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An Analysis of Socio-Economic Status and Causes of Begging: A Case Study of the Magh Mela in Prayagraj District, Uttar Pradesh

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the socio-economic status of beggars and causes of begging at the Magh Mela in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh. It focuses on the disparities among beggars and also on factors influencing beggary. The primary data was collected through interviews schedule of 100 respondents. In this study, the researcher has found variations in socio-economic conditions among beggars and identified key reasons for their beggars. The study shows that Scheduled Tribes (ST) and younger people tend to earn less money compare to other groups. The key causes of begging are insufficient pay, health issues, and family pressure in this study area. The Chi-square tests confirm significant variations in per day income among different community and age categories, which highlight the deep-rooted socio-economic inequalities. The study states that improving wages, enhancing healthcare access and implementing appropriate social support programs will be crucial for addressing the root causes of begging. A comprehensive and integrated strategy of economic, health, and social factors is essential for improving the well-being of beggars and reducing begging in the study area. The research states that it is need to take specific actions to tackle these complex problems that are faced by beggars.

Key Words: *Begging, Magh Mela, per day income, Socio-economic.*

I. INTRODUCTION

In recent times the Indian economy, poverty and unemployment have become a very crucial issue. Poverty and unemployment further generate many problems like beggary, malnutrition, starvation, and so on. Poverty also plays a crucial role in driving an individual to begging. For these individuals, the most significant obstacles are poverty and employment **(Khan, Menka & Shamad, 2013)**. Particularly, it is the World Bank that employs the term "extreme poverty," whereas other international organizations typically use its synonym "absolute poverty"**(Pietras-Eichberger, 2020)**. Beggars are poor and belong to a very weaker section of society **(Sultana&Alam, 2018)**. Begging is a social issue that affects not only the psychological well-being of beggar's family members but also disrupts the geographical and social dynamics of urban area **(Ahmadi, 2010)**. Beggars are among the poorest and most disadvantaged people in society. They often live in public places without enough income to support them and sometimes exploited as a voting base by political parties because of their lack of education and awareness **(Malarvizhi&Geetha, 2016)**.

India has about 500,000 people who beg regularly, and these numbers could increase to several million if we also count those who beg occasionally **(Sarkar& Mehta, 2019)**. Begging has become a common medium to fulfil some basic needs by demanding some favour like money, food, and goods from other persons. Those who ask for these favours are known as beggars. These beggars fulfil their basic needs without doing any work. On the other hand, beggars are those who are asking for their livelihood publically without any productive work. According to **Roseline Olufunke Bukoye, (2015)** "Begging is the practice of imploring others to grant a favour, which could be in form of gift like money, clothes or food with no expectation of reciprocation or refund." Beggars are mostly found in public places; on the side of the road, on the stairs of the temple, in market, in parks, on the side of hotels, in Mela, etc. Besides food and money, they also demanded cigarettes, drink, clothes, footwear, and other small things.

At the present time, beggary has become a profession of beggars for their livelihood because they have nothing to do any work either physically or mentally. According to some newspaper reports nowadays some beggars beg as a profession they not only fulfil their basic needs but they are living a luxurious life. Some beggars are really poor and have no job or can say they are unable to do work either due to old age or due to lack of physical or mental health. But some have there are no such issues they do not want to work and start their profession as begging.

II. METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION

Research Methodology: The present study is primarily based on primary data collected through interview schedules. In the study area (Magh Mela), there is a lack of accurate statistical information regarding the population of beggars. This issue creates a significant challenge for researchers conducting studies in this context. Consequently, to address this limitation, a sample of 100 respondents was selected using a simple random sampling method, despite potential deviations from sample criteria.

Study Area: The area of the study is Magh Mela. This Mela is organised every year at Triveni-Sangam in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh. In 2023, this Magh Mela has organised from 15 January to 4 March 2023. This Mela is also declared as UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage by UNESCO. Triveni-Sangam represents the confluence of three rivers Ganga, Yamuna and, Saraswati. But now day Saraswati River has no evidence. Thus, Triveni-Sangam is limited by only two rivers Ganga and Yamuna. This Mag hMela has a very important place not over India but also in the world.

