

Women's Socio Economic Realities in slum and Rural Area: A Comparative Study

DR. AKRITI MISHRA(ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR ,HOME SCIENCE, SRI AGRASEN KANYA P G COLLEGE, VARANASI) **ISHITA MISHRA** (RESEARCH SCHOLAR, MAHATMA GANDHI KASHI VIDYAPITH, VARANASI)

ABSTRACT : Women's socio-economic realities in slum and rural areas vary significantly due to differences in education, employment opportunities, and social norms. This comparative study examines 400 women of reproductive age, with 200 participants each from rural and urban slum areas. The study focuses on key factors such as educational and occupational status, marital status, main earning member of the household, socio-economic status, age at marriage, drug addiction habits, and awareness of, balanced diets, and coarse grains. Findings indicate that 65.5 % of rural women and 41.0% of slum women were illiterate ,majority of women in rural areas were housewife while in slum most of the women were working . The majority of respondents in both areas were married, with most women having entered marriage before the age of 18. In slum areas, a significant proportion of women contributed to their family's income, whereas, in rural areas, the primary earners were their husbands. Additionally, most respondents in slum areas belonged to a lower socio-economic status, while in rural areas, the majority fell under the upper-lower socio-economic category. These findings highlight disparities in economic responsibilities and social conditions between slum and rural communities. The study also reveals that drug addiction habits, though present in both groups, vary in type and prevalence. Furthermore, most respondents in both slum and rural regions lack awareness of balanced diets, coarse grains, and their nutritional value. The study highlights the urgent need for targeted policies that enhance educational opportunities, economic empowerment, and health awareness to improve women's overall socio-economic conditions in both settings. Enhancing women's understanding of balanced nutrition and the benefits of coarse grains can lead to improved health and well-being in these communities. It is essential to create awareness among women in every field to ensure their empowerment and equal participation in society. Education, healthcare, politics, business, and technology are just a few areas where women must be encouraged and informed about their rights, opportunities, and potential. When women are aware, they can break stereotypes, challenge societal norms, and contribute significantly to economic and social development. Awareness leads to confidence, independence, and the ability to make informed decisions, ultimately fostering a more progressive and inclusive world.

Key words : socio economic, drug addiction, balanced nutrition, well-being, educational opportunities.

Introduction:

Women in slum and rural areas face unique socio-economic challenges that impact their quality of life, opportunities for development, and overall well-being. The intersection of gender, poverty, and geographical location creates a complex web of disadvantages that hinder women's access to education, healthcare, employment, and social mobility. While both slum and rural settings present significant barriers to women's advancement, their challenges manifest in distinct ways due to differences in infrastructure, economic opportunities, and social norms. This study seeks to compare and contrast the socio-economic realities of women in slum and rural areas to identify key similarities, disparities, and potential policy interventions that can bridge the gap between these two demographics .Women in slum areas, often located in urban peripheries, experience acute socio-economic deprivation characterized by poor housing, lack of sanitation,

unemployment, and gender-based violence. Urban slums are typically marked by high population density, informal employment, and limited access to basic services such as education, healthcare, and security. Women in these areas are frequently engaged in informal labor such as domestic work, street vending, and garment production, with minimal legal protection and low wages. Additionally, they are more vulnerable to exploitation and violence due to unsafe living conditions and weak law enforcement. In contrast, rural women face challenges linked to agricultural dependence, patriarchal structures, and infrastructural deficiencies. Limited access to land ownership, lower literacy rates, and traditional gender roles often confine rural women to unpaid or underpaid agricultural labor. The rural economy is predominantly agrarian, and women contribute significantly to farming and livestock management but often do so without formal recognition or financial remuneration. Healthcare access remains a pressing issue in rural areas, where maternal mortality rates are higher due to inadequate medical facilities and trained personnel. Despite the differences in their environments, women in both slum and rural settings struggle with economic dependency, lack of decision-making power, and social constraints that hinder their ability to achieve financial independence and social progress. The interplay of education, employment opportunities, and social structures determines the extent of their empowerment and the potential for breaking the cycle of poverty.

OBJECTIVE :

Examine the socio economic condition & awareness of women in slum and rural area .

