


СОЦИАЛЬНАЯ СТРУКТУРА, СОЦИАЛЬНЫЕ ИНСТИТУТЫ И ПРОЦЕССЫ
SOCIAL STRUCTURE, SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS AND PROCESSES



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Inequality in objective quality of life between affluent city dwellers and slum dwellers in India: a case study in Guwahati city

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Abstract. The quality of life of people in any society determines social well-being. Objective quality of life is often regarded as a determinant of subjective quality of life. Subjective quality of life largely depends on material conditions other subjective factors too play an important role. Urban India is economically and technologically advanced but the constant growth of slum areas indicates an uneven impact of development on the living condition of people. The present study has divided the urban population into affluent city dwellers and slum dwellers. It has been found that quality of life in slums is very deplorable. The study sets the objectives to assess the inequality in the quality of life among affluent city dwellers and slum dwellers. The study has applied qualitative methods of data collection from the field. Data has been collected from Guwahati city of Assam.

Keywords: Quality of life; Social Well-being; Slum; City; Inequality in living standard

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Исследовательская статья

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Неравенство в объективном качестве жизни между богатыми городскими жителями и обитателями трущоб в Индии: исследование кейс-стади в городе Гувахати

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Аннотация. Качество жизни людей в любом обществе определяет социальное благополучие. Объективное качество жизни часто рассматривается как фактор, определяющий субъективное качество жизни. Субъективное качество жизни во

многим зависит от материальных условий, другие субъективные факторы также играют важную роль. В части городов Индия является экономически и технологически развитой страной, но постоянный рост трущоб указывает на неравномерное воздействие городского развития на условия жизни людей. В настоящем исследовании городское население было разделено на обеспеченных городских жителей и обитателей трущоб. Было установлено, что качество жизни в трущобах очень плачевное. Целью исследования является оценка неравенства в качестве жизни между богатыми городскими жителями и обитателями трущоб. В исследовании были применены качественные методы сбора данных на местах. Данные были собраны из города Гувахати, штат Ассам.

Ключевые слова: качество жизни; социальное благополучие; трущобы, город, равенство в уровне жизни

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Introduction. Quality of life is an expansive complex idea that generally incorporates subjective and objective assessments of both positive and pessimistic parts of life. Social well-being has two different dimensions: objective social well-being and subjective social well-being that focuses on quality of life and living standard among people of different nations and societies. The objective social well-being includes material resources such as income, food, and housing as well as other quality of life factors such as education, health, political rights, freedom, social integration. Subjective social well-being places a strong emphasis on people's own assessments of their lives, particularly their level of life satisfaction. Quality of life of the people includes both material conditions as well as happiness. The term 'quality of life' is frequently used in the context of work to describe having the time and resources to pursue what a person enjoys. Poor quality of life results from a job that pays well but necessitates so many working hours that the employee is unable to enjoy any of the income. Another factor affecting the quality of life is when a job gives the employee time to enjoy life but prevents them from doing so because they are too exhausted, hurt, stressed out, or in some other way unable to appreciate their pay. In this situation, a trade-off must be made between improving future quality of life and

compromising present quality. There are two kinds of quality of life study: individual quality of life and quality of life of collectivities such as class, community, gender and society as a whole. Quality of life in urban India is not equally maintained due to unequal material opportunities and capability of different sections of people. Ruut Veenhoven's (2000, 2012) and Amartya Sen's (1993) theoretical framework suggests that livability and life-ability (Veenhoven, 2000) and capability (Sen, 1993) are essential pre-conditions of quality of life in any society. So the assessment of quality of life in urban India needs to apply these theoretical frameworks. Capability and ability to use the available resources is determining condition of the quality of life. Livability of a place in term of its environment and material condition has the utmost importance in maintaining quality of life that also determines one's life-ability.

The study sets the objectives to assess the inequality in the quality of life among affluent city dwellers and slum dwellers.

Methodology: The study involves empirical evaluation of slums and affluent places in Guwahati city of Assam, India. Qualitative data has been collected from a selected sample of households. A sample of 60 households has been taken for structured interviews. 30 from slums and 30 from affluent areas were taken.

