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SOCIO-ECONOMIC ANALYSIS OF HOUSELESS POPULATION:
A CASE STUDY



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ABSTRACT:

The present paper is an attempt to analyze the socio-economic characteristics of houseless population and to find out the causes of houselessness and problems faced by houseless population in Aligarh city. The study is based on primary data collected through the field survey through the direct questionnaire to the respondents in different areas of Aligarh city on random basis. On the basis of random sampling during survey, the 100 samples of houseless population were selected in the city. The study shows that houseless population in the city is the result of age and sex selective rural in-migration of the people from various places of origin outside of the city. The

overall socio-economic characteristics of houseless population are very pathetic and deplorable.

KEYWORDS

House, Houseless, Population, Migration and Aligarh City.

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INTRODUCTION :

Houselessness is a condition in which people are denied from regular dwelling and unable to secure housing (Lee and Price-Spratlen, 2004: 3), while, New Advance Oxford Dictionary (2010, p. 745) defines homeless as people who have no home.

The legal definition of houseless varies from country to country or among different entities or institutions in the some countries or region (Allred, 2000: 144-147). Homeless households without physical dwellings falls within the scope of living quarters, the people used carry their few possessions with them, sleeping in the streets, in doorways, on piers, or in another space, on a more or less random basis (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2004). According to Censuses of India (1991, p. 64) the houseless population 'as the person who are not living in the censuses houses'. A 'census house' is a 'structure with roof'. Censuses enumerators are instructed to take note of the possible places where the houseless population is likely to live such as on the roadsides, railway lines, streets platforms, in the open sky. In other words, the term houseless includes people whose primary night-time residence is a shelter at ad hoc housing situation. The unsheltered segments of a homeless community who do not have ordinal lawfulness to building such person frequently prefer the term homeless (Venes, 1993: 319-340).

The phenomenon of homelessness is a major socio-economic and political problem (Kroll et al., 1986: 283-286) and it can be evidenced in both industrialized as well as developing countries (Jim, 2011: 4). In third world countries of the world, the rise of population growth as urbanization, industrialization and migration for employment & livelihood towards the cities where people live in slums, tents, along the roadways, railway lines, road dividers, in streets, etc., in the open sky in adequate or dilapidated condition (Atkinson, 1993: 148-153). Homelessness is result of multiple and interrelated individual structural factors (Monica, 1992: 3). It stigmatizes individuals or families with alcoholism, drugs, crime and mental ill-health, domestic violence, sexual assaults, stalking, threatening condition, smokers, etc. and simultaneously they are denied from the basic needs i.e. food, clothing, certain public benefits & emergency shelters. Major causes of homelessness as documented in many reports and studies includes unemployment and underemployment, low income, poverty, family conflicts, domestic violence and natural disasters (Robertson & Cousineau, 1986: 561-563). Therefore, the present study has been taken with the following specific objectives:

- (i) to analyse the demographic characteristics of houseless population in Aligarh city,
- (ii) to assess the socio-economic conditions of houseless population in the city, and,
- (iii) to examine the causes and problem of homelessness in the study area.

The Study Area

Aligarh city as a whole has been chosen as study area for the present research work. The city extending from 27° 52' to 27° 56' north latitude and 78° 3' to 78° 6' East longitude, lies in the western part of the Uttar Pradesh and takes up a geographical area of about 3747 sq. km. It comprises of 70 wards, accommodates a residential population of 3,673,849 of which 1,951,996 males and 1,721,893 females (Indian Census, 2011). According to the 2011 Indian Censuses, in the city 69.61 percent population was literate. The literary rate among males was 80.24 percent and among females it was 67.48 percent. Since independence, Aligarh city has grown from a small town to an important centre for industry and

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education. There are three factions, which have contributed to the development of Aligarh city, i.e., the establishment of Aligarh Muslim University in 1920, development of light industries and its demarcation as district headquarters. Moreover, in the last two decades, a number of new school and colleges have been also established in the city.

Data and Methodology

The study is based on the primary data generated through field survey with help of direct questionnaire to the respondents in Aligarh city. The survey was carried out during the months of February and May 2014 to see the seasonal impact on the concerned problem of houselessness. Prior to the survey, firstly a Pilot survey was made to identify the main areas of concentration of houseless population in the city, from the selected areas, 100 samples of houseless people were randomly interviewed (Table 1) for the collection of information about their socio-economic characteristics, causes of houselessness and problems faced by them, etc. After the field work was over, the data collected by using individual slips were scrutinized and were processed in tabular forms according to the requirements of the various facts of the study.