Objectives of the study

1. To study the socio-economic status of beggars in the study area.
2. To analyse the factors responsible for the causes of begging in the study area.

Hypothesis of the Study

1. H_0 = There is no significant variation in the socio-economic status among beggars in the study area.
   H_1 = There is a significant variation in the socio-economic status among beggars in the study area.
2. H_0 = There are no factors responsible for the causes of begging in the study area.
3. H_1 = There are specific factors responsible for the causes of begging in the study area.

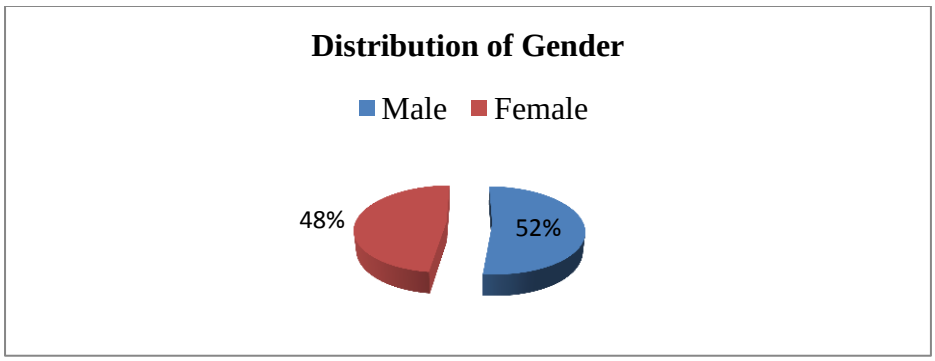
III. DATA ANALYSIS AND DATA INTERPRETATION

Table: 1.1 Distribution of the respondents according to gender.

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	52	52.0
Female	48	48.0
Total	100	100.0

Source: Field Survey

Figure: 1.1 Graphical representation of the distribution of respondents according to gender.



Source: Field Survey

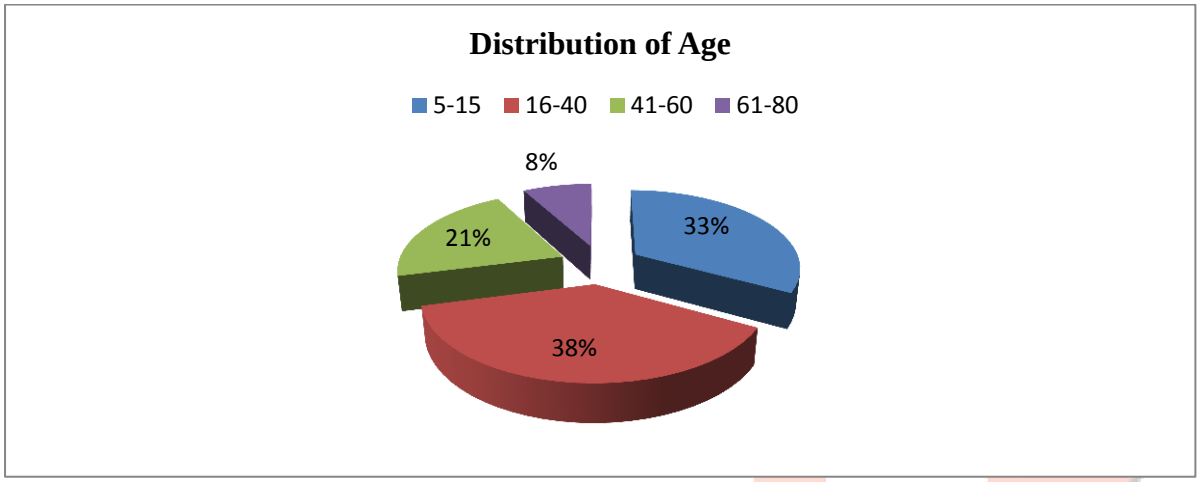
The table 1.1 and figure 1.1 show that100 people surveyed, in which 52 per cent are male and 48 per cent are female. This data is showing nearly equal representation of both genders in the survey.

Table: 1.2 Distribution of respondents according to Age.

