

Urbanization and Youths' Problems with Special Reference to Asia : Causes, Consequences and Remedies

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ABSTRACT The process of urbanization, causing a transformation of social structure and social functions, has a great impact on culture, specially of that of the youths. Sociologists have different perspectives on the consequences of urbanization; some view it as the climax of civilization which is the positive facet, while others express their negative views contending that the problems of city life outweigh the benefits. Under such conditions crimes, consumptive environments, stress, deviant behaviour, etc. enhance. Asia with her various cultures, is facing numerous social problems, more due to her fast process of urbanization. In this pace, the young generation is very vulnerable. The remedies of such conditions need investments enough to improve the culture of the youths, so far as their education, reproductive behaviour, employment, marriage, equality, etc. are concerned. Such vital infra-structures will play as keys to the social cohesion, economic progress, healthy social behaviour and secure prospects for the youths. Rapid social change in many part of the world, specially in Asia, has brought about important changes in values, family structure and youths behaviour in the form of new life styles.

INTRODUCTION

Our world is experiencing far reaching changes. The new and increasing phenomenon of urbanization has almost crippled the policies and programmes designed to respond the basic needs of the poor, new migrants and the youths in the developing world.

Urbanization, the process by which small towns grow into cities, is a transformation of social structure and social function as well. Urbanization also affects culture; almost all the local cultural traditions are affected through the process of urbanization. In sociological terms, urbanization is not entirely a "natural process"; it is a result of social action and power. People decide whether to move to big cities or stay in small towns, but their decisions are shaped by the power of those in charge of wealth and capital.

Urbanization involves migration from sparsely populated regions to densely populated

ones. The scope of this migration has been enormous in the twentieth century. In the year 1900 about 86.6 per cent lived in cities. Today more than 45 per cent of the world's population are city dwellers (Palen, 1987).

Sociologists have different perspectives on the consequences of urbanization; that is, some emphasize on the positive facet. They view cities as climax of a human civilization where people of different backgrounds can mingle and exchange ideas and outlooks; places that encourage innovations in business, science, technology and arts. Other sociologists emphasize on the negative side of urbanization. They contend that the problems of city life outweigh the benefits. cities, they say are polluted, crime ridden and consumptive environments that promote stress and mental illness.

In the present research, our prime objective is to prove and analyze the negative side of urbanization, wherein youth behaviour is badly affected. We will discuss as to how urbanization has changed the ideas and attitudes of the young generation, how the life-style of the youths has changed? This change is reflected in the deviance and juvenile delinquency and continues in a vicious circle.

Developing Asia is emerging as the new locomotive for world economic growth as we are entering the 21st century, and it is projected to be the fastest growing region in the world for the rest of the present decade. On current projections, developing Asia will account for almost one half of the increase in global output by the year 2000.

Developing Asia is a region diverse in culture, growth performance, economic management record, and legal and regulatory systems. Asia, although well moving towards economic development, is facing/approaching various social

problems such as high growth of urbanization, deep change in family structure, vast change-over in social functions and unbridled migration. Over the past quarter century, per capita income in East Asia has almost quadrupled (an annual rate of 5%), and has been coupled with a sharp reduction in poverty. But, in spite of its good economic performance, sociologically speaking it has vastly faced deviance, decay of morality, crimes and juvenile delinquency, addiction, sex-related problems such as AIDS, STDs¹, etc. which have mostly affected the younger generations. Such a high rate of growth specially in cities has attracted the youths.

Political fabric too, is responsible for the social imbalance and youth problems. Generational changes are partly caused under certain political circumstances. In spite of the stages of economic development as occurred and observed in Asia, still there are (big powers) countries in the area like China, India and Pakistan, wherein lots of people are seen at different forms of poverty. It will take time for institutional infrastructure, i.e. public and private sectors to effectively

cover the modernization process of these countries.

