

# Primary Level Education in the Slums of the Urban Areas: A Case Study

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**Abstract:** Among the numerous problems of the slums of many of the urban areas, problems for pursuing education of different levels are a major one that takes place due to different causes. In this connection, non-enrollment and dropped-out are two major constraints in the primary level education which lead deprivation of education for many students. The present study was conducted at some slum areas of Jorhat, a major city of Assam, India to find out the root causes of non-enrollment and dropped out of many of the students. The study revealed that financial constraint of the family, physical problem or illness, less interest of the students and elder members of the family, anti-social activities are the root causes for non-enrollment and dropped-out of many of the children.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The literacy rate of our country is not satisfactorily increased. According to the 2011 Government Census Report, literacy rate of India and Assam are 74.04 and 72.19 respectively. In spite of various measures adopted by the governments to uplift the literacy rate, complete literacy, which can be called the universalisation of primary education, yet it has not been possible. In this connection, non-enrolment and drop-out from schooling in all levels of education are vital problems especially among the unprivileged section, backward regions etc.

In slum areas of many urban spheres also these are common problems. A slum means an area of an urban sphere where poor people are living in a sub-standard condition with the lacks of infrastructure facilities. Under Section-3 of the Slum Area Improvement and Clearance Act, 1956, slums have been defined as mainly those residential areas where dwellings are in any respect unfit for human habitation by reasons of dilapidation, overcrowding, faulty arrangements and designs of such buildings, narrowness or faulty arrangement of streets, lack of ventilation, light, sanitation facilities or any combination of these factors

which are detrimental to safety, health and morals. As per UN Habitat a slum is characterized by lack of durable housing, insufficient living area, lack of access to clean water, inadequate sanitation and insecure tenure.

Bhushan(1992) pointed that a slum is residential area which gets inhabited primarily by poor, often demoralized families and characterized by sub-standard, unsanitary conditions, overcrowding and usually social disorganization.

Doniwal(2009) has stated that over 90 per cent of slum dwellers today are in developing world. South Asia has the largest share, followed by Eastern Asia, sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America. China and India together have 37 per cent of the world's slums. In sub-Saharan Africa, urbanization has become virtually synonymous with slum growth; 72 per cent of the region's urban population lives under slum conditions, compared to 56 per cent in South Asia. The slum population of sub-Saharan Africa almost doubled in 15 years, reaching nearly 200 million in 2005. According to Census of India, 2001 in India total population of the slum areas was 42,578,150 where 22,697,218 were male and 19,880,932 were female. The slum population in India has increased during 2001-11. In Assam in 2001, it was 82,289 where 43,472 were male and 38,817 were female lived in slum areas and both in national and state level the total slum population has been increased.

It is a fact that, non-enrolment, drop-out from schooling and absenteeism at the primary level etc. are of the vital problems regarding education in the slums of various urban spheres of India in general. P.K. Nambiar(1990) conducted a comparative study education particularly primary education between slum and non-slum areas and found that the level of education in the slums are very poor including drop-out, non-enrolment etc. In a study on slums of Balangir Town of Orissa P. K. Kara(1997) found that the levels

of education is very poor in the area under study where primary education encounters the problems like absenteeism, non-enrolment etc. M.V. Bijulal(2005) studied in some slum areas of Delhi to access the education and health status of the slum dwellers and found that the levels of these aspects are poor. In this regard primary education is under a pitiable condition. Thus in many slum areas are lagging behind in case of primary education.

In Jorhat - the second largest city of Assam, there are seven slum areas viz., Raja Maidam New Colony, Fancy Ali Area, Pujadubi Area, Horizon Colony Area, Tarajan Smashan Area, Bishnupur Banchbari Area with about 5000 households. In all slums areas of the city the level of education is not encouraging especially non-enrolment, drop-out and absenteeism are prime problems that lead to poor literacy rate and many social problems such as juvenile delinquency, gambling, alcoholism etc. Therefore, the study has been proposed to explore the real fact inside the aforesaid problems.

## II. OBJECTIVES

The aims of the study are to investigate the causes of non-enrollment, dropped-out and absenteeism among the students primary level of the slums of the Jorhat City and to study the differences between girls and boys in non – enrollment, drop-outs and absenteeism in the areas under study.

