



## Women and Children in Uncertain Times

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### Abstract

Uncertain situations do exist within the lives of the individuals, irrespective of the factors such as their caste, creed, race, gender, religion, ethnicity and socio-economic background. When an individual belongs to a wealthy household in urban areas, then living conditions and finances may not be problems for them, but they may face uncertain situations regarding their work, education, employment, relationships, and so forth. On the other hand, individuals who are residing in destitute conditions, belong to deprived and disadvantaged groups and socio-economically backward sections of the society, they experience numerous uncertain situations. The major kinds of uncertainties are relating to housing, environmental conditions, diet and nutrition, health, unemployment, illiteracy, relationships and communication terms with the other people, prevalence of crime and violence and poverty and backwardness. Uncertain times and conditions largely affects the growth and development of the children and the mind-sets of the individuals. When women go through uncertain situations, they feel various kinds of mental problems such as depression, stress, anger, frustration and lose interest in all the activities that they used to take pleasure in at some point of time. This research paper focuses upon the situations that women and children go through that may impose various kinds of uncertainties. The main areas that have been taken into account are, urbanization and urban poverty, significant uncertain situations, uncertain situations experienced by women, uncertain situations experienced by children, and significance of diet and nutrition. The intake of inadequate diet and nutrition puts an individual in an uncertain situation as he is unable to render appropriate performance in all kinds of activities and functions.

**Keywords:** Uncertainty; Urbanization; Poverty; Housing; Women; Children; Nutrition

### Introduction

Future of a person is always uncertain, one cannot say what is going to happen tomorrow or next moment. This research paper focuses upon the status of women and children during uncertain times. Women and children within the country are experiencing number of problems and difficulties, which are proving to be barriers within the course of their progression and well-being. In the present world, it is difficult to find a day, when cases are not heard regarding violence against women and children. There have been prevalence of many vulnerabilities against women and children. The main vulnerabilities against children are child marriage, trafficking, missing children, child labour, children affected by civil unrest, sexual abuse, drop-outs, malnutrition, foeticide, and HIV-

affected children. On the other hand, vulnerabilities against women have been crime and violence, sexual harassment, rape, acid attacks, physical abuse, dowry, and exploitation. All the above stated cases against women and children put them in a susceptible position and they experience uncertain situations.

One of the factors that is of utmost significance is, it is vital for women to generate information in terms of the factors that are necessary in leading to well-being and up-gradation. It is vital that the above stated factors should be preventable against women and children. Children of the country are the future citizens and they should be encouraged to study and think about their future plans. Four priority areas are important, these are, survival, health and

nutrition, education and development, and protection and participation. There have been implementation of laws and policies to protect the children. In the case of child labour, India has the highest number of laws in the world, and ironically it has the highest number of child workers. The problem of child abuse has been prevalent, the reason being that 53% of the children are victims. It is important to make provision of a safe and secure environment for the effective living of children and women.

### Urbanization and urban poverty

Increase in urbanization takes place with an increase in urban poverty. Individuals residing in rural areas are living in a backward state, the system of education, medical and healthcare services and other facilities are not adequately developed in rural areas as compared to the urban areas. The people belonging to disadvantaged communities, socio-economically backward sections of the society possess this viewpoint that urban areas can provide them with a better living and they migrate to urban areas in search for jobs, employment opportunities as well as to pursue their higher education. When individuals migrate to urban areas, living is not easy for them and they face certain hardships and problems. When individuals reside in slum areas, then clean drinking water, sanitation, provision of civic amenities become a source of problems for them. They reside in the conditions of poverty and backwardness. These conditions impose uncertain situations upon the people residing within the slums in urban areas. In the present world, more people are living in urban areas than in rural areas. The urban population has been increased from 30% during the 1950 to 54% in 2014 [1].

Poverty in the present world is increasing at a fast pace in urban areas as compared to the rural areas. Urban poverty is serious and mostly cloaked within the urban average data. The increase in the number of individuals residing within the slum situations is an image of the growth in the urban poverty. As per the current global estimates (UNFPA), one billion people live within the urban slums, which are normally overcrowded, polluted, hazardous, and lack basic services such as clean water and sanitation. According to the latest Global Report on Human Settlements, 43% of the urban population within the evolving regions lives in the slums. In the least developed countries, this percentage rises to about 78%. The poor living conditions in these slums are a main hindrance for the children living in these susceptible environmental conditions [1].

