

Non-enrollment and Dropout in Elementary Education —A Study of Scavenger's Children Living in Urban Slums of Lucknow and Kanpur

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Abstract:

Universal access and retention are two major objects through which nations including India committed to achieve Education for All which is central to the UN's Millennium Development Goals and Education for All. Non-enrollment and drop outs are therefore prime concerns before the nation, and more so in the context of marginalized sections. Scavengers are the lower most and at the bottom level of marginalization. Though living in urban areas could help them in adopting conducive and hygienic culture, scavengers and their children lag behind due to a large number of factors. The paper examines the factors that cause non-enrollment and dropout among 305 marginalized children in the age bracket of 6 to 14 years drawn through purposive sampling from 250(out of 2000)households of scavenger communities. The prevalence of dropout and non-enrollment rate is reported to be 55% and 40% respectively. Responses relating to factors that cause such high rate of dropout and non-enrollment were recorded through observation and personal interviews. Poverty, school and home related factors are primary factors that cause non-enrollment and dropout among scavengers' children. It is interesting to note that despite of innovative programmes at school level, school related factors are significant factors along with the poverty (which is traditionally prevailing). The result of the present study is an eye opener for the policy makers who are making tall claims in terms of school empowerment and reformations. It is pertinent to examine whether these children are willing to continue their education despite of many impediments.

Key words: Non-enrollment, Dropout, Education of Marginalized Children, Scavengers children, Elementary education.

Introduction

Social practices by human beings have always been at the center of each social problem that nations across the world witness, though a great degree of variation is prevailing in nature and magnitude of such social problems. Marginalization and deprivations are global phenomena and they exist in highest magnitude in rural, followed by semi-urban and urban areas. Manual scavenging is a vocation of few millions in India constituting approximately 10% of total population. Since “Right to live” is central to all other rights, scavengers fail to enjoy this right. Manual scavenging invites health complications, caste discrimination, and low self esteem and degraded human values. Realizing the crux of problems associated with manual scavenging, the Government of India passed “the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation” Act in September 2013. Abusive and derogatory languages use, restricted access to places of worship, discriminated seating arrangements and peer bullying in schools, sexual exploitations are common forms of social exclusion practices prevailing in society that primarily affects social mobility amongst scavengers— a category of human race is purposefully discriminated because of their sanitary welfare acts those fulfill their livelihood. Center for Human Rights and Social Justice (2010) noted that “the children of manual scavengers are particularly vulnerable to discrimination in their schools, where they are forced to perform cleaning and scavenging work, and where discrimination undermines all aspects of their education and often causes them to drop out of school altogether”. “The dropout problem is pervasive in the Indian education system. Many children, who enter school, are unable to complete secondary education and multiple factors are responsible for children dropping out of school” (Chugh

2011). Since “social exclusion leads to educational dropout and vice versa” (Mohanty 2013), out-of-school factors are equally responsible as within-school factors for causing dropout among children of scavengers’ community. The present paper is the outcome of a study being carried out to identify principal causes of non-enrollment and dropout among children of scavengers’ community in Lucknow and Kanpur (urban slums) in Uttar Pradesh.

Researches being carried out in the area of non-enrollment and dropout among elementary children of socially disadvantaged sections (especially of SC and ST) reveal wide range of within and out of school factors. Factors of both categories complement each other and eventually affect children of weaker sections adversely. Schooling in remote areas, backward villages and urban slums are generally characterized by poor physical infrastructure, lack of basic amenities as well as adequate number of teachers, leaking roofs and mud floors appear quite common in schools and providing a depressing atmosphere for children. Teaching aids and blackboards are relatively absent. Non-functioning of schools and teacher absenteeism is another aspect which needs careful attention. As reported by GOI (1988) a number of schools especially in backward and slum areas had remained closed for certain period of time in number of cases schools had not functioned since the beginning of the academic year (Nambissan 2000). Punishment in many form and the exclusion of children’s language and culture from the medium and content of school knowledge, as well as message of inferiority that are conveyed to them through the hidden curriculum, are crucial factor that are likely to adversely affect the children’s motivation to learn and their interest to studies (Nambissan 2000). Velaskar (1998) reported that new stigmatizing identities based on secular criteria of lack of merit are being imposed on dalits in place of their old, traditional, impure identity. They are labelled as “undeserving”, “stupid” and