URBAN POTENTIAL

In an already largely urban world, the growth of cities will be the single largest influence on development in the first half of the 21st century. Urban population is growing faster than world population as a whole. Within 10 years, that is to say by the year 2005, more than half of the world people will be living in cities, i.e. 3.3 milliard of the 6.6 milliard total. Urban future carries many risks for the physical environment and natural resources on the one hand and immaterial ills such as deviant behaviour, criminal behaviour, etc. on the other hand. But the efficiency of cities as they provide capital, labour and markets for entrepreneurs, innovators and the general people at all levels of economic activities, undermines the youth vices, deviance, shortcomings, etc. Cities already account for the sixty to eighty per cent of the gross national products of many developing countries.

Table 1 : Demographic and Urban Indicators, Selected Regions/Countries, 1996

Region/Country	Total population (millions) 1996	Projected population (millions) 2025	Ave. pop growth rate (%) 1995-2000	% Urban 1995	% Urban growth rate 1995-2000
World Total	5,804.1	8,294.3	1.5	45	2.5
More developed reg.	1,170.7	1,238.4	0.3	75	0.7
Less developed reg.	4,633.4	7,055.9	1.8	38	3.3
Least developed cont.	591.8	1,162.3	2.7	22	5.2
Africa	748.1	1,495.8	2.7	34	4.3
Asia	3,513.2	4,960.0	1.5	35	3.2
Europe	727.7	718.2	0.1	74	0.5
Latin America & Car	490.4	709.8	1.7	74	2.3
North America	295.7	369.6	0.9	76	1.2
Oceania	29.0	41.0	1.4	70	1.4
China	1,234.3	1,526.1	1.0	30	3.6
Former USSR	-	-	-	-	-
Korea "South"	45.4	54.4	0.9	81	2.1
Korea "North"	24.3	33.4	1.6	61	2.3
Malaysia	20.6	31.6	2.0	54	3.4
Philippines	69	104.5	2.0	54	3.7
Thailand	59.4	73.6	1.0	20	2.8
Vietnam	76.2	118.2	2.1	21	3.5
Iran	68.7	123.5	2.1	59	3.0
India	953.0	1,392.1	1.8	27	3.0
Pakistan	144.5	284.8	2.8	35	4.6
Bangladesh	123.1	196.1	2.2	18	5.2
Sri Lanka	18.6	25.0	1.2	22	2.8

Source : State Or World Population, UNFPA, 1996.

1. Sexually Transmitted Diseases

While cities spread up social transformation, and improve indicators of health, literacy and social mobility, that is moving the society towards equality and autonomy of women, such as closing the gender gap in education, access to reproductive health services including family planning, they also make the young generation very vulnerable. The youths in urban areas are very much prone to deviant behaviour and illegal activities.

Poverty has not risen in step with population growth; in many Asian countries the numbers of the poor have actually declined since the mid-1980s. But overall, the absolute number of the urban poor is still increasing. Many youths with wrong perception and under special conditions, find no way out, but to enter unfair activities. As estimated by UNFPA², as many as 600 million people in urban areas in developing regions cannot meet their basic needs for shelter, water and health from their own resources. Half the population in some of the world's poorest countries are living below poverty level. That is to say, poverty presents itself increasingly as an urban problem. Under such circumstances the children and younger generation among these people are more prone to violence, criminal behaviour, juvenile delinquency and vandalism.

Under such conditions many vulnerable youths need effective social investment in health, improving reproductive health and family planning of the older, controlling the spread of infectious diseases, education and promoting equality, all will play as infra-structures and keys to social cohesion, economic progress and healthy social behaviour, specially among the youths. In other words, investment in social and human development will be vital prospects for healthy future of the youths.

SOCIAL POLICY IN ASIA

Despite dramatic economic growth in South-east Asia during the 1980s, poverty and inequalities persist for many inhabitants of the region. Social progress has not kept pace with economic advancement, nor are the region's so-

cial development prospects as positive as its macro-economic potential, creating a gap—caus-

ing social problems specially among the youths. Some of the barriers to social development in the region may include :

- Lack of social development skills by policy makers.
- The centralization of the planning process itself.
- The inability of the policy planners to represent the needs of the poor and the vulnerable youths.
- The low priority given to social services in resource allocation processes.

