

Research Paper

## Using Contact Hypothesis and Indirect Reciprocity Approach to Improve Intergroup Relationship: A Slum-based Proposed Intervention

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### ABSTRACT

Intergroup conflicts are a manifestation of the perceived incompatibility of goals or values between two or more individuals, which emerges because the involved individuals classify themselves as members of different social groups. It can be easily perceived as the result of ingroup-outgroup bias. Conflicts can stem from a scarcity of economic resources, hunger for power, polarized ideologies, and opposing faith in science and religion. The relevance of psychology serves as a hawk eye in group relations which are also playgrounds for conflict. Slums are complex communities with convoluted intersections between religion, income levels, political patronage, etc. Social psychologists attempt to understand the social threads in these close-spaced and seemingly cohesive communities since they house a sizable proportion of our heritage and population. The hypothetical constructs and deductive systems of psycho-social theories explain group properties with objectives beyond internal physical reality. These explanations are only useful for the common when applied in the real-world setting for the resolution of social problems. Here comes the role of Interventionists who utilize these explanations as a basis for building interventions to reap benefits for society. The following study sets the stage for a proposed intervention in Ahmedabad's Chandola landfill slum located on the periphery housing a fractured community post the riots (2002) yielding a knotty understanding of the abstraction. The target population featuring Chandola comprises Gujarati Muslims and Bangla Muslims ranging from 13 to 29 years of age socially ascertained as ragpickers. The bastions of the advocated intervention are the Contact hypothesis and Indirect Reciprocity that transpired by a Vocational training program and a Computer game program appraised via impact evaluation.

**Keywords:** *Intergroup Conflict, Contact Hypothesis, Indirect Reciprocity, Intervention*

Some of the earliest interventions for conflict management have been based on the Third-party consultation approach. An initial descriptive model of third-party consultation was first provided by Fisher (1972). This approach aims at resolving conflict by facilitating communication and interaction of conflicted groups under a third-

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person consultant who has an unbiased perspective on the situation. The consultant is generally a practitioner in the field who has expertise in facilitating a productive confrontation.

Another significant set of studies has examined the role of Intragroup Dialogue in promoting acceptance of the collective narratives of all groups and willingness toward reconciliation. Intragroup Dialogue ameliorates identity threats posed by an intergroup conflict on collective identities, encouraging participants to adopt a more complex view of themselves, which validates both narratives of self and “other”. Over the years other intervention studies have explored the role of perspective-taking and collective dialogue for conflict management. Intergroup conflicts can be stroked by collective perceptions of injustice. Similar to the concept, a group of researchers applied a justice-focused intervention to resolve interpersonal conflicts and evaluated whether it could mitigate intergroup conflicts.

Some recent interventions that have been implemented on target groups like ours have explored new techniques of intergroup conflict management. For instance, in 2017, Andrej Tusicisny conducted an intervention in 3 slums of Mumbai, namely, Bhoiwada, Magathane, and Shivaji Nagar to reduce intergroup conflict and Hindu subjects’ discriminatory attitudes towards the Muslim minority. The researcher used a computer game program instigating intergroup contact and indirect positive reciprocity among members of both groups.

In another intervention conducted in 2022, a group of researchers studied the potential for pleasant and cooperative contact to reduce preconceived prejudice between religious groups in the context of Hindu-Muslim conflicts in 30 slums of Kanpur Nagar District, Uttar Pradesh. They employed a vocational training program for women aged between 15 and 50 years. The training included sessions on grooming skills at salons allowing for women of both groups to interact in a cooperative manner within that workspace. Aspects of this program have inspired some activities of our intervention. The proposed interventions are based on the principles of contact hypothesis and indirect positive reciprocity.

The age group was selected after a rigorous analysis of similar interventions suggesting that a tangible and temporal impact can be interposed when the crucial stages of social perspective development and employable phase that requires coordination of resources are targeted.

### ***Contact Hypothesis and Intergroup Conflict***

Much research in the field of intergroup conflict has provided strong support for the causal relation between “pleasant and cooperative contact” (Hewstone & Browne, 1986) and reduced intergroup conflict. First posited by Allport (1954), the Contact hypothesis is the assumption that positive contact with members of an out-group can decrease prejudice towards the out-group by the in-group and lead to improved intergroup relations. Social activities between both groups can foster empathy and belief updating, as long as such social activities involve working towards a common goal. Such an environment requires cooperative contact. Some examples include completing puzzles in pairs (Gu et al., 2016, 2019); art and music (Bergh & Sloboda, 2010), and playing sports (Lowe, 2020; Mousa 2019).

