

FULL-LENGTH ARTICLES

Exploring Urban Slum Education Through Photovoice With Children: Concepts and Techniques for Research

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Despite the expanding population of children in urban slums, the strive to ensure equitable education remains an under-appreciated and under-developed area. Yet, more research on urban slum education is necessary as urban slums are not merely physical spaces, but they portray multifaceted sociocultural issues in education. Conducting photovoice with children in slums is conducive to building a comprehensive and contextualized understanding of urban slum education based on children's perspectives. What concepts of urban slum education can researchers explore and how can photovoice help researchers understand them? In what ways can researchers adopt photovoice to explore the educational experiences of slum children by centering children's perspectives? This paper discusses five concepts of urban slum education, followed by each photovoice technique to explore them effectively. Further, this study provides technical issues for researchers to ensure that their research empowers children and is culturally relevant. The resulting comprehensive understanding of urban slum education will contribute to the development of slum-specific curricula and education policies and programs that are aligned with children's best interests.

With rapid urbanization, slums have proliferated worldwide. Currently, the world's 20% population, around 1.6 billion, dwells in overcrowded and risk-prone urban slums or informal settlements, with hundreds of millions being children (UN-Habitat, 2022; UNICEF, 2018). To mitigate the intergenerational urban poverty and socio-spatial divides, the global community has pursued slum upgrading policies under Sustainable Development Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities. However, the focus of the Goal has been constrained to physical and structural development (e.g., improving shelter conditions), with little attention paid to the socio-cultural qualities of slums. This has neglected and downplayed children's education in urban slums, resulting in the absence of education-related discourses (Kielland, 2015; Tsujita, 2009). Further complicating the issue, education policymakers, scholars, and practitioners have viewed children living in urban slums and urban education conditions through a deficit-based and problem-oriented frame (e.g., Gyansah et al., 2015; Rahma et al., 2020; Wirutomo, 2016). Underlying this perspective is a prejudice that characterizes children as victims who are marginalized and deprived on the one hand, and as the embodiment of social problems that pose risks

to the community on the other. The deficit framing in literature has also been pervasive in the interpretation of education injustice facing urban slum children, viewing it as an irreversible facet of children's lives due to social, political, and economic oppressions.

Moreover, in many social sciences, children have historically been viewed as passive and powerless victims who necessitate protection in the adultist world (A. Clark, 2005). The view has perpetuated adults' dominant presence, representations, and visions in urban cities, which suggests that children's presence, movements, and engagements have been neglected and silenced in urban cities (Templeton & Vellanki, 2022). Significantly, scholars of children's geography initiated a paradigm shift in thought, arguing that children are competent social actors who should be respected as beings in their own right (Holloway & Valentine, 2004). Such an agentic view indicates that children construct the everyday spaces of urban cities through their ways of being and relating to people and the more-than-human worlds, which encompass nonhuman sentient beings (e.g., animals and plants), material objects, and both natural and built environments (Templeton & Vellanki, 2022; Wolff et al., 2021). Children are also viewed as competent in using urban spaces according to their values and desires to make positive changes, contributing to cultural (re)construction and contesting adult domination (Holloway & Valentine, 2004; Riggs & Due, 2010; Templeton, 2021).

I concur with the view of scholars of children's geography, and this served as the springboard for my interest in photovoice that centers children's presence, voices, and stories. Photovoice is a powerful methodology through which people in a community can express their strengths and concerns that are most relevant to them, reflect the issues through photographs and dialogues, and ultimately spur policy changes (Wang & Burris, 1997). Employing photovoice with slum children is particularly significant as photovoice is an empowering tool that enables children to partake in the research process, control their way of expressing realities, and show their lived experiences in a fresh light (Allmark et al., 2017). In the education context, photovoice reflects where, when, how, and with whom slum children engage in learning. Notably, urban slums are not merely an "innocent backdrop to pedagogy" (Gulson & Symes, 2007, p. 8) but they are important educational spaces that manifest from the confluence of pedagogic moments, power relations, neoliberalist agenda, globalization, and interactions with both human and more-than-human world (e.g., books and streets). Given that education in slum spaces has rarely been explored, slum children's photovoice serves as a critical step in understanding urban slum education, laying the foundation for slum-specific education policies and programs. Hence, my study delves into child-centered photovoice methodology for exploring urban slum education. This leads to the following questions: What concepts of urban slum education can researchers explore and how can photovoice help

researchers understand them? In what ways can researchers adopt photovoice to explore the educational experiences of slum children by centering children's perspectives?

The first section provides a methodological overview of photovoice with critical and emancipatory epistemological underpinnings and intervention-oriented approaches (Call-Cummings et al., 2019). The second section presents the significance of researching urban slum education to understand five multidimensional concepts relating to education. The third section introduces photovoice techniques that education researchers can use and adopt to explore those concepts in urban slums. The fourth section illuminates the author's field study of the Jakarta slum in Indonesia as an example of a photovoice technique that explores children's identity development. This then leads to the final section which draws on technical considerations for photovoice research to ensure child's empowerment and cultural and ethical appropriateness.

Methodological Overview: Photovoice

Photovoice, initially known as photo-interviewing by Collier (1967), is a participatory visual research methodology that involves participants' photo-taking to identify and address community issues (Wang & Burris, 1997). Photovoice mainly comprises three steps: (1) creating an agenda for photovoice research and recruiting participants; (2) executing the proposed agenda; and (3) exhibiting photographs and taking tangible social actions (Amos et al., 2012). Following the recruitment of the participants, an information session takes place to introduce the photovoice project to the participants, discuss the project's goals and advantages, and review the ethical guidelines. Subsequently, the participants' photo-taking activity occurs, followed by one-on-one or focus group photo-elicitation interviews where participants select photos and discuss ideas, experiences, and stories. The interviews may further incorporate participatory activities, such as categorizing photos connected to research questions, where researchers and participants collaborate as co-researchers. (Jongeling et al., 2016).

