

# Beyond the Enrolment: Life skills Training and Educational Equity in Mangolpuri Slum Area of Delhi

Smriti \*, Prof. Kalpnath Singh Yadav

Research Scholar, Department of Sociology , Kumaun University Nanital Professor & H.O.D.  
Department of Sociology , Radhey Hari Govt. P.G. College Kashipur, Kumaun University Nanital, India

\*Corresponding Author

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.10200372>

Received: 10 February 2026; Accepted: 16 February 2026; Published: 12 March 2026

## ABSTRACT

The present study examines the education system beyond the enrolment by focusing & analysing the role of life skills training initiatives in shaping educational equity among school going children in urban slum area of Mangolpuri Delhi. The study uses a primary descriptive research design to collect the data within 100 households with 184 samples of school going children through structured household survey and child level questionnaire. The core findings reveal that while school enrolment has already reached near the universal level but the quality of participation in life skills programs is uneven due to socio-economic conditions of households. Participation in life skills initiatives was unevenly distributed with children going to govt schools in comparison to private schools or NGO governed schools. The significant gender-based differences were also observed in such programmes due to structural conditions of the educational system in specific area. Respondents exposed to life skills training reported higher level of confidence, classroom participation and interaction with peers and teachers. This paper concludes that primarily enrolment focused educational policies are insufficient to ensure equity in urban slum context and emphasises the need to integrate life skills education in mainstream schooling system.

**Keywords:** Beyond Enrolment, Education, Life Skills, Gender, Mangolpuri.

Access (IJRPR, 2024). Apart from the problem of physical access, researchers point out that the quality and content of the educational content matter when it comes to slum settlement education, and therefore educational inequity. The young of such environments are also frequently enrolled in government or low-priced private schools at home, where teachers' absence, underinvestment in teaching and pedagogic resources and rigidity in curriculum prevent children from achieving the best possible education (Dr. Suman, 2024). Delhi's urban slum education also faces ongoing challenges related to infrastructure, the high drop-out rates and exclusion from mainstream, accessible education opportunities. These observations are consistent with more general international research that slum school curricula often do not cater to the cognitive and non-cognitive skills required for children's total development.

Educational equity has become more of a means of developing not just a body of students who can enrol and who make it to school, but who can learn much more and who gain skills elsewhere, in areas such as critical thinking, communication, problem solving, emotional regulation. They are often referred to as non-cognitive or life skills that promote learners resilience and ability to cope with social and academic demands. Non-cognitive skills development has been found to relate to educational persistence, school participation, and future life outcomes, especially for disadvantaged urban young people (Krishnan, 2010). While the vast majority of noncognitive competencies research has been restricted to developed settings, these findings are highly applicable to urban Indian slums, where structural inequalities create further roadblocks to learning. In spite of their acknowledged value, structured life skills programs are not frequently integrated into traditional schools catering to slum populations. Instead, the necessary training often works outside the confines of traditional education by small-scale initiatives or non-government organizations (P. Das, 2025). In Delhi, projects like Free School Under the Bridge gives testimony to grassroots efforts to enhance basic education for underprivileged children although these tend to cover only literacy levels rather than more systematic enhancement of daily life skills (Wikipedia, 2024). Such uneven provision of complementary educational programs mirrors inequalities in resource distribution and implementation of policies.

Furthermore, existing research has shown that educational disadvantages in slums are complex and multiply outside the classroom when applied to the broader social, economic and psychological determinants of learning (IJSI, 2025). Inadequate nutrition, unsanitary and unsafe living conditions, and lack of access to community and supportive services are common among informal settlement children which impact their efforts to focus and learn (IJSI, 2025). The combination of these overlapping elements makes whole-person education approaches that teach life skills in addition to academic content, very important.

Mangolpuri, one of North-West Delhi's largest slum and resettlement clusters, embodies several of these challenges. Studying the slum areas in Delhi highlights that the educational barriers cannot be abstracted and are heavily interlinked with socioeconomic status, migration histories, and the support organizations of the institutions (Dr. Suman, 2024; P. Das, 2025). Though there is high school enrolment among children in Mangolpuri, both qualitative and quantitative evidence have shown that learning outcomes and access to skills is not always equitable. "The present study aims to explore education beyond enrolment and explores the impact of skill training initiatives on educational equity for school going children in slum area of Mangolpuri, Delhi. The study investigates the existing availability of opportunities obtained by gender, school type and consequences of these differences in the life of school going children in specific area.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The present study is informed by Amartya Sen's (1999) Capability Approach and Bourdieu's (1986) concept of cultural and social capital. Sen argues that education should be understood not merely in terms of enrolment or formal access, but in terms of the real opportunities it provides individuals to develop their abilities and pursue meaningful life choices. In the context of urban slums, life skills such as communication, self-confidence, decision-making, and emotional regulation strengthen children's ability to actively participate in schooling and benefit from educational processes.

