. In the case of the central part of a city, working people in the central business district prefer to live near their workplace but cannot afford high rent. Therefore, they live in old houses in blight areas characterised by sub-standard housing or low-quality housing. In these blight areas, it is not profitable to make or maintain improvements to the house. Similarly, industrial workers want to live near their workplace so that they can commute in a short time and at a little cost.
- 2) Vacant land in the city, especially near-deserted roads and railway lines and also neglected places are occupied by unsocial elements and sometimes by poor people. Here these people start to build ordinary shelters in the form of temporary *jhopdi* or a *kachcha* house. In the first stage houses are built with mud, thatched reeds, leaves, and tin, and later

they take a permanent form. In these localities, rural migrants can afford a shelter at a low rent.

- 3) There is a lack of civic amenities like sewage, drains, proper streets, streetlights, parks and playgrounds or other recreational facilities. In these conditions, the wastewater flows on the roads, thus creating an unhygienic and unhealthy environment. In the absence or shortage of toilets, people use open lands and drains for defecation. Thus, slum areas become very dirty, and the unsanitary conditions of slums make them the centres of endemic and epidemic diseases.
- 4) Slums are also assumed to be the shelter for many anti-social elements, which are the main participants in gambling, delinquency, prostitution, alcoholism, bootlegging and other organised crimes. The vicious, corrupt criminals find a haven in slums where they can carry on their nefarious activities with impunity.

Education of Slum Children

Education of deprived children living in slums has been an issue. Ordinarily, a slum is understood to be a streamlined settlement using an assortment of poorly developed tenements, mainly of a temporary character, usually packed with insufficient drinking water sources in unhealthy and unhygienic conditions. Slums are primarily urban occurrences, where poverty becomes clustered. A slum, according to the United Nations bureau UN-HABITAT (2003) report, is a region of a town characterised by poor housing and poverty and lacking tenure security. Slum areas are increasing rapidly in metropolitan cities like Delhi. Slums are spreading in and around the Harijan colonies and near the railroad tracks. Harijan colonies are *dalit*-dominated localities in the city that go by the generic name "Harijan Basti". Most slums in Delhi are situated in the Northeast and North regions like Bhalswa, Jahangirpuri, Seemapuri, Shastri Park, Seelampur, Sunder Nagri, Mandoli, Nand Nagri, and Tahirpur. Here you will find Harijan colonies, and these regions are close to the railway tracks. According to a census by the Government of India in 2011, the various municipal corporations of Del-

hi recognised a slum population of about 18 lakh in 2011. This is expected to increase to around 22-24 lakhs in the 2021 census according to the current master plan (MPD-2021). Urban poverty is spatially concentrated in slums, but not all slum families fall beneath the poverty line. On the other hand, poverty and schooling nexus is complicated, partially due to the difficulty in identifying the key differences in the effects of poverty on education and the consequences of knowledge on poverty. There are a couple of studies on slum families in India to explore the educational deprivation of slum dwellers. They continue to reside below the umbrella of ailments, insufficient health care services, congestion, inadequate drainage and sanitation, corrupt economic practices, violence, sexual abuse, along with un-conducive learning atmosphere. India's performance in the educational industry has not been remarkable from the post-independence era. Statistics suggest that India has lagged behind smaller countries, including Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. Family history and national issues make an environment that negatively impacts the worth of schooling. Further, pupils could drop out as a consequence of a significant number of school variables like uncongenial atmosphere, wrong understanding, absenteeism, mindset and behaviour of their instructors, and abuse or failure in the same grade.

