

Conditions of Beggars in Gurugram City: A Case Study

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ABSTRACT

Present research paper studies the current situation of beggars in Gurugram city, based on a primary survey of 120 respondents. The study focuses on various factors, including demographic details, living conditions, access to healthcare, education, and begging patterns, to understand the socioeconomic challenges faced by this marginalized group. The respondents were predominantly male, with most falling in the age group of above 40 years. A majority of the respondents were physically able-bodied, though a significant portion reported having disabilities. Most beggars had never attended school or held formal employment. The living conditions vary, with a considerable number residing in rented accommodations, while others live in slums or on the streets. Many beggars reported feeling unsafe while begging at traffic signals, indicating that the occupation comes with its own set of challenges, including insecurity and vulnerability. Begging was primarily concentrated around traffic signals, temples, and marketplaces, with most individuals begging for more than 8 hours a day. Despite their hardships, only a negligible portion of the beggars reported receiving any form of aid from government or non-governmental organizations. The findings of this study highlight the complex interplay between poverty, lack of education, homelessness, and social exclusion that perpetuate the practice of begging. The study also underscores the urgent need for comprehensive social welfare interventions to address the needs of this marginalized population and to reduce the socioeconomic inequalities that force individuals into begging.

Keywords:- Begging, Homelessness, Poverty, Gurugram, Social Exclusion, Urban Marginalization, Informal Settlements, Disability, Education, Vulnerability.

INTRODUCTION

Begging, an age-old social issue, continues to persist in both developed and developing countries. In India, the problem is particularly severe due to rapid urbanization, rural-urban migration, poverty, and inadequate social welfare mechanisms. In the burgeoning city of Gurugram, known for its rapid economic growth and modern urban infrastructure, the persistence of beggars in various parts of the city presents a stark contrast to its global image of prosperity. Despite its growth, Gurugram still grapples with high levels of inequality, poverty, and urban deprivation, which are manifested in the presence of beggars across its streets, markets, and religious places.

The decision to focus on Gurugram was driven by its dual identity as both a booming economic hub and a city grappling with deep-rooted poverty. The insights derived from this study could help inform policy decisions, leading to more effective interventions to tackle the problem of begging. The study is also a call for more inclusive urban planning that addresses the needs of the city's marginalized populations, offering them better access to education, employment, healthcare, and housing.

Significance of the Study:-

Present study delves into the lives of beggars in Gurugram, aiming to capture their demographic profiles, socioeconomic conditions, and the challenges they face. Through a primary survey of 120 respondents, the study seeks to shed light on the underlying factors that perpetuate begging as a survival strategy. The research addresses the importance of understanding the condition of beggars not only from a humanitarian perspective but also as a pressing urban governance issue that needs

immediate intervention. The study recognizes begging as a manifestation of extreme poverty, homelessness, and social exclusion, urging a reevaluation of urban policies and social welfare schemes.

Statement of the Problem:-

Gurugram's urban growth has resulted in increasing socioeconomic disparities, leading to a rise in the number of people turning to begging as their only means of survival. This marginalized population, often ignored by the mainstream, faces significant challenges, including lack of access to healthcare, education, housing, and job opportunities. Furthermore, begging is associated with insecurity, vulnerability to exploitation, and social stigma. While there have been efforts to eradicate begging, such as governmental rehabilitation programs and NGOs' involvement, the efficacy of these measures remains questionable, as evidenced by the growing number of beggars in the city.

Scope and Focus:-

The study focuses on the beggar population in Gurugram, aiming to identify:

- i. The demographic characteristics of beggars.
- ii. Their living conditions and access to basic services.
- iii. Their experiences with begging, including earnings, work hours, and locations.
- iv. The extent to which government or NGO interventions have reached them.

The study's primary objective is to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on urban poverty and social exclusion by offering a detailed understanding of the socioeconomic dynamics that force individuals into begging in a rapidly growing urban center like Gurugram.