Within the conditions of urban poverty, all the individuals, men, women as well as the children go through uncertain situations. It

becomes difficult for an individual to live in a kind of place which is overcrowded. Pollution is another major problem, whether it is air, water or noise, when an area is polluted, then it imposes detrimental consequences upon the existence of the individuals. Hazardous and precarious living conditions, shortage of civic amenities such as electricity and clean drinking water puts the living of the individuals in uncertain situations.

### Significant uncertain situations

Housing and living are important aspects within the lives of the individuals and large amount of uncertain situations have been imposed due to living and these have been stated as follows: (Forgotten Voices, 2015).

- **Pollution:** Pollution has become one of the most severe problems in urban areas, there have been three kinds of pollution, air, water and noise. Air pollution is caused due to smoke, dust and other materials, water pollution is caused by throwing of waste materials into water and noise pollution is due to loud noise. In rural and tribal communities, the individuals are dependent to a major extent upon the water bodies. Contaminated water can cause number of health problems and illnesses, therefore, it is necessary to curb water pollution. Air pollution also needs to be alleviated. For this purpose, the factories and industries need to implement the procedures, which may cause reduction in the omission of gaseous fumes causing air pollution. Therefore, in order to promote good health, it is necessary to alleviate various forms of pollution.
- **Illiteracy:** Illiteracy is one of the problems that is prevalent amongst the socio-economically backward sections of the society, deprived communities, disadvantaged and underprivileged groups. As a result of illiteracy, the individuals become unaware, ignorant and unmindful of all the tasks, functions and other activities that are necessary to enrich one's lives. When a person is unaware then certainly he may become the victim of all kinds of detrimental actions. It is of utmost significance to make provision of solutions to the problems of illiteracy. The individuals belonging to rural communities need to recognise the significance of education and how it would contribute in enriching one's lives. One of the effective measures is, there should be establishment of schools and training centres in rural communities. Furthermore, there should

be implementation of appropriate teaching-learning methods, teaching-learning materials and teachers need to be well-qualified and competent. Therefore, it can be stated that these measures will help in the eradication of illiteracy and spread the significance of education.

- **Unemployment:** Unemployment is a problem that largely affects the mind-set and existence of an individual. Unemployment is regarded as a major hindrance within the course of achievement of desired goals and objectives. Even when the individuals are not educated, still they aspire to look for employment opportunities to earn their living. Every individual desires some or the other kind of employment opportunity in order to earn his living; especially when a person is well educated and is unemployed, then he faces dire consequences. On the other hand, poverty stricken individuals who are not educated, even they desire to have employment because it is vital for them to make money to earn their living. It is necessary to formulate measures that would make provision of employment opportunities particularly for the deprived and economically weaker sections of the society, so they can sustain their living conditions satisfactorily.
- **Homelessness:** In urban India, due to lack of housing, homelessness has become a major problem for the individuals. When individuals do not have proper houses to live, they occupy the lands in and around the cities. When the individuals are homeless, it is apparent that they would not be able to participate in tasks and activities that would be necessary to enrich one's lives. They live in uncertain situations and are under constant threat of eviction, they are so backward and poverty stricken that they cannot afford to rent or invest in the housing projects of private developers due to high costs and lack of credit. Homelessness is a major impediment within the course of sustenance of one's living conditions. In order to provide solutions to this problem, there are establishment of night shelters for the individuals. This problem affects the health of the individuals, both physically and psychologically.
- **Health Care:** Health care is an important aspect for the individuals, belonging to all age groups, categories and backgrounds. When the individuals will possess good health, they will be able to effectually participate in tasks and activities that are necessary to enrich their living conditions. Whether an individual belongs to a middle class urban household or a backward, disadvantaged group, all the individuals want to

maintain good health and any kinds of health problems, illnesses and diseases put them in uncertain situations. Young children normally face health problems when their diet does not include proper nutrients which they require for effective growth and development. On the other hand, amongst the adult women, health problems, diseases and any kinds of illnesses put them in uncertain situations. In order to promote good health, the important aspects that need to be taken into consideration are, diet and nutrition, participation in physical activities, maintenance of pleasant environmental conditions within home, establishing amiable terms and relationships with family as well as community members, establishing positive thinking and learning to cope with the psychological problems of depression, stress, anger and trauma. When women would generate information in terms of these aspects, they would promote good health and well-being of their families and communities.

