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PROBLEMS OF SCHOOL DROP OUTS IN SLUM AREAS IN PUNE CITY



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ABSTRACT

Education is considered as one of the basic human rights and a worldwide social goal. However millions of children are raised in an environment of poverty, neglect and overwork, and denied access to such educational facilities. A large number of children work for long hours both at home and outside the home. Many a time due to lack economics resources, slum children work full time as daily wage labourers, maid servants, hotel workers, rag-pickers etc. This has resulted in high rate of school drop outs among the slum children especially the girl. The present study has made an attempt to highlight the various socio economic factors, familial factor,

psychological factors and other factors that cause school dropout among slum girls in Pune city. The study also attempted to propose possible solutions to the problems of school dropouts.

KEYWORDS : Education, Poverty, School dropouts, Slum children, Girl child.

PROBLEM OF SCHOOLS DROPOUTS IN INDIA

India has an education crisis of gigantic proportions. Across the country 1.5 million primary school age children are not in school. In 2002 after years of determined campaigning by civil society, India passed a constitutional amendment making primary education free and compulsory. This represents a big step in the right direction. However poverty and a lack of proper funding means many children have yet to benefit. Even with the introduction of legislations pertaining to education, it does not yet have the abilities to ensure that the environment to actually attain an education exists.

The lack of accessibility and the poor quality of education means few children can hope for a useful education- the majority end up is low paid unskilled labourers at a young age. Even those lucky enough to be in school struggle to obtain a basic education. The quality of teaching is poor and many schools suffer from overcrowding and a lack of even the most basic facilities including clean drinking wear toilets. The dropout rate is high as parents who see no benefit in a poor quality of education with draw their children. In addition, many children forego school or drop out early to support themselves and their families or pay off family debts.

In India, nearly 40% of the children drop out at primary stage of education. In fact a large

number of them consist of pull outs that are pulled out of the educational system by force of socio-economic compulsion present education system like irrelevance of curriculum, discriminatory of curriculum, discriminatory attitudes of teachers, parents and community.

DEFINITION OF SCHOOL DROPOUTS

School dropout is a term used quite often. A simple definition for a school dropout student is a one who does not complete high school.

The definitions of school dropouts have been offered from time to time including the followings.

School dropout is always gradual process. It starts from a casual reason. When it continues for long period, the child faced the problem in the school for understanding of various topics in school curriculum and thus a child starts to lose the interest in the school. Once the interest is lost he completely stop attending the school which we popularly called as school dropouts.

"A School drop out means students who leave school for any reasons except death before graduation or completion of a programme of studies and without transferring to another school".

Encyclopaedia of American education

"Someone who leaves a school or college without completing the course"

Oxford dictionary

Definitions of school dropouts are individual who,

- a) Were enrolled in school at some time during the previous school year
- b) Were not enrolled at the beginning of the current school year
- c) Have not graduated from high school or completed a stated or district approved educational program
- d) Do not meet any of the following exclusionary conditions,
 - Transfer to another public school district, private school or state or left the country
 - Temporary absence due to suspension or school approved educational program
 - Death

Causes of School Dropouts in Urban Slum:

Nearly 30% of India's population lives in urban slums (Census of India, 2001). Getting children in these slums to school is a difficult task keeping them in school is even more difficult. A majority these people are poor migrants who have moved to cities in search of work. While the adults do any work that they can find. Most of the children spend their days not in school but doing thing like picking rags, hanging around with their parents or simply wandering the streets

The priority of slum is earning money for survival than education. This situation invites problems of illiteracy and problems of school dropout among children. Since casual labour or domestic wage earner is the main occupation of the slum area, it becomes compulsory for every school going child to help in family's occupation as well as manage household works (Bislani & Roy, 1991). Thus, this conditional looses interest of the child in education making them discontinue in their studies.

School Dropouts among Slum Girls

In urban slum community, the status of girl child is very low. Social Attitude towards education especially of girl's education is not favourable. The girl child is deemed as a liability whereas the boy child is considered to be an asset. Educating the boy is regarded as an investment for future economic

returns. On the other hand, investing in girl's education is deemed as immediate economic loss and deprivation of a loyal and unpaid housekeeper, who will do household chores, take care of young siblings, and help in family occupation (Arun. S, 2000).

Apart from availability, accessibility and mobility issues, there are number of other factors for school dropout girl child to discontinue (drop-out) their studies at various levels (Primary, middle and secondary) of school education like poverty, early marriage, fear of sexual harassment etc (Jha.J.K,2002). And the female themselves are not interested in taking education and the urban slum attitude towards female education is not favourable.

OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of the study were to explore the factors which were responsible for school dropouts among slum girls in Pune city.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted among the school dropout girls in Luxminagar slum, Karvenagar, Pune City. The slum was selected for the study since the percentage of school dropout is very high. Here, only 60% of the children go to school Upto 7th Std., with great difficulty.

Snow ball sampling method was used since the size of the population was large and the total number of units was unknown. Sampling size in this study was 72 respondents.

Both the primary and secondary data were collected for this study. The primary data were collected through the personal interviews with the help of the structured interview schedules. The findings and conclusions have been drawn on the basis of the primary data collected for the study.

Results:

The Results and discussions are based on the primary data especially collected for the study. These are the major findings and conclusions of the study. Following are the results of the study of school dropout girls in Luxminagar slum.

