

## **Child Begging in Pakistan: A Case Study of Gujranwala**

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### **Abstract**

*The present research paper is an attempt made to analyze the major causes of child begging generally in Pakistan particularly in Gujranwala city. Gujranwala is one of the industrial-urban cities of Pakistan. Within the high population of the city, the dilemma of child beggars has been observed as a major social problem. Child beggars are those under 18 persons who ask for charity mostly money to others. For investigating the causes of child begging in Gujranwala, a quantitative research method was designed. For the present paper accidental sampling method from non-probability sampling techniques was adopted. A sample of 150 child beggars was taken. Through well-organized interview schedule data was collected from the respondents. The study found that poverty is the major cause of child begging in Gujranwala. The study also found that many of the respondents involved in begging had no physical or mental disability.*

**Key Words:** Beggary, Child Beggars, Socio-Economic Factors, Causes of Begging

### **Introduction**

Begging is a range of activities whereby an individual asks a stranger for money on the basis of being poor and/or needing charitable donations for health or religious reasons. Beggars may also sell small items, such as

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dusters or flowers, in return for money that may have little to do with the value of the item for sale” (ILO, 2004). The problem of begging is a universal phenomenon which cannot be specified to any country. “People engaged in begging are known as beggars. A beggar is known to be an individual such as children, elderly, disabled people, and families who normally begs in public space such as shopping areas, banks, public offices, churches, mosques, busy streets, markets, among others” (Adugna, 2006). In the words of Jelili (2006) “to beg” is to simply ask people for money, food, clothes etc. as a gift or charity. He conceptualizes begging to involve not only individuals but organizations or countries. The situation in our country is appreciated with different categories of beggars found mostly at parks, religious places, worship centers, markets, road junctions and venue of ceremonies. Begging is a global phenomenon which is not only found in our society alone but also found everywhere, in both developed and developing countries. But the alarming situation is in developing countries like Pakistan and India among others. Beggars are the poorest of the poor and the most disadvantageous section of the society, living in such a deprived condition that they are even unable to fulfill their basic needs of life (food, shelter, health and protection). They are found in front of the mosques, restaurants, markets, parks, hospitals, religious shrines, tourist places, street corners, and cinemas. It is a social problem that is noticeable in almost every urban area of developing countries. Although the problem of begging is a worldwide phenomenon, it is more pronounced in third-world countries. In many urban areas, child beggars

are found everywhere in public spaces like stations, restaurants, hospitals, markets, mosques, churches, etc.

Child begging is the begging in which boys and girls under the age of 18 beg, mostly through psychological and physical oppression (Ansari, 2006), (High Commissioner for Human Rights, 1990) & (Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention 1999). Child beggars are found in public places such as transport routes, urban parks and near busy markets. Some children start begging or working on the street and returning home at night eventually leave home to live on the street (UNICEF, 2009) already, the rapid pace of urbanization deprives up to a billion people of adequate shelter and basic services, forcing them to live in crowded and unhealthy conditions. The financial crisis, political decisions and natural disasters have caused a setback (IREWOC, 2009).

Economic factors contributing to beggarization's profitability include the lack of alternative economic opportunities, economic inequalities, and higher food prices. These conditions lead to an increase in the number of vulnerable people, creating more opportunities for criminal organizations to exploit such people to their advantage (Azam, 2011). Religion has been central to life in Pakistan. This state would allow Muslims to have freedom to practice and live by Islamic values. In Islam begging is discouraged and in fact it is considered as a sin. Prophet Mohammad stressed to earn a living by working (through Halal means) and not by begging. Beggary is banned in Pakistan and is prohibited in Islam, though it is permitted in the religion in times of great need. Thus,

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Islam plays a significant role in the acceptance of beggars in society and at times, requires sympathy for them.