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### *Indirect Positive Reciprocity and Intergroup Conflict*

Indirect positive reciprocity describes the tendency to help a person from an out-group who has previously helped someone else from the in-group. This in turn also induces prosocial behavior towards members of the out-group. Group stereotypes about cooperative behavior combined with the lack of any direct positive experience with the other group can help explain discrimination of out-groups that are too small, weak, or politically disenfranchised. Indirect positive reciprocity triggered by experiencing short and superficial cooperation with out-group individual members reduces discrimination against other members of the same group.

### *Theoretical Understanding*

The proposed interventions are based on the principles of the contact hypothesis and indirect positive reciprocity. Contact hypothesis is the assumption that positive contact with members of an out-group can decrease negative stereotyping of the out-group by the in-group and lead to improved intergroup relations. Indirect positive reciprocity describes the tendency to help a person from an out-group who has previously helped someone else from the in-group. This in turn also induces prosocial behavior towards members of the out-group. The intervention programs are composed of two broad activities, each overlaying the above-mentioned principles. The program activities are described at length below. This intervention program is based on the Program Logic Model which provides a theoretical rationale explaining the causal connections among the various components of the intervention as mentioned in the theoretical understanding.

### *Rationale*

We propose two separate intervention programs for participants above 19 years of age till 29 and school-going children who are 13 to 18 years old. The rationale is that both age brackets differ in their nature of conflicts and respective problems. While adults might consider the out-group as a threat to their job security which often manifests in small-scale violent breakouts, for children, conflict may occur in places like schools, where they are put together in one place but are unable to interact healthily due to persistent prejudices. Thus, the Vocational Training Program serves to increase intergroup contact between Gujarati Muslims and Bangla Muslims, while also equipping them with vocational skills that they can employ for creating work opportunities. Whereas, the Computer Game Program aims to increase cooperation among children of both communities in the school setting which may further lead to an increase in prosocial acts like helping, sharing, etc.

### *Target Group*

#### **Context**

Ahmedabad is often called an Indian ‘success story’ of economic urbanization, but it is also a city highly segregated along religious and caste lines, and a flashpoint is the 2002 Hindu–Muslim riots that left thousands dead and relocated most Muslim communities around the city’s landfills and waste management peripheries. One such worst-affected community of Ahmedabad is the Chandola landfill slum, lying on the outskirts of the city. The possible causal factors responsible for the ethnic violence in Chandola as attributed by scholars include resource scarcity, youth bulges (Urdal, 2008), economic disparities (Stewart, 2008), areas of deep electoral competition (Dhattiwala and Biggs, 2012), and traction due to inequality and social exclusion (Kanbur, 2007; Puri, 2014). Sitting amongst five different 75-foot-high garbage hills, Chandola is an ‘unimproved’ landfill site that serves as the final destination for large amounts of medical and industrial hazardous waste. With widespread

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prostitution, the area has been reviewed by 64 International Area Studies Review 19(1) as unhygienic and malnourished. Most of the Muslim victims of the 2002 riots were either engaged in scavenging activities or functioned as city garbage collectors. The process of 'Othering' has resulted because of structural marginalization further pushed by abrupt corruption pushing the Muslims to a lower economic rung. The infrastructure crunch is evident in water supply and sanitation. The social and demographic profile of Chandola is depicted below.

### *Precipitating Factors of Conflict*

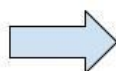
The precipitating factors that led to the intergroup conflict between Gujarati and Bangla Muslims were engrained in the social and economic profile of the community post-displacement. Amongst many, the factors chiefly responsible included the marginalization of Gujarati Muslims due to internal displacement; marginalization of Bangla Muslims due to famines and loss of livelihoods in subsistence farming (in Bangladesh); the influx of Bangla migrants created livelihood insecurity among Gujarati Muslims; social exclusion and poverty of both groups in the face of already persistent economic disparities.

### *Perpetuating Factors of Conflict*

Apart from the factors that expedited the conflict in the social setting, a host of elements sustained the conditions barring it from any scope of improvement. These included an uneven increase in the standard of living which enhanced the competition; language barriers restricting interaction; resource scarcity and youth bulges pushing the groups against each other; prejudices and stereotypes; the process of 'othering'; and ineffectiveness of the waste management industry amongst others.