Table 1 Distribution of Places of Interview and Number of Houseless People Interviewed at these place in Aligarh City, 2014

Places of Interview	No. of Houseless Peoples Interviewed
Railway Station	27
Katpula Bridge	18
Ghanta Ghar	11
Shamshad Market	10
Sir Sayed Nagar	6
Amberdkar Park	4
Jamalpur	6
Ramghat Road	6
Ameer Nisha	3
Firsdosh Nagar	3
Centre Point	2
Upper Fort	4

Source: Based on field survey.

The Results and Discussion

Table 2 depicts the age-structure of houseless population in Aligarh city. This table shows that 40 percent houseless persons were recorded as juvenile (20 percent) and senile (20 percent) population in the city while remaining share (60 percent) of houseless people were accounted as working population wherein 18 percent persons belonged to age-group of 20-30 years, 27 percent lied in the age-group of 31-40 years, and 15 percent came in the age-group of 41-59 years. Most of the houseless people come under

the category of working population due to age selective migration from rural areas towards the urban centres particularly for the employment opportunities.

Table 2 also shows the sex-composition of houseless population in Aligarh city. It is clear from this table that more than seventy percent (71 percent) people were observed as houseless males and about thirty percent (29 percent) houseless females during the survey, which is less than half of the percentage of houseless male population, and it is also the result of sex selective migration from rural areas towards the urban centres particularly for the work.

Table 2 Age and Sex Structure of Houseless Population in Aligarh City, 2014

Age groups	Percent
Below 19	20
20-30	18
31-40	27
41-59	15
Above 60	20
Total	100
Sex composition	Percent
Male	71
Female	29
Total	100

Source: Based held survey, 2014.

Table 3 exhibits the religious composition of houseless population in Aligarh city. During survey researchers found out that more than fifty percent (52 percent) houseless population belong to Muslim community whereas rest share (48 percent) of houseless population belong to Hindu community in the city.

Table 3 Religion and Marital Status of Houseless Population in Aligarh City

Religion	Percent
Muslim	52
Hindu	48
Total	100
Marital Status	Percent
Married	66
Unmarried	27
Widower	07
Total	100

Source: Base on filed survey, 2014

Table 3 also provides information about the marital status of houseless population in the city. An examination of Table 5 indicates that 66 percent of houseless population was found married, 27 percent as unmarried and remaining 7 percent were widowed. However, the most of the houseless reported that they migrated alone from rural areas in the city in search of jobs and their wives are still staying in rural areas.

Table 4 presents distribution of educational status of houseless population in Aligarh city. The analysis of this table shows that out of total sampled houseless population, 80 percent persons were accounted as illiterates and only 20 percent were as literates. Out of 20 percent literates, 10 percent got education upto primary level, 5 percent upto secondary level, 3 percent upto senior secondary level and only 2 percent upto graduate level.

Table 4 Education and Migration Status of Houseless Population in Aligarh City

Educational status	Percent
Illiterate	80
Primary	10
Secondary	05
Senior Secondary	03
Graduate	02
Total	100
State/districts	Percent
Non-migrants (within Aligarh city)	26
Migrants	74
Uttar Pradesh	57
Bihar	12
Rajasthan	03
Delhi	01
West Bengal	01
Total	100

Source: Based on field survey, 2014.

The percent distribution of houseless population by places of their birth is also given in Table 4 it can be seen in the table that only one-fourth share (26 percent) of the houseless population has their place of birth within the Aligarh city, while remaining proportion (74 percent) of houseless people were registered as migrants, means these people have their places of birth outside of Aligarh city, wherein, 57 percent people migrated from other districts of Uttar Pradesh to Aligarh city, the ratio of migration of houseless population from the states beyond the state of Uttar Pradesh to Aligarh city has been recorded from Bihar (12 percent), Rajasthan (3 percent), Delhi and West Bengal each (1 percent).

Table 5 gives detail account of occupational structure and income level of houseless population. The data analysis of the table reveals that more than seventy percent persons were engaged in casual works (44 percent) and rickshaw pulling (27 percent), whereas remaining proportion of houseless workers were found in the occupational categories of begging (17 percent), rag picking, blood donating and bandsmen each (2 percent), lumbering, black smiths and waiters each (1 percent) in Aligarh city.

Table 5 Occupational Structure and Average Daily Income of Houseless Population in Aligarh City, 2014

Occupation	Percent
Daily Casual Workers	44
Rickshaw Pullers	27
Beggars	17
Rag Pickers	03
Blood Donators	02
Tea Sellers	02
Band Baja People	02
Lumbers	01
Black Smith	01
Waiters	01
Total	100
Income	Percentage
Less than 50	46
50-75	20
75-100	16
100-125	12
125-150	04
More than 150	02
Total	100

Source: Based on field survey, 2014.