Methodology and methods. Quality of life has been a subject of assessment and evaluation in the disciplines of Psychology, Economics, Sociology, Health and Management. There is a different focus on quality of life by various disciplines. Two most prominent approaches like, social indicators (Mitchell, 1933; Bauer, 1966; Cohen and Olson, 1969) and Human Development (Haq, 2003; Sen, 2000) are developed for assessing national well-being or social well-being. These approaches of assessing social well-being in a nation emphasize on the quality of life of the humans and social health of the nation. Ruut Veenhoven (2000) theorized quality of life in more sociological and psychological term. Object of evaluation in 'quality of life' is 'life' that is life of an individual or quality of life of

an individual. Quality of life of collectivises like women, class and even entire humanity can also be measured. The term 'quality of life' does not just refer to human life rather refers to the life of all creatures (Veenhoven, 2000: 2). There are two dimensions of quality of life: 'chances and outcome' and 'outer and inner qualities'. 'Chances and outcomes' is the distinction between opportunities for a good life and the good life itself. It is also called the difference between potentiality and actuality. Chances (opportunities) and outcomes (results) may be related but not the same. One may be failed in realizing chances (opportunities), whereas, someone may achieve a lot in spite of poor opportunities. Outer and inner qualities are concerned with qualities of the environment and the individual's own self.

Table 1

Framework of Quality of life

	Outer qualities	Inner qualities
Life chances	Livability of environment	Life-ability of the person
Life results	Utility of life	Appreciation of life

Source: Veenhoven, 2000.

The present study mainly focused on life chances (opportunities): livability and life-ability of urban India. Livability here includes environment, economic opportunity, educational and health facilities. In terms of livability, city and towns are divided within them between advanced livable zones and poor livable zones. These are termed in this study as affluent areas and slums. Life-ability of the person in this study focuses on how affluent city dwellers and slum dwellers lead their life.

Amartya Sen's capability approach is suitable to examine the issue of inequality in quality of life in India. The notion of equality, which is one of the determining conditions of social well-being has many connotations in economic theoretical perspectives like utilitarianism of Jeremy Bentham (2000), Rawlsian (1999) primary goods and Sen's (1979) capability equality. Sen (1979) argued that concepts of 'utilitarianism' and 'primary goods' are ignorant of most essential notion "basic capabilities". "Basic capabilities" means that a person is able to do certain basic things: ability to

move, ability to meet one's nutritional requirements, ability to be clothed and sheltered, the power to participate in the social life of the community. Sen (1979) interpreted 'needs' as basic capabilities and emphasized on "basic capability equality" in society. He further said that the concept of 'need' is not inclusive as it's coverage through the information on primary goods and utility is not adequate (Sen, 1979: 217-219). The capability approach is freedom based, which see individual's advantage in term of his capability to do things he or she has reason to value. An Individual's advantage is lower if he has less capability to achieve things that he has reason to value. The capability approach focuses on the freedom that a person actually has to do things or he values doing or being (Sen, 2009: 231-232). The capability approach evaluates the advantage of a person in terms of his or her actual ability to achieve various valuable functionings as part of living. Functioning refers to a certain condition of a person and the various things he or she does in

leading a life. The capability approach contends that living is a combination of various doings and maintaining quality of life that can be assessed in terms of the capability to achieve valuable functionings. Elementary functionings are being adequately nourished, being in good health, etc., and complex functionings are achieving self-respect or being socially integrated (Sen, 1993: 30-31). Evaluative exercise by capability approach is carried out by distinguishing two kinds of questions: What are the objects of value? (2) How valuable are the respective objects? The capability approach focuses on the identification of objects of value and considers evaluative space in terms of functionings and capabilities to function. It is different from utilitarian analysis which uses individual utilities such as pleasures, happiness, or desire fulfilment as evaluative space (Sen, 1993: p-32).

Research Results and Discussion.

