

Intervention of a Non-Governmental Organisation and Its Implications for the Education of Slum Children

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Abstract

In this Study, the researcher attempted to find out the educational interventions of NGOs in slum areas in Lucknow city. Along with interventions, the researcher also examines the enrollment of students in schools run by NGOs, significant challenges affecting the education of slum children, and strategies to overcome them. To achieve the mentioned objectives, this study employed a Cross-Sectional Survey Research Design under Descriptive Survey Research Method to examine the NGOs in India focused on marginalised children education in Lucknow. It integrated qualitative and quantitative data triangulation using content analysis and open-ended interviews, revealing insights and classifying them into themes to find NGO practices and challenges in addressing educational disparities. The findings indicate that children residing in slum areas face substantial physical, economic, and social challenges that hinder their educational progress and overall well-being. Many of these children require comprehensive support to address academic and personal development needs. Various non-governmental Organisations (NGOs) actively assist these children, focusing on educational enhancement and character building. As a result of these interventions, children are improving their overall personality development. Despite these NGOs' various obstacles, they identify and implement effective strategies to overcome these challenges and support the children's development. This study provides valuable insights for education stakeholders, particularly educators, by promoting inclusive practices within the classroom. It identifies various strategies that can be employed to address the diverse challenges encountered by teachers when implementing inclusive educational principles.

Keywords: NGO, Slum children, Marginalised group, Educational interventions.

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INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

The United Nations first used the term NGO in 1945, but its deep roots were already present in India. Various non-profit Organisations, that is, Arya Samaj (1875), Friend-in Need Society (1858), and Prarthana Samaj (1864) were serving the continent for years. Several NGOs worked for citizens' education, health, and hygiene during British rule. After the independent establishment of the Central Social Welfare Board in 1953, their nation-building efforts and social welfare motives were encouraged (Asian Development Bank, 2009, p. 1-2).

The term NGO refers to a freely operated Organisation to serve social, cultural, educational, environmental, and economic causes. An individual or group often forms these Organisations without any government influence. They work on a non-profit basis and depend on government grants, voluntary donations, and contributions for their actions. NGOs work significantly for education, health, sanitation, and environmental sustainability. They exhibit autonomy and advocacy and focuses on social issues. India has diverse and vast geographical and sociological regions where the government lacks proper infrastructure and facilities. NGOs can operate in these regions on grassroot level and provide informal schools to reduce school dropout rate.

Various government schemes require large implementation systems to experiment with new models of education where the NGOs can implement these programmes in a more agile and innovative way by tailoring them as per the desired needs and contexts of the community.

As India's most populous state (Census, 2011), Uttar Pradesh faces significant educational challenges for children (International Labour Organisation, 2007). In India the primary livelihood for most families is agriculture but it cannot provide year-round employment, leading to the rural population's migration towards cities. They often settled in overcrowded urban areas termed as slums, which lack basic facilities like education, potable water supply, health, and sanitation.

NGOs help slums by providing educational support and facilitating the provision of services to these marginalised children living in slums. As reported in the Oxfam India Survey-2005 on Lucknow city (Lucknow Development Plan 2006, p. 35-37), over 10.18 Lac slum dwellers constitute 787 slums. These slums also contain more than 1 lakh school-going children who are in the profession of begging or child labour. These children do not want to beg, but their family conditions do not allow them to study. Non-governmental organisations help these children return to school, provide free tuition, and reduce the drop-out rate.

Table 1
Oxfam India Survey, Lucknow City
Development Plan 2006

S.No	Number of Slums	Percentage of Slums (Approx.)	Located On
1.	250	31.767%	Own land
2.	225	28.590%	Urban village
3.	195	24.770%	Multiple ownership
4.	115	14.612%	Railway land

Rationale of the study

As described in the Table 1 all the slums are located on unauthorised lands, the Slum dwellers often overlooked by the local bodies for the basic facilities, such as water, electricity, sewage system, health, sanitation, and importance of education, which is crucial for a child's holistic development. Many children remain illiterate, forced into labour like garbage collection or selling goods. Parents struggling for survival prioritise immediate income over education. In Lucknow, migration for better opportunities has led to overcrowding, further complicating these families' access to education and resources.

