

Built Environment and Deprived Children: Environmental Perceptions of the Urban Slum Cohort in Pune, India

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Abstract : Research from developed countries has demonstrated that the built environment can have a significant effect on children's cognitive and socio-emotional development. A majority of the studies on the relationship between the built environment and the well-being of children have been conducted in North America and Western Europe, though most of the world's children live in the global South. Millions of children living in urban slums in India confront issues associated with poor living conditions and lack of access to basic services. It is a well-known fact that slums are places of extreme poverty, substandard housing, overcrowding, and poor sanitation. These challenges faced by children living in slums can have a significant impact on their physical, psychological, and social development. Despite the magnitude of the problem, the area of research, particularly on the impact of the built environment of slums on children and adolescent well-being, has been understudied in India. Only a few studies in the global South have investigated the impact of the built environment on children's well-being. Apart from issues of the limited access to health and education of these children, the perception of children regarding the built environment which they inhabit is rarely addressed. A sample of 120 children living in the slums of Pune city between the ages 7 and 16 participated in this study, which employed a concurrent embedded approach of mixed method research. Questionnaires were administered to obtain quantitative data that included attributes of crowding, noise, privacy, territoriality and housing quality in the built environment. The qualitative analysis of children's sketches highlighted aspects of the built environment with which they associated themselves the most. The study sought to examine the perception of the deprived children living in the urban slums in the city of Pune (India) towards their built environment.

Keywords : physical environment, poverty, underprivileged children, urban Indian slums

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