



Socio-Economic Status of Slum Dwellers: A Cross-Sectional Study of five slums in Varanasi City

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Abstract

The study focuses on the socio-economic status (SES) of slum dwellers in Varanasi city. From the five wards of Varanasi slums, 200 households were interviewed with a predesigned questionnaire. To show the status of the families in the slum, we used Kuppuswamy's socio-economic class. The average score of Kuppuswamy's socio-economic status of slum dwellers is 7.7. In Varanasi city, based on the Kuppuswamy SES score, families belong to Upper-lower SES, and their average SES is seven. The states should focus on poverty, unemployment, income, and essential services in city areas. The present study suggests improving the socio-economic condition, which led to improved social, educational, and income status in slums.

Introduction

Slums are characterized by crowded and lack of basic amenities. Slums are found in vacant land or government land and grow in an unstructured way. The slum houses are typically made of bamboo, tin shed, straw leaves, polythene, etc. A building situated in the boundary of a slum may also be considered a slum house. Houses under slum areas are unhygienic, and the basic amenities in these houses are below standard than the general urban locality for residential purposes. Due to the economic situation, the people living in the slum areas are forced to live in unhygienic conditions.

In the nineteenth century, the slums were common in the USA and many European countries. In 1825, in New York City, the first slum was named as five points. It was developed due to urban settlement. Slums are part of the developed economies, but these settlements are predominantly part of the urban areas in developing and underdeveloped economies. The living condition of urban poor is considerably poor in socio-economically according to the survey findings. The socio-economic characteristics of slum dwellers are having a low level of income and illiteracy. To secure their living standard, their income should be stable. Some arrangements are required in slums to achieve a good quality of life (Singh, 2014). The undernourished and poor individuals living in urban areas have increased in most developing countries (Haddad et al., 1999).

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The literacy rate of the slum population is a bridge between the literacy rate of the rural and urban populations. The reason behind this is literate people are more mobile than illiterate people. A higher number of literate persons have been migrating from rural to urban areas. Because of unplanned and haphazard urbanization, these people are forced to live in sub-human conditions of slum areas (Sinha et al., 2011).

Social factors such as caste, religion, literacy level, marital status determine the SES of the households. The family's status also depends on education, family size, and the congenial atmosphere in the family. Any family's economic conditions determine the aspirations, the way of achieving goals, and material gains of its members. The economically better-off families usually succeed in satisfying their primary and secondary needs and can easily acquire material goals. While poor families cannot satisfy basic needs easily, and they experience emotional strains and tensions in their day-to-day life. Livelihood not only refers to income generation activity, but it comprises capabilities, assets, and activities necessary for means of living. A sustainable source of livelihood can recover from stress and shocks, enhance assets, and provide opportunities to the generation. It contributes to other livelihoods at the local and global levels in the long and short term. (Chambers & Conway, 1992; Keshav, 2015). The poor households live and survive in an ever-changing environment. It has been observed that new challenges posing new opportunities to them. They are confronted with multiple shocks and risks. The households remain vulnerable to these shocks and risks. Some factors affect the vulnerability of families to risks and shocks (Keshav, 2015).

Slum of Varanasi

The slum population was 42.6 million, which forms 15% of the country's total urban population and 23% of the population of cities and towns reporting slums (Census of India 2001). The census also reports that 41.6% of the total slum population resides in cities with over one million populations (Planning Commission, 2011; Sadashivam & Tabassu, 2016). Varanasi city is situated in the eastern part of Uttar Pradesh. It covers an area of approx. 82.1 km. Varanasi is often stated as the holy city of India and also the cultural capital of India. The city is situated on the bank of the river Ganga. It is surrounded by two small rivers Varuna in the north and Assi in the south. As per census 2011, Varanasi is the 6th most populated city of Uttar Pradesh and 30th most populated in the country with an approximate 1.2 million population. As per provisional reports of Census India, the population of Varanasi in 2011 was 1,198,491, of which male and female are 635,140 and 563,351, respectively. Total no. of Slums in Varanasi city numbers 46,732 in which a population of 302,025 resides. This is around 25.20% of the total population of Varanasi city (Census, 2011; M. Singh et al., 2021).

