

The Socio-Cultural Determinants of Begging: A Case Study of Karachi City

Dr. Sakina Riaz,

Corresponding author, Assistant Professor, Department of Social Work, University of Karachi, Pakistan.

Dr. Mumtaz Ali Baloch,

Chairperson/Associate Professor, Department of Social Work, University of Balochistan, Quetta, Pakistan.

Abstract

The present research paper aims to find out the socio-economic status of beggars' in Karachi city. A descriptive research design was employed by using survey method. The primary source of data collection was face to face interviews. A sample of 140 street beggars, were selected from different public places using purposive, a non-probability sampling technique. Data analysis, chi-square test of association was done. The key findings of the study show that begging is a structured profession in the city. Data indicated that the majority of the respondents have their own houses and they become the professional beggar in a routine with high satisfaction their existing profession. This study suggests that there is an urgent need to design and implement a comprehensive urban policy in order to control and the begging practice in the city.

Keywords: Socio-Cultural Determinants, Begging practice, Karachi.

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1. INTRODUCTION

ILO (2004) defined begging is defined as: “a range of activities whereby an individual asks a stranger for money on the basis of being poor or needing charitable donations for health or religious reasons. Beggars may also sell small items, such as dusters or flowers, in return for money that may have little to do with the value of the item for sale.” Generally, beggars have seen in all the period of human societies for getting assistance or charity in order to full fill their human survival needs. Currently, begging has become a profession, especially in the urban lifestyle due to many pull factors supported by urbanization which urged people to move towards better socio-economic opportunities, this trend also promotes begging occurrence (Gurav, 2015). Yet, there are numerous people who deliberately has chosen begging. Indeed, begging is a very complexed phenomenon and has stayed in almost every society, whereas its dominance is different from culture to culture.

It is very difficult to explain that why people choose this activity. There is not a specific single reason which is related to begging, still, it has different reasons and ground for its continuing practice in diversified culture. It is the consequence of a variety of socio-economical and biological aspects. Though, the tradition of begging has long roots in different culture and closely associated with religion particularly in South Asia for instance in India, where charity is measured one of the noblest human quality according to Hindu tradition (Dhruvasan 1963, P:10-12). In various religions like in Islam, Christianity and even in Hinduism seeking alms is an opportunity to earn God's blessings (Kaushik, 2014). This situation becomes more critical if any beggar has been suffering from any chronic disease like leprosy and mental illness, it tacitly criminalizes the illnesses (Mander, 2009).

Beggars use a number of strategies to take money from others and have countless explanations for hunting other's assistance. In Pakistan, it is a traditional mindset which generally promotes begging practices in urban areas like Karachi. Mostly, in Karachi, cultural practices promotes begging. For example, certain religious groups

or social classes may believe that the financial support of a needy person is a noble job. It has been observed by the researcher, that people who involve in begging is more often continue to work as a professional beggar and do not join any respectable profession.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Begging has been initiated as social practice since the existence of human society. It is viewed as one of the oldest challenges for human society. Though, there is no any evidence is revealed that begging is existed in primitive societies due to close social ties and strong family sytem (Khan,2013) and the weaker social structure and family support system had the foundation of begging as a social problem. Historically, Begging had noted in Greece amongst the initial period and the Byzantine era (Johnny, 2008) & (Alan,2010).The begging was popularized in the purview of the Christian doctrine of almsgiving during the era of the Middle Ages.(Tatek A.,2009).

Earlier researches on developing and developed countries suggest that socio-cultural such as migrant background, low educational level, and workload has played significant influences in determining the practice of begging. In this regards, a variety of an arguments and questions may arise in analyzing the process of begging [see also Jelili, (2013), Ghimire Loknath,(2014) Hanchao Lu ,(2005) , Olawale, S.G.(2007), Yusuf A. Bell M. B, Jarimi M, Ahmed S. Ogungbade O.K, J. A. Omotosho, AlHassan. Y. S(2012), Ahamdi H.(2010)].