Literature Review

A substantial amount of research has been done on education (both formal and informal) of both rural and urban slums in India, which provides a great insight into the situation or level of education in slums of India. Despite efforts to improve education the country still lags behind, especially in the slum areas (Census 2011). The review helped to evaluate the gaps to be filled and the methodology used by various authors working towards the same objective. Alagusundaram et al. (2016) conducted their study in Sivaganga district of Tamilnadu. They said that education is the basic requirement for human development. With education, employment opportunities are broadened and income levels are increased. In their article they tried to understand the differentials and factors associated with rural dropouts at the high school level. Their

study investigated the factors influencing the rural dropouts at high school level in Sivaganga District of Tamilnadu. Onyango and Tostensen (2015) state that though the academic achievements of the youth in Kibera (Nairobi, Kenya) has improved significantly as compared to a similar study done back in 2002, the dropout rates still remain a cause of concern. Their findings related to almost 74.4 percent of the youth being unemployed is in alignment with the Sivaganga findings.

Agarwal and Chugh (2003) conducted a study in the slums of Delhi to find out the learning achievements of children of slums. They mainly focused to find out the learner's (class 1st and class 4th) achievements in language subject and mathematics. They examined the entire teaching pattern involving the school infrastructure, teachers, teaching and learning resources available and most importantly the family of the students studying in the school. They concluded that there is a need to improve the educational attainment among the children living in the slums. Arora et al. (2006) have evaluated non-formal education in the Anganwadi of Jammu and Kashmir and have studied the role of pre-school non-formal education in a child's life. Anganwadi not only provided pre-school teaching but also looked after the health of a child. A healthy child has more learning capacity and its overall growth is also checked here.

Their study shows how non-formal pre-school education shapes a child's background before entering into the formal education system. Bacquelaire and Raymaekers (1991) conducted a research on NFE and concluded that Non-formal Education (NFE) is widely seen to foster development and to provide an alternative to formal education in developing countries. The objectives of many NFE programmes are seen to be restrictive and ill-considered and the provision is not adapted to the real needs of target groups.

Belle (1982) has presented a conceptual framework for understanding the interrelationships among formal, non-formal and informal education in her paper. It provides a typology of modes of education across the lifespan, from childhood to old age. Later on the paper raises questions regarding the relationship between non-formal education for individual and social

change within and across cultural and socio-economic groups. Debi (2001) conducted her study in urban slums. She said that in slums, children have limited access to formal education. Families have little motivation or means to send their children to school due to poverty. Non Formal Education provides a bridge to education through vocational and life skills training for them. Among various problems faced by the slum children of 6-14 years age group in achieving elementary education, most significant are large family size, poor living condition, poor health, unfavourable home condition, and surrounding environment, migration, language problem, unstable occupation and economic condition, poor parental educational background and school environment.

Chugh (2014) has made an attempt to prove that education is an indispensable tool that can eradicate social differentiation and prejudices and how a state and to what level a state can help to establish a proper education system. She conducted her study in the slums of Hyderabad and Ludhiana. She found that the households in slums of Hyderabad have varied occupations and higher levels of education and income while the slums of Ludhiana had households dependent on manufacturing and construction activities with low education and incomes. Ghosh (1995) has discussed the method and practice of teaching in the non-formal education system and how this pedagogy works and helps the students. If an institution follows systematic order the people associated with it reap the benefits. Education provided in a proper manner helps establish a better give and take relationship between the students and the teacher. Gaba and Lee (2015) conducted a comparative study on the growth and development of the distant education system of India and China. India and China are two fast growing economies of the world and need large skill based manpower to sustain the economic growth. The existing formal higher educational system in these countries will not be able to meet the demand of the economy. Govinda (1995) conducted a study on urban slums and their challenges in attaining education. Urban areas have plenty of schools and education providing institutions because it is widely believed that urban areas are well-provided with educational facilities, and therefore,

development of primary education need not be a matter of major concern for urban education planners.

This assumption fails to capture the fact that urban areas present wide disparity in terms of the socio-economic status of its population, and therefore, concerns and issues unique to an urban set-up are not taken into consideration when strategic interventions are planned for ensuring provision of quality education to the urban poor. Singh (2013) conducted a research study in slum elementary schools in an Indian set up (Varanasi). The research study primarily examined and analysed the effect of school and home factors on the quality of elementary education. The study was conducted in a randomly selected sample of 62 elementary schools in the urban slums of Varanasi city. Furthermore, competency based mathematics and language (Hindi) tests, developed by the Department of Educational Measurement and Evaluation, NCERT were also used in the study. The results of the study revealed a discernible effect of five school and home factors (that is basic facility available in school, instructional method adopted by teacher in curriculum transaction, teacher's behaviour in classroom, physical-natural environment of classroom and parents' socio-economic status). The learning outcomes of elementary schools' children in slum areas were found to be not satisfactory.