Distribution of Slums in Varanasi

Slums¹ in Varanasi are scattered throughout the city and found all over the city however established mostly near places of employment such as handloom industry, religious places, tourist places, and others. The general composition of the majority of slums comprises of scheduled caste and other backward classes, forming the weaker section of the society (Ministry of Urban Development, 2012). Out of the 210 slums, 156 slums are found in a core area such as central business districts, around temples, and small-scale industries, and the remaining 54 are located in the urban fringe areas near agricultural lands. The city has 210 slums and 4,07,036 people living in 78,253 households in these slums (Ministry of Urban Development, 2015).

Table 1: Proportion of Slum Population in Towns, 2011

S.No.	Name of the town having slum	Total population	Slum population	%of slum population
1	Varanasi (M Corp.)	1198491	458443	38.25
2	Ramnagar (NPP)	49132	850	1.73
	Total	1247623	459293	36.81

Source: DCHB 2011

The proportion of slum population in towns, 2011 wherein there are only two towns, where slum population is found to be living. Interestingly out of the total population of 1198491, 38.25%, i.e., 458443 found to be a slum population. The other town is Ramnagar NPP, where the slum population resides in the district.

Review of Literature

In the last 15 to 20 years, the WHO and the World Bank survey data for most countries shows that the absolute number of poor and undernourished individuals living in urban areas has increased. Also, more policy research needs to be conducted on the levels, determinants, and solutions for urban poverty and malnutrition (Haddad et al., 1999; Tsujita, 2009). With an increase in the duration of stay, migrants can better their standard of living. As migrants stay for longer years in the destination, they develop access to the urban labour market and shift to better-paid jobs (Gupta, Indrani; Mitra, 2002; Tsujita, 2009).

There is a correlation between a household's socio-economic attributes and various

¹The Slum Areas (Improvement and Clearance) Act, 1956, defined slums as: (a) Areas where buildings are in any respect unfit for human habitation; or (b) are by reasons of dilapidation, overcrowding, faulty arrangement and design of such buildings, narrowness or faulty arrangement of streets, lack of ventilation, light or sanitation facilities, or any combination of these factors, are detrimental to safety, health or morals (DIRECTORATE OF CENSUS OPERATIONS UTTAR PRADESH, 2011).

dwelling characteristics like quality structure, utility services, and living conditions (Shah, 2012). Sinha et al. (2011) suggested viable plans and policies for improving the facilities in slums to improve the living standard of poor households. The slum population density is high with a low gender ratio, high child sex ratio, high population growth, large share of SC/ST population, low literacy, low income with high poverty (Sinha et al., 2011). It has also been observed that the population engages in the informal sector.

Khan (2010) provides a short-view for the living standard residing in slums to the making of policy and plans developers including policy proposals to set the developing strategies to improve life in slums. There is a need to focus on short and medium-term policies. The attention should be focused on housing, education, health, sanitation, and livelihood activities. Accessibility to institutions is an effective means for reducing the vulnerability of the urban poor households in slums areas (Keshav, 2015). The majority of public assistance can play an important role (Khan, 2010).

The conditions of slum dwellers are better in the notified area than that of non-notified areas in the Kannur district of Andhra Pradesh. In the non-notified area, health and living conditions continue to be very poor and disgusting (Sufaira, 2013). Jha & Tripathi (2014) found the quality of life in the slums of Varanasi city is very low based on millennium development goals and India vision 2020. They used composite index and standard deviation techniques in measuring the quality of life. Ahmed et al. (2015) used KatchiAbadis' inhabitants' socio-economic profile based on health, community participation, educational attainment, income, demographic characteristics, employment, housing facilities, and sewerage indicators. The socio-economic conditions in transferred urban slums were better than the non-transferred slums.

