

Journal of Peace, Development and Communication



Volume 06, Issue 04, October-December 2022
pISSN: 2663-7898, eISSN: 2663-7901
Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.36968/JPDC-V06-I04-28>
Homepage: <https://pdfpk.net/pdf/>
Email: se.jpdc@pdfpk.net

Article:	Forefather's Profession and Greedy Nature of Parents: Socio-Economic Causes of Child Beggary in Peshawar, Pakistan
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Published:	31 st December 2022
Publisher Information:	Journal of Peace, Development and Communication (JPDC)
To Cite this Article:	Khan, A., & Muhammad, N. (2022). Forefather's Profession and Greedy Nature of Parents: Socio-Economic Causes of Child Beggary in Peshawar, Pakistan. <i>Journal of Peace, Development and Communication</i> , 06(04), 428–434. https://doi.org/10.36968/JPDC-V06-I04-28
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ABSTRACT

The present qualitative study, adopted a constructive approach with the aim of finding out the socio-economic causes of child begging in district of Peshawar, Pakistan. The primary data was collected by conducting 60 interviews with 30 male and 30 female child beggars. Moreover, representatives of the Child Protection Unit and Child Beggar Home, Social Welfare Officers, Police SHOs, and Lawyers, were also interviewed. Data was analyzed through the process of thematic analysis. The study concluded that most of the children started begging as a forefather's profession. The lack of governmental attention transformed the social evil of begging into a profession. Most of the beggars have migrated from other regions, especially Sindh, Punjab, and Afghanistan. Most of the parents turn out to be greedy, and their greed compels them to do begging while utilizing children to send them on the streets. The study recommends that relevant stakeholders, government, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) help begging children by educating them in schools and skill development centres to prepare them for an honorable life.

Keywords: Socio-economics, Child Begging, Social Welfare, Police, Lawyers

Introduction

Begging is an issue throughout the world, including in the world's richest countries. It has had a significant impact on all countries, notably Asian countries such as India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan. According to statistics based on Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) research in Pakistan (2020), there are up to 25 million beggars in Pakistan. Approximately 1.2 million begging children wander around the streets of Pakistan's major cities and metropolitan regions. The number of child beggars in the country is rapidly increasing. It has evolved into the shape of a profession in all aspects of our country, particularly in major institutions such as education, hospitals, public places, parks, bustling marketplaces, and even public transportation. Child beggars can be seen in all provinces of Pakistan, with the majority of them being under the age of ten (Khan, 2011). According to a survey conducted by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs' IRIN News (2019), there were around 8,000 child beggars in Karachi in 2003, rising to 12,000 by 2005. Lahore has over 10,000 kid beggars, whereas Rawalpindi has approximately 3,000 child beggars. In terms of Quetta and Peshawar, Quetta has about 2,500 child beggars, while Peshawar has about 5,000. At the federal and provincial levels in Pakistan, various governmental agencies are involved in the rehabilitation and eradication of child beggary. The Social Welfare Department, the Home Department, and the Child Protection Welfare Bureau, as well as the Dar-ul-Kafala, the Child Welfare Commission, and the office of WafiqiMuhtasib, are all working to help poor children in Pakistan (Jabeen, & Akhunzada, 2017).

In Pakistan, the problem of child beggary has existed for a very long time. Child begging is on the rise in Pakistan. Our young people account for more than 70% of our population, and they are our country's future. Child begging is a huge curse for our society and reflects poorly on our country around the world. Since last year, the number of young children on Pakistan's streets has more than tripled. They can be found in every part of the city, including educational institutions, bustling markets, and even public transportation (Laila et al., 2020). A large number of them are children under the age of ten. They are requesting money, clothing, and food. They are compelled to beg and collect garbage from dumps. Begging has always been a common occurrence in Pakistan, despite the fact that it has been illegal since 1958. Beggars are everywhere, and the law is largely ignored. However, the number of beggars has increased dramatically in recent decades (Ashraf et al., 2020). The beggary ratio is increasing at a faster rate. There are approximately twenty-five million beggars engaged in the profession of begging. The majority of them are Afghan refugees and people fleeing the tribal areas of Pakistan as a result of war and terror. According to recent estimates, Pakistan has between two and twenty-five million beggars. Pakistani beggary can be classified as need-based, convenience-based, or organized criminal beggary. Our Beggary issue represents various types of beggars, including religious beggars, migrant beggars, and physically and mentally disabled beggars. These types of beggars can still be found today (Dawn, 7 June, 2016).

Actually, economic and social causes are interrelated and interdependent, and one may be the cause of another in a particular society's social stratification or social structure. Some communities consider begging to be a social custom, while others consider beggary to be their

hereditary profession. In India, for example, there are communities of Bhat, Kanjars, Nats, Bajigars, and Juggles. They take it from childhood and do not associate it with any social stigma. Some of them saw their children as an asset that could evoke more sympathy in human hearts while also earning and supporting their parents (Iqbal, 2013).