Several research reviews have been published on begging behavior.For instance, (Tripathi and Arora, 2010) had viewed begging as soliciting or receiving alms in public place by exposing wound, injury, deformity or disease whether of himself or of any other person or animal. Nevertheless, Begging is very critical and complex in nature. It is observed that voluminous tactics have been used by beggars for begging. For example, a sick young street beggar generally attracts the sympathy of the common man (Fives, et al; 2010). Tanvir (2001) noticed that many beggars used different strategies to attract people. For example, women with very young babies in their laps cause people to give them alms. Broun (2010) considered begging as a charge for the failure or fragile governance in several cultures (Usoro, 2007;Bose and Hwang 2002; Collins and Blomley,2003) , observed begging as the practice of pleading others to provide financial support like money, clothes or food with no anticipation of exchange or refund. Boaten (2006), and Yilmaz and Dülgerler (2011) noted that "street children and begging as an ordinary phenomenon".

Some scholars considered begging as “ an act of stopping people on the street to beg for assistance” Chukwulobe (2011) and some people choose it as an occupation (Ogunkan and Fawole, 2009; Adedibu and Jelili, 2011). It frequently happens for obtaining a monetary assistance, usually in cash or charitable contribution without doing any services in return(John, 2010; Balogun,2012).

However, many kinds of researchers supported that begging has a strong association with poverty, for instance, the research of Khan et.al., (2014). There are many begging groups who coerced common people into begging or some people are forced to beg (Sabina, 2010) and keep the profit or take their share. It is viewed that these groups are generally supervised by "businessmen" or criminal gangs or mafias. Most of them are living in a very bad situation, the risk of maltreatment, forcefulness or even the assassination too. (Saini,2009, Malone, 2009). Simillarliy, Tambawal, (2010), Namwata et al. (2012), Adedibu, (1989) have mentioned that there is a strong link between deviant behaviors and street begging. Evidently, it is important to notice that the efforts on criminalizing and forbidding or arresting beggars have not evidenced mostly operative (Lynch, 2005; Rahman, 2009; Johnsen and Fitzpatrick, 2008).

In a study conducted by Abdallah Jacob Seni (2016) suggested that training is required for "influential community members" in controlling begging practices. In a report conducted by European Commission, published in 2012, had viewed the typology of the child begging into “Social and legal context” and classified into six categories ,which are focusing characteristics of children;begging Situation;begging activities; age group;child trafficking, and begging as Family survival Strategy .

As per the Government of Pakistan report of 2010 “the estimated population of Pakistan to be 171,297,000 with approximately 32.5% living in urban and 67.5% in rural areas.” (Nafees A. et al,2012). The Constitution of Pakistan has confirmed the provision of welfare is the responsibility of the State and declared that “The state shall provide for all persons employed in the service of Pakistan or otherwise, social security by compulsory social insurance or other means; and provide basic necessities of life”. The clause c & d of article 38 of the constitution has endorsed that the provision of social safety net is the state’s job.However in the Pakistani

context, the human development indicators are quite alarming. Though, there is an upturn trend of begging is commonly observed particularly in urban areas of Pakistan.

While there is no precise record is available about beginning practices and therefore, due to the dire shortage of the record, it is very difficult to define the history of begging in Pakistan and on what reasons it has originated in urban areas of the Country? Certainly, there are a number of social-cultural and political and environmental factors that involved promoting begging in urban areas. The scope of the present study is restricted to Karachi, the mega and one of the rapidly growing cities of Pakistan. According to the World Population Review report:

“In the last few decades and the metropolitan area have more than 23 million people, with a population density of over 24,000 people per square kilometer, or 63,000 per square mile ...and nearly 5 million people, or 50% of the population, in 2000.”

Similarly, it has been estimated that by the year 2025, more than 60 percent of the world's population will live in urban areas (Benítez, 2001). Keeping in view this scenario, through this research, an attempt has been made to find out the socio-economic cause of beggars with reference to Karachi. In the formal sector more than 4,500 industrial units are working whereas there is no research statistic has been accessible for the informal sector in Karachi. Hasan A, Mohib M. (2003) had viewed the city as per categorization of residence, and described into planned or unplanned areas ('katchi abadis' or 'Goths'). There are an estimated 702 squatter settlements, or 'ketchup abides,' in the city harboring 40 to 61 percent of the population (Nafees A. et al, 2012).