### *Figure 1 Chandola Slum Context*

Birkvad & Miklian in 2016 conducted a descriptive research to identify the intergroup conflicts in Chandola to provide an intricate understanding of the narrative of this slum community.



After the 2002 riots, Hindus of the Chandola slum explicated great acceptance towards the resettled Muslim who then took to engaging in scavenging or garbage collection.



#### **Chandola Landfill Slum**

There is relative peace between the Hindus and Muslims who collectively identify as GUJARATIS while there's a refocus of violence against illegal Muslim Bangladeshi migrants who have upscaled competition in the slum economy.

Chandola is surmounted with 5 garbage hills, the small shacks sufficing the housing requirements while large amounts of hazardous waste is delivered illegally at night.

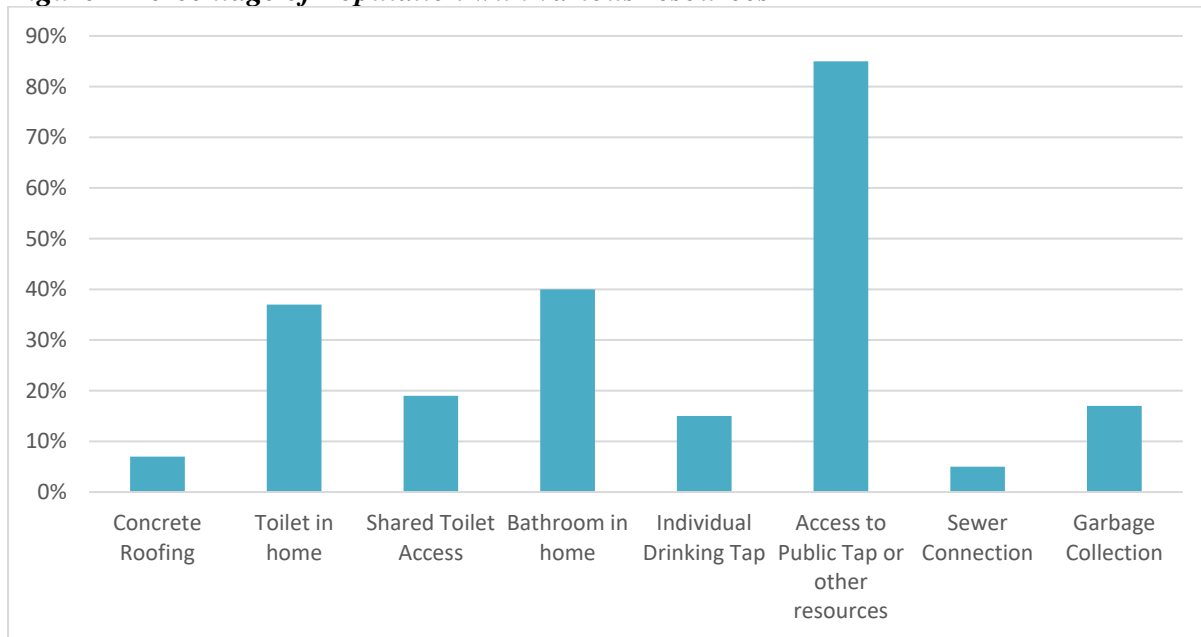
Young children aged 2- 14 sit under the shacks to slog days and sort garbage. There is also widespread prostitution among women who charge as low as Rs 150 - 200 per session.



