



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Social Science

Coping strategy adopting two poor community group of slum dwellers in Midnapore Municipal Area, West Bengal

KEY WORDS: Coping strategy, Slum, Survival skills, Standard of living, Composite index

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ABSTRACT

Coping strategy is the strategies or can also be described as 'survival skills' that people use in order to deal with stresses, pain, and natural changes that we experience in life. It is conscious or unconsciously choice of adaptation to environmental stress that enhances control over behaviour or gives psychological comfort. Coping strategies are a spectrum of activities: one side represents community self-help initiatives, intention of economic development etc, but the other side can also be misery and/or challenging life, i.e. migration, begging, child labour, violence, prostitution, even selling organs etc. The present study is an attempt to measure the degree of coping strategy of two community groups (Hindu & Muslim) and its relation with their standard of living over different slums in Midnapore Municipal Area, West Bengal by using simple composite index. In order to do the same, all slum neighbourhoods have been identified through in depth field survey with the help of earlier collected slum related information from municipality of Midnapore town. Relevant questionnaires used to collect the related information from households using appropriate sampling techniques.

Introduction:

According to Census-2011, in West Bengal, Slum reported towns is 122 and total slum population – 6,418,594 (Notified slums reported -48,918, recognized slums-37, 03,852 and Identified slums- 26, 65, 824 population) in compared to 4,115,980 slum population in 2001 census i.e. slum population increased 2,302,614 within 10 years (about 6% per annum to the total urban population) & about 1% to the total slum population of India.. According to Tendulkar method (Planning Commission, 2013) in the year 2011-12, the urban population of West Bengal below poverty line is 14.66%.

The general characteristics & hall marks of urban slum areas in India refers to overcrowding and congestion, extremely poor sanitation, lack of civic amenities and deviant behaviour, overcrowding, poor housing, choked drains, lack of garbage disposal facilities, poor personal hygiene, and hygienic conditions etc. Likewise, slum dwellers are not a homogeneous population, but a diverse group of people with different culture, religion, interests, means and background. Thus, diverse group of slum dwellers unsurprisingly faces stresses, pain or changes experience in his/her daily or span of life. Sometimes they try to solve or cope with the existing problems or adopt some strategies that are effective or harmful. Theoretically, there is difference of adopting strategies in different community due to their culture, religion, interests, means and background as well as difference in rural & urban people where economy is the main controlling factors.

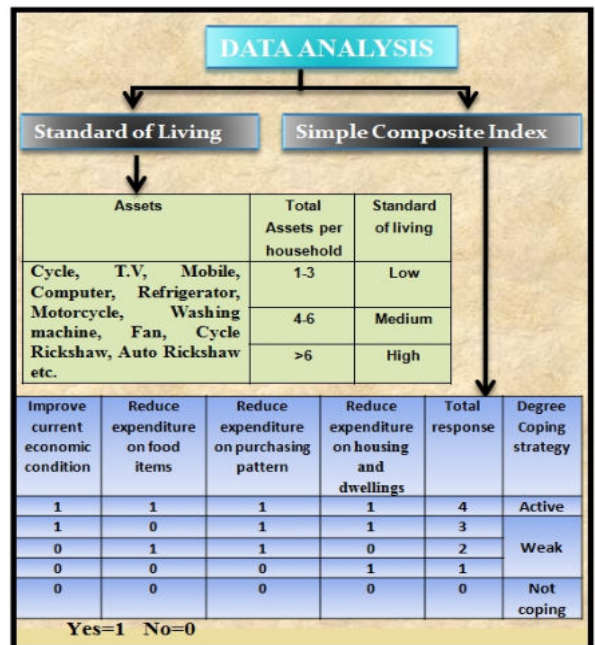
Coping mechanism is the strategies or 'survival skills' that people adopt in order to deal with stresses, pain, and natural changes that we experience in life. It is conscious or unconsciously choice of adaptation to environmental stress that helps control over behaviour or gives psychological comfort. Coping mechanisms are a spectrum of activities: one side represents community self-help initiatives, intention of economic development etc, but the other side can also be misery and/or challenging life, i.e. migration, begging, child labour, violence, prostitution, even selling organs etc. So, some group of community prefer recuperating economic status while other groups wish to develop their social, cultural status as well as social dominance. Thus, different slum community comparatively adopting coping strategies in different way so far as survival is concerned.

Objectives:

- To measure the degree of coping strategy of two community group (Hindu & Muslim).
- To assess the relationship between coping strategy and standard of living of two community groups.

Methodology:

Data Analysis:



Design of the Study:

Key questions	Data
1. Standard of living	Total number of assets per household.
2. Degree of coping strategy	Improve current economic condition, Reduce expenditure on food items, purchasing pattern, housing and dwellings.

Sampling Techniques:

The study is being mostly both subjective and analytical. Therefore for this purpose, 20 slums were randomly selected. From each selected slum, 10 households (Hindu & Muslim) were again randomly selected. Purposive sampling was adapted to some degree in choosing the opinion of those households together who are participated in group discussion personally.