Significance of Study

Primary education can be thought of as the backbone of a country's development. The achievement of each developmental program, plan or scheme is highly dependent upon this degree of education. This is the essential requirement to consider one as a literate individual. Illiteracy is just one of the many significant aspects that stand as a barrier in bringing some favourable shifts in the slum society. Several ailing practices and superstitious customs still afflict the culture. On the one hand, the country is currently growing in the technical fields and attempting to introduce 'Digital India' all over. On the other hand, twenty-six percent of the illiterate population is gaping (according to the 2011 census). According to a chapter, 'Current Challenges Facing the Indian Economy' by the

NCERT, illiteracy is principally found among the people living beneath the poverty line. Usually, in a town or city, one could differentiate between two types of individuals as over the poverty line, and beneath the poverty line. The majority of the urban population living under the poverty line are usually located in the slums characterised by streamlined settlement using an assortment of poorly developed tenements. These are mainly temporary, traditionally packed with insufficient drinking water sources in unhealthy and unhygienic conditions. Meeting fundamental demands becomes more significant than getting an education, as the majority of these people go through a lot for even basic livelihood. Because of this, Delhi suffers while trying to attain the goal of one hundred percent literacy. Taking into account the significance of primary schooling, the governments, both Delhi and the central government, are currently spending a great deal of money on this discipline. Again, it is notable that in the present primary education is free and compulsory and is traditionally thought of as the birth right of the children of the nation. There is also a provision of complementary mid-day meals. Still, the country cannot receive one hundred percent registration at this level and also does not have the ability to inspect the dropout rates. In these situations, such a study becomes significant.

Statement of the Problem

The current research is devised to study several issues regarding the primary level of schooling of the slum children of Delhi. Thus, the research qualifies as “Problems of Education in Slums of Delhi”.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are to examine the educational condition of the slum children, figure out the causes of drop out at the primary level of schooling, and explore the environmental conditions hampering the academic development of children.

METHODOLOGY

The current analysis relies on an illustrative study procedure, and a purposive sampling is

utilised to pick the sample of the report. Due to a shortage of time, a limited sample of 150 slum children and their families from different blocks of Nand Nagri were selected on purpose. A structured interview schedule was utilised to gather the essential information concerning the issues related to primary education among the slum children. To make better sense out of the data presented, it is essential to know a bit about Nand Nagri first.

History, Geography and Demography of Nand Nagri

For the research, the researchers undertook the slums of ‘Nand Nagri’ because areas like these despite being on the periphery of Delhi are miles away from it. The superficial reason may seem to be a random selection. However, the predominant reason on a deeper level is because Nand Nagri lies in one of the most overlooked areas of the illustrious capital. It was sad to see that in 2020 too, there are still places like these where abject poverty, unhealthy conditions and the crime rate show a total and collective failure of the city administration, the government, both at the centre and the state level, and the others as cohabitant citizens. If this was the plight of a part in the capital of the country, one could only imagine the conditions in the far-fetched rural areas.

History of Nand Nagri

As per the residents, the residential areas of Nand Nagri including the slums are mainly inhabited by people who were resettled here after the demolition of the Gulabi Bagh slums in 1976-1977. Since then, the families of these people have grown, and even the younger generation wants to live here and does not want to leave the area even though a better quality of life is available elsewhere. A major reason behind it can be traced to a sense of belonging to Nand Nagri, as they have grown up in these streets and played on the nearby roads.