Table 5 also presents the percentage distribution of average daily income earned by houseless people in Aligarh city. An analysis of data given in Table 5 shows that 46 percent houseless people used to earn less than 50 rupees per day, 20 percent 50-75 rupees per day, 16 percent 75-100 rupees per day, 12 percent 100-125 rupees, only 4 percent get 125-150 rupees per day and only 2 percent get more than 150 rupees per day. It means that more than eighty percent houseless people do not have monthly income more than 2500 rupees which is much insufficient to meet basic requirements of livelihood for the survival.

Table 6 shows the types of facilities availed by houseless population in Aligarh city. Out of total sampled houseless population, 47 percent use public hand pumps for drinking water, 9 percent use private hand pumps, 37 percent use public taps, 4 percent use private taps and only 3 percent use others facilities for drinking water like bottles, pouches, etc. Moreover, more than eighty percent houseless persons used public sources of water for drinking and only small share (13 percent) of houseless people take water for drinking purpose from private sources.

Table 6 Type of Facilities Availed by Houseless Population in Aligarh City, 2014

Source of Drinking Water	Percent
Public Hand Pumps	47
Private Hand Pumps	09
Public Taps	37
Private Taps	04
Others	03
Total	100
Time of Taking Food	Percent
Once	15
Twice	46
Thrice	30
Four	04
Fifth	01
Nothing	06
Total	100
Type of Latrine	Percent
Open Fields	39
Public Toilet	12
Railway Lines	49
Total	100

Source: Based on field survey, 2014.

Out of total sample survey, it can be seen from the Table 6 that more than one-fifth ratio of houseless persons have only either one time meal (15 percent) or even no meal in a day (6 percent) for their survival. The three-fourth percentage of houseless people used to eat the food two times (46 percent) and three times (30 percent) in a day, while, rest five percent houseless persons take four times (4 percent) and five times (1 percent) in a day which is much higher frequency of taking food in a day and may be harmful for normal health. At last, Table 6 depicts that on the basis field survey, 39 percent houseless population used to go in the open fields for defecation, 12 percent use public toilets and 49 percent go to railway tracts for defecation.

The percent distribution of infrastructure facilities used by houseless population is shown in Table 7. This table exhibits that only forty percent houseless persons possessed basic kinds of infrastructural facilities whereas remaining sixty percent people did not possess even a single item. Among the houseless people who possessed infrastructural facilities, The highest percentage of appliance is radio possessed by 11 percent houseless people, followed by rickshaw (9 percent), wrist watch (8 percent), cycle (7 percent), mobile (3 percent) and TV and other facilities each (1 percent).

Table 7 Percent of Durable Goods Possess by Houseless People in Aligarh City, 2014

Items	Percent
Radio	11
Rickshaw	09
Wrist Watch	08
Cycle	07
Mobile	03
Television	01
Others	01
No Facilities	60
Total	100

Source: Based on field survey, 2014.

Table 8 set out the percent distribution of socio-economic causes of houseless population in Aligarh city. The socio-economic causes like lack of jobs, extreme poverty, large family size, family conflicts, absence of family, police torture, and frustration, etc. are the main causes of houselessness in Aligarh city.

Table 8 Percent Distribution of Socio-Economic Causes of Houseless Population in Aligarh City, 2014

Causes	Percentage
Lack of Job	32
Extreme Poverty	26
Large Family Size	19
Family Conflicts	11
Absence of Family	07
Police Torture	03
Frustration	02

Source: Based on field survey, 2014.

During survey, the researchers identified that about one-third (32 percent) population became houseless due to lack of job, more than one-fourth (26 percent) due to extreme poverty, and nearly one-fifth (19 percent) due to large family size, therefore, more than three-fourth (77 percent) persons in the city forced to live the life of houselessness by three main factors viz., unemployment, poverty and large family. The remaining twenty three percent people reported family conflicts (11 percent), absence of family (12 percent), police torture (3 percent) and frustration (2 percent) as their causes of houselessness in Aligarh city.

