

Assessment of Social Status of Slums in Bilaspur City

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Abstract: The rapid pace of urbanization in India has led to the emergence and expansion of slums, particularly in mid-sized cities like Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh. This study aims to conduct a comprehensive socio-economic assessment of the slum population in Bilaspur City, focusing on key indicators such as income levels, employment status, educational attainment, housing conditions, access to basic services, and health care facilities. Primary data was collected through field surveys, interviews, and structured questionnaires across various slum clusters, while secondary data was sourced from municipal records and census reports. The findings reveal significant disparities in access to essential services and highlight the persistent challenges faced by slum dwellers, including inadequate housing, poor sanitation, irregular employment, and limited educational opportunities. The study also explores the role of government policies and local urban development programs in addressing these issues. Based on the analysis, strategic recommendations are proposed to promote inclusive urban planning and improve the living conditions of the urban poor. This research contributes to the broader discourse on sustainable urban development and social equity in rapidly growing Indian cities.

Keywords: Emergence, essential services and highlight the persistent, Rapidly Growing.

Introduction - The socio-economic condition of slum populations is largely shaped by key factors such as education, income, and occupation. These elements collectively influence living standards and contribute to the broader social environment in slum areas (Tripathy, 2013). Factors like housing quality, lifestyle, access to education and healthcare, and overall well-being are directly affected by socio-economic status. Understanding the distribution of age, caste, income levels, educational attainment, and types of employment is essential for a comprehensive socio-economic analysis of slum communities.

Review of Literature

The socio-economic assessment of slum populations has been a vital area of research within urban studies, development geography, and public policy. Numerous scholars and organizations have studied the complex realities of slum dwellers in India, addressing issues such as poverty, inadequate infrastructure, social exclusion, and policy failures. **Davis (2006)**, in his seminal work *Planet of Slums*, emphasized the global spread of slums and identified them as byproducts of unchecked urbanization, economic inequality, and neglect of urban planning. He noted that in cities of the Global South, including Indian urban centers, slums are often informal settlements with limited access to civic amenities. **Kundu (2003)** analyzed the urbanization pattern in India and noted that although cities are engines of economic growth, they often fail to accommodate the influx of rural migrants, resulting in

unplanned settlements and slum development. He highlighted the socio-spatial disparities that slum dwellers face due to marginalization and weak policy implementation.

Patel and Deb (2006) examined the living conditions in slums of Mumbai and concluded that slum residents face multidimensional deprivation—low income, poor education, inadequate housing, and lack of access to healthcare. They emphasized the need for community-based participatory approaches in slum improvement policies. **UN-Habitat (2015)** defines slums as settlements with poor housing structures, overcrowding, insecure tenure, and insufficient access to safe water and sanitation. The report on *World Cities* suggests that slum upgrading should focus not only on infrastructure but also on improving socio-economic outcomes such as education, employment, and health. **Kumar and Aggarwal (2013)** conducted a study in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, which showed that slum populations are often engaged in informal and low-paying jobs, with limited upward mobility. They stressed the need for skill development, vocational training, and inclusive urban policy frameworks.

Bose (2011), in his study of slums in Kolkata, pointed out the role of political patronage in the persistence of slums and argued that regularization without adequate service provision perpetuates poverty and inequality.

Chatterjee (2010) introduced the concept of “political society” to explain how slum dwellers negotiate with the state for basic services through informal and political

channels, often bypassing legal frameworks. This lens helps understand why some slums gain services despite being illegal settlements. In the **Chhattisgarh context**, **Chandrika and Verma (2017)** studied urban slums in Raipur and highlighted that residents suffer from poor housing, lack of sanitation, erratic water supply, and weak health infrastructure. Their findings indicated the urgent need for policy reforms tailored to the local context.

Though limited, existing literature on **Bilaspur City** suggests similar trends of urban poverty and informal settlements. Reports by the **Bilaspur Municipal Corporation** and **Census 2011** show that the slum population in the city lacks access to safe drinking water, waste disposal systems, and affordable housing. Despite national-level interventions like the **Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY)** and the **Rajiv Awas Yojana (RAY)**, the gap between policy intentions and on-ground realities persists in medium-sized cities like Bilaspur. Therefore, there is a strong need for empirical and localized studies that can bridge this gap and inform effective urban planning.

Objectives of the Study :

1. To analyze the social and population attributes of slums in the study areas.
2. To study the effects of slums on urban environment of the study areas.

Research Methodology:

Primary Data Sources: There are a total 27 slums in Bilaspur city in which 16517 peoples reside. For collection of primary data questionnaires will be filled by selecting 50 houses from 09 slums. here are mainly 27 slums in Bilaspur town out of which 10 slums have been selected for collection of primary data which comprises more than 40% of the slums.