As mentioned in NEP, 2020 focuses on achieving universal primary and secondary education (Chapter 1, Point number 2.2), and the NGO is helpful in re-enrolment of drop-out students in public and

private schools to ensure universal primary and secondary education.

NCF-SE 2023 promotes inclusion in schools (Part-B, Chapter-4, Section-4.1 a, c, d, g), and NGOs can inspire educational stakeholders to celebrate inclusivity in their classes and schools. NGOs do not practice segregation in their schools and have discovered various ways to avoid segregation.

The Constitution of India guarantees that children aged 6 to 14 will get free and compulsory education, but it still needs better enforcement and NGOs can work complementary to enhance educational needs and support to children of marginalised groups living in slums (Article 21A and Iyer, 2018).

The children of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and other socio-economic disadvantage groups face several disadvantages and have higher dropout rates, the NGOs are working to enhance the equitable and inclusive education for them to reduce school dropout rate (NEP 2020 Chapter 6, Point 6.2.1 and 6.2.2).

OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

- **Non Governmental-Organisation (NGO):** A non-governmental Organisation (NGO) is a non-profit Organisation, group, or institution that operates independently from a government and has humanitarian or developmental objectives. Suppose an NGO is designated to implement a United Nations

Development Programme (UNDP) project. In that case, the NGO must have the legal status to operate by the laws governing NGOs in the programme country (UNDP). In this Study, the term NGO will refer to one selected NGO of Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh.

- **Education:** The term education is the sum total of the experiences which shapes the attitude and determines the conduct of an individual (Doharey *et al.*, 2023, p. 2–3) In this study the term Education will refer to the holistic and progressive development of a Child’s personality and attitude.
- **Slum:** A slum is an overcrowded, informal, and irregular settlement of groups of individuals at hazardous locations with inadequate housing structures (Ashutosh College, 2020).

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The following objectives were included in the present research work:

- To find out the educational interventions of NGOs in slum areas.
- To find out the enrolment of slum children in schools run by selected NGOs in slum areas.
- To find out the challenges and barriers affecting the education of slum children provided by schools run by NGOs.
- To explore the strategies and measures NGOs employ to overcome the challenges and barriers.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Method

In this research, the Descriptive Survey Research Method was used to determine what educational and other interventions of the NGOs are there for the education and development of marginalised children living in slums.

Research Design

A Cross-Sectional Survey Research Design was implemented to achieve the research objectives. Data triangulation (quantitative data from document/content analysis and qualitative data from open ended interviews) has been implemented to snapshot the in-depth understanding of the research problem at a single and specific time to achieve the research objectives.

Population

The population of this research was all the NGOs of Lucknow, that directly works to educate children from marginalised groups living in slums.

Sample

The Navreeta Foundation was selected from the population for data collection.

Sampling Technique

The purposive sampling technique of the non-probability sampling method was used to identify the individuals relevant to the Interview. The researcher has a predetermined purpose or objective to be studied,

and purposive sampling was helpful for the selection of interviewees with specific areas of interest. These interviewees included the founder, one volunteer and NGO teacher, and one psychologist and relationship manager who can explain the existing relationship of particular domains or themes to help provide specific insights.

For data collection, two phases were done:

Document/Content Analysis

Navreeta Foundation NGO was selected as a sample in this research, so the document/content analysis method was used to collect demographic data of the students enrolled in the school run by this NGO. The researchers used a self-made checklist and collected data from students' records. This content analysis helped to find out the Gender, Social Categories, Class, and Age of slum children. After getting their details, the slum children were classified on the following three criteria:

- (i) Based on Gender (Boys/Girls/Other)
- (ii) Based on Social Category (Gen./OBC/SC/ST)
- (iii) Based on Class in the school run by NGO (Foundational Grade/Primary Grade/Upper Primary Grade)

Interview

An open-ended structured interview was conducted with the founder, one

volunteer and NGO teacher, and one psychologist and relationship manager of Navreeta Foundation. This interview was conducted to discover the challenges and barriers affecting the education of slum children provided by schools run by NGOs and to explore the strategies and measures NGOs employ to overcome these challenges and barriers. The interview schedule was prepared to focus on specific themes. These themes were prepared by thematic coding of ideas that show significant patterns or concepts in the data. These themes have a broader perspective that will also capture more specific and correlated aspects of data. The classified themes are as follows:

