



PSYCHOSOCIAL ASPECTS OF BEGGARS

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ABSTRACT **Background:** Beggars exist in all societies and begging is prevalent throughout the world. Place, prevalence and pattern of begging changed with the living place. It is a social evil in India and in the developing world. So that this study was carried out for psychosocial aspects of begging in Indore district of Madhya Pradesh. **Aim:** This study aimed to assess psychosocial aspects of beggars in Indore and to find psychosocial reasons of becoming beggar. **Methods:** Data collection techniques included: (1) survey through head count and (2) structured individual interviews. A sample of 100 beggars was selected through purposive sampling procedure so that all categories of beggars get covered. The interviews were conducted in the months from May 2021 to July 2021. Data was verified manually at various stages, tabulated and analysed in the form of tables, bar diagrams, histograms, charts, etc. **Results:** In this study, most of the beggars were children and adolescents and were females. Most of them started begging since the age of 6 years and came from nuclear family and living with the parents. They mostly beg for basic needs and supporting family financially. One fourth were beggars by choice because they don't want to do anything else. About half of the beggars started begging by force of their family. They were begging by means of selling the pens, toys, tissue paper etc. and feigning as if themselves or their children are diseased. 73%, 51%, 47%, 36%, 21 and 13% of total sample size were using tobacco gutkha, bidi/cigarettes, alcohol, solution/fumes inhalation, ganja and smack respectively. **Conclusions:** There is need of planning for elimination of this problem and beggars could be converted into worthy human capital and workforce for achieving a higher growth rate and ensuring inclusive development.

KEYWORDS : Beggar -Psychosocial -Addiction

INTRODUCTION:

Beggar is a "a person who publicly and regularly requests for money or goods for personal use in a face-to-face manner from unfamiliar others without offering a readily perceptible or valuable product of consumption or facility in return for articles received." (Lankenau, 1999).²

According to the Juvenile Justice Act 2000 (as amended in 2006)¹ of India, Begging is defined as: "Soliciting or receiving alms in a public place or entering into any private premises for the purpose of soliciting or receiving alms, whether under any pretence; exposing or exhibiting with the object of obtaining or extorting alms, any sore, wound, injury, deformity or disease, whether of himself / herself or of any other person or of an animal; the child beggars are rightly considered as "children in need of care and protection" by the act."

Classic begging is defined as asking for money either by evoking pity, or citing a particular circumstance (e.g. requirement of help in form of money for transport cost of bus and trains), without providing anything in return. Whereas Auxiliary begging is defined as offering token products or services in exchange for a donation of money.³

Since in India, charity is considered as one of the aristocratic and noblest act of human morality according to Hindu tradition (Dhruvasan, 1963, 10-12)⁴ and so begging has been an age old traditional profession. Among Muslims 'Zakat' or alms-giving is done during Ramzan. Giving to the poor is regarded as one of the highest duties for any Christian. In Buddhism begging by holy men is ascribed value because it is believed that it teaches them humility and enables them to break away from all forms of material bondage.

According to Census of India 2011⁵, the total number of beggars in India are little over 4 lakhs. As per the Census of India (2011), the population of Hindus constitute 79.80 per cent of India's population, and their percentage in the beggars is relatively high (72 per cent of total beggars in India). Muslims make up 14.23 per cent of the total population, and their percentage in the number of beggars is relatively low (25 per cent of total beggars in India). The percentage share of beggars from Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism, Jainism and other religions are 0.88 per cent, 0.45 per cent, 0.52 per cent, 0.06 per cent and 0.30 per cent, respectively. As per the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, there are 28,695 beggars in Madhya Pradesh.⁶

Begging is considered as a hereditary profession as a part of social customs in certain communities, which may include: Nats, Sains, Bajjigars, Jugglers, Bhats and Kanjars. They do not affix any sort of social disgrace or stigma to this occupation and pursue it from their very childhood.³

