

Migration & Educational Marginalization in Urban India: A Case of Kolkata Slums

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ABSTRACT

Migration has long shaped the socio-economic landscape of Kolkata, drawing large numbers of rural populations from West Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand and other states into the city's informal settlements in search of livelihood opportunities. These migrant clusters, concentrated in the slum pockets of Kolkata, represent some of the most disadvantaged urban communities, where children face multiple layers of deprivation. Access to education for migrant children remains particularly challenging due to a combination of socio-economic vulnerability, insecure housing, irregular income, and inadequate basic services in slum environments. This study investigates the nature of educational exclusion faced by migrant children in selected slums of Kolkata and identifies emerging opportunities for inclusion. Using a mixed-method approach, primary data were collected through household surveys, interviews with parents, teachers and community workers, and field observations within three major slum clusters. Secondary data has been studied from Census reports, KMC documents and government education statistics for the analysis. The findings reveal four major barriers economic constraints forcing children into labour or household responsibilities, cultural and linguistic differences that create classroom difficulties, institutional challenges such as lack of documents, admission delays and poor school infrastructure and environmental hardships, including congested housing and unsafe neighbourhoods. Despite these obstacles, several enabling factors were identified—government schemes like the Mid-Day Meal and RTE provisions, NGO-run learning centres, supportive teachers, and strong educational aspirations among migrant families. The study argues that strengthening documentation processes, improving school infrastructure within slum clusters, introducing language support programmes, and designing flexible schooling options for seasonal migrants are crucial for enhancing educational access. Addressing these policy gaps

would not only reduce educational exclusion but also help integrate migrant children more meaningfully into the urban education system.

Keywords: migration, social exclusion, migrant children, education access, Kolkata slums, urban marginality.

Introduction

Urban migration has played a transformative role in shaping India's metropolitan landscapes. Large cities such as Delhi, Mumbai, and Kolkata continue to receive substantial flows of rural migrants driven by livelihood insecurity, agrarian distress, and limited employment opportunities in their places of origin (Deshingkar & Akter, 2009; Srivastava & Sasikumar, 2003). Kolkata, one of the oldest metropolitan centres, has historically served as a major destination for migrant workers from both within West Bengal and neighbouring states including Bihar, Jharkhand, and Odisha (Census of India, 2011; Kundu, 2011). The city's industrial base, service sector expansion, and availability of informal employment continue to attract migrant labour despite declining formal job opportunities (Breman, 2013).

A significant proportion of these migrants settle in slums and informal settlements where housing is cheap but often insecure, overcrowded, and lacking in basic amenities such as sanitation, water supply, and solid waste management (UN-Habitat, 2020; Banerjee, 2011). Slums represent socially and spatially excluded urban spaces marked by multidimensional deprivation, limited state support, and weak access to public services (Thorat & Newman, 2010). For migrant families living in these precarious environments, education becomes a crucial pathway for improving socio-economic mobility and breaking cycles of poverty. Education is widely recognised as a key instrument for reducing inequality and enhancing long-term life chances, particularly for the urban poor (Tilak, 2002; PROBE Report, 1999). However, structural constraints embedded in slum environments often restrict children's ability to access and sustain schooling.

Statement of Problem

- Despite multiple national and state-level policies promoting universal education, migrant children in Kolkata's slums remain largely excluded from formal schooling.
- High dropout rates, low enrolment, and irregular attendance are consistently observed in migrant-dominated slum settlements.
- Educational challenges are intensified by several migration-related vulnerabilities, including:

- frequent relocations and unstable residence,
 - livelihood insecurity pushing children into work,
 - parental illiteracy and limited educational awareness,
 - language barriers faced by children from non-Bengali-speaking states.
- Schools near slum pockets often lack adequate infrastructure, such as classrooms, teaching materials, teachers, and sanitation facilities.
 - These schools are generally not equipped to support first-generation learners, who require additional academic and emotional support.
 - Consequently, a strong education–exclusion link becomes visible, where structural disadvantages of slum life restrict learning opportunities.
 - This leads to poor educational outcomes, reflecting systemic inequalities in urban education.
 - Understanding both the barriers and emerging opportunities for inclusion is essential to frame effective strategies for ensuring that migrant children are not left behind in Kolkata’s rapidly transforming urban context.

Objectives of the Study

1. **To examine the socio-economic and migration characteristics of migrant households living in selected slums of Kolkata.**
2. **To identify the major barriers that restrict migrant children’s access to formal education**, including economic, social, cultural, and institutional factors.
3. **To analyse patterns of enrolment, attendance, and dropout** among migrant children in slum communities.
4. **To explore the role of migration-related vulnerabilities**—such as frequent relocation, livelihood instability, and language barriers—in shaping educational outcomes.
5. **To assess the availability, accessibility, and quality of educational facilities** in and around the selected slum clusters.

Literature Review

Internal migration is a defining feature of India’s socio-economic landscape. Rural–urban migration has accelerated due to agrarian distress, lack of employment opportunities, and diversification of urban labour markets (*Deshingkar & Akter, 2009*). Major metropolitan centres—such as Delhi, Mumbai, and Kolkata—have served as long-standing destinations for labour migrants, particularly from economically backward regions of Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, and eastern Uttar Pradesh (*Kundu, 2011; Census of India, 2011*). Migrant workers predominantly

enter the informal sector, which is characterised by casual labour, insecure employment, and poor wages (*Breman, 2013*). For many migrant families, limited income and insecure tenure force them to settle in slums or squatter settlements, creating a link between migration and urban marginality.