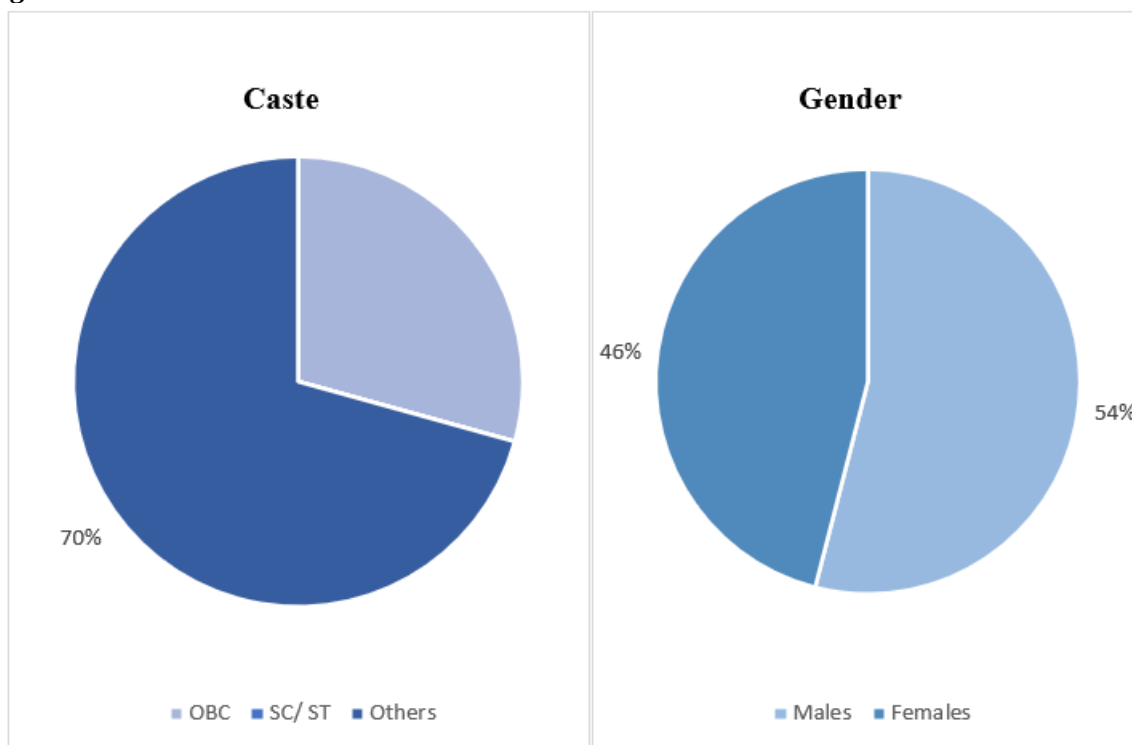
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### Demographics

*Figure 2 Percentage of Population with various resources*



*Figure 3 Caste and Gender Distribution*



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Figure 4 Patterns of Occupation