Age	Frequency	Percentage
5-15	33	33.0
16-40	38	38.0
41-60	21	21.0
61-80	8	8.0
Total	100	100.0

Source: Field Survey

Figure: 1.2



Source: Field Survey

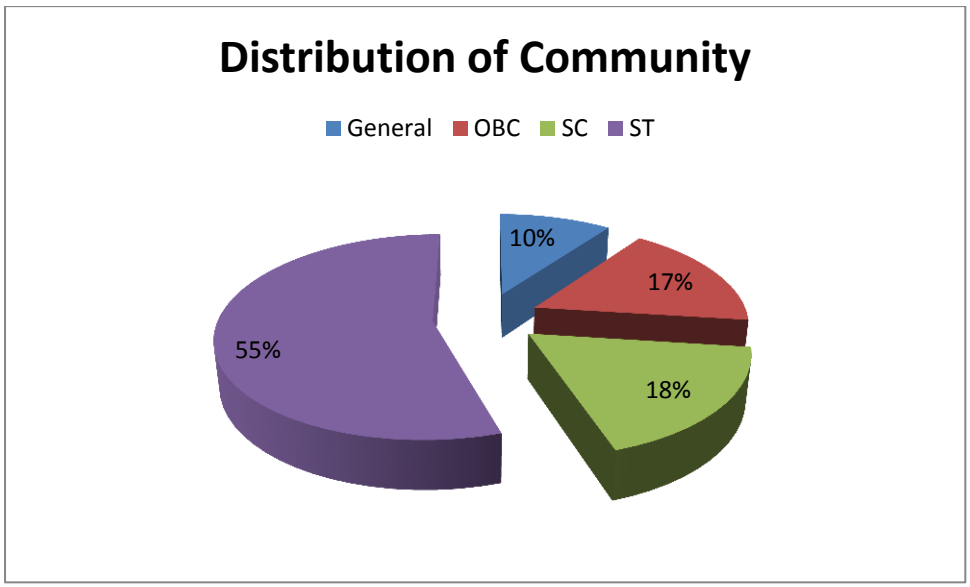
The table 1.2 and figure 1.2shows that the majority of beggars belongs to 16-40 age group which have 38 per cent of total respondent, while the 61-80 age group represents the smallest portion at only 8 per cent. It is also noteworthy that child begging is also prevailed. 33 per cent beggars are child which is the matter of concern.

Table: 1.3 Distribution of respondents according to Community.

Community	Frequency	Percentage
General	10	10.0
OBC	17	17.0
SC	18	18.0
ST	55	55.0
Total	100	100.0

Source: Field Survey

Figure: 1.3



Source: Field Survey

The table 1.3 and figure 1.3 reveals that more than half (55 per cent) beggars are belongs to ST community. The highest representation is from the ST community, which makes up 55 per cent of the respondents, while the General community has the lowest representation at only 10 per cent.

Table 1.4: Cross tabulation analysis of Community and Average per Day Income

Community	Average Per Day Income			Total
	0-100	101-200	201 and Above	
General	3(30.0%)	3(30.0%)	4(40.0%)	10(100.0%)
OBC	9(52.9%)	6(35.3%)	2(11.8%)	17(100.0%)
SC	6(33.3%)	9(50.0%)	3(16.7%)	18(100.0%)
ST	32(58.2%)	21(38.2%)	2(3.6%)	55(100.0%)
Total	**50(50.0%)**	**39(39.0%)**	**11(11.0%)**	**100(100.0%)**
Statistical Test	**X^2 = 14.292, df = 6, p = 0.027**			

Source: Field Survey
Note: The figure in parenthesis is aged to the total in the respective rows

Table 1.4 presents a cross-tabulation analysis of the community and their average per-day income in the study area. The table reveals that among the ST group, the majority of respondents (58.2 per cent) earn 0-100Rs average per day income, while the General category has the highest proportion of respondents (40 per cent) with earnings are 201 and above. The OBC, SC and, ST community mainly fall within the 0-200Rs income range. It shows a clear picture of the unequal distribution of income among these community where General mainly fall within the 201 and above income range. The chi-square value is 14.292 with 6 degrees of freedom (df). The p-value is .027 which is lower than 0.05 which shows a statistically significant relationship between the community and daily income.

