Addressing Educational Inequities in Urban Slums: A Narrative Review
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ABSTRACT

This study examines the challenges faced by children living in urban slums regarding access to education, drawing insights from a systematic process 27 published journal articles, academic papers and Seminar reports are selected Among these, 16 were chosen for detailed discussion, resulting key findings on socio-economic barriers, parental education levels, and awareness gaps hampering educational opportunities for slum-dwelling children. Findings prevalent problems as inadequate infrastructure, ineffective teaching methods, and parental disengagement exacerbating educational disparities. Study highlights interventions including skill development programs, targeted public initiatives, and policy reforms to address these challenges. Recommendations emphasize collaborative efforts among stakeholders to implement educational policies, improve infrastructure in government schools, and enhance parental awareness. Adopting diverse social work approaches is recommended to address the multifaceted challenges confronting slum communities. Implementing these interventions can contribute to fostering more equitable and inclusive education system, thereby advancing the well-being of all children in urban slums.

1. INTRODUCTION

The persons who are under eighteen years are regarded as a child (Act Relating to children, 2018). Children are defined by, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) as a human being below the age of 18 years' which is ratified by almost 192-member countries (Child Protection Seminar, 2003)

According to Pant & Nepal on the status of children in Nepal, the most vulnerable group in society are children, and also be the nation's future leaders and citizens. Children are unable to express their unique needs, wants, and aspirations, and as a result, they are constantly at risk of being taken advantage of. This is true in poorer nations where there is a relatively low degree of understanding about human rights. Where intervention is obviously absent, children have become the victims of servitude. Developing nations, including Nepal, continue to face significant challenges related to child labor, sexual harassment, and the trafficking of kids for prostitution and other forms of servitude. In the lack of effective enforcement of the laws already in place to protect them, children are more vulnerable to exploitation.

Urbanization occurs, family structures change from joint family to Nuclear and single family. Urban population relies on daily paid work, whether formal or informal, for most parents, including mothers (Hughes, 2021). It's essential to accurately define the scope of the problem and assess the level of care provided to children, especially when trying to engage policymakers and secure funding. The COVID-19 pandemic put pressure on finances, there is intense competition for attention and resources. Research that explore the injustices that exist beneath the surface of society in accessing quality childcare, considering factors like gender, class, and socioeconomic status, is essential. Creating fair financial systems, especially aimed at reducing the economic challenges faced by those with lower income levels, developing childcare strategies to accommodate changing societal needs, addressing financial barriers should be a top priority. This aims to ensure that childcare services are accessible and equitable for all, regardless of socioeconomic status.

Fink, Gunther, and Hill (2014) define the slum as the place where poverty is rooted, number of people live close, also cleanliness is not well maintained. The health outcomes of individuals, particularly children, influenced by the educational attainment of their mothers, and all households have different amounts of income, and access to healthcare varies depending on where people live. Children in cities usually have better health results. However, those in smaller urban areas, especially slums, have worse health outcomes. Singh (2016), socio-economic conditions faced by slum dwellers, emphasizing their lack of access to basic amenities, education, income, and healthcare. As they face various challenges like low level of education, poor health condition the study highlight to educate the slum effective measures propose solutions for comprehensive policy for primary healthcare for urban areas, which considers the special concerns of the poor, suggests enhancing their potential through skill

development programs and targeted public interventions to uplift the living standards of slum dwellers.

Singh (2016) is an intermediary among the literacy rate of rural people and the knowledge rate of the urban population. As literates are more mobile than illiterates, a greater number of literates have migrated from rural to urban areas; however, due to the unplanned and haphazard nature of urbanization, these people have been forced to live in a situation here they cannot meet their basic living standard, resulting in a higher rate of literacy in slum areas than in rural areas. Condition of poor Indian urban slum can be improved through programs like the National Urban Slum Development Programme, providing amenities like water supply, drains, sanitation, and education services. Implementing effective policies addressing slum issues and promoting equity in services. Small towns, especially in less developed states, need special support for education, social equality, and other needs.

Education serves as a significant tool for facilitating social mobility, enabling individuals to assisting individuals in breaking down societal barriers and unequal power structures, allowing them to progress and achieve goals. Education plays a pivotal role in empowering individuals from marginalized backgrounds to go beyond traditional roles and pursue opportunities beyond informal sectors, where lack of formal qualifications often limits access to skilled employment (Madheswaran & Attewell, 2007). Moreover, education holds inherent value, bound individuals with knowledge and confidence, by fostering their personal and societal development (Patnaik, 2007). It's not just about creating individuals oriented towards the market, but about cultivating socially aware and knowledgeable citizens. This is vital for promoting both social and economic advancement, and for constructing a fair and equal society. By prioritizing education, particularly for children in slum areas, design interventions can address their unique socio-economic challenges, ultimately contributing to the

reduction of exclusion and discrimination based on various social markers such as caste, gender, and ethnicity.