Significance of the Study:

Understanding the socio-economic conditions of women in slum and rural areas is crucial for formulating effective policies and interventions aimed at gender equity and poverty alleviation. The insights gained from this research can inform governmental and non-governmental organizations about targeted approaches to improving women's livelihoods. By comparing both demographics, the study highlights structural inequalities and suggests ways to enhance women's access to economic resources, education, and healthcare services. Moreover, the study contributes to the broader discourse on gender and development by illustrating how geographical and socio-economic contexts shape women's experiences and opportunities. It also serves as a foundation for further research on women's rights, labor policies, and social protection measures.

Review of literature:

Bino R.S. et al (2019) conducted a study on “**Socio Economic Status of Slum Dwellers in Tirunelveli District**”. In this study researcher found a strong correlation between respondents income ,spending habits ,education ,occupation and residence status . The majority of slum dwellers work as semi skilled labourers , but are not compensated for their efforts. Similarly, the respondent's income has not altered in accordance with their residency status ,which will allow social disparity to develop in the community in which they reside . Therefore , the appropriate authorities must take the required actions to eradicate this form of social prejudice from society.

Das Pintu(2022) conducted a study on **Socio Economic Position of Women Slum Dwellers in Bansberia Municipality Area** and found that women living in slums are neither socially nor economically stable. 32.71 percent of women have more than three children, while majority of women had their first kid before the age of 20. They do not receive enough prenatal and postnatal care. They have poor levels of education and are unaware of the health issue.

Pandey A.K. &Bhardwaj Ajay(2021) conducted a research on **Socio Economic Status of Women** and accordance with the results majority of slum families have neither high nor low income. They only make enough money to survive. Some indicators of progress and modernization have been seen. The average family size is small compared to income levels. Specific slum development programs and activities should be adopted to improve the socio economic situation of those living in slums. Efforts should be made to establish clean drinking water facilities, health centers, sanitation and skill based training. Improving socio economic conditions in slums can lead to better social, educational and income outcomes.

Kaushik Bhavana et al.(2022) conducted a study on **Socio Economic well being of rural women in Dehradun**. The purpose of this study is to investigate the economic freedom and socioeconomic well-being of rural women using a variety of measures, including financial independence, freedom of movement, family matters, self-esteem, and ownership-related aspects. A study was conducted using both qualitative and quantitative methods. In order to gather data and conduct a survey, women from four rural Dehradun district areas—Mazri Grant, Dhakrani, Chharba, and Misraspatti—were identified. Using a combination of purposive and random sampling methods, 848 women who were in contact with the pradhan of a certain hamlet answered the survey. Fourteen percent of those surveyed are in the 18–24 age range. A little over 55.2% of those surveyed worked in industries such as farming, weaving, sewing, handicrafts, nursing, and childcare. Of those, 84.9 percent of women consent to having financial independence at home, out of 55.2 percent. The finding of this study showed that there is a positive connection (0.151) between rural women's interest in art-craft work and mobility flexibility, as well as a favorable association between financial liberties and working women. Crafty women tend to have strong self-esteem, which encourages sustainability in their life through their artistic creations.

Naz Nazish (2017) conducted a study on **An Assessment of Socio Economic Profile of Rural Muslim Female Population :A Case Study**. The current study was carried out to emphasize the socioeconomic status of Muslim women, particularly those residing in rural areas. The overall findings show that rural Muslim women lag behind in terms of education, health status, household income, household amenities and facilities, gender equality, and work participation rate due to higher poverty, lower literacy, insufficient health and education facilities, traditional and conservative attitudes, discrimination, early marriage, and perceived sense of insecurity, among other factors. After foregoing examination of significant facts and conclusions, an attempt has been made to devise corrective strategies to overcome the difficulties and empower people.

Yasaswini Y. et al (2017) conducted a study on **socio economic condition of rural women :A case study.**

As per the findings of the case study, current rural women understand the current circumstances and are providing support to their families. However, women in the rural sector face obstacles in finding alternative career options by offering the essential skills. Low salary, a lack of job stability, and long working hours are also major factors contributing to their poor socioeconomic advancement. The government's actions will ensure that all women remain competitive in all activities. However, there is still a long way to go before we can achieve gender equality. Women in A. Rangampet are becoming more self-motivated and pursuing their own growth. Current surveys show that approximately 68% of women have basic reading and writing skills. They have enough freedom to save their wages and improve their socioeconomic level.