Urban slums reflect multi-layered deprivation, encompassing overcrowded housing, inadequate sanitation, limited access to clean water, and minimal state support (*UN-Habitat, 2020*). Scholars argue that slums are not merely physical spaces but structures of socio-economic exclusion where residents face institutional neglect, restricted access to citizenship rights, and marginal participation in urban development (*Thorat & Newman, 2010; Banerjee, 2011*). Migrant households face additional vulnerabilities due to lack of documentation, weak social networks, and limited political voice (*Samaddar, 2017*). These conditions shape the daily realities of migrant children and influence their educational opportunities and capabilities.

A substantial body of research highlights the challenges faced by migrant children in accessing education. Studies note that migrant children exhibit high rates of dropout, irregular attendance, and delayed enrolment due to livelihood insecurity, mobility patterns, and household responsibilities (*Smita, 2010; Jha & Shah, 2006*). Frequent relocation disrupts educational continuity, while language differences and parental illiteracy reduce children's ability to cope with school curricula (*Nambissan, 2009*). Seasonal migrants face particular disadvantages as their mobility prevents stable enrolment in government schools (*Chandrasekhar & Sharma, 2014*). In urban areas, the education–exclusion nexus is further reinforced by poverty, congested living environments, and the absence of supportive learning spaces (*PROBE Report, 1999*).

Research on urban slums indicates that schooling barriers are multidimensional. Infrastructure deficits—such as overcrowded classrooms, teacher shortages, lack of toilets, and absence of teaching-learning materials—affect learning outcomes for slum children (*NUEPA, 2014*). Administrative barriers, including requirements for identity documents, create additional hurdles for migrant families who often lack stable residence proof (*Smita, 2010*). Socio-cultural factors, such as early entry into labour, gender norms restricting girls' mobility, and limited educational aspirations among parents due to economic insecurity, further restrict school participation. Scholars emphasise that these barriers are systemic and require structural interventions rather than isolated schemes (*Tilak, 2002*).

Despite barriers, several enabling spaces exist within urban slums. Government programmes—such as the Mid-Day Meal Scheme, free textbooks under the SSA/RTE framework, and scholarships—encourage school participation among disadvantaged groups (*RTE Act, 2009; MHRD, 2013*). NGOs, community-based organisations, and informal learning centres provide bridging support, remedial classes, and counselling services for migrant children (*Singh &*

Mukherjee, 2018). Research also indicates that migrant parents increasingly recognise education as a pathway to upward mobility and prioritise their children's learning when institutional support is available (*Nambissan, 2014*). These opportunities highlight potential entry points for enhancing educational inclusion in slum communities.

Research Gap

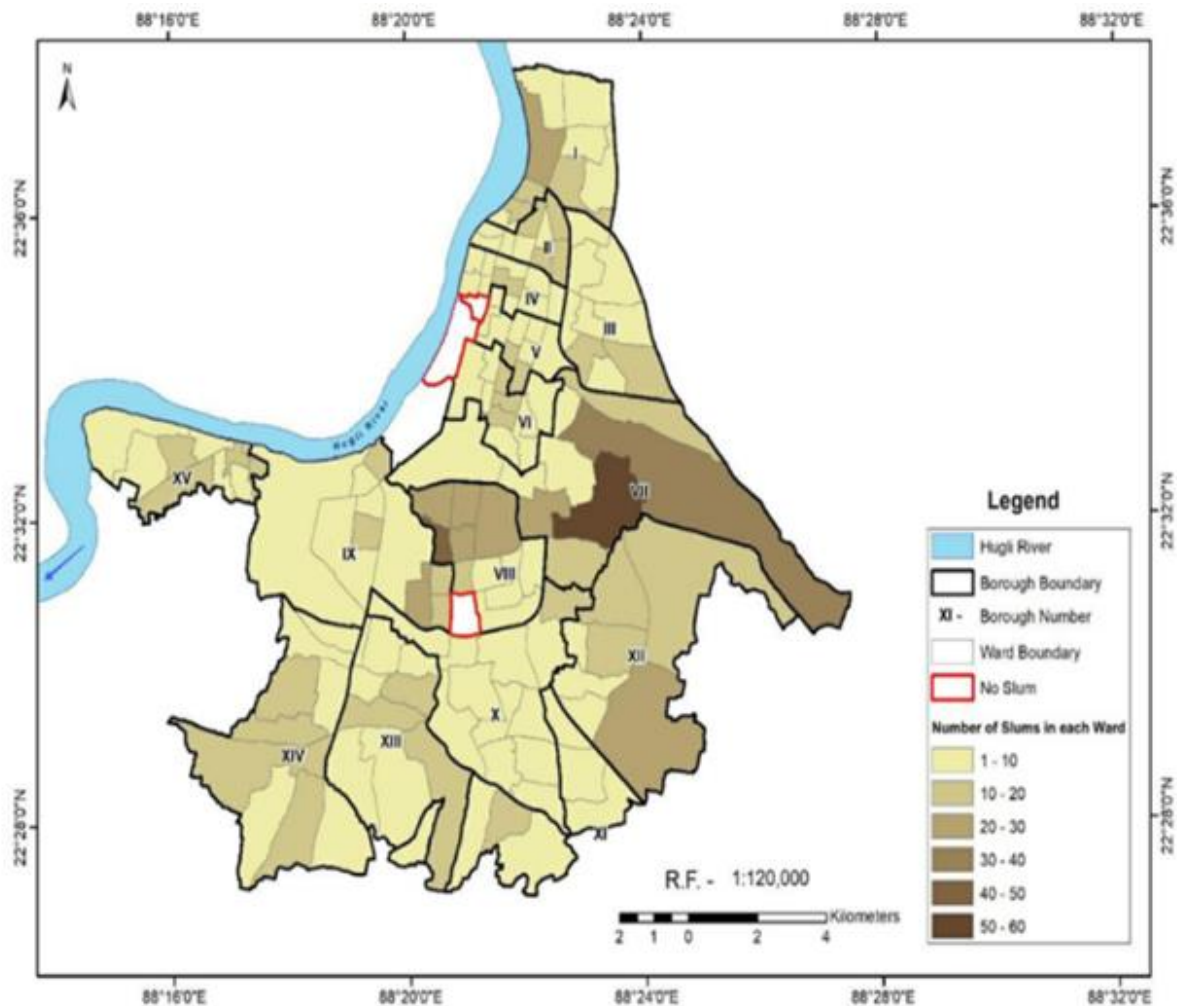
- *Limited city-specific and post-COVID empirical evidence on learning outcomes:* Existing studies on migrant children's education in urban India, including Kolkata, largely concentrate on school enrolment, attendance, and access rather than actual learning outcomes such as literacy and numeracy. Moreover, much of the Kolkata-focused literature predates the COVID-19 pandemic, which significantly disrupted schooling for migrant households living in slums. There is a lack of recent, micro-level empirical research that captures how pandemic-related school closures and digital exclusion have altered educational trajectories of migrant children in Kolkata's slums (ASER, 2022; UNICEF, 2021).
- *Insufficient longitudinal analysis of migration dynamics and children's education:* While migration is often linked to both economic opportunity and social vulnerability, existing research provides limited longitudinal or causal evidence on how different forms of migration (seasonal, circular, inter-state) affect children's schooling continuity and learning outcomes in slum contexts. Studies tend to treat migration as a static condition rather than a dynamic process, resulting in an incomplete understanding of how repeated mobility and duration of stay in Kolkata influence educational exclusion or inclusion over time (Desai et al., 2010; Smita, 2008).
- *Inadequate examination of institutional and administrative barriers to educational entitlements:* Although policies such as the Right to Education Act (RTE), Mid-Day Meal Scheme, and state-level scholarships exist, migrant children in slums often face difficulties in accessing these benefits due to lack of domicile certificates, Aadhaar linkage issues, school transfer complications, and language barriers. However, systematic, ward-level assessments of how these administrative constraints operate specifically in Kolkata's slums remain scarce, leaving a critical policy-implementation gap unaddressed (NUEPA, 2016; UNICEF, 2019).
- *Under-researched role of language and curriculum mismatch for migrant children:* Migrant children in Kolkata's slums frequently come from non-Bengali speaking states, resulting in language barriers that affect classroom participation and learning outcomes. While language is acknowledged as an exclusionary factor in national-level studies, there