In Bangladesh, the living conditions of slum dwellers are in bad hygienic conditions, with poor health issues. Majorities are living in rented houses in poor conditions. These slums are also responsible for urban poverty (Kamruzzaman & Hakim, 2016; Rahman et al., 2015). Bose & Ghosh (2015) examined the socio-economic status in slums based on economic variables (like income, saving, and financial inclusion), education, and other variables. Awareness about education and family planning has been a growing need of the time. The development of self-help groups and micro-finance institutions will be helpful in the removal of poverty among urban slums.

This study focuses on the socio-economic conditions of slum dwellers. Slum areas face basic amenities. People living in slum areas are facing various types of problems in daily life. The housing conditions of the slum areas are very poor. They lived in dilapidated housing structures, lack of cross-ventilation, lack of lighting sources affected the health of the slum dwellers. This study also focuses on slums related problems. The educational level of the slum dwellers is very low. So there is a need for active participation to solve the problems of slum dwellers. With the help of the better implementation of the plans and policies, we can solve the poor condition of the households of the slum dwellers. So there is a need for active participation to solve the

problems of slum dwellers. With the help of the better implementation of the plans and policies, we can solve the poor condition of the households of the slum dwellers (Nath Singh, 2016).

Jacobs et al. (2014) focus on enabling poor urban residents to take advantage of opportunities by providing education, skills, and health. The lives of people in slums and informal settlements require empowerment, good governance, participation of stakeholders, and political commitment (Goswami & Manna, 2013). Phukan (2014) found that the poor housing, water facility, and sanitation system in the slums create various problems. Poor condition harms many dwellers outside the slums. The ecology of these areas is greatly affected by such poor amenities.

Data and Methodology

Data were obtained by conducting a household interview among slum dwellers residing in Varanasi city. Data have been collected from 200 households of 5 wards. These wards are Bazardiah, Koniya, Baniya, Soniya, and Nadesar. The study examines the outcomes of socio-economic factors in terms of income, education, occupation, etc. An attempt has been made to understand how the status has changed over the last few years.

Table 2 : Households and Sample Size of the Surveyed Area

Name of Slum	Total Households*	Collected Samples
Bazardiah (Ward 48)	1208	79
Koniya(Ward 43)	1261	45
Baniya(Ward 65)	140	09
Soniya(Ward 52)	457	30
Nadesar (Ward 18)	1129	37

Note: *Primary database

Kuppuswamy Socio-economic Scale Index

The present paper utilized Kuppuswamy socio-economic scale 1976 for determining the socio-economic status of slum dwellers. This scale includes the educational level of the head of the household, occupational status, and family income (pooled from all sources). It classifies families into five groups: upper class, upper-middle-class, lower middle class, upper-lower, and lower socio-economic class based on score, and the range of score is 3-29 (Table 3). We have collected data from the five slums Bazardiah, Koniya, Baniya, Soniya, and Nadesar detailed collected samples are shown in table 2.

Table 3: Category of the Kuppuswamy Socioeconomic Class.

S.No.	KuppuswamySocio-economic Class	Score
1	Upper (I)	26-29
2	Upper Middle (II)	16-25
3	Lower Middle (III)	11-15
4	Upper Lower (IV)	5-10
5	Lower (V)	<5

Source:Kuppuswamy B. socio-economic status scale (urban). 1981.

For measuring Kuppuswamy's socio-economic class, we have used scores on different items presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Score on education, family income, and occupation.