The researcher has implied functionalist perspective and Nurkse's vicious circle of poverty as a theoretical framework to understand the paradox of begging in Karachi in this study. The first discusses the function of social institutions and social order and argues that “social stratification is needed to encourage people with distinct intelligence, knowledge, and skills to enter the most important occupations”. The second one focused on a “circular constellation of forces tending to act and react in such a way as to keep a country in the state of poverty” the help to understand the existence of begging across the generations (Jelili, 2006) & (Ogunkan and Fawole, 2009).

2.1 Objectives of the Study

This study was undertaken to identify the socio-economic status of street beggars in Karachi. Following study objectives were prepared for this research:

- to explore the socio-economic characteristics of the street beggars in Karachi;
- to investigate the extent to the association between socioeconomic and cultural Factors that influence the begging among beggars in Karachi;
- to determine the practices and the life patterns of beggars in Karachi;
- to examine the beggar satisfaction with beggary as the profession.

2.2 Hypothesis

1. There is a significant relationship between the ethnic background of the Beggars and their level of education
2. There is a significant relationship between residing conditions and begging as a Profession.
3. There is a significant relationship between methods and practices of begging & daily income of the beggar.
4. Beggars are eager to suggest their children adopt the same profession in future.

2.3 The significance of the Study

The study has manifold importance as it provides information about the beggar's lifestyle and helps to understand their socio-economic status. It will also help to understand the phenomena of begging and explain the Beggar's perspective regarding begging practices as a profession in Karachi city. This study was limited to the inner-city area of the city.

2.4 Methodology

Due to the non-availability of exact statistics about beggars living in Karachi, it was a great challenging for the researcher to find out the actual number of beggars living or working on the street in Karachi and conducts the research on the topic. Hence; a quantitative method was used for data collection for this study.

A sample of one hundred and forty (n=140) street beggars was obtained from numerous public places mostly shopping places in the urban areas of Karachi, with the help of informal contacts, accompanied by taking informed consent from the participants. This sample fulfills several criteria for this research. First, the respondents are living and working as professional beggars in Karachi. Second, they ensure a sound representation of the all provinces of Pakistan in terms of population as well as the socio-economic background. Only those beggars were included who have been engaged in begging since last two to three years in the city.

The data were collected within these pre-fixed strata through field survey in the commercial areas of six study sites which includes Gulshan-e-Iqbal block 4, Gulistan-e-Johar block 13& 14, Clifton, North Nazim Abad, Hyderi Market, and Tariq Road; represented high and lower-middle-income vicinity of the city. By using purposive convenient sampling technique, the sample was collected through face to face interviewed method for data collection from respondents. A especially aimed questionnaire was used as a data collection tool in this study.

The data was analyzed and the Pearson Chi-Square test. Four null hypotheses were raised and tested at 0.05 level of significance by using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 16.0 for windows.

2.4.1 Demographic Distribution of the Respondents Table 1

Gender	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Male	55	38.7	39.3
Female	59	41.5	42.1
Transgender	26	18.3	18.6
Total	140	98.6	100.0
Age	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
60 & above	15	10.6	10.7
55-60	16	11.3	11.4
50-55	11	7.7	7.9
45-50	10	7.0	7.1
35-40	6	4.2	4.3
30-35	34	23.9	24.3
25-30	13	9.2	9.3
20-25	35	24.6	25.0
Total	140	98.6	100.0
Religion	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Muslim	92	64.8	65.7
Hindu	35	24.6	25.0
Others	13	9.2	9.3
Total	140	98.6	100.0

