Demography, Migration and Economic Condition of Pavement Dwellers - A Study of Most Marginalized Urban Poor in Central Business Areas of Kolkata, West Bengal

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Abstract: *Homelessness is a result of the failure of the housing supply system to address the needs of the rapidly growing urban population. This disadvantaged segment of the population largely goes unnoticed. India has more than twenty million homeless people. Some of these people have migrated from their village homes. Many have lost their lands, homes and livelihoods in the villages to floods, other natural calamities and also due to political causes. Thousands of homeless, street dwellers live day after day on the pavements of Kolkata. This paper focuses on pavement dwellers of Kolkata with special reference to demography, migration scenario and economic conditions. Investigation was based on perceptual as well as factual data sources. The perceptual data was collected through field survey which was based on structural questionnaire. Total 160 selected samples were considered and simple random sampling techniques have been adopted during data collection. In the absence of sufficient, affordable accommodation, there are a number of approaches which could be taken to improving the lives of homeless people.*

Keywords: Homelessness, disadvantage segment, homeless people, migration, pavements

1. Introduction

The concept of pavement was seen when metalled roads were created in the major cities and towns for the people to ensure safety movement. But gradually pavements were occupied by the unauthorized sector (**Chowdhury, 1996**). So the functional value has changed and at present the pavements are used as a home for the homeless persons. This houseless, shelter less population lives on "pavements, open verandahs, under bridges, railway platforms, abandoned large pipes, courtyards of religious places and even hand carts they pull in daytime to earn their living"(**Jagannathan and Haldar,1988**).The concept of pavement dwellers has been described as people who live somehow under road side trees, in the unnoticed corner of parks, under over bridges, in the space between roads- in short wherever possible. In other words they can also described as "**Houseless Persons**". The pavement dwellers do not have permanent proper shelter above their head. They live in makeshift homes on sidewalks or pavements, underneath bridges and flyovers, along railways lines and in or near railway stations across the city. Street-dwellers are among the most deprived people in urban areas, in terms of living conditions, access to basic facilities, and health indicators (*NIPORT 1994; Thwin and Jaha 1996; Alamgir et al. 2000; Ray et al. 2001; NIPORT 2004*). Regardless of the reasons for people living on the street, street-dwelling can create specific problems, such as crime, and other antisocial activities, including prostitution, begging and drug abuse (*Anam et al. 1997*). *Ray et al. 2001; NIPORT 2004*). Regardless of the reasons for people living on the street, street-dwelling can create specific problems, such as crime, and other antisocial activities, including prostitution, begging and drug abuse (*Anam et al. 1997*).

The city authorities may view pavement dwellers in terms of social and environmental problems resulting from their activities, such as blocking footpaths and contributing to unhygienic conditions. Now, the homeless population has become more than a billion in the world. About 45 per cent of the urban population of all developing regions and 80 per cent of the urban population in the 'least-developed countries' are homeless and deprived of fundamental human rights. India has more than twenty million homeless people, and Kolkata alone has one million homeless people (*Bhattacharya, 2012*). The polarization of economic growth in and around the Kolkata has experienced rapid growth of urbanization, due to urbanization the rural people have migrated in large no the city. The slum and pavement of Kolkata are the ultimate destination of such migrants, for this reason the physical, socio-economic has started stagnating.

2. Study Area

The study has been made primarily on the different municipal wards of Kolkata Municipal areas. Among the pavement dwellers in Kolkata nearly half reside in and around the Central Business District (CBD) area (*Jagannathan and Haldar, 1989*). The study is done at the Central Business District (CBD) areas of Kolkata. Odd jobs, in transporting goods and providing services are located near the CBD where the largest number of commercial, retail, wholesale activities is also located at the Central Business Area. The study has conducted in two places e.g. Sealdah and College street surrounding areas (Ward no-37, 49, 44, 48) and other one at BBD Bag and Burrabazar surrounding areas (Ward no-22, 42, 43,45). During the war of 1971 a large number of refugees from East Pakistan (Bangladesh) migrated to Kolkata. Given the

over population of the city, a large number of them were forced to transform the sidewalks into homes.

3. Objectives

1. To know the overall concentration of pavement dwellers in Kolkata Municipal areas.
2. To study the migration scenario of the pavement dwellers with an overview both inter districts and inter states migration.
3. To analysis their workforce participation, different types of occupation among male and female and also focus on their intensity of poverty.