Table 7: Score on education, family income, and occupation				
Scores for education				
Education of the head of the household (1976)	Score	Education level of the HH for slum dwellers in Varanasi City*		Score
Professional or Honours	7	—		—
Graduate or Post-Graduate	6	—		—
Intermediate or Post-High-School Diploma	5	Intermediate or diploma		5
HighSchool Certificate	4	High school certificate		4
Middle School Certificate	3	Middle school certificate		3
Primary School or literate	2	Primary school certificate		2
Illiterate	1	Illiterate		1
Score for occupation				
Occupation of the head of the household (1976)	Score	Occupation status of the HH for slum dwellers in Varanasi City@		Score
Profession	10	—		—
Semi-Profession	6	Skilled Workers and shop & Market Sales Workers		6
Clerical, Shop-owner, Farmer	5	—		—
Skilled worker	4	—		—
Semi-skilled worker	3	—		—
Unskilled worker	2	Elementary Occupation		2
Unemployed	1	Unemployed		1
Scoresfor family income				
Family income of the head of the household (1976)	Score	CPI-IW Adjusted Family income for the year 2019#	Score	Updated Family income of the head of the household for slum dwellers in Varanasi City
> 2000	12	> 61629	12	—
1000-1999	10	30799-61628	10	30799-61628
750-999	6	23092-30798	6	23092-30798
500-749	4	15385-23091	4	15385-23091
300-499	3	9219-15384	3	9219-15384
101-299	2	3084-9218	2	3084-9218
< 100	1	< 3083	1	< 3083

Note: (i) * the education level of the head of the households are under the category Illiterate, Primary school certificate, Middle school certificate, High school certificate, Intermediate or diploma; (ii) # income adjusted based on the formula: New income = Multiplication factor CPI-IW (2019) X Linking factor CPI-IW(2001) X Linking factor CPI-IWbetween the year (1976-82) X original (1976) old income; (iii) @occupation level of the head of the households are under the category Unemployed, Elementary Occupation, Skilled Workers and shop & Market Sales Workers.

Results and Discussion

Characteristics of the head of the households

Based on the survey data, the characteristics of the head of the households are presented in table 5. While we interviewed 200 individuals, mostly household heads, the information collected pertains to a population size of 963 family members, of which 475 were male, and 488 were female. Therefore, the average family size turns out to be nearly 5 (since the calculated mean is 4.81), which is also the median value. The qualitative aspect of this finding is consistent with the general scenario and perception. Respondent's average age is 37.24 years, and the median age being 35 years. Out of 200 respondents interviewed, 187 were male, and they have 93.5%, and 13 were female, which is 6.5%. Out of 200 households surveyed, 72% were Hindus, and 28% were Muslims. Remarkably, not in a single slum of our study, we have observed the coexistence of the Hindu and Muslim population; in other words, a slum has only Hindu or Muslim inhabitants. It shows that the slums are separate on the lines of two dominant religions. Indeed, this phenomenon may have a lot of sociological, anthropological, and historical reasons and implications, and social scientists need to inquire about the historical aspects of the settlement pattern more intensively. The table also age-wise distribution of the head of the households. 0-29 age group respondents are 11%, 30-39 age group respondents are 50%, and the lowest 3% households represent the 60-68 age groups. The education level of the head of the households has been classified into five broad categories: Illiterate (have not completed education up to class 5 level), primary (up to class 5), upper primary (up to class 8), secondary (up to class 10), higher secondary (up to class 12). It has been observed that 58.5 percent of the households are illiterate. Around 25 percent of slum dwellers have completed primary-level education. Out of 200 households, only 10 percent completed the upper primary level. It is worrying that 4 percent of slum dwellers are secondary and only 3 percent higher secondary level education. The education level of the head of the households is also presented in graph 1.

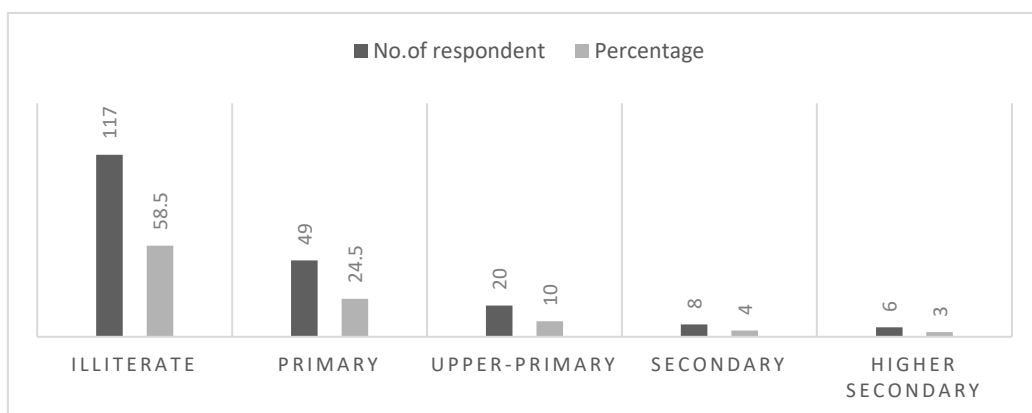
Table 5: Characteristics of the head of the households