## III. METHODS

The methodology of the study comprises research method, population, sample, tools, procedure of data collection and procedure of data analysis. The investigation is purely based on empirical data and therefore, sufficient empirical information were collected from the population through systematic manner. As the study was carried out in some major slum areas of the Jorhat City, Assam and the non-enrolled and drop-outs from the primary level education as well as the students those who are irregular in schools and their parents constituted the population of the study. Besides, the teachers of those students were also taken in some cases. The sampling method was followed to draw the sample from the target population. In this regard, a sufficient number of such students and parents were selected those fulfilled

the goal of the study. For collecting data interview schedule, interview methods were followed among children, parents. Besides, personal observation was done in some cases where necessary.

The data were collected from primary sources i.e. the non-enrolled, drop-out students and their parents through the help of interview schedule. However, information about drop-out and absenteeism were collected from the primary schools in which the dropped-outs studied or the irregular students are pursuing primary education. In this regard, the primary school teachers who taught the dropped-outs or irregulars were also interviewed. In this connection, the number of dropped-outs and irregular students were collected from the schools where such students were studied or presently pursuing education. Besides, investigators personal observation was applied where necessary. After collecting, the data were processed first, then the data will be analyzed in a systematic way.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The investigation was carried out in Jorhat Town where some of slum areas have been grown up. However, this study was conducted at Mesopoty and Horijon Colony, the two larger slum pockets of the city with about 600 households. After collection of data through interview schedule, interview as well as observations, the data were processed, edited and analyzed in the light of the objectives of the study.

### Background Information of the Parents:

This part deals with the discussion of the social background of the respondents' family. While investigating the attendances of those students the social background of their parents and family is out most important. Because, different aspects of social background of their family may have effects on drop-out, non-enrollment and irregular attendances problem of the children. Therefore, following is an effort to present the family background of the children and thereby the findings regarding non-enrollment, drop out and irregular attendance.

### Nature of the Respondents' Family:

The family is the backbone of a society that might be considered as the prime institution of child's socialization. As defined by MacIver and Page (1967)

that family is a group defined by sex relationship sufficiently precise and enduring to provide for the procreation and upbringing of children. In the area under study it was shown that a significant number of families are joint type in nature that may affect on the children's' education in general. It has been revealed that most of the families are having 6-10 members and few of them have more than 10 members which signify large family among them.

#### Occupation of the Parents:

Occupation, as an important indicator of man's life can be studied from various angles. It is related to man's life style, economy, mental set up and behaviour. Occupation is a set of activities centered on an economic role and usually association with earning. There is a relationship between occupation and earning as well as level of responsibility on children's education. Therefore, among the studied parents it was tried to bring out the occupational pattern of the parents and guardians of the students. In this regard it was found that most of the parents are engaged in daily labour where as only few are small business men and government service holders. Income is one of the important aspects of livelihood and all round development of a family. During my study it found that the incomes of most of the households are below Rs. 4000.00 per month.

#### Educational Status of the Parents of the Respondents:

Education is one of the basic activities of people in all human societies. Sarma (1993) defined 'Education is an activity for passing on certain socio historical experience to new generations; a systematic and purposeful influence that ensures the moulding of an individual, his preparedness' for social life and productive labour.' It is regarded as the backbone of the nation, which performs significant functions in the society that it broadens the mental horizon of the people, helps in socialization and formation of personality as well as encourages the spirit of competitions. It is education, which has a relation with social change and development, social mobility, social stratification etc. Also the education plays a key role in bringing out the awareness towards education of one's children or younger to him/her.

In the present investigation educational level of the parents were studied and found that most of them are

illiterates where only few members read up to Higher Secondary level or College level.

#### Root Causes of Hurdles in Pursuing Education:

There are many causes that hinder in pursuing education of the slum students. In the presents study also, some of root causes are depicted.

#### Root Causes in Non-enrolment of the Respondents:

There may be different causes of non-enrolment of the students. Besides, in many cases a student may not be enrolled due to different causes . In this connection, however, it was tried to bring out the root cause of non-enrolment. To explore it, the students and parents were interviewed. From their responses the root causes of non-enrolment have been found as followings.