Data Collection:

Division	Data	Procedure of data collection
Standard of living	Total number of assets per household, Income, Expenditure, Housing.	Household survey through structured Questionnaire

Degree of coping strategy	Improve your current economic condition, Reduce expenditure on food items, purchasing pattern, housing and dwellings.	Household survey through structured Questionnaire & Focus group discussion.
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Result & Discussion:

Degree of coping	% of households	
	Hindu	Muslim
Not coping	16.2	5.7
Weak coping	62.3	74.3
Active Coping	21.5	20.0

1.0 Degree of coping Strategy:

Amount of loan taken (Rs.)	Hindu (%)	Muslim (%)
<10000	46.4	39.2
10000-20000	35.7	30.4
>20000	17.9	30.4

In general every poor household taken some strategies for their living and struggling against their poor condition and always make an effort to improve their family background. But it is not at all times happen so. There is an only 21% Hindu & Muslim community household adopted active coping strategy, but 10.5% Hindu community households has not yet been adopting any coping strategies than Muslim community.

1.1 Amount of loan taken:

With the purpose of household expenditure sustenance or for small business households are taken loans from formal or informal institutions. In the study area, currently Muslim community households have taken loan more than Rs. 20000/- than the Hindu community households.

Mortgaged/ Sold household assets	Hindu (%)	Muslim (%)
Not yet	97.7	97.1
Mortgaged & Sold household assets	2.3	2.9

1.2 Mortgaged/Sold household assets:

Most of the household mortgaged & sold household assets during crucial period such as illness, daughter marriage etc. There is no significant difference between two communities regarding mortgaged & sold household assets.

Steps taken to improve further current economic conditions	Hindu (%)	Muslim (%)
Develop & improvement of small business	22.97	40.65
Increase income with alternative job	56.76	42.56
Increase working time	12.16	9.23
Others	8.11	7.56

1.3 Steps taken to improve further current economic conditions:

Most of the Muslim community households trying to improve their economic condition by means of develops & improving of small business & increase income with alternative job but Hindu community only by increase income with alternative job. This difference of enhancing economic conditions between two communities is due their cultural and traditional differences.

Steps reduce to expenditure on foods	Hindu (%)	Muslim (%)
Not yet	82.5	92.25
Eat fewer meal per day	7.5	5.25
Reduce overall food consumption	10.0	2.50

1.4 Steps reduce to expenditure on foods:

Generally Hindu community households are trying to reduce their expenditure on their food items by means of reducing overall food consumption than the Muslim community. The difference of food habits is intuitive nature and family tradition (Source: Focus group discussion).

1.5 Steps reducing on housing & dwelling expenditures:

Muslim community households more likely to living with Self-help housing with low cost materials but still 14.50% poor Hindu community living in renting low cost housing. The disparity is due the differences in earning status and health issues as well as the attitude of living in community.

Steps reducing on housing & dwelling expenditure	Hindu (%)	Muslim (%)
Self-help housing with low cost materials	81.50	95.50
Renting low cost housing	14.50	3.50
Others	4.0	1.0

1.6 Preference of study institute for Children education:

About 75% parents' of both community wish to children higher education as children may get govt. job or more wage employment by which impart in family earning and care them at the old age. There is increasing trend of prefer private institution for their children study in Muslim community households than Hindu community households.

Preference of study institute for Children education	Hindu (%)	Muslim (%)
Private institution	2.1	3.7
Govt. institution	97.9	96.3

1.7 Family planning taken:

Family planning strategy is slightly high in the Hindu community households. Birth spacing between two successive children is high in Hindu community households than Muslim community households by using contraception device. Most of the poor Muslim community households agree with their religious rituals as a result they don't want to take any contraceptive device to control birth spacing (Source: Focus group discussion).

Family planning taken	Hindu (%)	Muslim (%)
Birth control	38.5	37.1
Birth spacing	6.2	2.9
Total	44.70	40.00

1.8 Early children marriage reduces economic burden:

Hindu community household think that early children marriage reduces their economic burden and reduces rearing cost also, thereby free from family burden through give up their family responsibility on their son in addition to taking some dowry which is an additional income than the Muslim community households.

1.9 Taken Social support during troublesome period:

Most of the household have been taken social assistance for the most part from their relatives and friends respectively than their neighbours high in case of Muslim community due to cohesion or harmony in the community than Hindu community.

Taken Social support during troublesome period (%)	Hindu	Muslim
Asked relatives/friends for help	63.39	76.56
Asked neighbours for help	31.70	20.67
Others	4.91	2.77

Comparative analysis of coping Strategies between two communities:

Coping strategies of Hindu and Muslim communities is summarized, where each component of strategies is given by weighted value 1 (high rate of coping strategy) or 0 (low rate of coping strategy). After adding up the weighted value of each community result as same value (5), i.e. coping strategies of the both community is comparatively same i.e. there is no difference of coping strategies. The difference is only in the way of adopting different coping strategies.

Conclusion and Implications:

In general, the case study material shows that household incomes have been low and variable, and average real per capita income among the slum dwellers actually declined. On the basis of

descriptive results, there is no significant difference between adopting coping strategies of two communities. The slight difference of coping strategies between two communities is only by their culture, custom, habits, religious norms and perception about coping strategy. Therefore, the possibilities for improving the environment through individual action are very limited.

After analyzing coping strategies of two poor communities, which necessitate a variety of solutions and actions by conducting in-depth study about the community and their cultural environment. While some actions require immediate implementation such as introducing social welfare schemes, some actions need to be taken on a long-term basis changing the negative attitude of the poor community, general public and increasing accurate knowledge about poor communities. The required changes need to be reflected in policies and laws; attitude of the government, general public and service providers, NGO's; and different organization.

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