

Socio-Economic Causes and Consequences of Begging in Dessie City, North East Ethiopia

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Abstract

The objective of this study was to assess the causes and consequences of begging in Dessie city. To achieve the purpose of this research, a mixed research design was employed. The respondents were selected through convenience and purposive sampling techniques. The data were collected through survey, in-depth interview and key informant interview. Both quantitative and qualitative methods of data analysis were used in a concurrent manner. The researchers used descriptive statistical tools such as frequency, percentages, and tables to analyze the quantitative data. On the other hand, the qualitative data was analyzed by using thematic analysis methods. As the findings indicated that leading causes that force individuals to begging is the wide spread poverty and economic problems of families, health problems, physical disability, homelessness, loss of property and lack of caring relatives. Moreover, death of parents (orphanage), lack of old age security and divorce were the other causes of begging. The negative consequences of begging are lack of shelter and food, harsh weather conditions, verbal abuse, accident and harassments from fellow beggars, municipal officials and police. Moreover, discrimination and stigma were the other common problems associated with begging. It can conclude that beggar's are faced a wider range of socio economic challenges, immeasurable exploitations and sufferings while they were begging and living on the street, public places and churchyards. Therefore, government and non government organization need to resolve the major causes of begging as well as it needs to strengthen the social protection system to protect the vulnerable groups including beggars.

Keywords: Begging, Dessie, Ethiopia, Poverty.

Introduction

The concept of begging can have various definition based on the type of persons involved in the activity and the purpose of begging. It is viewed as an activity emanated from poverty and destitution. It is practiced to obtain from others what one is unable to get by oneself. It is a request directed to the rest of the society to bring oneself out of misery and poverty (1). Begging is also

defined as a method of earning ones living from the income obtained by other sectors of the society using age, health and economic condition as a means for gaining sympathy for survival, solving temporary problems or fulfilling some crucial and religious commitments (2).

Literatures about begging as social problem in the world are limited. Hence, where and when the beggary problem first happened is not well known (3). However the biblical reference indicated that begging activities were existed since the beginning of Greek and Roman empires (4). Although begging activity is both global and age-old phenomena, it is more pervasive in less developed countries like Ethiopia (5, 6).

In Ethiopia, there is no written document that indicates the exact time and place of the emergence of the practice of begging. However, it is known from oral reports that the practice has existed for centuries especially around religious temples and in the rural areas (7).

Begging is an urban problem that is noticeable in every urban area of any country as the traditional role of helping each other reduced. In traditional societies, where small group of people especially relatives live together and come to help one another, it was very uncommon to see begging in rural areas. Begging became a common phenomenon with the gradual breaking of mutual helping system (8). As generations gone forward, the world changed itself in to modernized, more civilized and urbanism way of life which erodes provisions of care and support to the needy (9). Thus, common way of life and mutual support substituted with individualism. That is the reason that begging is an urban problem. In many urban areas, beggars are found everywhere in public spaces, such as streets, filling stations, restaurants, banks, super markets, mosques, churches, etc. (5, 10).

Despite citing the exact number of beggars is difficult due to mobility of beggars across different places, (11), estimates that the number of beggars in Ethiopia ranges from 180,000 - 200,000. Amhara National Regional State (ANRS) accommodates the largest regional share (44, 843) (12).

The causes for the problem of beggary are diverse. Hence, the phenomenon of begging is a result of a

number of factors but not limited to poverty, religion, physical disability, culture, national disaster, civil war, bad habits (drug, alcohol, and gambling dependencies), family heritage, uncontrolled rural–urban migration, and psychiatric disabilities and disorders (5,10& 13). Environmental, economic, social, and health related factors (Tewoldebrhan, 2011). In its economic aspect, it attributed to low income, credit overdue, unemployment and lack of money to pay for different services (3). And the problem of small land holding size or shortage of land was highly correlated with the problems of begging.

Apart from the economic causes, the socio-cultural variables such as family disorganization, social norms and inappropriate parenting style were also the other main causes of begging (14).