There are two ways in which beggary is associated with economic conditions. Firstly, beggary is the outcome of adverse economic situation. Secondly, under few circumstances beggary is done for financial gain. Causes such as unemployment, landlessness, poverty, calamity, drought, etc leading to begging.³

The natural calamities such as earthquakes, flood, tsunami, hurricane and drought compel people to leave homes, leaving everything behind them and under circumstances of immediate need, the persons who are not able to perceive work or jobs undergo a feeling of compulsion to adopt begging in order to save themselves from starvation and death (Myneni, 2009).⁷

Beggar succeeds in getting alms for the reason that man will get spiritual reward, Punya, in exchange for a few rupees. Many people believe and are of opinion that even the good and high-quality things of earthly life may be secured and acquired through the God's grace and are granted to those who contribute assistance and support to the "down and out". Almost all classes of religion approve and encourage such sentiments.

The begging appeal includes all motives from the religious sentiments to mercy of the superior for the inferior, from greed for spiritual bliss to greed of success in material and social aspects, from affection towards one's own children to the desire for evasion of any evil sight.

AIM & OBJECTIVES:

1. Study of Psychosocial Aspects of Beggars in Indore.
2. To understand the socio-economic profile of beggars.

Study Area:

Indore is the largest and most populous city in the Indian state of Madhya Pradesh. Area of Indore district is 3898 sq.km. with total population of 32,76,697. Urban population is 24,27,709 and rural population of 8,48,988 as per the Indore NIC website.²⁰

MATERIALS & METHODS:

This study is focused on two areas of inquiry: (1) Survey of Beggars and (2) In-depth interviews of beggars. Both quantitative and qualitative approaches were applied in the process of obtaining information and analysis. Information on begging was gathered by means of structured Interview Schedule having (open and close-ended questions). A sample of 100 beggars was selected through purposive sampling procedure so that all categories of beggars get covered. The purpose of the study was explained to the beggars and only those beggars who willingly agreed to give information were interviewed. The interviews were conducted in the months from May 2021 to July 2021. Data was tabulated and analysed in the form of tables, bar diagrams, histograms, charts, etc.

Problems encountered during study like difficult to ask questions in between their begging time, evaded the study as more questions asked.

RESULTS:

1- Distribution of places of begging:

Location wise distribution of these beggars showed that maximum (40%) were found at traffic signals followed by markets/eateries (30%), religious places (20%) and bus/train stations (10%).

2- Age-wise distribution of beggars:

The sample distribution by age shows that the maximum numbers of beggars, about 40% are between 13-19 years of age. Nearly 20% are between 6-12 years of age, and another 20% are 20-40 years.

AGE(Yrs) Gender	6-12	13-19	20-40	40-60	>60
Male(%)	12	10	6	2	2
Female(%)	8	30	14	8	8
Total(%)	20	40	20	10	10

3- Distribution of age at which begging started:

However the age at which they started begging shows that 20% beggars were initiated into begging by their parents or relatives ever since they were born. Maximum number i.e. 40% beggars started begging between the ages of 6-12 years.

AGE(Yrs) Gender	0-5	6-12	13-19	>40
Male(%)	15	20	10	5
Female(%)	5	20	20	5
Total(%)	20	40	30	10

4- Type of family of beggars:

A large majority of the respondents 80% belonged to nuclear families; 20% were from joint families.

5- Distribution of place of living of beggars:

Majority of beggars stay in Urban slums of Indore like Musakhedi, Gwal Toli, Azad Nagar and near Jail road. Rest i.e. 30% of total samples were came from nearby villages for begging and they return to their homes in evening.

6- Distribution of beggars according to residing with:

Majority of the beggars 40% were living with parents; 22% with family; 20% with friends; 12% with their relatives and 6% were staying alone.

7- Reasons for begging:

30% of the beggars mentioned that they did not like begging but had no option or alternate source of earning. 25% beggars which mostly include children, beg for help family. Only 25% acknowledged that they like to beg and did not want to do other work/job. 10% beg as they have nothing to do at home and they beg for extra income.

