

Life satisfaction of slum residents

CR's newest published paper "Life Satisfaction among the Poorest of the Poor: A Study in Urban Slum Communities in India" written by Esther Sulkers and Jasmijn Loos examined the life satisfaction and its predictors in the context of extreme poverty in residents of Kolkata's slum areas. This study used data from the Multidimensional Poverty study. The outcomes suggests that the slum residents are more satisfied with their lives than one would expect based on their living conditions. This contradicts the common-sense belief that poor people are unhappy by definition: a satisfied life does not depend only on objective poverty. People living in poverty may give greater values to different aspects of their life, such as meaningful interactions and relationships. Adaptation and resilience play an important role in buffering against the difficult circumstances of living in a slum.

Some key findings

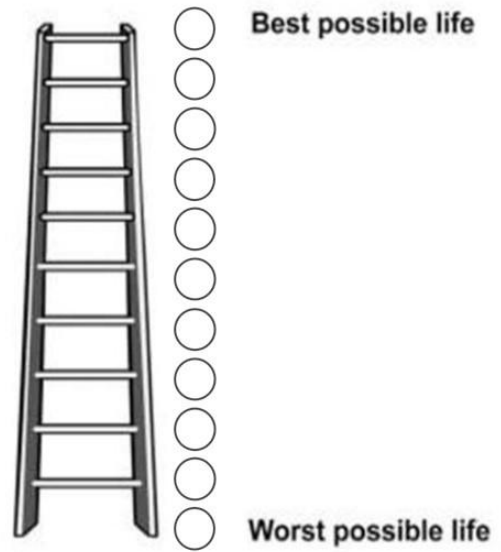
The level of global life satisfaction measured in the slum residents in Kolkata was not significantly different than that from non-slum residents in Delhi. This tells us that slum residents are not necessarily less satisfied with their life than the general population in India, regardless of the deprived circumstances they live in. Looking at the different domains in life it was found that the slum residents are least satisfied with about their financial situation and most satisfied about their social relationships.

What predicts a satisfied life? Higher levels of life satisfaction were related to age, income and deprivation. Specifically, younger residents and those with higher incomes and lower scores on the multidimensional poverty index (MPI) reported higher levels of global life satisfaction. The full model explained only 15.4% of the variance of life satisfaction which tells us that there is so much more than one's objective situation that predicts a happy and satisfied life.

The study is published in Psychological Studies. For the PDF see:
<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12646-022-00657-8>

Assume that this ladder is a way of picturing your life. The top of the ladder represents the best possible life for you. The bottom rung of the ladder represents the worst possible life for you.

Indicate where on the ladder you feel you personally stand right now by marking the circle.





Boys program

In 2021 Calcutta Rescue implemented a program in the school curriculum tackling gender equality in slum settlements. Gender equality is an important theme in India. Due to globalization, societies are changing rapidly. Although women do reach higher positions in India, these are usually only accessible for the highest casts. There are limited opportunities for people from poorer backgrounds, lower casts and/or Muslim background. As a result, of gender inequality, girls tend to drop out of school early because of marriage and pregnancy. Boys tend to drop out of school early because work is waiting to contribute to the family income. Although the Indian society in terms of gender equality seems to be changing for the better, in many slum settlements crime and gender-based violence are still common.

In most programs for gender equality emphasis is put on the empowerment of women and girls. Evidence indicates however, that gender equality cannot be achieved without the involvement of men and boys. We know that while the women's movement and the young women's movement must continue to lead the movement for gender equality, we additionally need to engage and educate boys and young men in order to achieve gender equality. Effective strategies for *gender equality* should thus be directed towards *both sexes*.

Calcutta Rescue (CR) has already developed a program in which the education of girls is carefully supported and monitored. With the support from the Cloverleaf Foundation, the Swiss, German and Dutch support groups Calcutta it now expands this initiative with the start of a new program focusing on gender-related behaviors and attitudes of boys. Hereby, an integrated, holistic approach is being adopted in order to have a transformative impact on the lives of adolescent boys. This plan is to scale up the program right from its inception in order to prevent it from becoming an isolated oasis. This program will be fitted within the existing policy framework.

Aims of the Boys Program (targeting boys 10 years and older), which will be defined in five different categories: educational, psychological, social, economic and civic are:

- Minimize gender gaps in education (e.g.; Improve attendance and academic results);
- Improve the subjective well-being of boys and girls;
- Bring about positive changes in gender attitudes and social norms which helps to keep students in education/vocational training and prevent drop out and child marriage
- Prepare better and responsible sons, brothers, husbands in the slum communities

Baseline study November 2021

The baseline study of the program, performed in November 2021 provides a starting point for the program in the next three years. Several measures were be taken into account in order to assess current attitudes and behavior towards gender equality.

