

Socio-economic Status of Child Beggars in Dhaka City

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Abstract

The study was conducted in Dhaka city, the capital of Bangladesh taking 70.73% boys and 29.29% girls using convenience sampling method. About 41.46% respondents were 2501-3000 BDT and 9.75% were 1001-1500 BDT and 3001-3500 BDT earners having 82.92% respondents no link with other occupations. Some 53.66% fathers of the respondents were rickshaw pullers, 17.07% farmers and beggars as well as 46.34% mothers of respondents were housewives, 26.83% beggars and day labours in occupation. About 60.97% respondents came in begging from the slums and 63.41% respondents adopt begging due to their poverty and 34.15% were forced beggars forced by parents (24.39%), friends (26.83%) and kidnappers (19.51%).

Keywords

Child Beggars, Socio-economic Status, Dhaka City

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1. Introduction

The greatest English poet William Butler Yeats, a Nobel laureate in Literature once says,

“Come away, O human child!

To the waters and the wild

With a fairy, hand in hand,

For the world's more full of weeping

Than you can understand.” [1]

Begging is the practice of entreating others to grant a favour, often a gift of money, with little or no expectation of reciprocation. Beggars are found in public places such as transport routes, urban parks and near busy markets. Besides money, they may also ask for food, drink or other small items [2]. The simplest way of defining begging is to ask for money

without any return of services [3]. Macdonald defined begging as asking for alms or charity given out of sympathy to the poor [4] and it is a street level resource for the poor and powerless [5] and the solicits alms receivers to sustain livelihood are called beggars [6].

Child is a young up to 18 year's age according to the section 4 of in vogue Bangladeshi Child Act 2013. According to the ILO's Child Labour Convention and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Children are the youth belongs to less than 18 years of age. Child begging is the begging in which boys and girls under the age of 18 beg, mostly through psychological and physical oppression [7]. 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 [8].

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The child beggars are the 'High Risk Groups of Children', children without adequate parental care. Literature suggests that refugee children, street children and children from low-income families are particularly vulnerable to exploitative labour practices, including exploitative employers, poor wages, lack of training and physically inappropriate demand, and higher risk of physical punishment and sexual abuse [9, 10]. Some children start begging or working on the street and returning home at night eventually leave home to live on the street [11]. The UNICEF defines street children as 'who is of the street and on the street' [12]. In Bangladesh numerous children live as street children in the big cities and towns particularly in Dhaka city. They live an inhuman life and a significant portion of them are involved in begging [13]. 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 [14].

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. Despite constitutional recognition of the right to shelter for all citizens, 41 percent of all children are deprived of adequate shelter [15]. It can be well assumed that, a major portion of these children are the child beggars. 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 [16].

In Bangladesh, there is a lack of comprehensive data on street dwellers or people with similar Condition such as their number, living conditions and livelihood activities. Different small Scale surveys give some idea about their numbers. According to a government estimate of 2004, there were 250,000 street children in Dhaka city [17]. Also, there were 100,000 beggars in the city and about 4,000 to 6,000 were disabled among them [18].

While a small but growing body of research describes the lives of people who live in urban informal settlements or slums, very little research describes the population with no housing at all [15]. Many of them have been coming to Dhaka by the process of migration. And Dhaka city, being the capital and land of 'opportunities', has to take the major brunt of this influx of migrant population. In line with this, the homeless population in Dhaka, of which a significant number is the child beggars; is known to face extortion, erratic unemployment, exposure to violence, sexual harassment, and to engage in high-risk behaviours [19, 20].

Begging is a social problem, considering as a violation of public order and it is prohibited by the Dhaka Metropolitan Police Ordinance III of 1976. There have a vagrant act which is implemented outside the metropolitan area. According to ordinance number 81, begging is one kind of crime and there have one month punishment who beg or try to beg or who try for coming sympathy of others through showing any physical injury, diseases, skin diseases or showing misbalance position of the organs of his or her bodies for the intention of having some beg [21]. It is also prohibited in many cities all over the world like Dhaka [22, 23].

States parties shall recognize for every child the right to benefit from social security, including social insurance and shall take the necessary measures to achieve the full realization of this right in accordance with their national law [24]. 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, which referred in article 25 to childhood as entitled to "special care and assistance" [25-27]. Therefore the current study was conducted to assess the socio-economic status of the child beggars in Dhaka city of Bangladesh.

2. Framework

2.1. Study Type

The study was a pilot study.

2.2. Population Selection

There were taken a total 108 child at different slums on Dhaka city in Bangladesh.

2.3. Study Duration

The study was conducted from July 2014 to June 2015

2.4. Sampling Method

The non-probability (Convenience sampling) method was used to frame the beggars from the study places.

2.5. Data Collecting Techniques

A planned questionnaire was developed containing both the closed and open ended query to collect data through face-to-face interview with the respondents. The questionnaire was pretested in areas far away from the sample areas and revised according to the feedback gained in the field level. The questionnaire was formed to obtain the relevant information considering personal, household, social and economic details.

2.6. Data Verification

The questionnaire was checked per day taking the interview

and gain these were carefully rechecked after collecting all the data and coded prior the entrancing into computer technology. The data was edited in case of sighting discrepancy (doubt entry, wrong entry etc.)

2.7. Statistical Analysis

The data were processed to undergo statistical analysis using SPSS 16 windows program. Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel were used to represent the tabular and chart icon.