Bourdieu's perspective further helps in understanding how children from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds often lack cultural capital that supports academic success. Limited parental education, weak institutional familiarity, and restricted exposure to learning environments may reduce children's educational advantages. Life skills initiatives, therefore, can play a compensatory role by enhancing interaction, leadership qualities, and participatory engagement within schools. In this study, educational equity is viewed not only as equal enrolment but as fair access to opportunities that enhance children's overall capabilities.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Despite the fact that school enrolment among children in Mangolpuri, Delhi improved with sustained policy efforts, educational equity is hindered as there is limited equity with respect to life-skills education access that many slum children cannot convert high enrolment into meaningful participation. Recent studies demonstrate that urban poor learners experience "learning poverty," characterized by weak foundational and socio-emotional skills even as they are enrolled in schools (World Bank, 2018). UNESCO and UNICEF (2021) highlight that teaching and learning of life skills (such as communication, problem-solving and emotional resilience) are fundamental for a good education, especially for disadvantaged urban children. Without the integration of life-skills training into regular schooling, enrolment gains risk reproducing rather than eradicating educational inequality.

### **Research Questions**

1. What is the core extent and nature of access to life skills-based programmes among school going children in urban slum of Mangolpuri Delhi?
2. What are the differences in gender, type of school, and household socio-economic background in access to life skills education in Mangolpuri?
3. How does life skills training affect participation in and equity of education among children residing in urban slums beyond school enrolment?

## Research Objectives

1. To assess the availability and forms of life skills training among school-going children in Mangolpuri, Delhi.
2. To study gender and school type-based disparities in access to life skills education among school going children in Mangolpuri, Delhi.
3. To Examine the role of life skills initiatives in promoting educational equity beyond enrolment in the context of urban slum education.

## Research Methods

The research is descriptive and analytical in nature and based on primary field data, gathered from the urban slum settlement of Mangolpuri, North-West Delhi using field survey. The study area was purposively chosen due to the fact that it is a typical urban slum context which involves high population density, migrant households, informal work and extensive reliance on government schooling. 100 households were sampled using purposive sampling and 184 children (6–16 years) who attend school were picked by simple random sampling. Data was collected using a structured household schedule and a child-level questionnaire on school enrolment, attendance trends, life skills training experiences, participation in extra-curricular activities, and self-reported confidence, communication, and social interaction indices. Other sociodemographic variables, including parental education, occupation and household income, were reported. Descriptive statistics such as percentages, means and cross-tabulations were used to detect differences based on gender and school type. The ethical aspects were adhered to with care with parental or guardian informed consent, voluntary participation, and the anonymity of participants' identities were strictly maintained throughout the study.

## Findings of the study

### Occupational Profile of the Household

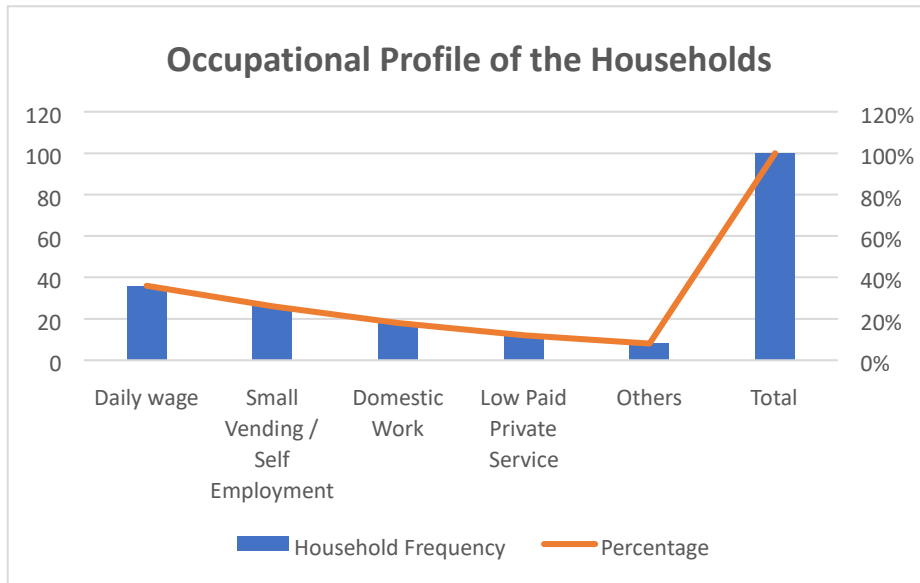
The socio-economic profile of households in Mangolpuri reveals a high degree of livelihood insecurity and structural vulnerability that influence children's education. Most household heads are involved in informal sector employment, like daily wage labour (36%), small vending or self-employment (26%) occupations characterised by unreliable income, insecurity, and lack of social protection. An additional 18 percent of households rely on domestic work, and 12 percent are employed in low-paid private service, mirroring the prevalent instability and low-income livelihoods. These work environments restrict those households' commitment to investing in children's education and increase exposure to economic shocks which result in irregular school attendance or more domestic demand and responsibilities for the children. Furthermore, the preponderance of first-generation learners reflects family low levels of educational capital and low parental support for schooling and non-academic competences. Taken together, these factors highlight the contribution of economic instability and low parental education level in Mangolpuri as structural impediments undermining the conversion of school enrolment into equitable educational outcomes.

