Documenting The Lives of out-of-School Adolescents – A Study From Surat City Slums

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ABSTRACT

Education is the fundamental requirement for human development, broadening of employment opportunities and the progress of a nation. However, school dropout has remained a consistent phenomenon of education system in India. In urban areas, the adolescents from slum areas are more likely to drop out of school. Failure to complete high school not only produces negative outcome for the individuals but also widens the existing social and economic inequalities. This paper contributes to the understanding of lives of "out of school" urban adolescent boys and girls. The socio-demographic profile of out-of-school adolescents throws light on "who are they."

The field based cross-sectional study was conducted among the drop out adolescents (age group-10-18 years old, n=76) from urban slums, Udhana Zone, Surat city. The study was conducted with semi structured interview schedule. The quantitative and qualitative analysis directs various insights for improving the efficiency of education system, the educational planners need to understand and identify the social groups that are more susceptible to dropout and the reasons for their dropping out. The programme strategies should be designed taking into account the rural and urban differences for a successful implementation of multiple education and skill development schemes. More community-based studies are required to have an insight into the profile of students who drop out from schools, so that efforts can be directed to reduce their vulnerabilities and plan integrated interventions for them.

Key words - Adolescents, Out of school, School Dropout, Surat city,Urban poor.

INTRODUCTION

According to the National Survey on Estimation of Out of school children conducted by Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD-2014)6 million children in age group of 6-14 years are out of school in India (NSS, 2014).Out-of-school numbers consist of both the children

who are dropped out and the children who have never attended schools.

Adolescence is the period in human growth and development that occurs after childhood and before adulthood, from 10 to 19 years. It is a period of dynamic brain development. However, the dropout from school also happens at adolescent age group and found more among girls than boys. For example, as the recent Annual Survey of Education Report - 2017 findings suggest, that on average the difference between enrolment levels of boys and girls at age 14 are declining, however, by the age of 18, 32% girls are not enrolled in school compared to 28% boys (Pratham, 2017)

Urban India has, 35.9 million (27.9%)early adolescents(10–14 years age group) and 29.6 million (23.1 %)late adolescents (15 –18 years age group) NIUA, 2016). Adolescents in slums are marginalized amongst them. As the base of city life itself is economy driven, most of the adolescents are school dropouts and working. Different factors are responsible for the life they live. The working and living conditions are not always good. Their vulnerability as children might make them prone to victims for different crimes. The conditions differ by gender. The girls also face greater social disadvantage. It is commonly observed that traditional gender norms push girls into helping with household chores and sibling care, leading to irregular attendance that eventually results in dropouts. Early marriage, lack of safety in schools and low aspirations related to girls' education also lead them to drop out.

In this context, the present study was taken to document empirically the lives of adolescents who are out of school, so that policies and programs can effectively be planned to address them.

2   Objectives & Research Questions

Keeping the above context in perspective, the present research was carried out with following specific objectives –

- To generate socio-demographic profile of adolescents who have been dropped out of school in urban slums.

- To throw light on their daily routine life and to document their perceptions, opinions and expectations.

- To determine the risk factors associated with school dropout among adolescents

- To assess the utilization of existing schemes for adolescents, with reference to Kishori Shakti Yojana by ICDS for the adolescent girls.

Research Methodology

Research Setting

The present field based cross-sectional study was carried out in three slums of Municipal Corporation of Surat city in Gujarat during period December 2017 to

February 2018. It is known as the fourth fastest growing city of the world (CMF, 2017), the city has a population of 44, 61 026 as per the Census 2011. The city shows 55.29% recent decadal growth rate and around 37% of the total population reside in slums and slum like areas (SMC, 2019). Surat is considered to be the city with highest in-migrant population across India (Santha, 2015). The administrative South zone [Udhana] has most vulnerable population (WRF, 2015) the three slums were selected with purposive sampling from this zone - Morarji Vasahat, Subhashnagar, and Vallabh Vasahat. The same slums were expected to be a part of future interventions hence, were selected. All three slums can be characterized as established informal settlements located in the textile area of the city, where people from several slum communities come to zone for work. Most residents have lived together for more than 30 years. Permission from Surat Municipal Corporation was taken before beginning of the study.