Methodology of the Study :

The District Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh was selected purposely for the study . The Varanasi District have a total number of 8 blocks in rural area and 210 urban slum in urban area out of which 10 villages of badagaon block & 20 slum were taken from urban with the help of systematic sampling . The total number of sample size was found to be 400 out of which 200 respondents each were taken from rural & urban slum area . A validated and pre tested finalized interview schedule was administrated for gathering the data which divided into different parts for fulfillment of aims & objective . The data were analyzed with the help of SPSS and statistical techniques such as : percentage , mean, SD , chi square , t test , analysis of variance , Karl Pearson's coefficient of correlation etc used.

Result and Discussion:

Table 1: Distribution of slum and rural respondents according to their educational status :

Educational status	Region					
	Slum		Rural		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
Illiterate	131	65.5	82	41.0	213	53.2
Primary	22	11.0	26	13.0	48	12.0
Middle	28	14.0	10	5.0	38	9.5
High School	12	6.0	35	17.5	47	11.8
Inter	02	1.0	18	9.0	20	5.0
UG	04	2.0	20	10.0	24	6.0
PG	01	0.5	09	4.5	10	2.5
Total	200	100.0	200	100.0	400	100.0

$\chi^2=61.24$
df=6
P<0.001

Above table shows that majority of respondents (65.5 %) were illiterate ,14.0% respondents had education upto middle class, 11.0 % respondents had education upto primary only 6% respondents having high school ,1 % of respondents having inter 2% having UG and only 0.5 % had PG in urban slum area while in rural area 41.0 % respondents were illiterate ,17.5 % having High school, 13 % having primary ,10 % having UG, 9 % having inter 5 % having middle education and only 4.5 % having PG. The statistical test proves the fact that there is highly significant difference in educational status of urban slum & rural respondents.

Table 2: distribution of slum and rural respondents according to their occupational status:

Occupational Status	Region						$\chi^2=182.30$ df=5 P<0.001
	Slum		Rural		Total		
	No	%	No	%	No	%	
Daily wages labour	69	34.5	06	3.0	75	18.8	
Made servant	60	30.0	07	3.5	67	16.8	
Self employed	17	8.5	04	2.0	21	5.2	
Housewife	43	21.5	154	77.0	197	49.2	
Agriculture labour	06	3.0	28	14.0	34	8.5	
Small shopkeeper	05	2.5	01	0.5	06	1.5	
Total	200	100.0	200	100.0	400	100.0	

Above table depicts that 34.5 % respondents were daily wages labour ,30 % were made servant ,21.5 % were housewife 8.5 % were self employed 3 % were agriculturae labour and only 2.5 % were small shop keeper in urban slum area while in rural area majority of respondents (77.0 %) were house wife , 14 % were agriculture labour ,3.5 % were made servant ,3 % were daily wages labour ,2 % were self employed and only 0.5 % were small shopkeeper. . The statistical test proves the fact that there is highly significant difference in occupational status of urban slum & rural respondents.

Table 3: distribution of respondents on the basis of their marital status and region:

Marital status	Region						$\chi^2=22.58$ df=3 P<0.001
	Slum		Rural		Total		
	No	%	No	%	No	%	
Unmarried	07	3.5	04	2.0	11	2.8	
Married	163	81.5	191	95.5	354	88.5	
Widow	17	8.5	05	2.5	22	5.5	
SEP/Divorced	13	6.5	00	0.0	13	3.2	
Total	200	100.0	200	100.0	400	100.0	

Above table depicts that majority 81.5 % & 95.5 % of respondents were married in both urban slum and rural area respectively. 8.5 % were widow and 6.5 % were SEP and only 3.5 % were unmarried in urban slum area while in rural area 2.5 % respondents were widow and only 2% were unmarried. Statistically this difference is highly significant.