The study advocates for formative assessment, which, when properly implemented, fosters creativity and enhances student achievement. It emphasizes the importance of education in personal growth and human development, with governments recognizing its role in providing opportunities and fostering skills. Education is portrayed as a lifelong journey, encouraging curiosity and adaptability beyond the confines of the classroom, goal is to cultivate individuals who are not just knowledgeable but also eager and capable of learning from diverse experiences, ensuring each reaches their full potential (Rustiadi, 2015).

Over the next ten years, education must be prioritized across Africa to ensure responsible resource management, strengthen democratic institutions to meet international standards, and elevate the living standards of its citizens (Oketch, 2012) The study's findings reveal two main points: first, parents residing in slum areas tend to have lower expectations regarding their children's educational achievements compared to parents in non-slum regions; second, parents in slum areas aim for higher educational goals for their children than they themselves attained.

Achieving universal education for all children necessitates policymakers and governments to consider the socio-economic conditions of slum-dwelling children alongside school-related factors. Banerjee (2014) highlights the countless challenges faced by these children, including limited access to schooling, poor educational quality, insufficient infrastructure, negative teacher attitudes, cramped living conditions, and lack of family support. In addition to these obstacles, financial constraints pose significant barriers to education for slum residents.

1.1 PURPOSE OF REVIEW

This review aims to explore the educational challenges faced by children in slum areas, focusing on institutional injustices, social stigmatization, and financial difficulties, as outlined by Batra (2017). By synthesizing existing literature, the review seeks to identify the key barriers preventing these children from accessing quality education and to highlight successful interventions and strategies to improve their educational opportunities.

1.2 OBJECTIVES
i. To identify the challenges faced by slum children in accessing education
ii. To explore interventions to improve educational opportunities

2. METHODOLOGY

This narrative review included studies that met specific inclusion criteria. These studies required to be published in peer-reviewed journals in the English language. Additionally, the studies employed a descriptive research design. By including studies meeting these criteria, aimed to gain a complete understanding of the Challenges faced by children living in slum areas to access education.

2.1 METHODS

To find out about Children in slums and their educational rights, I planned and checked lots of places online like Sage Publications, Taylor and Francis Online, Springer Open, Research Gate, and Google Scholar. I used different words like "children," "slums," "educational rights," and "challenges" in search, also looked at lists of articles that other people wrote to find more articles which might have missed, here the goal was to find all the important articles about this topic.

2.2 SAMPLES

In the methodology section, the study used a systematic selection approach to collect relevant literature for analysis. Initially, a thorough Google search showed 53 articles, including published M Phil and PHD dissertations and discussion papers. From this first pool, 27 articles were recognized as possibly fitting the criteria. These articles were thoroughly screened,

resulting in the selection of 16 articles and dissertation acceptable for debate in discussion section. Other 11 were placed in the introduction section. Throughout the screening process, 9 articles were discovered to be duplicates, while 17 did not match the established criteria. The extracted data were synthesized using a narrative approach. This narrative approach allowed a thorough review of the literature, helping the identification of significant themes and insights important to the research issue. The Conclusion have been presented in text summarized clearly and concisely.

3. DISCUSSION

The study of urban slums in Pune examined the educational conditions and challenges faced by children in these marginalized communities. With approximately 40% of Pune's population residing in urban slums and around 11% of children lacking access to education, there was critical need for interventions to improve educational opportunities. Due to economic pressures on their families' child labor was prevalent. While some educational support was provided by NGOs, not all slum areas received such assistance, emphasizing the need for broader efforts to ensure educational access for all children. Slum children had strong determination to pursue education as a means to escape poverty. Overall, this study highlights importance of policy reforms and collaborative efforts from policymakers, authorities, NGOs, and the community to effectively address the educational needs of slum children and promote social innovation in urban renewal programs (Deshpande, 2021).

Choudhury's (2018), study on educational conditions among slum children reveals important findings, a significant part of slum population lacked access to education, some unaware of their right to it. Many non-school going children never attended or dropped out due to financial constraints, disinterest, or household duties. Some were encouraged to go school due to day-meals facilities and

job prospects, others faced obstacles like uninteresting teaching methods and fear of punishment. Parental awareness of education was low, yet most expressed a desire to educate their children regardless of gender. Environmental factors, such as noise and living conditions, impede effective studying. Issues like overcrowding persist in nearby school, it indicates need for systemic improvements in infrastructure and support for slum children.

