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Does ability to bounce back depend on education?

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Abstract

One of the most conspicuous symbol of poverty in India is growing population of children in slums. Probing the role of education on the ability to bounce back from adversities was the aim of this investigation. One hundred adolescents living in slums with half of them receiving formal education and other half not receiving any education (drop outs) were sampled and assessed. t test was used to determine the difference in the mean scores of this ability to bounce back in these two sub- samples. Results revealed a significant difference in this regard. Majority of non-school going slum adolescents expressed a wish to go to school if they get a chance again. As far as the reason for not going to school was concerned, majority of them reported lack of interest and poverty as main causes. Majority spent their day just working as rag pickers, labourers or selling vegetables or fruits. A little more than half of the total sample reported that they were not encouraged by anybody to go to school. While those who were encouraged, revealed that they were motivated by their parents.

Keywords: Adversities, Resilience, Slum Children

Introduction

A report published by Union government in 2011 on 'Slums in India- A statistical compendium' revealed that in India, every eighth urban child stays in slums. According to a report of National Buildings Organization (NBO) of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation, "About 7.6 million children are living in slums in India and they constitute 13.1% of the total child population of the urban areas of 26 states/ union territories reporting slums.' The city beautiful-Chandigarh alone comprises more than 20% slum children. Most of the children in slums spend their life begging, selling trinkets, shining shoes or washing cars to contribute towards the economic condition of their family. They are disadvantaged children, having no access to formal education, basic services, financial and community resources, family affection and support. Unfortunately, they are disfavoured children with poor chances of having a bright future and are vulnerable to multiple risks like substance abuse, delinquency, mortality, morbidity etc.

There is tremendous pressure on slum children to start working at a very young age. Majority of slum children have never attended any school while those who attend, drop out even before completing their high school. However, on closely researching over the issue, one finds that despite the multiple risks, surprisingly many slum children develop into normal productive human beings. They seem to possess a special ability known as resilience.

According to Meichenbaum (2012), resilience refers the ability to bounce back, beat the odds, transform one's emotional and physical pain into something "positive" ^[1]. It is both the capacity of individuals to navigate their way to psychological, social, cultural, and physical resources that sustain their well-being and their capacity individually and collectively to negotiate for these resources to be provided in culturally meaningful ways ^[2]. Werner and Smith (2001) conceptualize resilience as an end product of buffering processes that do not eliminate risks and adverse conditions in life but allow the individual to deal with them effectively ^[3].

Resilience, particularly in slum children, is a vital life skill that helps to cope with various adversities and stresses and enable them to adapt to the situations of slum life. It helps them to face adverse circumstances of their life head-on and bounce back to life with all possible strength.

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Objectives

The objectives of the present research were:

- To analyze socio-demographic attributes as well as level of resilience of school going and non-school going slum children.
- To determine difference, if any, in resilience of school going and non-school going slum children.

Material and Method

Participants

The present study was conducted on slum children of Chandigarh who were in the age group of 12-18 years. Further selection criterion was based upon the school going and non-school going status of the respondents. The sampling procedure has been discussed under the following sub-heads.

Selection of School Going Slum Children

For selecting the sample of school going slum children, a list of institutions working for the education of slum children was taken from the internet. From this list, two institutions namely The British School, Sector- 44 B, Chandigarh and Theatre Age, Sec-24, Chandigarh were randomly selected and from each institution, 25 children, irrespective of their sex, who were fulfilling the following criteria, were selected for the study:

- Age group of 12 to 18 years, and
- Attending formal/ informal schooling

Selection of Non-School Going Slum Children

For selecting the sample of non-school going slum children, again a list of all the slum areas of Chandigarh was obtained from the internet. From this list, two slum areas namely Janta & Kumhar Colony, Sec- 25, Chandigarh and Rajiv Colony, Sec- 38 W, Chandigarh were selected through random sampling technique and from each selected slum area, 25 slum children irrespective of their sex, who were fulfilling the following criteria were selected for the present study

- Age group of 12 to 18 years, and
- Not attending any formal/ informal schooling.

Thus, the final sample comprised of 100 slum children (50 School going +50 Non-School going).

Instruments Used

Socio-Personal Profile: A Socio-Personal Profile Schedule for the subjects was developed by the investigator. It includes items under 5 sub-heads- background information about the subject, family structure, living conditions,

education, stressful life situations and about self. The items under the sub-head of education were different for school going and non-school going children. For school going children, it consists of items like name of school, class, facilities provided by the school. While, for non-school going, it contains items like earlier went to school or not, want to go to school, reasons behind dropping-out, and any motivation to go to school.

There are total 31 items in this schedule and the medium of this tool is Hindi.