“indolent”. Anitha (2000) reported that some teachers quite openly stated that “formal education is not useful for the children of the lower caste” and such teachers support their arguments by citing instances among children of those communities who have discontinued schooling and working as an agricultural labourers in the villages. The Bodh study mentioned that corporal punishment was common when children failed to give the correct answers to the teacher’s questions. Teachers often felt that fear was necessary for children to learn (DPEP 1999). So far as the Dalits are concerned, stereotypical notions of social inferiority underlie the use of corporal punishment as a pedagogic tool as well. Schools thus not only fail to reach out and address the context of educational deprivation of these communities but often tend to compound it. Jalaludin reported in the Times of India (Jan.14,1991) that 47.9% of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe children surveyed in the Tikamgarh block of Jhansi district did not even enroll in school because they feared that they will not be allowed to sit with upper caste. The findings of the NSS (42nd round) regarding reasons why Dalit children discontinue their studies are of interest. While around 46% of Dalit drop out in rural areas is attributed to economic reason (including participation in domestic work), a significant 30% of children discontinue their education because of lack of interest in studies. A further 16% leave the education mainstream as result of failure (NSSO1989). While lack of interest in studies and failure are often seen as a consequence of parental and community attitudes as well as poor academic abilities, the qualities of education that children (especially first generation learners) are exposed to, surely needs critical attention (Geetha 2002). Omprakash (1986) opined that poverty is the single most important reason for Scheduled Caste not attending the school. Non-school going children are assets to the family. Discussing the educational backwardness of the Scheduled Caste, Chowdhary (1971) says that majority of non- school going age

group in the rural areas belongs to Scheduled Caste. Selvanathan (1989) also is of the same opinion that the percentage of illiterates is substantial among the Scheduled Caste than that non-scheduled caste. Chitnis and Aikara (1977) in a study of drop out and stagnation on Scheduled Caste students and they were found to be very inferior in almost all aspect of socio-economic background and in performance as well. According to the DSCFDC sponsored study carried out by the Department of Social Work, University of Delhi, in 1992-93 revealed that a majority of them (up to 90%) claimed that they send their children to school, but their drop-out rate is rather higher, especially among the girl children. Several factors like illiterate parents, lack of guidance, financial inadequacies, apathetic commitment of teachers and their non-serious attitude, domestic responsibilities and peer group influence are responsible for these social phenomena.

Center for Human Rights and Social Justice (2010) reported case studies pertaining to the atrocities against children of manual scavengers in schools. Through evidenced based research, the Center claims that “Dalit children are forced to clean classrooms, offices, toilets, and urinals on a regular basis. Such children are routinely discriminated in curricular, co-curricular and cultural events by their teachers and fellow students. In certain cases children are employed in the disposal of dead animals, or must accompany their parents to work or to beg for food. These factors have either forced these children to leave school or to stay away from school education.” Another evidence based research on manual scavenging children conducted by Arunthatiyar Human Rights Forum (AHRF) during 2009-10 reflects “discrimination of these children at public places particularly in schools though not obviously seen conspicuously; it is mostly expressed in a disguised manner. Children attend schools for the development of their future but are shunned because of the discriminatory practices towards them”. The AHRF reported that 24%

children dropped out from school out of which 14% of them are working in various places like agricultural farms, shops and domestic work and 10% of them are neither working nor continuing their skill developing activities. Regarding the psychological status of these children, Eshetu Genemo (2010) found that “the majority of scavenging children were found to have poor self esteem associated with feeling of rejection, inferiority and insecurity”.

