

Begging: Poverty or Habit Unraveling Public Perspective from South Punjab

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ABSTRACT

Begging is defined as the intentional act of imploring others to grant favors often in the form of money with minimum or no expectation of reciprocation. Sometimes, they also demand the provision of food, drinks, clothing, cigarettes and many other small items. They often operate in the public places to attract more attention of the common people. Its major types include needy, habitual, and professional beggars. In the modern world, there observe a great increase in the number of beggars that became a concerning point for the common people and governments. However, this study conducts a survey to ask for the opinion of the common citizens to that whether poverty is the main cause of begging or whether it is a habitual behavior that people adopt irrespective of their economic status. After survey, structured questionnaire was developed, encompassing Likert-scale questions designed to gauge public opinions on the causes and consequences of begging in Pakistan. This questionnaire was administered to a sample size of 300 people, covering diverse age groups from different regions of South Punjab. Uni-variate (frequency distribution and percentage and Bivariate analysis (Chi square and Gamma Statistics) was carried out. Huge majority (95.0%) of the respondents were of age 20-25 years; (75.7%) of the respondents were female; (64%) of the respondents were language are saraiki speak;(96%) of the respondents were unmarried;(65.7%) their occupational were selected to (other)..; (82.3%) were education selected to (other..);(40.0) of the respondents were agreed to

individuals facing extreme poverty;(33%) of the respondents were strongly agreed the individuals facing extreme poverty;(29.3%) of the respondents were agreed to they faced basic necessities such as food; (53.3%)of the respondents were seeking alternative means of income; (35.3%) of the respondents were neutral response rather than a habitual inclination. Bivariate analysis showed highly significant more will be poverty in the community vs more will be begging; More will be employment opportunities in the community vs less will be begging prevalence.

Introduction

In modern society orphans, beggars, thieves, and murderers from society. Begging occurs when individuals or groups do not have the appropriate economic resources to survive (Azeem, 2023; Ayoob, 2019). Corruption and government weakness are two factors that contribute to the development of criminal networks (Azam, 2011). Despite its association with poverty, beggars are also skilled (Tesar, 2015). As a result, presenting disabilities, diseases, poverty, and so on is strategically begging (Khan et al, 2014; Namwata et al. 2012) attempt to develop begging typologies by analyzing beggars' strategies, characteristics, and needs. Despite the fact that they used to force people to buy from them, (Ayoob, 2019) small merchant beggars are described as fascinating because they controlled people even when they really wanted to make money (Farid et al., 2021). Begging is fun and a skill that lets you earn money without working (Delap, 2009). Due to high population pressures, it is the universal pen of the world and is increasing daily, affecting the world economy negatively (Khan & Fahad, 2020). (Kihara's, 2017) definition, genuine beggars are professional, temporal, or continuous, since they are in need. In most cases, beggars own their homes and are happily settled (Riaz, 2019). It indicates that fake beggars also exist, for example, professionals who pretend to be disabled. (Namwata, et al. 2012) begging it is rare for a beggar in this category to own a house. Most forms of begging were represented by the ten types of begging (Broadly et al., 2017). Begging is one of the curse evils that ruin the society of the world and make communities unfavorable (Mirjat et al., 2017). A life of honesty and respect should be lived in this manner (Chaudhry & Mohyuddin, 2011). Street begging has been a long-standing social problem that has concerned well-meaning Nigerians for generations (Bukoye, 2015). They have yet to acknowledge their responsibilities toward rehabilitating beggars (Malik & Roy, 2012). Children minds using different techniques to force them into begging (Delap, 2009). Forced child begging is a global problem (Khan & Fahad, 2020). High levels of poverty and consumption, it is crucial to take into account poverty processes and power relations. Having a spatially and relationally based analytical framework is therefore useful. While this is the case, it is important to recognize differences between area-based approaches and its consequences (Beau 1997; Beall (1997). Diverse groups' issues and priorities must be recognized and addressed not only through methodologies but also via analytical. Honest' beggars may only do it when there is little chance of conflict and there is no shortage of food (Royle et al, 2002). The nutritional status of an individual can be assessed by calculating his or her height and weight in relation. Nigerian society's begging problem, but it appears intractable, especially in our cities (Fawole et al. 2010; Ali et al. 2004). Beggary as an organized crime, or legalization, in Pakistan is examined in this research (Azam, 2011). Picture of commercial sexual exploitation of women and children (Chaudhry and Mohyuddin 2011). Pakistan's urbanization, along with poor living conditions and limited access to