Secondary Data Sources: Topo sheet, Tahsil office Reports, Census Handbook, Record of Town Planning Office, Record of Bilaspur Corporation Office, Paper cutting and web sites are the secondary data sources for this study

Analysis of Data: The data collected through primary and secondary data sources will be analyzed with the help of statistical tools.

Discussion: Slums typically emerge due to multiple challenges, including the lack of affordable developed land for the urban poor, high population growth, rural-to-urban migration in search of employment, and insufficient urban infrastructure and services. According to Sufaira (2013), slums are often the outcome of flawed urban policies, weak governance, corruption, poor land management, inadequate regulations, lack of political commitment, and ineffective financial systems.

In the Bilaspur urban area, industrial development, educational institutions, transport facilities, hospitals, and government offices have generated employment opportunities for both skilled and unskilled workers. Many migrants from nearby rural regions are drawn to these cities in search of better livelihoods. However, due to the high cost of urban housing, migrants often occupy vacant

lands—whether public, private, or semi-government—to build informal shelters, leading to the formation of slums. These settlements are typically socially diverse, comprising individuals from different economic, religious, and educational backgrounds, creating a heterogeneous community structure. Due to limited education and skills, most slum residents—both men and women—work in low-wage, unskilled jobs and live in unhygienic and crowded conditions. A detailed socio-economic assessment of slums can be conducted by analyzing factors such as income levels, employment types, education, housing quality, and demographic characteristics. High levels of poverty and lack of resources characterise the social status of Bilaspur slum dwellers. Most slum dwellers live in extreme poverty levels with limited access to basic amenities such as clean water, electricity, decent housing and health services. Lack of proper housing and sanitation facilities means that they are often exposed to various health hazards and suffer from preventable diseases. The social status of slum dwellers in Bilaspur is complex and multi-faceted and is shaped by many factors including poverty, migration, urbanisation and social inequality. Access to education and health services is limited in the slums of Bilaspur city, especially among the female population. Health facilities are inadequate. The high cost of medical treatment is a deterrent for most slum dwellers and as a result, diseases such as tuberculosis, respiratory infections and diarrhoea are prevalent. Due to the lack of proper drainage and waste disposal system in the area, there are open drains and garbage dumps, which spread diseases like malaria, dengue and cholera. A survey conducted by Bilaspur Municipal Corporation in 2023 has revealed that the number of slums in the city is 27. Bilaspur Municipal Corporation has 27 slums .. Most of the people living in slums are migrants, who come to the city in search of work and better economic opportunities. They are migrating here from different parts of the country including Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan itself. The situation of women and girls is particularly bad here due to low levels of literacy, limited access to health services and high rates of domestic violence . Maternal and child health outcomes are poor here.

Women face significant cultural barriers and are often excluded from decision-making processes which affect their way of life. Bilaspur slums are mostly inhabited by people of a particular caste, who come from the same background. Whose social status, social customs and traditions are almost similar. Slums of Bilaspur city are areas characterized by limited economic opportunities. Most of the slum dwellers in the 10 slums surveyed are employed in the informal sector, working as daily wage labourers, roadside vendors, domestic workers and construction workers. They earn meager incomes, which are barely enough to meet their basic needs. The daily wage labourers who mostly come from villages are mostly from joint families.

Survey of commercial work places reveals that child

labour is another important issue here. Poverty forces children in slum areas to engage in manual labour to support their families. Age and gender are not a constraint for employment in slum areas as the survey found that even a 14-year-old child who is of an age to go to school or play with children of his age group is looking for work to have two meals a day. On the other hand, a woman who is breastfeeding a one-year-old child and who should be resting is also ready to work here.

Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh's third-largest city, has a significant slum population. As of the 2011 SECC, around 36.8% of the city's municipal residents—approximately 98,555 people—lived in slum areas. District-wide, nearly 29.9% of the urban population resides in such settlements, which are marked by social, economic, and spatial marginalization.

Most slum households fall under low-income categories, with 70.6% relying on casual labor, 7% being self-employed, and 3.7% engaged in salaried work. These jobs often lack security, regular pay, or benefits, leaving families vulnerable to economic fluctuations.

Slum dwellings are typically substandard and made from low-cost materials. Fewer than 60% of residents have formal land tenure. Many slums face inadequate access to basic infrastructure such as water, sanitation, drainage, roads, and waste management. Education and healthcare access is limited, with only a few slums near schools or health centers. The population largely consists of displaced or landless individuals from marginalized caste groups—23% SC, 11% ST, 54% OBC, and 12% general category. Overcrowding is common, with families living in cramped conditions, which heightens social and health-related vulnerabilities.