Many of the region's countries are unable to harness reliable and accurate information for developing social strategies and evaluating their impact on the social system. Other obstacles are found in the persistence of unsupported assumptions that economic growth in itself leads to social well-being and prosperity for/of the entire population groups. Therefore, in order to resolve the obstacles, policy makers emphasize and agree on the value of a regional network for research and information exchange to aid in developing more effective social-policy planning in the Asian region.

DEMOGRAPHIC, SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL URBAN - RELATED RISKS AMONG THE YOUTH

Demographic, social and environmental conditions in cities have effects on the incidence of infectious diseases and behavioural abnormalities as follows :

Demographic

Fertility rates continue to fall due to the impact of reproductive health and more prevalence of family planning programmes. Due to fall in mortality rates, the older age groups are increasing and at the same time sex ratios do not stay at right balance due to male-dominated migration. All these changes and disorders bring about problems.

Social

Population densities in urban settlements generally exceed those in rural areas. Crowding is an important element in disease transmission, particularly of air-borne infectious agents. Also, rates of divorce incidence increase. Phenomenon of aging is more observed in cities. The

2. United Nations Fund for Population Activities

continued spread of shanty towns increases slum-dwellings and marginal-dwellers; all of which cause a chain of problems specially for the youths.

Environment

Cities harbour threats to health unknown in rural settings. Most important and obvious is the pollution of air and water as a result of industrial activity, transportation, poisoning caused by emissions from cars and trucks. In Cairo city lead concentration in the air is five to six times greater than the global norms, and the blood of children has lead content levels three to five times higher than children in rural Egypt. The impact of excessive carbon monoxide is faced in one form or another by all cities in the modern world. This has more adverse impact

on children than the aged.

Smith (1988:9) is of the opinion that :

"Like people, cities have personalities. Each represents a unique mix of history and natural setting, cultural patterns and lifestyle, some are ugly yet attractive, others beautiful but dull. Under such circumstances modelling and theorizing about cities is risky, if even possible".

The indicators below showing a clear perspective of the youths, bring about complexities in the Asian and developing societies. Where the percentage aged 10 - 24 is high, a lot of problems in social and economic contexts follow. When the frequency of marriage among girls aged 15-19 is high, further poverty problems follow in future. Lower rates of secondary enrolment is also the indicator of youth problems, juvenile delinquency, etc. in a society.

Table 2 : Selected Indicators of the Youths in Selected Regions/Countries of the World 1994

Regions/ Countries	Population		% Who Die before Age 15	% Enrolled in Secondary School (Latest)		Pop 1994	Teenage Pop Ages 15-19 In millions						
	Ages 10-24			M	F		Pop 1994	% Illiterate		% Ever Married Females	% Having a Birth Each Year	Contraceptive Prevalence Rate	
	In millions	%						1970's	1990			All	Married
	Pop 1994												
World	1,582	28	10	53	44	513	-	19	21	6	-	19	
More Developed	265	21	2	91	93	87	-	-	4	4	-	-	
Less Developed (Excl. China)	989	31	12	45	34	325	37	24	30	9	-	20	
Africa	228	32	17	31	22	75	-	-	30	12	-	8	
Asia	968	29	11	53	40	310	-	20	22	5	-	17	
North America	60	21	1	91	91	19	-	-	5	6	46 (15-24)	-	
Latin America	145	31	7	45	48	48	17	6	17	8	6	36	
Europe	107	21	2	91	93	36	-	-	5	2	-	-	
Former USSR	67	23	4	91	101	22	-	-	-	5	-	-	
Oceania	7	25	5	67	67	2	-	-	7	3	-	-	
Afghanistan	6.3	28	30	11	6	2	67	49	-	-	-	-	
Bangladesh	42.3	34	21	25	12	13.5	63	54	69	18	-	19 Age>25	
India	274.8	30	13	54	32	89.6	49	34	44	9	-	19(15-24)	
Iran	20.7	32	11	66	49	6.9	39	21	-	-	-	-	
Malaysia	5.9	30	3	57	59	1.8	-	6	10	3	-	-	
Thailand	17.9	31	6	34	32	5.8	6	1	17	4	7	43	
China	322.7	27	7	56	45	98.8	-	7	4	1	-	11	
Japan	26.4	21	1	96	98	8.8	-	-	2	0	-	39	
Korea North	6.6	28	5	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Korea South	12.4	28	3	90	91	4/1	1	-	1	0	44(15-24)	-	
Sri Lanka	5.3	29	3	71	77	1.8	13	4	7	3	2	20	
Pakistan	40.5	31	19	29	13	13	68	51	25	8	1	3	
Nepal	6.8	31	17	43	17	2.1	78	61	33	10	-	1	

Source : Population Reference Bureau, March 1994.