services (Zaidi, 2011; Malik and Roy 2012). The life of a beggar is characterized by nothing but begging and moral corruption (Iqbal, 2013). The majority of societies regard street children as violent. Pakistan, mainly below the poverty line (Chaudhry et al. 2014; Vedadi et al. 2013; Sheikh et al. 2020); Ameer et al. 2024); Shah et al. 2021). There are many poor and disadvantaged people in society who are beggars with disabilities (Groce et al. 2014). Pakistan is like. On the streets, children face many challenges (Ali and Ali, 2015). Street begging among adults and children in (Suleja Bukoye, 2015). Socio-economic determinants of child begging in Pakistan (Ali et al. 2016). A pioneering phenomenon of begging before colonial times was the degree of independence. A society cannot function without beggars (Mirjat et al. 2017; Green, 2017)). Worldwide, there are estimated to be millions of homeless children each day (Riaz, 2018). Beggary is one of the greatest social and economic problems in the world (Ayoob, 2019). In particular, child begging has gained global attention due to its vulnerability and negative effects on children's personalities (Jamil et al. 2019). Children beg, what antisocial activities they participate in, and what government can do to prevent child beg. Society is plagued by a number of endemic, multifaceted, and significant social problems, such as beggary. Begging and informal street work are common livelihood strategies (Friberg, 2020; Khan and Fahad, 2020). Work on the streets and beg for money (Friberg, 2020). Propose a solution to the problem of street-begging and poverty as an issue that can be prevented (Hassan et al. (2020). Farid et al. (2021) discovered that there is a typology of begging and beggars in Punjab. Children who scavenge are at risk of serious injury (Firdous, 2022). Children scavenge waste in search of reusable items Criminal aspects of begging (Saeed, 2022). Children who are beggars are the most vulnerable group because they lack basic needs, care, and protection (Tabassum and Suhail 2022). Beggars' behaviors and effects with Interpretative Phenomenological (Rasool and Kausar 2022). Facing the problem of begging, an unconventional and social issue (Zia and Hussain (2022). Pakistan's beggar problem is complex, with no easy solution. It is ineffective and counterproductive to criminalize begging as it is currently done Pane and Nasution (2023). Economic disadvantages population when trying to overcome visibility and job challenges (Ali Khan et al. 2024).

Materials and Methods

Research Design

A structured questionnaire was developed, encompassing Likert-scale questions designed to gauge public opinions on the causes and consequences of begging in Pakistan. This questionnaire was administered to a sample size of 300 people, covering diverse age groups from different regions of South Punjab. A total of three divisions of South Punjab were included in the study (Dera Ghazi Khan, Multan, and Bahawalpur). At the first stage, one district from each division was selected through a simple random sampling technique. At the second stage, two tehsils were selected from each district randomly. At the third stage, 50 respondents from each tehsil were selected through a purposive sampling technique.

Results and Discussion

Socio-economic information of the respondents: Socio- economic characteristics of the respondents like age, education, income, age at marriage/ marriage duration, household status, and facilities play an important role in awareness, adoption, and better reproductive health of females. The data relating to these aspects are presented and discussed as under:

Age of respondent/ her husband: Age is an important factor in determining the behavior of human beings. It indicates the ability to do work and the attitude of a person towards various social and

economic aspects of life. Age refers to the number of years completed by an individual since her/his birth. Age factor is very important to influence one's behavior; it widens the vision of an individual through experience. The respondents were asked about their age and data in this regard are presented in Table 1.