3. Results

There were found that maximum number (43.90%) of respondents were in 7-10 years of ages, 36.58% respondents within 11-14 years and very few (4.88%) within 3-6 years. Some 53.66% fathers of respondents were Rickshaw pullers and 46.34% mothers were housewives according to the study (Table 1).

Table 1. Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents.

Parameters	Frequency	Percentage
Sex		
Boys	29	70.73
Girls	12	29.29
Age (years)		
3-6	2	4.88
7-10	18	43.90
11-14	15	36.58
15-18	6	14.63
Father's occupation		
Rickshaw pullers	22	53.66
Farmers	7	17.07
Beggars	7	17.07
Small Traders	5	12.19
Mother's occupation		
Housewives	19	46.34
Day Labours	11	26.83
Beggars	11	26.83

Table 2. Socio-economic characteristics of the respondents.

Parameters	Frequency	Percentage
Causes of being beggars		
Poverty	26	63.41
Force giving	14	34.15
Others	1	2.44
Comes from		
Villages	10	24.39
Towns	6	14.63
Slums	25	60.97
Monthly Income (BDT)		
1001-1500	4	9.75
1501-2000	6	14.63
2001-2500	10	24.39
2501-3000	17	41.46
3001-3500	4	9.75
Relationship with other occupations		
Labours	2	4.88
Drug dealings	5	12.19
No relations	34	82.92
Relationship with their families		
Yes	19	46.34
No	22	53.66

There were observed that 63.41% respondents in begging profession by dint of their poverty and 34.15% were forced beggars came from slums (60.97%). About 41.46% respondents earned 2501-3000 BDT (highest) and 9.75% earned 1001-1500 BDT and 3001-3500 BDT (lowest). 82.92% beggars had no relation with other occupations while 12.19% were added with drug dealings and 4.88% with labours keeping no relation with their families (53.66%) (Table 2).

According to the table 3 statement, 24.39% and 26.83% respondents adopted the begging due to their parents and friends respectively and 12.19% were forced by terrorists. 43.90% respondents said that they took cigarette, 14.63% alcohol and 17.07% ganja seeking anonymities.

Table 3. Victimization dimensions.

Parameters	Frequency	Percentage
Doing begging (forced by whom)		
Friends	11	26.83
Parents	10	24.39
Neighbours	7	17.07
Terrorists	5	12.19
Kidnappers	8	19.51
Types of drugs taking		
Cigarette	18	43.90
Ganja	7	17.07
Alcohol	6	14.63

4. Discussion

Child Begging is one of the most alarming and horrific forms of violence especially targeted Children. It is a most violent phenomenon for whole world. In Bangladesh, children are also facing this violent alarmingly [28] and the number of child beggar is increasing day by day in Dhaka city [29]. The children are in deprivation to their rights to rights to survival, education and safe childhood [30]. The study covered the socio-demographic characteristics of the child beggar to represent the whole figure of Bangladesh. Most of the respondents were boys (70.73%) and belongs to the age group 7-10 years according to the study. There were found that maximum number (43.90%) of respondents were in 7-10 years of ages 36.58% respondents within 11-14 years and very few (4.88%) within 3-6 years. Some 53.66% fathers of respondents were rickshaw pullers and 46.34% mothers were housewives. Another study shows that, majority of the child beggars (66%) are boys and 77% are in age ranging 10 to 14 years [31].

There were observed that 63.41% respondents in begging profession by dint of their poverty and 34.15% were forced beggars came from slums (60.97%). Another study done on Dhaka city found most of the beggars (around 60%) in the study are slum dwellers [32]. Present study showed that, about 41.46% respondents earned 2501-3000 BDT (highest) and 9.75% earned 1001-1500 BDT and 3001-3500 BDT (lowest).

82.92% beggars had no relation with other occupations while 12.19% were added with drug dealings and 4.88% with labours keeping no relation with their families (53.66%). According to other study, child beggar earns a total of Tk. 172 daily (including income from other sources) and most of them live with their parents [33]

According to the present study, 24.39% and 26.83% respondents adopted the begging due to their parents and friends respectively and 12.19% were forced by terrorists. 43.90% respondents said that they took cigarette, 14.63% alcohol and 17.07% ganja seeking anonymities. There were found by another study, most of the child beggars are forced by their parents and take drugs sometimes [30]. In Bangladesh, as in many developing countries, there is a widespread belief amongst the public, policymakers and social workers that children 'abandon' their families and migrate to the street because of economic poverty [34, 35].

According to the Article 17 and 19 of the constitution of Bangladesh, the state should take proper measures of free and compulsory education for the children along with equal economic development throughout the country and to fulfilling this condition; the government of Bangladesh under the Ministry of Social Welfare builds up five vagrancy centres. But most of the beggars do not want to spend their time into the vagrancy centres because of various problems along with insufficient food facility, treatment opportunity, rehabilitation insecurity, recreational lacking and so on [36-38].

Considering the overall study, it felt that the life of child should be begging and exploitation free on the basis of the existing laws to eradicate the child abuse to arrange safe childhood [39-41].

5. Conclusion

Begging, especially the child begging is the curse for the society affects the total image of the country. Beggars are the low income earners, not sufficient to survive in the society maintaining the basic needs and the luxurious hopes is on the brown study. Good governance along NGOs should come up with their helping hands to combat the vagrancy problems for the child beggars in Bangladesh.

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