Upon completing the interviews, researchers transcribe the interviews, develop thematic coding schemes based on participants' interpretations, and analyze participants' context-specific voices, which in turn yields photographically generated knowledge (Shah, 2015). Following that, efforts are made to translate the photo-elicited knowledge into practices to confront and upend the current structures that have failed to meet the needs of the community (Call-Cummings et al., 2019; Shah, 2015). One powerful way to translate knowledge into action-making is holding a photovoice exhibition. Co-facilitated by researchers and participants, the exhibition raises awareness and encourages critical dialogue on the photo-elicited issues with relevant stakeholders (e.g., local government officials, ministerial officials, and neighbors) (Mayfield-Johnson & Butler, 2017). The participants share their insights about their community situation, thereby contributing to the development of programs and interventions that could bring positive changes

to the community (Jongeling et al., 2016) This is the final stage of using photovoice for making community-based social changes (Palibroda et al., 2009).

Enrooted in participatory action research (PAR) strategy and photojournalism, photovoice highlights participants' revealing personal and community experiences related to social, political, and economic issues in the community through photographic images (Call-Cummings et al., 2019). Harper (2002) delineated this, stating three categories about which participant-generated photos generally represent: (1) visual inventories of material objects, artifacts, and people; (2) events as a part of collective or institutional actions (e.g., pedagogical practices); and (3) intimate social groups or dimensions (e.g., family members) (Clark-Ibáñez, 2007). All three categories commonly reflect participants' knowledge, perspectives, and relational and contextual experiences, all of which serve as the primary source of expertise for analysis (Mayfield-Johnson & Butler, 2017).

Photovoice is also grounded in Freirean critical, feminist, and emancipatory theoretical perspectives. This means that photovoice integrates participant-centered research paradigm, activism, and participant empowerment in various ways: inviting community members with marginalized backgrounds, engaging them with critical consciousness about their living circumstances, reporting specific community issues based on the community members' perceived importance, bringing their often-neglected and silenced voices to the forefront, and ultimately accomplishing individual and community development (Allmark et al., 2017; Call-Cummings et al., 2019; Jongeling et al., 2016; Wang & Burris, 1997).

With the goal of addressing social concerns, photovoice has been implemented primarily in the fields of public health and health care, but it has been gradually used in the education field (Evans-Agnew & Rosemberg, 2016). Education scholars have used photovoice to explore myriad topics, including language acquisition (Kelly-Jackson & Delacruz, 2014), everyday classroom experiences (Bell et al., 2011), and children's identity development, which this study will explore in detail.

Significance of Child-Produced Photos in Urban Slum Education

Scholars of children's geography view that children are competent social actors whose voices, experiences, and activities (re)shape everyday spaces of urban cities along with adults (Clark-Ibáñez, 2007; Holloway & Valentine, 2004). Based on this agentic perspective, children actively utilize urban spaces according to their own values, conceive motivation to make positive changes, contribute to cultural construction and changes, and resist adult domination (Holloway & Valentine, 2004; Riggs & Due, 2010; Templeton, 2021). Such children's agency is a backbone in adopting photovoice that pursues research *with* children, not research *on* children (Butschi & Hedderich, 2021; Christensen & James, 2008). Collaborating with children means rethinking the researcher's role by handing over power, agency, and autonomy to child

participants—e.g., allowing children to control over the photography process to decide what to include or exclude in their photographs (Epstein et al., 2006).

Children's control extends to photo-elicitation interviews, where children select images for discussion and interpret what they see and hear from their first-hand perspectives (Vellanki & Davesar, 2020). This contrasts with conventional interviews, where an adult researcher exercises authority over the children in the interviews (C. D. Clark, 1999). Epstein et al. (2006) noted that the conventional interviews are often “outside [children's] sociolinguistic repertoire” (p. 2), making it challenging for children to express their thoughts during the question-and-answer sessions. This consequently falls short of fulfilling the researchers' objectives of the interview (Epstein et al., 2006). In contrast, in photovoice, adult researchers provide minimal or no prompts during interviews, and children's selected photos shift the interview subjects from one to another (Allmark et al., 2017; K. M. Johnson, 2020; Shah, 2015). This is possible as photos serve as interview stimuli and “clear, tangible, yet nonlinguistic prompt[s]” (Clark-Ibáñez, 2007, p. 173), representing children's visual voices. Children's fragmented stories about each photo create layers of narratives, reflections, and self-expressions (Allmark et al., 2017).

Photovoice particularly carries significant value when being conducted with children with disenfranchised, vulnerable, and marginalized backgrounds (e.g., working children, street children, children with disabilities, and children with refugee backgrounds) (Power et al., 2014). This is because the academic discourse on the lives of marginalized children mainly centers around alarming and pressing issues (e.g., violence, negative school experiences, and abject poverty), all of which are often misconceived, overexaggerated, and skewed (Clark-Ibáñez, 2007). As Clark-Ibáñez argued, education researchers' engrossment with deficit-based problem frames has caused the quotidian lives of children in relation to institutional, structural, and community features to be overlooked. The distorted or partial picture of children's lives raises the critical question: “Is this all there is to being poor and a kid?” (Clark-Ibáñez, 2007, p. 170). On another level, narratives of children's geographies have been downplayed in academia as being perceived to be too mundane and insignificant (Horton & Kraftl, 2006). The academic discourse subsequently continues to disregard children's everyday lives in education, cloaking the variable and complex details about how children engage in education in various children's geographies, including in urban slums.

Multidimensional Concepts of Urban Slum Education

For education researchers, exploring urban slums is imperative to disrupt the biased problem-oriented lens of education conditions and pursue a comprehensive understanding of slum contexts. While there are few studies with a balanced approach illuminating both protective and risk factors about urban slum education (e.g., Bima et al., 2022), a majority of existing studies

overemphasize education inequalities among slum children (e.g., gaps in educational achievement). Those studies mainly highlight how such inequalities stem from socioeconomic and cultural constraints as well as deprivations of material and human resources in a child's ecological system (Kielland, 2015; Oketch et al., 2012; Silva-Laya et al., 2020). This suggests the need for education researchers to develop a deep and appropriate understanding of urban slum education by acknowledging the multiplicity of ways of children's being, becoming, and doing within education environments that are intertwined with "the assemblage of multiple discourses, practices, technique, objects, and propositions that come together in particular places at a particular time [and space]" (Sobe & Kowalczyk, 2013, p. 11).

