

Assessing the Impact of Urban Expansion on Housemaid's Children in Chi3, Greater Noida: From Urbanization to Child Welfare a study

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ABSTRACT

The socio-economic framework of society started changing when the expansion of urban cities started growing rapidly. The growth of these societies and their communities experience transformations that often reveal challenges and inequalities.¹ Greater Noida, a city undergoing significant urbanization, serves as an undeniable case study in this perspective. In the name of economic growth the city is rushing towards changes, In terms of social change the daily realities of some of the cities of the most vulnerable residents named "housemaids and their children "remain overshadowed.

This study seeks to shed light on the crossroads of child welfare & urban growth. It investigates how the city of Greater Noida's new developments evolve changes and put socio-economic pressures on these families. These pressures create hindrances to the safety, well-being, and rights of the children of the Housemaids.

The situation getting worse in the aftermath of the crucial COVID-19 pandemic². This research employs a mixed-methods approach, integrating qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys, to explore the overall welfare of these vulnerable children who are between the ages of 6 to 14. By examining the effects of their mothers and their demanding work conditions and the uneven

¹ <https://hdr.undp.org/content/rapid-urbanisation-opportunities-and-challenges-improve-well-being-societies>

² *The COVID Decade: Understanding the Long-Term Societal Impacts of COVID-19, 2024*

quality of their living environments, the study aims to address broader questions about sustainable development and child rights.

This research is supported by a small organization named Swaha Foundation generally works for destitute children in Delhi NCR, this study is trying to address the risks mainly neglect and abuse faced by these children. Through comprehensive analysis, the research aims to provide observed evidence that can inform targeted interventions and ensure the fundamental rights and needs of all children.

Key words: Neglect, Abuse, children, Sustainable Development Goals, Child Rights, Informal Labour , Sustainable Development Goals, Greater Noida

Background

According to the last census, Greater Noida has a population more than 1 million, comprising young professionals students families drawn by the city's modern infrastructure and prevailing economic opportunities .Greater Noida, is a prominent city, known for its multicultural demography's. The population is marked by a mix of high-income groups and lower-income workers. In recent years it has experienced rapid growth in urbanization and population growth.³ Has lives in most expensive societies and have-nots like housemaids and daily wage laborers lives in abandoned houses mainly in chi3,who form a crucial part of the city's workforce.

In search of better livelihood Housemaids in Chi3, Greater Noida, often migrate from rural areas, nearby small towns seeking employment due to lack of opportunities in there hometowns. Socio Economic conditions of these vulnerable are deplorable. These precarious conditions force them to stay in underprivileged areas lacking proper infrastructure & basic necessities. As these women are sometimes sole bread earners or part of dual income household overburdened with too much work ,their children frequently encounter neglect, increased risks of abuse, limited educational resources, and Urbanization further amalgamate these challenges by creating pressures economically as well as socially that strengthen disparities.

Research Question

How has the rapid urbanization, impacted overall well-being of children from housemaid households, particularly in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic in Chi-3, Greater Noida?

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greater_Noida

Literature Review

According to Kundu, 2019, urbanization can lead to improved economic conditions for some, while concurrently creating adverse living conditions for others, particularly those in low-income groups. Tiwari & Rao, 2021 discussed in an article about the unequal distribution of resources in urban areas can lead to inequality in access to education, healthcare, accommodation, which are critical for the welfare of children in downtrodden communities. Research has shown that children in such environments are more prone to experience malnutrition, neglect, and limited access to educational opportunities, which are basics for their overall development (Nath, 2018).

Sharma, 2020 in his article pointed out that In Greater Noida, the rapid pace of urbanization, where both parents work long hours, often leaving children without adequate supervision or care. This situation is particularly acute for children of housemaids, who are often left to fend for themselves or cared for by older siblings, leading to potential risks such as neglect and abuse. Mitra, 2020 explains about the welfare of children in rapidly urbanizing areas is a growing concern, particularly in the context of sustainable development goals.

Urbanization, while frequently associated with economic growth, can also lead to the marginalization of vulnerable groups. Banerjee, 2021 talks about the safety for the vulnerable In Greater Noida. According to him urban expansion has led to noteworthy changes in the living conditions of many families, often resulting in a reduction in the quality of life for children. The lack of safe play spaces, sanitation facilities, and overcrowded living conditions can have detrimental effects on children's mental and physical health.