The Resiliency Scale For determining the resilience of subjects, a standardized resiliency scale developed by Wagnild and Young (1987) was used^[4]. It is reported to be a highly valid and reliable scale. The reported reliability of the instrument has been tested across a variety of sample populations. The alpha coefficient ranged from .85 to .94. Overall the alpha coefficient exceeded .80. This resiliency scale has a total number of 25 items with a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) for taking response. The authors reported that the resiliency scale has two major factors- acceptance of life and personal competence- both of which concur with the definition of resilience. Personal competence covers items on self-reliance, independence, determination, mastery and resourcefulness. While the acceptance of self and life represents adaptability, balance, flexibility and a balanced perspective on life. The scale is in English. So it is translated in Hindi for use with children. The scale was administered individually on each subject.

Procedure

Permission was sought from the head of selected educational institutions for slum children. The adolescents who were meeting the criteria of the selection were approached in the educational institutions and the selected slum areas. Rapport was established with the selected subjects. They were briefed about the study and confidentiality of the results. Taking into consideration their convenience, date and time were fixed up for administration of the tools. On the scheduled date and time, the selected subjects were administered the selected psychological instruments.

Statistical Analysis

For analyzing the data, percentage, mean, standard deviation, standard error of mean and 't' test were used.

Results and Discussion

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Attributes of School Going and Non-School Going Slum Children

N = 100

Variables	Categories	School Going Slum Children (%)	Non-School Going Slum Children (%)	Total Sample (%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Attributes • Age 	12-14 years	70.0	56.0	63.0
	14-16 years	28.0	30.0	29.0
	16-18 years	2.0	14.0	8.0
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender 	Boys	58.0	38.0	48.0
	Girls	42.0	62.0	52.0
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Religion 	Hindu	90.0	94.0	92.0
	Muslim	8.0	6.0	7.0
	Sikh	2.0	-	1.0
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family Structure • Family 	Nuclear	66.0	80.0	73
	Joint	34.0	20.0	27
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child lives with 	Biological Parents	90.0	72.0	81.0

	Only Father/Mother	4.0	12.0	8.0
	Biological and Step-parent	-	8.0	4.0
	Grandparents	4.0	4.0	4.0
	Any other	2.0	4.0	3.0
• Birth Order	First Born	28.0	34.0	14.0
	Second Born	32.0	44.0	16.0
	Third Born	18.0	12.0	9.0
	Fourth born and Above	22.0	10.0	11.0
• Father's Occupation	Private Job	10.0	4.0	7.0
	Shopkeeper	16.0	12.0	14.0
	Gardener	12.0	6.0	9.0
	Labourer	26.0	58.0	32.0
	Auto-driver	20.0	8.0	14.0
	Others	16.0	6.0	21.0
• Mother's Working Status	Housewife	66.0	34.0	50.0
	Maid	12.0	56.0	34.0
	Rag-picker	8.0	-	4.0
	Private Job	4.0	-	2.0
	Any other	10.0	10.0	10.0
• Monthly Income	Rs. 1000-Rs. 10,000	64.0	86.0	75.0
	Rs. 10,000-Rs. 20,000	26.0	10.0	18.0
	Rs. 20,000 and above	10.0	4.0	7.0
• Kind of House the Child is Living in	Made of Bricks	62.0	38.0	50.0
	Thatched House	16.0	50.0	33.0
	Made from Mud	18.0	10.0	14.0
	Made of Sacks/Plastic	4.0	2.0	3.0
• Exposure to Stress/Adversity in Last Few Years	Physical Stress	52.0	60.0	56.0
	Psychological Stress	46.0	38.0	42.0
	Any other	2.0	2.0	2.0
• About Self: • Define Yourself as	Happy and Interested in Life	46.0	24.0	35.0
	Somewhat Happy	38.0	66.0	52.0
	Unhappy and Disinterested	8.0	4.0	6.0
	Somewhat Unhappy	8.0	6.0	7.0
• Aim of Life	Doctor	30.0	10.0	20.0
	Engineer	20.0	-	10.0
	Police/Army	4.0	14.0	9.0
	Lawyer	8.0	-	4.0
	Teacher	32.0	54.0	43.0
	Have not thought of it	4.0	22.0	19.0
	Any other	2.0	-	1.0
• Able to Face Problems • Feeling about • Physical and Mental State	Yes	92.0	78.0	85.0
	No	8.0	22.0	15.0
	Excellent	46.0	30.0	38.0
	Good	32.0	42.0	36.0
	Fair	2.0	26.0	22.0

Results in Table- 1 indicate that majority of both school going as well as non-school going slum children were in the age range of 12-14 years and were Hindus. They belonged to nuclear family, were second borns and living with their parents. Their fathers were labourers and had monthly family income between Rs.1000-Rs.10, 000.

Both type of samples differed with regard to gender, working status and kind of house the child was living in. Majority of school going slum children were boys, living in houses made of bricks and had non-working mothers. On the contrary, majority of non-school going slum children were girls, living in thatched houses and had mothers who were working as maids in other houses.