1. Children's Diverse Learning and Playing in Heterogeneity

For a comprehensive understanding of urban slum education, researchers must understand that slums are important spaces for children's learning and playing at home, school, and open spaces of cities. All of these spaces affect children's bodies and minds through the regimes of learning, skills, and development (Holloway & Valentine, 2004). Moreover, some studies shed light on non-formal education (NFE) operated in NGO-run community learning centers in urban slums, where children engage in various learning activities and interact with other children and adult members of the community (Pyati & Kamal, 2012). This suggests the need for a nuanced understanding of urban slum education as slum children are heterogeneous groups with varying educational circumstances. Each child brings diverse experiences and backgrounds, some with exclusive access to formal education or to NFE, and others with access to both. For those with NFE experiences, children's learning spaces and experiences are further diversified from both in-school learning (i.e., formal education) and out-of-school learning (i.e., NFE and informal education). Subsequently, children's access to various education settings influences children's identity development (Coll & Falsafi, 2010).

2. Children's Identity Development

Researchers must understand that slums are spaces where spatiality influences children's identity development as to who they are and who they become (Hammond, 2022; Paechter, 2004). Such influential spatiality embodies children's interactions with other people (e.g., teachers and peers), materials, senses, and experiences (Horton & Kraftl, 2006). The assemblage of interactions establishes the particularities and complexities of the education environments through which children undertake meaning-making and identity constructions (Dewayani, 2013; Horton & Kraftl, 2006). Here Raffo (2011) suggests using an analytical tool involving interpenetrated macro-meso-micro scales. In the first scale of Raffo's framework, the macro level denotes power and inequality in urban social structures. Within the urban slum setting, the *macro level* encompasses various ideologies, including neoliberalism (Morgan, 2012; Plumb et al., 2007), capitalism (Kabiru et

al., 2013), globalization (Grinberg, 2023; Sarwono, 2014), education norms (Dewayani, 2013), and the assemblage of gender, race, sexuality, dis/ability, cultural heritage, and religions (Jules & Anuar, in press). The second scale of Raffo's framework—*meso level*—refers to children's immediate social surroundings in children's neighborhoods and communities, such as street youth's subculture (e.g., Beazley, 2003). The last scale of the framework—*micro level*—explains that children interact and form relationships with their intimate surroundings, such as families, teachers, and peers. Urban slum children are closely associated with this level involving parent-child interactions, teachers' attitudes toward children, and peer-to-peer bonds (Bose, 2016; DeHaan & Macdermid, 1996; Hai, 2014).

Alongside interactions with others, children's identity continues to be mediated by material objects that are present in everyday learning spaces of urban slums. While the objects may seem mundane with seemingly little significance (e.g., pen), it is worthy of "bring[ing] their unnoticed significance and functionality to light" (Vannini, 2009, p. 354). The material objects construct particular meanings to children by evoking sentimental feelings, sensory modes, values, and sensibility (Horton & Kraftl, 2006; Vannini, 2009). In sum, education researchers must examine all dimensional scales and children's interactions with other people and material objects in urban slums, all of which mediate children's identity development.

3. Mobility in Interspaces

Interspaces (or liminal spaces) refer to in-between spaces that connect different fields (e.g., learning spaces) as transitional spaces or boundaries in which people intersect and move (e.g., journey from home to school) (Hulme & Truch, 2005). In the urban slum education setting, interspaces are the critical spatial-temporal dimension of *third places*, namely, key sites where children's informal public life takes place between the primary destination (e.g., home) and secondary destination (e.g., school) (Weir, 2023). This concept assumes that children's identity is developed beyond fixed and stationary brick-and-mortar spaces (e.g., schools), as children's learning experiences are fluid as per their shifting situatedness (Coll & Falsafi, 2010; Gulson & Symes, 2007). Therefore, education researchers should investigate children's mobility in interspaces to understand slum children's learning experiences and their identity development through interactions with various actors and material objects. The interspaces in urban slums encompass threshold spaces in neighborhoods, children's routinized transitory spaces (e.g., sidewalks between home and school), and even extensive residential relocation from one place to another (e.g., in-migration from a rural area to an urban slum) (Weir, 2023).

4. Power Dynamics

Urban slums are "locus of power relations" (Holloway & Valentine, 2004, p. 14) entangled with power dynamics and complex hierarchies created by cultural, economic, social, and political forces, which link to the

aforementioned macro level. First, neoliberal capitalism ideology is permeated as a social standard for education in urban slums (Dewayani, 2013). This norm posits that formal education and seeking advanced education degrees are imperative for upward mobility, compelling slum children to passively conform to meet social expectations, escape menial labor, and secure stable employment amidst fierce job competition (Kabiru et al., 2013; McCarthy, 2003). Some studies showed that slum children's pursuit of ideology is often not translated into poverty eradication, but rather reproducing the cycle of educational injustice despite children's efforts and sometimes prompting rebellious behaviors (e.g., vandalism) among frustrated slum youth (Dewayani, 2013; Kabiru et al., 2013; Karakul, 2016). Another power pervasive in slums is globalization, especially the influx of Western cultures and modernity, which has established new standards of social norms and ways of living among children (Nath, 2006). From globalization, new youth culture has appeared, including the modes of dress, use of technologies, slang words, and ways of interaction with peers (Sarwono, 2014). Moreover, traditional patriarchy is a hegemonic generational order, upholding the devaluation of girls' education and parents' preference for sending boys to school. Hence, the crisscrossing power and social norms in the historical and cultural specificity of the urban slums have built unique education conditions.