The paper addresses the following questions – How does the life of adolescents in urban slums who are school dropouts, and working look like? What are the different reasons they chose or had to choose dropout from school? What are their daily life struggles? What can be the possible ways through which they can be empowered and linked to existing services in better ways?

Sampling Procedure

Study population were adolescents who had been dropped out of school from more than a year. The list of school dropouts was not available. So, it was decided to do house to house survey for active search of dropped out adolescents in households of all three selected slums. The team of 4 surveyors collected the data. For each slum, a reference landmark was identified and each household was visited. The head of the family was asked two questions – i) if adolescent age group individual belongs to family ii) if yes, whether that individual is school going or not. Following criteria ensured the selection of respondents –

Inclusion criteria

- Age group of adolescence – 10 to 18 years old.

- The respondent must be dropped out from school from past 1 year.

Exclusion criteria

- If respondent is not willing to participate in research.

- If respondent has never attended the school.

- If respondent is uncertain about school dropping out process or if decision is not made.

Those households were marked and visited again which were having individual/s meeting inclusion criteria but were not present in house during identification round. If a household had, more than 1 dropped out adolescents, all were interviewed separately.

In all, n=76, (8.16 %) adolescents were found "out of school" from sampling universe n=931.

Tools and Data Collection

Informed oral consent was procured from parent/guardian after explaining them the purpose of study and ensuring anonymity of the respondent. Then, in-person interviews were conducted in vernacular Gujarati/ Hindi languages.

Research tools included semi-structured interview schedule. Each schedule had three sections – Common section for boys and girls, separate for boys and separate for girls. Interview schedule had different sections on socio-demographic profile, schooling experience, reason for dropout, current daily routine and aspirations of respondent. The girls were asked specific questions about Kishori Shakti Yojana. The schedule contained quantitative as well as open ended qualitative questions.

The schedule had been translated in vernacular language Gujarati and was pretested with 10 respondents residing in a slum different from 3 selected slums.

Learning from pre-testing were incorporated and questions were modified accordingly.

Data Analysis

Data were entered, tabulated and analysed in Excel 2016. The analysis was done overall and with gender segregation. Qualitative questions were coded and analyzed in order to form the descriptive narrative.

Findings and Implications

Table no.1
Socio-Demographic Profile of (Respondents)
out-of-school adolescents

Variable	N=76	%
Age		
11-14 years(Early Adolescents)	17	22.37
15-18 years(Late Adolescents)	59	77.63
Gender		
Boys	26	34.21
Girls	50	65.79
Religion		
Hindu	67	88.16
Muslim	9	11.84
First language		
Marathi	30	39.47
Hindi	20	26.32
Urdu	1	1.32
Gujarati	25	32.89

Family size		
<4	18	23.68
>5	58	76.32
Type of family		
Nuclear	38	50.00
Extended nuclear	37	48.68
Joint	1	1.32
Ownership of house by the family		
Owned	52	68.42
Rented	24	31.58
Possession of Mobile phone		
Smartphone	16	21.05
Regular phone	16	21.05
No mobile	44	57.89

The Right to Education (RTE) act guarantees free and compulsory education for children belonging to 6 to 14 years age group. However, present study reports 22.37 % adolescents from early adolescence age group (11-14 years) were dropped out from school.

Total 77.6% of adolescents between the ages of 15 and 18 years, that is, late adolescence phase were dropouts.The proportion of dropping out is higher during the age where secondary and higher secondary schooling is expected. The mechanisms to bridge out-of-school children to school operate during the elementary schooling, but it's absent for secondary education.

Majority of respondents(88.16%) belonging to Hindu religion and remaining (11.84%) were of Muslim religion.

Majority(39%)used Marathi as primary language followed by Guajarati (32%)Hindi and Urdu for daily conversation.