- **Poverty and Backwardness:** In not only rural communities, but in urban communities as well, the problems of poverty and backwardness are prevalent. These problems make the individuals unaware and due to unawareness and lack of information, they are unable to progress. Due to these problems, they are unable to sustain their living conditions and struggle to make ends meet. The individuals, belonging to deprived, marginalized and socio-economically backward sections of the society are the ones, who are residing in the conditions of poverty and backwardness. They have the main objective of looking for employment opportunities, so they are able to alleviate these conditions and sustain better livelihoods for their families. Therefore, it can be stated that poverty and backwardness need to be eliminated, so economically backward sections of the society and poverty stricken individuals can be at par with the mainstream society. When they will be able to integrate with the mainstream society, they will be able to promote better livelihoods opportunities.

#### Uncertain situations experienced by women

The problems and difficulties due to uncertain situations that have been experienced by women have been stated as follows:

- **Physical Abuse:** This is the problem that women usually suffer from within the households at the hands of their husbands and in some cases even their fathers or brothers. It means causing bodily hurt to a person by pushing

beating, thrashing, punching or using certain tools in order to cause physical injury to the person. This problem is normally prevalent amongst the disadvantaged communities. The husbands in these households are uneducated and unaware, hence, they begin to beat and physically abuse their wives even on trivial issues. Research has indicated that in homes as well as in schools, children are also being subject to physical abuse. Physical abuse to a major extent not only affects the health of the individuals physically, but also psychologically. Therefore, it is necessary to put into practice measures and ways to eradicate physical abuse.

- **Verbal Abuse:** This is the form of abuse, which is done in a spoken manner, when a person makes use of obscene language and harsh words in order to insult or humiliate a person, then it is termed as verbal abuse. This form of abuse causes immense mental pain to an individual and the psychological approach gets effected. Verbal abuse takes place out of the feelings of anger and frustration. This form of abuse takes place in all kinds of households, but majority of the cases belong to the deprived communities and socio-economically backward sections of the society.
- **Dowry Harassment:** In the present existence, there have been formulation of laws and policies regarding dowry, but in the past, women have undergone extreme uncertainty and misery due to dowry harassment. When the family of the girls were unable to give sufficient dowry to the family of the boys, then women were abused and harassed. In order to lead to marital stability, the role of women's social and economic independence has been a crucial area and has aroused interest within the mind-sets of the social researchers. This interest has been in response to an increase in the female labour force participation and levels of divorce and separation [2].
- **Acid Attacks:** There have been numerous cases, when women have been victims of acid attacks. This means throwing of acid on a woman with the purpose to mutilate, disfigure or kill. This is considered to be one of the most heinous crimes against women, which is mostly done by obsessed people. The major reason of occurrence of acid attacks have been when young girls are offered a marriage proposal and they refused or if they raise their voice against any of the misdemeanours of the people, then they become acid attack victims. This kind of crime normally brings life of a person to a halt when she is not in a position to do anything and undergoes extreme depression and distress.

- **Crime and Violence:** Poverty stricken households living in rural areas in some cases send their teenage girls or older girls to urban areas to work as domestic helpers in the households. There have been cases, when these girls are abused and harassed to a great extent. They are made to work for long hours, given very less to eat, are deprived of sleep and any kind of leisure activities such as watching television or listening to music. In such cases, women and girls are even severely beaten and all the time they are verbally abused. When they are hired, their parents are assured of good pay, but they are not sent a single rupee for months. These girls and young women become victims of crime and violence which puts them in uncertain situations.
- **Work Participation:** Women are normally at the lower position within the labour market as far as participation in work activities and pay is concerned. They basically occupy low status and low paying jobs, even if they have the similar skills and work ethics as men. The unemployment rate amongst the women is higher as compared to men even in the informal sector. In the organized sector, the number of women is significantly less, even if they possess the skills and the qualifications. Therefore, when the women are not considered at par with men, when they are looked down upon, then they will certainly encounter barriers within the course of empowerment [3].