5. Past-Present-Future Learning Experiences

It is important to note that spatial situatedness is conceptualized not only through spatial turn but also through *temporal turn*. The latter suggests how temporality and history/ies shape children's situatedness of learning in urban slums, which deserves researchers' attention and interpretation. This concept is enrooted in the hauntology of posthuman theory and poststructuralism, implicating that children's past-present-future assembly is inseparable from the spaces of education (e.g., classrooms) and the matter(ing) positioned within it (e.g., desks and blackboards). In other words, this concept delves into children's "past/future conjurings of history/ies and saturated discourses between spatial considerations of presence *and* absence" (Varga & Monreal, 2021, p. 83) in urban slum education contexts. In that sense, education researchers should focus on how children's traces of histories (i.e., children's past social and emotional experiences) are tethered with the present matter(ing) in spaces of education, and how these histories induce the present ways of children's learning conditions, experiences, opportunities, and injustice in urban slums.

With all these features present in urban slums, conducting a photovoice with children would bring comprehensive, multifaceted, and contextualized insights about education in urban slums. Photovoice will demonstrate a wealth of knowledge regarding children's lived learning experiences by identifying strengths and weaknesses of current education conditions (or education interventions) and empowering children whose voices are often neglected.

Table 1. Summary of Multidimensional Concepts of Urban Slum Education

Subject		Aspects of Interest
Goal: To recognize the multiplicity of children's ways of being, becoming, and doing in education conditions that are embodied with intersectional discourses and practices.		
1	Children's diverse learning and playing in heterogeneity	- How children engage in diverse learning spaces, and how such experiences affect children's bodies and minds with regard to learning, skills development, and growth - Children's engaging in one or more forms of education that are interrelated - i.e., formal education (e.g., school), non-formal education (e.g., NGO-run community learning center), and informal education (e.g., home and cities)
2	Children's identity development	- How children's assemblage of various interactions in slums leads to establishing particular education environments where children experience identity development - Using Raffo's (2011) interpenetrated macro-meso-micro levels to examine varying interactions <i>Macro level</i> – ideologies; <i>meso level</i> – e.g., neighborhoods; <i>micro level</i> – immediate surroundings - Material objects in everyday learning spaces evoke children with emotional connectedness, mediating their identity development
3	Mobility in interspaces	- How children's mobility in interspaces (e.g., journey from home to school) mediates children's learning experiences and identity development - Valuing children's dynamic interactions and learning practices beyond the fixed and brick-and-mortar spaces of education
4	Power dynamics	- How cultural, economic, social, and political forces create power dynamics that intersect and create particular education conditions for children - e.g., neoliberal capitalism, societal oppression, globalization, and traditional patriarchy
5	Past-present-future learning experiences	- How temporality and history/ies shape slum children's situatedness of learning in urban slums - How children's histories of past experiences have impacted the present ways of their learning conditions, experiences, and injustice in urban slums
Overall benefits: Using photovoice to acquire comprehensive, multifaceted, and contextualized insights about education in urban slums - The knowledge entailed will be beneficial for: Polymakers: By raising recognition of the diverse education experiences of slum children, contributing to developing slum context-specific policies and programs Practitioners: By fostering place-based curricula tailored to children's optimal development and aligned with their best interests Slum children: By empowering them through collaboration with adult stakeholders, especially by inspiring policymakers to recognize and implement necessary changes to improve learning conditions		

Photovoice Exploratory Techniques for Multidimensional Concepts

The following outlines five photovoice techniques that help explore the five concepts above. While each technique is based on a distinct objective of inquiry, all techniques share the common aim of delving into the intricacies of children's learning experiences in slum environments based on children's perspectives.

1. Photovoice Technique for Children's Diverse Learning and Playing in Heterogeneity

Photovoice will help explore the interrelatedness of different forms of education. One effective way would be to involve a small number of children, who experience all three domains of education, in taking photos of their learning spaces and conducting in-depth storytelling interviews based on the child-generated photos with each one. However, instead of asking children to take photos as they move around for different forms of learning (i.e., formal, non-formal, and informal education), a researcher can take an alternative approach by setting up a particular educational place (e.g., NGO learning center) to facilitate children's photo-taking activity. Here, what is mirrored in

children's photos (i.e., objects, actions, and events) can function as interview stimuli for exploring different forms of education. For example, during a photo-elicitation interview, if a child chooses to discuss the NFE teacher and their interaction with the teacher, a researcher can expand the conversation of the topic to formal education, such as asking about the child's interaction with their school teacher.

Analyzing children's perspectives, behaviors, and attitudes toward different forms of education can be undertaken based on the words that children frequently mention (and choose to silence and refuse to respond to) and words for emotions and senses. The researcher can then group those words into categories by finding the available conditions (e.g., opportunities/resources and limitations) and perceived characteristics of each form of education (e.g., close bond with NFE teachers). These characteristics can be visually presented through a comparison chart (Bima et al., 2022; M. Johnson & Majewska, 2022) or an overlapping circle chart. While the former is conducive to identifying distinct characteristics of each form of education based on situational determinism, the latter is effective in showing how the three forms are interconnected (Cameron & Harrison, 2012).

Furthermore, to examine the heterogeneity of education conditions in comparisons, one photovoice approach for achieving the objective is to conduct a comparative study with individuals as the unit of analysis. Among various attributes of individuals that can be focused on, the status of children's schooling (and even working) is a potential mode for inquiry. For instance, a photovoice study can focus on the education experiences of children with varying schooling status—e.g., children exclusively enrolled in formal school, who are out of school for work, who engage in both formal schooling and work, who engage neither, and who engage in both formal and non-formal education. During the photovoice process, researchers should guide children to take photos of their education experiences for an arranged time and facilitate one-on-one photo-elicitation interviews by focusing on interview questions to gain awareness of the heterogeneity—e.g., why formal school education is not accessible for some children, how each child participant perceives schooling and working, what are children's needs and wants about education, and whether children's needs and wants are differed or shared.