**Table & Graph: 1 Occupational Profile of the Households**

SL No.	Occupation Type	Household Frequency	Percentage
1	Daily wage	36	36%
2	Small Vending / Self Employment	26	26%
3	Domestic Work	18	18%
4	Low Paid Private Service	12	12%
5	Others	08	8%

Total	100	100%
-------	-----	------

Source: Research Fieldwork, 2025



The Given data indicating that a large proportion of the selected respondents belong to first generation learner households indicating limited educational opportunities and access.

### Educational Status of Parents

The parents’ educational levels of the sampled households have a low level of formal educational attainment, with significant effects on the children’s schooling in Mangolpuri. A substantial proportion of parents,40%, have no formal education, and 28 % only completed primary education, with over two-thirds of parents having minimal education. Fewer (20%) of parents achieved secondary education, and only a minor minority (12%) have completed higher secondary education or above. This trend implies that the majority of children come from first-generation learner homes, where parents do not provide appropriate academic guidance, language support, or school expectations. This limited educational capital in families limits children’s homebased learning environments and drives greater reliance on schools for both academic and non-academic support, which again justifies the use of school-based interventions including education in life skills, to achieve equity in education.

Table & Graph: 2 Educational Status of Parents

SL No	Educational Status of parents	Percentage
1	No Formal Education	40 %
2	Primary education	28%
3	Secondary Education	20%
4	Higher Secondary and Above	12%
	Total	100%

Source: Research Fieldwork, 2025

## Educational Status of Parents

■ No Formal education  
■ Education Primary  
■ Education Secondary

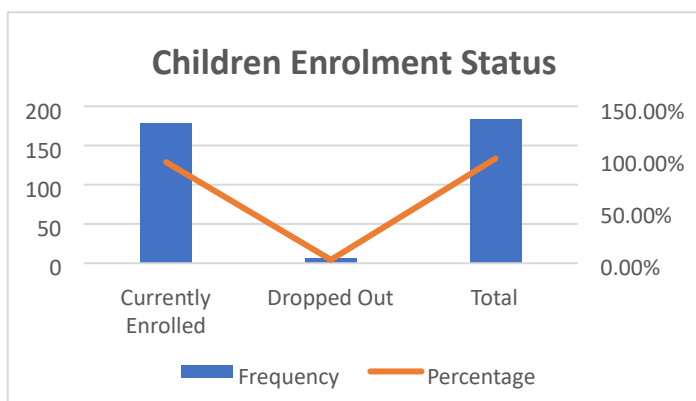
## School enrolment & Attendance

Attendance in school among children aged 6-10 years in the sampled households of Mangolpuri is nearly universal, a clear testimony to both the efficacy and the persistence of compulsory education policies and the initiatives towards moving slum children more towards formal schooling. According to Table 1.3, 96.7 percent of the respondents are enrolled at school (school at the time of the survey) and only 3.3 percent have dropped out. High enrolment indicates that, especially for urban slums, issues of access to schools and formal admission have been settled. That dropouts are very few points to a still considerable range of vulnerabilities born of economic hardship, household instability, and disengagement from education that can still drive some out of the educational system. Despite this auspicious enrolment picture there was a pronounced difference in attendance as to the attendance regularity of enrolled children. For instance, there may not be one possible reason; several children presented irregular attendance due to household responsibilities or care of younger siblings or illness, seasonal migration, and the financial pressure to support family livelihoods when financial difficulties arose.