In addition to this, environmental factors such as drought, climate change, pest invasion, flooding and other catastrophes could affect the productivities of farmers in rural areas and push them to migrate from one place to another place to fulfil for their necessities. In rural areas, land degradation, deforestation, and other environmental conditions are directly linked with their productivity and life conditions (15).

On the other hand, the act of begging has negative repercussions on both the human dignity and image of the nation. Economic, cultural, political, psychological, social and other health related problems are some of the consequences of begging (14).

In addition to this, discrimination, marginalization, segregation, prejudice, isolation, conflict, and limited social relationships and interactions are the negative consequences of begging (16). Likewise, beggars also feel shame and guilt feelings, identity crisis, fear as the result of verbal abuse, stress, anxiety, depression, suspiciousness, hopelessness, loneliness, and problem of adjustment (14). Likewise, begging is not only creates nuisance to the physical and social environment of cities but also for national image (17).

There were few studies which have been conducted on begging in Ethiopia. Among other things, these studies have been focused on the prevalence, trends, causes and socioeconomic conditions of beggars (6, 4 &14). The socio-economic determinants of begging are also examined by previous researchers (18). Moreover, (19) assessed the measures taken on the problem of begging and the responsibilities of different stakeholders. Furthermore, how begging is used as a survival strategy by destitute (elderly and children) members of the society were examined by different researchers (7; 20 &1).

Moreover, there is insufficient literature regarding the cause and consequences of begging in Ethiopia even the existing ones are outdated and it could not signify the current context of begging. The other identified gap by the researchers, in the above studies, is the

methodological gaps. Methodologically, too, most of these studies have only employed qualitative methods, hence lacked triangulation. Therefore, in this study it has tried to fill the existing methodological gaps by triangulating both qualitative and quantitative research methods. To fill the above gaps, this study was conducted to assess the causes and consequence of begging in Dessie city in Amhara National Regional State.

Research Methods

Description of the study area

Dessie town is one of the three metropolitan cities in Amhara region. It was located 401 km far from Addis Ababa the capital city of Ethiopia. Dessie city is served as the capital city of South Wollo zone and surrounding districts. According to Central Statistical Agency the total populations of the city account 151,174 of whom 72,932 are men and 78,242 are women. The majority of the inhabitants 58.63% were followers of Ethiopian orthodox Christianity while the remaining 39.92% and 1.15% were Muslim and Protestant followers respectively (21). Currently, there are 584 beggars in Dessie city. Out of the 584 beggars, 410 are male's and 174 were female's (22).

Research Design

The purpose of the study is to explore the socio economic causes and consequences of begging among beggars of Dessie city, North East Ethiopia. In doing so, a cross-sectional mixed research design was applied. Mixing qualitative and quantitative approaches gives the potential to cover each method's weaknesses with strengths from the other method (23). Furthermore, the objective of the study requires the integration of both quantitative and qualitative data.

Study population and sample size Determination

The study population is all categories of beggars involved in begging activity in Dessie city. The study specifically focused on those beggars begging for alms around churchyards, mosques, bus station, hotels and street frontiers. Hence, currently there are around 584 beggars who have lived in Dessie eventhough the number fluctuates from time to time due to their itinerant nature of beggars (22). Particularly, the study focuses on 584 beggars of the study area. Out of this, the researchers selected 188 samples of beggars based on convenience sampling technique. To determine the sample size, (24) sample size determination formula is used as follows: $[(n=N/(1+N(e)^2))]$, Where N = the total population, n = the required sample size, e = the precision confidence level which is = (95%) at $P = \pm 6$. Based on this, the sample sizes of this study were $584/(1+584(0.06)^2) = 188$.

Methods of data collection

To conduct this study, three main methods of data collection were employed. These included survey, key informant interviews and in-depth interviews.