is a notable absence of localized research that quantifies its impact or evaluates remedial measures such as bridge courses or multilingual pedagogies in Kolkata's slum schools (Smita, 2008; Mohanty, 2010).

- *Limited attention to intra-slum heterogeneity and intersectionality:* Most studies treat slum children as a homogeneous group, overlooking how educational exclusion varies by gender, caste, religion, length of migration, and housing tenure. Migrant girls, children from marginalized castes, and those living in insecure or non-notified slums often experience layered disadvantages. Empirical research that captures these intersecting vulnerabilities within Kolkata's slums remains limited, reducing the explanatory power of existing findings (UNICEF, 2012; Thorat & Newman, 2010).
- *Lack of rigorous evaluation of NGO and community-based educational initiatives:* Several NGOs and community organizations operate informal learning centres and remedial education programmes in Kolkata's slums. However, most available documentation is descriptive or anecdotal, with very few impact-based or comparative evaluations focusing specifically on migrant children. This gap restricts evidence-based scaling of effective interventions and limits policy learning from grassroots initiatives (Banerjee & Duflo, 2011; Pratham, 2019).
- *Data gaps at ward and slum level on migrant children's education:* National surveys such as Census and NSSO lack disaggregated data on migrant children at the intra-urban level, masking spatial variations across Kolkata Municipal Corporation wards. The absence of standardized datasets combining migration status, schooling indicators, and learning outcomes creates a significant methodological gap, constraining targeted policy formulation for migrant children in slums (Census of India, 2011; UNICEF, 2021).

Methodology

The study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design to examine educational exclusion and opportunities among migrant children residing in slums of Kolkata. A mixed-methods approach was used, combining quantitative household survey data with qualitative insights to capture both measurable indicators and lived experiences of migrant households. The study was conducted within the Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC) area. Sixteen slum settlements were purposively selected from different wards based on high migrant concentration, locational characteristics, and accessibility. These slums represent both inner-city and peripheral areas and reflect typical conditions of migrant-dominated urban settlements. Primary data were collected through a structured household questionnaire administered to parents or guardians of children aged 6–14 years. The survey captured information on population composition, migration status,



The study was conducted within the Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC) boundaries, consisting of 144 wards and 16 boroughs. Slums in this jurisdiction represent almost one-third of the city's populace, with both sanctioned and unsanctioned settlements making it a complex case. Migration—spanning from international movements during the partition of Bengal to rural-urban migration in recent decades—has strongly influenced the demographic and socio-economic composition of these slums. Sixteen wards have been chosen for the context of this research for ensuring geographical representation and socio-economic diversity. These wards extended across east, west, south, central, and north Kolkata and covered locations like Cossipore, Ultadanga, Maniktala, Kankurgachi, Phoolbagan, Sealdah, Entally, Park Circus, Tangra, Topsyia, Ballygunge, Kasba, Dhakuria, Jadavpur, Behala, and Tollygunge. Extending to these diverse places, the study tries to present an overall sense of how migration works with exclusion and livelihood challenges in various parts of the city.