Income (per day)	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Rs:100-150	4	2.8	2.9
Rs151-250	9	6.3	6.4
Rs251-400	22	15.5	15.7
Rs:401-550	22	15.5	15.7
Rs:550-700	39	27.5	27.9
R:s701-850	23	16.2	16.4
Rs: 850 -1000	21	14.8	15.0
Total	140	98.6	100.0
Marital Status	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Married	51	35.9	36.4
Unmarried	34	23.9	24.3
Married with children	29	20.4	20.7
Married without children	10	7.0	7.1
Unmarried with children	16	11.3	11.4
Total	140	98.6	100.0
Ethnic Background	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Urban	33	23.2	23.6
Rural	94	66.2	67.1
Others	13	9.2	9.3
Total	140	98.6	100.0
Qualification	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Primary	37	26.1	26.4
Secondary	25	17.6	17.9
Matric	39	27.5	27.9
Illiterate	23	16.2	16.4
Intermediate	11	7.7	7.9

Graduate and above	5	3.5	3.6
Total	140	98.6	100.0
Satisfaction	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Satisfied	45	31.7	32.1
Not Satisfied	58	40.8	41.4
Up to some extent Satisfied	26	18.3	18.6
No Answer	11	7.7	7.9
Total	140	98.6	100.0
Profession	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Treat as the full-time job.	36	25.4	25.7
Working as Part-time job	51	35.9	36.4
Working as seasonal beggar	29	20.4	20.7
working as occasional beggar	24	16.9	17.1
Total	140	98.6	100.0
Practice /Method	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
By using Slogan	20	14.1	14.3
Through Silent Request	20	14.1	14.3
By Showing Art	20	14.1	14.3
By displaying Animals (monkey)	13	9.2	9.3
By showing their weak or small children	26	18.3	18.6
By showing their disability /injured body part	19	13.4	13.6
By showing their medical reports or prescriptions	22	15.5	15.7
Total	140	98.6	100.0

Residential Status	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
living in own property	29	20.4	20.7
living in Own property in slum areas	38	26.8	27.1
Living as a tenant in a rented house	41	28.9	29.3
Living with relatives.	32	22.5	22.9
Total	140	98.6	100.0

3.1 Discussion & Results

Testing of Hypotheses (Table: 2)

1. Ho: There is a significant relationship between the ethnic background of the beggars and their level of education.

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	6.068 ^a	10	.810
Likelihood Ratio	7.558	10	.672
Linear-by-Linear Association	.674	1	.412
N of Valid Cases	140		

a. 9 cells (50.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .46.