Table 4: distribution of slum and rural respondents response regarding main earning member of their family:

Source of earning money	Region						$\chi^2=125.10$ df=3 P<0.001
	Slum		Rural		Total		
	No	%	No	%	No	%	
Self	30	15.0	05	2.5	35	8.8	
Husband	43	21.5	154	77.0	197	49.2	
Both	120	60.0	37	18.5	157	39.2	
Parents if unmarried	07	3.5	04	2.0	11	2.8	
Total	200	100.0	200	100.0	400	100.0	

The above table reveals the respondents response regarding main earning member of their family. The data shows that in majority of family husband & wife both are earning money in urban slum area while in rural area majority of respondents husbands earn money for their family. The statistical test proves the fact that there is significant difference between urban slum & rural area

Table 5: Distribution of slum and rural respondents on the basis of their socio economic status:

SES	Region					
	Slum		Rural		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
Lower	137	68.5	34	17.0	171	42.8
Upper Lower	63	31.5	114	57.0	177	44.2
Lower Middle	0	0.0	40	20.0	40	10.0
Upper Middle	0	0.0	12	6.0	12	3.0
Total	200	100.0	200	100.0	400	100.0
Mean MPCl ±SD	1061.80±488.40		2202.40±1165.43		1632.10±1059.44	

t=12.77
df=398
P<0.001

The above table shows the socio economic status of the respondents . Majority of respondents belong to lower category(68.5%) and 31.5 % respondents belong to upper lower in urban slum area while in rural area majority of respondents belong to upper lower, 17 % respondents belong to lower, 20 % belong to lower middle and only 6 % belong to upper middle. The average MPCl among urban slum area is found to be 1061.80 Rs while it is noted to be just double that is 2202.40 among rural respondents . The statistical t test clearly shows that there is highly significant difference in average MPCl between urban slum and rural area in the present study.

Table 6: Distribution of slum and rural women based on their age at marriage:

Age at marriage	Region					
	Slum		Rural		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
10-13	22	11.4	5	2.6	27	6.9
14-17	147	76.2	88	44.8	235	60.5
18-21	24	12.4	76	38.8	100	25.7
22-25	00	0.0	27	13.8	27	6.9
Total	193	100.0	196	100.0	389	100.0
Mean age ±SD	15.57±1.94		17.81±2.85		16.70±2.69	

t=9.03
df=387
P<0.001

Majority of respondents 87.6% and 47.4% respondents getting married before 18 yrs in urban slum & rural area respectively. Only 12.4 % of respondents getting married after 18 yrs in urban slum and 52.6 % respondents getting married after 18 yrs in rural area. The average age among urban slum area is found to be 15.57 while 17.81 among rural respondents. The statistical t test clearly shows that there is highly significant difference in average age between urban slum and rural area in the present study.

Table 7: Distribution of slum & rural respondents on the basis of their habit of drug addiction:

Habit of drug addiction	Region						X ² =111.70 df=1 P<0.001
	Slum		Rural		Total		
	No	%	No	%	No	%	
Yes	121	60.5	20	10.0	141	35.2	
No	79	39.5	180	90.0	259	64.8	
Total	200	100.0	200	100.0	400	100.0	

Majority 60.5 percent of females belong to urban slum area were habituated to drug addict different kind of substances while it was observed to be only among 10 percent of rural females. Statistical chi square test is also proves the fact that the proportion of females of urban slum area is found to be significantly more in comparison to the rural females. It may be due to poverty, lack of opportunities for employment of education, lack of adequate health care facilities, mental health services as well as support networks. It is also seen that women in slum area may be disproportionately expose to domestic violence, domestic abuse as well as community conflict. It is also may be due to limited awareness about the harmful risk and the consequences of drug addiction which is more in slum than the rural area.

Table 8: Distribution of slum & rural respondents knowledge regarding balance diet:

Knowledge about balance diet	Region						X ² =31.64 df=1 P<0.001
	Slum		Rural		Total		
	No	%	No	%	No	%	
Yes	45	22.5	99	49.5	144	36.0	
No	155	77.5	101	50.5	256	64.0	
Total	200	100.0	200	100.0	400	100.0	

More than three fourth 77.5 percent of urban slum respondent as well as more than half 50.5 percent of rural respondent had no knowledge about balanced diet and this difference is found to be statistically highly significant. It clearly shows that the proportion of urban slum respondent significantly has lesser knowledge as compare to the rural respondents might because of their low literacy rate & non availability of required food items.

