

## **Task-Oriented Strategies Of Slum Women In Everyday Lives; As A Reflection Of Psychological Empowerment - An Ethnographic Study**

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### **Introduction**

One can understand Psychological empowerment as any phenomenon over a lifespan which enables an individual to adapt to any existing environmental stressor, and respond to it, considering the overall long term reimbursement of his/her current decision making". This indicates that a futuristic vision, and its affirmative consequences, before considering various alternatives which are available to one at present, during the process of decision making plays a vital role. This view further facilitates our understanding in the context of psychological empowerment and highlights the position of task oriented strategies as proposed by Endler and Parker and their theory on coping strategies, which involve obtaining information about stressful situation and about alternative courses of action and their probable outcome; it also involves deciding priorities and acting so, as to deal directly with the stressful situation.

Task-oriented strategies functional by the slum women in Delhi can be used as a means to examine the process of psychological furtherance and psychological empowerment. It is also interesting, to note, here, that coping strategies functional among the slum women, exhibited in terms of their aspects of social self and real self, have been observed to be considerate of a futuristic vision, where when faced with challenges in their daily lives, their coping strategies, facilitate decision making based on the future recompense of existing choices. These choices are the paramount which enables one towards cognitions aimed at the selection of the best alternatives and plans of action in everyday lives.

Based on this view, this study aims to propose that task-oriented strategies functional in everyday lives of slum women are a vital tool in context of examining psychological empowerment, as these coping strategies exhibit various aspects of social, personal and ideal self of these slum women, whose cognitive capacities manifest in various forms of psychological furtherance, i.e., a futuristic vision, consideration of a long term perspective, after the identification of existing and future possibilities, which resonates with their overt and covert behaviors. Finally, considering the scientific orientation of psychology, as a discipline, this study aims to validate its findings based on intensive observations and study of observable behavior of the participants in a naturalistic setting to maintain its ecological validity.

**Keywords-** slum, psychological, empowerment, furtherance, cognition, task-oriented strategies

### **Objectives of the study**

- To fill in literature gap in context of the recognition of psychological empowerment for slum women based on the explanations of task-oriented strategies functional in their everyday lives and coping.
- To facilitate the understanding of task-oriented strategies as a tool to examine psychological empowerment.

• **Methodology and data collection and analysis of ethnographic records**

The design of the study is qualitative using naturalistic and participant observation and ethnographic based on inductive reasoning. Secondary data was collected based on literature review in the context of slum women and their daily lives and primary data was collected from intensive field observations from two locations in Delhi, i.e., Slum area near Okhla modh and Begumpur. Data was analyzed based on the findings of field observations and content analysis of secondary data made in order to reflect the findings of this study. Results of 10 transcribed interviews have been categorized into three categories as suggested by Endler and Parker. Tally marking of all responses observed from ethnographic interviews have significantly contributed in the results of this study.

**Sampling**

Purposive sampling

The criteria for choosing participants will be on the basis of the following considerations

- She is the primary caregiver for her family
- She is a resident of Delhi or Delhi NCR slum area
- She is not acquainted with formal or informal education
- She is of age group 20-30 years

**Discussion of Results**

***I. Task-oriented strategy emerged as a prominent aspect of everyday life coping for slum women in Delhi***

Ethnographic field notes were classified into coping strategies as suggested by Endler and Parker Task-oriented strategies were observed to be the most prominent aspect of everyday life coping of slum women in Delhi, in their everyday lives. Responses and behavioral observations, which involved obtaining information about stressful situations and about alternative courses of action and their probable outcome; it also involved deciding priorities and acting so, as to deal directly with the stressful situation, were categorized in Task-oriented strategies.

Responses involving reporting of emotions to maintain hope and to control one-self for positive self regulation or venting of feelings of, anger.

**Result table-1 Sample Responses categorized as Task-oriented Strategy**

Sample Responses to Ethnographic interview categorized in task oriented strategy	
1.	“If one keeps thinking about problems, one simply gets stuck with problems. I rather understand the problem and solve it,
2.	I see myself married, having children, taking care of my family and focusing on good education for my children. “Ab jo hamre sath hua woh toh hone nai denge na apne bacho ke sath”. (what happened with us we won’t let that happen with our children)
3.	All the children go to school in our home. They all study in the government school in lal kuan.
4.	“jab hamare bacho ko school mein dakhila nahi mila.. hum khud gay, patta lagaya ki kyu nahi milra ha...bohota din ase chalta raha, phir patta challa ki hamare paas ko jaan pechechan ka kazak nahi h.. islia hamare bacho ko dakhila nahi milra h... Phir hamne inki tution yahi lagavadi. (Due to lack of identity cards and essential documents at the time of school admissions, our children have been denied from school admissions, but then we hired a tuition teacher, who comes and takes classes of our children in the basti itself.
5.	“ Hamara ghar nahi bansakta jab tak yeh nahi banjatta, hum to taiyaar bhethe hain, pasey bhi ikhatte karlie h hmne.My house cannot be made unless the drainage is made, we are very much prepared with our finances for our house to be made ”.