Overview of Kolkata

Kolkata, the capital of West Bengal, is one of India's oldest metropolitan cities and a major urban centre in eastern India. Located on the eastern bank of the river Hooghly, Kolkata functions as an important administrative, commercial, cultural, and educational hub. The city has historically attracted migrants from rural West Bengal as well as neighbouring states such as Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, and Uttar Pradesh due to employment opportunities in informal sectors, small-scale industries, construction, transport, domestic work, and services.

Despite relatively slower industrial growth compared to other Indian metropolitan cities, Kolkata continues to experience steady in-migration, particularly of low-income households seeking livelihood security. This has contributed to the expansion of slums and squatter settlements across the Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC) area. According to Census of India (2011), Kolkata has one of the highest proportions of slum population among Indian metropolitan cities, reflecting deep-rooted issues of housing shortage, urban poverty, and social exclusion.

The city's urban landscape is characterised by sharp socio-spatial inequalities. While central and southern parts of Kolkata show better access to infrastructure and services, northern and eastern peripheral areas contain a high concentration of slums with inadequate housing, limited access to basic amenities, and insecure tenure. These spatial inequalities directly influence access to education, health care, and other social services, particularly for migrant populations residing in slums.

Characteristics of Selected Slums

The slums selected for the present study are located within different wards of the Kolkata Municipal Corporation and represent typical low-income settlements inhabited predominantly by migrant households. These slums were selected to capture spatial diversity, varying degrees of infrastructural access, and differences in migration history.

Population Composition: The population in the selected slums is socially and economically heterogeneous but predominantly consists of low-income households. The residents include Scheduled Castes, Other Backward Classes, religious minorities, and economically marginalised groups. Household sizes tend to be large, with a high dependency ratio and a significant proportion of children in the school-going age group. Educational attainment among adults is generally low, particularly among first-generation migrants, which influences educational aspirations and support for children's schooling.

Table 1: Slum Population of Selected Wards

Ward No.	Total Slums	Notified Slums	Non-notified Slums
20	46	31	15
28	40	23	17
29	19	12	7
33	40	25	15
34	45	25	20
36	51	31	20
40	47	30	17
55	46	32	14
58	18	9	9
59	42	29	13
65	28	15	13
66	47	31	16
69	30	16	14
73	36	28	8
82	40	26	14
90	19	15	4

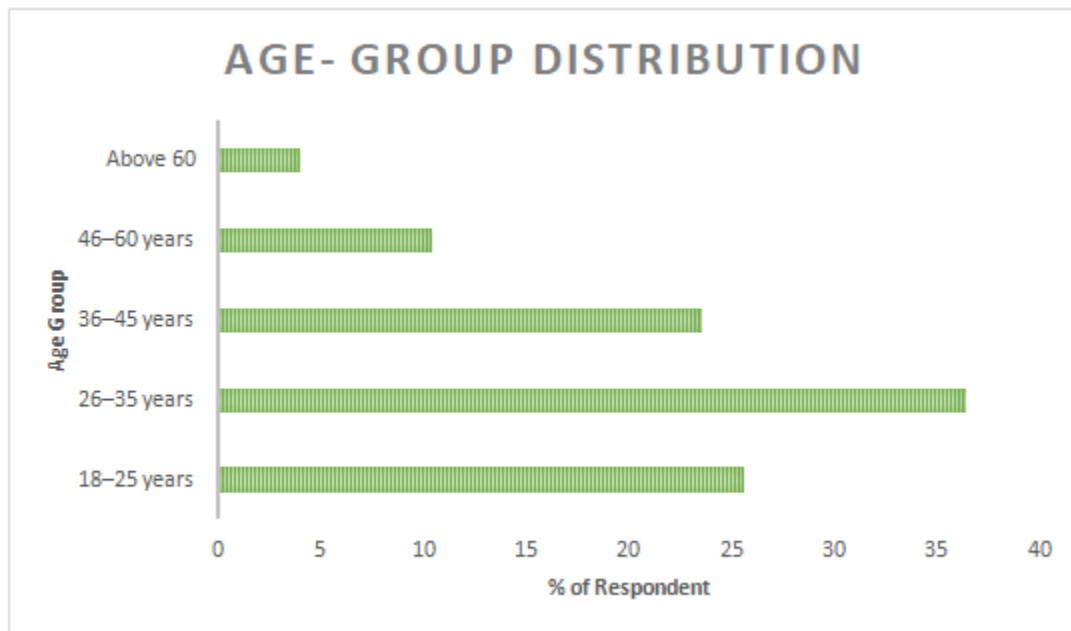
Source: Primary Data, 2024

Table 2: Age- Group Distribution of Slum Respondents

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage
18–25 years	128	25.6
26–35 years	182	36.4
36–45 years	118	23.6
46–60 years	52	10.4
Above 60	20	4.0

Source: Primary Data, 2024

Figure 1: Age Group Distribution



Migrant Share: A substantial proportion of the slum population comprises migrant households, including both inter-district and inter-state migrants. Many residents have migrated from rural areas of West Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, and Uttar Pradesh. Migration is largely circular or semi-permanent in nature, driven by poverty, lack of rural employment, and agrarian distress.

Seasonal migration patterns are common, leading to frequent disruptions in children’s schooling and contributing to irregular attendance and higher dropout rates.