Girls tend to drop out more (65.79%) as compared to boys. Further it can be noted, as shown in figure 1, that girls tend to be out of school at early age as compared to boys. One of the possible reasons is family size. The family size has a negative impact on schooling of the children. Higher proportion of nuclear and extended nuclear families(50% and 49% respectively), probably need to earn more and take care for siblings are possible "urban" specific barriers for schooling. As suggested by figure 2, the impact is higher in girls.
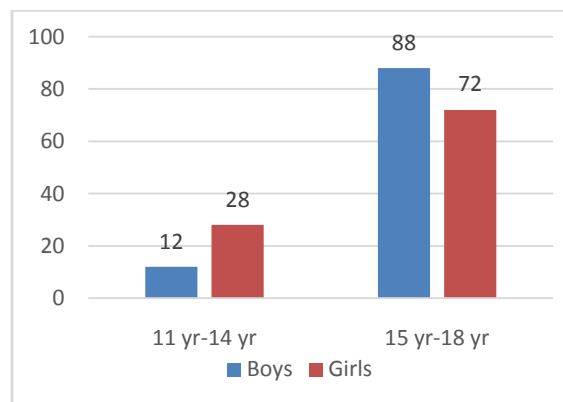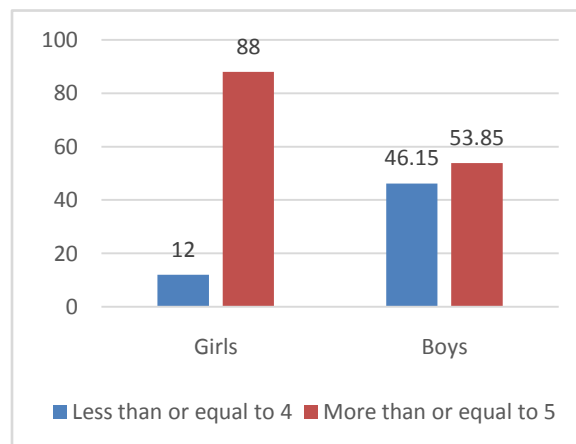
Fig: 1 Gender and Age Distribution

Fig.2 Family Size Distribution as per gender

In total, 68% adolescents lived in their own housing and 32% had to reside in rented household. No ownership of separate mobile phone was reported by 58% adolescents while among users, 21% reported having Smartphone.

Table no. 2

Schooling & daily routine profile of respondents

Variable	N=76	%
Standard of dropped out		
Dropped out during primary (1st- 4th)	15	19.74
Dropped out during upper primary and secondary (5th-10th)	61	80.26
Type of School		
Government	55	72.37
Private or trust	21	27.63
Education completed in		
Native	6	7.69
Surat City	70	92.31
Dropout since		
Recent dropouts (in last 3 years)	60	78.95
More than 3 years	16	21.05
% of last exam passed		
Below 60	46	60.53
60-80	23	30.26
Above 80	7	9.21
Occupation		
Unemployed	12	15.79
Self employed	8	10.53
Daily wage labourer	25	32.89
House work and helping parents in earning	30	39.47
Housewife	1	1.32

Most of them(80.26%) dropped out during upper primary or secondary stage of education. In total, 72.37% completed education in Government schools while 27.63% of them had studied in private or trust operated schools. Out of total, 92.31% had schooling in Surat city only while 7.69% had education at their native place and dropped out when their family migrated to Surat. Dropping out was recent (in last 3 years period) for almost 79% and remaining are out of school since more than 3 years. In last examination, majority, 60.53% scored below 60 percent marks, around 30% of them scored marks between 60 to 80 percent and around 9% had to dropout despite scoring more than 80 percent of marks.
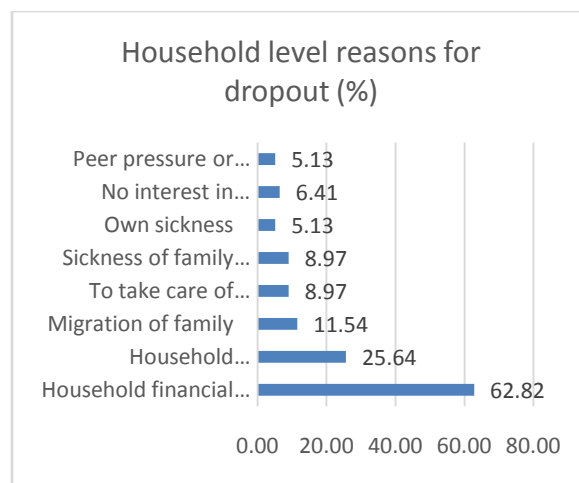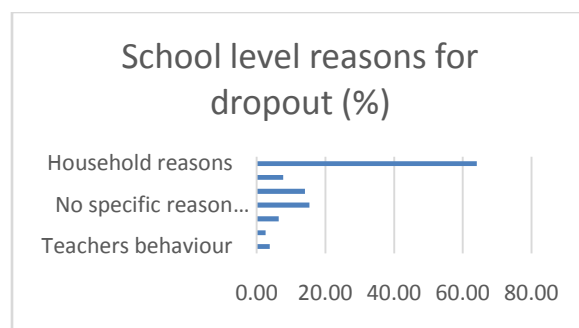
Fig: 3 House hold level reasons for Drop Out

