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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

SOCIO-ECONOMIC DETERMINANTS OF BEGGARY AMONG CHILDREN

Yasmeen Khoraoo, Mashook Ali Khowaja, Naeem Majeed, Numan Majeed, Adnan Maqsood Choudhary

ABSTRACT:

Objective: To determine the socio economic determinants of beggary.

Design: Case control study.

Setting: The study was conducted in the urban community of Lahore from 1st March to 30th April 2010

Subjects: 100 people were selected, 50 cases and 50 controls. The cases were randomly selected from the urban areas and the controls were also randomly selected from the urban areas. The criteria for selection of cases and controls was that they should be mentally sound, and below the age of 15 years.

Method: A questionnaire was framed, pre tested and then interviews were conducted. Information was collected, compiled and analyzed by EPI Info.

Result: The factors father's death (5.05 times), disabilities (8.61 times), family sizes (4.64times), running away from homes (2.78 times) were associated with beggary while addiction and education were not associated with beggary.

Conclusion: The study showed that disability, father's death, family size and addiction were associated with beggary. No association was found between beggary and educational status or between beggary and addiction.

Key Words: Beggary, Socio Economic Determinants, Children.

Introduction:

Beggary can be defined as a solicitation for money or food (especially in the streets by an apparently penniless person), a state of extreme poverty or destitution; "a general state of need exists among the homeless"[1], the state of not having enough money to take care of basic needs such as food, clothing, and housing – a state of extreme poverty.[2] With the constant rise in inflation and commodity prices, poverty is reaching the most pathetic levels. The poor are becoming more and more poor as the days are passing, and the rich are amassing more and more wealth. Beggary is one of the consequences of poverty and greed for more. Various factors are involved in increasing the trend of beggary among the illiterate classes. Large family size, low socio economic status, unemployment, child lifting, greed etc. are responsible for leading people to beggary. Those who are well off pay charities to the beggars out of mercy and religious attitude, thus encouraging more people to beg instead of doing something to earn money. A previous study revealed that beggary is an outcome of socio economic conditions[3]. Another study expressed that growing unemployment and poverty was the main cause that pushed children towards the curse of beggary[4]. Another study showed that beggary is a curse and a social problem faced by the poor countries. Beggary is a social menace. It is affecting the impression of the community as well the nations. Beggary is a curse and a social problem faced by the poor countries. A developed social system does not leave space for that matter by taking care of poor sections of their society. Beggary and crimes flourish in the countries where social security is nonexistent[5].

In light of the above discussion, we conclude that beggary should be discouraged. There are people who have taken up beggary

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as a trade. They have organized groups which include women, children and the old who beg in the name of Allah, and then there are the money collectors, who take all the money collected by beggars of their group, and in return they provide them inappropriate food and shelter. The increasing number of beggars and the forms of beggary (in Pakistan) have turned the phenomenon into a national concern. It is the need of time to evaluate which factor is dominating as a determinant of beggary, amongst social factors (education, lack of parents, addictions, disabilities) and economic factors (family size). This study was designed to evaluate the prevalence of these factors among beggars.

Materials and Methods:

The dependant variable was beggary and independent variables included education, lack of parents, addiction to drugs, disabilities, running away from home and family size. The study was conducted in the urban areas of Lahore. The subjects included young beggars and the controls included young children working at workshops or other places where child labor is in vogue. The inclusion criteria included presence in urban areas of Lahore, mental fitness, and age below 15 years. The exclusion criteria were mental retardation, age above 15 years and external influences. For ethical reasons, the information was not disclosed to anyone and the names of the beggars were not mentioned anywhere in the research. The study design was case control. As the prevalence rate was not found, sampling size was taken randomly by choice i.e. 50 cases and 50 controls. The data was analyzed manually and some calculations were made using SPSS 12.0 and EPI Info.

RESULTS AND DATA ANALYSIS

INFLUENCE OF FAMILY SIZE

Beggary

Family size above 3

	+	-	
+	37	19	56
-	13	31	44
	50	50	100

Odds Ratio: 4.64; Confidence Interval: 1.83 – 11.98

There is association of family size with beggary, and the family size is 4.64 times more associated with beggary.

EFFECT OF EDUCATION

Beggary

Never went to school

	+	-	
+	39	37	76
-	11	13	24
	50	50	100

Odds Ratio: 1.25; Confidence Interval: 0.45 - 3.45

There is no association of education with beggary.

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ROLE OF FATHER'S DEATH

Beggary

Father Absent

	+	-	
+	32	13	76
-	18	37	55
	50	50	100

Odds Ratio: 5.05; Confidence Interval: 1.98 – 13.13

There is association of father's death with beggary, and the death of father is 5.05 times more associated with beggary.

EFFECTS OF DISABILITY

Beggary

Disability

	+	-	
+	27	6	33
-	23	44	67
	50	50	100

Odds Ratio: 8.61;

Confidence Interval: 2.84 – 27.33

There is association of disability with beggary, and the disability is 8.61 times more associated with beggary.

IMPACT OF RUNNING AWAY FROM HOME

Beggary

Ran away from home

	+	-	
+	26	14	40
-	24	36	60
	50	50	100

Odds Ratio: 2.78; Confidence Interval: 1.12 – 6.98

There is association of running away from home with beggary, and the children who run away from home are 2.78 times more associated with beggary.

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INFLUENCE OF ADDICTION

Domestic Violence

Addicts

	+	-	
+	12	4	16
-	38	46	84
	50	50	100

Odds Ratio: 3.63; Confidence Interval: 0.97 – 14.68

There is no association of addiction with beggary.

DISCUSSION:

The research showed that the disability is associated with beggary. A previous study also showed that the disabled people are more involved in beggary than the normal individuals. They are unable to do something to earn a living, and so they start begging[3]. Death of the child's father was also found to be an important factor leading people into beggary. A study conducted in some other areas also showed similar results[5]. Family size is also one of the factors causing people to beg, though it is not as significant as the other factors. Large family size increases the burden on family budget and plays role in poverty[4]. Addiction found to have no association with beggary. Running away from home was not found to be associated with beggary. Almost an equal number of children who had run away from homes were found to be working in the workshops and restaurants. Hence this factor is not much influential on the determination of beggary. This study has been done for the first time in this area, as no previous studies could be found for this area. There is no association of education with beggary. Equal number of illiterate children was found to be beggars or workers at various places.

CONCLUSION:

The study showed that disability, father's death, family size and running away from home were associated with beggary. No association was found between beggary and educational status, and beggary and addiction.

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