

Slum Dwellers and Community Development

Swaha Bhattacharya
University of Calcutta, Kolkata

The characteristic feature of human life is his effort to make a wholesome community life where reciprocation and sharing is the key concept. The present investigation has been designed to study whether living conditions in slums affect the dwellers regarding the nature of social relationship, perceived uncongenial/ congeniality of environment and priority need of the dwellers. A group of 300 adult inhabitants were selected from different slums of Kolkata city. General Information Schedule, Perceived Physical Environment Questionnaire, Perceived Social Relationship Questionnaire and Priority Need Questionnaire were administered to them. They perceive the physical environment as uncongenial. Their priority need varies in connection with their physical and social environment. From the findings it may be suggested that immediate steps should be taken to counteract and eliminate the anti-democratic behaviour traits of the dwellers and also there is need to implement organised programmes for community welfare dealing with their own dwelling places or neighbourhood.

The word place conveys many different dimensions such as physical size, tangible versus symbolic, known and experienced versus unknown or not experienced. Place also includes that which influences the meaning occupants give to it through personal, social and cultural processes (Altman & Low, 1992). Like place, the word community can convey different meanings such as inhabited geographically defined areas or groups of people identified by common interests, value, culture etc. but not bounded by physical locale. Sense of community is associated with the social environmental characteristics of place, although residents' perceptions of it have been linked to physical features of the built environment (Plas & Lewis, 1996). One model of sense of community (McMillan & Chavis, 1986) further delineates its content in terms of affective, cognitive and behavioural

components. When one has a sense of belongingness to an identified community, he or she anticipates receiving resources from that community and then reciprocates by responding in kind when the community requires something of his/her resources. Satisfaction is viewed by the utilitarian value (of a place) to meet certain basic needs (Guest & Lee, 1983) ranging from sociability to services to physical characteristics (Fried, 1982; Herting & Guest, 1983; John, Austin & Baba, 1986). The specification of concept subsumed under sense of place, particularly place identity, place attachment and sense of community, has not been clearly articulated. There is considerable overlap between factors such as emotional bonds, affiliation, behavioural commitment, satisfaction and belongingness which are loosely associated in theoretical description. There is an obvious

relationship between man-made environment and place-attachment (Stokols, 1990) and also the objective reality of the modern environment and well-beingness of the community (Graham & Healy, 1999). Furthermore, there is a close relationship between subjective emotional and symbolic meanings associated with places and the personal bonds of attachments of people regarding the specific places (Williams & Vaske, 2003). Place-identity is not only a matter of the images, likes, beliefs and values and rules and regulations of a physical setting, but also the particular patterns of understanding, competence and resource skills the person has developed with respect to it. The key word 'slum' consists of a hut, group of huts or buildings, or areas characterised by over-crowding, deterioration, unsanitary condition or absence of facilities or amenities, these conditions or any of them, endanger the health, safety or morals of its inhabitants or the community. Slum environments are overcrowded and suffering from various types of deprivation. Generally, a cluster of rooms, facing a rectangle courtyard or a narrow slum pathway, form a hutment which forms distinct physical and social units in a slum. The slum exists in almost all the municipal wards – everywhere in Kolkata although in varied proportions. Every third Kolkattans live in a slum. Often there is negligible contact between the slum dwellers and his neighbours who live in decent houses. The inhabitants of slums are treated as social outcastes by the elites of Kolkata for all practical purposes. Man has made his life bio socially programmed for a healthy social symbiosis – an interdependency in social and community life – to share, to serve and to think and to feel for others around him. The beauty of human life is that he plans and designs his physical environment not for self only but for the welfare of his descendants and kinsmen also. Considering this, the present investigation has been designed to study the slum dwellers' perception in connection with

their living environment as well as the development of Kolkata city. The major Objectives are (i) to study the physical environment as perceived by the slum dwellers of Kolkata city, (ii) to study the social relationship as perceived by the slum dwellers of Kolkata city and (iii) to study the priority needs of the slum dwellers.

Hypotheses

- i. Physical environment as perceived by the slum dwellers is uncongenial.
- ii. Social relationship as perceived by the slum dwellers is not satisfactory.
- iii. Priority need as perceived by the slum dwellers is differentially associated with duration of stay.

Method

Sample

A group of 300 adult inhabitants belonging to different slum areas of Kolkata city were selected as subjects. By using stratified random sampling technique, samples of 100 each were drawn from North, Central and South Zone of Kolkata City. Equal number of male and female subjects was selected from each zone of the city. The minimum educational qualification is Madhyamik.

Tools

1) General Information Schedule: It consists of items like name, address, age, sex, educational qualification, occupation, income, duration of stay, etc.

2) Perceived Physical Environment Questionnaire: It consists of 40 items answerable in a five-point scale, viz., strongly agree to strongly disagree, where high score indicates congenial physical environment as perceived by the slum dwellers and vice-versa. Odd-even split-half reliability is 0.79.

