

A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY ON SLUM DWELLERS

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Introduction

Slums punctuate almost every city of the world. This has become a universal phenomenon accompanying with urban growth. Sri Lankan experience on slums is discussable and it is one of current topics of national policy planners. The ratio of slums will increase day by day with chronic problems. Some sort of social trends have been occurred in urban areas such as economic activities, demographics, physical access and environmental risks. On the other hand it can be seen by the way of crimes, prostitution, odd jobs, attitudes etc. This situation can be seen in not only in Colombo but also in Kandy, Galle, Kalutara as well as Jaffna in Sri Lanka. And the urban poverty is not a natural dilemma. It is a one of results of activities those who have done in last two three decades. In addition the policy makers didn't or couldn't put their keen attention on the town plan, which was well planned. As results of this situation slums and shanties have been created. Poverty and Culture of poverty has been created.

Research problem

What are the special factors that affects to their life pattern?

Objectives

- To identify their life pattern.
- To describe new trends or problems of slums.
- To identify social effects of slum dwellers.
- To consider some of the possible policy implications of this research.

Methodology

Theoretical Perspective: The researcher selected a current and very important issue for future urban plans. In this sociological approach, basically a descriptive field research was done (Babbie, 1998). I have tested the theory of culture of poverty, theory of "urbanism as a way of life" and sub cultural theory to identify their special life pattern.

Research Methods: Field researches are mostly popular in sociological studies, because, the researcher can interfere to the certain place directly and it helps to gain more knowledge of his study. The Field research can be used to study of settlements, life styles or subcultures (John & Lofland, 1995). Field research is most appropriate way of study attitudes and behavior within their natural settings. Survey method and case study method were used as research methods.

Data collecting techniques: The researcher identified the selected research problem using by the secondary and primary data. Secondary data helped to identify and getting better definitions on the problem as well as develop to an approach to the problem. Besides, it helps to interpret primary data more insightfully. Researcher used secondary sources such as survey reports, historically valuable letters and diaries, government administration reports and autobiographies to examine origin of the urban poverty as well as slum dwellers. The researcher have used questionnaires to collect data prepared with multiple-choice answered questions, open ended questions and dichotomous questions including semantic differential scale questions in this study. The researcher made personal in-home, structured, in-depth interviews and natural conversations in my study. Researchers used unstructured personal observations and monitor all aspects of the phenomenon that seem relevant to the problem. It used to discover complex interaction in natural social settings.

Sample System and Study Area: sample was selected in slum residences by multistage sampling method which is from one type of probability sample method regarding the study.

Results and discussion

It is a well-known fact that poverty is the prime characteristic of slum. The poor have always been forced to live in the worst housing of the city. As a holistic viewpoint, there is a different life pattern in urban areas as Louise Wirth (1938) defined as "urbanism as a

way of life". According to his definition on urbanism, size, density and heterogeneity are the three basic traits. The urban communities are large, dense and heterogeneous. It effects psychologically and there is an impact on the social structure. In such a sense, there is a huge gap between these slum dwellers and other city dwellers. It is directly affect their personal lives that live in slums. They have built prestige as slum dwellers. Most of them adjusted to this life style. They don't have an idea to escape from this image. They survive from this. It's become as a cycle.

In relation to the findings, it is clear that, more than 75% of them working as temporary workers and for low wages also. According to the general observation of the study, overwhelming majority of families was found to be nuclear. Most of families included with only parents and children; means householder and his wife and children. Most of them planned their families up to three children. It was one of considerable results of national health policy.

It is important to note that, most of families were becoming female headed as their husbands who functioned as breadwinners had been died as well as some of them were arrested or remanded. This was one of remarkable issues what was bloomed from the community.

Having looked at the most important aspects of education is that literacy rate is very high (89.9) in this community. But it was almost only for reading and writing just. In case of education, that the level of performance among the

children of the slum dwells is very low and poor. This may be due to want of guidance from parents. The parents do not take note of the complaints if any of the teacher. The children are left, to care for themselves. They do not attend school regularly.

Another characteristic of this community is that, from the total number of cases 82% of them spend their total monthly income for daily expenses basically for foods, and cloths, for schooling and housing. 12% of them spent 90% of their monthly income for this.

Vulnerability is most controversial issue in this community. These are gambling, drinking, beggary, theft and sex offences. The standard or focal culture mostly identified slum residents because of this behavior.

There were not enough infrastructures facilities. They have short comings on especially sanitary facilities. In addition there were some problems regarding ownership of their land and houses.

There is no huge gap between male and female within this society for survival. Men and women have equal conditions for realizing their day to day life activities. However there are some

shortcomings of female decision making ability and socio-economic opportunities

The slum dwellers are generally not careful at all about their future because of poverty. They have addicted to culture of poverty as noted by Lewis (1965). It means these cultural values are giving to generation by generation. Thus, they are economically distressed and even frustrated. This developed a sort of culture or subculture, in this sense poverty leads to a certain kind of behavior and specific attitudes.

The government has launched pilot surveys to identify this area. According to findings, the government has made several efforts to get better living standards in this area. There are low – cost apartments, urban council houses, and million houses program such as “Sahaspura” (Thousand houses program) and “Palin mandira” (From hut to palace). Some of the families were granted loans for upgrading of their houses. The government also tried to relocate these families from this area to sub-urban. But the problem is that, when they received an apartment from the government, tried to sell them and again they are coming to slums. It can be identified as a cycle of culture of poverty.