The Area of Nand Nagri

Nand Nagri is an area located in the north-east of Delhi. It is situated near the Bhopura

border and is a neighbour to many similar localities like Tahirpur, Sunder Nagri and New Seemapuri. There are mainly four wards in the Seemapuri region, namely, New Seemapuri, Nand Nagri, Sunder Nagri and Dilshad Garden. Nand Nagri has several parks, many government schools and a few private schools. Govt. Girls/Boys Sr. Secondary School, Janta Flats and Govt. Sarvodaya Kanya/Bal Vidyalaya, E-Block are the two most famous schools in the area. It also has a university called the Subharti University in the area. The Nand Nagri area is predominantly divided into five major blocks from A to E. These five blocks are further divided as:

1. Block A1, A2 and A3
2. Block B1, B2, B3, B4, B5 and B6
3. Block C1, C2 and C3
4. Block D1, D2 and D3
5. Block E1, E2, E3 and E4

Nand Nagri comes under the East Delhi Municipal Corporation. While the area does not have any particular place of attraction except for a couple of parks, which are hubs for gamblers and addicts, people here find the Ambaa Chaat Wala to be a place of attraction for foodies even outside the Nand Nagri area.

The People of Nand Nagri (Population and Ethnic Composition)

With a population of almost 1.5 lakh, this densely populated area has not seen any major changes over the years when it comes to development and better living conditions. While the major population consists of Hindus, a sizable chunk of it also encompasses Muslims. The research shows that the concept of living in joint families still exists in Nand Nagri due to cultural and traditional values. Due to this reason, most households have five or more members. People of other religions do live here, but their population is on a minuscule level. Till the time of the field research, people of all religions, castes and sub-castes seemed to have coexisted harmoniously in the region for several decades.

Education in Nand Nagri

There has been a massive development in the education sector in the last 10-15 years and the effects of which are visible in the Nand Na-

gri area. Now, there are a lot of schools in the area, and the government runs most of them. After interviewing around 150 children in residential areas between the ages of 4-17 years and their families, it could be easily concluded that most of them are actively going to school. The small percentage that did not go to school were mostly dropouts who had left the school in or after the 9th standard, as they were finding the studies too tough and were failing.

These findings were different from the findings of the Gouda and Shekhar (2014) study, which was based on the data from National Health Survey 3. It states that just seventy-five percent of the students were currently enrolled with twenty-five percent not going to any school, formal or informal. Out of this lot, fourteen percent had never attended school and eleven percent had dropped out due to different reasons. Due to poor academic performance, and with the consent of their families, many students thought it was better to drop out and look for a livelihood to help the family. All of them were into odd jobs like cycle rickshaw pulling, and being a bike mechanic. There is a school in almost every block of Nand Nagri, and the residents actively utilise them. The meeting with rag-picking children and beggars, as this is the lot that has never seen a school and talking to them would have been a worthwhile experience. However, there was no such child. It can be either because there were none or were not at the right place at the right time. Hopefully, it was the former.

Attitude of Residents towards Education

Due to the increasing awareness about the importance of education both at the government and the local level through NGOs, people have become extremely supportive of education. Most of them are inclined towards sending their children to school, as they want their children to become successful in life and afford better living conditions. The NGOs and *Anganwadis* here make sure that every child is getting access to primary education and healthcare. They go from door to door to ensure the same and are well received by people and are appreciated for their efforts. The education sector is doing a good job in Nand Nagri in sensitising the residents.

However, most people can only afford to send their children to government schools, and it is due to this reason that most private schools have failed in the area and have shut down after running for a few years. The ones that remain have been struggling with increasing dropout rates due to comparatively high fees and growing apathy of parents towards the education of their child. While all the parents are supportive about sending their child to school, most do not look beyond that and never interact with their child regarding school or education. The private schools actively want the parents to participate. Also, parents do not want to spend much towards educational activities and art and craft when required by private schools. They compare them with the government-run schools where the school itself supplies all the materials. This attributes a massive influx of students from private to government schools.

Noteworthy Case Studies

Even though the researchers talked to more than 300 slum dwellers, including children and adults, a few stories stood out. The condition of Nand Nagri makes one question whether anyone really cares about the citizens? Here are a few moving life experiences and vivid stories.