3) Perceived Social Relationship Questionnaire: It consists of 40 items answerable in a five-point scale where high score indicates satisfactory social relationship among the slum dwellers and vice-versa. Odd-

even split-half reliability is 0.82.

4) Priority Need Questionnaire: It consists of a list of eight priority need considering the necessity for good and healthy living. Respondents are asked to rank the priority needs.

Table 1: Item-wise distribution of discrimination Index

Item No.	Discrimination Index	Item No.	Discrimination Index
1	15.26	21	12.39
2	14.89	22	15.21
3	16.23	23	14.88
4	11.56	24	15.56
5	12.04	25	11.29
6	13.89	26	17.45
7	17.28	27	18.37
8	19.56	28	19.55
9	17.11	29	16.21
10	15.23	30	15.24
11	16.68	31	13.56
12	13.51	32	14.29
13	15.29	33	11.58
14	16.82	34	12.76
15	12.44	35	13.11
16	16.09	36	17.09
17	18.53	37	18.5
18	19.28	38	19.19
19	12.33	39	15.26
20	14.86	40	10.28

Table 2: Item-wise distribution of discrimination Index

Item No.	Discrimination Index	Item No.	Discrimination Index
1	15.58	21	13.58
2	14.21	22	14.21
3	13.69	23	12.17
4	11.58	24	11.5

5	12.02	25	12.14
6	16.58	26	15.29
7	17.79	27	17.58
8	18.11	28	16.23
9	15.06	29	19.1
10	14.52	30	15.75
11	13.96	31	14.39
12	12.52	32	12.45
13	11.67	33	13.17
14	10.44	34	18.56
15	13.38	35	15.43
16	16.56	36	16.11
17	15.79	37	14.57
18	14.8	38	13.64
19	12.13	39	12.98
20	11.81	40	11.66

Procedure

General Information Schedule, Perceived Physical Environment Questionnaire, Perceived Social Relationship Questionnaire and Priority Need Questionnaire were administered to the subjects with proper instruction. Data was checked and scoring was done with the help of scoring key. Frequency and percentages were calculated for General Information Schedule. Mean and S.D. were calculated for Perceived Environment Score, Perceived Social Relationship Score. Comparison was made by applying t-test. Rank was done for measuring the priority need of the dwellers.

Results and Discussion

In the present study the general characteristic data shown in Table-3 explicitly depicted the characteristic features of the subject:

Table 3: General characteristic features of the slum dwellers

Characteristic features	North (N=100)		Central (N=100)		South (N=100)		Total (N=300)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1. Age in years (mode value)	36.40		37.28		35.66		36.28	
2. Education								
a) Madhyamik	55	55.00	61	61.00	58	58.00	174	58.00
b) Higher Secondary	35	35.00	25	25.00	25	25.00	85	28.33
c) Graduate	10	10.00	14	14.00	17	17.00	41	13.67
3. Occupation								
a) Service	10	10.00	15	15.00	18	18.00	43	14.33
b) Business	40	40.00	25	25.00	35	35.00	100	33.33
c) Casual Work	40	40.00	48	48.00	32	32.00	120	40.00
d) Nothing significant	10	10.00	12	12.00	15	15.00	37	12.34
4. Family size (mode value)	7.42		6.13		8.26		7.98	
5. No. of living rooms (mode value)	1.50		2.00		1.50		1.75	
6. Duration of stay in years								
a) Below 10 years	42	42	35	35	60	60	137	45.67
b) Above 10 years	58	58	65	65	40	40	163	54.33

The physical environment as perceived by the slum dwellers belonging to different areas of Kolkata city is shown in table - 4. Analysis of data reveals that the majority of slum dwellers perceive the physical environment uncongenial. More uncongenial attitude was observed by the female inhabitants than their male counterparts. Their unfavourable attitude is mainly due to lack of living space, lack of children's play area, overcrowded locality, inadequate light and ventilation within the

room, poor drainage system, excessive noise and disturbance in and around the house. Thus, the Hypothesis-I, "Physical environment as perceived by the slum dwellers is uncongenial" – is accepted. Besides this, when comparison was made between the two groups of slum dwellers belonging to North and Central, Central and South, South and North Zone of Kolkata City for male, female and combined group separately, significant difference was observed.

Table 4: Comparative picture of physical environment as perceived by the slum dwellers belonging to North, Central and South Zone of Kolkata City.

Comparison between	Male (N=100)		't' value	Female (N=100)		't' value	Combined (N=200)		't' value
	Mean	S.D.		Mean	S.D.		Mean	S.D.	
North vs. Central	82.52	7.86	2.95**	78.33	6.71	1.99*	80.42	7.24	2.47*
	85.56	6.78		80.37	7.88		82.96	7.39	
Central vs. South	85.56	6.78	5.26**	80.37	7.88	5.08**	82.96	7.39	5.37**
	79.3	9.86		74.58	8.32		76.94	8.44	
South vs. North	79.3	9.86	2.04*	74.58	8.32	3.54**	80.11	8.11	3.14**
	82.52	7.86		77.76	7.96		80.42	7.24	

*p<0.05; **p<0.01 ; Score range: 40 to 200. High score indicates favourable attitude and vice-versa.