Household level reasons for dropout (%)

Peer pressure or…	5.13
No interest in…	6.41
Own sickness	5.13
Sickness of family…	8.97
To take care of…	8.97
Migration of family	11.54
Household…	25.64
Household financial…	62.82

Fig: 4 School level reasons for drop out

School level reasons for dropout (%)

Household reasons
No specific reason…
Teachers behaviour

The multiple responses were recorded at household level; poor financial conditions (62.82%), other household responsibilities than earning (25.64%), Migration of family (11.54%), Taking care of younger siblings (8.97%), Sickness (5.13%), Sickness of family members (8.97%), Willingness to earn money (6.41%), Other friends are earning money (5.13%). 79% reported no school level reason for dropout but only the household reason. The findings relate with national survey on estimation of out-of-school children where, poverty/economic reason is cited by majority of head of the household in households having an out of school child.

School related reasons for drop out were; School is far (68.75%), High fees (37.50%), Difficulty in subjects comprehension (31.25%), teachers behavior (18.75%), Classmates behavior (12.50%). Safety from crimes and personal protection issues restrict parents to continue education, especially in case of girls when the school is far. Multiple languages and lack of cultural competency might hinder in subject comprehension.

In case of schooling experience, 73% reported enjoyed their school. Majority respondents used to like play(56%), Friends (41%), followed by teaching, teachers support, and computer lab. Least reported were subjects, food and books. If given a chance in future, 55% reported that they would like to rejoin school.
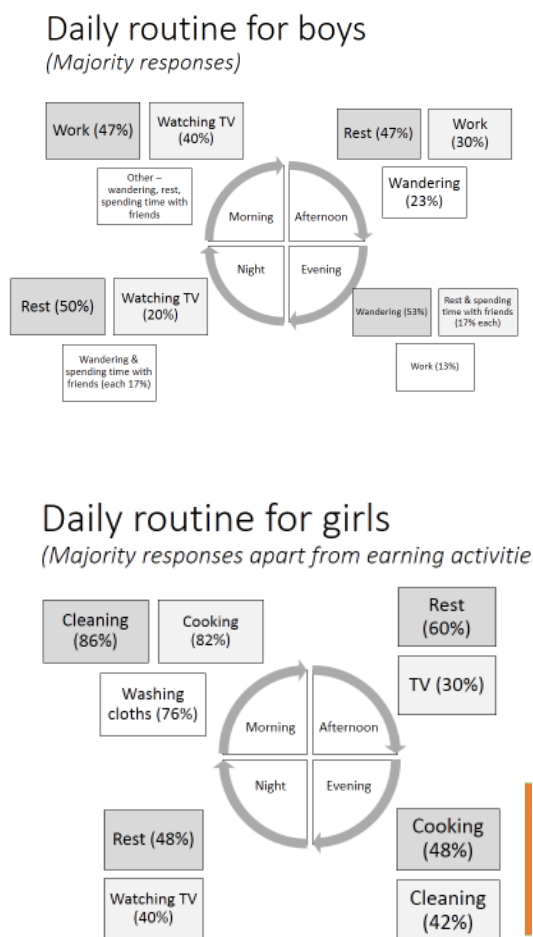
Occupational Status :

Out of the total respondents, 39% adolescents were neither in school nor in economic activity themselves but they were helping parents in household chores and earning. In all, 16% reported that they were unemployed and searching for work. 43% reported either they are self-employed or earning from the labour work.

Current work typology for boys was looms, waiter work in hotel, sari folding work, casual laborers, and sales in textile market, welding work, and working in factory. For girls, it was, Jari work (embroidery), housemaid, selling goods, tiffin service, work in factories, mahendi to brides.

Some observations about work nature were- Many were doing the seasonal jobs. All boys were working outside for earning money either themselves or with parents. Work pattern was changed as per need and household requirement. Many were engaged in two or more jobs during year. 42.5% don't travel outside home, majority of them were girls, 35% use bus or auto for travelling. Dropouts in girls was also found linked to early marriage and child bearing.