Survey

The survey is the most widely used data gathering technique in sociology, and it is used in many other fields, as well (25). This method enables researchers to study a given population by relaying only in the portion of that population which is called samples. Thus, it saves time and money and helps to access accurate information. Therefore, to carry out this study, the researchers had selected 188 samples of beggars from Dessie city. In order to get a reliable data from respondents, the data were collected by using semi-structured questionnaire. All of the questions are developed by the researchers based on the existing literature. The questionnaire consists of both close and open-ended items. Initially, the questionnaire was prepared in English and translated to Amharic language since the respondents were Amharic speakers. Thus, helps to ensure the validity and reliability of the questionnaire. Besides, content validity of the English and Amharic language version of the questionnaire was assessed by two experts of sociology from Wollo University. The translation consistency of the instrument was also examined by language professionals. Based on their comments and suggestions, revisions were made.

Indepth interview

In-depth interviewing is a qualitative research technique that involves conducting intensive individual interviews with a small number of respondents to explore their perspectives on a particular idea, program, or situation (26). It has also designed to discover the underlying motives needs, desires and feelings of respondents (27). This method enabled the researcher to generate highly detailed information and to have better understanding on the causes and consequences of begging. Therefore, a total of 6 in-depth interviews will be conducted with beggars to collect the detail qualitative data. The researchers used interview guide check lists.

Key Informant Interview

Key informants are those research subjects in ethnographic studies who have a disproportionate weight and role in the conduct and outcome of the research (28). It is used to gather specific qualitative information from respondents. Therefore, using such methods helps to get detail information from informants. Interview guide with loosely structured conversation is used to collect data. This allows the interviewee to respond flexibly and the interviewer to

manage the core issues of the study. In this study, one office head and two experts of labour and social affairs office were selected purposively and interviewed.

Methods of Data Analysis

The data obtained from various sources is analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative data analysis methods. The qualitative data was collected from respondent using key informant and in depth interview. The data collected via key informant and interviews were analyzed by using theme and content analysis. On the other hand, the quantitative data was processed as an important part of the whole survey operation. It includes editing, coding, data entry, data cleaning and consistency checking. A Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, version 21) was used to analyze the data. The researchers used descriptive statistical tools to analyze the quantitative data. Descriptive tools such as frequency, percentages, and graphs are employed to present the results. Finally, the qualitative findings are used to substantiate the quantitative findings.

Ethical Consideration

Ethical issues were carefully considered throughout the course of the study. To do this, an informed consent was received from participants before the commencement of the interviews. The participation of the respondents in this research was voluntary. Anonymity of respondents and confidentiality of their responses were ensured throughout the research process. Information that was provided by informants would not be transferred to a third party or would not be used for any other purpose.

Results and Discussion Socio Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table1: Percentage Distribution of Respondents by Socio Demographic Characteristics.

Variable	Category	F	%
Sex	Male	105	55.9
	Female	83	44.1
	Total	188	100
Age	10-19	7	3.7
	20-29	34	18.1
	30-39	16	8.5
	40-49	37	19.7
	50-59	46	24.5
	Above 60	48	25.5
	Total	188	100
Religious Affiliation	Orthodox	141	75
	Muslim	45	23.9
	Catholic	2	1.1
	Total	188	100
Educational level	Illiterate	78	41.5
	Read and write	28	14.9

	Grade 1-4	40	21.3
	Grade 5-8	40	21.3
	Grade 9-12	1	5
	College Diploma	1	5
	Total	188	100
Ethnicity	Amhara	177	94.1
	Oromo	6	3.2
	Tigri	5	2.7
	Total	188	100
Marital status	Single	72	38.3
	Married	60	31.9
	Divorce	24	12.8
	Widowed	32	17
	Total	188	100
Birth Place	Dessie	40	21.3
	Out of Dessie	148	78.7
	Total	188	100

Source: Survey, 2020

In this study, a total of 182 beggars were selected and interviewed. From these, the majority participants 55.9% were males and the remaining 44.1% of the respondents were females. Similarly, (6) found that the numbers of male and female beggars are 56% and 44% respectively. Contrary to the mainstream fact that females are more vulnerable to poverty and socio economic problems than males, the finding of this paper showed that the number of male beggars outweighs the number of female beggars. There are some reasons which have identified in this study. One of the interviewee said that *“male beggars are audacious to beg in front of the almsgivers. However, female are afraid to ahead in front of the almsgivers than male’s”* (35 years female interviewee). In addition to this, another informant reported that *“poor females are engaged in other alternative activities like housemaid and commercial sex work instead of begging”* (46 years male interviewee). According to the qualitative data female beggars have less probability of joining into begging than males.