Singh, 2021 in his article talks about the impact of urbanization on educational opportunities is also thoughtful. Schools in rapidly growing urban areas are often under-resourced overcrowded and incapable to cater to the basic needs of children from disadvantaged backgrounds. This situation is worse by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has disrupted educational access and further marginalized already vulnerable children

Kumar, 2021 discussed about the shift to online learning, for instance, has left many children without access to education due to the lack of digital devices and net availability in their homes. Furthermore, Patel, 2021 in his paper talks about economic impact of the pandemic has led to increased food insecurity, further affecting the health and well-being of these children.

In 2020 UNICEF Report on child Rights pointed out significant remarks. The document emphasized Covid 19 has had an inconsistent impact on children who are vulnerable, particularly and hailed from low-income strata. Family upheavals, closing of schools, stress at homes and increased domestic responsibilities have placed significant mental stress on these children, many of whom have had forced to abandon their education to support their families.

Objective:

To explore how hasty urbanization and the COVID-19 pandemic have impacted the daily lives, educational opportunities, and overall well-being of children from housemaid households, with a focus on identifying risks of neglect, abuse, and poor living conditions.

Hypothesis

The study hypothesizes that the demanding work conditions of housemaids and the uneven urban environment lead to significant risks, including neglect and abuse, for their children.

Methodology

This study employs a mixed-methods approach to comprehensively understand the challenges faced by children from housemaid households in Chi3, Greater Noida, due to rapid urbanization. The methodology combines qualitative interviews with quantitative surveys to ensure the exploration of the research questions.

Research Design

The research design follows a convergent parallel mixed-methods approach, where qualitative and quantitative data are collected and analyzed separately before being integrated. This design allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the issue by validating and cross-verifying findings from both methods.

Criteria for Selecting Participants:

In this study, a stratified random sampling technique is employed to ensure a representative sample of housemaid households in Chi3, Greater Noida. Random number tables were used to select around 72 households and selected 121 children as sample, ensuring diversity in socio-economic status, family size, and residential conditions. The sample is drawn from a frame provided by the Swaha Foundation, which includes households identified through local community networks and NGO databases.

The study focuses on children aged 6 to 14 from housemaid households in the Chi3 area of Greater Noida. The selection criteria are designed to find out a representative sample of children based on their age, gender, and school attendance status (From the evening school run by Swaha Foundation) to ensure an inclusive understanding of the impact of urbanization on their welfare and protection. It specifically targets households where at least one parent, usually the mother, is employed as a housemaid, ensuring that the sample reflects the challenges faced by these families. The research includes both school-going children and those who have dropped out,

providing a comprehensive view of the educational impact. Gender diversity is also considered, with both boys and girls included to explore any gender-specific challenges. To maintain geographic consistency, the study exclusively examines children residing in the Chi3 area.

Data Collection Methods

The study employed a mixed-methods approach for data collection, integrating both qualitative and quantitative techniques to gain a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by children from housemaid households. **Qualitative data collection** involved semi-structured interviews with housemaids, and representatives from local NGOs, aiming to gather detailed insights into the children's daily routines, educational opportunities, safety concerns, and the effects of their mothers' work conditions. Additionally, focus group discussions were conducted with groups of housemaids to explore common themes and shared experiences, particularly concerning the impacts of urbanization and the COVID-19 pandemic on their children's well-being. **Quantitative data collection** was carried out through structured surveys administered to the selected households. These surveys gathered numerical data on school attendance, health, socio-economic conditions, and access to basic services, and included questions on perceived educational quality and other relevant factors.

Sample Size and Demographic Breakdown:

The study's focus on Child Welfare and Protection variables encompasses several critical areas that directly impact the well-being of children from housemaid households. These variables include safety and protection, where exposure to abuse or neglect is a key concern. Incidents of physical and emotional abuse, as well as neglect due to inadequate supervision or care, are closely monitored. Additionally, the safety of the home environment is scrutinized, with attention to the structural integrity of households, overcrowding, potential safety hazards, and the frequency and quality of parental supervision.

Socio-economic factors play a crucial role in shaping the living conditions and opportunities available to these children. Key variables include household income, and any financial dependency on the child's income, if applicable. Living conditions are also significant, with a focus on housing quality, the condition of the residence, and access to basic services like water, electricity, and sanitation facilities. These socio-economic variables collectively influence the overall environment in which these families live and the implications for child welfare.