'I Don't Like Doing Anything Else'

"Why don't you study? Don't you realise that your mother is anxious about your future?". Kishan who is 10 years old, stood staring sheepishly into the ground while trying to answer. Kishan was playing in a dingy little public park near his shanty. These are what people call home in the slums of Nand Nagri. He told a bit about himself, the school he goes to and what his parents did. His father was a rickshaw puller, and his mother worked as house help in the DDA flats of Dilshad Garden. Kishan and his family were forced to leave West Bengal after the floods in August 2017 washed away their house, the little piece of land and whatever they could call as property. His experiences were not even a distant memory, and he explained in great detail about his friends in West Bengal. Finally, he took the researchers to his hut, where his mother prepared the meal for the evening. The family was

struggling financially and how Kishan's mother, Sonu, wanted him to study so that he earns well enough for himself and does not end up doing odd jobs. "But the problem is that this boy is never at home and is only interested in playing cricket all day long", she said. When asked why he troubles his mother so much, his reply was not something expected. "I don't like doing anything else. I just want to play cricket and become a batsman like Steve Smith." "Who is Steve Smith?" one of the researchers asked just to test his knowledge despite knowing the answer very well. It is then he went on to explain the Australian ball-tampering scandal, the ban on Steve Smith and why he still idolised him. "He has apologized, is a changed man and has one of the best test averages next to Virat Kohli."

Kishan's story is similar to the findings of Ajibade-McBean (2014) and Ebert et al. (2009) regarding how these slums have poor capabilities in terms of recovery from floods, earthquakes, fires and other accidents. Hardly does Kishan know that history can repeat itself and he may be devoid of a roof on his head in an instant.

'Private Education Can Accelerate the Learning Curve, But...'

Navodaya Public School in B-Block was perhaps the first and the only public school in the main Nand Nagri slums. There are some reputed schools in the nearby area of Dilshad Garden. like Nutan Vidya Mandir and Queen's Global International School. However, since they were not a part of Nand Nagri, a field visit was out of the scope of the research area. Radhika and her sister run Navodaya Public School from home. There are six teachers in all between the ages of 20-30 years, all with professional degrees to their name. Though most of the students had left by the time the researchers reached, there were a few little ones between the ages of 4-9 years, and they seemed quite happy and content. One difference in comparison to government-run schools was that the Navodaya was trying to impart some knowledge in the area of communication skills, especially English speaking. Also, the children seemed quite at ease while talking in contrast to the children of the same age group of the government schools. It is a run-for-profit

entity but was struggling to keep up due to the lack of enthusiasm of the nearby slum residents to send their children to this private school. There are literally more than a dozen government schools and *anganwadis* around that give access to free education. Thus the school sees a pretty high dropout rate, as most children migrate to a government school after studying here for one year. “We try to engage students in a lot of hands-on activities related to indoor sports, and arts and crafts. We try to provide as much raw material as we can, but sometimes we do ask the parents to purchase a few things. This doesn’t go down well with most parents, as they already have a hard time paying the fee. We understand that these people dream of sending their children to private schools, as it is a privilege they didn’t have. However, we have our own limitations. The parents expect every facility to be included in a nominal school fee. Private education can accelerate the learning curve, but Nand Nagri residents are still not in a position to afford it. They find it a much better option to put their wards in government schools where they are not only provided with free textbooks and other course material but also with uniform, stipends and mid-day meals. Can’t blame them.”