4. Methodology

The work is started with the area selection, gathering information about place from different books, articles, journals. The necessary information was collected from Kolkata Municipal Corporation, Kolkata Metropolitan Development Authority (KMDA); secondary data and Municipality ward map also collected from Municipal office and other sources like different journals, Statistical Hand Book of Kolkata district.

Primary data are collected from door to door survey was done with help of questionnaire. Due to lack of appropriate secondary data in different wards of Kolkata Municipal areas about Pavement dwellers I faced sampling problem. So I have chosen 80 families from Sealdah-College street area and another 80 families from BBD Bag-Burrabazar area. The total number of sample is 160.

For analyzing the data, collected information was classified in the light of objectives for the study. The classified data was coded, tabulated and calculated. The results were presented along with tables and graphs in numbers and percentages.

5. Results and Discussion

5.1 Pavement Dwellers in Kolkata

In 1987 the Calcutta Metropolitan Development

Authority (CMDA) conducted a "Socio-economic survey of Pavement dwellers in Calcutta". The survey found that the total number of pavement dwellers was 55571 as of March 1987. Nearly 27,493 were found by this 1987 survey to be located in or near the CBD.
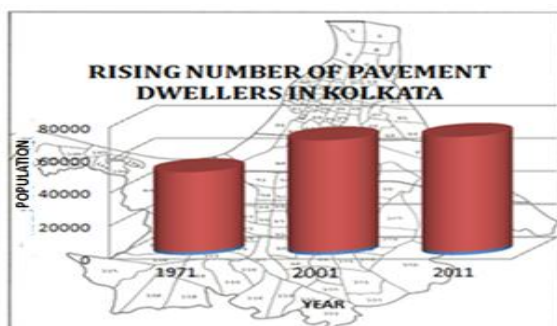

Figure 1: (Source: Census of India)

Figure 1 shows the population growth of pavement dwellers in Kolkata from 1971 to 2011. The number of pavement dwellers in 1971 was 48402. In 2011 it has turned into 69798

Figure 2 is represented the male-female composition of pavement dwellers. Here we can see that the male population increases 51531 in 2001 to 54658 in 2011. But there is a decline in female population; it was 16145 in 2001 but in 2011 it is 15140
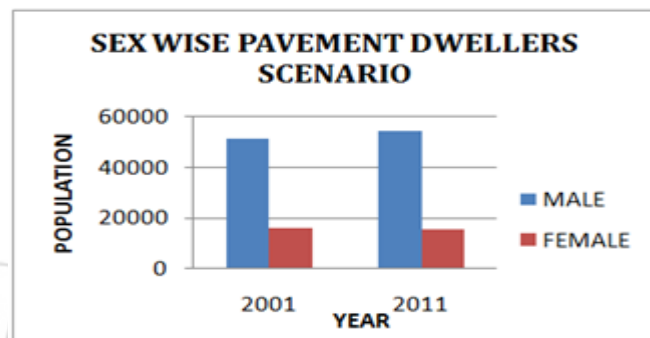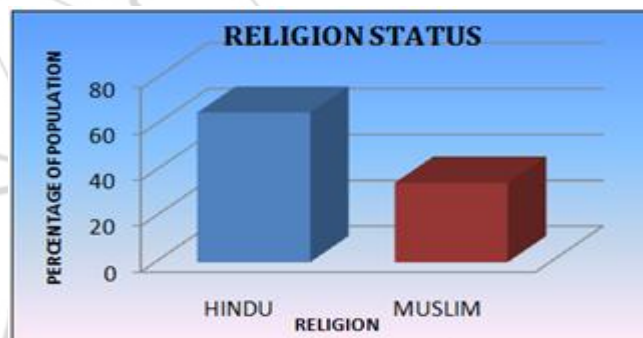

Figure 2: (Source: Census of India)

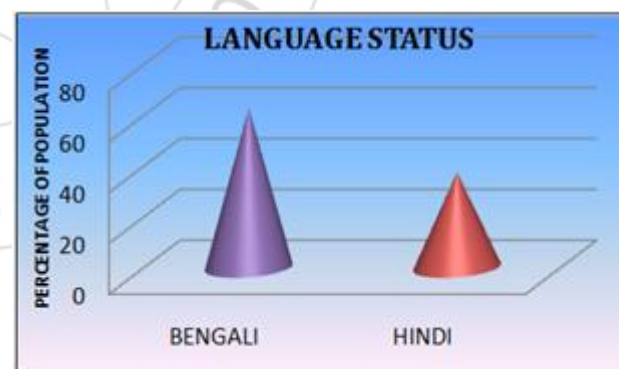**Figure 3:** (Source: Primary Survey)