Table1.5 Cross tabulation analysis of Age Group and Average per Day Income

Age Group	Average Per Day Income			Total
	0-100	101-200	201 and more than	
5-15	21(63.6%)	11(33.3%)	1(3.0%)	**33(100.0%)**
16-40	17(44.7%)	17(44.7%)	4(10.5%)	**38(100.0%)**
41-60	10(47.6%)	10(47.6%)	1(4.8%)	**21(100.0%)**
61-80	2(25.0%)	1(12.5%)	5(62.5%)	**8(100.0%)**
Total	**50(50.0%)**	**39(39.0%)**	**11(11.0%)**	**100(100.0%)**
Statistical Test	**X^2 = 26.840, df = 6, p = 0.000**			

Source: Field Survey

Note: The figure in parenthesis is aged to the total in the respective rows

Table 1.5 presents a cross-tabulation analysis of age groups and average per day income amongst beggars in the study area. The younger age groups like 5-15 and 16-40 usually earn less and fall into the 0-100 and 101-200 income ranges. On the other hand, older age groups, especially the 61-80 age group are earning over 201 per day. The most common income for everyone is 0-100Rs, in this range half of the respondents are falling. This shows that older individuals generally earn more, while younger people earn less. In this table, Chi-square value is 26.840 with the 6 degrees of freedom. The p-value is 0.000 which clearly shows a significant association between the age group and the average per-day income of beggars.

Table: 1.6 Distribution of Respondents according to Average Per Day Income and Marital Status

Average Per Day Income	Marital Status			Total
	Married	Unmarried	Widows / Widowers	
0-100	15(30.0%)	27(54.0%)	8(16.0%)	**50(100.0%)**
101-200	22(56.4%)	15(38.5%)	2(5.1%)	**39(100.0%)**
201 and more than	6(54.5%)	2(18.2%)	3(27.3%)	**11(100.0%)**
Total	**43(43.0%)**	**44(44.0%)**	**13(13.0%)**	**100(100.0%)**
Statistical Test	**X^2 = 10.941, df = 4, p = 0.027**			

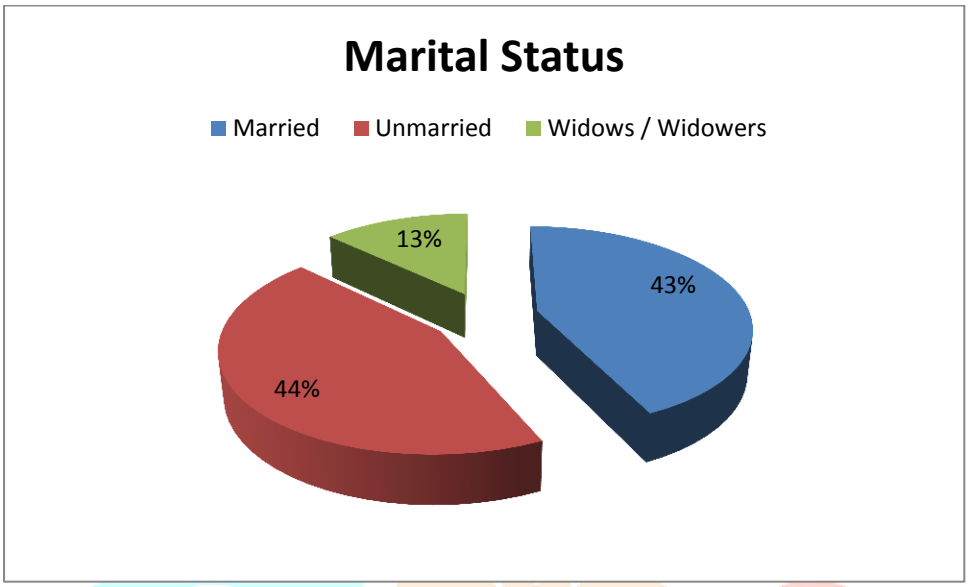
Source: Field Survey

Note: The figure in parenthesis is aged to the total in the respective rows

Table 1.6 presents the cross-tabulation analysis of average per-day income of respondent and their marital status. According to the table most unmarried respondents (54 per cent) earn between 0-100 income ranges, while married respondent (56.4 per cent) earns between 101-200 income ranges. Widows and widowers tend to earn less, with 16 per cent falling into the 0-100 income range. Married people are more likely to earn 101-200 per day (56.4 per cent), while only 30 per cent of married individuals make 0-100, compared to 54 per cent of unmarried people. For widows/widowers, only a small portion earn between 101-200 or 201 and above (27.3 per cent), with most earning 0-100. The Chi-square value is