Education of respondent/ her husband: Education is a key to implementing social, attitudinal and behavioral changes (Jamison et al., 2006). Amongst the users of antenatal care services (ANC), there appeared to have a change in their rhujaanat (aspirations) which was being driven by a combination of increased awareness of the utility of ANC and a financial and social ability to access services. Women's education emerged as most prominent factor leading to an appreciation of utility of ANC use (Mumtaz and Salway, 2007). Husband wife's education also plays an important role in several demographic phenomena like desired family size, knowledge and maternal health care, consensus regarding decision-making etc. (Mturi, 2003). Education was organized as single most powerful variable in unifying fertility behavior. Ensuring that girls who got education, had considerable impact on fertility behavior, including the postponement of marriage and first pregnancy, and the number of children (Babalola et al., 2008).

Table 1: Distribution of the respondents with respect to their socio- economic characteristics

Age categories	Freq.	%
20-25 years	285	95.0
26-30 years	15	5.0
Total	300	100.0
Gender categories	Freq.	%
Male	73	24.3
Female	227	75.7
Total	300	100.0
Language	Freq.	%
Urdu	96	32.0
Saraiki	192	64.0
Other	12	4.0
Total	300	100.0
Status	Freq.	%
Single	288	96.0
Married	12	4.0
Total	300	100.0
Occupation	Freq.	%
Govt. Job	41	13.7
Private Job	41	13.7
Farmer	11	3.7
Self-Business	10	3.3
Other	197	65.7
Total	300	100.0
Education	Freq.	%
Uneducated	15	5.0
Elementary	6	2.0
HSSc	32	10.7
Other	247	82.3
Total	300	100.0

An overview of the study's respondents' ages is shown in Table 1. Out of a total of 300 respondents, a significant majority of 285 individuals, accounting for 95% of the sample, fall within the age range of 20-25 years. In contrast, only 15 respondents, representing 5% of the sample, are aged between 26-30 years. This distribution indicates that the majority of the respondents are relatively young, with a predominant concentration in the 20-25 age group. The cumulative percentage reaches 100% at the 26-30 age group, confirming the total sample size and the age distribution within the study.

Based on the gender of respondents, Table also shows the frequency and percentage distribution. Out of the 300 respondents, 73 are male, representing 24.3% of the sample. Meanwhile, a substantial majority of 227 respondents are female, making up 75.7% of the sample. This distribution shows a notable gender imbalance, with females comprising the dominant portion of the respondent pool. The cumulative percentage reaches 100% at the female category, confirming the total sample size and the gender distribution within the study.

According to respondents' mother tongue, Table displays the frequency and percentage distribution. Among the 300 respondents, 96 individuals, constituting 32.0% of the sample, identify Urdu as their mother tongue. A majority of 192 respondents, or 64.0% of the sample, speak Saraiki as their native language. Additionally, 12 respondents, representing 4.0% of the sample, have other mother tongues. This distribution highlights the linguistic diversity within the respondent pool, with Saraiki being the predominant mother tongue. The cumulative percentage reaches 100% at the "Other" category, confirming the total sample size and the mother tongue distribution in the study.

Table shows the frequency and percentage distribution of respondents according to their marital status. Out of the 300 respondents, a vast majority of 288 individuals, or 96.0%, are single. Only 12 respondents, representing 4.0% of the sample, are married. The cumulative percentage reaches 100% at the married category, affirming the total sample size and the marital status distribution within the study.