Figure 4: (Source: Primary Survey)

Another important demographic characteristic is **language status (Figure 4)**. Bengali language is most used language in Kolkata, but due to large interstate migration of pavement dwellers into Kolkata, I have found in BBD Bag and Burrabazar surrounding area that 37.44% respondents speak in Hindi where as 62.66% respondents in Bengali.

5.2 Demographic Profile

Based on the primary survey of the pavement dwellers in CBD area of Kolkata, the following demographic characteristics has been analyzed. **Religion plays** a

significant role in socio-economic status. Here the study shows 65.33% Hindu respondents and 34.66% Muslim respondents are there. (**Figure 3**). The number of Muslim population is high in Sealdah and College Street areas.

5.3 Role of Migration

In the city of Kolkata a large percentage of working force has migrated from the surrounding rural areas, although sometimes they come from others states e.g. Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Orissa etc. These workers have spilled over into the sidewalks of the roads in the city.

It has been represented in Figure 5 about the different causes of their migration. Most of the pavement dwellers have migrated due to economic reasons primarily (92%) because of landlessness, natural calamities, lack of of labour in rural areas and desire to live near the place of work.

After discussing the causes of migration here we focus the migration inflow from different areas towards Kolkata. Majority of them came from rural areas especially from interior South 24 Parganas areas, where salt water creates

agricultural difficulties and numerous factors make communication difficult. The growing landlessness, the potential drought and flood conditions, low productivity of soils are some major causes for growth and spread of pavement dwellers in Kolkata.
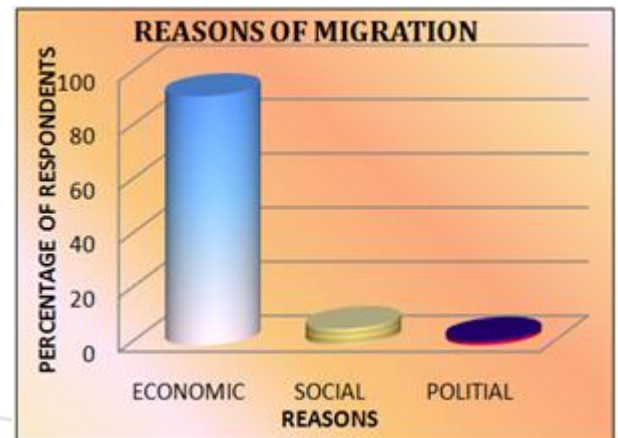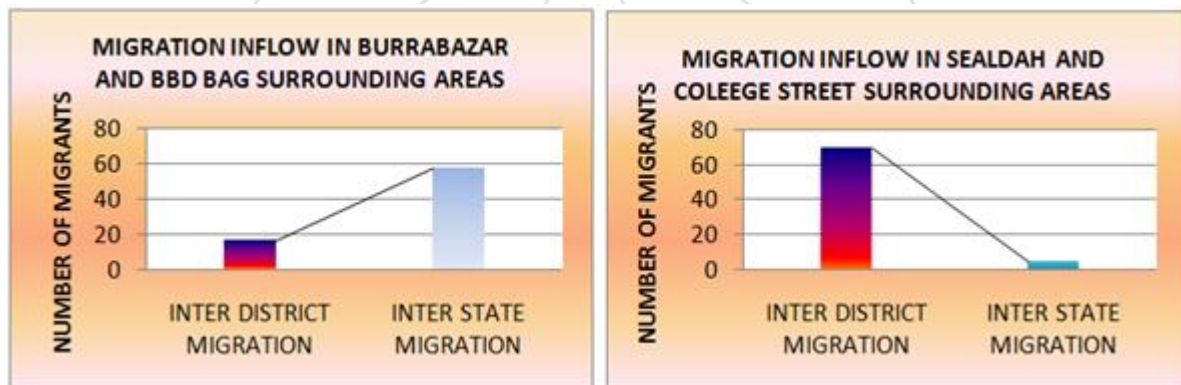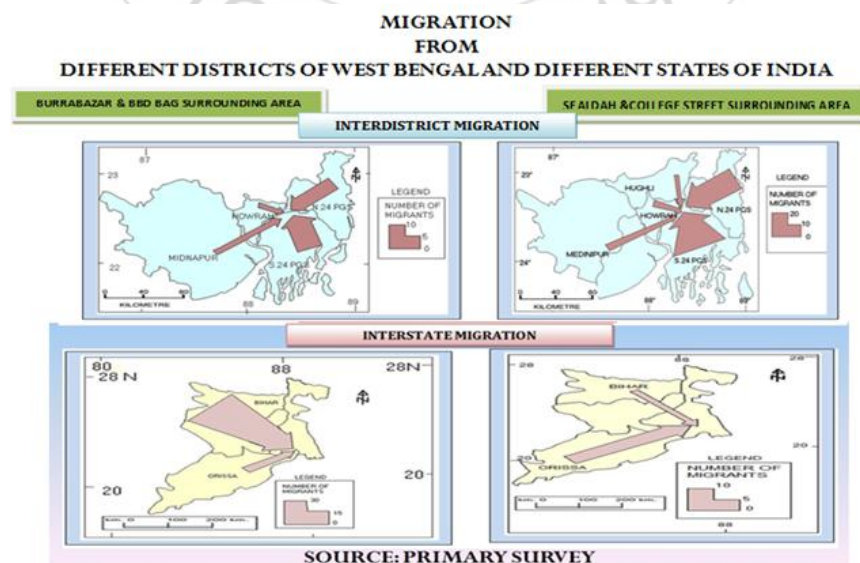