‘Hopefully, My Girl Won’t Face What I Did’

Anju is a 31-year-old single mother who lost her husband to liver failure due to alcoholism. “I don’t have happy memories after marriage, as my husband used to drink a lot, not come home for days at a stretch, beat me up regularly and gambled away whatever little I earned to keep the house together. My in-laws weren’t supportive either and were always a mute spectator whenever I was being abused verbally or physically. These beatings and the trauma intensified after I had Kusum in 2007. Having a girl child was against what my in-laws and my husband wanted. I had to be extra cautious whenever my in-laws were around my daughter and took her with me when going to work. Finally, my husband died in 2013. I was thrown out of the house by my in-laws while cursing me for ‘taking their son away’. My daughter and I were left stranded. I spent the next couple of months at a friend’s place, who is a widow too and built

myself up. And then the Azad Foundation happened. I took the driving course, and today I drive influential and high-class women around the city. This has not only helped me to have a stable and sufficient income but also build useful contacts. Today, Kusum goes to a decent private school, and her education is sponsored by one of the madams I know. Today if I look back and trace the reason for my plight, it all boils down to being uneducated. I couldn’t study after class 8th, the class which Kusum is in right now. Hopefully, my girl won’t face what I did. I can feed my daughter well, and this is satisfying enough. Kusum is one of the class toppers and speaks English really well!” While Anju offered the researchers steaming hot *aloo parathas* with a pickle in the chilly January winter, Kusum introduced herself in flawless English. The look of admiration in Anju’s eyes was visible.

‘My Father Was a So-So Student, But I Am the Class Topper’

Raghu is a 12-year-old bubble child and one of the top performers in his school. He wants to become an engineer. But many children want to become engineers, so then what was so special about him? This child was crystal clear about what he wanted to do with his engineering skills. “I want to join the Indian army and build missiles”, he beamed while explaining how missiles intrigued him. He quickly asked his dad for his mobile and started showing YouTube videos related to the armed forces. His unwavering attention and the way his eyes were glued to the screen was memorable. He also told how his father could not get selected for the defence forces and how he plans on making his father proud. “My father was a so-so student, but I am the class topper. They will definitely take me.” “But that is not how it works!” the researchers chuckled at his innocence. “You need to clear a fitness test too.” “Oh, that I will. I already run faster than most of my friends. Only Mujammil runs faster than me.” “But why are you so interested in missiles?” “When I was in class 5, our teacher told us about Dr A.P.J Abdul Kalam and his contribution to space research and India’s defence systems. I find missiles very fascinating. Our soldiers will not need to go anywhere and risk their life. We can finish off our enemies with just

the push of a button.” The educational scenario of Nand Nagri is changing.

Objective Wise Analysis and Interpretation of Data

Objective 1: To Examine the Educational Condition of the Slum Children

Sample Set: 150 slum children

Responses: Table 1 shows the response of the interviewed children pertaining to the objective.

Table 1: A comparative depiction of school going, never attended, and dropped out students

School going	Drop out	Not enrolled	Total
126 (84%)	6 (4%)	18 (12%)	150

Interpretation of the Above Data

From the above data, one could interpret that from 150, 126 children, or eighty-four percent of them were continuing their schooling. 6 children or four percent have dropped out due to various reasons enumerated in the next section, and 18 children or twelve percent of children have not attended any kind of school in their life. As per the findings the dropouts are due to poor economic backgrounds, bad company and no interest in studies.

Objective 2: To Figure Out the Causes of Drop Out At the Primary Level of Schooling

Sample Set: 150 slum children

Responses: Table 2 shows the response of the interviewed children pertaining to the objective.

Interpretation of the Above Data

After assessing the information gathered through distinct questions of this interview shown in Table 2, the researchers found that thirty-four percent of the children responded that they did not have time and space at home to study. A sizable eighteen percent of these students responded that household chores hamper their studies. Needless to say, the majority of these students were girls. Twenty-three per-

Table 2: Causes of dropouts at the primary level of schooling

Question	Yes (%)	No (%)
Do you get the necessary time and space to study in your home?	66	34
Do you believe that doing household chores interferes with your studies?	18	82
Do you have an education-friendly atmosphere at home?	77	23
Whatever you are taught at school, do you find it interesting?	90	10
Do the teachers punish you or anybody else?	100	0
Is it true that the fear of punishment impacts your regularity at school?	8	92
Do the conditions where you reside hamper your study routine?	40	60

Note: The numbers have been rounded off to the nearest percent.

cent replied they had a non-friendly academic setting in the house. Concerning the instruction method in schools, ten percent replied they were not interested in the material taught at schools, or it was not intriguing enough. A whopping one hundred percent replied that the educators practice a variety of punishments in the classroom, and eight percent of the pupils responded that the fear of punishment disturbs their frequency of going to school. Forty percent of these students responded that the ecological conditions where they reside largely hamper their routine studies.