**Table & Graph: 3 Children Enrolment Status**

SL No	Children Enrolment Status	Frequency	Percentage
1	Currently Enrolled	178	96.7%
2	Dropped Out	6	03.30%
	Total	184	100%

Source: Research Fieldwork, 2025



These results indicate that enrolment does not guarantee that students attend regularly in school. Irregular engagement reduces children’s engagement with what they are learning at school but also limits the opportunities afforded by formal education itself and the rewards of first-generation learners who are already not well supported academically at home. Thus, despite remarkable progress we have witnessed, Mangolpuri remains chronically under-attended and uninvolved, and a focus on enrolment-based learning and equity-oriented education that is not readily adopted is one of our most problematic limitations.

## Attendance Pattern of Enrolled Students

The attendance of enrolled children in Mangolpuri shows significant differences in the regular school participation pattern. As shown in Table 1.4, 64.3 percent of the children in attendance reported attending regularly and a substantial 43.7 percent attended irregularly. Although the greater majority of children reported

maintaining regular attendance, the high percentage of irregular attendance suggests continued barriers to schooling for families. Irregular attendance was largely due to household chores, the care of younger siblings, seasonal illness, and economic pressures, most of which meant children would have to stay home or help other members of the family. These factors mirror the wider socio-economic vulnerabilities of slum households, where children’s time is often guided by domestic and survival circumstances. This lack of consistency in attendance adversely affects continuity of learning, levels of engagement in the classroom (i.e., in academic success and retention) and is particularly harmful to first-generation learners, which in turn maintains the status quo of educational disadvantage despite high enrolment rates.

**Table 1.4: Attendance Pattern of Enrolled Students**

SL No	Attendance Pattern of Enrolled Students	Percentage
1	Regular Attendance	64.3%
2	Irregular Attendees	43.7%

**Source:** Research Fieldwork, 2025

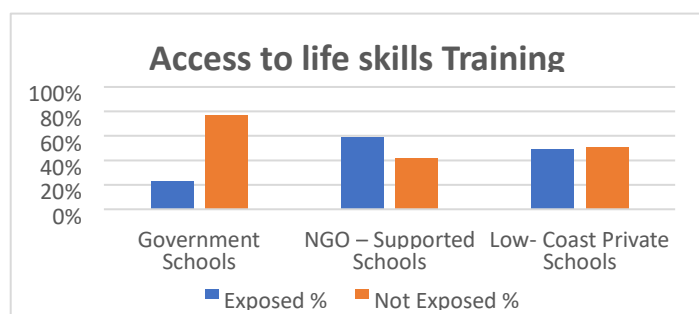
**Access to life skills Training**

The results show that structured life skills training among children in Mangolpuri is minimal and unevenly spread out across school types. Table 1.5 indicates that 23% of children enrolled in government schools reported exposure to life skills activities but substantial proportion (77%) had no such exposure in given territory. Children attending NGO-supported schools, however, had drastically higher levels of access to interventions, 58.5 % participating in life skills-related activities, followed by low-cost private schools as 49.2%. This difference shows the institutional role of the non-governmental and private actors to supplement formal education with holistic skills. Overall, only 40.2% of the sampled children mentioned experience of any exposure, i.e., communication exercises, group discussions, leadership tasks, or problem-solving activities; more than half of children are not given the opportunities of this kind.

**Table & Graph: 6 Access to life skills Training**

SL No	Access to life Skills Training	Exposed %	Not Exposed %
1	Government Schools	23%	77%
2	NGO – Supported Schools	58.8%	41.5%
3	Low- Coast Private Schools	49.2%	50.8%

**Source:** Research Fieldwork, 2025



In this context, the findings provide evidence that the school curriculum of government schools in slum areas is not only based on academic knowledge and syllabus completion but also have limited room for the development of non-academic skills. The uneven access of children to schools reproduces educational inequality, because children’s opportunities for mastering basic life skills are shaped by the type of school they enter, not what universal education provides.

The differences in access to life skills training across school types indicate that such opportunities are shaped by institutional arrangements rather than being uniformly available. Government school students appear to

have comparatively lower exposure, whereas NGO-supported and private school students report better access. This pattern suggests variations in institutional priorities, available resources, and external support structures. Such disparities contribute to unequal developmental opportunities among children within the same slum locality.