Table 3: Migrant Share in Slum Population

Ward No.	Total Slum Population	% Migrant Population
20	17230	72
28	14510	73
29	18940	78
33	16880	70
34	21600	78
36	15880	69
40	22500	79
55	19300	77
58	24100	81
59	21840	74
65	16200	72
66	19600	81
69	17200	75
73	22900	75
82	26400	77
90	22300	80

Source: Primary Data, 2024

Basic Amenities: Access to basic amenities in the selected slums remains inadequate and uneven. Housing structures are mostly temporary or semi-permanent, constructed with tin,

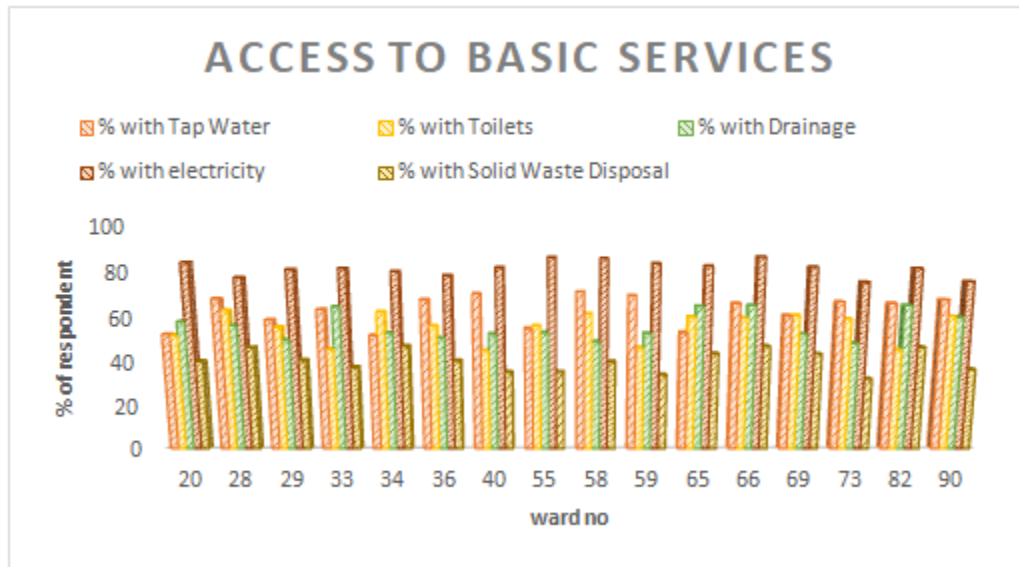
bamboo, plastic sheets, or low-quality bricks. Water supply is often dependent on shared standposts or community taps, while sanitation facilities are limited, with a high reliance on shared or public toilets. Drainage systems are poorly maintained, resulting in waterlogging during the monsoon season. Electricity access is relatively widespread but often informal or irregular. Educational infrastructure, such as proximity to government schools and anganwadi centres, varies significantly across slums, affecting enrolment and continuity of education among migrant children.

Table 4: Access to Basic Amenities

Ward No.	% with Tap Water	% with Toilets	% with Drainage	% with electricity	% with Solid Waste Disposal
20	52.6	52.3	58.4	84.7	40.3
28	68.7	63.4	56.7	78.1	46.7
29	59.1	55.9	50.1	81.7	40.9
33	63.8	45.8	65.1	82.1	37.7
34	52.1	62.7	53.3	80.7	47.3
36	68.2	56.4	51.0	78.9	40.6
40	70.8	45.3	52.7	82.4	35.3
55	55.2	56.4	53.4	87.0	35.4
58	71.6	61.9	49.3	86.4	40.2
59	70.0	46.5	53.1	84.3	34.2
65	53.4	60.6	65.3	83.1	43.8
66	66.6	60.1	65.6	87.1	47.3
69	61.1	61.2	52.8	82.8	43.7
73	67.2	59.7	48.6	76.0	32.3
82	66.5	45.7	65.6	82.1	46.8
90	68.2	60.8	60.4	76.3	36.8