Objective 3: Whether The Environmental Conditions Interfere with Their Studies of These Slum Children and What Are They

Interpretation of the Above Data

Table 3 shows that twenty-eight percent of these students felt that the noisy atmosphere of the local market or nearby railroad tracks hampers their study. Thirty-seven percent replied they could not study due to the disturbances generated by their alcoholic parent or a relative in the home, and seven percent are troubled by the constant struggles in the house. Additional-

Table 3: Conditions affecting the studies of slum children

<i>Cause</i>	<i>Yes (%)</i>	<i>No (%)</i>
Noisy area like a marketplace or near the railway track	28	72
Presence of an alcoholic at home	37	63
Constant conflicts at home	7	93
Effects of economic deprivation	59	41
One room house	15	85
Miscellaneous reasons	12	88

ly, fifty-nine percent felt the ill effects of economic deprivation in their schooling, and fifteen percent responded that because of a one-room home, they do not feel like studying at all due to constant movements around. Twelve percent responded they felt disturbances due to a variety of facets like, criminal activities in the region such as eve teasing, theft, vandalism, and mob lynching. Other reasons such as loud music played in the neighbourhood, continuous existence of drug addicts and gamblers in the area also emerged.

RESULTS

Poverty

The socio-economic history of these households has become the most critical contributor that decides the continuation or discontinuation of their children's education. The poverty of these parents nevertheless remains among the essential causes of the minimal involvement of children in education and related activities. Sixty-six percent of these children reported the most crucial reason for dropout would be poverty.

Home Environment

A significant issue faced by a few slum children is that they do not find enough space and time in the house for regular studies, and a few needed to execute the domestic chores that also hamper their study schedule. The house atmosphere is not supportive for twenty-three percent of pupils. The un-conducive and contaminated environment has additionally hampered and demotivated them from focussing on their education. The analysis also shows that the

children living in slum areas do not have favourable academic surroundings.

Inadequate Comprehension at the Primary Level

It has frequently been observed that inferior understanding at the fundamental level is just another reason for dropouts. It has been noted that approximately forty-six percent of those children avoided going to school after a dwindling interest in their education as a result of inadequate understanding. The remedial classes, although held frequently, proved useless.

The Methodology Adopted in School

The students who had dropped out signalled their motives for dropping out include educators' insensitive mindset, the defective procedure of instruction, and inadequate time to complete course assignments. Ten percent of students have stated that the faulty method of teaching and un-conducive environments has led to frequent dropouts at schools.

Difficulty in Some Specific Topics/Subjects

They discovered that the curriculum had hard to grasp topics and subjects, particularly General Mathematics and General English at the upper primary level. Approximately seventy percent of children find both of these subjects hard as there is no extra help like tuitions or parents clearing their doubts. Also children feel shame in asking in the schools as according to them either fellow mates will make fun or are afraid of the teacher.

The Demise of Parents

Another reason for dropouts was the abrupt or premature death of their parents. It had forced the slum children to depart from studies. Since then, they have engaged in certain economic undertakings for their survival and also to help other members of the household. Although there are stringent regulations against child labour in India, the ground reality has been disturbing. A lot of these children want to study. However, the conditions have made them part ways from education.

Corrupt Practices

A substantial demographic of people in the Nand Nagri slums are Scheduled Castes. The government supplies various financial rebates to the SC individuals. Still, because of sick practices such as commissions to the middleman, many do not have the ability to acquire these financial advantages. Due to similar reasons, the government machinery must take the issue of corruption seriously to assess the ground realities of their policies and schemes.