**Result table- 2 Sample Responses categorized as Avoidance-oriented Strategy****Responses to Ethnographic interview categorized as Avoidance –oriented Strategy**

- |    |   |
|----|---|
| 1. | “shuru se adat hain apko ase rehene ki”,- (we are used to living like this now) |
| 2. | “Jo hoga dekha jayga”- (we will see to whatever happens)                        |

**Result table-3 Sample Responses categorized as Emotion oriented Strategy****Responses to Ethnographic interview categorized as Avoidance –oriented Strategy**

- |   |
|---|
| 1.shuru se adat hain apko ase rehene ki”- we are used to living like this now |
|---|

According to the results Task-oriented strategy was observed to be most prominent as a functional coping strategy in everyday lives to face everyday life challenges by slum women. With the view suggesting that psychology is a study of observable behavior based on assumptions of behaviorism, a coping strategy which is functional in terms overt responses, aiming at positive coping in everyday live, with a consideration of all possibilities and alternatives and long term reimbursement of existing life choices, is harmonizing with the concept of psychological empowerment.

**II. Task-oriented strategies as a tool to examine psychological empowerment.**

According to Kabear's (2001) definition, empowerment is “the expansion of people's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them”.

This indicates that at a cognitive level, it is the formation of belief that they can succeed in change efforts, which also directs us towards the realization that, slum women in Delhi are manifesting psychological empowerment, which is reflected in their everyday life experiences, in terms of their decision making, difficult working situations, and living situations. The results of this study point out to significant overt responses as a behavioral manifestation of their task-oriented responses, in order to deal with their day-day life stressors.

Considering the view, that psychological empowerment can be examined by studying coping strategies, which at a cognitive and a behavioral level exhibit decision making keeping into consideration, one's best interest in terms of survival , positive adaptation, and adjustment in the context of day-day life stressors.

Coping strategies, therefore correspond to the understanding that, any life choice, decision making, which is redolent of any phenomenon over a lifespan which enables an individual to adapt to any existing environmental stressor, and respond to it, considering the overall long term reimbursement of his/her current decision making is reflective of the phenomenon of psychological empowerment, in context of cognitive and behavioral manifestations as a reaction made to everyday life challenges.

Coping strategies however, not only serve as a tool to study the process of psychological empowerment in everyday lives of slum women but also serve as an objective study of behavioral responses which are indicative of the process of psychological empowerment at both, cognitive and behavioral level.

Based on the findings of the study it can be proposed that psychology as a scientific study of human behavior must study cognitive and behavioral responses as a symbolic interaction of cognitive manifestations, and corresponding responses made towards environmental needs. With this view, psychological empowerment as a process can be examined by studying coping strategies, which are in due course the manifestations of schemas, which carry information, enabling an individual to adapt ,

adjust, think, choose, decide, and act to any existing environmental stressor considering the overall long term reimbursement of his/her current decision making. According to this proposition, Task-oriented strategies applied by slum women in Delhi serve as a vital tool to view the reflection of psychological empowerment.

### ***III) Reflecting literature gap and path of future research work***

Psycho-social research has investigated psychopathology for years and has focused on the prevailing abnormality statistics for slum women. But, the recognition and receptivity towards phenomenon which are symbolic of effective and positive cognition, which enable them to adapt and efficiently function in environment, and make appropriate decisions and choices to deal with everyday life stressors, has not been given much attention. This is resulting in literature gap, in terms of conceptualizing cognitions which are aiding adaptive functioning for slum women, despite the absence, of sufficient resources to facilitate survival and effective coping in their everyday lives.

Unfortunately, contemporary research work in this area has brought into light the prevailing abnormality and deviation statistics, focusing very little on cognitions and behavioral responses, which reflect, the primary care givers/ women in slums, illustrating a true example of psychological empowerment, but it is appealing to see, that phenomenon of deviation and maladjustment runs analogous with the appearance of positive psychological orientation, potency and effectiveness of higher cognitive process, illustrating a trend of forward movement, ultimately reflecting moments of augmentation and psychological empowerment among the primary care givers in slums.

By studying, behavior or responses (to stimuli) which can be measured and studied objectively, in the view of task-oriented strategies, in a naturalistic setting and observation in everyday life, one can examine responses, which are symbolic of adaptive functioning, and are manifesting in the form of coping strategies applied by slum women in Delhi, in their everyday life situations to environmental stimulation, which may facilitate the conceptualization of psychological empowerment.

Moreover, Considering the introduction of the national mental health policy in 2014, this research aims at analyzing the forthcoming direction of research work in this area and laying the fundamentals of conceptualization of psychological empowerment, by reflecting primary data in this context, which have brought into light the reflections of psychological effectiveness in context of daily lives of slum women and the manifestation of psychological empowerment by, studying the task-oriented strategies adopted by them.

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