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Resilience among the Children of Migrant Construction Workers: A Case of Mumbai

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Abstract

The livelihood crisis in rain dependent and drought prone regions of rural India largely drives migration in search of livelihood. The construction industry absorbs the highest numbers of internal migrants in urban India with estimated 40 million building and other construction workers. Most of them live on the construction sites with their children in conditions that lack basic living necessities. Exposure to adversities early in life can have far reaching devastating impact on the lives of these children. Mumbai Mobile Creches, a non-profit consistently working with the children of migrant construction workers in Mumbai, conducted a qualitative study with its alumni to understand educational resilience. Five alumni who demonstrated positive adaptation by successfully completing at least undergraduate studies to progress on a path that lead them to a stable, successful, and fulfilling adulthood were selected purposively. In-depth interviews explored critical life events of the alumni and how they overcame adversities. Findings revealed educational vulnerability of the migrant children and facets of their successful transition to adulthood. Self-efficacy, self-regulation, social competence, and a sense of purpose in life helped participants achieve outstanding academic successes despite difficult circumstances. Above all, being first generation learners participants emphasized importance of mentoring for migrant children.

Key words: Migrants, children, education, resilience

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