Source: Primary Data, 2024

Figure 2: Access to Basic Amenities

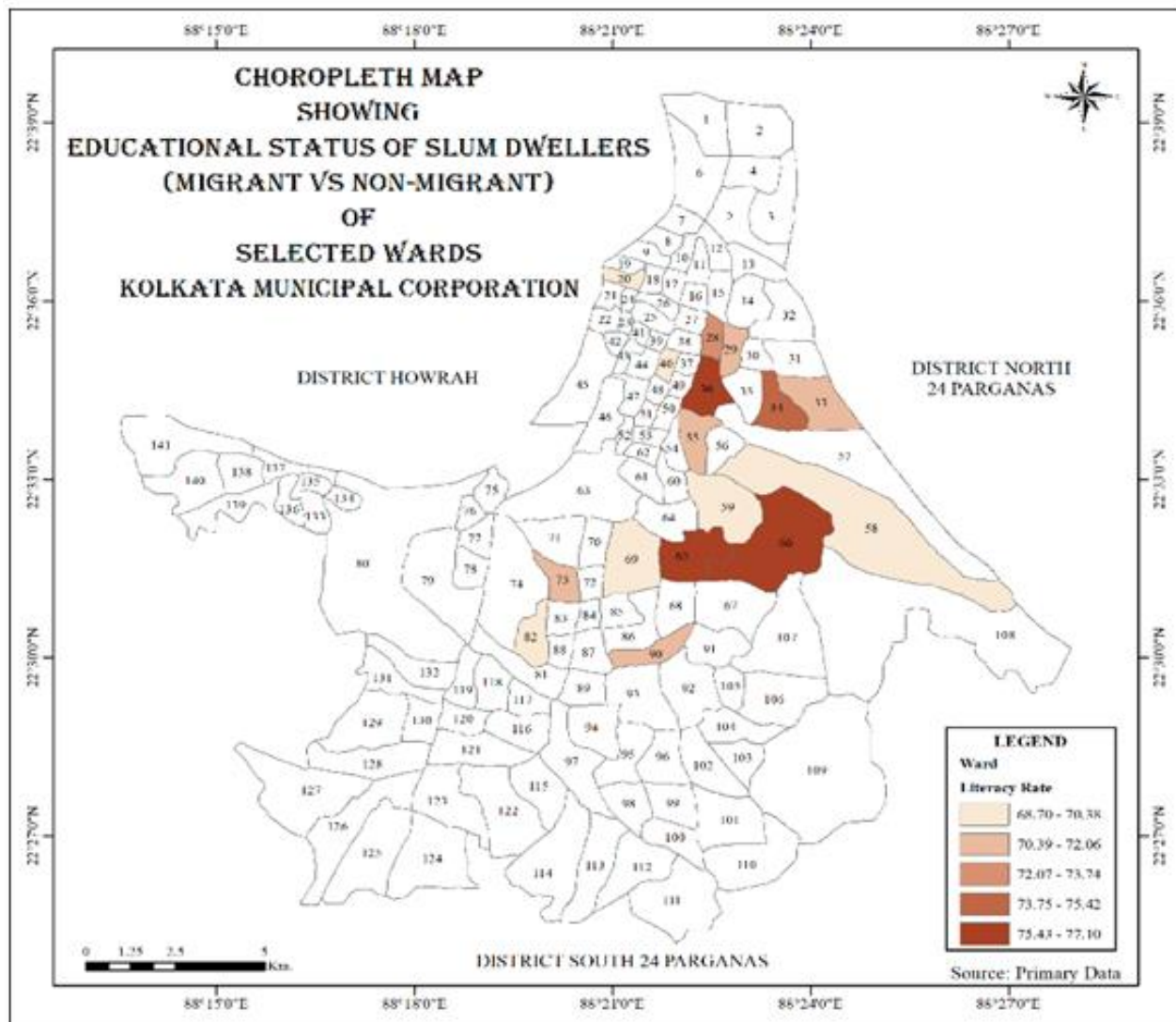


Educational Profile in Selected Slums

The educational profile of children in the selected slum areas of Kolkata reflects significant disparities in access, continuity, and quality of schooling, particularly among migrant households. The majority of children in the age group of 6–14 years are enrolled in government or government-aided schools, as these institutions provide free education, textbooks, uniforms, and mid-day meals. However, enrolment does not necessarily translate into regular attendance or sustained educational progression. A substantial proportion of migrant children experience irregular school attendance, primarily due to seasonal migration, parental occupational instability, domestic responsibilities, and lack of adult supervision. Temporary return migration to native places often results in prolonged absences from school, leading to learning gaps and grade repetition. In several cases, children re-enrol in the same grade after migration-related interruptions, indicating limited academic progression. The incidence of school dropout is noticeably higher among migrant children compared to non-migrant children within the slums. Dropout is most pronounced at the upper primary level, where increased academic demands, language barriers, and indirect schooling costs contribute to discontinuation. Children from inter-state migrant households, particularly those from non-Bengali speaking backgrounds, face additional challenges related to the medium of instruction, which adversely affects comprehension and classroom participation. Pre-school education through anganwadi centres plays an important role in early childhood education for younger children; however, access and quality vary across slums. While some children benefit from early learning exposure, others—

especially from recently migrated households—remain outside the anganwadi network due to lack of awareness or documentation.

Map 2: Literacy Profile



Overall, the educational profile highlights a pattern of educational vulnerability marked by nominal enrolment, irregular attendance, learning discontinuity, and higher dropout rates among migrant children. These patterns underscore the multidimensional nature of educational exclusion in Kolkata’s slums, where structural constraints, migration dynamics, and institutional barriers collectively shape educational outcomes.

Table 5: Educational Level of the Selected Slum

Education Level	Frequency	Percentage
Illiterate	62	12.4
Primary	113	22.6
Upper Primary	141	28.2
Secondary	118	23.6
Higher Secondary	46	9.2
Graduate & Above	20	4.0