Figure 5: (Source: Primary Survey)

Figure 6: (Source: Primary Survey)

Pavement dwellers were migrated **between** both **interstate and inter districts** (**Figure 6**). At BBD Bag and **Burrabazar** surrounding area they have mainly migrated

between interstate, especially in surrounding areas of **Burrabazar**. While on the other side at the areas of Sealdah majority of migrants come from S.24 Parganas. In

our study (**Figure 7)** 33% respondents have migrated from Bihar, while on the other side 25% are from South 24 Parganas.

5.4 Occupation Status of Pavemnet Dwellers

The CBD area has a large number of wholesalers, who are in the business of selling clothes, food grains, paper, hardware and furniture. These wholesalers need helpers, and labourers who will transport the goods (hand cart pullers to transport bulk goods cheaply, head load carriers for very short distances, porters to download the raw materials and goods which arrive in the city and to load the goods on trucks which are being send long distances). The single most important occupation of sidewalk dwellers was found to be in the transport sector as head load carriers and porters.
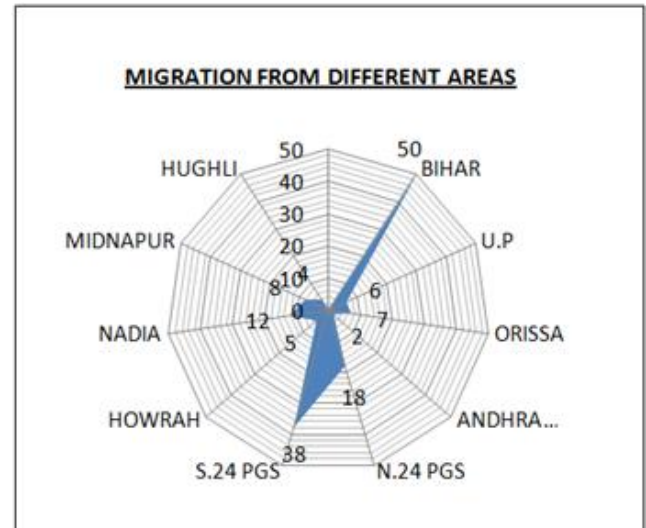