Rationale

The 21st century has been widely acclaimed as the “knowledge century”. Every nation is finding itself to be performing in an increasingly competitive and globalised international environment where the information, research, research innovation, education and lifelong learning have become critical parameters. It has been well recognized that the creation of new knowledge primarily depend on strengthening the education system, promoting research, teaching and innovations. To promote education it is very essential to aware about right and duties in the field of education. As education is the birth right of the child thus each and every child should get the opportunity out of it. In India, provision of free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of 14 years is a fundamental right. As Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE) is still an elusive goal thus much ground is yet to be covered. As per the Revised Program of Action (1992) the area which became the uncovered in UEE till date is socially , culturally and economically excluded groups particularly marginalized group of rural, slums and remote areas i.e. Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe , minority, girls, economically poor slum children. Despite of various constitutional provisions, legislations and policies on education in the post independence period rural marginalized groups in general and scavengers’ children of urban slums in particular

continue to be in bad state. In the era of globalization, urbanization, modernization and privatisation of education, the non enrolment and drop out is the real challenge before the nation. How to integrate them in the main stream and make universalization of education successful is the immediate call of the hour. Thus in the present context, the slum children in general and scavengers' children in particular constitute the priority target group.

The present study was designed to examine current statistics and factors responsible for dropout and non-enrolment among children belonging to scavenger's families in Lucknow and Kanpur urban slums in the state of Uttar Pardesh.

Research Design

Methodology

In the light of above cited rationale and research objects, researcher employed descriptive research methodology. In the first phase, Existing colonies in urban slums (in which large numbers of scavenger families inhabit) were identified through survey method on the secondary source data being published by Government of India and Government of Uttar Pradesh. In the second phase, household survey was made by the researcher in order to identify non-enrolled and dropout children in the age bracket of 6 to 14 years. On the basis of field visits and personal interviews, researcher explored the factors that were found to be fuelling non-enrollment and dropout among scavenger children.

Sample

The population of the present study consisted of dropout and non enrolled children among Scheduled Caste families particularly living in Urban Slums/Basti and whose occupation is basically scavenging. Uttar Pradesh is the most populous

State of India. The Scheduled Caste population (35,148,377) of UP is 21.1% of total population of the State (166,197,921). There are 70 districts in UP, whereas the present study was carried out in two districts, i.e., Kanpur and Lucknow. Kanpur and Lucknow are the biggest and oldest city of northern India with a total population of 41, 37,489 and 36, 81,416. In order to see the numbers and population of urban slums of Kanpur and Lucknow, Kanpur has total 505 slums and Lucknow has 530 slums in general. Out of 1035 slums, there are 62 scavenger's colonies in both the cities (28 in Kanpur and 34 in Lucknow).

The sample of the present study is consisted of dropout and non enrolled primary school children of scavenger family from the selected colonies of Lucknow and Kanpur city. The criteria for selecting these scavenger families were that they are mainly the socially excluded group and literacy rate of such children are below the national level literacy rate. The reason for which the Universalisation of Elementary Education is becoming impossible and integrating them into the mainstream is the real challenge before the nation. The drop out and non enrolment rate of such scavenger's children is highest among the Scheduled Caste children. Thus the investigators decided to take up the research project on this particular group of the society. The data for the present study was taken randomly from 10 scavenger colonies of both Kanpur and Lucknow city on the basis of large population. The investigators could locate 2000 households of scavengers from a total of 10 slums of Lucknow (5 slums) and Kanpur (5 slums). A household survey was conducted in phased manner. In first phase, each household was visited by the investigators just to know the caste background of the inhabitants. In the second phase the investigators selected randomly 250 households from a total of 2000 households. With the help of purposive sampling, 180 dropout children (Boys=83, Girls= 97) and 125 non- enrolled children (Boys=79, Girls= 46) were selected.

Tools and Techniques

A set of questionnaires and interview schedules were developed and used in order to collect data from parents, teachers, students, children and community members. Collected data were analysed by using percentages as statistical technique.