Following is a list of the occupations of respondents, as shown in Table. Out of the 300 respondents, 41 individuals (13.7%) are employed in government jobs, while an equal number of 41 respondents (13.7%) work in private jobs. A smaller segment of the sample, 11 respondents (3.7%), are farmers, and 10 respondents (3.3%) run self-businesses. The largest category, labeled "Other," comprises 197 respondents, accounting for 65.7% of the sample. This distribution indicates that a significant portion of the respondents are engaged in various occupations not specified in the other categories. The cumulative percentage reaches 100% at the "Other" category, confirming the total sample size and the occupational distribution within the study.

Table 1 shows the frequency and percentage distribution of respondents regarding level of education completed. Out of the 300 respondents, 15 individuals (5.0%) are uneducated, while 6 respondents (2.0%) have completed elementary education. Thirty-two respondents (10.7%) have completed Higher Secondary School Certificate (HSSc) education. The majority, comprising 247 respondents (82.3%), fall into the "Other" category, indicating they have completed various other levels of education not specified in the listed categories.

Table 2 shows the frequency and percentage distribution of respondents regarding on whether begging is predominantly a result of individuals facing extreme poverty. Out of the 300 respondents, 83 individuals (27.7%) strongly agree with this statement, while 120 respondents (40.0%) agree. Forty-two respondents (14.0%) are neutral, neither agreeing nor disagreeing. A smaller group of 33 respondents (11.0%) disagree, and 22 respondents (7.3%) strongly disagree. This distribution indicates that a majority of respondents (67.7%) believe that extreme poverty is a significant factor contributing to begging, with only a minority disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. As similar to (Ayooob, 2019), 12% of the respondents said that they beg because of poverty and impoverishment.

Table 2: Distribution of the respondents according to their different facing extreme poverty

individuals facing extreme poverty	Freq.	%
Strongly agree	83	27.7
Agree	120	40.0
Neutral	42	14.0
Disagree	33	11.0
Strongly Disagree	22	7.3
Total	300	100.0
adopt irrespective of their economic status	Freq.	%
Strongly agree	99	33.0
Agree	85	28.3
Neutral	54	18.0
Disagree	32	10.7
Strongly Disagree	30	10.0
Total	300	100.0
basic necessities such as food	Freq.	%
Strongly agree	64	21.3
Agree	88	29.3
Neutral	54	18.0
Disagree	66	22.0
Strongly Disagree	28	9.3
Total	300	100.0
seeking alternative means of income	Freq.	%
Strongly agree	25	8.3
Agree	160	53.3
Neutral	67	22.3
Disagree	32	10.7
Strongly Disagree	16	5.3
Total	300	100.0
rather than a habitual inclination	Freq.	%
Strongly agree	52	17.3
Agree	96	32.0
Neutral	106	35.3
Disagree	30	10.0
Strongly Disagree	16	5.3
Total	300	100.0

Table 2 shows the frequency and percentage distribution of respondents regarding on whether begging is a habitual behavior that some individuals adopt irrespective of their economic status. Out of the 300 respondents, 99 individuals (33.0%) strongly agree with this statement, while 85 respondents (28.3%) agree. Fifty-four respondents (18.0%) are neutral. A smaller segment, consisting of 32 respondents (10.7%), disagrees, and 30 respondents (10.0%) strongly disagree. This distribution indicates that a significant portion of respondents (61.3%) believe that begging can be a habitual behavior independent of economic status, while a smaller portion disagrees.

Table 2 shows respondents' views on why people resort to begging, particularly focusing on the lack of access to basic necessities such as food, shelter, and healthcare. A notable 64 respondents (21.3%) strongly agree that the absence of these essentials drives individuals to beg, while 88 respondents (29.3%) agree with this perspective, indicating that a significant portion believes begging is closely linked to basic needs. In contrast, 54 respondents (18.0%) are neutral, showing some uncertainty or lack of strong opinion on the issue. A substantial number, 66 respondents (22.0%), disagree with the notion, and 28 respondents (9.3%) strongly disagree. Table 4.9 shows respondents' views on why people resort to begging, particularly focusing on the lack of access to basic necessities such as food, shelter, and healthcare. A notable 64 respondents (21.3%) strongly agree that the absence of these essentials drives individuals to beg, while 88 respondents (29.3%) agree with this perspective, indicating that a significant portion believes begging is closely linked to basic needs. In contrast, 54 respondents (18.0%) are neutral, showing some uncertainty or lack of strong opinion on the issue. A substantial number, 66 respondents (22.0%), disagree with the notion, and 28 respondents (9.3%) strongly disagree.