Gender attitudes

Gender attitudes were measured with the adapted version of the Gender Equitable Men (GEM) scale. The GEM scale is a well-known valid and reliable instrument that measures attitudes toward "gender-equitable" norms. It consists of 21-items, which can be administered to boys and girls and provide information about the prevailing norms in a community as well as the effectiveness of any program that hopes to influence them.

Attitudes towards violence against women (in boys only)

This was measured with 8 items addressing attitudes towards violence in women.

Experience with sexual harassment (in girls only)

Experience with sexual harassment was measured with 4 items addressing issues related to sexual harassment in schools.

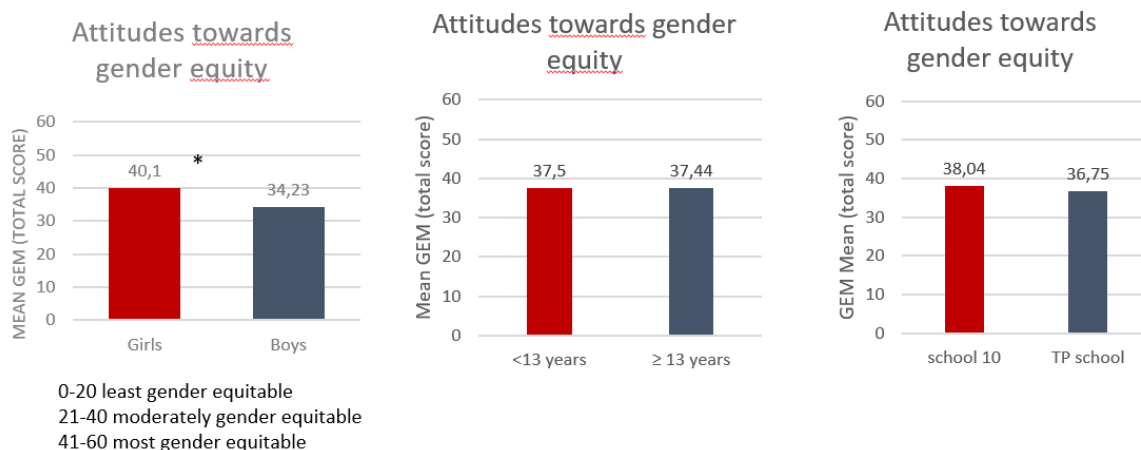
Subjective well-being

Subjective well-being (negative and positive) was measured with 2 questions addressing self-esteem (self-esteem index) and life-satisfaction (Cantril's ladder)

School outcomes

Data on school attendance, school dropout and academic performance will be obtained annually from the school records.

Some key findings



Gender attitudes

Boys scored significantly lower than girls on the GEM scale, indicating that they responded less positively towards gender-equitable norms. No significant differences between the two age groups and the different schools appeared.

Attitudes towards violence against women

The majority of the boys did not disapprove violence against girls in a number of situations (see table below). There was a significant (but small) relationship between attitudes towards gender equality and tolerance towards violence against girls. This means that boys who are more gender equitable are less tolerant of violence towards girls.

It is acceptable to beat a girl when:	% yes
She talks to a boy	31.7%
She goes out to play	29.1%
She stays out late	25.8%
She doesn't help in the household chores	36.1%
She doesn't complete her homework	39.2%
She doesn't obey elders	47.9%
She fights with others in class	35.0%
She fights with brothers and sisters	31.1%
She replies back when harassed by boys	40.7%

Experience with sexual harassment

The results regarding experience with sexual harassment show that sexual harassment is present in schools but that the frequency of sexual harassment depends on the type of harassment.

In the past week	% yes
Have you been inappropriately approached by a boy at school?	7.6%
Passed a boy dirty comments at you?	12.1%
Made a boy at school dirty gestures in your presence?	13.3%
Have you been inappropriately touched or groped by a boy at school?	3.8%

Subjective well-being

On average boys and girls were quite satisfied with themselves. Boys did indicate to be less satisfied with their life than girls.

	Boys Mean (SD)	Girls Mean (SD)	P value
Satisfaction with oneself (on a scale ranging from 1-5)	3.70 (1.33)	3.86 (1.28)	.296
Satisfaction with life (on a scale ranging from 0-10)	6.61 (2.72)	7.59 (2.36)	.002