For the age distributions, the majority of the respondents 25.5 % are aged 60 and above followed by 24.5% of the respondents were found in the age category of 50-59 years. Moreover, 19.7%, 18.1%, 8.5% and 3.7% of the respondents, respectively are in the age group 40-49, 20-29, 30-39, and 10-19 years. The mean age of the study population was 43.8 years. As the quantitative data indicated that the majority of the respondents are aged and they are above 60 years. This indicated that as individuals were aged they were not able to work and feed themselves. As the age of individual's increases, the ability and productivity of such people decreases. Moreover, the likelihood of

employment also lessened. Aged people are also susceptible to chronic disease.

In addition, religion is an important aspect that shape the ways in which begging is embedded and contextualized (29). The act of giving alms for the poor considered as a holy deed by Christian followers (2). In addition this, alms giving is considered as one of the major principles and practice of Islamic religion (30). Even though the existing literatures confirm the religious teaching and dogma regarding begging, it is failed to identify the magnitude and prevalence of begging in terms of religious affiliation. However, in this study, 75% of the respondents were followers of orthodox Christian. The remaining 23.95% of the respondents were Muslim. Insignificant numbers of respondents were Catholic.

When we look at the educational status of the study participants 41.5 % of the respondents did not attend formal school. In contrary to this, studies conducted by (18), (6) and (12) respectively indicated 70.3 %, 68% and 74.45% of beggars to be illiterate. There is also wide inconsistency of the current study with the study made by (18), (6) and (12). In the current study, 21.3% of the respondents have attended grade 1-4, 21.3% of the respondents have attended grade 5 -8 and the remaining 14.9 % of the respondents can read and write. As the data indicated that the majority of the respondents were not attended formal education. The majority of the study respondents 94.1% were from Amhara ethnic group, followed by Oromo ethnic groups consists of 3.2 % and; 2.7% of the respondents were Tigrins. The majority of the respondents were Amhara ethnic groups thus may due to the homogeneity of the population where this research had been conducted.

Of all respondents, about 38.5% of the respondents are single followed by married beggars consists of 31.9 % of the total respondents. But (18) in his finding did not get a single beggar instead he found that 50% of the respondents are currently married. The current study is less by 11.5 % from the above finding particularly the married ones. The study conducted by (6) in Bahir Dar found that 30% of the respondents were not married thus were less than by 8.5% from the current studies. On the other hand, similar study also showed percentage distribution of married beggars which consists of 16% that is less than the current study by 15.5 %. In contrary to this, study conducted by (31) found that 63.3% of the respondents were married.

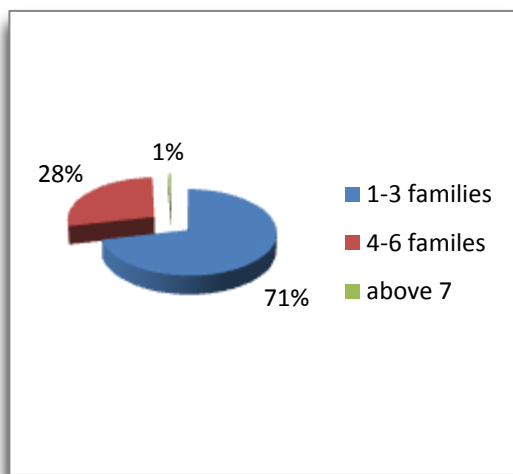
Besides, the current survey data showed that 17% of the respondents were widowed. Research conducted by (18) and (26) found that 23.3% and 20% of the respondents were widowed respectively. Accordingly, the present study had decreased by 6.3% and 3% respectively from the above findings. From the survey data, the remaining 12.8 % of the respondents were

divorced. But studies by (6) showed that 32% of the respondents were divorced. The divorce rate among beggars in Bahir Dar was higher than the current study. Moreover, this finding showed that the prevalence of single beggar's surpassing than the married ones even though married people have the tendency to join begging as a livelihood strategies. Some of the interviewee in support of this idea reported that married people have more tendencies to involve in begging due to family related socio economic problems. As the respondents stated that married people did not have an adequate income to maintain and support the dependent families.