Odd Jobs

Another substantial observation produced from the research is that these dropouts have associated themselves with odd jobs of different kinds. A number of them are working or have worked as a salesperson at local stores, sweepers, factory workers, labourers, and rickshaw pullers to put money in their pockets. Also, it was discovered that a lot of those who had dropped out from schools have been participating in unhealthy practices such as smoking, drugs, alcohol, and gambling. A few of them have turned to criminal activities to aid their addictions. According to the parents of some of these children, bad company is the real reason behind their child (who dropped out) turning into criminals and addicts.

DISCUSSION

The present research was conducted to find the problems in education faced by 5-14-year-old children residing in the slums. The results reveal that poverty and an unsupportive household environment negatively affects the studies of slum children. Either they never go to school all their life or are forced to drop out after a few years. Further, not having a strong grasp on foundational concepts and difficulty in understanding what is being taught further enhance the dropout rate. The teaching methodology adopted by the school as a whole or individual teachers can also result in disinterest in academics and going to school altogether. Both parents and children then tend to focus on earning a livelihood rather than completing their education.

The result of the present research is in line with the results of many other research studies. Kumar (2008) states how the government provided education in Delhi is not up to the mark and the level is going down constantly. Debi (2001) conducted her study in urban slums. She said that in slums, children have limited access to formal education. Families have little motivation or means to send their children to school due to poverty. Singh (2013) conducted a research study in slum elementary schools in the Indian set up (Varanasi). The learning outcomes of elementary schools' children in slum areas were found not satisfactory. According to Gouda and Shekhar (2014), due to poor academic performance, and with the consent of their families, many students thought it was better to drop out and look for a livelihood to help the family. Kumar and Shukla (2016) state that how such a situation promotes violation of many legal frameworks under the child labour laws.

Are low fee private schools an option for the slum children if they are not happy with what is being taught at their government run school? No. Despite low fee private schools, according to Agarwal and Chugh (2003), most parents still cannot afford the expenditure on private schools. Based on the results of the present and past studies, it can be concluded that elimination of poverty is one of the key aspects to ensuring provision of quality education to slum children. As urbanization grows, we may expect that slums will tend to grow even faster (Shekhar 2019). Today, over half of the world's population lives in urban areas and it is projected that, by 2050, two out of three people will live in a city (Roy et al. 2019). One setting of particular importance is the informal settlements or 'slums' that are gradually dominating the urban space (Wado et al 2020). Poverty elimination is the need of the hour and it goes a long way in building a household environment that supports education. This is closely followed by continual training and awareness programs for schools and teachers to eliminate any mundane, archaic teaching methods and instead adopt new and interesting ones that make education fun.

CONCLUSION

Education is regarded as the right of every child in the nation from six to fourteen years of

age as per the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan. Besides, it includes in its own fold the slum the children of the society in regard to teaching them. Poverty and fiscal restrictions have affected the degree of schooling significantly. Further, particular school variables like uncongenial atmosphere, inadequate understanding, absenteeism, mindset, and behaviour of instructors have also led to school dropouts. These dropouts also have resulted in some dangerous life choices such as alcoholism, substance abuse, and stealing.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Apart from the government policies, plans, and attempts, each concerned citizen of India has to realise the significance of education and operate righteously on an individual level. Making those aware, who have been living in the backward regions, about the importance of primary education in their personal lives and for the country's growth and advancement, is of paramount importance. Both policymakers and scholars need to be patient listeners first. If one takes a step back from making huge statements based on preconceived notions and instead work as per the ground realities, the effectiveness of the actions can increase manifold. It is high time one realised the same instead of focusing on non-significant issues that only attract communal conflicts and hamper the blanket of development.

APPENDIX

Jhopdi: A shack or a small hut built from bits of wood or metal.

Kachcha: Something that is flimsy is easily damaged because it is badly made or made of a weak material.

Amba: A Hindu goddess.

Chaat: Savoury food that has a sweet, salty, and/or spicy flavour.

Wala: A person related to or selling something. For example, 'ice cream wala' is an ice cream vendor.

Anganwadi: A centre providing care for mothers and young children, especially in rural areas of India.

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