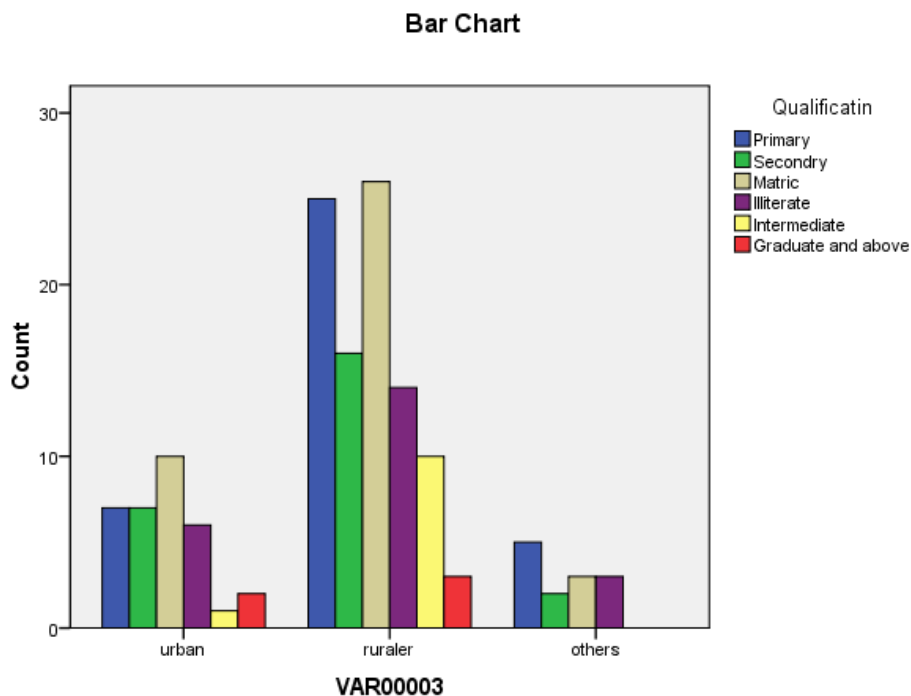


Figure :1

The above table indicates that $\chi(1) = 6.068^a$ $p = 0.810$

It is revealed from the interpretation of the data that there was no significant association between qualification of the beggars and their ethnic background. In this case, $\phi = .810$, which is a weak positive relationship between the two variables. So, it can be concluded that we reject the null hypothesis and accept our alternative hypothesis.

Testing of Hypothesis No :2

Ho: There is a significant relationship between residing conditions and begging as a profession.

Chi-Square Tests

		df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Monte Carlo Sig. (2-sided)		Monte Carlo Sig. (1-sided)			
				Sig.	99% Confidence Interval		99% Confidence Interval		Sig.
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	
Pearson Chi-Square	9.984 ^a	9	.352	.360 ^b	.347	.372			
Likelihood Ratio	10.344	9	.323	.352 ^b	.340	.364			
Fisher's Exact Test	9.981			.351 ^b	.339	.363			
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.984 ^c	1	.159	.162 ^b	.153	.172	.077	.092	.084 ^b
N of Valid Cases	140								

1 cells (6.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 4.97. (p value : **0.352**)

Bar Chart

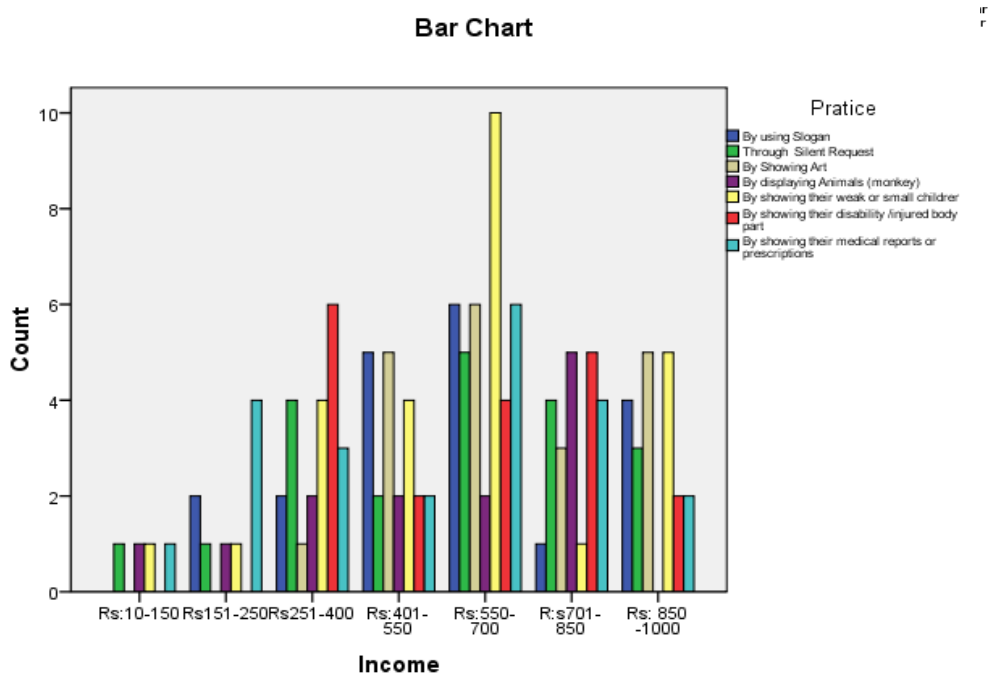


Figure :2

Another finding is that majority of that respondents who have their own house in the city, worked as a part-time profession (34.5%). Whereas, 28.9% of the full time beggars have their own houses in slums areas. This result tells us that there is statistically significant association between residing conditions and begging as a profession in the present study.

Testing of Hypothesis No :3

There is a significant relationship between methods and practices of begging & daily income of the beggar.