Using a comparison chart during photo-elicitation interviews would enhance the quality of analysis by visually and effectively displaying children's varying experiences. Researchers should first prepare a chart with multiple categories related to schooling status, then paste the comparison chart on the wall, and guide children to locate the printed photos to the matching categories of the comparison chart (e.g., "resources supporting schooling", "concerns hindering schooling", and "issues pushing to work"), all of which are relevant to urban slum contexts. With the children's informed assent, the researcher should consider presenting and sharing the findings with policymakers, government officials (e.g., ministerial officers), researchers, and

practitioners to bring practical implications. The charts will help the experts to identify heterogeneous education conditions facing urban slum children, which then will be a valuable resource for revamping policies towards broadening education goals to embrace the heterogeneous groups and devising action plans and programs through either strengthening the identified strengths or mitigating the weaknesses. Yet, socially, when presenting a comparison chart to the public, the researchers must consider that the chart could unintentionally rigidify the marginalization and stigmatization of children, regardless of their heterogeneous experiences. Additionally, researchers need to be mindful of the potential discomfort among some children due to relative disadvantage to other children (Abebe & Bessell, 2014). It is therefore crucial for researchers to foster an inclusive and respectful environment that encourages feeling respect for differences with empathy and care among children.

2. Photovoice Technique for Children's Identity Development

To examine the development of children's identity, researchers should provide participant children with digital or disposable cameras and guide them to document their everyday learning experiences for a certain period (e.g., a week). In this way, children will have sufficient time to capture their learning activities and interactions with people, objects, learning spaces (e.g., school, home, and NGO learning center), and interspaces (e.g., streets from home to school). To center and listen to children's narratives during photo-elicitation interviews, researchers are responsible for keeping interview questions to a minimum (K. M. Johnson, 2020). Some of the potential interview questions could be "What do you see in your photos?" and "Why is the particular moment or experience meaningful to you?" One effective way is to frame questions by using the PHOTO technique, which is an acronym of a series of five inductive open-ended questions: "How can you describe your Photo?", "What is Happening in your picture?", "Why did you take a picture Of this?", "What does this picture Tell us about your life?", and "How can this picture provide Opportunities for us to improve life?" (see Amos et al., 2012, for more detail) The PHOTO technique will help researchers engage in an in-depth discussion with children about each of the children's photos. Such engagement with the children will help the researchers contextualize each photo through children's sense-making in urban slums beyond what is explicitly visible. Consequently, the children's storytelling will elicit children's social identity.

To take one step further, researchers can implement the Participative Ranking Methodology (PRM) during photo-elicitation interviews, which will lead to a more detailed and nuanced understanding of the contextual issues in children's learning circumstances (Ager et al., 2010). The PRM asks children to rank their photos on what they consider as the "most meaningful/prevalent resources" or the "biggest/prevalent concerns" in their education environments. Researchers can analyze the PRM through two different approaches:

- (1) *frequency* – e.g., ordering the top three resources/concerns by count; or
- (2) *average rank* – e.g., determining the top-ranked resources/concerns based on the average rank across all children's photos. For instance, in the case of calculating the average rank of 'peers', researchers can add the ranking numbers assigned to 'peers' by each child, and then divide the total by the number of children interviewed (Ager et al., 2010).

3. Photovoice Technique for Mobility in Interspaces

In addition to using the PHOTO technique-based photo-elicitation interviews described above, researchers can undertake visible listening to effectively explore the interrelationship of mobility, space, and identity development. One of the child-friendly visible listening approaches is map-making (A. Clark, 2005). Researchers can incorporate map-making as a part of the photo-elicitation interviews, or as a stand-alone activity before conducting the photo-elicitation interviews using child-generated maps as interview stimuli. Map-making involves children using their photographs and drawings to display their mobility in the journey between school, home, and NGO learning centers (A. Clark, 2005). A child's map can also display children's perceived socio-materiality and affections in the interspaces. For example, in their map about their routinized routes between home and school, children can present significant social actors, objects, and the more-than-human world (e.g., trees and riverbanks) that a child feels meaningful by evoking certain emotions (Morojele & Muthukrishna, 2012). Additionally, the map can imply children's motility, namely, *mobility capital* that is determined by children's socio-economic-cultural capital, competencies, and capabilities (Taylor, 2007). Motility includes how children feel about their neighborhoods, pedestrian roads, and transportation available and accessible to them (e.g., feeling fear, comfort, and competence) (Taylor, 2007). Importantly, throughout the map-making process, researchers are responsible for engaging in dialogues with children, documenting the dialogues, and interpreting children's ways of seeing, being, and representing themselves in the interspaces. To bring a wider awareness and to help reshape adults' views on children's role in public spaces, researchers can also consider exhibiting children's maps in open public spaces (e.g., schools). Such an exhibition would contribute to realizing adults' concerted efforts to ensure children's safe and comfortable mobility in public spaces.

Instead of conducting a map-making-based photo-elicitation interview, researchers can consider organizing a walking interview with children either one-on-one or in groups. For example, the researcher can take a one-on-one walk along a child's familiar routes in their neighborhood (e.g., streets, riverbanks, and railroads) to explore the child's mobile methods, sensory experiences, stories, and emotions attached to a child's journey and learning

experiences in daily life (Lenette, 2022). During the walking interview, the child is an agent and co-researcher who has the authority to decide “where to go, what to talk about, how long to walk for, [and] what to photograph” (Lenette, 2022, p. 9). Moreover, in an example of walking on the streets of a child’s journey to school, a researcher can incorporate the fabric of time-space by guiding the child to reflect the connections between the current environments and corresponding environments from their previous neighborhood. This would be particularly effective in the case of a child who has experienced enforced eviction and relocation. In such a case, during a walking interview, a child can bring back memories, thoughts, and emotions by connecting the material objects at present and corresponding material objects of their previous slum neighborhoods (Magos & Tsevreni, 2023). Here, researchers are responsible for learning stories of a child regarding what objects/people evoke emotional connections, how the objects/people carry personal significance and meanings to a child spanning both past and present experiences, and how all these cumulatively shape the child today.