(Chung, 2011). Similarly, children from socially disadvantaged groups such as Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are more likely to stop attending school compared to the general population. There are differences based on where children live, with those in remote areas or urban slums being more likely to leave school. In completing high school doesn't only affect individuals negatively, but makes worse social and economic inequalities. It emphasizes to make the education system better and prevent students from leaving school, planners need to figure out which social groups are most at risk of dropping out and why it's happening.

The study carried out by Dutta and Dey (2020) showed a critical role of government and policymakers addressing the educational challenges faced by slum children. Social workers' interventions highlight the urgent need for systemic improvements in education policies and infrastructure to ensure the rights and welfare of slum children are upheld. Advocating for policy reforms becomes essentials to address the root causes of educational inequities in slum communities. This require lobbying for increased investment in education, including measures to improve school accessibility, enhance the quality of education, and provide support for marginalized children. By engaging with government authorities and policymakers, social workers can advocate for inclusive policies that prioritize the educational needs of slum children, fostering their overall development and social inclusion. Ultimately, Joint actions are need at the governmental level for effecting

meaningful change and improving educational outcomes for slum children.

McKinney (2014) in the study about the relationship of child poverty to school education showed the challenge of child poverty despite decades of efforts to alleviate. The recognition of education as a fundamental human right, many children, particularly those from marginalized backgrounds, still face obstacles in accessing schooling (Leathwood., 2004). While government interventions in disadvantaged schools show promise, they must be complemented by broader societal changes and support mechanisms. Comprehensive, multidimensional approach advocated for addressing child poverty and enhancing educational access. Long-term, ongoing studies are view as crucial for unraveling the complexities of these issues and understanding their meaningful consequences in children's lives. Further research is needed to explore into the experiences of disadvantaged children within educational settings, their future prospects, and the effects of poverty on diverse populations, including those in rural and migrant communities. Ultimately, addressing child poverty and improving educational equity necessitate collaborative efforts from policymakers, educators, and society at large.

The findings of the research study conducted by Goti (2019) suggest that the majority of parents in Rukmini Nagar were highly interested in educating their children, with 97% expressing a keen desire for their children's education. However, despite this interest, various factors, such as low income, lack of education among parents, and limited awareness of educational opportunities pose significant challenges. This contribute to parents' inability to provide support for their children's education, including enrolling them in private schools or providing tuition. Additionally, parents' lack of understanding about subjects and courses further hinders their ability to guide their children effectively, particularly after board exams. Overall, the findings reflect a positive attitude among parents towards educating

their children, hindered by socioeconomic and educational barriers. Bhattrai (2024) importance of responsive and autonomy-supportive parenting in fostering resilience, especially in challenging environments. Despite these challenges, parents' positive attitude toward education emphasizes the potential impact of supportive parenting practices, even when hindered by socioeconomic barriers.

Yuko (2013) states that total number of children from slums attending school between the age group of 5-14 years was much lower than children in Delhi. Parental perception about education and poverty were seen to be the major constraints. Limited awareness related to educational provisions and incentives led to high dropout rates. Parents cannot afford to pay school fees and children in slums were more likely to attend government schools than low paying private schools. Delayed enrollment and repeating grades continued to be concerning, for already poor families' requirement of certificates created further problems for already poor families. To address these issues, interventions focusing on pre-primary education, birth registration, and parental awareness were crucial. Simplifying admission processes and providing support for enrollment are essential steps towards achieving universal elementary education in urban areas amidst worsening urban poverty and increased rural-to-urban migration. However, majority of school-age children were overage and had low educational attainment. Children in slums were more likely to attend government schools rather than low-cost private schools, also suggest current government incentive programs targeting slum households require enhancements to effectively reach all in need and address their specific challenges. This suggests existing programs is insufficiently benefit intended recipients, calling for optimization to alleviate poverty and improve living conditions.

In 2016, Chimankar explored the dynamics of urbanization and the living conditions within urban slums in India. Various aspects, including housing, access

to basic amenities, healthcare services, and the role of education. Chimankar emphasizes the importance of education in improving the socio-economic status and overall well-being of residents in these marginalized communities. His findings show the necessity for comprehensive interventions that address not only housing and healthcare but also prioritize educational initiatives to uplift the quality of life in urban slums (Chimankar, 2016). Mousumi and Kusakabe (2017) explored the factors influencing the choice of low-cost private schools in two Muslim-majority slums, Badarpur and Okhla, in Delhi. Through using interviews method, it was found that slum residents preferred low-cost private schools over government schools due to challenges like distance, busy roads, overcrowding, and financial constraints associated with accessing government schools. Despite concerns about teaching quality, teacher training, and infrastructure in private schools, they were chosen as more accessible option. To address educational shortcomings, parents supplemented their children's schooling with private coaching. Although public education was valued, issues like physical and sexual abuse, as well as drug addiction, were observed in government schools, prompting some parents to consider changing their children to government schools after primary education. Furthermore, some parents expressed a desire for modern education within an Islamic framework, voicing discontent with the diminished focus on religious subjects in government schools, to cater to their values and beliefs. Many schools, children from low-income backgrounds are frequently stigmatized and marginalized, being perceived as deficient or incapable of learning. This exclusion from learning isn't solely due to resource constraints, but also stems from systemic issues and societal factors, but also stems from biases and prejudices regarding their abilities within the classroom environment (Batra, 2017).