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	36.346 ^a	36	.453
Likelihood Ratio	40.596	36	.275
Linear-by-Linear Association	.936	1	.333
N of Valid Cases	140		

a. 43 cells (87.8%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .37.(p value : **0.453**)

figure :3

The result indicates that a high majority of the respondent earns Rs: 550-700 per day .The respondents disclosed that showing weak or small children (their own or borrowed) as a good strategy to earn money in this profession. The beggars used a number of strategies in order to earn more in an organized manner for instance the results

shows the second heights percentage of the beggars used as showing their medical reports or prescription and earns in between the range of Rs: 250 – 1000 per day. The data shows that using Slogan, using salient request and showing art are popular practices whereas displaying animals (monkey, birds etc.) as the unpopular or weakest method of begging in the study areas.

Testing of Hypothesis No: 4.

Ho: Beggars are eager to suggest their children to adopt the same profession in future.

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	12.785 ^a	12	.385
Likelihood Ratio	13.233	12	.352
Linear-by-Linear Association	.557	1	.456
N of Valid Cases	140		

a. 10 cells (50.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .55. P value : 0.385

By eyeballing the observed frequencies in the cross tabulation matrix, it appears that beggars are eager to suggest their children to adopt the same profession in future. Interestingly, the findings of the study reflect that the begging is now becoming a profession in Karachi and the majority of the beggars are satisfied with the profession and willing to transfer the same profession to their next generation. This result concludes and accepts our null hypotheses that there is a statistically significant association between beggars satisfaction and to suggest their children for adopting the same profession in future.

Bar Chart

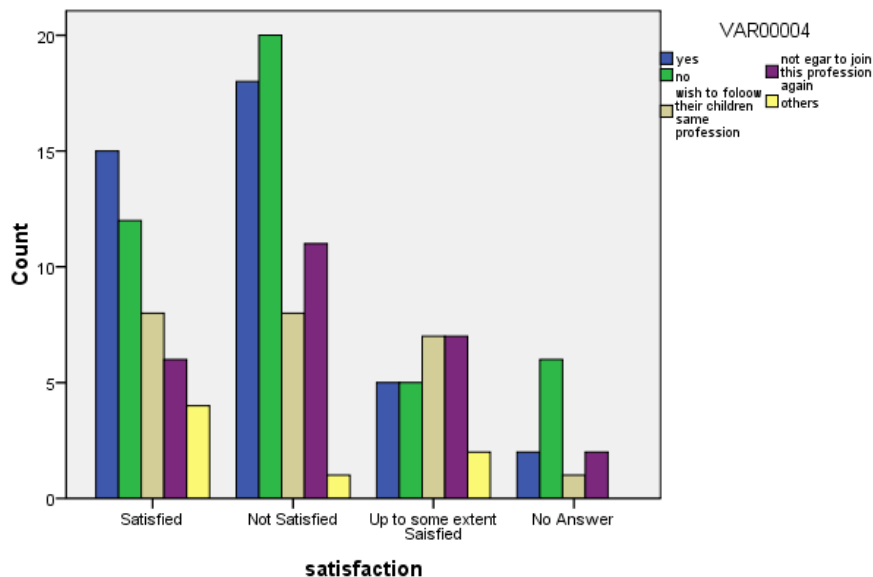


Figure:4

This research has been initiated to focus on socio –cultural determinants of begging with reference to Karachi city. The researcher had used the different variable like socio-economic status, age, gender, residential arrangement, and per day income to understand the begging phenomenon wisely and to address the behindhand factors of this

complex issue. About one hundred and forty street beggars (140) were interviewed; using self-administered questionnaires to collect each respondent's data.

It is noticed that the demographic characteristics like male population, female population, gender ratio, and household size are significantly associated with socio-economic status. (See table 1)

It is revealed that majority of the respondents were Female beggars (41.5 %). Keeping in view the Islamic perspective and Pakistani culture, male members of the family are responsible for financial support of the family. In the present research, it was noticed that female beggars were taking the financial burden in society as beggar. This results are quite resembled with the study of Aliya Bano (2013) found it as a “gender issues which need to be addressed through legal interventions.”