Source: Primary Data, 2024

Figure 3: Educational Level

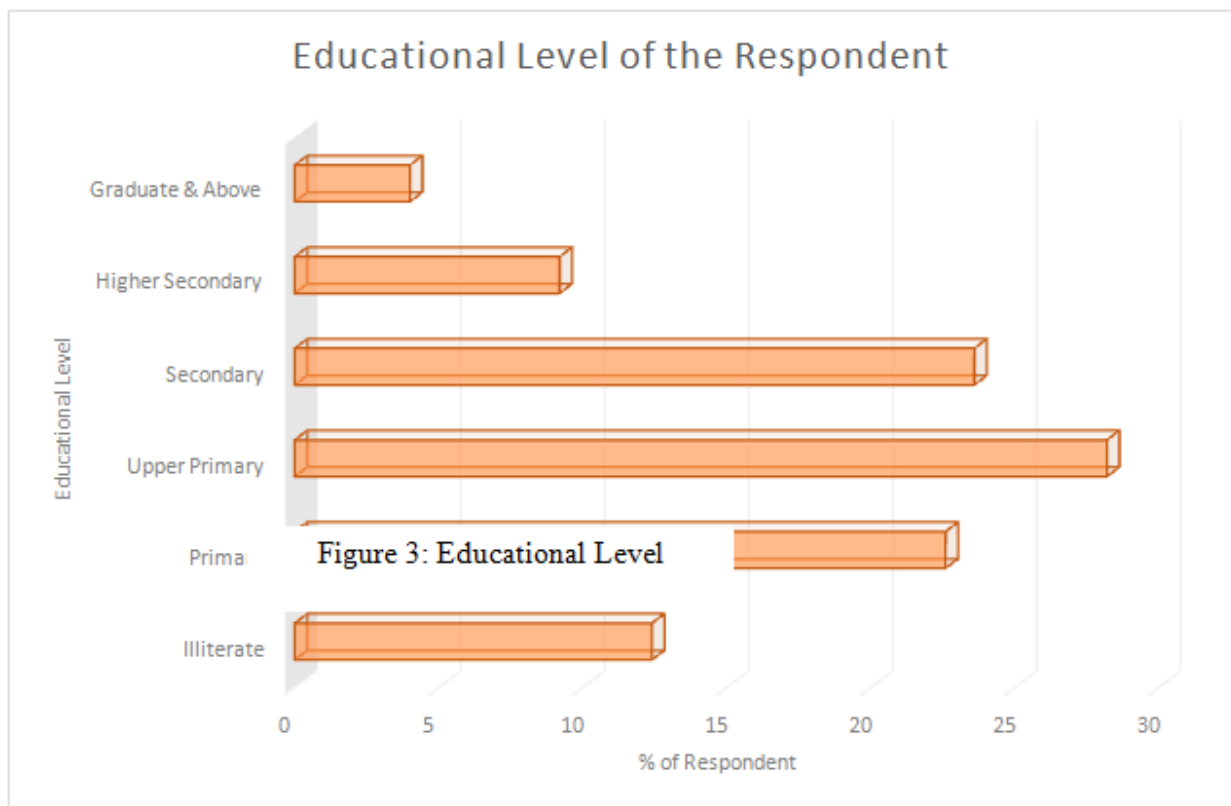


Table 6: Educational Profile of the Slum Dwellers

Ward No.	Literacy Rate (Total)	Dropout % (Children)
20	70.2	17.7
28	72.6	12.0
29	72.0	15.6
33	71.3	15.8
34	75.1	14.1
36	77.0	11.9
40	68.7	14.0
55	70.6	17.1
58	69.0	17.3
59	69.8	11.8
65	77.1	14.2
66	76.4	10.9
69	69.4	10.7
73	71.7	12.3
82	69.4	17.7
90	70.6	10.4

Source: Primary Data, 2024

Figure 4: Educational Status

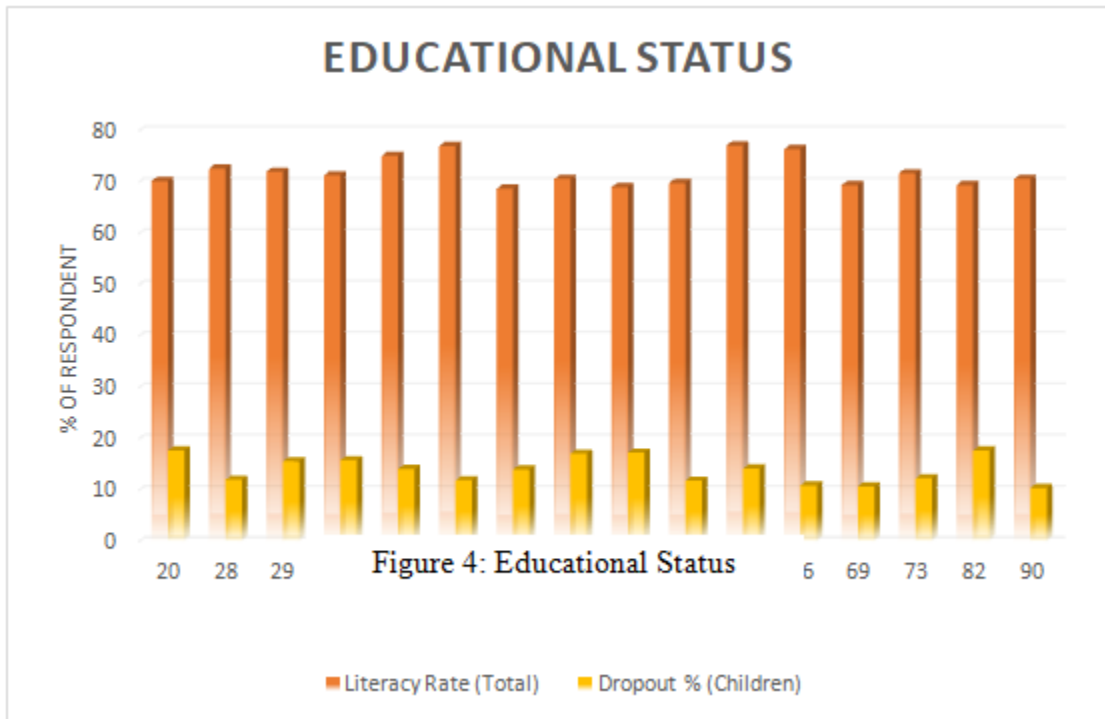


Table 7: Factors of Affecting Educational Growth

Indicator	Yes (%)	No (%)
Face language barriers	42.3	57.7
Institutional barriers	31.2	68.8
Lack of mobility	38.7	61.3

Source: Primary Data, 2024

Result and Discussion:

The results of the study reveal pronounced educational inequalities among children residing in Kolkata’s slums, with migrant status emerging as a critical determinant of exclusion. The findings indicate that educational disadvantage is not solely a function of poverty but is closely linked to migration dynamics, spatial marginality, and uneven access to basic amenities.