The challenges identified regarding education include not only financial constraints but also difficulties in understanding the curriculum and dissatisfaction with teaching methods, particularly among children from marginalized backgrounds. Teachers' lack of sensitivity towards these students exacerbates the situation, leading some parents to believe that their children are better off working to contribute to the family income. To address these challenges, the government should focus on raising awareness about the importance of education within marginalized communities and enhancing teacher training programs to better equip educators to support these students effectively. Special attention should be given to methods and strategies for teaching marginalized students. Additionally, efforts to sensitize parents, particularly regarding the education of girls, are crucial. Strengthening scholarships and incentives can further motivate students from marginalized backgrounds to pursue education, while adult education programs can improve school-community interaction and support parents in facilitating their children's education (Bose, 2016).

Rannaware et al. (2022) cited to emphasize the challenges confronted by slum children in accessing education, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. It underscored problems like not having enough resources, bad internet, not understanding well, and getting distracted during online classes, which made fewer poor people come to class. Additionally, the importance of a supportive environment and adequate resources for continuous learning during emergencies like pandemics. However, the study also indicates the adverse impact of reduced face-to-face interaction on social engagement, crucial for holistic development. The research emphasizes the pressing need for targeted interventions to mitigate the unique obstacles faced by slum children and ensure equitable access to education, particularly in times of crises.

Performance of children in community schools, largely from medium to low economic backgrounds, is significantly influenced by their parents' socio-economic status. Poverty and

unemployment make parents difficult to actively participate in their children's education and be engaged in school-related activities and limit access to higher education, leading to children engaging in semi-skilled or unskilled labor. Educated parents play a pivotal role in supporting their children's education, highlighting the importance of parental involvement. To address these challenges, stakeholders should prioritize accessible technical and vocational education, enhance parental involvement through various strategies like regular interaction and awareness programs, and provide support such as remedial classes for children with illiterate or poorly educated parents (Pant, 2020).

The findings emphasize the critical need for policymakers to address the educational challenges faced by urban slum dwellers, which have often been overlooked despite various initiatives targeting social, economic, and regional disparities. While urban areas generally boast better socio-economic indicators compared to national averages, the situation in slum areas remains critical, to or worse than many rural regions. Specifically, the focus is on ensuring the inclusion and retention of slum children in the education system, highlighting the vulnerability of this demographic to dropping out, necessity for tailored policies and programs that not only facilitate access to schools but also provide sustained support to ensure their dignified participation in education. (Upadhyay, 2017)

3. CONCLUSION

Challenges faced by children living in slums in accessing education are multifaceted and deeply rooted in socio-economic disparities, parental education levels, and inadequate awareness about educational opportunities. Poor teaching methods and teachers' insensitivity further intensifies these challenges. However, this review finds out promising interventions to address these challenges. Planners must prioritize identifying at-risk social groups and understanding the underlying reasons for student dropout rates. Proposed

solutions include skill development programs, targeted public interventions, and systemic improvements in policies and infrastructure. Advocacy for policy reforms and collaboration among stakeholders are crucial for tackling root causes of educational inequities, importance of improving educational opportunities for marginalized communities, particularly children living in slums. It emphasizes the necessity of enhancing teacher training, raising awareness about the significance of education, prioritizing accessible technical and vocational training, involving parents in the educational process, and offering support, such as remedial classes, to children with less educated parents. These strategies are crucial for improving the overall educational outcomes and breaking the cycle of poverty in these communities. Implementing these interventions, we can work towards creating a more equitable and inclusive education system that uplifts the lives of all children, regardless of their socio-economic backgrounds.

4. RECOMMENDATION

Efforts are needed to address the educational barriers faced by the urban poor, including slum children by recognizing them as a population in need of targeted interventions. Collaboration among ministries and local governments is essential to implement educational programs and policies tailored to the needs of vulnerable populations. Investment in child-friendly infrastructure in government schools can motivate attendance and learning among slum children. Diverse social work approaches, such as human rights-based and participatory methods, should be employed to effectively address the complex challenges faced by slum communities. Increasing parental awareness of the importance of primary education and use of protocol to sale of alcoholic products in slum areas are additional measures needed to improve the well-being and educational outcomes of slum children.

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