The percent distribution of data of practices of bad habits and disease among houseless people has been presented in Table 9. This table depicts that the bad habits like smoking, tobacco & gutkha chewing,

liquor drinking, pan masala, drug addiction, gambling, etc. deteriorate the social values, dignity, and quality of life but, now, such evils have percolated up to the lowest stratum of the society, and, consequently, the socio-economic problems of poor have further got multiplied and intensified. Out of total sampled houseless population, only 14 percent persons were found who have no any kind of bad habits while all the remaining large share (86 percent) of houseless population were engaged in some kinds of bad habit practices, for example, 35 percent houseless people were smoking of beedi and cigarettes while 36 percent persons were chewing the tobacco (19 percent) and gutkha (18 percent). In the remaining share of houseless population who were involved in bad habit practices, the houseless people, who used to drink liquor, were registered 6 percent, followed by chewing the pan masala and addiction of drugs each (3 percent), and gambling (2 percent).

Table 9 also depicts the percentage distribution of incidence of diseases among houseless people in the city. Health is an important indicator of level of socio-economic development and determines the quality of life of the people. The most of the houseless people have been reported to be suffering from various kinds of diseases due to their unhygienic living conditions, arduous nature of work, poor nutrition and bad habits.

Table 9 Percentage Distribution of Practices of Bad Habits and Incidence of Diseases among Houseless People in Aligarh City, 2014

Bad habits	Percent
Smoking	35
Tobacco	19
Gutkha	18
Drinking	06
Pan Masala	03
Drugs	03
Gambling	02
No Bad habits	14
Total	100
Incidence of Diseases	Percent
Cough and Cold	45
Joint Pain	14
Back Pain	10
Chest Pain	09
Asthma	05
Gastroenteritis	05
Tuberculosis	04
Diabetes	03
Blood Pressure	03
Stone in Gall Bladder	02
Total	100

Source: Based on field survey, 2014.

For example, nearly half sampled houseless population (45 percent) reported cough & cold and one-third share of houseless population experienced the joint pain (14 percent), back pain (10 percent) and chest pain (9 percent). The rest of the sampled houseless population were prone to the asthma & gastroenteritis each (5 percent) tuberculosis (4 percent) diabetes & blood pressure (3 percent) stone in gall bladder (2 percent).

CONCLUSION

The overall analysis of the study reveals that the houselessness is an emerging major problem of our society. Houseless people mirror the plight of the marginalization of our modern development upon our culture, tradition, identity, language and economy in Indian cities. The age and sex selective migration of population from rural areas to the urban areas results the problem of houselessness, as only forty percent houseless persons were recorded as juvenile and senile population while remaining share of houseless people were accounted as working population in the city. Further more than seventy percent houseless population is comprised of houseless males rather than females because males usually come from their places of origin towards urban centres in search of employment opportunities. Moreover, about three-fourth share of houseless population is observed as migrants in the city who have their places of origin outside of Aligarh city. The study also reveals that only one-fifth proportion of houseless population is registered as literate whereas rest of the persons are illiterate and they reported the low income of family, poverty, large family size, unemployment, family disintegration etc. as their causes of illiteracy. All sampled houseless population were recorded as houseless workers where more than seventy percent persons were engaged only in daily casual works and rickshaw pulling, and remaining proportion of houseless workers were observed in activities of begging, rag picking, blood donating, bandsmen, lumbering, black smiths and waiters. The 46 percent houseless workers only earn less than 50 rupees per day and about fifty percent persons earn 50 to 125 rupees as their daily income.

More than eighty percent houseless persons used public sources of water for drinking and there are limited sources of private water for drinking purpose. However, merely one-fifth proportion of houseless persons has only either one time meal or even no meal in a day for their survival. Moreover, about ninety percent houseless people used to in the open spaces for defections i.e. open fields and railway tracts while one-tenth share use public toilets for defecation. The forty percent houseless persons possessed some basic kinds of durable goods, in which, the highest percentage of appliance is the radio possessed by 11 percent houseless people, followed by rickshaws, wrist watch, cycle, mobile and TV. More than three-fourth persons reported the unemployment, poverty and large family size as their causes of houselessness, whereas, the remaining reported family conflicts, absence of family, police torture and frustration as their causes of houselessness. Likewise, more than eighty percent houseless population was engaged in some kinds of bad habit practices wherein more than seventy percent houseless people were found smoking of beedi and cigarettes, and chewing the tobacco & gutkha. Consequently, more than half sampled houseless population reported problems of cough, asthma and gastroenteritis and one-third share of houseless population experienced the joint pain, back pain and chest pain.

The suggestions from respondents to improve their socio-economic conditions are like that, to provide cheap and easy access to shelter, develop health facilities, make availability of water and food

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assistance, open education institutional, introduce easy term institutional loan, develop employment opportunities, distribute land, etc. Government should control the corruption in governmental bodies and improve the efficiency and ability of administrative workers to be committed towards the concerned works & duties.

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