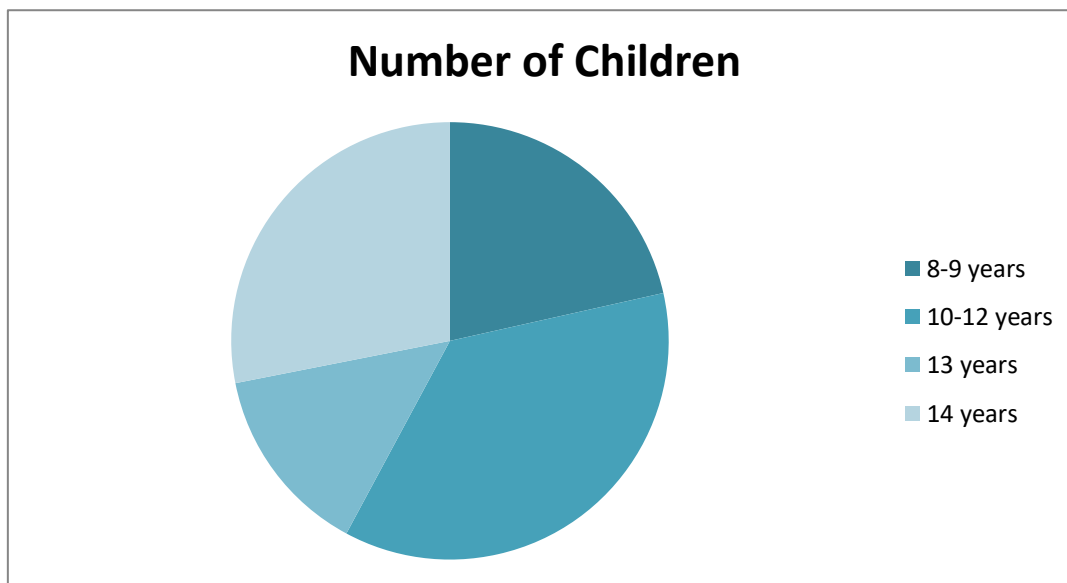
To examine these variables, students were divided into gender-based groups, creating separate groups for boys and girls. Both groups participated in three rounds of discussions, designed to be informal and engaging. During these sessions, most girls and a significant number of boys shared their personal stories, offering insights into their lived experiences.

The study involves a stratified random sampling technique to ensure that all relevant sub-groups within the population are adequately represented. The sample is broken down as follows:

Table: Age and Gender Distribution of Children Interviewed

Age Group	No Of Children	No Of Girls	Percentage of Girls	School Attendance
8-9	26	09	28.57%	SWAHA Foundation
10-12	44	19	40.91%	SWAHA Foundation
13	17	06	35.29%	Notable Drop Out
14	34	07	20.59%	Significant Dropout

Data Analysis, Key Findings, and Discussion



In the age group of 8-9 years, there are 26 children, with 9 of them being girls, accounting for 28.57%. All children in this group are currently attending school run by the Swaha Foundation in

the evening. For the 10-12 years age group, there are 44 children, including 19 girls (40.91%). This group also has all its children attending the evening school run by the Swaha Foundation, with a higher proportion of girls compared to the younger group. In contrast, the 13-year-olds, numbering 17, include 6 girls (35.29%). Similarly, the 14-year-old group comprises 34 children, with 7 girls (20.59%), and exhibits a significant dropout issue, as most children in this age group are no longer attending school.

During the focus group discussions conducted with housemaids, they expressed that the increasing demands of their work often require additional help. As a result, many girls aged 12 above accompany their mothers frequently in their domestic work to contribute to the household income. In the aftermath of COVID-19, these families faced challenges significantly as many of their previous employers relocated to different cities, leading to a loss of work.⁴ So, many mothers are no longer sending their daughters to NGO-run evening schools. Instead, these young girls are primarily engaged in cleaning tasks, while their mothers handle cooking and other assigned duties. Despite this, there has been no notable increase in their wages. Informal interviews with the girls revealed that 90 percent of them expressed a strong desire to continue their education. Only one girl aged 12, indicated that she was content with her work as a maid, as it allowed her to watch television shows and receive nice clothes from the family where she works with her mother.

A few maids are in a difficult situation; while they refrain from taking their daughters to work, these girls still do not attend school because they must care for their younger siblings. In Chi 3, most of the participants live in deplorable conditions, residing in abandoned houses that lack proper electricity and sanitation. In many cases, dogs, cows, and humans share the same compound, as most of these houses are in disrepair and have no gates and in 2024 they are defecating in open as well in many households.

During conversations with small children (6-12) found that some are facing physical abuse by close friends and relatives. One particularly troubling case involved a seven-year-old boy who shared that his uncle, an auto driver who often drinks, had physically and sexually abused him. Child abuse, especially when it happens within the context of a relationship of power and trust, is the most fundamental violation of childhood and the tragedy is that it is most often perpetrated upon innocent and vulnerable children by adults who are ideally supposed to uphold the rights of children, and work in their best interest⁵. All children are vulnerable to abuse (Woodall 2014)⁶.