4. Photovoice Technique for Power Dynamics

Photovoice pursues a social justice approach, aiming at children’s critical recognition, contestation, and disruption of the unequal social order that devalues slum children and their education circumstances ultimately for establishing a just society (Picower, 2012; Wade, 2007). It is expected that photovoice for social justice will enable children to be critically aware of the assemblage of power dynamics as children through photo-elicited discussions. While unpacking power dynamics may seem unmanageable to children, Wade (2007) suggested that children, from their primary education level, are capable of developing knowledge, skills, and values concerned with social justice through empathy and perspective-taking abilities in their developmental phase. Further, Templeton and Vellanki (2022) conducted a photovoice with children aged 2-5 in New York City to decenter adults’ gaze to children’s ways of conceptualizing public spaces (e.g., streets and parks). Considering the possibility of involving early-aged children in photovoice research on power dynamics, the questions researchers should consider are: What are age-appropriate topics, and what processes need to be taken practically?

When photovoice centers on power dynamics, one possible topic is gender dynamics, and this can be approached in different ways. As one approach, a researcher provides disposable cameras to each child, requesting them to follow a parent/guardian, adult neighbor, or adult family member to take photos of where they work, rest, and interact with others. When following an adult, children can freely walk around their neighborhood to photograph ordinary urban practices (e.g., parks, traditional markets, and rickshaws). Distributing a list of questions to the children for the activity would help them to take photos related to the research inquiry. Upon completing the photo-taking activity and having photos printed out, the researcher can organize a focus group activity where children collectively discuss what

gendered division of activities and gendered norms are reflected in their photos of the urban city (e.g., bazaar-going mother, dinner-preparing grandmother, and rickshaw driver uncle). The discussion centering on a critical feminist approach will raise critical awareness about how gendered roles, behaviors, and norms shape the everyday lives of urban slums. Children can also discuss what/who are present or absent in the places (e.g., shoppers for cooking ingredients are mostly mothers at a traditional market) and how social gender norms and stereotypes might have influenced their activities.

Both studies by Clark-Ibáñez (2007) and Shah (2015) provided critical insights into gendered activities among children in inner-city Los Angeles and Western India, respectively. Despite their significance, the former centered on the researcher's analysis stemming from the researcher's one-on-one photo elicitation interview with each child, while the latter included exclusively girls in one-on-one and group elicitation interviews. However, instead of conducting individual interviews and photovoice activities in groups based on the gender binary, it is deemed most optimal to facilitate photo-elicitation focus group discussions with children with all genders together. Through such critical dialogues on gender power dynamics, children could develop collective critical consciousness regarding gender disparities by "making the familiar strange" (Erickson, 1984, p. 62). The dialogues are significant in terms of leading slum children to have deliberate discussions about the arbitrary nature of everyday lives, which have been taken-for-granted for the children as cultural insiders (Erickson, 1984). For example, why do many women visit traditional markets to buy ingredients? What might happen if men were the ones doing it? Such a way of discussions would serve as comprehensive sexuality education when the questions are designed in consideration of developmental appropriateness (see also UNESCO, 2018). Notably, the discussions will enable children's mutual learning about socio-cultural norms and religious beliefs that construct gender roles in urban slums and how such gender roles can be changed, ultimately realizing balanced and equitable gender relationships (Tawana & Romm, 2023). Likewise, in pursuit of social justice, photovoice will be useful for examining other power dynamics pervasive in urban slums (e.g., neoliberalism, capitalism, and racism).

5. Photovoice Technique for Past-Present-Future Learning Experiences

Using aesthetic and visual presentations is a useful way to reflect the interconnectivity of the past and present regarding slum children's education conditions. The aesthetic and visual features will invite the audience to connect themselves to children's affective experiences and support them in navigating the complexity behind the photos, including what is present and absent (Varga, 2024). One way of doing it is through a longitudinal photovoice study using (re)photography. When conducting (re)photography, children are responsible for taking photos of a particular learning space(s) at different temporal moments (e.g., one-month intervals), aiming to capture how children's learning space(s) changes over time and how time affects

the learning space. As a next step, the researcher assists the children in juxtaposing 3-5 children-generated photos side-by-side or superimposing the photos to produce a (multiple) single image. Upon having the superimposed images, the researcher should guide children to write poetry or phototexts in the blank space next to each of their superimposed images, providing detailed descriptions about their way of seeing and learning experiences in urban slums. The written texts are the “imaginary literacy spaces, or spaces of writing” (Gulson & Symes, 2007, p. 9), through which children express their stories and meaning-making in learning spaces. Such a creative and introspective strategy using photos and literacy will contribute to both children and the audience gaining awareness of the intersection of time, opportunities, and challenges in urban slum education conditions.

The Author’s Case: Children’s Identity Development in Non-formal Education Spaces in Jakarta Slums

Aligning with the second concept of urban slum education, which is the identity development of children, I conducted a photovoice technique to explore how an NGO learning center (i.e., NFE space) mediates children’s identity development in urban slums of Jakarta, Indonesia. My research involved 25 children aged 11-16 at the lower secondary education level, both school-going children and out-of-school children.

1. Recruitment, Consent, and Assent

Recruitment and Guardian Consent. Before arriving in Jakarta, I had a Zoom meeting with NFE teachers to discuss the photovoice method. We agreed to conduct the photovoice activity with all children between the ages of 11 and 16 during two hours of class at the NGO learning center. In the Zoom meeting, I also provided them with parental consent forms (PDF format), requesting the parents’ consent for the children’s participation in the research. NFE teachers sent the forms home and explained the research over the phone and in-person. After arriving in Jakarta, I also held a meeting with the interested parents at the NGO learning center to provide further explanations about the research. Parents signed the consent forms on-site or they sent the signed forms to the center.

Child Assent. During the photovoice briefing session, I reviewed the goals, photovoice method, and the agenda of the research (e.g., centering children’s voices and perspectives). Importantly, I emphasized the voluntary nature of the research participation and addressed all the questions from the children. To obtain children’s assent for participation I distributed each child a sticky note, asking them to write their names and draw one of the three options: a circle if they assent to participate in the photo-taking activity, a triangle to prefer drawing as an alternative to photo-taking, or an X to refuse participation. The purpose of the sticky notes was to reduce any potential peer pressure associated with raising hands when deciding whether to participate in the research. I asked children to fold their sticky notes once, so their responses would not be seen by others. I collected all the sticky

notes, checked the children's responses, and provided disposable cameras to the children participating in the research. All children marked a circle and were subsequently given disposable cameras.