Population Composition and Migrant Concentration: The selected slums exhibit a socially heterogeneous population dominated by Scheduled Castes, Other Backward Classes, and

minority communities. Across the 16 slum areas, migrant households constitute a substantial share of the population, averaging around two-thirds of total residents. Slums with higher migrant concentration tend to display greater socio-economic vulnerability, reflecting the precarious livelihoods and insecure housing conditions of migrant families. This demographic profile reinforces existing patterns of social exclusion and shapes children's access to educational opportunities.

Basic Amenities and Educational Environment: Access to basic amenities varies considerably across the slums and has a direct bearing on children's educational participation. Although electricity access is relatively widespread, inadequate sanitation and unreliable water supply remain major concerns. Poor living conditions, particularly overcrowding and lack of private sanitation facilities, adversely affect children's health, study time, and school attendance. Slums with lower access to sanitation and water facilities show higher levels of absenteeism, suggesting an indirect but significant relationship between infrastructural deprivation and educational exclusion.

Enrolment, Attendance, and Dropout Patterns: The study finds that enrolment rates among children aged 6–14 years are relatively high due to the availability of government schools and the implementation of universal education policies. However, this apparent inclusion masks deeper forms of exclusion. Irregular attendance is widespread among migrant children, particularly in slums with a high proportion of seasonal and inter-state migrants. Temporary return migration and unstable parental employment frequently disrupt schooling, resulting in learning gaps and grade repetition. Dropout rates are notably higher at the upper primary level, where academic demands increase and support mechanisms weaken. Migrant children are more likely to discontinue schooling due to language barriers, lack of academic support at home, and the perceived low economic returns of education. These findings align with earlier studies that highlight the limitations of enrolment-based indicators in capturing educational inclusion.

Language, Mobility, and Institutional Barriers: Language emerges as a significant barrier for children from non-Bengali speaking migrant households. Difficulty in understanding classroom instruction contributes to poor academic performance and disengagement from schooling. In addition, frequent mobility and lack of transferable school records hinder continuity of education. Administrative challenges related to documentation further restrict access to government schemes such as scholarships and mid-day meals, intensifying educational vulnerability among migrant children.

Discussion: The findings underscore the multidimensional nature of educational exclusion among migrant children in Kolkata's slums. While policy frameworks emphasize universal access, the lived realities of migrant households reveal persistent gaps in continuity, quality, and

institutional support. Education for migrant children is shaped by a complex interaction of social identity, migration-induced mobility, infrastructural deprivation, and systemic barriers within the schooling system. The study highlights that educational opportunities in slum contexts are unevenly distributed and highly contingent on migration status and settlement conditions. Without targeted interventions such as language support, flexible schooling arrangements, and improved access to basic amenities, migrant children are likely to remain trapped in cycles of educational disadvantage. These results point to the need for inclusive urban education policies that recognise mobility, diversity, and spatial inequality as central challenges to achieving educational equity.

Findings

The study reveals that migrant children residing in Kolkata's slums experience multiple and overlapping forms of educational exclusion. Although school enrolment levels are relatively high due to the availability of government schools and universal education policies, regular attendance and learning continuity remain major challenges. Migration-related mobility, particularly seasonal and circular migration, frequently disrupts schooling, leading to absenteeism, grade repetition, and eventual dropout, especially at the upper primary level.

The findings further indicate that migrant concentration is higher in slums with poorer access to basic amenities, such as sanitation and reliable water supply. These infrastructural deficits indirectly affect children's educational participation by increasing health risks, reducing study time, and contributing to school absenteeism. Language barriers faced by children from non-Bengali speaking households significantly hinder classroom engagement and academic performance, reinforcing educational disadvantage. Administrative and institutional barriers—such as lack of transfer certificates, Aadhaar linkage issues, and limited awareness of educational entitlements—also contribute to exclusion. Overall, the results demonstrate that educational exclusion among migrant children is not merely a matter of access but is shaped by structural, spatial, and institutional constraints.

Suggestions

Based on the findings, the study proposes the following measures to enhance educational inclusion of migrant children in urban slum settings:

1. **Flexible and migrant-responsive schooling:** Schools should adopt flexible admission and attendance policies to accommodate seasonal mobility. Bridge courses and remedial classes can help migrant children reintegrate into the formal education system after migration-related disruptions.

2. **Language support mechanisms:** Introduction of multilingual teaching aids and transitional language support for non-Bengali speaking children would improve classroom participation and learning outcomes.
3. **Strengthening early childhood education:** Improved coverage and quality of anganwadi centres in slums can support early learning and reduce future dropout risks among migrant children.
4. **Improved access to basic amenities:** Upgrading sanitation, drinking water, and housing infrastructure in slum areas can indirectly enhance educational participation by improving children's health and well-being.
5. **Simplification of administrative procedures:** Portability of educational entitlements and simplified documentation requirements are essential to ensure uninterrupted access to schooling and welfare schemes for migrant children.
6. **Support for community-based initiatives:** Greater collaboration with NGOs and community learning centres can provide academic support, counselling, and awareness among migrant families regarding the importance of education.

Conclusion

The study concludes that educational exclusion among migrant children in Kolkata's slums is a multidimensional and structurally embedded phenomenon. While policies have succeeded in expanding enrolment, they have been less effective in ensuring continuity, quality, and equity in education for migrant populations. Migration-induced mobility, inadequate basic amenities, language barriers, and institutional rigidities collectively constrain educational opportunities for migrant children. Addressing educational exclusion in urban slums therefore requires integrated policy interventions that go beyond school enrolment to consider housing conditions, migration dynamics, and administrative inclusivity. Ensuring equitable educational opportunities for migrant children is essential not only for social justice but also for sustainable urban development in rapidly growing cities like Kolkata.

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