⁴ T. R. Subramanya, 2023

⁵ Kemoli, A.M. and Mavindu, M., 2014.

⁶ Karen Woodoll is a renowned content writer who mostly writes about Children issue related to Abuse and Neglect.

Counseling sessions were initiated for him, and during the data collection period, several sessions were organized for all the children as well.

Getting data on sexual abuse of children of maids is very difficult task and authentication of the data is also very sensitive aspect while collecting it. A large number of girl-children engaged in domestic work are exploited through different forms of sexual harassment by their employers or by their cousins or relatives at home⁷. The survey reveals that almost 57 per cent of the Child Domestic Worker participants have been physically abused. The most common type of physical abuse faced by the Child Domestic Workers is beating with an external object slapping and hair pulling. Very often children are asked to keep the abuse a secret. Statistics from the survey reveal that the children face emotional abuse in varied forms such as being cursed (9%) shouted at (45%) threatened (11%) and blamed (19%)

Ironically, while Chi 3 has prestigious schools affiliated with CBSE, ICSE, IB, and IGCSE boards, there are no government schools accessible to the underprivileged children in the area. This desolate disparity raises significant concerns about child welfare and their rights, particularly regarding their right to education. The absence of basic educational facilities for these children, who are already vulnerable, undermines efforts to safeguard their well-being and development. In the context of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, this situation poses a critical question, How can we as a nation claim progress toward these sustainable development goals when, in urban areas like this—a real estate hotspot⁸—many disadvantaged children are denied even the most fundamental educational opportunities?

A total of 28 girls and approximately 70 boys, aged 8 to 12, are attending evening classes in the area. Among the girls, a significant number were found to be underweight. Twelve of the girls have begun menstruating, and most are aware of menstruation, as they had attended educational sessions on the topic. However, there is variability in menstrual hygiene practices; while some girls use sanitary napkins, others rely on old cloths. Despite the presence of a government hospital nearby for emergencies, no specific health camps have been organized by the government for these children, highlighting a gap in accessible healthcare services tailored to their needs.

On average, households of maids struggle economically, despite having dual incomes. Typically, the men in these families work as auto drivers, daily wage laborers in construction, small shop

⁷<https://www.ilo.org/international-programme-elimination-child-labour-ipecc/sectors-and-topics/child-labour-and-domestic-work>

⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chi_III,_Greater_Noida

workers, or roadside vendors selling paan masala; some are also involved in repairing of bicycle and puncture fixing. A significant number of the male members in these households are engaged in alcohol consumption, further straining their money. During our interactions, few maids shared that their lives were particularly difficult because their husbands and sons were involved in theft and sometimes money spent on legal expenses, including paying the police to secure the release of their family members from custody. These financial burdens aggravate their already unstable deplorable situation.

This study examines the challenges in achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) related to child welfare and protection in the urbanizing region of Chi3, Greater Noida. It focuses on children from housemaid households, highlighting concerns about safety, protection, and socio-economic factors. Many families live in overcrowded, abandoned houses without basic amenities, undermining different SDGs related to Clean Water and Sanitation, Sustainable Cities and Communities. Parents often work long hours, leaving children unsupervised, which compromises their safety and well-being, challenging the achievement of SDG related to No Poverty and Good Health and Well-being.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to strict ethical guidelines to protect the rights and well-being of participants. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring they understood the purpose of the study and their right to withdraw at any time. Confidentiality was maintained by all personal data, and care was taken to avoid any harm or distress to the participants, particularly the children.

Conclusion

The study validates the hypothesis that the demanding work conditions of housemaids, coupled with the uneven urban environment in Chi3, Greater Noida, significantly contribute to the risks faced by their children, including neglect and abuse. The research findings confirm that these factors, worsened by socio-economic disparities and inadequate living conditions, create an environment where children from housemaid households are particularly susceptible. The increase in school dropouts, the shift of older children into domestic work, and the heightened risks during the COVID-19 pandemic underscore the critical nature of these challenges.

The study's conclusions affirm that targeted interventions addressing these underlying causes are crucial for safeguarding these children's well-being and development. By focusing on improving access to education, enhancing home safety, and supporting families, the study emphasizes the importance of a multi-faceted approach in mitigating the adverse effects of urbanization. This approach is essential not only for protecting these children but also for ensuring progress towards

achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in this rapidly urbanizing context. The research calls on policymakers, NGOs, and community leaders to prioritize the needs of these vulnerable children to promote a more equitable and sustainable future.

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