- (i) Physical (Demography/Logistics/Infrastructure)
- (ii) Socio-cultural
- (iii) Interpersonal and Intrapersonal (Individual Differences/Health Issues/Prior Experience or Knowledge)
- (iv) Cognitive (Emotional/ Moral)
- (v) Economical (Vocational/ Occupational/Professional)
- (vi) Religious

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The researcher has analysed and interpreted the findings of document analysis and interviews, found specific results, and developed different insights. The researcher also analysed the data to identify specific patterns in the interviewees' answers. The

Percentage Statistical technique used for the analysis of the data collected with the help of document/content analysis, which answered the second objective; on the other hand, the first, third, and fourth objectives were achieved by interview data, which was analysed with the help of qualitative thematic data analysis technique.

FINDINGS

The objectives and findings of content analysis and open-ended interview of the participants regarding educational intervention of NGO for slum children are as follows:

First Objective and Finding of the Study

The Study’s first objective was to determine NGOs’ educational interventions in slum areas.

The educational interventions of NGOs in slum areas are found in item 1 of the interview schedule. The interviewees’ responses deduce that the NGO navigates children from marginalised groups to tide them over from social and cognitive stagnation. Personalised attention

is given to all the children, and teachers also work for the holistic development of children. NGOs provided education during the pandemic when COVID-19 was at its peak. The ‘Ek Nayi Disha’ initiative provides free education to slum children, running three batches and offering personalised attention. It conducts counseling sessions with parents to emphasise the importance of education and hosts awareness programmes on topics like menstruation and LGBTQ+. It has focused on academic excellence and character-building of slum children for the past five years.

Second Objective and Finding of the Study

The study’s second objective was to determine the enrolment of slum children in schools run by NGOs in Slum areas.

During the content analysis, the researcher collected demographic data about 68 students studying in schools run by NGO in two branches, Chinhut and Triveninagar. The collected data was arranged on three criteria with the help of a percentage statistical technique.

**Table 2
Classification of children**

Core Criteria	Levels	Percentage of students within level	No. of students within level
Based on Gender	Male	45.588%	31
	Female	54.411%	37
Based on Social Category	General	02.942%	2
	Other Backward Class	11.764%	8
	Scheduled Castes	85.294%	58
	Scheduled Tribes	0%	0

Based on Class in the School run by NGO	Foundational	26.470%	18
	Primary	41.176%	28
	Upper Primary	32.352%	22

Based on Gender (Boys/Girls)

The collected data was also classified based on gender, for example, boys and girls. Out of 68 children, 31 (45.588%) of the children are boys and 37 (54.411%) are girls. This data reveals that NGOs have more female children enrolled than males. Many girls from this group also work as house helpers, but female children are more likely to enroll in NGOs as changing social norms emphasise the importance of education for girls. Co-curricular activities like free distribution of sanitary napkins, arts and crafts classes, and good touch bad touch classes appeal more to girls.

Based on Social Category (Gen./OBC/SC/ST)

The collected data was also classified based on social categories such as General, Other Backward Class (OBC), Schedule Caste (SC), and Schedule Tribe (ST). A total of 58 (85.294%) children belong to the SC category, 8 (11.764%) children belong to the OBC category, and 2 (2.941%) children belong to the general category. There is no representation from the ST category. The maximum number of children studying in

schools run by this NGO belongs to the SC category.

This implies that NGOs play a very significant role in educating many children from the marginalised sections of society. The school is also very accessible for SC children and engages marginalised communities.

Based on Classes in Schools Run by NGOs (Foundational Grade/ Primary Grade/ Upper Primary Grade)

Ultimately, the collected data was classified based on classes or sections. These sections exist in NGOs, and they teach them in three sections:

Foundational Classes

Children between the age group of 4 and 7 years studied in this section. Most children are school-going and study from Anganwadi to Grade 2 in Government primary school.