Poor sanitation and overcrowded living conditions contribute to high rates of disease, including diarrhea and respiratory infections. Mobile health clinics like Dai Didi have helped improve access, serving over 128,000 women by 2022, but coverage remains limited.

Many slum residents are rural migrants seeking better livelihoods. However, they face difficulty accessing services and often lack strong social support systems within urban settings. Programs like PMAY-Urban and initiatives by Chhattisgarh's SUDA aim to improve housing and basic services. However, many slum clusters still suffer from inadequate water, sanitation, and legal housing security due to implementation gaps. Bilaspur's slum population deals with compounded challenges—economic instability, poor housing, limited services, and social exclusion. Sustainable improvements require a comprehensive approach combining legal housing rights, infrastructure upgrades, skill development, healthcare access, and social inclusion.

A. Social Status Of Slum Population: Bilaspur, a rapidly growing city in Chhattisgarh, has witnessed significant urbanization over the past few decades. Alongside planned development, the city has also experienced the emergence and expansion of slum areas, where a considerable portion

of the population resides under precarious conditions. The social status of the slum population in Bilaspur reflects a mixture of socio-economic challenges, informal living conditions, and limited access to basic services. Most slum dwellers in Bilaspur belong to economically weaker sections, including marginalized social groups such as Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), and Other Backward Classes (OBCs). These communities often migrate from nearby rural areas in search of livelihood opportunities but end up settling in informal housing due to the lack of affordable shelter in the formal sector.

Education levels among slum populations remain low, especially among women and older generations. Many children attend government schools, but issues like lack of parental literacy, irregular attendance, and early involvement in labor affect their educational outcomes. Adult literacy rates are improving slowly due to government initiatives and NGO efforts, but disparities remain evident. Health conditions are another major concern. Overcrowding, poor sanitation, and limited access to clean water contribute to the spread of communicable diseases. Though some residents benefit from urban health centers, the quality and availability of medical facilities are often inadequate. Nutrition is also a persistent issue, particularly among children and pregnant women. Socially, slum dwellers often face stigmatization and exclusion. Their settlements are sometimes viewed as illegal or encroachments, leading to a lack of recognition and formal support from urban planning authorities. Despite this, strong community bonds and informal networks help residents manage everyday struggles, from finding employment to resolving local disputes.

Women in slums face multiple layers of disadvantage due to poverty, illiteracy, and gender-based discrimination. However, they often take active roles in informal economies through domestic work, street vending, or self-help groups. Over time, these efforts have contributed to gradual empowerment and greater community participation. In recent years, there has been some improvement due to government housing schemes, sanitation missions, and awareness programs. Yet, the overall social status of Bilaspur's slum population continues to be shaped by poverty, limited access to services, and socio-economic exclusion.

The social status of slum residents is often influenced by factors such as caste, religion, and the language they speak. These aspects are frequently inherited from their native regions, especially in the case of migrants. The slum population in Bilaspur city comprises individuals who have relocated from various parts of the country, including nearby tehsils, districts, and even other states, bringing with them diverse social backgrounds. To evaluate their social standing, key indicators such as caste, education level by caste, occupation by caste, and religious affiliation are considered. These elements collectively shape the overall social framework of slum communities in the urban area.

Area wise caste status of slum population : Data on caste composition within slum populations across different areas of Bilaspur city was gathered through structured interviews conducted using a prepared questionnaire. The caste-wise distribution is presented in Table 5.1 and Figure 5.2. Among the total surveyed population, individuals belonging to the Open General Caste category constitute 18.22 % of the slum residents in the urban region.

For the Other Backward Classes (OBC), 18.04% of the slum population falls under this category. The ST category makes up 10.87% of the slum dwellers. Scheduled Castes (SC) form the majority within the slum communities, comprising 52.85% of the total population. The data clearly indicates that Scheduled Castes dominate the slum areas across Bilaspur city slum area.

Area Wise Religion Status of Slum Population: Bilaspur, a rapidly growing urban center in Chhattisgarh, is witnessing significant demographic and spatial changes due to migration, urban expansion, and economic transformation. A notable aspect of this urban growth is the rise in slum settlements across various parts of the city. These informal settlements have emerged as a result of rapid population inflow from rural areas in search of employment, affordable living spaces, and better amenities. However, limited availability of planned housing and weak enforcement of urban planning policies have led to the unplanned growth of slums in different regions of the city.