Characteristics	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Religion		
Hindu	144	72
Muslim	56	28

Gender		
Male	187	93.5
Female	13	6.5
Age		
0-29	23	11.5
30-39	99	49.5
40-49	60	30
50-59	12	6
60 -68	6	3
Education		
Illiterate	117	58.5
Primary	49	24.5
Upper-primary	20	10
Secondary	8	4
Higher Secondary	6	3
Income		
Less than Rs. 5000	27	13.5
Between Rs.5000 and Rs.10000	127	63.5
Between Rs.10000 and Rs.15000	26	13
Between Rs.15000 and Rs.20000	16	8
Above Rs. 20000	4	2
Total	200	100

Note: calculation based on field data.

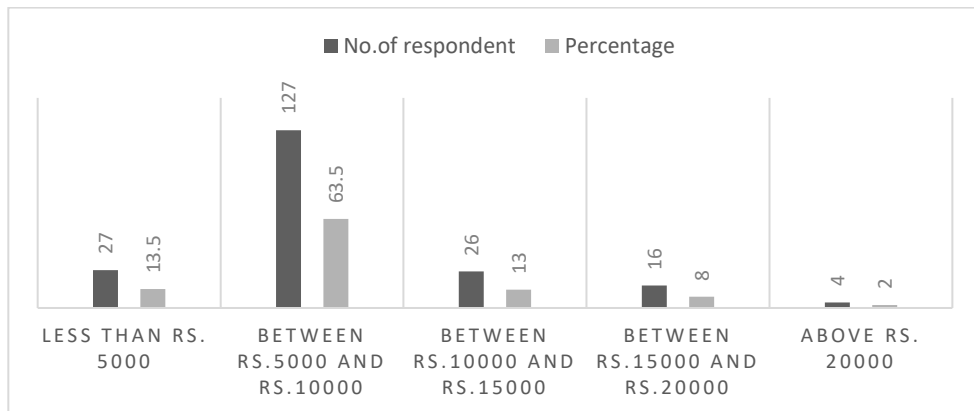
Graph 1: Education-wise Distributions of Respondents



Note: Bar graph Based on field data

The average monthly family income is Rs. Rs.7597.5, and the median income is Rs. 8000 per month. The monthly income data collected are grouped into five classes: (a) less than Rs. 5000, (b) between Rs. 5000 and Rs. 10,000, (c) between Rs. 10,000 and Rs. 15,000, (d) between Rs. 15,000 and Rs. 20,000 and (e) above Rs. 20,000. In 63.5 percent of households belong to the income group Rs. 5000-10000. Only two percent of households have above Rs. 20,000 individual income. The income level of the head of the households is also shown in graph 2.

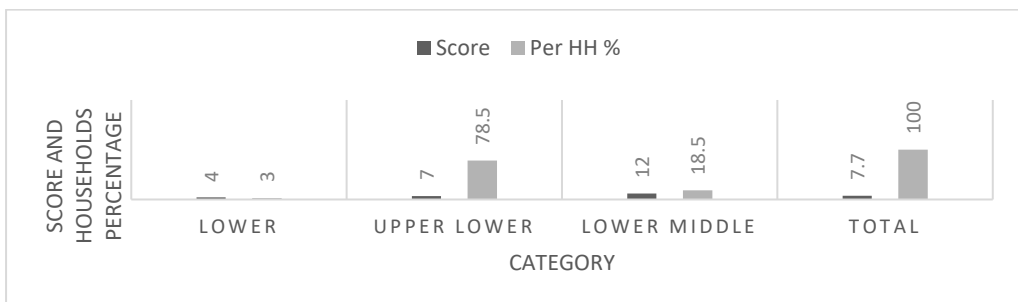
Graph 2 : Income-wise Distribution of Households