#### Uncertain situations experienced by children

The uncertain situations that are experienced by children have been stated as follows:

- **Child Labour:** When any kind of work, toil, effort or employment is put by the children who are below 14 years of age, then it is termed as child labour. In urban areas, slum dwellers render a significant contribution to the development of the economy. It is considered to be the major source of affordable labour supply for production, both in the formal as well as the informal sectors of the economy. The development and growth of the economy within the country is appreciated, when there is production, innovation, development of technology, then there are individuals, including children who have put in manual labour and hard work. Labour has been supplied by children even in hazardous circumstances [1].

- **School Drop-Outs:** Education is regarded to be of utmost significance. Every individual realises the significance of education, whether they belong to wealthy families or poverty stricken, and disadvantaged groups. There have been existence of situations that compel children to give up their education and drop-out of school. There have been various kinds of cases and situations due to which children drop-out of school, such as financial problems, transportation problems, lack of interest in studies, unable to perform well in class tests and assignments, stern attitude on the part of the teachers and ineffective communication with the fellow students and other people in school.
- **Female Foeticide:** Individuals have formed this viewpoint within their mind-sets that males can enhance the status of the family and bring prestige. This viewpoint is mainly amongst the people who reside in rural areas or those who belong to disadvantaged and socio-economically backward sections of the society. They feel that females are a source of burden and always desire for the male child; they believe in making provision of education to the male children so that they are able to earn a source of income for their families. On the other hand, they believe in aborting the female foetus because they believe that females are just the liabilities for the families.
- **Malnutrition:** This has become a severe problem amongst the children. The problem of under-nutrition in children is of a stern amount in urban India. In India, 32.7% of the children in urban areas, under five years of age are underweight and 39.6% are stunted. The problem of malnutrition within the country is far reaching since the opposing influence in the first 24 months of one's life itself is largely irreversible. The impact of malnutrition upon the children has imposed dire consequences, the reason being that when a person receives adequate nutrition, he gains energy and is able to appropriately perform all the tasks and functions. As a result of malnutrition, the development, growth, abilities, performance and the mind-sets of the individuals gets affected in a negative manner.
- **Crimes and Violence:** There has been prevalence of crimes and violence against children. The millions of cities are the major contributors to crime and violence against children. The major crimes and violent acts include child trafficking, kidnapping, rape and infanticide. Girls who are young, below ten years of age are sexually harassed and raped, they are per-

sueded by men who try to catch hold of them by offering them sweets and then they are taken to secluded areas and raped. Infanticide means killing of the new born girl child, this is the most severe crime, when the girls are denied their basic right that is the right to live. It is believed amongst the backward and poverty stricken communities that girls are meant to get trained only regarding the household chores and education is not meant for them.

- **Child Marriage:** In rural communities, there has been a system of child marriage. People long for a male child and believe that males can bring wealth and prestige to the family, whereas, females are only considered to be a burden. They believe in early marriage of their girls. When a girl is married off early, she is not permitted to attend educational institutions, she is not mobile and remains confined within the house, performs the household chores, then all these factors prove to be hindrances within the course of women empowerment.

#### Significance of diet and nutrition

Food and nutrition are considered to be the essential requirements for all individuals and when an individual goes through uncertain times, he faces scarcity of food and nutrition. The essential nutrients such as proteins, minerals, vitamins, carbohydrates are lacking in their diet as a result of which they undergo health problems. Women and children are malnourished and undernourished when they do not intake proper nutrients. The main question that arises is why the children are stunted in their growth. When an individual goes through uncertain times, then he is unable to meet all the basic needs and requirements, hence, due to lack of proper diet and nutrition, he undergoes various kinds of health problems. When a person does not get proper diet and nutrition, he suffers from various kinds of problems which have been stated as follows:

1. The growth and development of the person gets affected, he is unable to concentrate upon his studies and his performance in school gets affected in a negative manner as a result of which he either drops out of school or achieves lower educational qualifications.
2. When women who are expecting do not intake proper diet and nutrition, then it affects the health of the unborn child. Expecting mothers are supposed to take proper nutrition because they have to feed themselves as well as their unborn child.