10.941 with 4 degrees of freedom (df). The p-value is 0.027 which shows a meaningful connection between marital status and their average per-day income. This relationship suggests that marital status affects income levels.

Figure 1.4: Marital Status of the Respondents



Source: Field Survey

Table: 1.7 Distribution of respondents according to community and education

Community	Education		Total
	YES	No	
General	2(20.0%)	8(80.0%)	**10(100%)**
OBC	4(23.5%)	13(76.5%)	**17(100%)**
SC	5(27.8%)	13(72.2%)	**18(100%)**
ST	13(23.6%)	42(76.4%)	**55(100%)**
Total	**24(24.0%)**	**76(76.0%)**	**100(100%)**
Statistical Test	**X^2 = .235, df = 3, p = 0.972**		

Source: Field Survey

Note: The figure in parenthesis is aged to the total in the respective rows

Table 1.7 presents the cross-tabulation analysis of the community and their status of education. According to the table, only 20 per cent are respondent are literate, and remains 76 per cent respondents are unable to take the education. At the community level, the SC community is more educated compared to other communities based on percentage. The chi-square value is 0.235 which 3 degrees of freedom (df) which reveals that there is no statistically significant differences are found in the education level across different communities because the p-value is 0.972 which is much greater than 0.05. This shows that education disparities do not significantly vary among the studied communities, pointing to a broader systemic issue affecting access to education across all groups.

Table 1.8: ANOVA

Average Per Day Income					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	6.341	3	2.114	5.143	.002
Within Groups	39.449	96	.411		
Total	45.790	99			

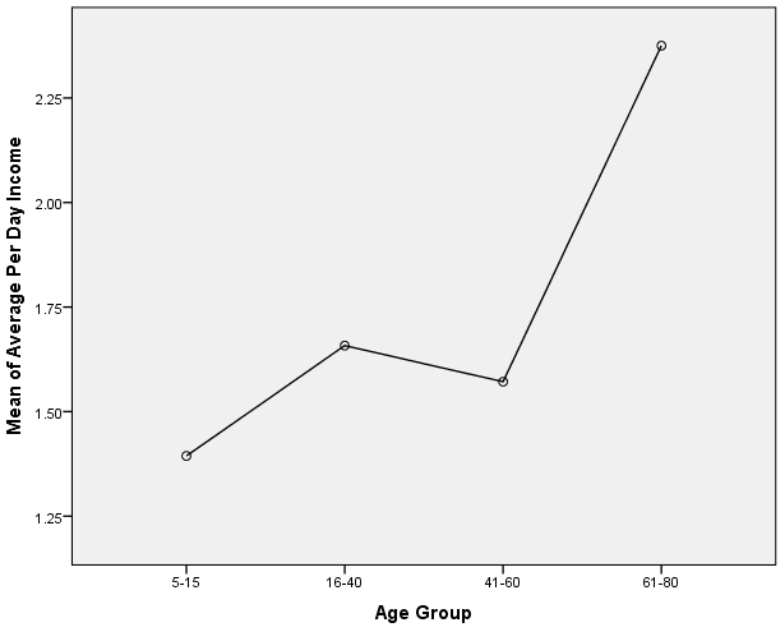
The above table is ANOVA statistic, which examines whether average per day income differs significantly across the groups or not. The Sum of Squares of between Groups is 6.341 which shows the variability in mean incomes across the four income groups. F value is 5.143 which is statistically significant because p value (.002) is less than .05. It also shows significant differences in mean incomes between the groups.