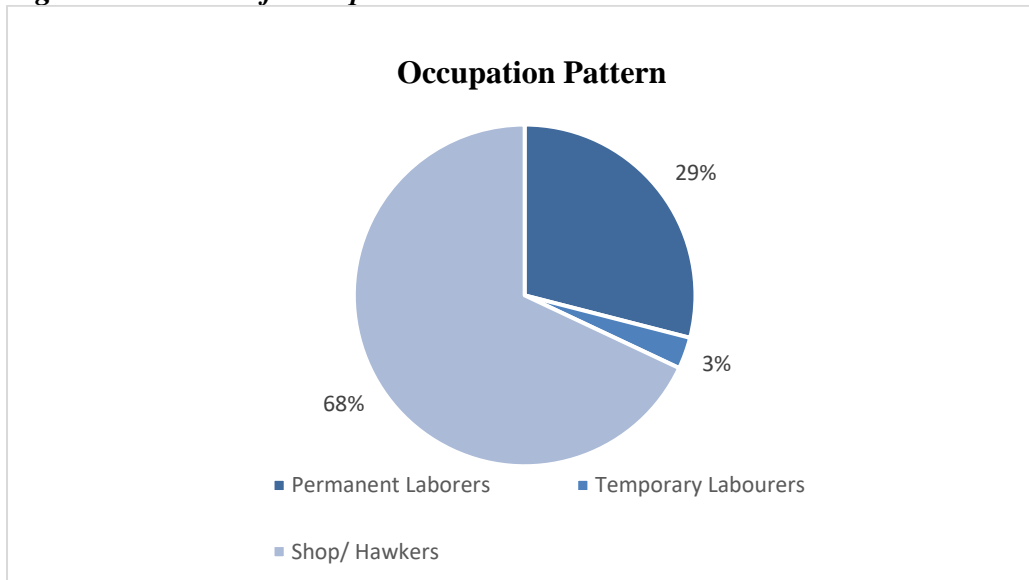


Figure 5 Percentage of Ownership of Houses

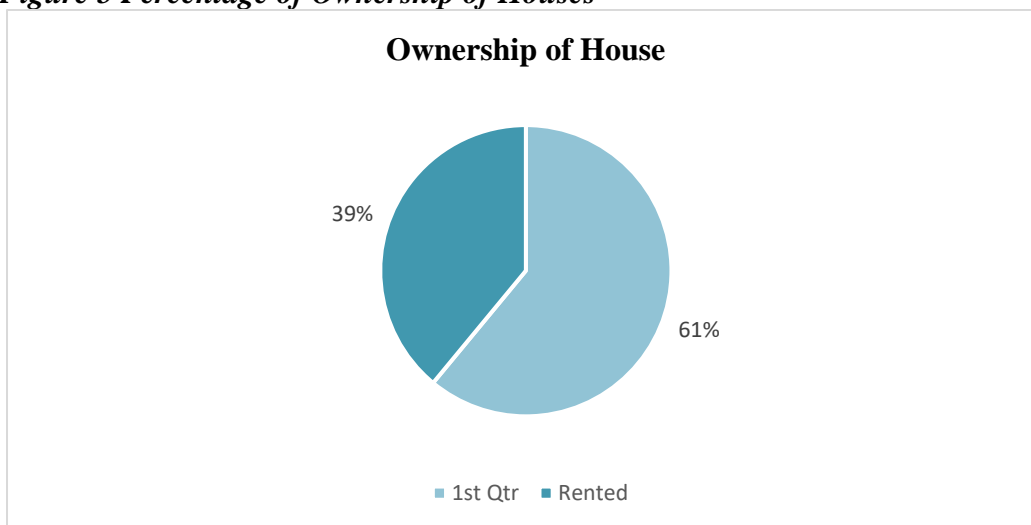
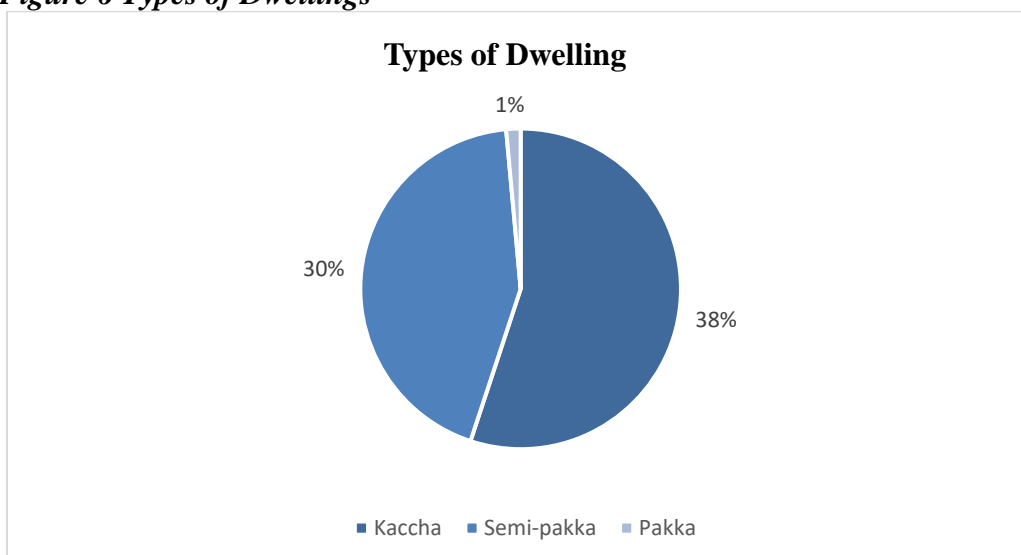


Figure 6 Types of Dwellings



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Below are some excerpts from the interview conducted by Birkvad and Miklian (2016) in the region, expressing how people feel about Bangladeshi Muslims.

Bharat, a 21-year-old Hindu who has picked scrap from the landfill for several years, puts it more succinctly, “Bangladeshis and we remain a separate entity...the AMC guys are with us so we have enough backup [in case of violence]. When there is a confrontation between a local guy and Bangladeshi, local people stand together, regardless of us being Hindu or Muslim. There are differences between us [local Hindus and Muslims], but we have to stay in the same locality and stay united.”

But for the Bangladeshis, the experience cuts more deeply than a ‘separate but equal’ mentality. As Rafaiza notes, “I’m Bangla so I can’t enroll my children into a school. They ask me for an ID card but I have none. The maximum police can do is deport us. And we come back again because there is no food in Bangladesh. The only people who are really troublesome are the goons on both sides. They create unnecessary problems and get us good Bangladeshis into trouble.”

