

Socio-Economic Conditions of Child Beggars in Gujranwala: An Exploratory Study

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Abstract

Child beggary is a worldwide phenomenon which is a serious social problem on one hand and is depriving the personality grooming, social status of beggars on the other. The present research paper focuses on the prevailing socio-economic conditions of the child beggars in Gujranwala city. Child beggars are the beggars of under 18. For exploring these socio-economic conditions, a cross-sectional research design was used. Quantitative data was collected. Well-structured interview schedule was used for data collection. In the present study, accidental sampling method from non-probability sampling techniques was used. Total sample size was 150 respondents. The study found that majority of the respondents (71 %) were migrated from/ born in some urban areas but at present, less than two third (64%) of the respondents were living in the city. The study found that more than one half (59%) of the respondents had no access to school. It was recorded that little less than two third (64%) earns 10,000-20,000 rupees per month. The study found that more than one third (36%) of the respondents had paka house whereas less than one third (31%) had kacha house.

Key Words: Beggary, Child Beggars, Socio-Economic Conditions, Living Conditions.

Introduction

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 beg in the public spaces such as shopping areas, banks,

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public offices, churches, mosques, busy streets, markets, among others” (Adugna, 2006). To beg is to simply ask people for money, food, clothes etc. as a gift or charity (Oxford Advanced Learners’ Dictionary, 2001, Jelili, 2006). Jelili (2006) conceptualizes begging to involve not only individuals but organizations or countries. The situation in our country is appreciated with different categories of beggars found at motor park, religious, worship centers, markets, road junctions, venue of ceremonies and worst still on the campuses. The simplest way of defining begging is to ask for money without any return of services (Fitzpatrick & Kennedy 2000). In accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) “a child is defined as a boy or girl less than 18 years old (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child ,1989). So all those persons, under 18, who ask for money in terms of charity from others are called child beggars.

According to Baker, Panter-Brick and Todd (1997) explaining the family problems like alcoholism, mental, physical and sexual abuses, or neglect etc. all these things have bad effects on their mind and motivates to children for leaving home. Similarly, economic reasons, excessive workloads, family stress and a desire for independence, most of the boys leave home before the age of 18 it has also be a reason (Baker, Panter-Brick & Todd, 1997). 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 Report, 2009). 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).

This implies that begging is not peculiar to individuals, but also organizations or countries. For the latter group, it is conceptualized here as “corporate begging”; and it is made to include seeking for charity by organizations or grants or debts cancellation by richer organizations or nations to poorer organizations or nations. The former category, which is the concern of this study, is synonymous with street and house-to-house begging; it borders around such issues or related concepts as “panhandling” “mendicancy” and “vagrancy” which characterize city beggars. This conceptualization would not only capture the image of the begging and beggars in question, but also reflect their implications for the city’s physical and socio-economic environment.

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 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

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

Sometimes poor people from villages come to towns and cities to beg. They do so because of shortage of food etc. So they are forced to leave their homes. They are temporary beggars. Many people who are unemployed are forced to beg. The government must take serious action against professional beggars. Those who are able-bodied must be made to work and earn honest living. The crippled and the old should be confined to poor houses. It is the duty of the government and the well to do to reform society (World Bank, 2000).

Most children who leave home to live on the streets come from slums or low cost housing, both which is areas of high illiteracy, drug use, and unemployment. Children usually transfer their lives to the streets through a gradual process; they may at first only stay on the street a night or two. Gradually they will spend more time away from home until they do not return.

To the arena of the development of children, of whom, street children are one category who is becoming visible day by day. Every year, millions of children are pulled into life on the street by economic need, problems at home, commercial exploitation, or poor access to schools. The majority of these street-based children are unprotected and sometimes working children who are highly vulnerable to exploitation. Their lives on the streets leave them with few opportunities to form emotional connections to caring adults, or to develop the social abilities, education, or job skills necessary to rejoin society and lead productive and meaningful lives (De Benitez, 2001). It has been estimated that more than 100 million street and working children around the

world are struggling to survive under harsh and often exploitative conditions (De Benitez, 2001).

Begging destroys the future of these children because they are learning dependence rather than to be independent from childhood. The child beggars are a distinct category of the street children who are most deprived even with the basic needs and struggle to survive in different places across the globe. These children are particularly the vulnerable group; where a child is prone to abuse, deprivation of basic needs, care and protection continuing a miserable lower class life (CUBS, 2010).