The study conducted by Lowicki (2002) found that the “Household poverty is the key motivating reason for children to work as a beggar and their earnings are treated as the great support for their family’s survival”. This study results showed that the majority of the respondents were married (35.9%) and having children (20.4%).

As far as the residing conditions, interestingly, this research showed that (47.2%) beggars have their own property, mainly in slum areas or extent of informal settlements in urban peripheries (26.8%). Approximate 28.9% of the respondents were stated that they living as a tenant in a rented house whereas others are living with relatives 22.5% respectively. These results have also confirmed the research of a familiar study, conducted by Ali. et al. (2004) in the Pakistani context. Another interesting and distressing finding is that 27.7% of beggars, who belongs to rural background, have completed their Matriculations. This result indicates that there is a missing link between quality of education and the economical consumption of the students. Hence, this study found that there is a strong connection in different variable like internal migration, poor quality of education, low wages or joblessness, and marital status, which pushed the respondents to enter in informal economy as survival strategy.

Furthermore, it was also noticed with great concerns that a high percentage of the respondents were reported that they worked as Part-time beggars (36.4%) ,whereas, 25.7% beggars were worked as full time job .In this regard, 18.6% beggars were used their small or weak children as a successful begging tactic to get the sympathy of the people. This result indicates that the demonstration of the weak children is a standard practice for obtaining charity.

As far as the job satisfaction is concerned ,(41.4%) of the respondent declares that they did not satisfied with this profession, however remaining 59% of the respondent did satisfied up to some extent with the profession. More importantly, it was declared that a vast majority has their own house in the slum areas of the city; this indicates the weak governance or ill legal systems of living.

The results of the study found significant relationship between begging as a part time profession. Data also revealed that most of the beggars were belongs to rural background and migrated to Karachi for and had chosen begging. Almost 30% of the respondents were earned Rs: 550-700 per day.

Conclusions

This study pointed out that homelessness, poverty; unemployment and family rejection are the connecting factors which are directly squeezed with begging. While, weak governance and the absences of Governmental check and balance and policy implementation about working on the street are linked to promote the begging culture in Karachi comfortably. Similarly, there is a strong social-political network regarded as a key component in the life of street beggars which provide a lot of support, protection and facilitate them in their personal, social, economic life as viewed by the present study. The researchers observed serious lapses in the maintenance of effective check and balance systems on the streets. This situation helps and facilitates the beggars in performing their job. It can be concluded that bagging should be considered as a national problem and necessary policies must be designed for its reduction.

Recommendations

On the basis of the above-mentioned analysis, this research suggests that:

- It is revealed that the absence of legal earning opportunities and weak police monitoring system are listed as exclusive factors for beggars' involvement in criminal activities in Karachi.

- This research endorses that for controlling street begging and its contributing factors, a holistic approach is needed. Policymakers and public authorities may implement multi-dimensional interventions on the basis of socio-religious and psycho-economic factors.
- This study strongly recommends that the government should take necessary vigilant, preventative and responsive steps for the elimination of all types of begging especially criminal beggars and powerful mafia groups from society.
- There is a strong need to set or design the “eligibility criteria” for donation or charity through appropriate urban charity policy. There is a need to design a proper system for the welfare of genuinely deserving people in every community (Muhalla) or union council or town level. Furthermore, through proper monitoring and collecting weekly charity or donation from the community through Social Workers, support the needy people at their doorstep in the same community decently.
- Moreover, Social Security system should put more emphasis on social insurance and social assistance programs for the socially disadvantage people for their social cohesion at local community level with proper record of genuine or deserving people is also needed in the city.
- Comprehensive policies and effective policing system and accurate Statistical information are required to address this issue within proper legislative contexts. In this connection, Beggars would not be permitted to work in the streets.
- Furthermore, necessary measures should be taken to ban on beggars migrating from one city to another city. Media campaigns can play a vital role in discouraging the begging practices.
- More rigors, empirical researches are needed for better understanding of the phenomennah.

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