Quality of life inequality in Urban India. A developing society like India has progressed remarkably in its economy, but the overall quality of life is still poor. Particularly, India's objective quality of life is deplorable. Livability and life-ability in India are not up to the mark, so people's overall life satisfaction has gone down, though not worse. People are looking to fulfilling the 'conditions' of the best possible life. India needs to improve its 'livability' and 'life-ability' in a manner that people's capability and opportunity can be equivalent. Objective quality of life that is 'livability' and 'life-ability' of a society determines people's subjective life satisfaction or happiness. But capability inequality prevails in India which put an obstacle to attaining overall quality of life.

India's modern development process has been instituted through industrialization, commercialization of agriculture, mining and the conservation of forests. Modern economic development started by the colonial policy was a shift from subsistence economy to the capitalist economy. Agrarian land ownership systems such as Zamindari, Mahalwari and Ryotwari marked the beginning of the commercialization of agricultural production. This modern

development brought considerable transformation in the economy. But there was also rise in the problems such as socio-economic disparities between rich-poor, depeasantisation and alienation of peasants and displacement of labourers. India's industrial development in the post-independent era remarkably modernized infrastructure facilities, manufacturing establishments and agriculture. Land reform and green revolution marked the positive shift in the poverty alleviation and reducing unemployment. So, India during the 1960s and 70s, got transformative shift in power and energy, agricultural production, irrigation, transport communication and manufacturing industries. India's development process got momentum shift in 1991 because of Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization (LPG) policy that remarkably transformed the investment policy, production pattern and market condition. Beginning of 2000 was another landmark for India's development, as the service sector revolution brought by Web 2.0 (advanced WWW) and digitalization brought by internet revolution. Digitalization gained much height in the development of services.

In order to understand the quality of life inequality in urban India, exploring the condition of slums is necessary. Slum manifest the extreme form of urban poverty and poor quality of life. Slums are characterized by extreme level of over-crowding, poor sanitation, unhealthy and dehumanizing living conditions. Slum dwellers lack access to basic facilities of life such as proper housing, safe drinking water, sanitation, drainage, solid waste management, internal and connecting roads, street lighting, education and healthcare. Most of these slums are located in environmentally fragile and critical zones like flood, disaster and land slide prone areas, which makes dwellers vulnerable (Slums in India A Statistical Compendium, 2011). In India, slum population is 49% of the total urban population (World Bank). According to global slum population data in 2001, most of the slum dwellers in South Asia are residents of India. It was around 63% (170 million) that accounted for 17% of the total slum population of the world (World

Bank, 2008: 7). In the states of Andra Pradesh, Chattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Odissa, West Bengal, Maharashtra, more than 1 in 5 urban households lives in slum. Maharashtra has the

highest number of slum blocks: 21,000, out of total 1 lakh slum blocks in India (Shrinivasan, 2013).

Table 2

Proportion of Slum Households in Metro Cities

City	Proportion of slum households (%)
Greater Mumbai	41.3
Kolkata	29.6
Chennai	28.5
Delhi	14.6
Bengaluru	8.5

Source: Census, 2011.

Mumbai has the highest numbers of slum households. Recent data from Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board (DUSIB) shows that there are 675 slums in Delhi. Slum Redevelopment Authority (SRA), Mumbai, Government of Maharashtra reported that Mumbai

has a total of 2,400 slums. According to the Economic Survey of Delhi (2020-21), the National Capital Territory of Delhi covers an area of 1,483 square kilometres¹.

Table 3

Urban Poverty in various regions of the World

Region	Number of urban poor (in millions) "\$1/day"	Number of urban poor (in millions) "\$2/day"	Urban Share of the Poor \$1.08/day	Urban Share of the Poor \$2.15/day	Urban Share of the population
East Asia and Pacific	16	126	6.7	15.1	38.8
China	4	53	2.2	9.5	37.7
Eastern Europe and Central Asia	2	32	33.4	49.9	63.5
Latin America and Caribbean	38	111	59.0	65.6	76.2
Middle East and North Africa	1	20	19.9	29.3	55.8
South Asia	135	297	24.9	25.2	27.8
India	116	236	26.0	26.0	28.1
Sub-Saharan Africa	99	168	30.2	31.1	35.2
Total	291	752	24.6	26.4	42.3

Source: World Bank Report, 2008.