Urban Lifestyle

Patterns of social relationships, consumption of material goods, quality of culture, dependency on certain norms, etc. altogether constitute lifestyle. Therefore, in modern sociology, the notion of style of life has been used to distinguish between rural and urban, urban and suburban forms of social life. During the present century both developed and specially the developing countries have undergone extraordinary changes which bring with them conditions and beliefs which used to be taken for granted. This process brings new lifestyle or what we mean, the urban lifestyle.

One consequence of the rapid urbanization is that cities with their more westernized patterns of life show an enormous discrepancy of culture and behaviour with the rest of a developing country's population with special reference to the youths. Studies show that the new young migrants and their dependents to cities are vulnerable to the lure of alcoholism and drug abuse, or may develop such adverse emotional states as brutalization, apathy or depression. Studies in cities like Buenos Aires have shown that the migrant inhabitants of shanty towns have very high rates of alcoholism, violence, mental retardation, other psychiatric problems and learning difficulties among the children. As medical and social services in such parts of cities are so poor, many of these problems are not treated in an appropriate way.

From a demographic point of view, one of the most conspicuous characteristics of large cities specially in developing countries, is the preponderance of young people. Having no access to school education and often unemployed, innumerable adolescents and young adults suffer from a lack of future perspectives and feelings of malaise and discontent. Exposed to alien patterns of value, they rebel or become antagonistic to the values dominant in the family or cultures they stem from.

These masses of young people easily fall victim of criminal groups, gangsters, etc. These actions and deviant behaviour are not surprisingly more prevalent among young people in more populated cities. In a typical European city today, there are at least between 100 and 200 people per hectare, whereas in neighbourhoods with

high rise buildings, that number may even rise to 10000 to 15000 people. How does the human organism respond to such unnatural conditions? There is convincing evidence that high population density in itself might have important behavioural and psychological impact. That is, the level of stimulation might exceed what a person's central nervous system is capable of handling. Therefore, crowding may be potential source of stress and a state of abnormal behaviour. The big-city phenomenon causes urban distress, and the way out is found in resorting to alcohol, psychotropic drugs and the like by the youths. Drug abuse in cities specially by the youths is an important risk condition for acquiring diseases like AIDS. Moreover, dependency on such substances may cause individuals to stop contributing economically, socially and emotionally to their families or social groups.

Rapid social change in many parts of the world, specially in Asia, taking the form of overurbanization, has brought about important changes in values, family structure and community experience in the form of new urban lifestyle which in turn interfere with some of the important psychological and health needs of human beings. Grippled by a sense of isolation or alienation, young people particularly in their search for group membership and values worth identifying with, that is in quest of a sense of belonging and responsibility, simply cannot satisfy those needs in healthy ways. Therefore, they are more prone to deviations and new life-styles.

Fortunately, there are also indications that cultural and social factors might favourably influence the response of human beings to the conditions of rapid social change, urbanization, and high population density. Sociologically speaking, and as an example to further enunciate the matter, it has been shown that people reared in traditional Chinese culture are likely to be more tolerant to high density living and have lower levels of stress than people educated in "Western" traditions. Such tolerance by virtue of its tendency to allay or quiet the development of discontent, could serve to prevent anti-social, health risk and criminal behaviour. Therefore, the lifestyle could be maintained in a more stable manner. That is to say, too quick "Westernization" which is usually achieved in the process of

urbanization may change the lifestyle of the youths in an undesirable way.