21-year-old Bangladeshi migrant Daksha feels similarly. Not only does she feel institutionally discriminated against, but she also feels threatened by her Gujarati neighbors, “More and more Banglas are coming to these hills. We don’t speak (the local) language. We swear at each other and fight with each other in different languages...Gujarati women keep screaming at me. I can’t understand what they say. Sometimes I fight back in Bangla and other times I just leave it. Together with my husband, I earn 500–600 rupees a day much of which goes into food and rent. [Still,] we are much better off on these hills than the plains of Bangladesh.”

**Table 1 Features of Target Group**

Criteria	Features
Region	Chandola, garbage slum, Ahmedabad, Gujarat
Nationality	Indians & and illegal Bangladeshi migrants
Age	Thirteen to eighteen years old(a school-based Intervention) Nineteen to twenty-nine years old (a work-based Intervention)
Sex	Males & Females
Religion	Islam (Gujarati Muslims & Bangla Muslims)
Caste	Socially identified as “rag-pickers” caste
Profession	Predominantly Rag- pickers (among men & children) Prostitution (among women) A small percentage of children also attend school
Language	Hindi, Gujarati, Bengali

### Identifying the problem

Broadly, the problems of intergroup conflict between Gujarati Muslims and Bangla Muslims are:

1. Process of “Othering”- Perception of the Bangla community as being strongly different resulting in marking them as out-group.
2. Threat to livelihood with the influx of Bangladeshi waste-pickers in the already scarce economy.

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3. Extreme poverty of both groups resulting from a history of marginalization and social exclusion.
4. Negative prejudices and discriminatory behavior towards each other.

***Stakeholders***

Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC) as the stakeholder, employs people in landfill areas and works towards community development and improvement. However, there is a slight inclination of AMC workers towards fellow Gujaratis, they also admit to being wary of Bangladeshi Muslims. There are also NGOs concerned with urban slum development that are functioning in the area. As Bangla Muslims reside in Chandola without any legal status, governmental help for them becomes even more scarce.

***Needs Assessment***

To understand the problem’s severity and prevalence, both informal and formal modes of need assessment can be done. Secondary sources like research work provide evidence of Chandola’s intergroup conflict based on nearly 100 interviews conducted over an 18-month period. Similarly, prior to the intervention a baseline assessment or a formal pretest evaluation can be carried out in the form of semi-structured interviews employing Donini’s (2007) ‘perceptions’ approach. Whereas for the literate group of a population like school-going teenagers, widespread surveys can be conducted monthly.

**Setting Goals and Designing the Intervention**

***Table 2 Long-Term Goals for Intervention Programs***

<b>Program</b>	<b>Long Term Goals</b>
Vocational Training Program	Building skills so that individuals can seek more employment opportunities and work with members of perceived out-groups in harmony.
Computer-Game Program	Increase prosocial behavior acts of children towards each other and set a foundation for harmony in the future.

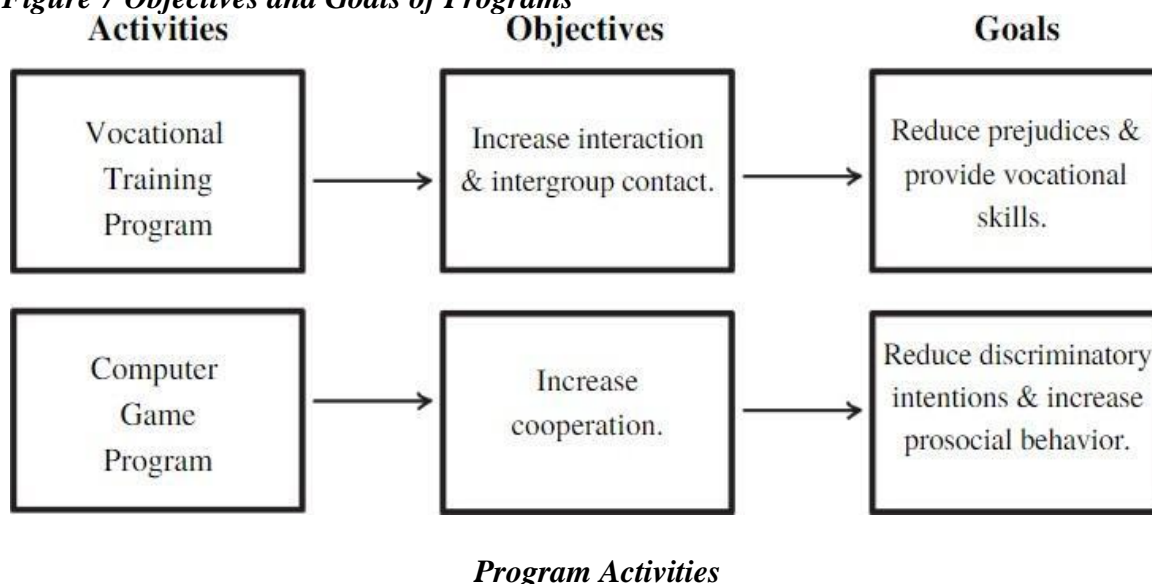
***Table 3 Objectives of the Programs During, Immediately After, and 6 months after the Implementation***