South Asia has the highest number of urban poor population in the world: 135 million \$1/day and 296 million \$2/day, 2002. World's five megacities are there in South Asia, where

a major concentration of urban poor is found. The cities of Mumbai, Delhi, Calcutta, Dhaka and Karachi have 18.8 million, 16 million, 14.5 million, 13 million, and 12.2 million urban

¹ The Economic Times. Slums in Mumbai and 675 in Delhi: Government in Lok Sabha. URL: <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/2400-slums-in->

[mumbai-and-675-in-delhi-government-in-lok-sabha/articleshow/96432644.cms](https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/2400-slums-in-mumbai-and-675-in-delhi-government-in-lok-sabha/articleshow/96432644.cms) (accessed 22 December 2022).

poor respectively. These cities have large number of slums, which has become a major challenge of city management and dealing with urban poverty. India alone shares 17% of the total slum dwellers of the world (World Bank, 2008).

In urban India, particularly in large cities, we see a clear difference in the living standard of people in terms of income, housing, car, education, health, and so on. All the cities today have large numbers of apartments, sophisticated residential areas, corporate offices, advanced hospitals, modern schools and educational institutions but the question is whether all have equal access or all have equal capability in access. Within these cities, the slum is an area where, houses, hospitals, toilets, drain, educational institutions etc. are in a very deplorable state.

As per the urban slum report: Mumbai, condition of sanitation is very pathetic as 73% of slums depend on community toilets, whereas, 28% slums have open defecation, 0.7% of slums have toilets on payment and individual toilets are there only in 1% slums. Slum dwellers need to be in cue to use toilets

and the privacy of women is compromised. Toilets are very poorly managed, so it leads to an unhygienic environment. Women and small children often face difficulty in using such poor toilets. There is also the issue of drainage, garbage collection and waste management in slums. Drainage is there but most of these are blocked and inadequate garbage bins make the slum more deplorable. Most of the slum areas have dumping zone of urban waste, so dwellers are living with such pollution and unhealthy environment (Risbud, 2003, p-7). Educational attainment is very poor in slum though children attend nearby Municipal Corporation School. Older generations over the age of 50 have no formal education. Post school education can only be afforded by financially sound slum dwellers. Health condition of slum dwellers is another major concern, as there are cases of frequent diseases like malaria, dysentery, cholera, jaundice and typhoid. These are mainly because of the poor environmental condition of slums (Risbud, 2003, p-8).

The present study developed the conceptual framework of evaluating quality of life inequality in Indian context.

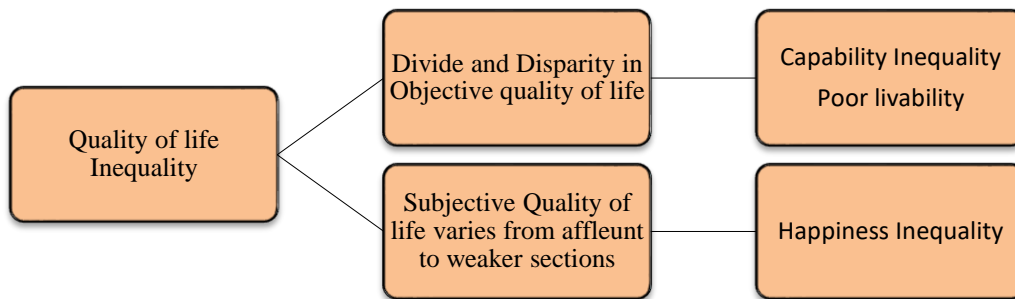


Fig. 1. Quality of life inequality in Urban India (Source: Field Study in Guwahati)