A Worldwide NGO, World Vision Ahmad et al (2011) explored that poverty, domestic abuse and violence, broken families or death of a caregiver(s) are some of the reasons why people become homeless and children unaccompanied. While some people are forced into begging, others turn to begging as a way to make money because there are few alternatives. The majority of adult beggars are disabled, elderly, mentally ill or afflicted with a stigmatized illness, such as leprosy. Children may also accompany adult beggars either through necessity or to be used to elicit greater sympathy from passersby.

According to the Pradhan (2006) street child is a common problem and has been occurring throughout the world for a long time since even before written history. Developed countries have made strict policy to get rid of this social issue; however it is not fully controlled. One of the serious problems, which influence becoming street child, is the poverty level. Begging is an evil, but in Pakistan it has become an organized profession. Begging has now become a shameless business (Azam, 2011). The common push and pull factors that bring the children into street are poverty, big family size, family violence, abuses, urbanization (migration), school abandonment and inadequate parental guidance were taken to be the push factor while the pull factors included desire for independence, financial security, excitement and glamour of living in cities, and some hope of raising one's standard of living. Whereas family disorganization can significantly increase the number of beggars in a certain social settings;

family is an integral part of our social system, which influences our patterns of behavior and activities. Any disturbance in our home condition especially in the case of a poor ones leads to a breakdown of family, which in return gives rise to beggary. Deaths of parents, death of the husband, death of the breadwinner, step parental treatment, maltreatment disruption in the family, or desertion by the husband are some important factors responsible for begging (Ali et al, 2004) & (Ramasamy, 2004). In addition, physical disability or infirmity such as blindness and deafness force many people to beg, when the economic conditions of their families did not allow sustain their well-beings. Developing countries carry the largest burden of disability as the result of civil war, poor access to health facilities, harmful traditional practices. As the result, they have a large numbers of street beggars (Wamisho & Memore, 2009).

### **Objective of the Study**

Followings are the objective of the present research study.

- To find out the socio-economic factors of child begging in Gujranwala City.

### **Materials and Methods**

In this research study the quantitative research method was used. Survey method among quantitative method was further adopted to collect the data through face-to-face interviews. A cross-sectional research design was applied in this study. The population of the study consisted of child beggars of age under 18. Quantitative method was used in this research to drive the understanding of various factors that cause child begging in the society. The data are collected through direct interviews with the

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respondents. Primary data were collected from 150 child beggars, who were found in public areas and data was collected by using accidental sampling technique. Settle town Market, Model Town Park, Sharanwala Bagh & Pondawala Pasroor road, Peoples Colony Market, Sialkot Bypass & Pindi Bypass, Chand Da Qila, DHQ's Civil Hospital and the research team also concentrated on the public places like bus stops, railway stations, and the religious places such as, Mosques, Darbar and Churches to locate the beggars were main areas where the data was collected. Accidental sampling method from Non-probability sampling techniques was adopted. Interview schedule was further used as a tool of data collection. Data analysis was based on descriptive statistics only.

### Data Analysis

The analyzed data in this study in based only on descriptive statistics.

**Table No. 1: Distribution of respondents as per their gender**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>
Boys	96	64.00
Girls	54	36.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100.00</b>

As per the above table, majority of the respondents (64%) were boys whereas the small number more than one third (36%) of the respondents were girls.

**Table No.2: Distribution of respondents as per their age**

<b>Age</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>
7-10	32	22.00
11-14	69	46.00
15-18	48	32.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100.00</b>

According to the above table, majority of the respondents (46%) fall in the range from (11-14) years whereas less than one third (32%) of the respondents from (15-18) years other more than one fifth (22%) of the respondents age were between (7-10) years.

**Table No.3: Distribution of respondents as per their disability Status**

<b>Disability Status</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>
Deaf & Dum	15	10.00
Physically	27	18.00
Mentally	10	07.00
None	98	65.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100.00</b>

As per the above table, the majority of the respondents (65%) did not have any kind of disability, (18%) respondents were physically disable whereas (10%) of the respondents were deaf & dam only (07 %) were mentally disabled.