<b>Intervention Program</b>	<b>During the Intervention</b>	<b>Immediately after the Intervention</b>	<b>Intermediate-term changes (6 months after)</b>
Vocational Training Program (Change in behavior)	Learning vocational skills while working closely with each other.	Reduction in prejudices	Maintaining peaceful contact and positive attitudes. Increase in communication
Computer-Game Program (Change in attitude)	Inducing intervention with amusement for greater participation. Increase cooperation and trust.	Reduction in discriminatory intentions.	Increase in prosocial behavior.



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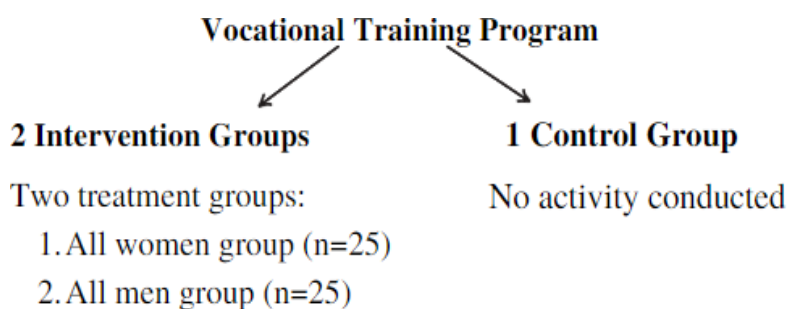
**Figure 7 Objectives and Goals of Programs**



**Vocational Training Program**

This program has 2 intervention groups; one for females (n=25) and one for males (n=25). There will be one control group that will not undergo any treatment. It will participate only in pretest and posttest evaluation.

**Figure 10 Intervention and Control Groups of the Vocational Training Program**



The sample can be selected through the cluster sampling method and the study would follow a quasi-experimental design. The first nine days will be devoted to individual training for both groups and the female group will be given an Introductory Level beautician course for a span of 9 days, meanwhile, the men's group will be given an Introductory Level Woodwork and carpentry Course. On the 10th day both groups would sit for a session on Self nursing activities and on the 11th day, the groups would distribute praise notes to each other. Each activity will allow participants to work in cooperative contact while engaging in hands-on training. The activities are listed below.

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**Table 4 Activities in the Vocational Training Program**

<b>Duration</b>	<b>Vocational Training for Men</b>	<b>Vocational Training for Women</b>	<b>Instructor</b>
1 <sup>st</sup> day	Introductory session on Woodwork and carpentry.	Introductory session on beautician course.	Researchers
2 <sup>nd</sup> , 3 <sup>rd</sup> & 4 <sup>th</sup> day	Understanding of Tools, Measuring and Marking, Holding, Cutting, Grooving, Planning, Striking, Boring, and Miscellaneous Tools.	Modules and activities on basics of skincare and hygiene.	Trained instructors
5 <sup>th</sup> & 6 <sup>th</sup> day	Care and maintenance of Tools, Precautions while using carpentry tools, understanding Woodworking machines, Woodworking lathes, Wood sawing machines, etc.	Styling (Hair treatment, hair cutting, Brow shaping, hair coloring, and hair styling).	Trained instructors
7 <sup>th</sup> & 8 <sup>th</sup> day	Drawing (Instruments for drawing, Preliminary practice, Orthographic/ Isometric/ Oblique/ Perspective drawing/ Freehand drawing.	Grooming (manicure and pedicure, waxing, threading, Bleaching, masques)	Trained instructors
9 <sup>th</sup> day	Finishing Work (Stains and Preservations, Wood filling, Polishing, Paints).	Bondo transfers (Corporate/ bridal/ party makeup)	Trained instructors
10 <sup>th</sup> day	Basics First Aid (such as performing chest compressions, providing rescue breathing, doing CPR, bandaging bleeding wounds, Heimlich Maneuver for choking, etc.)	Same as the first group along with an inclusion of tips for menstrual hygiene and basic aid skills during pregnancy emergencies.	Nurses from the nearby Municipal Hospital.
11 <sup>th</sup> day	Concluding session (Includes distributing praise notes between participants and to participants from researchers).	Concluding session (Includes distributing praise notes between participants and to participants from researchers).	Researchers