Table 2 illustrates the respondents' opinions on whether begging becomes a habitual behavior when individuals find it easier than seeking alternative sources of income. The majority, 160 respondents (53.3%), agree with this view, suggesting that they believe begging can become a habit due to its perceived ease compared to other income options. Additionally, 25 respondents (8.3%) strongly agree with this perspective. On the other hand, 67 respondents (22.3%) remain neutral, indicating uncertainty. A smaller segment, 32 respondents (10.7%), disagree, and 16 respondents (5.3%) strongly disagree. As similar to (Ali, 2020), there is no easier way to earn money than by begging. It is important to set aside one's ego and honor in order to beg. It is common for lazy individuals to need an easy or short way to earn money in order to avoid hard work.

Table 2 shows the respondents' perspectives on whether poverty is the primary driver for individuals to engage in begging, as opposed to a habitual inclination. A notable portion, 52 respondents (17.3%), strongly agree that poverty is the main factor, and 96 respondents (32.0%) agree, indicating a significant belief that economic hardship drives begging more than habit. A large group, 106 respondents (35.3%), remain neutral on this issue, reflecting uncertainty or lack of strong conviction. Meanwhile, 30 respondents (10.0%) disagree, and 16 (5.3%) strongly disagree. As reported in previous study that a variety of negative experiences have been reported among those who beg. Those who beg often struggle with mental illness, physical health complaints, recurrent unemployment, and family issues (Cadaret et al, 2018)

Table 2 presents the respondents' views on whether begging is a learned behavior passed down through generations within certain communities. A significant proportion of respondents, 108 (36.0%), strongly agree with this notion, while 85 (28.3%) agree, suggesting that many believe begging is perpetuated through generational learning. Meanwhile, 74 respondents (24.7%) are neutral, indicating uncertainty or lack of a strong opinion on this issue. Conversely, 22 respondents (7.3%) disagree, and 11 (3.7%) strongly disagree. As reported in the previous study the category of

beggars are the beggars who were raised in the streets. They can be viewed as professional beggars or the “pure beggars”, because they have a family history of begging (Hirst, 2006)

The cross tabulation between responses to Question 27 (perceptions of poverty in the community) and Question 37 (views on the relationship between poverty and begging) reveals interesting patterns. Among those who strongly agree that poverty is prevalent in their community, 52 respondents also strongly agree that poverty leads to increased begging, while 24 agree with this perspective. Conversely, 19 of these respondents are neutral, and a small number, 5, disagree, with none strongly disagreeing. For those who agree that poverty is a significant issue, 15 also strongly agree that it leads to more begging, while 42 agree, with 27 disagreeing and 5 strongly disagreeing. Among those neutral about poverty's prevalence, 23 strongly agree and 30 agree that poverty leads to more begging, whereas 9 disagree and 7 strongly disagree. In the group that disagrees with the notion of widespread poverty, 10 strongly agree and 12 agree that poverty results in increased begging, while 4 disagree, and none strongly disagree. Lastly, among those who strongly disagree that poverty is prevalent, 6 strongly agree and 5 agree that poverty causes more begging, with no respondents disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. This data suggests a significant correlation between perceptions of poverty and beliefs about its impact on begging, with those seeing more poverty generally also seeing it as a driver for increased begging.