The child beggars in Bangladesh have been recognized by many literatures as such a category of the street children who lack the proper requirements of life and they are tagged as 'severely deprived' children. These severe deprivation can be found with their not having the adequate services in the provision of shelter, sanitation, water, information, nutrition, education, and health etc. At policy and program levels, there is little provision for providing shelter facilities to poor, homeless households, or children living on the streets and this picture are reflected also in the other provision of life requirements for the street children and more specifically the child beggars (Black, 1996).

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. In 1948, the UN General Assembly passed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations General Assembly, 1948), which referred in article 25 to childhood as entitled to "special care and assistance" In 1959 the UN General Assembly adopted the Declaration of the Rights of the Child (United Nations General Assembly, 1959) , which recognized rights such as freedom

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from discrimination and the right to a name and a nationality. It also specifically enshrined children's rights to education, health, care and special protection (Rai, 2000) (Kolosov, 2002) Tripathi, S. C& Arora, Vibha ,2010).

In the developing world more than one in three children does not have adequate shelter, one in five children do not have access to safe water, and one in seven has no access whatsoever to essential health services. Over 16 per cent of children under five lack adequate nutrition and 13 per cent of all children have never been to school. There are 2.2 billion children in the world of which one billion live in poverty i.e. without adequate shelter, safe water and health facilities. About 121million children are out of education worldwide and the majority of them are girls. 10.6 million Children die before they reach the age of five. 1.4 million Die each year from lack of safe drinking water and adequate sanitation. 2.2 million Children die each year because they are not immunized and 1.5 million children are orphaned due to HIV/ AIDS (The State of the World's Children, 2013). 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 (Ramasamy, 2004).

Objective of the Study

The present study was carried out with the objective to examine the prevailing living conditions of child beggars at Gujranwala city.

Aspects of the Study

This study covers various aspects of child beggars included their permanent residence/ birthplace (from where either they or their parents migrated, current status of residence, condition of their houses and availability/access to the basic facilities which were seen in their houses like Electricity, Clean water, Toilet, TV/ Mobile phone, Fridge, Sui gas, Motor cycle/ cycle and Pets, access to education, monthly income, and parental care.

Materials and Methods

For the present research study a cross-sectional research design was applied. Survey method among quantitative method was further adopted to collect the data through face-to-face interviews with the help of a well-structured interview schedule which covered different aspects related to living conditions of child beggars. The target population of the study was consisted of child beggars at Gujranwala city. For this study, Non-probability sampling method was proposed as per the nature of the study. Further accidental sampling technique was used to collect the information data from the potential respondents. Total sample size was 150. Primary data were collected from child beggars who were found in public areas and data was collected by using accidental sampling technique. For the present study, data analysis was based on descriptive statistics only.

Data Analysis

Table No.1: Distribution of respondents as per their migrated from/ birth place

Birth Place	f	%
Village	44	29.00
City	106	71.00
Total	150	100

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According to the above table, majority of the respondents (71 %) were migrated from/ born in some urban areas whereas the small numbers of the respondents (29%) were migrated from/ born in some rural area.

Table No.2: Distribution of respondents as per their status of current residence

Current Residence	f	%
Village	40	27.00
City	96	64.00
Jhompri	14	09
Total	150	100

As per the above table, less than two third (64%) of the respondents were lived in the city whereas more than one quarter (27%) of the respondents in the village and less than one fifth (09%) of the respondents were currently living in the Jomphari.

Table No.3: Distribution of respondents as per their access to education

Access to Education	f	%
Yes	62	41.00
No	88	59.00
Total	150	100

According to the above table, more than one half(59%) of the respondents had no access to school whereas less than half (41%) of the respondents attended the school.

Table No. 4: Distribution of respondents as per their Father's occupation

Fathers' Occupation	f	%
Labor	90	60.00
Beggar	11	07.00
Unemployed	-	-
Job	10	07.00
None	39	26.00
Total	150	100.00

As per the above table, exact three fifth (60%) of the respondents' fathers were laborers whereas more than one quarter (26%) had no occupation, and (07%) were beggars and (07%) were doing some job.

Table No.5: Distribution of respondents as per their Mother's occupation

Current Residence	f	%
House servant	50	33.00
Labor	16	10.00
Beggar	55	37.00
None	29	20.00
Total	150	100

As per the above table about the occupation of respondents' mothers, more than one third (37%) of the mothers of the respondents were beggars, whereas exact one third (33%) were house servants and one fifth (20%) were doing no job and (10%) were some kind of laborers.