3. Lack of proper diet and nutrition leads to prevalence of the diseases as well as other health problems within an individual. There are foods which are a rich source of calcium, potassium, proteins, vitamins, fats, minerals, iron and so forth which are required for proper growth. When a person starts aging, then it is vital that he should take care of his diet, for instance, women who are above the age of 30 years are required to take proper calcium in their diet.
  4. Maternal education and access to safe drinking water [4] is also a critical part of diet and nutrition. In some areas, people do not get safe drinking water, hence, their health gets affected, because diseases are caused due to contaminated water, hence, it is vital for a person to maintain his health and for this purpose, access to maternal education and safe drinking water is important.
- **Negotiate Support:** When there has been formulation of strategies and approaches regarding the prevention of crimes; then an individual or group of individuals need to negotiate the support of the agencies and other organizations that have an influence over the factors that are causing crime. For example, if consumption of alcohol has proved to be disruptive within the community, then support would be negotiated with local licensees and transport providers.
  - **Develop an Action Plan:** An action plan should concisely summarize the actions and the activities that are selected to lead to a reduction in the specific target crime. The main areas in the case of formulation of action plan should include, the target crime, formulation of objectives, what will be the goals of the strategies, the rationale for the selected actions, the contribution of the agencies and organizations and clear performance measures and setting up of the timeframe.
  - **Implement and Monitor the Crime Prevention Strategy:** In this case, one should enable the actions and the projects that are to be appropriately targeted. Enable the selection of the appropriate participants and locations for carrying out the plan, and assist with the measurement of the project outcomes. The actions and activities that are required to be initiated is an imperative concern in the case of implementation and monitoring of the crime prevention strategy. Evaluation of the crime prevention strategy is considered vital, the reason being that evaluation system should primarily focus upon the consequences and the results.

### Development of crime prevention strategies

There are five main stages in the development of crime prevention strategies: [5].

- **Develop a Crime Profile:** The formulation of a crime profile enables a person to obtain clear ideas on the types of crimes that are prevalent within the areas. These profiles also assists in the determination of the types of crime that would be the focus of the strategy. The crime profile should categorize the level and types of the crime; where it takes place and the causes that effect the occurrence of the crime within a local setting. Understanding of the why factors, behind the occurrence of the crime, who are the individuals that are involved into it, and who are the victims of it will contribute in the development of the strategies that can precisely lead to a reduction in crime.
- **Research Crime Prevention Approaches:** Once an individual or a group of individuals are able to detect the occurrence of various types of criminal and violent acts within the community. The second step is the formulation of approaches that would look into the factors that lead to the prevention of crime. Crimes are committed usually when an individual has to attain something, hence, the most vital approach is hardening of the targets. When the targets become difficult to achieve, then the individuals have to move back from getting engaged in any types of criminal acts.

### Conclusion

Uncertain conditions and situations are prevalent within the lives of the individuals. These situations sometimes can be avoided and preventable, on the other hand, some situations cannot be avoided and individuals are required to deal with them in an appropriate manner. There are four important abilities that an individual should possess, these are the abilities to solve problems and make decisions, ability to regulate emotions, ability to collaborate with others and the ability to facilitate change and to bring about transformations [6]. The possession of these abilities, certainly assists an individual in dealing with uncertain situations. The main kinds of uncertainties that an individual experiences are relating to the conditions of poverty and backwardness. Poverty, destitution and backwardness enables an individual to experience dire and appalling consequences.

The various kinds of significant uncertain situations that are experienced by the individuals are the problems relating to pollution, illiteracy, unemployment, homelessness and health and nutrition. The provision of adequate diet and nutrition is important for the individuals, because when the person does not intake proper food, then his health gets affected and also he undergoes various kinds of problems in the performance of all kinds of tasks and duties. The different kinds of uncertain situations that are experienced by women are physical abuse, verbal abuse, dowry harassment, acid attacks and crime and violence. These are the severe problems that put individuals in uncertain and precarious situations. On the other hand, different kinds of uncertain situations that have been experienced by children are, child labour, school drop-out, female foeticide, malnutrition and crime and violence.

The infliction of these kinds of crime and violent acts upon women and children certainly put them in uncertain situations. There have been formulation of rules, policies and laws that have put a restraint upon these crimes and prevalence of violent acts. There has been substantial progress made in the reduction of child deaths and in the present existence, there has been initiation of policies and rules that the practices of female foeticide and infanticide should be abolished and girls should be given the right to live [7].

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