JUVENILE DELINQUENCY : A SOCIAL PROBLEM

Defining juvenile delinquency, (Sethna, 1994), an eminent social scientist has written that "Juvenile delinquency involves wrong doing by a child or a young person who is under an age specified by law for the time being in force of the place concerned". Newmeyer puts the same idea in these words : "A delinquent is a person under age who is guilty of anti - social act and whose misconduct is an infraction of law".

Causes of Juvenile Delinquency

The causes of Juvenile delinquency mainly under the conditions of urbanization are divided into three classes :

A) Social causes consisting of :

1 - family, 2 - school, 3 - criminal area, 4 - bad company, 5 - recreation, 6 - war, 7 - social disorganization, and 8 - displacement.

B) Psychological causes concerning criminal behaviour are the following :

1 - intellectual weakness, 2- mental disease, 3 - characteristics of personality, and 4 - emotional instability.

C) Economic causes consisting of :

1 - unemployment, 2 - poverty, and 3 - unbridled inflation.

Juvenile delinquency could be controlled only if urbanization is controlled and social equilibrium is maintained. Modern welfare states aim at investing in an reforming the juvenile delinquents so that they become responsible citizens when they grow old. Reformation could be achieved through measures such as

1) Probation : a method in which the juvenile delinquent is kept under supervision of a probation officer whose job is to lead the delinquent to get established in normal life.

2) Reformatory institutions such as reformatory schools, certified schools, auxiliary homes, etc. to be devised to reform the delinquents in the populated urban areas.

Urbanization, the process by which small towns grow into cities, is a transformation of social structure. Urbanization also affects youths'

culture. It is not entirely a natural process, but a result of social action. It needs extensive management, planning and organization, without which social problems will appear in a cyclical manner. If the process of urbanization is unplanned and at random, then it will lead to the appearance of the youths' problems of more complex nature.

DETERMINANTS

The determinants of health and well-being of the youths in urban areas are complex and can be generally related to four sets of factors :

- 1 - Poverty including low income, low level of education, and inadequate family security.
- 2 - Physical environment including overcrowding, inadequate or non-existent shelter, pollution and exposure to infectious agents/diseases and gangsterism.
- 3 - Social and cultural factors including composition of the family, cultural restrictions, age, gender, race, extent of mental stress and use of violence.
- 4 - Economic and political factors including maldistribution of income and assets within the city and lack commitment to and practice of participatory democracy and justice.

A functional theory of concentric zone, developed by Ernest Burgess of Chicago School (1925), suggests that cities develop outward from their centre, resulting in areas or zones that have specialized functions. The area closest to the central business district; the zone of transition demonstrates the most severe urban problems. The reason he adds, specially by the younger people is that mobility reduces the controls over people's behaviour; and in some cases, the controls "break down completely". The result, he asserts, is demoralization, accompanied by promiscuity, vice, juvenile delinquency, urban gangs, crime, the break-up of families, and vandalism areas, etc.

SUGGESTIONS

While more than half of the world's population is under the age of 25, certain measures must be taken in order to control both urbanization as well as youths' problems. The proposals may be as follows:

- 1 - Curbing of the population growth rate.
- 2 - More supervision on youths.
- 3 - More investments on youths.
- 4 - Strengthening of the educational resources.
- 5 - Connecting the youths to the past traditions and culture through family relations or so.
- 6 - Connecting the youths to the moralities, religious and ethical values.
- 7 - Optimal distribution of population.
- 8 - Imposition of heavier taxes in larger cities.
- 9 - Creation of healthy opportunities including sports, leisure time, etc.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we would like to stress that since the future is not fixed and can be moulded by human action, it is closely related to social policy. Regardless of the specific policies adopted in the years to come and the shape they give our future, we must always keep in mind that urban problems ultimately centre on basic human needs. In order to design a future that overcomes current urban problems, our policies must incorporate basic human needs – social, psychological and physical. Only then can a future be forged that enhances the quality of life and maximizes human potential.

Violence as one of the city's major problems, specially among the youths, needs appropriate treatment. Yet, many people find cities alienating and experience intense personal problems in

them. Cities have different effects on different groups of people, however, some find within them islands of intimacy that yield high personal and social satisfaction. Among the population groups most affected in cities, are the youths who are the victims of socio-economic contradictions.

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