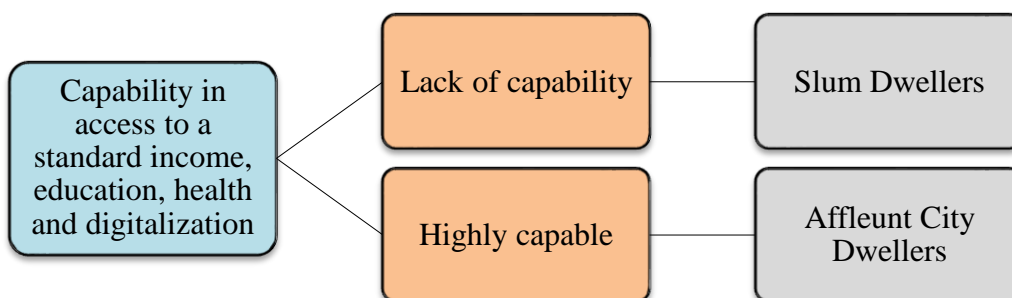


Fig. 2. Capability Inequality in Urban India (Source: Field Study in Guwahati)

Inequality in Quality of life has two dimensions: divide and disparity in material conditions and inequality in subjective quality of life. This inequality in quality of life is the ultimate result of capability inequality and poor livability in the case of material condition and happiness inequality in the case of subjective quality of life.

Evaluation of Capability and Quality of life in Guwahati City

Income Indicator. Those who live in slums typically lack literacy. They are thus involved in low-level economic activity. They make less money than other people. Due to lower income levels, individuals typically don't have access to nutritious meals. Children in slums suffer from malnutrition. People's development is greatly influenced by their in-

come. No one is able to live a healthy life without a sufficient income. Good health, quality educational opportunities, and the living standards of slum inhabitants must be improved. Slum dwellers have made a substantial contribution to the economy of any city by offering labour at a reasonable price for both formal and informal sectors of the economy. We can cripple the slum residents' ability to work by implementing skills development programs. Health and income are correlated because good income ensures spending for effective health benefits (Table 4).

The data shows that the majority of the slum respondents earn between 3000-5000 per month and not more than 10000. Most of the affluent section earns more than 100000 (Table 5).

Table 4

Income level of people from Affluent places and slums

Places of living	Income			
	3000-5000	5000-10000	50000-100000	Above 100000
Slums	19	11	--	--
Affluent	--	--	12	18

Source: Field study in Guwahati, Assam.

Table 5

Occupation of Slum and City Dwellers

Places of living	Occupation					
	Daily wage labour	Monthly wage labour	Doctor	Professors/ Teachers	Officers (state/central/ Defence)	Business
Slums	23	7	--	--	--	--
Affluent	--	--	3	8	10	9

Source: Field study in Guwahati, Assam

The data shows that slum dwellers are daily and monthly wage labourer, and affluent city dwellers are doing highly rewarded professional jobs. Occupation and job is closely linked to educational attainment. So professional jobs among affluent city dwellers indicate higher educational attainment. But due to poor educational attainment, slum dwellers are mostly involved in daily wage labour in formal and informal sectors (Table 6).

The data shows that slum dwellers have 100-500 rupees expenditure per day and majority among affluent section have above 1500 rupees expenditure per day. Expenditure determines one's capacity to bear the expenses (Fig. 3).

Life satisfaction level among slum dwellers is lower than affluent city dwellers. Economic condition determines overall life satisfaction.

Table 6

Places of living	Daily Expenditure			
	100-500	500-1000	1000-1500	Above 1500
Slums	30	--	--	--
Affluent	--	3	9	18