**Computer Game Program**

This intervention involves a computer game to be undertaken in 10 rounds. Students will be purposely paired with a fellow student who will either be a Bangla Muslim or a Gujarati Muslim. Each student will sit with a computer and the identity of the fellow student will not be revealed. Subjects would believe that they are playing a game with real people, while their partners are in fact generated by a computer. The computer screen will show 3 unobtrusive cues of the partner's membership in either the Gujarati or Bangla group.

**Table 5 Experience of Cooperation and Expected Outcome across the Four Groups**

<b>Groups</b>	<b>Experience of Cooperation</b>	<b>Expected Outcome</b>
Generalized Reciprocity group	Subjects always face cooperators.	It is expected that participants will feel more trust in each other irrespective of group.
Cooperative Gujarati Muslims group	Subjects play 5 rounds with cooperating Gujarati Muslims and then 5 rounds with defecting Bangla Muslims.	It is expected that participants will feel more trust in Gujarati Muslims.

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Groups	Experience of Cooperation	Expected Outcome
Cooperative Bangla Muslims group	Subjects play 5 rounds with cooperating Bangla Muslims and then 5 rounds with defecting Gujarati Muslims.	It is expected that participants will feel more trust in Bangla Muslims.
No Reciprocity group	All 10 partners defect.	No facilitation of trust.

### *Implementing the Intervention*

Researchers implement the Vocational Training Program within the slum locality. Each day the training will commence at 8 am and will finish at 5 pm with a one-hour break. The course curriculum will be prepared in consultation with a professional expert. Activities are to be facilitated by respective invigilators. For the Computer Game Program, the school chosen is Chandola Municipality School (Number 1) set up by AMC in the South Zone (Ahmedabad Municipal School Board, 2021, secondary data). Institute for Development Education and Learning (IDEAL) is a local NGO that focuses on rural development and poverty alleviation. The intervention can be conducted in collaboration with the NGO.

### *Evaluation*

The intervention procedure is to be reviewed by IRB, along with an over-check by AMC. We propose a peer review in the later stages of the study. To determine the hypothesized improvement in functioning outcome evaluation can be done using the following scales Pretest, Posttest, and Lagged posttest (after six months).

**Table 6 Measures for assessing Vocational Training Program and Computer Game Program**

Scale	Author (s)	Items	Variable Measured
The k-nearest neighbor score	Jeremy Spater (2019)	11 items	Outgroup hostility and outgroup exposure
The Intergroup Anxiety Scale	Tausch, Hewstone, and Roy (2009)	6 items	Discriminatory intergroup contact
Positive Downstream Indirect Reciprocity Scale	Malgorzata Szczesniak, Agata H. Swiatek, Maria A. Swiatek & Wojciech Rodzen (2022)	20 items	Indirect Reciprocity
The Generalized Trust Scale	Yamagashi and Yamagashi (1994)	6 items	Trust and Cooperation
The Pro-social Behavior Questionnaire	Weir, Stevenson & Graham (1980); Weir & Duveen (1981)	20 items	Pro-social Behavior

### *Implication for Practice*

Taken together, our proposed interventions, backed by empirical evidence, suggest that intergroup conflict in slum settings such as that of Chandola can be reduced by increasing intergroup contact and inducing indirect positive reciprocity. The Vocational Training Program that follows the behavioral change approach implies that interacting in closed spaces increases communication thereby, reducing prejudices between the in-group and out-group. It represents a shift from Whereas, the computer game program trails the path of attitudinal change suggesting that the incorporation of trust and cooperation in intergroup

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relations decreases discriminatory intentions sequentially increasing pro-social behavior. The assimilations of the two intervention programs put forward an insight into resolving the quantum of intergroup conflict while adding to the existing pool of literature.

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### **Conflict of Interest**

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