

Factors Contributing to Child Begging in Hilla City- Babylon- Iraq during the Year 2011

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Abstract:

Background: Beggary among children is a social problem which has not only psychological consequences such as inferiority complex in the beggars, family members and their network of kinship but it will affect the social structure of the community.

Objective: To determine the contributing factors of beggary among children.

Methods: A case control study was conducted in the urban community of Hilla city- Babylon province-Iraq from the 1st May through 1st of September 2011.

Two hundred children were selected, 100 cases and 100 controls. The cases were randomly selected from the urban areas and the controls were also randomly selected from the same areas. The criteria for selection of cases and controls were that they should be mentally sound, and below the age of 18 years.

A questionnaire was framed, pre tested and then interviews were conducted.

Results: The Odds ratio of the following factors : family history of beggary 30.03 times, father's death 3.4 times, disabilities 7.451 times, family sizes 11.345 times, never being in school 18.64 times, drug abuse and delinquency 5 times all were associated with beggary while alcohol consumption of fathers and receiving social support salary by their families were not significantly associated with beggary.

Conclusions: The study showed that family history of begging, disability, father's death, family size, smoking, and drug abuse were associated with beggary. No association was found between beggary and father alcohol consumption or between beggary and the social support salary paid to their families.

Keywords: Beggary, Contributing Factors, Children, Iraq, Babylon.

Introduction:

A 'Beggar' or a 'cadger' is a person who lives by asking people for money or food ⁽¹⁾. Mortimer defined street begging as asking for money without an exchange of service ⁽²⁾ Olawale regarded alms begging as the habit of someone (a beggar) soliciting for favor, from potential donors for survival and enrichment ⁽³⁾.

Some commentators have argued that this societal ill has a cultural/religious dimension to it, while others argued that it has more of the political dimension ⁽⁴⁾. According to certain studies, begging is often regarded as an anti-social behavior issue ⁽⁵⁾.

Beggary is a social problem which has not only psychological consequences such as the development of inferiority complex in the beggars, family members and their network of kinship, but also problem of begging will affect, as an unpleasant problem, the social structure of the urban area. ⁽⁶⁾ Studies expressed that growing unemployment and poverty among families were the main causes that pushed children towards the curse of beggary ^(7,8).

To a casual observer, children who beg on the streets appear to all intents and purposes as delinquents, risky and gone 'outside childhood' ⁽⁹⁾. In other instances, they might be regarded as helpless and vulnerable victims, or separated from their families, orphaned or abandoned ⁽¹⁰⁾. These children spend their childhoods on the street, living under terrible conditions. The most visible consequence of child begging is related to vulnerability of their life and health due to permanent residence in the street. They are constantly threatened by injuries in road traffic, but also by violence. Child begging is associated with child prostitution, smoking drug abuse and involvement of children in the commission of criminal acts such as robbery. This constitutes one of

the gravest and most gross violation of children rights ⁽¹¹⁾. The objective of this study is to identify the possible risk factors associated with child begging in Hilla City - Iraq.

Subjects and methods:

The essential official permissions have been obtained from the Mayor office and the related directorates (police, social affairs authority), the dependant variable in this study was beggary and independent variables included child level education, lack of one or parents (orphan), family size (>5 members considered as large family), divorce parents or the father marry more than one wife (broken family) alcohol consumption of the child's father, child's smoking habit (current smokers), gross physical disabilities of children and the involvement in crimes (if they were captured by police for any reason other than being beggars).

The study was conducted in Hilla city the capital of Babylon province-Iraq, during the period May through September 2011, subjects included young beggars below 18 years of age and the controls included age and sex matched children of workers working at small and medium factories or they are working with their relatives. The inclusion criteria included presence and living in the city of Hilla, mental fitness, and age below 18 years.

The 100 begging children (cases) were selected by a simple random sampling technique from the list of registration of beggars available in the local provincial office (committee for beggary surveillance), while the control group was selected by a systematic random sampling from children assisting their parents or working with their relatives in Hilla industrial quarter medium and small factories, during summer holiday.

Data collecting tool was a specially designed questionnaire form which is prepared by the investigator himself through utilization of available relevant literature taking in consideration the ideas of specialized socialists in the department of sociology in the college of art department of sociology as well as the ideas of physicians at the community medicine department in Babylon medical college.

For ethical reasons the informed consents of participants. Their parents or their employers were obtained and the information was not disclosed to anyone and the names of the beggars were not mentioned anywhere in this research. The data was analyzed manually and some calculations were made using SPSS 17.0, Chi square was calculated together with Odds Ratio (OR) and the Confidence Intervals. $P < 0.05$ considered statistically significant.