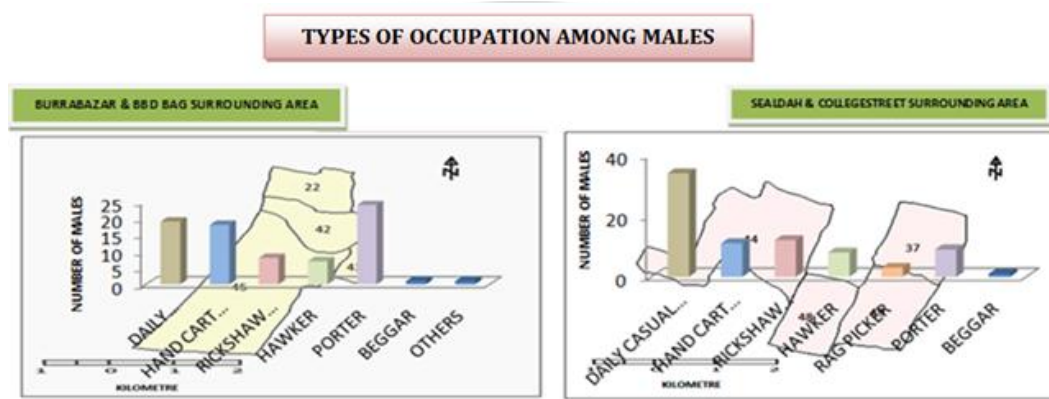**Figure 7:** (Source: Primary Survey)

Figure 8a & 8b: (Source: Primary Survey)

Field survey reveals that at BBD Bag and Burrabazar surrounding areas most of the male workers are porters, hand cart pullers (**Figure 8a &8b**) whereas at sealdah surrounding areas they are mostly daily causal labour.

On the other side the female pavement dwellers mainly works as rag pickers. A few are domestic servants, daily casual labour and beggars.
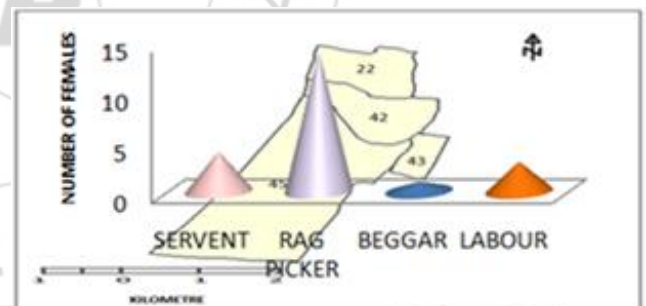

Figure 9a: (Source: Primary Survey)

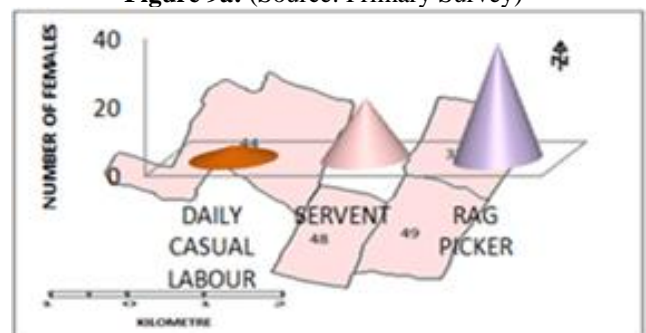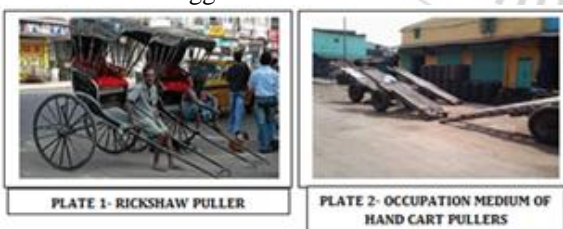**Figure 9b:** (Source: Primary Survey)

The survey shows that the pavement dwellers were engaged in a variety of low paying jobs of rupees 100-200 per week. There are 51% pavement dwellers who earn Rs.150-200 per week. Here we see that 7% dwellers

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income is below Rs.100 per week (**Figure 10**). Here the extent of the poverty is discussed through **Head Count Ratio Index (HCI)**. The headcount ratio is the proportion of the population that is classified as poor. The headcount poverty ratio or index is defined as the percentage of the population whose living standards lie below a given threshold referred to as "poverty line". Here it is calculated by this formula:

$$HC = \frac{1}{N}\sum_{i=1}^{q}1 = \frac{N_q}{N}$$

Here, HC= Head count Index
N_q = the number of poor N= total population

Here we also measure the intensity of poverty through **Poverty Gap Index** (**PGI**). The poverty gap (**PG**) is defined as average difference between poor households' expenditure and the poverty line. The poverty gap index (**PGI**) is defined as the ratio of the Poverty Gap (PG) to the poverty line. The poverty gap index (PGI) is calculated as:

$$\text{PGI} = \frac{1}{N}\sum_{j=1}^{q}\left(\frac{z-y_j}{z}\right)$$

Where, **N** is the total population,
q is the total population of poor who are living at or below the poverty line,
z is the poverty line, and
y_j is the income of the poor individual j.