Source: Field study in Guwahati, Assam

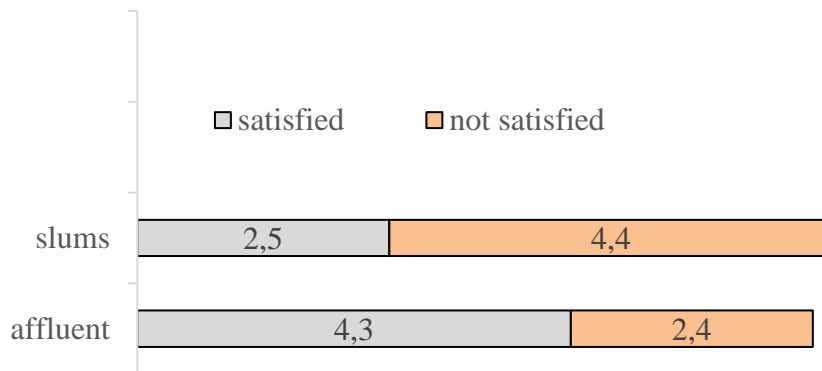


Fig. 3. Economic Condition and life satisfaction (0-10) (Source: Field study in Guwahati, Assam)

Education Indicator. We can better comprehend societal disparity and inequality in the quality of life by examining the educational attainment of affluent and weaker sections. The issue of income inequality in the urban area is not new but the capability to earn among weaker sections is a matter of concern. People can become economically stable through a strong, accessible education system, which enables them to actively participate in economic growth. In reality, a country's success depends

to a considerable extent on its capacity to develop the skills and abilities of its constantly expanding population, particularly when that population primarily consists of youths (Table 7).

The data shows that most of the slum dwellers are illiterate. Those who have studied, attained till class VIII only. Whereas most affluent people have done their masters and some of them have completed their doctorate degrees as well (Table 8).

Table 7

Places of living	Highest level of education					
	Illiterate	Class V-VIII	Class VIII-XII	Bachelors	Masters	Ph.d
Slums	21	9	--	--	--	--
Affluent	--	--	--	9	18	3

Source: Field study in Guwahati, Assam.

Table 8

Type of School from which children of Slum and Affluent Areas are imparting education

Places of living	Type of Schools	
	Government	Private
Slums	9	--
Affluent	18	12

Source: Field study in Guwahati, Assam.

Most of the respondents from both slums and affluent areas have studied in government schools. According to the respondents from the affluent section, they have utilized their educational skills in a rational way. But slum dwellers have not been able to utilize their educational skill. Respondents from both the section agreed upon supporting their next generation to attain higher education but the unavailability of resources in the slum area is a major concern. The condition of the schools is the main issue in slums. These schools have too many students but there is an absence of requisite infrastructure. As a result, children struggle to attend and get a proper learning scope. Also, a lot of teachers in the slums lack the necessary training and credentials. As a result, they are unable to give their kids a quality education.

Health Indicator. For a variety of reasons, the health of the slum population is very important. Slums won't disappear anytime soon. Slum conditions will progressively impact national and urban health metrics. Slum dwellers frequently reside in an unclean and

unsanitary environment. In states of India, particularly in the slum areas (where we conducted our research), recurrent floods cause calamity because houses are submerged in floodwater, which spreads a variety of contagious diseases. The poor's migration from the countryside to cities also increases the population of urban slums, which leads to scarcity in access to basic public services like power, education, and drinkable water. So, the living conditions and public health of slum dwellers are worst. Poor housing conditions have an adverse effect on mental health and stress levels. Crowding, pollution, noise, poor lighting, restricted access to green spaces, and other slum-related environmental problems can increase mental health conditions, such as depression, anxiety, violence, and other social dysfunctions (Table 9).

The data shows that slum dwellers cannot bear their health expenses and seek help from nearby government hospitals. But still, they are not getting enough attention from the government hospitals, and their treatment gets delayed every time 9 (Table 10).

Table 9

Capability of spending for health facilities

	Capable for medical expenses	
	Yes	No
Slums	--	30
Affluent	30	--

Source: Field study in Guwahati, Assam.

Work-related stress and anxiety among Slum and City Dwellers

Places of living	Workload and pressure	
	Yes	No
Slums	13	17
Affluent	27	3

Source: Field study in Guwahati, Assam.

The work-related stress and anxiety are higher among affluent people. It may be because of the extreme level of work pressure at workplace, lack of family bonds and inability of spending personal time. Slum dwellers face less work-related stress and anxiety rather they

feel physical pressure and exhaustion while performing risky jobs (Table 11).