Results:

Table (1) shows that there are significant associations between positive family history and lacking one or both parents with child begging, the Odds Ratios are; 30,032 and 3.439 respectively. this means that positive family history of beggary is 30,032 more associated with children's beggary while being orphan is 3.439 more associated with child begging, these associations are statistically significant $p < 0.05$, this table reveals no significant

association between fathers married more than one wife and beggar child $p > 0.05$.

Reviewing bad habits and delinquency among beggars revealed that tobacco smoking habit , drug abuse and involving in crimes associated significantly with begging with p values < 0.05 and Odds Ratios ,5.165 , 5.264 and 4.571 respectively(table 2).

Table (3) shows that alcohol consumption of fathers is not significantly associated with child begging while fathers unemployment and being a child of a broken family (divorced parents) are significantly associated with beggary among children $p < 0.05$.

Table (4) demonstrates that there are a significant associations between never being in school and being disabled child and begging $p < 0.05$.the Odds Ratios are 18.614 and 7.452 respectively which means that children not enrolled in schools is 18.6 time more liable to be beggars as compared to children properly exposed to education, while those who have physical disability are 7.45 times associated with beggary.

Table (5) shows that big family and not owning a house(renting house) and unemployment of parents are all significantly associated with begging $p < 0.05$ the Odds Ratios are 11.345, 13.33 and 3.635 respectively, on the other hand receiving a family social support salary was not associated with children beggary $P > 0.05$, OR=1.6 (CI0.778-3.429).

Table (1): distribution of the study population by familial characteristic

Variable	Beggars No. (%)	Control No. (%)	X^{2**}	df	P values	Odds Ratio (95% CI)*
Family history of beggary						
Yes	38 (38.0)	2 (2.0)	40 .500	1	$< 0.001^*$	130.032 (6.995- 128.93)
No	62 (62.0)	98 (98.0)				
Orphan						
Yes	18 (18.0)	6 (6.0)	6.818	1	0.009*	13.439 (1.303- 9.074)
No	82 (82.0)	94 (94.0)				
Father married > than one						
Yes	5 (5.0)	4 (4.0)	0.116	1	0.733	11.263 (0.329- 4.848)
No	95 (95.0)	96 (96.0)				

*Confidence Interval ** Chi Square (Yates' correction)

Table (2): distribution of the study population according to personal characteristics regarding bad habits and conducts

Variable	Beggars No. (%)	Control No. (%)	χ^2	df	P values	Odds Ratio (95% CI)
Smoking						
Yes	21 (21.0)	6 (6.0)	9.634	1	0.020*	14.165 (1.602- 10.826)
No	79 (79.0)	94 (94.0)				
Substance abuse						
Yes	14 (14.0)	3 (3.0)	7.779	1	0.005*	15.264 (1.463- 18.937)
No	86 (86.0)	97 (97.0)				
History of crime						
Yes	16 (16.0)	4 (4.0)	8.000	1	0.005*	14.571 (1.471- 14.210)
No	84 (84.0)	96 (96.0)				

Table (3): distribution of children's father by socio economic characteristics

Variable	Beggary		χ^2	df	P values	Odds Ratio (95% CI)
	Case (%)	Control (%)				
Father Alcohol consumption						
Yes	3 (3.0)	1 (1.0)	1.020	1	0.312	13.062 (0.313- 29.948)
No	97 (97.0)	99 (99.0)				
Un-Employment						
Yes	31 (31.0)	11 (11.0)	12.055	1	0.001*	13.635 (1.706- 7.744)
No	69 (69.0)	89 (89.0)				
Broken family						
Yes	17 (17.0)	6 (6.0)	5.944	1	0.015*	13.209 (1.209- 1.209)
No	83 (83.0)	94 (94.0)				

Table (4): distribution of children by their level of education and disabilities

Variable	Beggary		χ^2	df	P values	Odds Ratio (95% CI)
	Case (%)	Control (%)				
Effects of education						
Never went to school	78 (78.0)	16 (16.0)	77.158	1	< 0.001*	118.614 (9.115- 38.009)
Went to school	22 (22.0)	84 (84.0)				
Disability						
Yes	7 (7.0)	1 (1.0)	4.688	1	0.030*	17.452 (0.900- 61.729)
No	93 (93.0)	99 (99.0)				

Table (5): distribution of study population according to economic determinants of families.