Table 9: Distribution of slum& rural respondents knowledge about coarse grain& nutritive value of used coarse grain:

Knowledge about coarse grain	Region						X ² =9.27 df=1 P<0.01
	Slum		Rural		Total		
	No	%	No	%	No	%	
Yes	139	69.5	165	82.5	304	76.0	
No	61	30.5	35	17.5	96	24.0	
Total	200	100.0	200	100.0	400	100.0	
Knowledge about nutritive value of coarse grain							
Yes	11	5.5	38	19.0	49	12.2	X ² =16.95 df=1 P<0.001
No	189	94.5	162	81.0	351	87.8	
Total	200	100.0	200	100.0	400	100.0	

The information about knowledge of urban slum & rural respondent regarding course grain , use of various type of course grain as well as its nutritive value are collected and analysis is presented in the table 14. It reveals that more than two third of urban slum respondent (69.5percent)and more than three fourth of rural respondents (82.5 percent)had knowledge about course grain and statistically this difference ids found to be highly significant . It is clear from the result that the proportion of rural females significantly have more knowledge as compare to the urban slum females regarding course grain . It may be due to that most of the female of rural area generally grow the course grain in their field and it is easily available in the rural area at cheapest rate. It is also seen that even though the urban slum & rural females use the course grain but they do not know about which food grain is called course grain .

Conclusion:

It is conclude from the result that majority of respondents in both area were not literate .Even though the male and female of a family were earning member and they contribute to their family income in slum but in rural area only husband was the income generating source for the family but the socio economic status of slum family was obtained to be significantly lower than the rural families. Majority of females got married before 18 years of age which is significantly higher than the proportion of rural females age at marriage . It is also observe that 60.5% of females of slum area and only 10.0percent of females of rural area were habituated to drug addict of various type of substances. More addiction in slum females might because of unawareness about the harmful risk and consequences of drug addiction, it may be due to poverty ,lack of opportunity of education, lack of adequate health care facilities and disproportionately exposed to domestic violence, domestic abuse ,community conflict and also depend on family members addiction habits. Therefore various type of policy and programs should be performed by the authority to uplift to female educational status ,socio economic status and motivational programs to vanish such type of domestic violence and abuse in slum as well as in rural community. Majority of respondents were not aware about balanced diet .It is also conclude from the result that majority 82.5% of rural and 69.5% of slum females had knowledge about different type of course grain but they do not know about the presence of nutrient in course grain. Even though they were using various type of course grains such as: Bajra, jwar in the present study area.

Suggestions :

- This study shows that lower illiteracy rate of women so it is necessary to conduct rallies and workshop to highlight the importance of education and provide practical education for women in both area.
- Collaboration with local leaders and awareness campaign can also motivate families to prioritise women's education and help close to literacy gap.
- It is important to encourage equal economic participation for both men and women. This can be achieved by promoting skill development programs for women in areas like agriculture, handicrafts, or small businesses, giving them the opportunity to contribute to the family income. Access to financial resources, such as microloans or savings groups, should also be facilitated to help women start their own ventures. Additionally, awareness campaigns about the importance of women's financial independence can help change societal perceptions, while community support systems like women's self-help groups can provide the necessary resources
- Marrying before 18 can lead to health complications, especially in early pregnancies, as the body may not be fully developed. Delaying marriage helps safeguard the physical and mental well-being of young girls.

Bibliography:

- Pandey A.K. and Bhardwaj A.(2021).Socio Economic Status of Slum Dwellers :A Cross Sectional Study of five Slums in Varanasi City. Journal of Global Economy .Volume 17,Issue 3,pp 164-177.
- Bino R.S. et al (2019).Socio Economic Status of Slum Dwellers in Tirunelveli District. Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research. Volume 6,Issue1,pp.100-105.
- Das Pintu(2022). Socio Economic Position of Women Slum Dwellers:An Investigation of a Few Selected Slums in the Bansberia Municipality Area , West Bengal India.Research Review International Journal of Multidisciplinary.Volume-7, Issue 4,pp 38-47
- Kaushik Bhavana et al (2022). Socio-Economic Well Being of Rural Women in Dehradun District :An Investigative Method . International Journal of Technology Management and Sustainable Development . Volume 21, Issue 1, pp 85-113
- Naz Nazish (2017). An Assessment of Socio Economic Profile of Rural Muslim Female Population :A Case Study . International Journal of Applied Research. Volume 3, Issue 6, pp 463-471.
- Yasaswini Y. et al(2017). Socio-economic Conditions of Rural Women – A Case Study. International Journal of Research and Scientific Innovation (IJRSI) . Volume IV, Issue VIII,pp 52-53.