Table 3: Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	90.111 ^a	16	.000
Likelihood Ratio	100.342	16	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.440	1	.230
N of Valid Cases	300		
a. 11 cells (44.0%) have expected count less than .7. The minimum expected count is .61.			

As a result of the Chi-square Tests, insights are provided into the relationship between perceptions of poverty and begging behavior. There are 16 degrees of freedom and a .000 asymptotic significance level in the Pearson Chi-Square test. Based on these results, perceptions of poverty are significantly related to views on begging. In the Likelihood Ratio test, the value is 100.342 with 16 degrees of freedom and .000 asymptotic significance, supporting the strong association. The key thing to remember is that 11 cells (44.0%) have an expected count of less than 5, and the minimum expected count is .61. The Chi-Square test might not be reliable because of the data distribution. It's still very likely that poverty leads to more begging based on the significance levels.

Hypothesis 2: More will be employment opportunities in the community; less will be begging prevalence.

Test Chi-Squares to see if there's any correlation between employment opportunities (Q47) and begging (Q17). Using 16 degrees of freedom, the Pearson Chi-Square value is 20.357 and the p-value is 0.205. With a p-value of 0.205, the p-value is well within the conventional significance threshold of 0.7, meaning begging prevalence and employment opportunities are significantly correlated. In spite of 40% of cells having expected counts less than 5, the analysis shows that, as high as 0.7 significance level, there's a significant relationship. Therefore, the research hypothesis is that higher employment opportunities lead to fewer people begging.

Table 4: Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
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Pearson Chi-Square	20.357 ^a	16	.205
Likelihood Ratio	22.470	16	.129
Linear-by-Linear Association	.250	1	.617
N of Valid Cases	300		
a. 10 cells (40.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.81.			

The crosstabulation analysis of the relationship between employment opportunities (Q47) and begging prevalence (Q17) shows a varied distribution of responses. Among those who strongly agree that increased employment opportunities reduce begging, 34 respondents (11.3%) agree that begging prevalence is also low, while 8 (2.7%) strongly agree, indicating a belief that more job availability correlates with less begging. In the "Agree" category for employment opportunities, 47 respondents (15.7%) agree with less begging, with another 23 (7.7%) strongly agreeing. However, the neutral category shows a mixed view: 39 respondents (13%) agree with less begging, but 18 (6%) strongly agree, suggesting some uncertainty or lack of strong opinion on the impact of employment opportunities. Disagreement is also present, with 9 respondents (3%) strongly agreeing and 20 (6.7%) agreeing that more employment correlates with less begging. Among those who strongly disagree with the effectiveness of employment opportunities in reducing begging, 27 respondents (9%) agree that begging prevalence is low, but only 2 (0.7%) strongly agree. Overall, the data suggests that while there is some consensus that increasing employment opportunities can reduce begging, opinions vary significantly, there was a noticeable percentage of respondents who expressed uncertainty or disagreement.

Conclusion

This research provides a comprehensive analysis of the socio-economic factors contributing to the persistence of begging in South Punjab, Pakistan. The study's findings underscore the complex interplay between variables such as employment opportunities, law enforcement, education, and basic life facilities, and their impact on begging prevalence. Significant correlations were identified between begging and an increase in crime rates, as well as a reduction in tourism and investment opportunities. These results suggest that addressing begging requires a multifaceted approach, incorporating both immediate support for those in need and long-term strategies to improve socio-economic conditions. However, the study also reveals that not all variables have a straightforward relationship with begging, highlighting the challenges in formulating effective policies. While some factors, like employment and law enforcement, showed a significant impact, others had weaker or non-significant associations, indicating the need for further research to fully understand the nuances of this issue. The research emphasizes the importance of integrated efforts from policymakers, law enforcement agencies, and social welfare organizations to reduce begging through targeted interventions. By addressing the root causes, such as poverty, lack of education, and inadequate social services, it is possible to create a more sustainable and humane solution to this persistent social problem in Pakistan.

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