Consumption of alcohol is higher in the affluent section. According to them, they consume it mostly on weekends to celebrate the break from a hectic schedule and also to release stress (Fig. 4).

Table 11

Consumption of Alcohol and tobacco

Places of living	Use of Alcohol/ Tobacco	
	Yes	No
Slums	11	19
Affluent	22	8

Source: Field study in Guwahati, Assam.

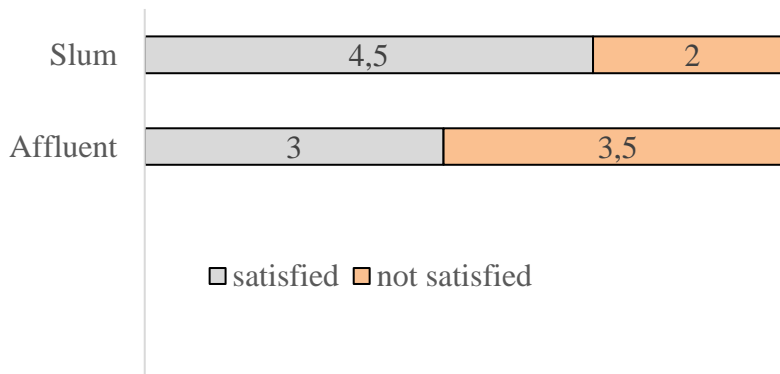


Fig. 4. Health Satisfaction level among Slum and City Dwellers over the past one month (Source: Field study in Guwahati, Assam)

Digital Access Indicator. More direct technological influence is being felt in everyday life. Smartphones have taken on the role of the city's keys by providing millions of people with rapid access to information on transit, traffic, health services, safety alerts, and local news. To make better decisions and enhance

the quality of life, smart cities use data and digital technologies. Agencies are now able to follow events as they develop, comprehend how demand patterns are evolving and changing in contemporary times, and respond immediately with an affordable solution.

Table 12

Access to Digital Devices

Places of living	Use of electronic devices	
	Yes	No
Slums	20	10
Affluent	30	--

Source: Field study in Guwahati, Assam.

The data shows that most of the respondents from both slums and affluent sections use electronic devices and mainly mobile phones. The use of laptops, computers, tablets, etc is

seen only in affluent sections (Table 13).

Most of the respondents of the affluent section are in social media and they use other platforms such as Google, Email etc (Table 14).

Table 13

Use of social media

Places of living	Use of social media	
	Yes	No
Slums	12	18
Affluent	24	6

Source: Field study in Guwahati, Assam.

Table 14

Access to e-learning platform and resources

Places of living	Use of e-learning platforms	
	Yes	No
Slums	--	30
Affluent	22	8

Source: Field study in Guwahati, Assam

None of the respondents from the slum area use e-learning platforms. However, most of the respondents from the affluent section use e-learning platforms such as Unacademy, Byjus etc.

Still, there are people who can't access the internet as they don't have smartphones, laptops, gadgets, and other mandatory devices. Therefore, a digital divide is explicitly emerging in India, which might result in massive gaps in access to the internet in the age of a network society. The huge cost of access to and the use of new technology will set the stage for a digital divide i.e., digital discrimination. Digital illiteracy is also on the constant rise in India.

Conclusion. Urbanization in India no doubt has transformed the development pattern but it led to the emergence of socio-economic disparity in urban India. Slum in urban India is a major concern because of their poor quality of life. On the other side, smart cities and metro cities are making remarkable progress in economic development. Large-scale rural-urban migration created the problem of overcrowding and housing because poor migrants cannot afford the costly houses and apartments. As a result, certain areas of poor living conditions have come up in each Indian city, which is termed as slum. We have found a clear distinction between affluent areas of the city and slums in terms of quality of life. So, it's not simply inequality of income but rather inequality in the quality of life. The present study mainly focused on the objective quality of life and it can be concluded that material condition is a major determinant of subjective quality of life or happiness.

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