Table No.6: Distribution of respondents as per their size of family

Current Residence	f	%
01-03	14	09.00
04- 06	52	35.00
07-09	50	33.00
More than 09	34	23.00
Total	150	100

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As per the distribution of the respondents according to their family size, more than one third (35%) of the respondents' family size was (04-06) family members whereas one third (33%) were (07-09) family members, less than one quarter (23%) were with more than a family members whereas a small member of the respondents (09%) had family size of (01-03) family members.

Table No.7: Distribution of respondents as per their head of family monthly income

Monthly Income	f	%
10,000-20,000	95	64.00
20,001-30,000	41	27.00
Above 30,001	14	09.00
Total	150	100.00

As per the above table monthly income of the head of the family, less than two third (64%) of the heads of the family's income was 10,000-20,000 rupees per month whereas more than one quarter (27%) responded their father monthly income was 20,001-30,000 rupees per month and a small number (09%) of them responded that their father's or head of family income was more than 30,001 rupees per month.

Table No.8: Distribution of respondents as per their parental care in their homes

Parental Care	f	%
Yes	111	74.00
No	39	28
Total	150	100

According to the above table the majority (74%) of the respondents had met proper care in their home or family whereas more than one quarter (26%) of the respondents had no proper parental care in their home or family.

Table No.9: Distribution of respondents as per their home condition

Condition of House	f	%
Kacha House	46	31.00
Jhompri	30	20.00
Paka House	54	36.00
Kacha Paka House	20	13.00
Total	150	100

As per the above table, more than one third (36%) of the respondents had paka house whereas less than one third (31%) had kacha house, exact one fifth (20%) of the respondents were lived in the jompharhi and other less than one fifth (13%) they were lived the kachapaka house.

Table No.10: Distribution of respondents as per their home availability of basic facilities

Basic Facilities	Yes		No		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Electricity	110	73.00	40	27.00	150	100.00
Clean water	120	80.00	30	20.00	150	100.00
Toilet	108	72.00	42	28.00	150	100.00
TV / mobile phone	90	60.00	60	40.00	150	100.00
Fridge	25	16.00	125	84.00	150	100.00
Sui gas	48	32.00	102	68.00	150	100.00
Motor cycle/ cycle	70	47.00	80	53.00	150	100.00
Pets (Sheep, Camels, Cow, Horse, Hens)	60	40.00	90	60.00	150	100.00

According to the above table majority (73%) of the respondents had facility of electricity in their homes whereas more than one quarter (27%) of them had no electricity. An overwhelming majority (80%) of the respondents had availability of clean drinking water whereas some (20%) of them did not have the said availability. Majority (72%) of the respondents had the facility of toilet in their homes whereas some (28%) of them did not have the toilet

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facility. Three fifth (60%) of the respondents had television and Mobile phone whereas (40%) of them had no such facilities. Some of the respondents (16%) had Fridge facility in their homes whereas majority (84%) of the respondents did not have Fridge. Almost-one third (32%) of the respondents had Sui-gas connection and supply in their homes whereas majority (68%) of them had no Sui-gas. Less than half (47%) of the respondents had Motorcycle/Cycle whereas more than half (53%) of them had no Motorcycle/Cycle. Exactly three fifth (60%) of the respondents had no Pets whereas exactly two fifth (40%) of the respondents had different pets (Sheep, Cows, Horse, and Hens) in their homes.

Table No.11: Distribution of respondents as per the problems they have to face at workplace

Problem Faced	f	%
Sexual harassment	-	-
Physical violence	20	14.00
Verbally abuses	50	33.00
None	80	54.00
Total	150	100

As per the above table more than half (54%) of the respondents did not face any problem at the work-place whereas one third (33%) of the respondents had to face verbal abuses from people and less than one fifth (14%) of the respondents had to face physical violence at the work-place while begging.

Table No.12: Distribution of the respondents as per the place of sleeping at night

Place of Sleeping	f	%
Home	120	77.00
Parks	20	11.00
Market	06	04.00
Railway Station	-	-
Bus Stand	04	03.00
No Fixed Place for Sleeping	-	-
Total	150	100

According to the above table an overwhelming majority (77%) of the respondents slept in their homes at night whereas less than one fifth (13%) of the respondents slept in parks. Very small number (04%) of the respondents slept in the market and (03%) respondents slept at bus-stand at night.