Primary Classes

Children between the age group of 8–11 years studied in this section. All children are school-going and study in Grades between 3–5 in primary or private schools.

Upper Primary Classes

Children over 12 years old are taught in this section; in this section,

all (except one) children study in government or private schools.

Out of 68 children, 28 (41.176%) studied in the primary section, 22 (32.352%) studied in the upper primary section, and 18 (26.47%) studied in the foundation section.

Suppose we combine the children of the primary and upper primary sections. In that case, it constitutes about 73.529% of the total number of children, which suggests that many children from primary and upper primary classes want to study and need extra care and attention in classes. NGOs play a supplementary role in educating these children.

Third and Fourth Objectives of the Study

The Study's third objective was to discover the challenges and barriers affecting the education of slum children provided by schools run by NGOs, and the fourth objective of the Study was to explore the strategies and measures employed by NGOs to overcome the challenges and barriers.

The challenges and barriers affecting the education of slum children and the strategies and measures employed to overcome them have been explained below.

Physical Challenges and Strategies to Overcome Them

The interviewees uncovered several challenges faced by the NGO due to inadequate teaching infrastructure and unavoidable environmental conditions, such as rain, harsh summers, and chilly winters.

Children lack basic stationery and proper seating, which hinders their learning experience and overall educational progress. To overcome the above-mentioned challenges, they have adapted to seasonal changes; classes are scheduled flexibly, 8:30 AM in winter and 6:00 AM in summer. Community support is sought for conducting classes, and donations of stationery and old books from volunteers were encouraged. Children are also equipped with dictionaries to enhance their learning.

Social Challenges Strategies to Overcome Them

The initiative faces societal barriers, including refusal to use public parks for teaching, lack of community cooperation, and non-acceptance of slum children. The children also wear various social stigmas, prejudices, and stereotypes. Additionally, language unfamiliarity and cultural differences among children may lead to conflicts.

The initiative, cleaned the park and planted trees to reassure neighbours about its preservation. Collaboration with Nagar-Nigam was established, and community objectives were shared through *Nukkad-Nataks*. Celebrating festivals like Eid, Diwali, and Christmas fosters respect among students and promotes a sense of humanity. The children were taught about the local languages of each other, which helped in the establishment of a mutual network among them.

Interpersonal/Intrapersonal Challenges and Strategies to Overcome Them

Children lack confidence and motivation to study, often influenced by family conflicts and an illiterate background. Many are unaware of their skills and have negative prior knowledge, leading to difficulties in formal education and further exacerbating family differences. Few children were out of the formal education system, and many were learning poorly.

Children were appointed for event management, while psychologists provided counseling. NGO members conducted parental counseling and tried to correct students' knowledge gaps. Initiatives focused on re-enrolling drop-out children in schools and fostering connections between parents and educators.

Emotional/Moral Challenges and Strategies to Overcome Them

Self-comparison among children often leads to stereotypical thinking about masculinity and femininity, contributing to emotional instability and anxiety. Family and societal pressures for boys to earn and girls to marry young result in decreased classroom attention, with some children resorting to street vending.

Focus on skill identification and improvement through playtime with children and sessions by the "Open Minds" Organisation for confidence building. Emphasise parental counseling and emotional empathy toward children.

Economic Challenges and Strategies to Overcome Them

Financial problems are causing increased drop-out rates as children work to support their families. Parents struggle to afford education for all their children, so they encourage male children of the family to study only. It also highlights the need for financial assistance to ensure every child can access education.

Sponsorship from volunteers helps cover school fees, enabling the re-registration of children in government and public schools. Discussions with schools have also led to concessions for underprivileged students, supporting their education. Free tuition classes are available to help children enroll in schools like Kendriya Vidyalaya.

Religious Challenges and Strategies to Overcome Them

Initially, children struggled to socialise with peers from different backgrounds due to family values and religious challenges, leading to issues of non-acceptance among some students. They undergo various prejudices about the caste system and believe in the concept of lower caste, untouchability, etc.

Children were educated about religion, emphasising the importance of all faiths' beauty and unity. They were encouraged to avoid discrimination based on social categories or religion.