According to an estimate, one of the greatest and most effective factors that encourages begging is a child's involvement in begging and the state's attitude toward child begging. When a child begs from his brothers, sisters, or peers, he develops the habit of begging (Ahmed and Ali, 2018). When a child interacts with a begging family, he is inspired because he is mentally immature and easily drawn to this type of greed. Because of their greedy nature, some children are forced to engage in begging by their own parents. Some are taken advantage of by gangs or mafias (Wamiso et al, 2009).

Most families do not have enough resources to support themselves and their children, so they resort to begging. They beg not only because they are poor, but also because they are underemployed or unemployed. As a result, some social and biological factors become secondary to the economic situation. Many people turn it into a profession instead of doing honest labor work in order to earn enough money quickly. The majority of them turns it into a business and exploits others for their own financial gain. Behind this threat is a group that operates in major cities and forces many children into this profession (Sharma, 2004).

Beggars are the poorest and most vulnerable members of society, living in such deplorable conditions that they are unable to meet their basic needs such as food, health, shelter, and security. Begging requires no physical or mental effort to earn one's bread because it has taken on the appearance of professionalism (Iqbal, 2012). Without a doubt, beggars are needy people, but the majority of them used sympathy tactics to collect more alms and avoid physical labor. The majority of beggars are found in public places such as transportation routes, urban parks, and busy shopping malls. In addition to money, they may request food and beverages. Children from low-income families are especially vulnerable to exploitative labor practices. There is little provision for providing shelter to poor children and children living on the street, particularly child beggars (UNICEF, 2009).

Children who are forced to beg are subjected to physical abuse. They are forced to work or are subjected to abuse while begging. They stayed on the streets for a long time to beg and also to give the rest of their earnings to the family's elders. Children who are forced to beg are frequently third parties, and as a result, they live far away from their parents. Worsening financial circumstances, as well as their causes such as discrimination and migration, are at the root of much forced child begging (Drom, 2005).

According to a study conducted in Delhi, boys and girls are forced to beg by their parents, and they have also had similar experiences on behalf of third parties, resulting in long working hours and a lack of control over the money they earn. Spending a long time on the streets to earn 50-100 rupees per day. These children give all of their begging money to their parents or elders, keeping only 5-10 rupees for transportation and snacks (IBN Live, 2009).

Statement of the Problem

Beggary has always been viewed a social evil and blight on society. Even outside mosques and other places of worship as well as other high-traffic areas, it is not uncommon to see people begging on the streets. It has progressed from being a loose connection to a globally organized one, making it among the most extremely complicated and demoralizing evil of all time. In Pakistan, beggary is really not that much of a necessity but has instead now become occupation. It is among the most demeaning method of making money, and people seem to prefer bashing or disgracing to hard physical labor and jobs. For a long time now, people have recognized beggars as a social evil. It's not unusual to see street beggars, particularly children, in any busy area. Because of massive unemployment, economic hardship, and rising prices, many individuals in developing nations like Pakistan choose to make a living by begging. Most often, begging is the only option for those who lack access to basic necessities like food and water. In this respect, often these parents compelled their children to engage in street begging, either as it was their ancestors' means of making a livelihood or just because they themselves were greedy. In light of this, the current research in district Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan investigates the socioeconomic causes, such as begging as a family profession and the greedy nature of parent.

Methods and Procedures

The present study, being qualitative in nature, was conducted in the district of Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Primary data was collected through in-depth interviews with the help of an interview guide. In this regard, 60 interviews were conducted with 30 male child beggars and 30 female child beggars through purposive and convenient sampling techniques. The purpose behind using the aforementioned sampling techniques was to ensure the flexibility to reach them out. Besides, 18 other stakeholders, one male and one female, from various governmental organizations, such as representatives of the Child Protection Unit and Child Beggar Home, Social Welfare Officers, Police SHOs, and Lawyers, were also interviewed. The collected data was analyzed through the process of thematic analysis.

Results and discussion

Forefather's Profession

As per the study, some of the child beggars' statements indicate that the profession of child begging, in some cases, is an inherited profession. This has been generated from generation to generation. Psychology says that when an activity is repeated again and again, it becomes a habit and the habitual becomes indifferent to it. A stage comes when they consider it as their forefather's profession and feel no guilt for being beggars. Lack of awareness, lack of government and societal attention are some of the factors that transformed a social evil into a profession. If these kinds of families were discouraged on time now, it would not stand as a profession in society.

When I met Zuhra and Zeeshan in a local hotel at Dabgari Garden, Peshawar, when I asked them why they do not adopt any other profession instead of this menace, they stated that:

"We are basically from Punjab province and here we live in rented homes. Our whole family is involved in the act of begging and we should not be ashamed of begging because it is our forefather's profession."