Fig 5 - Daily routine mapping for boys & girls

Daily routine for boys
(Majority responses)

Daily routine for girls
(Majority responses apart from earning activitie)

As seen in the above figure, in case of boys, there was least time allocated to household chores and sports or play. 5 boys out of 26 were not working. 64% of working boys – work for 8 hours or more, 72% are new workforce (less than 3 years), 12% reported formal training for work. 92% were on daily wages.

Girls face duel responsibility of earning as well as household responsibilities. They help parents in earning activities, looking after siblings- is done throughout the day or as and when required. 26% of girl's respondent work outside home for earning as housemaids or in factories, mostly in afternoons. During formative field interactions many girls asked for opportunity of vocational training for them. So they were asked -Girls were specifically asked about willingness to attend skill based courses. 92% showed willingness. 74% could specify their interests. Computer (30%), Beauty parlor (30%), Sewing (20%)and other- , mahendi, spoken English.

Hobbies included watching TV (72.5%), cooking (36%,dominant in girls), Sports (36%, dominant in boys), Mobile phone use (21%) while driving, art and substance use were other reported hobbies. 16% of boys reported their active association with local voluntary group or mandal which is active during festivals or for sports.

Experience of Kishori Shakti Yojana among girls :

In case of Kishori Shakti Yojana run by ICDS, 84% of girls knew about existence and location of nearbyAnganwadi Centre (AWC); 60% of them had visited AWC and know their Anganwadi Worker. 24% were aware about "Kishori Shakti Yojana" which is meant for adolescent girls. However, for previous week of study, there was no reporting of consumption of iron folic acid tablet or attendance of meeting in prior week of survey by any of the respondent. Girls were asked questions related to early

marriage. 22% heard case of early marriage in their neighborhood during last year. 58% not aware about effects of early marriage. 26% knew that "it is harmful" but couldn't specify the reason. 16% could specify harmful effects in terms of maternal and child ill-health, malnutrition.

Discussions

Study is one of few urban specific studies in this arena. The study comprised of drop out adolescents, majority of respondents dropped out between the ages of 15 and 18 years i. e. late adolescence phase mainly during secondary stage of education. Further girls tend to drop out more as compared to boys. Study implied distance of school as a significant factor for discontinuation of schooling. The economic condition of family also found an influencing factor for drop out. The adolescences from poor financial background tend to dropping out. Hence, multi-dimensional reasons are inducing drop out among urban poor adolescence. Findings on the occupational status confirming the socio- cultural pattern of patriarchal society, boys allocated least time to household chores and more time to sports or play. Majority of working boys found working for 8 hours or more and mostly on daily wages this indicates the complex issue of child labor and exploitation. The findings also directed gender role, girls are found accomplishing duel burden of earning as

well as household responsibilities. They help parents in earning activities and looking after siblings throughout the day or as and when required.

Out of the total respondents, approximate half of the adolescents were neither in school nor in economic activity themselves but they were helping parents in household chores and earning. In all, 16% reported that they were unemployed and searching for work.

Majority of girls knew about existence and location of nearby Anganwadi Centre (AWC) and also visited AWC and knew their Anganwadi Worker. Only few percentage of girls were aware about "Kishori Shakti Yojana" which is meant for adolescent girls. However, none of them reported the consumption of iron folic acid tablet or attendance of meeting in prior week of survey by any of the respondent.

Conclusion :

It can be stated briefly that researchers, academicians, policy makers, and program implementers need to perceive the lives of out - of - school adolescences from multidisciplinary perspectives – sociological, educational, economical, and psychological- to understandthe complexity of multidimensional influencing factors for their present lives.

There is an utmost need for Innovative approach to ensure integration of education,

life skill education and vocational skill as an urban model in reaching out to this vulnerable group. Despite the government efforts through multiple schemes, lack of awareness among beneficiaries is the foremost reason for not reaching out to the needy.

More community-based, specific for urban poor, adolescents are required to developan insight into the profile of students who drop out from schools, the access andreach to education issues, socio economic contributors to drop out and aspirations of dropout childrenso that efforts can be directed to reduce their vulnerabilities and plan integrated interventions towards child friendly policy and programs.

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