Discussion

The study found that majority (71%) of the respondents was migrated from/ belong to some urban area whereas more than one quarter (29%) were from rural area. As per the current residence status of the respondents, it was found that more than three fifth (64%) of the respondents they were living in the city whereas more than one quarter (27%) of the respondents were living in the adjoining village. According to the access to education, little less than three fifths (59%) of the respondents did not have any access to school whereas more than two fifths (41%) had access to school/ education.

It was found that as per the occupation of respondents' fathers, exactly three fifth (60%) of the respondents fathers were laborer whereas more than one quarter (26%) had no occupation. For mothers' occupation of respondents, the study found that more than one third (37%) of the respondents' mothers were beggars whereas one third (33%) of them were house servants. About the

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family size of respondents, more than one third (35%) of the respondents family size was consisted on (04-06) family members whereas exactly one third (33%) were (07-09) family members. It was found that the monthly income of respondents' family, more than three fifth (64%) was from 10,000-20,000 rupees per month whereas more than one quarter (27%) responded 20,001-30,000 rupees per month. According to the proper parental care of respondents in homes or family, the study found that majority (74%) of the respondents had met with proper parental care in their home or family whereas more than one quarter (26%) of the respondents had no proper parental care in their home or family.

It was also found regarding the prevailing conditions of the respondents houses, more than one third (36%) of the respondents had pakahouse whereas less than one quarter (31%) of the respondents had kacha house and exact one fifth (20%) of the respondents were lived in the jhompari. About the availability to the facility of electricity, majority of the respondents (73%) had the facility of electricity in their homes whereas more than one quarter (27%) of them had no electricity. An overwhelming majority (80%) of the respondents had availability of clean drinking water whereas some (20%) of them did not have the said availability. Majority of the respondents (72%) had the facility of toilet in their homes whereas some (28%) of them did not have the toilet facility. Exactly three fifth (60%) of the respondents had television and Mobile phone whereas two fifth (40%) of them had no such facilities. Some of the respondents (16%) had Fridge facility in their homes whereas majority (84%) of the respondents did not have Fridge facility in their homes. Almost-one third (32%) of the respondents had Sui-gas connection and

supply in their homes whereas majority (68%) of them had no Sui-gas. Less than half (47%) of the respondents had Motorcycle/Cycle whereas more than half (53%) of them had no Motorcycle/Cycle. Exactly three fifth (60%) of the respondents had no Pets whereas exactly two fifth (40%) of the respondents had have different pets (Sheep, Cows, Horse, and Hens) in their homes. It was explored that more than one half (54%) of the respondents did not have to face any problem at their workplaces whereas one third (33%) of the respondents had to face verbal/ abusive language problems from people. Regarding the place of sleeping at night of respondents, the study found that an overwhelming majority (77%) of the respondents slept in their homes at night whereas only (13%) of the respondents slept in parks.

Conclusion

It was concluded that majority of the respondents (71 %) were migrated from/ born in some urban areas but at present, less than two third (64%) of the respondents were living in the city whereas more than one quarter (27%) in the village and less than one fifth (09%) of the respondents were currently living in the Jomphari. Regarding access to school it was also concluded that more than one half (59%) of the respondents had no access to school. About father's occupation, exact three fifth (60%) of the respondents' fathers were laborers whereas more than one quarter (26%) had no occupation and a small number (07%) were beggars. Whereas about the occupation of respondents' mothers, more than one third (37%) of the mothers of the respondents were beggars. According to the family size, it was concluded that more than one third (35%) of the respondents' family size was (04-06) family members whereas one third (33%) were (07-09) family members. For monthly

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income of the head of the family it was recorded that little less than two third (64%) earns 10,000-20,000 rupees per month. It was also concluded that more than one third (36%) of the respondents had paka house whereas less than one third (31%) had kacha house. For the provision and availability of basic needs of life, majority (73%) of the respondents had facility of electricity, An overwhelming majority (80%) of the respondents had availability of clean drinking water, Majority (72%) of the respondents had the facility of toilet in their homes, Three fifth (60%) of the respondents had television and Mobile phone, majority (84%) of the respondents did not have Fridge, Less than half (47%) of the respondents had Motorcycle/Cycle whereas more than half (53%) of them had no Motorcycle/Cycle. Exactly three fifth (60%) of the respondents had no Pets whereas exactly two fifth (40%) of the respondents had different pets (Sheep, Cows, Horse, and Hens) in their homes. It was concluded that an overwhelming majority (77%) of the respondents slept in their homes at night with their families whereas less than one fifth (13%) of the respondents slept in parks.

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