LITERATURE REVIEW

- i. **Urban Marginalization and Begging:** Researchers have long identified begging as a visible manifestation of urban marginalization. Davis (2006), describes the rapid urbanization in developing countries as a primary driver behind the formation of informal economies, where begging thrives due to systemic inequalities and poverty.
- ii. **Begging and Poverty:** According to Rao (2013), begging is deeply linked to poverty and unemployment, where individuals unable to secure livelihoods turn to begging as a survival strategy. Studies in India show that a lack of formal employment opportunities and the absence of a social safety net are critical drivers of this phenomenon.
- iii. **Social Exclusion and Vulnerability:** Harvey (2008), argues that urban spaces are marked by stark inequalities, where the poor are spatially excluded. This spatial exclusion forces the poor to reside in slums or on streets, where they are vulnerable to exploitation and marginalization, contributing to the perpetuation of begging.
- iv. **Disability and Begging:** Bhan (2016), highlights that people with disabilities often turn to begging due to the lack of employment opportunities and inadequate social security measures, making them one of the most vulnerable groups in urban settings.
- v. **Interventions and their Limitations:** Roy (2009), critiques the existing governmental and non-governmental interventions aimed at curbing begging. He notes that these initiatives often fail to address the root causes of begging, such as unemployment, homelessness, and lack of access to healthcare and education.

STUDY AREA

Gurugram, previously known as Gurgaon, is a major city and district in Haryana. The Union Government officially approved the name change to Gurugram on October 14, 2016. The city's geographical coordinates are from 28°21'40"N to 28°31'49"N in latitude and from 76°55'40"E to 77°10'22"E in longitude, according to the Municipal Corporation boundaries as of 2015. Gurugram stands as a remarkable example of rapid urban growth, experiencing significant increases in population both geographically and demographically. This sudden spike in growth suggests a transformation, almost like a rebirth, as the area has evolved from a small village into what is now known as the nation's Millennium City. On the global stage, Gurugram has earned the title of "Icon of India's Growth and Development".

Gurugram, a prominent city in the state of Haryana, has transformed from a sleepy suburb of Delhi into one of India's most dynamic urban centers. Known for its skyscrapers, multinational corporations, and luxury shopping malls, Gurugram is often seen as the epitome of India's rapid urbanization and economic growth. However, beneath this glossy surface lies a city grappling with significant social inequalities, poverty, and urban marginalization.

Historically, Gurugram's rise to prominence began in the late 1990s when it attracted major corporate investments. Since then, the city's population has ballooned, leading to unplanned urbanization, a surge in real estate development, and significant infrastructural challenges. The city's rapid development has drawn millions of migrants from across India in

search of better livelihoods. However, not all of these migrants have been able to secure formal employment, leading many to the informal economy, including begging.

The city is divided into several sectors, with well-developed areas housing multinational corporations and upscale residential complexes, while the outskirts and older parts of the city are marked by informal settlements, slums, and homelessness. These informal settlements are often populated by migrant workers and marginalized groups, including beggars, who live in overcrowded, unsanitary conditions with limited access to basic services.

While Gurugram has made significant strides in economic development, the city faces glaring inequalities, especially in terms of access to housing, healthcare, education, and social welfare services. This stark contrast between wealth and poverty is most visible in the presence of beggars across the city's streets, traffic signals, temples, and markets.

METHODOLOGY

The study is based on a primary survey conducted with 120 beggars in Gurugram city. A structured questionnaire was used to gather data on various aspects of their lives, including demographic information, family and living conditions, begging patterns, and access to services such as healthcare and education. Respondents were selected randomly from different parts of the city, including traffic signals, markets, and religious places, to ensure a representative sample of the begging population. The data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics to identify patterns and correlations. The survey included both closed and open-ended questions to capture quantitative data and qualitative insights into the lived experiences of beggars. Data was also collected on their interactions with governmental and non-governmental organizations to understand the level of support they receive and the challenges they face.

Objectives of the Study:-

- i. To examine the demographic profile of beggars in Gurugram, including their age, gender, marital status, and physical disabilities.
- ii. To understand the living conditions of beggars, including their housing situation, family composition, and access to healthcare.
- iii. To analyze the socioeconomic factors that drive individuals to begging, including education, employment history, and earnings.
- iv. To assess the challenges and dangers associated with begging, including safety concerns and interactions with law enforcement.
- v. To evaluate the effectiveness of existing government and NGO interventions aimed at supporting beggars.