With regard to birth place, the majority 78.7% of the respondents were out of Dessie whereas the remaining 21.3 % of the respondents were from Dessie city. Is it may be due to the fact that begging is a widely condemned and neglected act and people do not want to resort this shameful act in their birth place or the area where so many people know them. Besides, Leprosy patients were runaway from their birth place due to stigma, discrimination and inaccessibility of leprosy drugs.

Family Size of Respondents

Figure 1: Percentage Distribution of Respondents by family size.

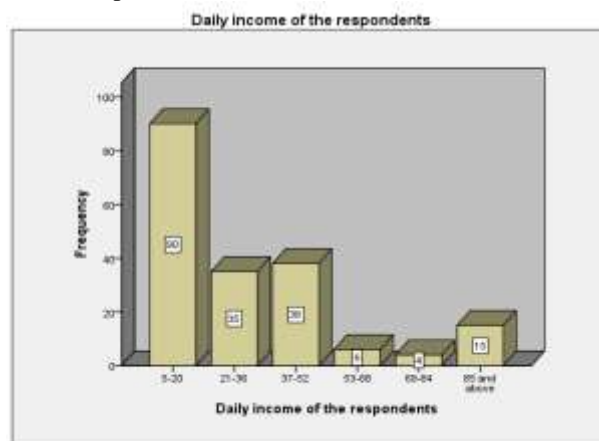


Source: Survey, 2020

As it is indicated in figure 1, 71.4 % of the respondents have 1-3 family size and 28.6% of the respondents have four and above family size with an average family size of the 2.43. Studies conducted by (18) showed that 65% of the respondents have 2-4 family size and 16% are single family. About 19% have five and above family size.

Income Level of Beggars

Figure 2: Percentage Distribution of Respondents based on income level.



Source: Survey, 2020

As figure 1 indicates that the daily income level of beggar respondents of the study area. Out of the total 188 respondents participated in the survey, almost half (49.7 %) of the respondents obtained 5 to 20 birr in a day. Similarly, study in Bahir Dar by (6) showed that 68% of beggars obtain daily income of 20 birr or less. The remaining 20.2%, 18.6% and 8% of the respondents were collected between 37-52 birr, 21-36 birr as well as above 85 birr in a day respectively. Insignificant numbers of respondents thus were 3.2% and 2.1% collected money between 53-68 birr and 69-84 birr in a day. In average, the beggars collected 33.46 Ethiopian birr in a day via begging. This indicates that all of the survey respondents were surviving below the poverty line of US\$1.25 per day.

The qualitative data from interviewee showed that the income level of the beggars were not consistent. The amount of money they received from alms-givers were different from place to place as well as from time to time. Moreover, the amounts of money collected from alms-givers by beggars also vary due to begging strategies, skills, arts and abilities. For instance, during holidays they were got more amount of money than other days. Besides, they were got more money churchyards than other places such as streets. In support of this argument, a 36 years informant stated that *"I have found 50 birr in average per day via begging but the sum of money I have got from begging is not uniform. I have also got less than fifty birr. And sometimes, I back to my home without money. When I return to my home without money, I am too scared because my parents were anticipated who come about with money or bread."*

Another 39 years informant stated that *"I have got 10 birr per day in average. But today alms-givers were providing few cents not more than 10 cents at a time. I*

did not get anything except a few amount of money". Similarly, the other informant also stated that "I have got 15-20 birr in a day during holidays and festivity. However, in regular days I could not find it". As the above narration of the respondents indicates that there are also difficult times for beggars because they lack money/ leftover foods.

