

Research Scholar: Shama Norien Major

Supervisor: Prof.Mehnaz Ansari

Title- A Case Study of Children Living in Leprosy Afflicted Community

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Major findings of the study: The three generations living in the community, have different experiences which shows that each generation faced different kinds of difficulties and support for getting education and sustainability in the society.

Accessibility to educational opportunities for children in the community: All the children of the third generation in the community have access to education to government schools in their neighborhood and hostels, run by NGOs to facilitate education. Hostels provides support to access to school, food and a conducive environment for learning, a proper daily schedule and some mentoring through hostel staff and senior peers. Children get admitted in government schools easily in any of the classes, but they face difficulty in getting admission in class 10th and 12th, especially when they fail in class 9th and 11th. Some of the parents shared that their ward had to drop studies as the school authorities denied them admission.

Multiple challenges to access education among children affected by Leprosy and Disability. Government schools provide facilities for education to these children but not at all the stages of schooling, as the provisions for Rights to Education Act 2009 is meant for children up to 14 years of age. The government-sponsored provision of mid-day meals and books are provided in schools, only till Class 8th. As a result, most of these children face difficulties after Class 8th, when such provisions are not available. Non-government organizations also support the education of these children. Children get uniforms and bags for school from N.G.Os like **NLR India foundation** .

Exclusion from continuing participation in school: These children face multiple psycho-social challenges to access education, like low socio-economic status of families which leads to lack of sufficient money for their children's education. There are financial issues of unemployment and migration of parents, wastage, stagnation and dropouts. Children also lacked interest in classroom activities, administrative support for admission was disheartening after repeated failure in the same class. Land and housing issues are a cause of stress for parents as well as children. There is a lack of a conducive physical environment at home for studies due to insufficient space in their homes, regular and consistent monitoring, mentoring, encouragement and motivation and communication from parents. Regular talks related to problems in schools and class take place only in a few of the families, and these are the same families who regularly monitor and encourage their children to study. Children in these families, despite their parents' low level of literacy, are found to be more proactive in their school related work and also aspire to achieve university level education.**Children have to contribute to household work:** Children spend a lot of time doing household work. Girls are required to spend about triple the amount of time for house work, though both girls and boys are regularly required to fetch water from the community taps. **Perspective of children towards education and career aspirations:** Children's aspirations of career are not very concrete and realistic. Some of them either have vague ideas or lack clarity and have very low aspirations. All the children of the third generation in the community are sure of completing class 12th and taking up a job

The stigma attached to them hinders them from getting jobs even after completion of schooling. Those who are able to get jobs are also discriminated against by other colleagues at some point of time in an overt or covert manner. In families where the mother is the only parent, it was even more difficult to fulfill the child's needs and to provide support for education. Children of single mothers want to complete their schooling and take up jobs at the earliest possible time as they know the conditions of their families and are empathetic towards their mothers. They are realistic in setting their goals in career and education.

Perspective of parents towards education and career of their children: There has been a marked change in the attitude of parents towards education and career aspirations for their children from first to third generation their children's education. **Children, who face multiple vulnerable positions, are marginalized due to social hierarchies:** A 'girl child' faces challenge due to patriarchy, and the one who has leprosy is more disadvantaged. Education of the children in the community can be traced from their socio-historical context. It was found that how the situations and experiences of one generation affects the next generation in terms of their opportunities to access education and sustainability in the society. The *generational effects* on the education of children are long term. The *generational effects* are especially due to stigmatization of people affected by leprosy due to which their families too, are stigmatized. The first generation of leprosy affected people experienced an extremely high degree of stigma attached to the disease by society. **Difficulties and support system of second generation people** - Some of them were rejected by school authorities for admission as the authorities think that the presence of these children will have a negative effect on other children and the reputation of the schools will be adversely affected. Most of them dropped out of school, as the school did not provide a sense of care and belongingness to these children and parents' migration as parents often migrated in search of resources for survival due to which they could not sustain in school. Early marriage for girls and the need to augment family's income by boys were the main reasons for dropping school.

Difficulties and support system of third generation people: These children also have difficulties due to their parents' chronic poverty. Stigma and poverty is prevalent across all the generations but its effects are reduced over the years, across generations. Most of the parents have low income therefore these children lack resources and poverty has mitigated effects on them.

Parents of this generation want to educate their children and send them to school, but they are not able to provide a very conducive home environment, regular mentoring, monitoring, encouragement and help in their school related tasks. They find it financially challenging whenever their children's school fees have to be paid for board exams. The parents of the third generation want their children to live a better life and not suffer numerous difficulties they themselves had gone through, especially economic and social.

Psycho-social difficulties of the children within the classroom (third generation) - Most of the teachers do not teach regularly which leads to learning loss. Most of the children do not know how to read and write to express themselves eloquently even in class 11th. They do not understand the subjects taught to them. Teachers' pedagogy does not cater to their learning needs Teachers often punish these children, and do not provide guidance to these children.

There are very few children who have completed their schooling in the community. Even those who have completed school education do not have adequate information and support.

Heads of the community say that political leaders help to a large extent in solving their problems whereas children have contrary opinions about it.