Note:Bar graph based on field data

Graph 3 Represents the Kuppaswamy socio-economic score and percentage of households for lower, upper-lower, and lower middles. For the lower category, the SES score and households percentage are 4 and 3, respectively. Other hands in upper lower class average SES score and percentage are 7 and 78.5 percent, respectively. For lower-middle-class avg. SES score and percentage are 12 and 18.5%, respectively. For all 200 slum households, the average socio-economic status score is 7.7.

Graph 3 : Kuppaswamy Socio-economic Status Score and Households Percentage



Note:Bar graph based on field data

Among 200 households, 157 households belong to upper lower socio-economic status with an average SES of 7. Religion wise SES score shows that the Hindu community household's average SES score is high compare to the Muslim community. It indicates that the Hindu community is better off condition Muslim community in the slums. It also indicates that the middle-class average SES score Hindu community is low compared to the Muslim community. In contrast, a higher percentage of 23.61 households in the Hindu community is lower than that of 5.61 households in the Muslim community. It shows that middle-class households in Muslim communities are lower but better off in condition than Hindu communities in slums. On the other hand, the upper-lower class Hindu community average SES is high compared to the Muslim community while the higher percentage is 87.50 of households in Muslim community compared to lower percentage 75 of households in Hindu community.

Caste-wise SES score shows that Scheduled Caste community household's average SES score is high compare to Scheduled Tribe, Other Backward Class, and other communities. It indicates that the Scheduled Caste community is better off condition among them. It also indicates that the ST community is higher than the upper and lower class, and the average SES is also higher than the other and OBC communities. Religion-wise and Caste-wise scores are presented in graphs 4 and 5.

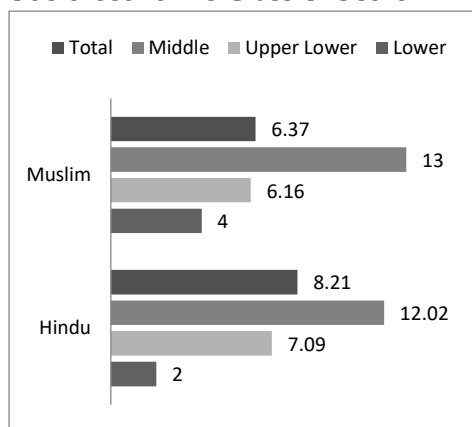
Table 6 : Socio-economic Score and percentage on Religion, Caste, Education, Occupation and Family income for the head of households

Religion	Lower	%	Avg. SES	Upper Lower	%	Avg. SES	Middle	%	Avg. SES	Total	%	Avg. SES
Hindu	2	1.39	2	108	75.00	7.09	34	23.61	12.02	144	100	8.21
Muslim	4	7.14	4	49	87.50	6.16	3	5.36	13	56	100	6.37
Caste												
SC	3	2.44	4	89	72.36	6.94	31	25.20	12.09	123	100	8.17
ST	0	0	0	7	100	6.71	0	0	0	7	100	6.71
OBC	3	5.56	4	46	85.19	6.58	5	9.26	12.2	54	100	6.96
Others	0	0	0	15	93.75	6.67	1	6.25	12	16	100	7
Education												
Illiterate	6	5.13	4	105	89.74	6.39	6	5.13	12.33	117	100	6.57
Primary	0	0	0	36	73.47	7.61	13	26.53	11.76	49	100	8.71
Upper-primary	0	0	0	10	50.00	7	10	50.00	11.9	20	100	9.45
Secondary	0	0	0	3	37.50	8.67	5	62.50	12.4	8	100	11