8- Daily time spent on begging:

Majority of beggars i.e. 68% spent 5-8hrs daily, 25% spent 1-4hrs/day and 7% spent 9-12 hrs/day on begging.

9- Ways of begging:

About 39% of beggars sell toys, flowers, balloons, pens, tissue paper on traffic signals or near eateries to get alms. 31% of female beggars carry in-arm baby to get alms by creating sense of urgent need of money to nurture their child. 9% were handicapped, 11% carry god idols for begging. Rest of beggars ask for money.

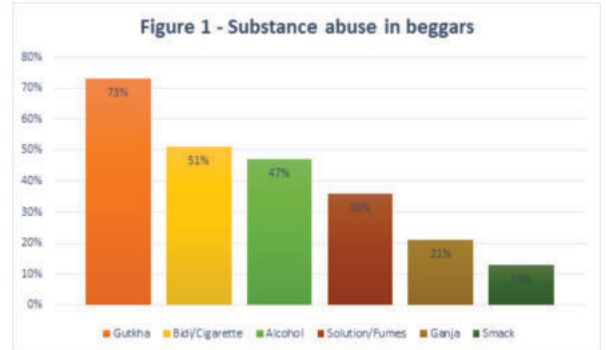
10- Alms received by begging:

The earnings varied from less than Rs. 50 to over Rs. 300 per day.

Majority of the children about 40% were earning between Rs. 200-300. About 31% of them earn more than Rs 300 in a day. 18% earn Rs 50-200 and 12% earn less than Rs 50 in a day.

11- Substance abuse in beggars:

Tobacco in form of chewing and smoking is the commonest form addiction present in beggars (Figure-1). Most of them have multiple addictions.



DISCUSSION:

In this study we found maximum number of beggars at traffic signal followed by markets and religious places as compared to study conducted in Delhi²¹ showed maximum number of beggars at religious places followed by bus/train/metro stations. In this study, Most (68%) of beggars were female as compared to other study with 36% female beggars. And 60% of total belong to the age of 19 years and less. This may be due to difference in sample size. Maximum number i.e. 55.5% of beggars initiated begging at the age of 6-12 years which is comparable with finding of our study as we found the maximum number of beggars initiated at the same age i.e. 40%. Maximum number i.e. 88.3% of beggars belonged to nuclear family which is comparable with finding of our study as we found the same i.e. 80%. Findings of stay arrangements of beggars showed that maximum number live with their parents followed by with family and friends, which is similar to the other study showing the same. In this study, 30% beggars beg for basic needs and 25% beg as they are not interested in regular job. This is comparable with study done in Delhi²¹ in child beggars shows the similar findings. Majority of beggars in this study were forced by family to beg, which is a similar finding in many studies. Approx. 40% beg by selling things on traffic signals or in market places and around 30% carry in-arm baby to get alms. These findings were also seen in other studies as they don't consider themselves as beggars. Tobacco in form of chewing or smoking is the most common addiction found in majority beggars with some alcohol, ganja and smack in adult beggars and with volatile solutions/fumes and alcohol. These findings are comparable with study conducted in beggars in New Delhi.²¹

CONCLUSION:

Begging is a social evil mainly due to the combined effect of one or two psychosocial problems. A combined effect of ageing and destitution may lead to beggary, or disability and destitution may lead to beggary. Thus beggary is a by-product of psychosocial problems such as ageing, destitution, landlessness, homelessness, disability, earning without working etc. Beggary appears when there are no basic needs, lack of care of elderly, widows, orphans, disabled and diseased persons and also lack of timely and effective coverage of institutional supports including, family, community and government.

India is the fastest growing economy in the world. Beggars are potential human resources and they should be converted into worthy human capital and workforce for achieving a higher growth rate and ensuring inclusive development. We need to have a holistic approach for the elimination of psychosocial problems.

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