RESULTS

Table 1: Personal Information of the Beggars

Sr. No.	Personal Information	Type of Response	No of Respondents
1.	Age	Below 10 years	33
		10-20 years	25
		21-40 years	27
		Above 40 years	35
2.	Gender	Male	72
		Female	48
		Other	0
3.	Marital Status	Single	40
		Married	23
		Divorced/Separated	19
		Widowed	38
4.	Physical Disability	Yes	42
		No	78
5.	Have you ever attended school	Yes	12
		No	108
6.	Have you ever had a job?	Yes	22
		No	98

Source: Data Collected by Research Scholar During Primary Survey

The analysis of the results, based on the primary survey, reveals several key findings. The majority of the beggars in Gurugram are male (72%), and a significant portion of them are above 40 years of age (35%). Most beggars are unmarried (40%), while a sizable portion are widowed (38%), indicating the role of family breakdowns in pushing individuals into begging. Despite being physically able-bodied, a large number of respondents (78%) have never attended school, and an overwhelming majority (98%) have never held formal employment.

Table 2: Family and Living Conditions of the Beggars

Sr. No.	Family and Living Conditions	Type of Response	No of Respondents
1.	Where do You live	Slum/Informal Settlement	32
		Homeless (Streets)	20
		Rented accommodation	57
		Shelter home	11
2.	Who do You live with	Alone	67
		Family	48
		Friends	5
3.	Do you have access to healthcare services when needed	Yes	32
		No	46
		Sometimes	42

Source: Data Collected by Research Scholar During Primary Survey

The living conditions of beggars vary, with 32% living in slums or informal settlements and 20% being completely homeless. Many beggars (67%) live alone, which highlights their social isolation and vulnerability. Access to healthcare is limited, with only 32% reporting that they can access healthcare services when needed.

Table 3: Begging Conditions

Sr. No.	Begging Conditions	Type of Response	No of Respondents
1.	How long have you been begging	Less than 6 months	7
		6 months to 1 year	12
		1-3 years	47
		More than 3 years	54
2.	Where do you usually beg	Traffic signals	38
		Temples/Religious places	48
		Markets	34
3.	How many hours do you spend begging each day	Less than 4 hours	29
		4-8 hours	32
		More than 8 hours	59
4.	On average, how much money do you earn from begging daily	Less than ₹50	2
		₹50-₹100	28
		₹100-₹200	56
		More than ₹200	34
5.	Do you feel safe while begging at traffic signals	Yes	28
		No	92
6.	Have you received any help from the government or NGOs	Yes	9
		No	111

Source: Data Collected by Research Scholar During Primary Survey

In terms of begging conditions, most respondents (54%) have been begging for more than three years, with the majority spending more than 8 hours a day begging. Begging primarily takes place at traffic signals (38%) and religious places (48%). Daily earnings from begging range from ₹50 to ₹200, with a majority earning between ₹100-₹200. The safety of beggars remains a major concern, with 92% reporting that they do not feel safe while begging at traffic signals.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study paint a grim picture of the living and working conditions of beggars in Gurugram. Despite the city's rapid economic growth and modernization, a significant portion of its population remains trapped in a cycle of

poverty, homelessness, and social exclusion. The beggars surveyed in this study are predominantly male, elderly, and socially isolated, with limited access to education, employment, and healthcare. Their living conditions are dire, with many residing in informal settlements or being completely homeless.

Begging, for most of the respondents, is not a temporary means of survival but a long-term occupation. The fact that most individuals have been begging for more than three years, often for more than 8 hours a day, indicates the absence of alternative livelihood options. The majority of beggars earn between ₹100-₹200 a day, which is barely enough to survive in a city like Gurugram. Their work is not only physically demanding but also fraught with insecurity and danger, as evidenced by the high percentage of respondents who reported feeling unsafe while begging.

The lack of access to healthcare services further exacerbates their vulnerability, as many beggars suffer from untreated health conditions. This, coupled with their social isolation, makes them one of the most marginalized and neglected groups in the city. Despite their desperate need for assistance, very few beggars have received help from the government or non-governmental organizations. This highlights the inadequacy of existing social welfare programs and the need for more targeted interventions.

The study underscores the urgent need for a comprehensive policy framework to address the issue of begging in Gurugram. This framework should focus on providing beggars with access to education, healthcare, housing, and employment opportunities, thereby reducing their dependence on begging as a means of survival. The role of non-governmental organizations should be strengthened, and their efforts should be better coordinated with government initiatives to ensure that aid reaches the most vulnerable sections of society.

In conclusion, begging in Gurugram is not just a manifestation of individual poverty but a reflection of the broader systemic inequalities that plague the city. Addressing this issue requires a multifaceted approach that tackles the root causes of poverty and social exclusion. By providing beggars with the necessary support to reintegrate into society, we can begin to address the deep-seated inequalities that continue to divide the city.

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