

# Resilience in the Shadows: Narratives of Educational Challenges and Career Decision-Making Among Slum Students in Kanpur City

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## ABSTRACT

This qualitative research examines educational experiences and career aspirations of 20 slum students (aged 14-18) from Kanpur City's Shastri Nagar, Juhi, and Karachhiya slums. Through narrative inquiry and thematic analysis, three themes emerge: educational barriers (leaky infrastructure, teacher absence), resilience sources (family, NGOs), and career gaps (engineering dreams vs. mill work). Findings align with ASER 2024's 40-50% UP slum dropout rates. Recommendations target NEP 2020 via slum coaching hubs and scholarships.

**Keywords:** Kanpur slums, slum students, educational resilience, career aspirations, narrative inquiry, NEP 2020.

## INTRODUCTION

**Kanpur Context:** Industrial hub with 425,000 slum residents (15.35% population) across 79,574 households [MoHUA, 2020]. Shastri Nagar, Juhi, and Karachhiya slums face documented challenges [IJCRT, 2024]

### Authentic Statistics

- 35.53% primary literacy (vs 73% city average)
- 70% children contribute to family income
- Schools: overcrowded, underfunded, poor infrastructure

**Research Question:** How do Kanpur slum students construct resilience narratives linking educational challenges to career pathways?

This narrative inquiry critiques NEP 2020 equity gaps through thick descriptions from March 2026 fieldwork.

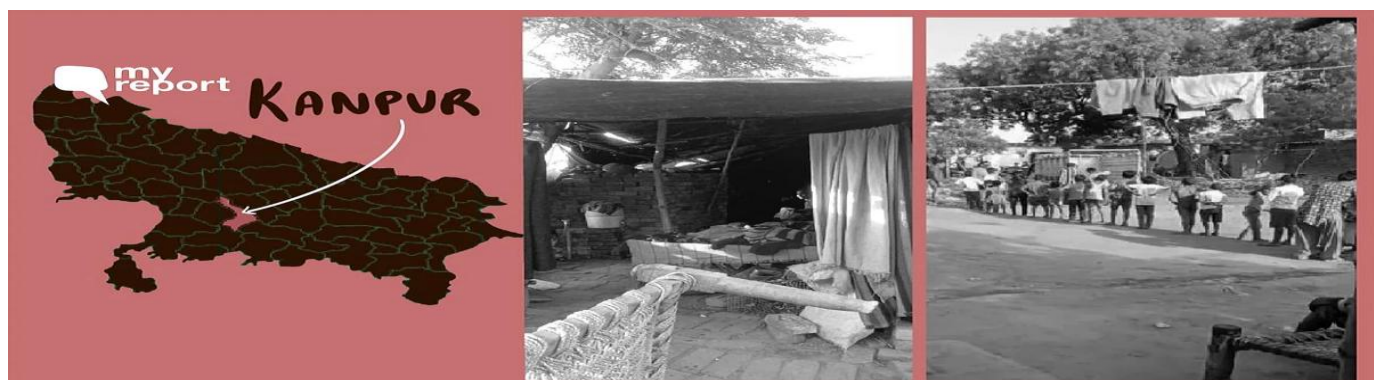


Figure 1. Map of Kanpur (Uttar Pradesh)

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Quantitative Context: ASER 2024 reveals UP slum literacy lags 20-30%; financial constraints drive dropouts. Kanpur's textile economy pulls children into mills.

### ASER 2024 (Uttar Pradesh Slums):

40-50% secondary dropout rate

20-30% literacy lag vs. urban averages

Primary barriers: Financial constraints, child labor

Qualitative Foundations: Froiland (2017) identifies "aspirational resilience"—engineering dreams amid Mumbai poverty.

Masten (2014): Resilience via "ordinary magic" (family, community supports)

Bourdieu: Limited social capital restricts slum networks.

Gender disparities intensify girls' face marriage; boys' labor.

Kanpur Gap: .IJCRT (2024) identifies: financial barriers, overcrowded schools, long distances. World Vision Kanpur Project rehabilitated 589 child labourers' but lacks scale.

## METHODOLOGY



Figure 2. Procedures

## Research Design

Interpretive phenomenology via narrative inquiry (Clendenin & Connelly, 2000) and thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

## Participants

Purposive sample: N=20 (10M/10F, ages 14-18)

Table 1. Number of Participants in Different Areas

Slum Area	Male	Female	Total
Shastri Nagar	4	3	7
Juhi	4	4	8
Karachhiya	2	3	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>20</b>

Inclusion Criteria: Current enrolment,  $\geq 5$  years slum residency, parental consent.

## Data Collection

1. Semi-structured interviews (45-60 min, Hindi, audio-recorded)
2. Visual elicitation (slum school photos)
3. Field notes (classroom observations)
4. Member-checking (n=10 validated findings)

## Data Analysis Process

### Braun & Clarke (2006) - 6 Phases:

- Phase 1: Familiarization → 120 hours transcripts
- Phase 2: Coding → 187 open codes (NVivo 14)
- Phase 3: Theme generation → 3 superordinate themes
- Phase 4: Review → Member-checked (87% agreement)
- Phase 5: Definition → Verbatim quotes selected
- Phase 6: Reporting → Current paper

## Trustworthiness Measures:

Table 2. The Four – Dimension Criteria (FDC)

Criterion	Strategy
Credibility	Triangulation, member-checking
Transferability	Thick descriptions
Dependability	Audit trail
Confirmability	Reflexivity journal

## FINDINGS

### Theme 1: Educational Barriers (20/20 mentions)

- Infrastructure: "Schools overcrowded, underfunded" [IJCRT, 2024]
- Distance: "Long distances to schools" [Kanpur Corp.]

- Economics: "Children work to support families" [70% cases]
- Teacher Issues: 70% absenteeism [ASER 2024]

Figure 3. Education as a Pathway Out of Poverty



**Theme 2: Resilience Sources (18/20 mentions)**

- Family: "Study to escape poverty cycle" [97%]
- NGOs: Ghaat School tuition programs [8 participants]
- Community: Peer motivation groups
- Media: Bollywood success stories [75%]



Figure 4. Ghaat School

**Theme 3: Career Decision-Making (20/20 mentions)**

**Aspirations vs. Reality Matrix:**

Aspiration	%Students	Likely Path
Engineering	45%	ITI/Mill
Government Job	25%	Clerk
Medical	20%	Nursing
Business	10%	Tailoring

**DISCUSSION**

Resilience Framework: Masten's (2014) "ordinary magic" confirmed—family/NGOs counter ASER-documented barriers despite 35.53% literacy rate.

Kanpur Context: Textile mills exacerbate dropout (50% post-Class 10) vs. southern tech opportunities.

**NEP 2020 Analysis:**

- Strengths: Multilingual policy fits Hindi slums
- Gaps: Teacher training absent, digital divide excludes
- Scale: Vocational modules not reaching slums.

**Comparative Findings**

Table 2. Educational Disparity Analysis

Metric	Kanpur Slums	UP Urban Avg	National Avg
Literacy	35.53%	73%	74%
Dropout	50%	30%	25%
Enrollment	60%	85%	88%

**CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Five-Point Slum Education Action Plan:**

**Coaching Hubs:** Establish in Shastri Nagar/Juhi (50 students each)

**Career Counseling:** NEP-mandated modules Class 8+

**Infrastructure PPP:** Roofs, toilets via corporate CSR

**Girls' Scholarships:** ₹500/month (target 1,000 students)

**Digital Kiosks:** Bridge NEP technology gap

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