### Gender Based Differences

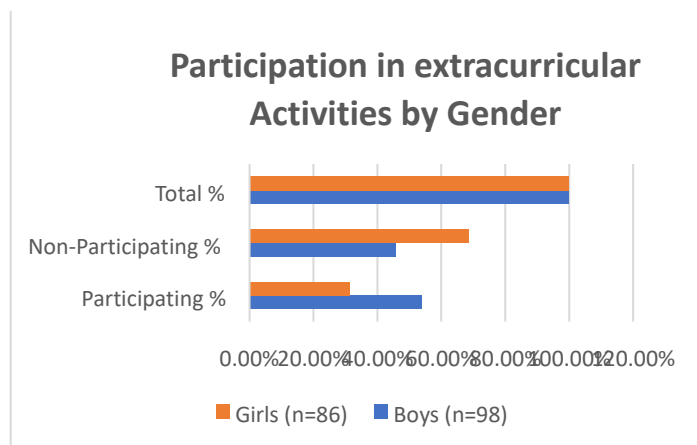
Significant gender differences were observed in participation outside academic learning of the sampled boys and girls from Mangolpuri. According to Table 6.6, 54.1% of boys participated in extracurricular and group based activities, whereas only 31.4% of girls participated in such activities. In stark contrast, non-participation was significantly higher in girls (68.6 percent) than boys (45.9 percent). Lower levels of participation among girls were largely attributed to restrictions on mobility, increased involvement in household responsibilities, and concerns related to personal safety, especially during after-school hours. This seems to have restricted girls’ access to areas that promote interaction, confidence, and skill development. This meant that girls were more likely to struggle, compared to their male peers, to obtain life skills outside of the school building.

The gender gap in participation further reflects the influence of prevailing socio-cultural norms within slum communities. Girls’ relatively lower involvement in extracurricular and life skills activities appears closely connected to domestic responsibilities, mobility constraints, and safety concerns. These factors limit their engagement beyond classroom learning and reinforce gendered educational inequalities despite similar enrolment rates.

**Table & Graph: 7 Participation in extracurricular Activities by Gender**

SL No.	Gender	Participating %	Non-Participating %	Total %
1	Boys (n=98)	54.10%	45.9%	100%
2	Girls (n=86)	31.40%	68.6%	100%

Source: Research Fieldwork, 2025



## DISCUSSION

The findings of this study are consistent with broader evidence on educational inequality in urban India. National assessments such as ASER (2022) and the World Bank (2018) report have pointed out that improvements in school enrolment do not automatically lead to better learning outcomes. Research in other slum settlements has similarly shown that first-generation learners often rely heavily on school-based support due to limited educational resources at home. The situation observed in Mangolpuri therefore reflects structural patterns of disadvantage rather than isolated local issues.

## CONCLUSION

The study highlights that while enrolment levels in Mangolpuri have reached near-universal levels, educational equity remains incomplete. Socio-economic vulnerability, low parental educational attainment, institutional

differences across school types, and gender-based constraints continue to shape children's educational experiences.

Drawing upon the Capability Approach, the study emphasises that enrolment alone does not guarantee meaningful educational participation. Life skills training contributes to children's confidence, communication, and engagement, thereby strengthening their ability to benefit from schooling. However, unequal access to such initiatives risks reinforcing existing inequalities.

Achieving educational equity in urban slums therefore requires a shift from enrolment-centred approaches toward broader capability-enhancing interventions within formal schooling

### Policy Implications

1. Life skills education should be systematically incorporated into government school curricula in urban slum areas.
2. Special attention must be given to reducing gender-based barriers that restrict girls' participation beyond formal classroom learning.
3. Collaboration between schools and non-governmental organisations should be strengthened to expand access to holistic educational programmes.
4. Teacher training initiatives should promote participatory and child-centred teaching methods that support both academic and non-academic development.
5. Educational monitoring systems should extend beyond enrolment statistics to include attendance consistency, participation levels, and life skills development indicators.

### REFERENCES

1. ASER Centre. (2022). Annual status of education report (ASER) 2022. ASER Centre, New Delhi.
2. Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education* (pp. 241–258). Greenwood Press.
3. Chugh, S. (2011). *Dropout in secondary education: A study of children living in slums of Delhi*. National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA), New Delhi.
4. Drèze, J., & Sen, A. (2013). *An uncertain glory: India and its contradictions*. Princeton University Press.
5. Government of India. (2009). *The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009*. Ministry of Law and Justice, New Delhi.
6. Sen, A. (1999). *Development as freedom*. Oxford University Press.
7. UNESCO. (2021). *Reimagining our futures together: A new social contract for education*. UNESCO Publishing, Paris.
8. UN-Habitat. (2016). *World cities report 2016: Urbanization and development – Emerging futures*. United Nations Human Settlements Programme, Nairobi.
9. UNICEF. (2019). *Life skills education and youth empowerment*. UNICEF, New York.
10. UNICEF. (2021). *Life skills education: A framework for 21st century learning*. UNICEF, New York.
11. World Bank. (2018). *World development report 2018: Learning to realize education's promise*. World Bank, Washington, DC.
12. World Health Organization. (1997). *Life skills education for children and adolescents in schools*. WHO, Geneva.