**Table No.4: Distribution of respondents as per their reason of begging**

<b>Reason of Begging</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>
To Support Family	40	27.00
No Job	17	11.00
Parents Death	06	04.00
Poverty	60	40.00
Family Profession	20	13.00
Disability	07	05.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100.00</b>

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As per the above table two fifth (40%) of the respondents begged because of poverty, more than one quarter (27%) begged for supporting their families whereas less a small number (13%) of the respondents begged because it's their family profession, (11%) begged because they did not have any other job, (05%) due to some physical disability and (04%) due to the death of their parents as they had no other earning source then.

**Table No.5: Distribution of the respondents as per their reason of being in this profession begging**

<b>Reason of Being in Profession</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>
Family Profession/Business	38	25.00
Disability	20	13.00
Poverty	64	43.00
Loss of Natural Disaster	05	03.00
None	23	16.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100.00</b>

As per the above table, less than half (43%) of the respondents indicated poverty as the only reason for being in the profession of beggary whereas one quarter (25%) of the respondents were in the profession of beggary due to family business. However, some of the respondents (16%) did not answer that why they were in this profession. Less than one fifth (13%) were in the profession of beggary due to some physical disability and a very small number (03%) of the respondents were related with this profession due to loss in some natural disasters.



**Table No. 6: Distribution of the respondents’ as per their satisfaction with their current profession (beggary)**

Satisfaction	F	%
Yes	72	48.00
No	78	52.00
Total	150	100.00

As per the above table majority of the respondents (52%) were not satisfied with their current profession whereas less than half (48%) of the respondents were satisfied.

**Discussion**

As per the gender of respondents, majority of the respondents (64%) were boys whereas the small number more than one third (36%) of the respondents were girls. According to the age of respondents, majority of the respondents (46%) were from (11-14) years whereas less than one third (32%) of the respondents were from (15-18) years and more than one fifth (22%) of the respondents age were between (7-10) years. As per the disability of the respondents, majority of the respondents (65%) did not have any kind of disability, however (18%) respondents were physically disable. These (18%) findings regarding disability differs the findings of that the major cause of begging is physical disability (Ansari, 2006). Economic factors contributing to beggarization’s profitability include the lack of alternative economic opportunities, economic inequalities, and higher food prices. These conditions lead to an increase in the number of vulnerable people, creating more opportunities for criminal organizations to exploit such people to their advantage (Azam, 2011). Similar kind of results are found about the causes of begging as exactly two fifth (40%) of

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the responded that because of poverty they beg whereas more than one quarter (27%) begged for supporting their families. As per the reason for being in the profession of begging, more than two fifth (43%) of the respondents indicated poverty as the only reason for being in the profession of beggary whereas one quarter (25%) of the respondents were in the profession of beggary due to family business. About the satisfaction with their current profession (beggary), majority of the respondents (52%) were not satisfied with their current profession whereas less than half (48%) of the respondents were satisfied.

### **Conclusions**

It is concluded that almost two third child beggars were boys and one third of them were girls with the age group less than half (46%) of child beggars were from the age group of 11-14 years. It was also concluded that for the reason(s) involving in the profession of beggary exact two fifth (40%) of the respondents were involved in the begging profession due to poverty whereas more than one quarter (27%) of the respondents beg for supporting their family and some (13%) of the respondents adopted begging as it was their family profession. Further for satisfaction of the respondents with their current profession (beggary) more than one half (52%) of them were not satisfied with their current profession whereas less than half (48%) of the respondents were quite satisfied with current profession. From those who were satisfied with their current profession, less than half (42%) took beggary as a blessing to face poverty and hunger whereas less than one quarter (23%) could not do any other job due to some physical disability. On the other hand, those who were not

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satisfied with their current profession gave different reasons as an overwhelming majority of them said that the public dislikes the profession and they wanted to study.

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