Variable	Beggars No. (%)	Control No. (%)	χ^2	df	P values	Odds Ratio (95% CI)
Family size						
More than 5	94 (94.0)	58 (58.0)	35.526	1	< 0.001*	111.345 (4.540- 28.350)
Less than 5	6 (6.0)	42 (42.0)				
Family rent house						
Yes	78 (78.0)	21 (21.0)	64.986	1	< 0.001*	113.338 (6.792- 26.192)
No	22 (22.0)	79 (79.0)				
Un-Employment						
Yes	31 (31.0)	11 (11.0)	12.055	1	0.001*	13.635 (1.706- 7.744)
No	69 (69.0)	89 (89.0)				
Social support salary						
Yes	21 (21.0)	14 (14.0)	1.697	1	0.193	11.633 (0.778- 3.429)
No	79 (79.0)	86 (86.0)				

Discussion:

The case control study design has been adopted ,since a beggar child is a socially ill ,The advantages of such design are ; the availability of cases , it needs less time , it can detect the associations between diseases or health related events and risk factors of interest ⁽¹²⁾.

However case control studies are prone to bias .selection bias can occur particularly in the selection of control ⁽¹³⁾.

The latest growth of urban population growth and economic, social, physical, cultural, and increased migration due to arm conflicts and insecurity cause multiple problems on the environment of Hilla city, which make control of these problems and to develop policies and solutions difficult and haunts the planning and executive bodies in the city. Given the complexity of the problems caused by the population explosion, such as deterioration of the residential environment and

increasing poverty and social problems including begging among children and its consequences ⁽¹⁴⁾.

The current study shows that positive family history is the dominating contributing factor of begging among children in Hilla city .Vicious circle of poverty theory seeks to explain the persistence of poverty in the society and indicates that poverty as subculture, passes from one generation to another and becomes institutionalized amongst the poor. It is one of the characteristics which prepare the ground for the phenomenon of begging ⁽¹⁵⁾ .This theory emphasizes on peoples inability to manage risk rather than their attitude to risk as a way of breaking the vicious circle. Other attributes of poverty which make escape difficult are poor health , lack of skills , lack of self confidence or proper support mechanism .lack of physical asset or combination of the above⁽¹⁵⁾ .

There for in order for the poor to meet their basic needs, they have to resort into begging, this helps to

explain the existence of begging across the generations⁽¹⁶⁾. This finding agrees with findings of other studies in some developing countries⁽¹⁷⁾.

Being single or double orphan is also one of the determinants causing children to beg though it is not as significant as the other factors, the number of orphans is high in Iraq after the armed conflict situation and the terrorist attacks that taking place during the insecurity era in the urban areas after the third gulf war⁽¹⁸⁾, this finding is in consistent with the finding of other studies⁽¹⁹⁾.

This study reveals that smoking and abusing drugs and high prevalence rate of delinquency are significant contributors to beggary among children, this may be explained that many beggars were exposed to stressful conditions that lead to anxiety disorders and depression⁽²⁰⁾, most beggars feel very bad towards begging life and saw begging activity as an immoral conduct, the majority of beggars reported that they spent money on food expenses, buying clothes and paying house rents, people who are begging on the streets simply pretend to be beggars so as to raise money for unnecessary purposes like alcohol tobacco smoking and drug consumption⁽¹⁷⁾.

Father alcohol consumption and married more than one wife have no significant association with beggary life of children, this may be explained by the restriction of alcohol selling which is also prohibited religiously in Islamic societies, and this finding disagreed with other similar studies^(19,21). Never going to school is strongly and significantly influencing child begging in this study, this finding disagree with the finding of similar study carried out in Pakistan⁽¹⁹⁾. 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⁽²²⁾. Family size is also one of the factors causing children to beg; this finding coincides with the finding of other study⁽²³⁾.

Renting house and unemployment of the family members are two important factors that push children to beg, this may indicate the multidimensional character of poverty which constitutes a serious problem among sectors of Iraqi people.

No significant association was found between providing families with psycho-social support salaries and begging among their children this may be related to the little fund allocated to this issue.

In **conclusion** the study showed that positive family history of beggary, never went to school, disability, orphanage, family size and renting house were associated with beggary. No association was found between beggary and social support salaries, and the father marriage with another wife.

Begging flourishes because people tend to be generous, when people give money to beggars, why should they bother to work. Awareness programs need to be conducted for poor to help them realize how shameful it is to beg. Educational and rehabilitation programs should be conducted at the community level in order to find sustainable multisectorial solution to prevent poor and disabled children from being pushed to beggary

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