2. Photovoice Activity

I first provided a photovoice briefing session to explain the research objectives and reasons for using photos in my research; then, I led children to practice using a disposable camera as a group. Right before starting the photo-taking activity, I provided the children a "Photo-Taking Activity Sheet," (see Appendix A), to guide children on what to photograph. As the focus of my research was on children's identity development related to their interactions with people and the material world, the questions in the Activity Sheet began with "who" and "what" (e.g., "Who or what makes you feel happy and excited?", "Who or what is most meaningful to you in your community?"). During the photo-taking activity, children were asked to take three photos for each question to respond by freely walking around inside and outside the NGO learning center (accompanied by NGO teachers when taking photos outside). Next to the first column on questions, in the second and third columns, children were asked to briefly write "what they photographed" and "where they took the photo", respectively.

To seek richer and more contextualized insights into education in Jakarta slums, I integrated the PRM into one-on-one storytelling interviews. During the one-on-one interview, I gave children printed photos and asked them to pick the top six photos that they would like to discuss and rank the photos in the order that reflects the children's perceived significance (Ager et al., 2010). I also asked the children to give a title to each photo in the back of the six photos of their choice. (Some children even wrote a few lines of prose about the photo in addition to a title). The titles are significant in terms of breaking the representational certainty. Moving beyond what is visible, the titles enable interpretation of the photos from children's viewpoints (Vellanki & Davesar, 2020). Based on the PHOTO technique, my questions during the storytelling interview centered on children's way of seeing and understanding images (e.g., "Please tell me about your photo. Why did you choose this title?", "What is happening in your photo?") and interpret the image (e.g., "Please tell me why this person or object shown in the photo makes you feel cared for") by linking to the topic listed in the Activity Sheet. In this way, the interpretation of photos was in connection with images, text, and the stories of children from their point of view (Vellanki & Davesar, 2020). Notably, the PRM activity and subsequent storytelling interviews were noteworthy: They strengthened children's participation, empowerment, and contextualized understanding of urban slums' education circumstances, all of which contributed to a fuller comprehension of how NFE spaces in urban slums affect children's identity development. My research demonstrated that children, as agentic co-researchers, actively participated in data collection—i.e., photographing what/who they deemed important in their learning, choosing their own pseudonyms, giving titles for their

photos, selecting the photos of their preference for storytelling by ranking the photos according to the levels of importance from their perspective. Children also gained empowerment through sharing their knowledge about learning environments and discussing everyday realities that connect learning at home-school-NGO learning center and street work across Jakarta.

The Way Forward: Technical Considerations

This study has illuminated the five photovoice techniques that education researchers can use and adapt in urban slums. As mentioned above, education in urban slums has been under-appreciated and under-developed, from which there has been a lack of discussion regarding researchers' ethical issues and practical considerations about conducting photovoice in urban slums. Hence, the following discussions aim to provide practical assistance to education researchers, ensuring their photovoice research promotes children's empowerment and agency while pursuing to be culturally appropriate, ethical, and respectful.

1. ***How do you ensure child-centered participation in research?*** Education researchers can ensure this by including children's participation and perspective throughout the research process—before (research design), during (data collection and analysis), and after (publication) the photovoice research. During the research design phase, inquiring slum children about “what they want to know” and “what would be helpful for them” would be beneficial for formulating research questions aligned to children's best interests. Furthermore, during the data collection phase through photovoice, researchers should allow children to choose their own pseudonyms since self-selected pseudonyms demonstrate participants' agency and are contingent on socio-historical settings based on an anticolonial framework (Fricas, 2022). Yet, researchers should support children to engage in critically reflective deliberations about potential power inequalities and racism that certain pseudonyms might bring in cross-cultural knowledge-sharing (Brear, 2017). Even when analyzing and interpreting the collected photovoice data, researchers should center children's views to ensure children's positional nuances are reflected appropriately (Morris & Naeem, 2023). Such efforts would entail policy and program recommendations to be more relevant and responsive to the needs and contexts of children. In the data analysis and dissemination phase, other important questions to consider are: “Is it feasible to co-publish with children experiencing urban slum education?” and “How to disseminate the research findings and analysis that would be helpful to the urban slum communities?” In that sense, throughout the

photovoice process, children can take ownership of their stories and hold high motivation for transforming their education experiences within urban slums.

2. ***How do you ensure that children are involved in an equitable and culturally appropriate way?*** Educators should be mindful of the remaining power dynamics involved in photo-elicitation interviews between a researcher and slum children. While photovoice is theoretically an emancipatory and participatory method as per Freirean and feminist theoretical underpinnings that alter a dominant research paradigm to a participant-centered approach, a power structure remains throughout the photovoice research processes (Call-Cummings et al., 2019). This is especially prevalent when a researcher and a translator/interpreter are outsiders of a slum community, having different socioeconomic, racial/ethnic, and gender identities. Accordingly, researchers should consciously reflect on their positionality, assumptions, and potential influences on the research (Lenette, 2022). Another power dynamic that researchers may face is inequity and cultural differences between/among the child participants. Creating an inclusive and respectful environment is crucial, and one way to do this is by facilitating role play and discussions with child participants before a photo-taking activity. For example, researchers can show child participants a photo taken by the researcher in the child's community (e.g., trees and streets) to encourage them to have free discussions about their thoughts and experiences. The activity can help children understand and appreciate diverse perspectives among them while recognizing that their individual thoughts and experiences construct their community as a whole—i.e., how every “bits and pieces [of children's thoughts]—are fundamentally important to the construction and practice of [their] lives and spacings” (Horton & Kraftl, 2006, p. 87). Another strategy for equitable and culturally relevant research is to involve a local organization member as a co-facilitator of the photovoice project in the case of conducting research with/at a local community-based organization. The local facilitator can help foster a sense of familiarity, rapport, and openness between a researcher and slum children (Jahangir et al., 2022). Moreover, throughout the research, researchers should communicate and check with local gatekeepers about ethical obligations and cultural appropriateness of the design of the research instrument, interview approaches, and researchers' interactions with the children.