Not only local beggars, Peshawar is also home to many other beggars who migrated from other parts of the country. Among the other provinces, Sindh is found to be the leading province as per my research information. It was found out that most of the time, the entire family seems to be involved in child begging. Ahmad Raza is a young guy of 13 years who explains it as:

My whole family is engaged in the profession of begging. My father is head of our family and gives us instructions on how to beg and how to make money. My brother and two sisters are also beggars. I will not quit this profession as it is my forefather's profession."

A similar case is reported with another girl, Shahkeela, of age 12, who states that:

One year ago, I came from Kashmore in Sindh. I live in a hut on the ring road in Peshawar. I earn Rs. 400 to Rs. 600 per day. The rest of the members of my family are also beggars. Our forefathers were also beggars. We got this profession as heredity."

Child begging might be worse, but letting it take the shape of a profession is the worst. If it is ignored the way it is, it will lead to the destruction of social values and norms and it will have very adverse impacts on our society. When I discussed this issue with a police official at GulBahar Police Station, he stated that:

"The child beggars are involved in this social evil in such a frequent way without any hesitation that they have made it a profession of their forefathers. Historically and genetically, it might not be their forefathers' profession, but it might be their cultural problem that attracts them towards begging."

Is begging really going to take the shape of a profession in the city of Peshawar? What is its current position in the city? I kept these questions before the officials of the social welfare department of the district of Peshawar, who stated that:

"The main cause behind this menace is the involvement of professionals who control the whole territory and they even pay to reserve the area. They have fore fathered the profession and the majority of them are from Sindh, Punjab, and Afghanistan."

But today, beggary has adopted the shape of a profession. Beggars can be found on all busy streets, at railway stations or car stands, at busy crossings, near churches, mosques, and gurudwaras, and everywhere else people congregate and visit. He admitted that begging was his family business as his forefathers also did it in all the major cities during the holy month and came back to their areas one night before Eid. This is not an explanation to make a psychological analysis of the mentality of beggars in our society. In most cases, it is a type of hereditary disease as a child beggar perceives that he/she has to follow in the footsteps of their fathers and forefathers who made money by begging (Nahhas, 2016).

In Pakistan, people of all ages, including children, are seen begging in the streets. Child beggars are of the opinion that they follow the profession of their forefathers, and it is a kind of acquisition for us to make our living. Therefore, begging for them is a profession, rather than a necessity (Save the Children, 2011).

Greedy Nature of Parents

Greed is reported to be one of the greatest reasons behind child begging. Most of the parents turn out to be very greedy, and their greed forces them to do evils like theft and begging. Being an

easy and effective way to get wealth, most ignorant parents turn towards sending their children to the streets to beg. Parents teach their children not to reveal their identities and to act in ways that elicit public sympathy. According to the study, some materialistic parents value wealth more than their children. As Asmabibi, aged 12 years, says:

We bring a lot of money to our parents, but still they are not satisfied and ask us repeatedly to bring more and more. We want to study, but it is our parents who do not let us do so.

The greed of parents has not only stressed the children psychologically but also physically. As Rashid Khan, age 13, states that:

I used to come home late at night and get up early in the morning for the sake of begging. If I do not get up early, I am being tortured, scolded, and even taken out of my home by my parents. We used to have our morning breakfast out of home in order to get to begging stations on time.

Greed is a curse, existing almost in one form or the other. If it comes to parents, it already becomes difficult to deal with thoroughly as the government has no resources enough to conduct awareness sessions on a large scale. I discussed this problem with the officials of the Social Welfare Department. An official from the Social Welfare Department argues that:

"Mostly the parents force their children to have begging as a primary source of income. This stage of age is a suitable period for them to be formally educated but, unfortunately, their precious time is wasted."

A survey by the social work department from Dehli University revealed that some of the child beggars in the capital city were educated like graduates, even post-graduates, and many had only had education up to the secondary level. Many of such cases can be attached to our country's lack of job opportunities and security, but seeing the ready presence of manual jobs, such surprising results only reflect another aspect of begging for greed and not for need (Sharma, 2004).

Conclusions and Recommendations

The present study concluded that certain socio-economic causes are responsible for child begging in Pakistan. Most of the children started begging because it was the profession of their parents. Their parents begged for many decades. In addition, most of the child beggars did not feel any guilt as they considered it their forefather's profession. The lack of social and governmental attention was some of the significant factors that transformed the social evil of begging into a profession. Likewise, most of the beggars were not local; they migrated from the other provinces, especially Sindh, where most of the people live below the poverty line. As a child beggar perceives it, it is a type of hereditary disease because he or she must follow in the footsteps of fathers. Most of the parents turn out to be greedy, and their greed compels them to do begging while utilizing children to send them on the streets. The majority of materialistic parents love wealth more than their children. Moreover, the parents' greed has put their children under stress, which not only affects their mental but also physical health. Some of the recommendations made in light of the study's findings were to assist begging children in receiving education at schools and skill development centres in order to prepare them for a productive life.

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