Table: 1.9Post Hoc Test:

Multiple Comparisons						
Dependent Variable: Average Per Day Income Tukey HSD						
					95% Confidence Interval	
(I) Age Group		Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
5-15	16-40	-.264	.153	.314	-.66	.13
	41-60	-.177	.179	.754	-.65	.29
	61-80	-.981*	.253	.001	-1.64	-.32
16-40	5-15	.264	.153	.314	-.13	.66
	41-60	.086	.174	.960	-.37	.54
	61-80	-.717*	.249	.025	-1.37	-.07
41-60	5-15	.177	.179	.754	-.29	.65
	16-40	-.086	.174	.960	-.54	.37
	61-80	-.804*	.266	.017	-1.50	-.11
61-80	5-15	.981*	.253	.001	.32	1.64
	16-40	.717*	.249	.025	.07	1.37
	41-60	.804*	.266	.017	.11	1.50
*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.						

The above table shows the Post-Hoc Test shows the 61-80 age group earns more than all other age groups likes; 5-15,16-40 and 41-60. The age groups 5-15, 16-40, and 41-60 reveals that there is no significant differences.

Figure 1.5: Means Plot



This is the mean plot which represents the relationship between mean of average per day income and mean of five age groups. This plot shows a gradual increase in income from the 5-15 age group to 16-40 age group. The increase in income from the age group 5-15 to 61-80 indicates a sharp rise in earnings towards older ages.

Table 1.10: The Causes of Begging in the Study Area

Causes of Begging	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Insufficient Pay	28	28.0
Health issues	14	14.0
Family pressure	17	17.0
Insufficient Pay, health issues & Family pressure	10	10.0
Insufficient Pay and Health issues	9	9.0
Insufficient Pay & Family pressure	14	14.0
Health issues & Family pressure	8	8.0
Total	**100**	**100.0**

Figure: 1.6 Graphical Representations of Causes of Begging

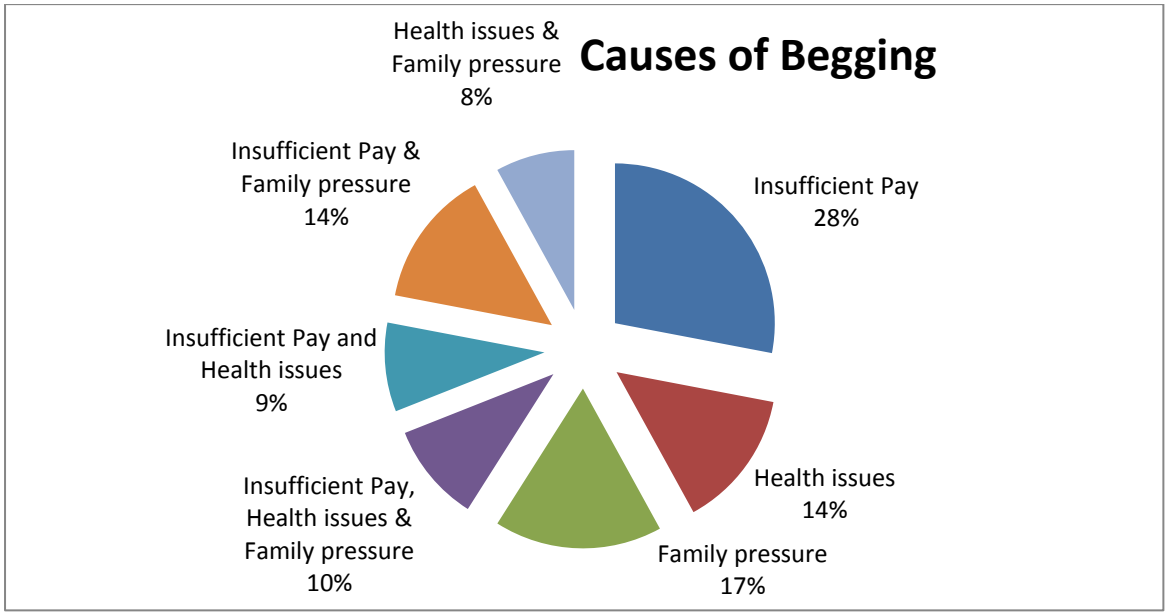


Table 1.4 and figure 1.4 reveal a detailed distribution of causes of begging in the study area. Every cause is quantified in frequency and percentage. The reasons behind beggars include Insufficient Pay, Health issues, Family pressure, and also a mix of these factors. Finally, it can be said that each cause can contribute on its own or in combination to the overall situation.