FINDINGS

- ✦ The study has revealed some important findings. They are listed as follows:
- ✦ 40 percent of the respondents belonged to the age group of 12-14 years which means that many of them have dropped out from school at the primary and secondary stage of education.
- ✦ Regarding mother tongue, it has been found maximum number of the respondents i.e. 72 percent of the respondents were from outside Maharashtra.
- ✦ Another finding showed that extreme poverty as one of the major salient features of the respondents i.e. 76 percent of the respondents had a monthly family income which was less than Rs. 3000.
- ✦ Regarding the availability of physical infrastructure, it was found that majority of the respondents used open field for toilet purpose i.e. 71 percent which was very unhealthy and unhygienic.
- ✦ 70 percent respondents were found using one common public tap water as their only source for drinking water. It is observed that the age of marriages of the respondents were very early.
- ✦ 60 percent respondents revealed 12-14 yrs as the right time for marriage.
- ✦ Regarding the work done by the main earner in the family, it was found that majority of them are either the respondents father or mother. 66 percent of the family members are engaged in construction work.

- ✦ 41 percent of the respondents were found to be unemployed due to heavy family responsibilities
- ✦ The study revealed that 69 percent of the respondents attended school which was less than 1 K.m.
- ✦ 47 percent of the respondents expressed their satisfaction on the school environment.
- ✦ More than 50 percent of the respondent's family members were uneducated. So, 56 percent of the respondents expressed that the relation between their parents and the teachers were very poor.
- ✦ 43 percent of the respondents revealed that having financial problems as one of the major reasons for dropping out from school. It was closely followed by domestic responsibilities and those who were not interested in studies due to school environment.
- ✦ 60 percent of the respondents dropped out from school at the primary stage of education.
- ✦ 36 percent of the respondents expressed their desire to continue school again.
- ✦ 60 percent of the respondents expressed that their parents were not in favour of continuing their education since it was expensive and they have other family responsibilities also.
- ✦ 50 percent of the respondents had firm belief that education was helpful not only for getting employment but also for increasing wisdom and getting a good status in life. And 47 percent of the respondents showed negative attitude towards education since it was expensive and there was no guarantee for getting employment also.
- ✦ 68 percent of the respondents expressed that most of the educational assistance comes from various non-governmental organizations which were working in the slums, by providing free clothes, books, study material etc and some NGOs also imparted non formal education to the children.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The study revealed that poor financial condition has forced the respondents from discontinuing their studies and start earning money at a very early age. Encouragements of education for a girl child are very poor in the slum areas. It is also observed from the study that the atmosphere in slum area is not conducive for a girl's education as many parents felt that education of a girl child was luxury and of no use since girls need to do only household work. This reason has made many of the respondents dropped out from the school as soon as the expenditure or effort involved in sending her to school rises above their low taxes hold. Above this, family responsibility was compulsory for every school going child. Almost all families expected financial and domestic help from their children. Most of the respondents were busy doing household chores like cooking, washing, cleaning etc and looking after their siblings. It is unfortunate that, majority of them have dropped out from school due to economic constraints and domestic work. And those respondents who got the opportunity to study expressed that they get little time for study due to their work and domestic responsibilities. And because of these, they cannot complete their study in proper manner, and these badly affect the ratio of school dropouts.

There was no motivation on the part of the parents, and the child cannot relate to the teachers. That made the child lost his or her then interest in the school and eventually the child stopped going to the school. While studying the condition of the respondents after school dropout many of the respondents expressed that they feel unhappy and have realized the importance of education in their daily life. But, there was no constructive support to sustain their educating process. Various reasons like early marriages, educational problems, school environment etc were also responsible for dropping out from school. Very few students reached up to secondary stage of education.

One can conclude that the problem of school dropout is a very serious problem, which needs

immediate attention and many factors like the family background, socio economic status, the school environment, community atmosphere etc are all responsible for high school dropout rates. Though there is good understanding about education among the respondents but they felt that priority of earning was more important than education. This also indicates that the slum communities do not have a very favourable attitude towards education since most of the families need the help of the respondents for various domestic works and care of the siblings. The risk of school dropout is also much higher in families which have to deal with poverty and marginalization. The prevention and annihilation of school dropout are complex problems which require the involvement and implication of social institutions, not just by the government, but all civil society and all those concerned with the quality of life of the children and the very future of the country.

SUGGESTIONS

Based on the conclusions, the study attempted to make some suggestions as follows:

- Close interaction between teachers and students should be encouraged.
- School should lessen the burden of home work for girls who have heavy responsibilities at home.
- Transport and escort facility should be provided to children from remote habitations with sparse population where opening of school is not viable.
- Residential schools for dropouts and vulnerable girls should be introduced especially in and around slums areas.
- Proper financial assistance to the schools from government as well as from the Local community.
- Education to be more practical than theoretical/reduce theoretical syllabus & Increase practical.
- Subjects should be of student's interest up to middle level
- Totally free education for needy and slum students up to secondary stage (up to Xth class) by all states should be introduced. Although the 93rd constitution amendment gives the legally enforceable right to free elementary education of age between 6-14 years, the restriction of age between 6-14 years could be a barrier, particular in poor areas in long run.
- The central and the state government should make sure that the incentive schemes such as mid day meal programmes, free text books, uniforms free bus pas etc. are being implemented and extended to the whole of the country.
- Adequate support services of child care such as crèche, day care centre etc. should be provided so that the working parents can keep their young child while they go for work. This will also lessen the burden of school going girl who usually has the responsibilities of looking after her siblings.
- The government should provide alternatives modes of schooling combine with formal and non formal courses for dropouts. Here, NGO s should be encouraged to play more effective role in the delivery of non formal system of education.
- There should be a linkage between the government and non-governmental organizations. In fact, it is found that that the voluntary workers and organizations have been able to established a better rapport with the poorer sections, due to their informal approach and attitude.
- Appointment of an expert panel to identify the indicators responsible for school drop-out-rate along with non-retention of girl child in schools and implement effective preventive strategies.

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