Results and Discussion

Data relating to dropout and non-enrollment of scavengers children reveal that dropout rate among children in Kanpur is 66% where as in Lucknow is 52% whereas the non enrolment rate among children in Kanpur is 34% and in Lucknow is 48%. As a whole the dropout rate is 59% whereas the non enrolment rate is 41%. The dropout rate is high among children belonging to scavengers because of obstacles in home and school front and at individual level. Dropout rate among girls is higher than boys but non-enrolment rate among boys is higher than girls. The reason behind it is that parents don't want to educate boys because they are born to earn for the livelihood. According to parents comment "What will boys get from attending the school only to kill time"? So far the dropout rate among girls is concerned parents don't want to continue their education due to domestic responsibility. Girls are meant for household work and to release the mother's workload. Class wise dropout rate among children belonging to scavenger's families in Kanpur and Lucknow implies that dropout rate is high in class II (33%) followed by class III (25%) and class V (23%) respectively. The reason is that in class I, teachers do not stress on study only emphasize on the physical presence of the children. But from class II onwards teachers start to teach which make the children as well as parents difficult to maintain regularity in studies, which cause dropout among such children. Statistics relating to dropout and non-enrolment among children belonging to scavenger's families revealed that dropout rate in both cities is more than 55 percent of the total surveyed

population. Non-enrolment among children belonging to scavenger's families is found to be about 40%. It is because of the obstacles that scavenger children confront at home and school level. Gender wise statistics relating to dropout and non-enrolment revealed that dropout rate among girls is higher than boys but in case of non-enrolment the case is just reverse, i.e., non-enrolment rate among boys is higher than girls. The result is because of the parental perception of educating boys means spoiling /killing precious time. Boys are born to work and earn their livelihood. Dropout rate among girls is high because of their active participation in domestic activities and supporting mother in household activities. Class wise dropout rate indicate that from grade II onwards, the dropout is more prevailing. Such result is attributed to the study load, nature of teaching and assignments at school level.

Data pertaining to the potential factors responsible for dropout and non-enrolment poverty (35%) and school related (35%) factors are found to be the major factors responsible for high dropout and non-enrolment among children belonging to scavengers' families. Other factors which are responsible marginally include home related (14%), individual related (09%) and cultural (07%) factors. Factors that are responsible for high dropout and non-enrolment among the children of scavenger's families include poverty, school and home related factors. In the category of poverty, lack of money to fulfill basic physical needs; engagement in domestic work and child care, are found to be more pertinent. Factors that are responsible for high dropout and non-enrolment among the children of scavenger's families include poverty, school and home related factors. In the category of poverty, lack of money to fulfill basic physical needs; engagement in domestic work and child care, are found to be more pertinent. Among school related factors, inadequate physical facilities, punishment, irregular school functioning, and no study at school are found to be de motivating factors for children belonging to scavenger's

families. Among home related factors, lack of interest among parents and traditional taboos are found to be significant factors responsible for dropout and non-enrolment among children. Lack of interest in studies and caste/occupation feelings found to be individual and cultural factors responsible for low participation in school sector. It is interesting to note that despite of innovative programmes at school level, school related factors are significant factors along with the poverty (which is traditionally prevailing). The result of the present study is an eye opener for the policy makers who are making tall claims in terms of school empowerment and reformations. It is pertinent to examine whether these children are willing to continue their education despite of many impediments.

Recommendations

Based on the results of the present study, it is recommended that initiatives are to be taken to improve the government school administration at par with the private school. Institutional facilities and culture should be such that it must attract the maximum participation among scavenger's children. State Government should pay more attention to the children of such families and issue the SC certificates and declare them as community below poverty line. Financial assistance is to be given to such families so that their children can participate in educational activities. Free schooling with provision of free book and clothing is to be provided to children belonging to scavenger's families. Reservation in Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) may be mandatory for the talented scavenger girls as a way of motivation for the parents and children too. In order to sustain the interest of such children in education Centres for Open Schooling or non-formal education centres may be established nearby the slums. Community schooling to educate these children and empower with adequate skills on certain vocations will suffice their social cohesion.

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