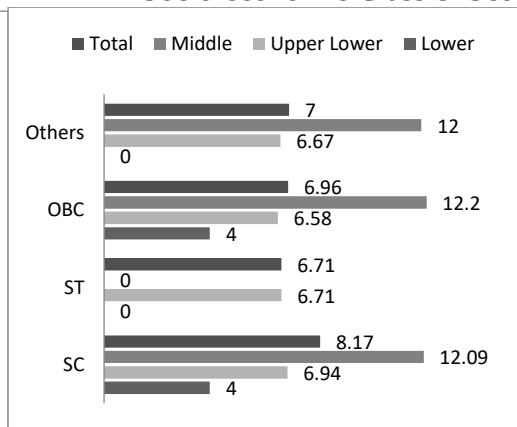
Higher Secondary	0	0	0	3	50.00	9	3	50.00	13.33	6	100	11.17
Occupation												
Unemployed	2	66.67	4	1	33.33	5	0	0	0	3	100	4.33
Elementary occupation	4	3.15	4	121	95.28	6.01	2	1.57	12	127	100	6.04
Skilled workers & shop & market sales workers	0	0	0	35	50.00	9.57	35	50.00	12.11	70	100	10.8
Family Income												
Below-3083	4	57.14	4	3	42.86	7.33	0	0	0	7	100	5.42
3084-9218	2	1.89	4	96	90.57	6.55	8	7.55	11.37	106	100	6.9
9219-15384	0	0	0	50	81.97	7.1	11	18.03	11.90	61	100	7.9
15385-23091	0	0	0	6	33.33	7.33	12	66.67	12.08	18	100	10.5
23092-30798	0	0	0	2	28.57	9	5	71.43	13.6	7	100	12.28
30799-61628	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	100	13	1	100	13
Total	6	3	4	157	78.5	7	37	18.5	12	200	100	7.7

Note: Based on field data calculated

Graph 4: Religionwise Kuppuswamy Kuppuswamy Socio-economic Class & Score



Graph 5: Caste-wise Socio-economic Class & Score

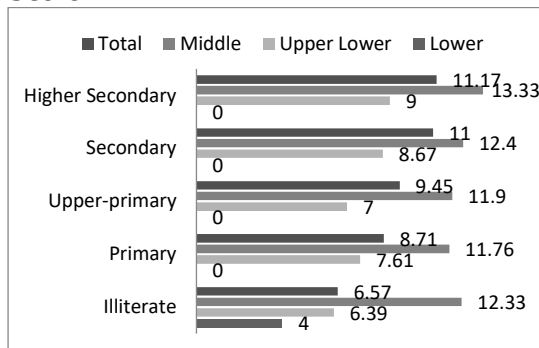


Note: Based on field data.

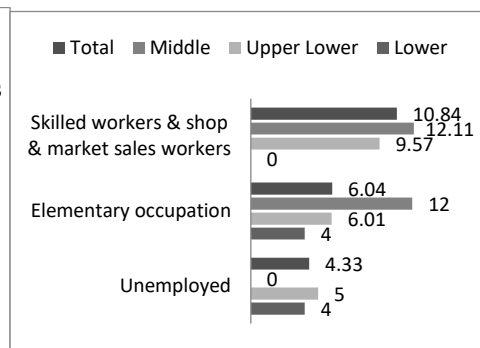
Education-wise SES score shows that the Higher Secondary education completed household's average SES scores are high compare to Primary, Upper Primary, and Secondary level education. It shows that many households have completed their higher secondary education. It also indicates that none of the lower-class households completed

any level of education. In the upper lower class, 73.47 percent of households completed primary education than the middle class, and 26.53 percent completed primary education. The higher percentage of households belongs to the lower-class category with a lower socio-economic score. Maximum households have an elementary occupation, and they belong to the upper-lower class of socio-economic status. Graphs 6, 7, and 8 represent education-wise, occupation-wise, and family income-wise average scores for the different classes of the slum households.