Data inserted in Table-5 reveals the comparative picture of social relationship as perceived by the slum dwellers belonging to North, Central and South Zone of Kolkata City. By analysing the data it can be said that although they are living in overcrowded and deteriorating environment but they are maintaining good and healthy relationship with each other. More healthy relationship was observed among the male dwellers than the female dwellers. It can

further be said that they want to do something for others wholeheartedly and the community feeling is high among them. Thus, the Hypothesis-II, "Social relationship as perceived by the slum dwellers is not satisfactory" – is rejected. Previous findings are highly correlated with the present findings in connection with place identity, place attachment and sense of community.

Table 5: Comparative picture of social relationship as perceived by the slum dwellers belonging to North, Central and South Zone of Kolkata City

Comparison between	Male (N=100)		't' value	Female (N=100)		't' value	Combined (N=200)		't' value
	Mean	S.D.		Mean	S.D.		Mean	S.D.	
North vs. Central	145.28	10.54	5.11***	150.64	9.88	6.49***	147.96	10.03	5.90***
	152.33	8.95		160.11	10.83		156.22	9.77	
Central vs. South	152.33	8.95	2.29**	160.11	10.83	0.78*	156.22	9.77	0.45*
	155.24	9.15		158.47	10.15		156.85	9.66	
South vs. North	155.24	9.15	7.16***	158.47	10.15	5.55***	156.85	9.66	6.39***
	145.28	10.54		150.64	9.88		147.96	10.03	

*Difference is insignificant; ** p<0.05; ***p<0.01; Score range: 40 to 200. High score indicates favourable attitude and vice-versa.

Comparison was also made between the two groups of slum dwellers whose duration of stay is below and above ten years in the same environment in terms of priority needs. It has been observed that priority need varies with the duration of stay. Those whose duration of stay is above ten years gave emphasis on safety and security, on the contrary, those

where duration of stay is below ten years gave emphasis on physical environment. When comparison was made between these two groups, significant difference was observed. The Hypothesis-III, "Priority need as perceived by the slum dwellers is differentially associated with duration of stay" is accepted.

Table 6: Comparison between the two groups of slum dwellers whose duration of stay is below and above ten years in the same environment in terms of priority needs

Priority needs	Duration of Stay	
	Below ten years (%)	Above ten years (%)
1. More living space	20	10
2. Proper sewerage and drainage system	18	15
3. Need for children's play area	13	5
4. More security	11	20
5. Peaceful environment	12	19
6. Control of antisocial activities	9	18
7. Adequate water-supply	10	9
8. Need for recreational facilities	7	4

$\chi^2 = 45.26$, $df=7$, difference is significant.

Measures should be taken to improve the physical environment of the dwelling places, proper drainage and sewerage system, adequate light, adequate water supply and play area. Government, NGO's and Local people should come forward for implementation of community welfare programme for healthy living both physically and psychologically.

References

- Altman, I., & Low, S. (1992). *Place attachment, human behaviour and environment*, 12, New York, Plenum Press.
- Fried, M. (1982). Residential attachment: Sources of residential and community satisfaction, *Journal of Social Issues*, 38, 107-120.
- Graham, S., & Healy, P. (1999). Relational concepts of space and place: Issues and planning theory and practices, *Journal of European Planning Studies*, 7, 623-646.
- Guest, A.M., & Lee, B.A. (1983). Sentiment and evaluation as ecological variables. *Sociological Perspectives*, 26, 159-184.
- Herting, J.R., & Guest, A.M. (1983). Components of satisfaction with local areas in the metropolis, *Sociological Quarterly*, 26, 99-115.
- John, C., Austin, D.M., & Baba, Y. (1986). The question of community attachment revisited. *Sociological Spectrum*, 6, 411-431.
- McMillan, D., & Chavis, D. (1986). Sense of community: A definition and theory. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 14, 6-23.

Plas, J., & Lewis, S. (1996). Environmental factors and sense of community in a planned town, *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 24, 109-133.

Stokols, D. (1990). Instrumental and spiritual views of people – environment relations. *Journal of American Psychologists*, 45, 641-646.

Williams, D.R., & Vaske, J.J. (2003). The measurement of place attachment: Validity and generalizability of a psychometric approach. *Forest Science*, 49, 830-840.

Received: March 2, 2006

Accepted: June 22, 2006

Swaha Bhattacharya, PhD is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Applied Psychology, University of Calcutta, Kolkata – 700 009.

International Websites of Psychology

1. American Psychological Association's Publications
www.apa.org/books
2. Institute of Personality and Ability Testing www.ipat.com
3. APA Membership www.apa.org e-mail: membership@apa.org
4. Cognitive Psychology www.cognitivescience.net
5. Indian Academy of Applied Psychology www.iaap.org.in, www.jiaap.com

Journal of Personality and Clinical Studies

(Bi-annual)

A Publication of the Association of Clinical Psychologists, Delhi

Editor: Kailash Tuli
editorjpcs@yahoo.com