3. *How does your research benefit the slum community?*

This is the core question for education researchers conducting field studies in urban slums. How would their research—both their presence in the field and their research findings—bring practical contributions to realizing equal and equitable education for urban slum children? Vanderbilt and Ali (2020) highlighted that youth-engaged research must be meaningful and helpful to local communities and children with whom researchers learn about. That refers to researchers' responsibility to ensure their presence in the field is beneficial to the community based on a trusting relationship and that their findings are useful in ways that children also view as useful (Vanderbilt & Ali, 2020). Here, the important questions to continue asking throughout field research are: What benefits matter to slum communities and children (Fujii, 2012)? Accordingly, while conducting photovoice in urban slums, education researchers can dedicate time and effort to providing what the community identifies as meaningful and valuable (e.g., having casual conversations, after-school classes to slum children, and assisting in cooking). Upon collecting photovoice data and with children's informed assent, education researchers can consider sharing child-generated photos on social media to bring awareness about slum education to the academia and the wider public, beyond policymakers.

Additionally, the researcher's positionality orients varying approaches to benefit the community. By what means were they invited into the community? Are they an insider-researcher or outsider-researcher? If they are the former, what is their possible role and actions to bring maximal benefits to the community? For example, they may bring a collective voice and actions to form a community network to participate in the entire research process together and develop tools to advocate for and bring the local government's attention to slum education conditions and support slum children's quality education. Meanwhile, if they are an outsider-researcher, they should consider how they could establish a trusting relationship with the slum community, depending on how long they will stay in the field. They should consider in what ways they can build trusting relationships and rapport with community members (e.g., spending time for socialization and participating in religious and social activities). The researcher is also responsible for grasping what benefits the community expects to have from them, providing the resources and benefits that the

community identifies as valuable from them, and endeavoring to write about their lives and perspectives honestly, carefully, and ethically (Vanderbilt & Ali, 2020). What actions would they take after exiting the field? Rooted in a commitment to the slum community's education development, they should pursue sustained interactions to explore the issue further, collaboratively facilitate a project for educational change, and endeavor to empower slum children for the long-term, among many other actions, when they return from the field (Figueroa & Fox, 2020).

4. ***How is your research ethical for slum children?*** For slum children's research participation, researchers should obtain parental consent by holding a meeting with parents/guardians to explain the content, including potential benefits and risks of children's participation, voluntary nature, the steps of photovoice that children will be asked to do, using photos for dissemination. In addition to parental consent, children's informed assent should be obtained from children before beginning the photovoice activity (e.g., during the photovoice briefing session). Researchers should discuss with local gate stakeholders to determine whether written or verbal assent is more suitable for slum children. In both cases, using simple everyday language is important during explanation. For the written assent, using an age-appropriately designed child assent form, combined with images and simple texts, is recommended (Dockett et al., 2012). During the explanation, researchers must clearly share with slum children the value of their participation and what they assent to through sufficient explanation, including potential benefits and risks of child participants, using simple everyday language during explanation (Clark-Kazak, 2017).

Pursuing the nature of children's voluntary participation and informed assent, researchers should ensure that children can withdraw from the research at any time, considering some issues may unintentionally trigger emotional discomfort and trauma among children (e.g., school bullying and street work). Furthermore, during the photovoice activity, researchers should ensure slum children's safety and confidentiality for photovoice activity as one of the top priorities. When facilitating children's photo-taking activity, it is crucial to avoid placing children in risky situations. Effective approaches include asking an NFE teacher/parent to accompany a certain number of children during the photo-taking activity and reminding children not to stand in the

middle of the street, where cars/passengers may pass by, in order to take the perfect shots (Amos et al., 2012). Ensuring children's anonymity by using children's self-selected pseudonyms, and cartoonizing/blurring photos for presenting children in humanizing forms are among many other important ethical issues.

Conclusion

With the rising population of urban slum children, the need for researching urban slum education has become further pronounced in order to ensure slum children's equal and equitable education in pursuit of sustainable inclusive urban development. Hence, it is an important future task for education researchers to pay closer attention to this topic and establish sophisticated knowledge of urban slum education which has long been under-examined. For building knowledge on urban slum education, conducting photovoice carries great potential to build such knowledge about interpreting the children's lives within their cultural frames. Child-generated photos will center their voices, views, and experiences, presenting their lived educational experiences. This study discussed five concepts of urban slum education, followed by each photovoice technique to help explore those concepts. Consequently, this study helps education researchers to explore multidimensional issues related to children's education in urban slums. Such concerted effort-making on child-run photovoice in urban slums will be conducive to informing policymakers and practitioners in developing policies and programs that align with children's needs and best interests, particularly in slum contexts. Using photovoice with children and centering their voices is a hopeful step towards equitable and transformative education in urban slums.

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Appendix A

PHOTOVOICE: PHOTO-TAKING ACTIVITY SHEET

Name:

Camera #:

#	Topic	What did you take a photo of?	Where did you take photos?
1	What or who makes you feel happy and excited?	(1)	
		(2)	
		(3)	
2	What or who is the most meaningful to you?	(4)	
		(5)	
		(6)	
3	What or who makes you feel confident?	(7)	
		(8)	
		(9)	
4	What or who makes you feel motivated?	(10)	
		(11)	
		(12)	
5	If we would like to know you better, what should we know?	(13)	
		(14)	
		(15)	
6	What or who makes you feel cared for?	(16)	
		(17)	
		(18)	
7	What or who makes you feel understood and respected?	(19)	
		(20)	
		(21)	
8	What or who is most meaningful to you in your community?	(22)	
		(23)	
		(24)	
9	What or who makes you feel a sense of belonging to the community?	(25)	
		(26)	
		(27)	