In this regard, Head Count Ratio (**HCR**) is used to define poverty based on the Suresh Tendulkar panel's recommendations in 2011-12 i.e. Rs. 33 per head per day. People who are living below the poverty line or have Below Poverty Level (**BPL**) card are considered as poor.

Here **PGI** represents the mean proportionate poverty gap in the population. In study areas, the highest poverty gap index was found at ward no: 48 (0.2045) where head count ratio was also highest (**Table I**). Poverty gap index was least at ward no: 22, where head count ratio was also the second lowest. The poverty gap indices of the sample wards indicate that the households in these wards fall below the poverty line.
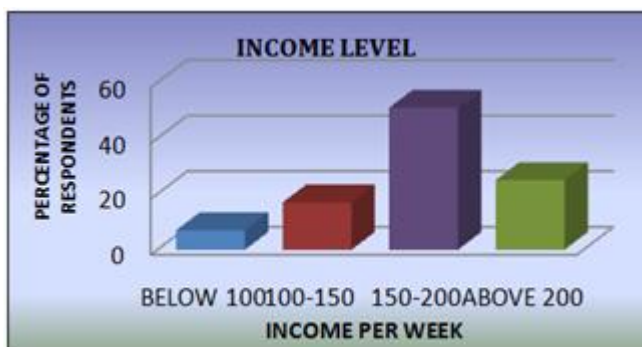

Figure 10: (Source: Primary Survey)

Table I: Headcount Index of Different wards of Kolkata

WARD	BPL CARD HOLDER	TOTAL POPULATION	HEAD COUNT INDEX
44	4	20	0.2
48	13	20	0.66
49	11	20	0.55
37	9	20	0.45
22	5	20	0.27
42	7	20	0.33
43	11	20	0.55
45	10	20	0.5

Source: Computed by author from Primary Survey

Table II : Calculation of Poverty Gap Index

WARD	AVERAGE FAMILY INCOME (PER MONTH)	INCOME POVERTY LINE (URBAN)	POVERTY GAP (PG)	POVERTY GAP INDEX(PGI)
44	866.5		123.5	0.1247
48	787.5		202.5	0.2045
49	889		101	0.102
37	834		156	0.1575
22	907	990	83	0.0838
42	896.5		93.5	0.0944
43	793		197	0.1989
45	817.5		172.5	0.1742

Source: Computed by author from Primary Survey

6. Suggestions

1. At first they should increase their own awareness about environment, education. It is most important to increase their literacy level for getting satisfactory job.**2.**The persons who are already dropped out they should be trained in vocational training centre to make them self employed.**3.**Those who possess special skills should be rehabilitated by arranging bank loans. The KMDA has already launched a project named Small Scale Enterprises in this regard. Those who do not possess any skill should be trained in vocations like carpentry, sewing of garments and repairing sectors etc. **4.** Availability of proper and reasonable health services to the pavement dwellers is a dream. There should be separate Health Department in Municipal Corporation. **5.** Policy is needed to ensure homeless people have access to secure land title and support to develop their own dwellings.

7. Conclusion

In case of pavement dwellers there is a serious lack of reliable data. It is a problem oriented topic. The study indicates that the pavement dwellers are facing numerous problems related to basic needs. These pavement-dwelling is also creating social and environmental problems by blocking footpaths and also making unhygienic condition resulting public health hazard. The time has come now for relevant government departments, Municipal Corporation and NGOs to take some urgent and serious programs to mitigate the problems faced by the pavement dwellers and bring them within the framework of national policy and to treat them as equal.

8. Future Scope

More in detail study with larger sample size of respondents from different wards may be done in future to understand more details of problems faced by pavement dwellers. Future study can be done on their standard of living and accessing scenario of basis amenities of life. There is a scope for further study about different types of insecurities of which they become victims. In future a study can be done about their health hazard and mortality –morbidity scenario of their children.

Acknowledgement

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