#### Financial constraint of the Family:

In this new modern world financial factor plays a major role. But as many people are financially poor they suffer from financial crisis for surviving in this modern complex world. The economic situation in the whole country is very poor and it affects certain households to the point where a certain number of families are in such a poor financial constraint that the parents could not provide proper financial aid to their children for education. During my investigation it was explored that in the studied slum area total 11 children were not enrolled in any school where some of them are not enrolled due to financial constraint of their parents and the parents are always in a position of struggle for livelihood. For this, no significant difference was found between boys and the girls.

#### Physical Problem:

Physical problem is another big problem for development of education of all levels. Especially due physical problem right from the birth or before enrolling many children could not take admission in school. On the other hand poor people could not pay more attention to such children for treatment. In the studied area it was found that out of the 11 children 36.37 per cent could not take admission in the school.

#### Root Causes in Dropped-out:

There may be different reasons in dropping out of the students. Besides, in many cases a student may be dropped-out due to different reasons. In the study it

was tried to bring out the root causes of the drop-out of the students. In this regard, the major cause has been taken into consideration. To explore it, the students, parents and sometimes the neighboring school authority were interviewed. From the responses of the parents, students the root causes of drop-out have been found as the followings.

It is seen that due to ten different causes, drop-out is taking place and the assumed causes that presented in the hypothesis i.e., poverty and lack of interest of the children in pursuing education are two root causes in this regard. However some other causes have also been found in the study. We may show it in a pie diagram as presented below.

#### Financial Constraints of the Family

Financial condition is an important factor in development of human life. But in slum areas many people lives in a poor financial condition and the parents are not able to provide proper finance in pursuing education. In our study also, the financial condition of most of the parents are poor. The parents are always in a position of struggle for livelihood. For such financial constraint of the parents, a good number of students were dropped-out from school. It was also a significant fact that the number of girls' drop-outers is higher than the boys. Thus parental financial factor is a vital one in primary education.

#### Illness

Good health is one of the sign for development and good physical and mental health is required for Children's education. But, during study it was revealed that physical problem affect some of the students for which out of the total drop-outers 11.90 per cent was dropped out.

#### Engagement in household activities

Sometimes, many children have to involve in household activities that hamper them in pursuing their education. In my Investigation, it was found that 4.76 per cent of the total dropped-outers had to leave studies to take care of their siblings and household activities as both the parents have to go work. But importantly, they are the girls.

#### Children are not interested in Pursuing Education:

Education is a primary need in this era of globalization. Students of different levels must pay

attention in pursuing education. But it was found that some students pay less importance in study that leads about 14.29 per cent students for drop-out school. They want to give importance on just play or other activities rather than go to school.

#### Family Disorganization:

Family disorganization may be occurred due to different reasons that may lead several problems to the little child and adolescents. In our study it was found that some students were drop-out from school due to family disorganization.

#### Anti-Social Activities:

Anti-social behaviours are actions that harm society as a whole. Children, the innocence of our society become involved in anti –social activities such as stealing, pick pocket, addicted to alcohol, drug or gambling, using abusive and slung language etc. due to many factors such as polluted social environment, lack of guidance of the elders, mental disorder etc. The lower family socio-economic status may also associate with higher levels of anti social behavior. In my investigation it was explored that for such reasons some students was dropped-out from school who were only boy students.

#### Less awareness of the elders of the family:

The lack of awareness and information amongst some parents concerning the need formal education to their children is one of the factors behind drop-out of children. This is particularly common amongst parents with low levels of education and intellectually disables parents. The interest of the parents and guardians are most essential towards the education of their children. Parental education is of vital importance in effecting students' educational achievement. But in my investigation it was explored that many parents do not give importance towards the primary education of their child. It is come up due to illiteracy and less educational qualification of the parents, busy in livelihood etc. For such less awareness of the parents' 9.52 per cent students are dropped-out from school.

## IV. CONCLUSION

In the above, we have presented the findings of the study in a holistic way where the family and social background of the respondents, root causes of the non-

enrollment and dropped-out have been discussed. We have found that almost all families were of poor economic background which leads many problems in pursuing education of the children. More over lack of interests of the children and the parents, defective natural and social environment, illness etc. are the causes of non-enrollment and dropped-out of many of of the children of the studied areas.

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