Single Causes of Begging:

1. Insufficient Pay: Insufficient Pay is the most significant cause of begging. Data reveals that nearly one third of the respondents are begging due to inappropriate wage provided by employer. Thus, it is one of the primary reasons for their begging. This suggests that economic insufficiency is a critical factor for driving an individual as beggar.

2. Health issues: Health issues are also a major cause of beggary, which affect 14 per cent of the respondents. Poor health is a big hindrance for any individual to work and earn a living, when any employer wants to hire a skilled and healthy worker. Thus, it leads them to resort to begging.

3. Family pressure: Family pressure is one of the non-avoidable factors for any individual to drive in the profession of beggary. This factor affects 17 per cent of the begging population in the study area. This category includes those individuals who are forced to beg due to family circumstances. For example, if other family members are unable to work or provide enough income. This is one of the biggest factors for child begging.

Combined Causes of Begging:

1. Insufficient Pay, Health issues and Family pressure: 10 per cent are those who are become beggar due to multifaceted issue of insufficient pay, health issue and family pressure. These beggars faced both socio and economic problems.

2. Insufficient Pay and Health issues: 9 per cent are those beggars begging due to Insufficient Pay and Health issues. These individuals are encountered twofold disadvantaged with both economic and health related challenges.

3. Insufficient Pay and Family pressure: This combination has affected 14 per cent of the respondents.This shows that income insufficiency coupled with family pressure significantly drive begging in the study area.

4. Health issues & Family pressure: This combination has affected 8% of respondents in the study area. These beggars have faced only socio problems behind being beggars.

IV. FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Findings of the Study:

- Significant variations in income were found across different communities; with the ST group having the highest percentage (58.2 per cent) earning 0-100 per day
- The younger age group earns daily average income less than the older age groups.
- The primary causes of begging are insufficient pay (28 per cent), family pressure (17 per cent), and health issues (14 per cent).
- The study shows nearly equal gender distribution, with 52 per cent male and 48 per cent female respondents.
- The ST community forms the majority of the begging population (55 per cent), while the General category has the lowest representation (10 per cent)
- Chi-square tests indicate significant relationships between both community and age with income levels, confirming socio-economic disparities among beggars.

Conclusion & suggestions: This study provides a detailed analysis of the socio-economic status of beggars and the causes of begging in Magh Mela in Prayagraj district of Uttar Pradesh. This study reveals significant variations in the socio-economic conditions among beggars. Beggars from Scheduled Tribes (ST) and younger age groups earn lower daily income rather than others. It shows that socio-economic disparities are deeply rooted in the begging population.

The primary causes of begging are insufficient pay, health issues, and family pressure. Insufficient pay emerged as the most significant factor, indicating that economic inefficiency drive individuals to beg. Health issues also play a critical role due lack of access to adequate Medical facilities. Family pressures also contribute role to force an individuals into beggary due to familial challenges and responsibilities.

These findings highlight the need for targeted efforts to tackle family, economic, and health issues. For better wages, more jobs, and improved healthcare, it needs some remedial measures which followings:

- Implement targeted job creation initiatives for marginalized communities, especially the ST group, to provide alternative livelihoods and reduce reliance on begging.

- Ensure the enforcement of minimum wage laws to address the issue of insufficient pay, which is a significant cause of begging.
- Improve healthcare services for vulnerable populations to prevent health issues from forcing individuals into begging.
- Strengthen social welfare programs aimed at supporting families facing economic pressures to reduce family-driven begging.
- Introduce educational and vocational training programs for young beggars, particularly those in the 5-15 age group, to empower them with skills for future employment.
- Launch awareness campaigns to reduce societal stigma against beggars and encourage community involvement in reducing the incidence of begging.
- Implement stricter regulations and monitoring to prevent child begging, often driven by family pressure, and ensure their right to education.

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