

Educational Status of Children Living in Brick Kilns: Access, Enrolment, and Dropout

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ABSTRACT

Any country that values its citizens must prioritize education, and in the modern world, the importance has increased very much. Without any doubt, the social and economic progress of any country depends on the education system of that country. The most vulnerable group in terms of education are children who live with their parents in brick kilns. Children are mostly involved in this kind of work because brick-making is a piece-rate work that requires minimal skill. They are forced to join their parents in the low-wage, low-skill trap due to the illiteracy of their parents. The families only stay here for the active season which starts from May to October, for the rest of the year they return to their native places. Children are the most negatively impacted from the educational point of view, they live with their parents in brick kilns which are far away from their native places, and don't have any educational facilities available for five to six months of the year. There is no official data or specific information available regarding the number of laborers and their children living in brick kilns. Their magnitude generally varies keeping in pace with the demand and production of bricks taking place at a particular time. Poverty and illiteracy of parents are two main reasons behind the involvement of children in brick kilns of the kulgam district. The present study makes an attempt to understand the educational status of children living in

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the brick kilns using a broad framework of research. In the present study, purposive sampling technique was used to gather data from the respondents of 06 brick kilns through self-made interview schedules. The study found that 180 children are living in these brick kilns without receiving any kind of formal education at present times.

Key terms: Educational Status, Children, Brick Kilns, Access, Enrolment, Dropout

Introduction

The laborers from different parts of the country start migrating to Kashmir valley in search of livelihood from May and remain till the month of October, as most of them have been hired by contractors by paying them some money in advance which engulfs them in debt bondage and can't quit this job till the expiry of the contract. Globally, debt bondage is the most common type of forced labor. This type of slavery is prevalent in brick kilns. Typically, it appears to be a contract for employment, but in many cases, human rights violations, poor nutrition, and extreme poverty were all prevalent (Khan, 2021). Kashmir valley has rich soil and clay present in abundance, which aids brick workers in producing a large number of bricks. These bricks are used for various constructional purposes throughout the whole Kashmir Valley. It takes a lot of labor to make bricks, and most families engage their children also in this kind of job as a seasonal workforce. Being an observer of the fact that children along with their parents become the most vulnerable, as they have no option to receive any kind of formal education in schools due to seasonal migration for six months. During the initial years, these children only look after their younger siblings but with the passage of time, they start to help their families in preparing clay for bricks, making bricks, storing bricks, and

after three to four years they also indulge in such kind of work and become a kiln worker. Thus we can say it becomes a generational employment for these people. "Children accompanying migrant parents to the brick kilns face a more difficult life due to factors like social and cultural isolation, participating in work alongside parents, a vicious cycle of extreme poverty, poor health conditions, language barriers, poor educational attainment." (Save the Children India, 2022). The need of the hour is to understand that these people are living merely on a very low income hardly satisfying their basic needs of day-to-day life. Children accompanying their parents also work to supplement their family income. Working of children under the age of 14 years is considered child labor but the situation of children living in brick kilns is totally different from the rest of the society.

Throughout the world, 763 million people live outside of their native places which has a significant impact on the education of their children education (GMR, 2019). Interstate migration rates in India increased between 2001 and 2011 despite commendable attempts to boost chances for local employment (World Economic Forum, 2017). The temporary migrant households are unable to give their children better educational opportunities. According to GMR, 80% of children of seasonal workers never had access to education in India. At the community and school level, the lack of an efficient mechanism to maintain data on seasonal migrant children is one of the main obstacles. Additionally, Due to their migrant status, the native teachers and schools hardly regard them as out-of-school children, because some of them join the school after a few

months. These children are unable to receive education at their working places due to the varied enrollment procedures and norms for migrant children in schools, the location of schools, disparities in the curricula, lack of interest of parents, and linguistic hurdles. The continuation of schooling for seasonal migrant children is impacted by the lack of an efficient framework both at the native and worksite locations. These children consequently do not develop the necessary abilities and expertise at the appropriate period. Compared to children from non-migrant households, children from migrant families have a higher likelihood of dropping out of school. The average projected likelihood of dropout is similarly high for children from cyclical migratory homes due to a number of socioeconomic factors. The chance of primary school dropout is higher for girls and boys from migrant families than for girls and boys from non-migrant households (Meher and Padhan, 2022). The poor economic condition of children at home was the key factor in discontinuation of schooling. The study suggested that it's necessary to start widespread awareness campaigns to educate the public about the value of education in daily life and to inspire people to become literate. By focusing on socio-economically disadvantaged groups, the problem of child labor can be halted, regulated, and eventually abolished (Ali, 2019).

Objective of the study

1. To find out the educational status of children living in brick kilns of Kashmir Valley in terms of access, enrolment, and retention.