Graph 6: Education-wise Kuppuswamy
Kuppuswamy
Socio-economic Class & Score



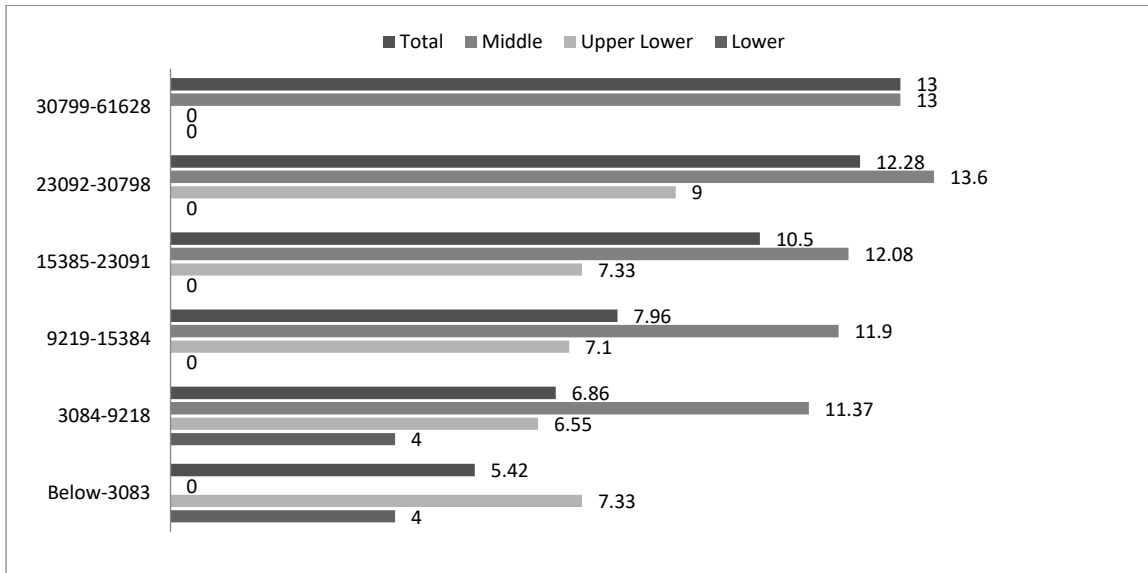
Graph 7: Occupation-wise
Socio-economic Class & Score



Note: Based on field data.

Income-wise average SES scores are presented in table 6 and also shown in graph 8. The SES score (13.6) for lower-middle-class family income (23092-30798) is the highest among all income groups. For income classes below-3083 and 3084 to 9218, the minimum average SES score was recorded at 4. These income classes belong to the category of the lower class.

Graph 8 : Family Income-wise Kuppuswamy Socio-economic Class & Score



Note: Based on field data.

Conclusion and Suggestions

The present study is conducted among 200 slum households in Varanasi city. The study indicated that the average age of slum dwellers is 35 years. Around 59 percent of the households are illiterate, and less than 30 percent have been completed primary-level education. It is also alarming about the upper primary, secondary, and higher secondary levels. The average family size is 4.8. Out of 963 family members, 475 were males, and 488 were females. One-third of survey households, more than 70 percent are Hindus, and less than 30 percent are Muslims. The average family income is Rs. 10159.5, and the median income is Rs. 8000. Around 127 households (approx. 64 percent) are lies between (5000-10000) income group and less than 15 percent of households below to Rs. 5000 income group, and above to Rs.20000 income group only 2 percent of households exist.

Results show that the income of most families living in the slums is neither high nor low. They have only a survival level of income. There are, however, some signs of development and modernization that have been observed. For instance, the average family size is relatively low compared to income standards. Specific slum development-related schemes and programmes should be implemented to improve people's socio-economic status living in slums. Steps should be taken to develop clean drinking water facilities, health facility centers, cleanliness and sanitation, and skill-based training. It will improve the socio-economic condition, which will lead to the improvement of social, educational, and income status in slums.

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