Slum clusters in Bilaspur are primarily located near railway lines, industrial zones, drainage channels, and low-lying areas that are often prone to waterlogging and poor sanitation. Areas such as Sarkanda, Rajiv Nagar, Sirgitti, Mangla, Dayalband, and Nehru Nagar are known for their dense slum pockets. These regions are characterized by overcrowded housing, lack of access to clean drinking water, inadequate drainage systems, poor waste management, and limited access to education and health services. The socio-economic status of slum dwellers in Bilaspur reflects the broader challenges of urban poverty. A majority of the slum population belongs to marginalized communities, including Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), and Other Backward Classes (OBC), who often rely on informal labor markets such as construction, domestic work, rickshaw pulling, and small-scale street vending for their livelihood.

In terms of infrastructure, while some slum areas have received basic amenities under government schemes like the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) and Rajiv Awas Yojana (RAY), many remain inadequately served. The condition of roads, drainage, and electricity remains poor in several localities, leading to health hazards and frequent disruptions in daily life. Furthermore, the population density in slum areas is significantly higher than the city average, leading to a strain on existing public services. Seasonal migration adds to this pressure, particularly during harvesting and construction seasons when temporary laborers move in and settle in informal shelters.

status of the slum population in Bilaspur city highlights the urgent need for inclusive urban planning, slum rehabilitation programs, and improved access to basic services. Addressing these issues is essential for enhancing the quality of life of slum dwellers and ensuring equitable urban development in Bilaspur.

Bilaspur, a prominent city in the Indian state of Chhattisgarh, reflects a diverse religious composition, showcasing the cultural harmony and pluralism that define much of urban India. The city accommodates a variety of faiths, with Hinduism being the predominant religion followed by a substantial portion of the population. Temples dedicated to various deities such as Lord Shiva, Vishnu, and Durga are widely spread across the city, serving not only as places of worship but also as cultural centres during major festivals like Navratri, Diwali, and Mahashivratri.

Apart from Hinduism, Islam is another significant religion in the region. Numerous mosques, including Jama Masjid and other community prayer halls, are active, especially during religious events such as Ramadan, Eid-ul-Fitr, and Eid-ul-Adha, which are observed with great enthusiasm by the local Muslim community. Christianity is also practiced by a segment of the population, with churches like the Sacred Heart Church and various Protestant establishments playing a central role in spiritual and community life. Christmas, Easter, and Good Friday are important religious events celebrated by the Christian residents. In addition, followers of Sikhism, Jainism, and Buddhism also contribute to the city's religious fabric. Sikh families regularly gather in Gurdwaras, where prayers, langar (community meals), and religious services are held. Jain temples in the city, often adorned with intricate carvings and serene environments, reflect the presence of a peaceful Jain community. Similarly, Buddhist followers, especially among scheduled tribes and some urban dwellers, observe rituals and teachings inspired by Lord Buddha. Bilaspur's religious structure is not only defined by places of worship but also by interfaith coexistence and mutual respect among communities. The city is a microcosm of secular values, where various religious traditions thrive side by side, contributing to a vibrant and inclusive urban society.

Educational Status of Slum Population: Education is a key indicator of socio-economic development, and analyzing the educational status of slum dwellers in Bilaspur city provides valuable insights into their living conditions and opportunities for upward mobility. Based on primary data collection and field observations, the educational profile of the slum population in Bilaspur reveals a pattern of low literacy levels and limited access to quality education.

A significant portion of the slum residents in Bilaspur have either not attended school or dropped out at an early stage. Illiteracy remains a major concern, particularly among older adults and women. Many families prioritize earning over education due to economic hardship, leading to a high dropout rate among children, especially after primary or middle school. Children in these areas often attend nearby

government schools, but irregular attendance, lack of proper learning environments at home, and limited parental support in academic matters hinder their educational progress. Although some initiatives by government and non-government organizations have aimed to improve literacy levels through adult education programs and scholarships for students, the impact has been modest due to inadequate outreach and follow-up.