Methodology

Based on the objectives framed and the experience of the investigator in this field, a detailed interview schedule was framed and used in the field survey. Interaction with brick kiln owners, children, and their families served as the main source of primary data. While approaching the children and their family members, permission was taken from the brick kiln owner. The present study is descriptive in nature. The sample of the study consists of 40 children living in 06 brick kilns of district Kulgam, Jammu and Kashmir, to collect the data from the respondents purposive sampling technique was used. Great care was taken for the confidentiality of respondents to hide their identity who don't wish to be identified. The present study is de-limited to children of seasonal brick kiln laborers who are in the age group of 06-14 years and are presently living in brick kilns of the Kulgam district. Jammu and Kashmir is a union territory of India, and Kulgam district is one of its districts. It is situated 18 kilometers (11 miles) away from Anantnag in the direction of the southwest. Town Kulgam is located approximately 17 kilometers (11 miles) from Anantnag and 68 kilometers (42 miles) from Srinagar.

Analysis and interpretation of data

The field level data collected from children residing in the brick kilns of the Kulgam district are analyzed and interpreted in the present section.

Table 1: Showing total number of children living in brick kilns

Age	Boys	Girls	Total
06 to 14	73	107	180

As per the data collected from 06 brick kiln owners, it was found that a total number of 180 children in the age group of 06-14 are living with their parents in brick kilns of Kulgam District. The table further depicts that the majority (59.44%) of the children living in brick kilns are girls as compared to (40.55%) of boys. Keeping this thing into consideration, primary data for the present study were collected from 24 girls and 16 boys.

Table 2: Showing educational status of children living in brick Kilns

Status	Boys	Girls	Total
Presently-Enrolled	01	03	04
Never-Enrolled	05	12	17
Drop out	10	09	19
TOTAL	16	24	40

After analysis of the primary data which was collected from 40 children of brick kiln laborers, the table 2 shows that only 10% of children are presently enrolled at their native places, whereas, 42.5% of children had never been enrolled in any type of school. The gender-wise distribution shows that majority of girls 70.58% had never been enrolled as compared to 29.41% of boys, The table further depicts that dropout is higher among boys 62.5% as compared to 37.5% of girls.

Table: 3 Different tasks performing by children in brick kilns

Family chores	Caring of siblings	Work in brick kilns along with parents	Any other
08	14	16	02

Table No. 3 shows that the majority (40%) of children are working with parents in achieving the set target goal of brick making by performing different tasks, such as preparing clay for bricks, mould bricks, and stocking bricks. About 35% of children responded that their duty at the kiln is only to take care of their younger siblings majority of them were girls. The table further shows that 20% of children are engaged in family chores. However, 02 children does not mention anything when they were asked what kind of tasks you are performed at this particular kiln.

Table: 4 Duration of Seasonal Work Period in Brick Kilns

Duration	Number
04-Months	03
05 Months	21
06Months	16

The table depicts that Majority (52.5%) of children responded that they are staying here from last 05 months along with their family members, whereas 40% of children responded that their parents are working from last 06 months. However, 7.5% of children responded that their families had joined this job from last 04months.

Major Findings

- 73% of children do not have any kind of educational facilities available near brick kilns as they are located nearly 03-05 kilometers away from the residential area.
- 99% of parents are not interested in sending their children to schools present in the locality, However, they are ready to educate their children if the government will establish some worksite school near these kilns.
- 180 children are presently living in 06 brick kilns of the Kulgam district of Jammu and Kashmir
- The majority (107) of the children living in brick kilns are girls as compared to (73) boys.
- Out of 40 children, only 04 children are presently enrolled at their native place, but due to the seasonal migration of parents, they can not attend school nearly for 04-05 months of the year.
- Not a single child of brick kiln laborers is enrolled in any school of the district Kulgam.
- The gender-wise distribution shows that majority of girls 70.58% had never been enrolled as compared to 29.41% of boys.
- The dropout rate is higher among boys 62.5% as compared to 37.5% for girls.

- 40% of children are engaged in different kinds of brick-making tasks which indicates that children are also engaged in this kind of dangerous job.
- Majority (92.5%) of children responded that they are staying along with their family members in brick kilns of Kulgam district from last 05-06 months.

Conclusion

Universal education, one of the UN Sustainable Development Goals number 4, cannot be accomplished until it is mandatory for all state governments to educate migrant children. Through collaboration with various stakeholders, interdepartmental convergence, incredibly simple school migration, encouragement and motivation of parents, the establishment of work-site education centers establishment of seasonal hostels, and other means. Education is among the most important aspects you can provide for your child. It can help them get out of their situation and lead better lives. In many cases, it was found that children are being forced to work in brick kilns. Working in a brick kiln can have a lasting impact on a child's life. They are unable to attend school because they are working long hours at the kiln and don't have enough time to attend school. Therefore, proper access to education is also very important if we want these children to grow up healthy and strong enough for adulthood. It is suggested that without any excuse, free and compulsory education should be provided to all children in the age group of 05 to 16 years. The responsible individuals who disobey national and international responsibilities to protect children's rights

should be brought to justice by the government authorities. It is necessary to start widespread awareness campaigns to educate the public about the value of education in daily life and to inspire people to become literate. By focusing on socio-economically disadvantaged groups, the problem of child labor can be halted, regulated, and eventually abolished.

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