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

The educational implication of this Study is as follows:

For Policymakers

As National Education Policy (NEP), 2020 (Chapter 1, Point no. 1.1) mentioned, Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) is not available for young children, especially those from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, so the finding of this Study about the enrolment of children shows various aspects of need challenges of marginalised sections, which can guide policymakers to design educational programmes and allocating resources as per the need of the communities.

Achieving Universal Foundation Literacy and Numeracy

The highest priority of the education system is to achieve universal foundational literacy and numeracy in primary schools by 2025 (NEP, 2020, Chapter 2, Point no. 2.2), therefore, the NGOs help in re-enrolment of the drop-out children in government and private schools to achieve the goal without further delay.

For Curriculum Implementation

Proper infrastructure and participation ensure retention among girls and students from socio-economically disadvantaged groups (NEP, 2020, Chapter 3, Point no. 3.4). The findings of this Study also indicate the lack of infrastructure in specific areas, which can help the

curriculum implementers to provide physical resources wherever required.

For Parents

This research amplifies and gives a voice to marginalised groups living in slums. Many peers and families can be seen to have observed significant changes in children's overall personality and academic reputation. When these groups understood the significance of literacy, they took a step forward to be educated. The cycle of poverty and illiteracy will automatically break, and they will become a part of mainstream society.

Develop Spirit of Service in Individuals

A citizen should develop ethical and constitutional values, a spirit of service, and a productive contribution to society (NEP, 2020, Chapter 9, Point no. 9.1.1). This research culminates the exigency of marginalised groups and endeavours in partnership with society. Citizens can acknowledge their obligation towards underprivileged sections and expand their participation.

For Teachers

The teachers should celebrate inclusion in their schools (Part-A, Chapter 4, Section 4.1, Point no. a, c, d, g). The NGOs include children from all social groups, such as middle class and underprivileged girls, specially abled, etc. No one is discriminated on the basis of age, sex, gender, religion, or social status. This promotes inclusion among teachers. Using

local language can reduce drop-out rates in primary schools (NEP, 2020, Chapter 3, Point no. 3.4). The NGOs also use local language to increase participation and reduce drop-out rates.

For Children

Education should aim for holistic development and character building rather than cognitive development (NEP, 2020, Chapter 4, Point no. 4.4). This study contributes to the acknowledgment of all the stakeholders of NGOs who are effectively enhancing children's personalities and working to promote children's holistic development. More children can be inspired after seeing the positive change in children after being part of these schools.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the role of an NGO in educating and developing the personalities of slum children. The findings reveal that NGO plays a crucial role in navigating children from marginalised groups and work towards their holistic development. They provide support in various forms, that is, the '*Ek Nayi Disha*' initiative and re-enrolment of school drop-out children. They work for the character building of children and play a vital role in spreading awareness regarding sensitive topics, such as LGBTQ+, animal care, and menstrual hygiene.

The findings of document analysis reveal information about the enrolment of slum children

in schools run by NGO. The NGO has more number of girls enrolled than boys, revealing preferable and appealing conditions for girls. The NGO provides safety, knowledge, and awareness regarding various issues. The NGO has a majority of slum children (85.294%) from Schedule Caste, promoting inclusion of marginalised communities of society in mainstream education. Most slum children (73.529%) were studying in primary and upper primary sections of schools run by the NGO, disclosing the extra need for care and attention in this age range. The interviewees' responses reported various challenges and strategies to overcome them. The significant physical challenges were inadequate stationery and infrastructure for conducting classes and harsh weather conditions. The NGO adopted a flexible schedule for classes and promoted voluntary donations. Numerous community stigmas and prejudices affected the NGO initiatives; community and authority collaboration promoted inclusion and addressed these gaps. Poor prior knowledge, family and community conflicts, and low self-esteem affected their education. Counseling sessions, skill-building activities, and parental engagement supported the children to gain confidence and eradicate learning poverty. Financial challenges were overcome with the help of sponsorship and school concessions. Religious prejudice, stereotypes, and

discrimination affected the learning environment, but the awareness programme helped significantly in the promotion of unity and mutual respect towards diversity. The study concludes that NGOs do not play a supplementary role but a complementary role in government efforts to support the education of underprivileged children.

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