The data indicates that while a small percentage of slum dwellers have managed to complete secondary or higher secondary education, very few pursue higher education or vocational training. Factors such as financial constraints, early involvement in labour, and lack of guidance contribute to the low representation of slum youth in colleges or skill-based institutions. educational condition of the slum population in Bilaspur city is marked by high illiteracy, early school dropout, and limited access to quality education. Addressing these issues requires a multi-pronged approach involving better infrastructure, community awareness, financial assistance, and inclusive educational policies that target the specific needs of slum residents. To understand their literacy status, an attempt has been made to analyse the literacy pattern slum-wise, caste-wise and according to certain social groups. The male literate population in slums in Bilaspur city is 65,723 and female literate population in slums is 63,071. The literacy rate in slums of Bilaspur city was 81.81 per cent in 2011. The male literacy rate is 85.47%, which is higher than the female literacy rate of 73.86%. The literacy male-female disparity index was 0.108. The literacy rate of slums in Bilaspur city is lower than the district (86.2%) and state average (91.02%). Household surveys in slum areas across Bilaspur city show that Guru Ghasidas Nagar ward under Mini Basti slum tops the list with a literacy rate of 75.42 per cent, while Prem Gali slum in Vishnu Nagar ward is at the bottom with a literacy rate of only 52.24 per cent. Some areas have higher literacy rates than the city slums because they are surrounded by areas with better educational and other facilities. In Indian conditions, the higher the caste, the higher the literacy rate. Slums that have a higher number of people from one caste or another have higher literacy rates. Mini Mata slum literacy rate male and female 79.58% and 69.25% respectively are highest and Whears in Rajendra Nagar slum and Dabripura slum 55.71 and 49.44 lows

Distribution of Age group wise and Gender-wise Literacy Rate: The literacy scenario in the slum areas of Bilaspur city reflects critical social patterns and disparities based on age and gender. Understanding these differences provides important insights for targeted educational interventions and policy formulation.

- **Age Group-Wise Literacy Distribution:** The literacy rate in slums varies significantly across different age brackets. The younger age groups tend to have higher literacy levels due to better access to educational opportunities in recent years. On the other hand, older

generations often have lower literacy levels, reflecting past limitations in schooling infrastructure and social constraints.

- **Children (6–14 years):** This age group shows a relatively higher literacy rate, especially due to the implementation of compulsory primary education under the Right to Education (RTE) Act. Enrolment is high, though dropout rates still affect continuity, especially for girls.

- **Youth (15–24 years):** Literacy levels in this group are moderate but show improvement, especially among boys. Vocational training and skill-based learning also contribute to functional literacy. However, a portion of this group still struggles with basic reading and writing, especially among girls due to early marriage or domestic responsibilities.

- **Adults (25–59 years):** Literacy in this group shows a decline, particularly among women. Many individuals in this age group had limited access to formal education during their childhood. Employment responsibilities often prevented continued education.

- **Elderly (60 years and above):** This group reflects the lowest literacy levels. Most members of this generation, especially women, never received any formal education. Literacy is almost entirely male-dominated here, and functional literacy is rare.

- **Gender-Wise Literacy Analysis:** Gender disparities in literacy are clearly evident in Bilaspur's slum areas. Social norms, economic challenges, and domestic responsibilities contribute to unequal access to education for females.

- **Male Literacy:** Across all age groups, male literacy rates are consistently higher. Boys are generally prioritized for education in slum households. Even in older age groups, some men have received basic education or informal learning through work.

- **Female Literacy:** Despite gradual improvements, female literacy remains lower than male literacy across most age categories. The gender gap is particularly visible in the 25–59 and 60+ age groups. Early marriage, child-rearing, and household duties are major reasons for school discontinuation among girls. However, younger females show improved literacy rates due to governmental educational schemes, NGO interventions, and community awareness programs.

The literacy landscape in the slum areas of Bilaspur city highlights both progress and persistent challenges. While younger generations are increasingly gaining literacy, gender-based disparities and lower literacy among older residents remain key concerns. Focused educational drives, adult In the 7–14 years age group, literacy was found to be 100%, with no difference between males and females. This is largely due to the fact that children in this age range are enrolled in school, ensuring universal literacy without any gender disparity.

Among individuals aged 15–34 years, the literacy rate remained relatively high at 70.34%. However, a gender gap is evident, with male literacy at 88.06% and female literacy at 80.32%. In the 35–59 years age group, literacy levels declined noticeably, reaching an average of 45.51%. Both

male and female literacy rates showed a downward trend, and the disparity between the two genders began to widen. For individuals aged 60 and above, literacy rates dropped significantly to just 18.16%. A sharp gender disparity was observed here, with male literacy at 24.34% and female literacy much lower at 12.18%. Overall, the data suggests that as age increases, literacy rates decrease, and gender disparities become more pronounced. This trend indicates that older generations, particularly women, had limited access to education in the past, which is still reflected in the slum populations of Bilaspur city.

Conclusion: Average Annual income with educational status, area wise caste status, caste wise educational status, caste wise occupational status, area wise religion status, educational status, age group wise distribution, dependency ratio and labour force participation rate of slum population this will affect the living condition of slum population, educational development of slum population, human resource in and economic development of slum population. All these factors play an important role for socio-economic assessments of slum population in Bilaspur urban area.

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