Both type of subjects suffered from physical stress in the last few years. In spite of it, they admitted that they were able to face problems in their life and want to be a teacher in future. Furthermore, majority of school going slum children perceived their physical and mental state as excellent one. They admitted that they were happy and interested in their

life. On the other hand, majority of non-school going slum children perceived their physical and mental state as good and revealed that they were somewhat happy with themselves.

Table 2: Education of School Going Slum Children

(N = 50)

Variables	Categories	School Going Slum Children (%)
• Class	5th-8th	38.0
	8th -10th	52.0
	Above 10th	10.0
• Do you like to go to school?	Yes	94.0
	No	6.0

Result presented in Table- 2 indicate that majority of school going slum children were in 8th-10th standard and they liked going to school.

Table 3: Education of Non-School Going Slum Children

(N = 50)

Variables	Categories	School Going Slum Children (%)
• Did you go to school earlier?	Yes	44.0
	No	56.0
• If you get a chance, would you like to go school again?	Yes	42.0
	No	58.0
• Reason for not going school/dropping out	Lack of interest	40.0
	Poverty	30.0
	Lack of time due to work	10.0
	Any other	20.0
• How do you spend your day, if you do not go to school?	Working as labour	14.0
	Selling vegetables and fruits	8.0
	Rag picking	6.0
	Any other	70.0
	• Do anybody encourage you to go to school?	Yes
	No	52.0

Result presented in Table- 3 indicate that majority of non-school going slum children had gone to school earlier and would like to go to school if they get a chance again. As far as the reason for not going to school is concerned, majority of them reported lack of interest and poverty as main

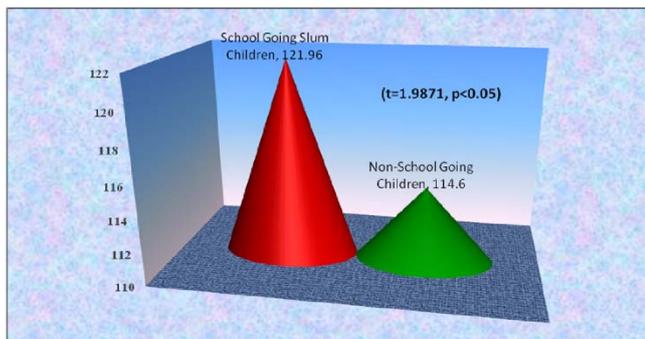
reasons. Majority spent their day doing household chores, playing with friends etc. A little more than half of the total sample reported that they were not encouraged by anybody to go to school. While those who were encouraged, revealed that they were motivated by their parents.

Table 4: Significance of Difference between Mean scores of Resilience of School Going Slum Children and Non-School Going Slum Children

S. No.	Variables	Dimension/Area	Sample of Slum Children	Mean	SD	SEM	t-value	p-value
1.	Resilience		School Going	121.96	18.8917	2.0912	1.9871	<0.05
			Non-School Going	114.6	22.7667	1.9822		

N = 100 (50 School Going Children + 50 Non-School Going Slum Children)

Results presented in Table-4 highlight that there existed significant difference ($t = 1.9871$, $p < 0.05$) between means scores of school going and non-school going slum children with regard to resilience. School going slum children were found to be more resilient than non-school going slum children.



The obtained results related to more resilience among school going slum children as compared to their non-school going counterparts are in line with the findings of Rouse (1998)^[5], Borman (2001)^[6], Eiseman, Cove and Popkin (2005)^[7] and Reis, Colbert and Thomas (2005)^[8]. Their findings highlight that school going slum children as compared to non-school going slum children are more resilient, have the ability to rise above life's challenges and show a positive response to adversity. On the other hand, contrary results have also been cited in a number of studies^[9-12]. They highlighted that despite deprivation, neglect and maltreatment, non-school going slum children managed to cope well. Ignoring the hardships of slum environment, many children see slum life as a better way of living. Slum children who do not go to school often work to earn money and this gives them a sense of worthiness which enhances their resilience.

The possible reasons for the present findings could be that school attending slum children can use school activities as a support for healthy adjustment and achievement. Extra-curricular activities conducted at school increases their resilience^[13]. Education helps them in developing better coping skills^[14].

Education not only enhances their knowledge for dealing with problems and challenges of life but extra-curricular activities of school helps them to bond with their school and teach them some important skills such as leadership and teamwork. It contributes in enhancement of their resilience^[15]. Furthermore, teachers in schools play very pivotal role in motivating children to succeed not only in academic domain but in general life too. These factors help in building up and boosting resilience in such children. The same fact has been endorsed by the findings of Crawford (2006)^[16].

Recommendations

The present study has implications for social welfare workers, educationists and policy makers. On the basis of results of the study, it can be recommended that awareness should be created in parents living in slums to motivate their children to go to school as this is the only way they can empower them to survive and bloom well inspite of adverse conditions.

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