Housing Conditions of Respondents

Table 2: Percentage Distribution of Respondents based on housing status.

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent
Housing conditions of beggars	Own	19	10.1
	Rented/private	36	19.1
	Religious places	32	17
	Government Houses(Kebele house)	48	25.5
	Street	53	28.2
	Total	188	100

Source: Field Survey, 2020

House is one of basic needs for the population in order to survive and protected life (32). Accordingly, the majority of the respondents 28.2% were resided on the street. In support of this, the majority of the informants stated that living in the street is common and usual experience for beggars. The majority of beggars were lived on the different corners of the street due to lack of house and they were being and becoming homeless. According to the saying of the informants the amount of money they have received via begging is not much enough for both food and house rent. They were faced difficulties in paying money for house rents. Therefore, in order to survive, they prefer to apply the money they have got to buy food instead of house rent.

On the other hand, 25.5% of the respondents were resided on government (Kebele houses). In line with this, the qualitative data from the interview revealed that those who came to Dessie early have received government houses (Kebele houses) with a little price. However, those who come too late were suffered from housing problems and they were forced to live in miserable conditions.

Moreover, 19.1% of the study participants were resides on private house (rent houses). In substantiating this, some of the interviewee also confirmed that they were living on private houses by paying monthly rental fee. But now a day the price of house rent is skyrocketing and it is difficult for lower income community including beggars to get a rent house in a moderate price. In line with this, one of the informants stated that:

"I am living in private rent house by paying 650 birr in a month for house rent. The owners of the house increase the rent fee of the domicile from time to time. In addition to this, I bought teffe and fire wood. All the money I have received via begging were used for daily consumption of my household. Leading a family is another burden. Therefore, it is difficult to me to get money for saving. Do you think how living it is costly? (39 years informant from Dessie)

Out of 188 survey participants, 17% of the respondents reported that they were living around religious places. In substantiating this, some of the respondents stated that they were sleep in church yards and open public spaces. Living on public places like church yards is also dangerous for the well being of the beggars. It destroyed's the self-esteem and self-confidence of beggars. The other informants stated that lack of house and being homeless has negative consequences on the psychological status of the individuals. It has an influence on the overall mental health of homeless because it has predisposed to depression, mental health problems and anxiety.

On the other hand, the remaining small numbers 10.1% of the respondents have resided on their own houses. Some of the respondent's revealed that they were living in their own home with their partners and children. They did not pay house rents. They are involved in begging to get money for food and related goods and services.

Duration and Frequency of Begging

Table 3: Percentage distribution of beggars by duration and frequency of begging

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent
Duration of begging	1-5 years	85	45.2
	6-10 Years	62	33.0
	11-15 years	15	8.0
	16-20 years	10	5.3
	21 - 25 Years	3	1.6
	26-30 Years	7	3.7
	31-35 Years	2	1.1
	36-40	4	2.1
	Total	188	100.0
Frequency of Begging	1-3 days	32	17.0
	4-6 days	53	28.2
	7 days	103	54.8
	Total	188	100

Source: Field Survey, 2020

Most survey respondents had begged for a considerable period of time (33). A majority of 45.2% had begged for five years followed by 33% of whom begged 6-10 years. Moreover, 8% had begged for between 10 and 15 years, and 5.3% had begged for

between 16 and 20 years, 3.7% had begged for between 26-30 years, 1.6% had begged for between 21 - 25 Years, while only 1.1% was begged for between 31-35 years.

Frequency of street begging among the young and old determines the extent to which begging is a major means of livelihood and survival as well (34). The above table shows the frequency of begging in a week in Dessie city. Accordingly, the majority 54.8% of the respondents had begged 7 days in a week. As the survey data indicates that respondents were begging 5.5 days in average. In addition to this, 28.2% of the respondents had begged 4-6 days in a week. The minimum numbers 17% of the respondents were beg 1-3 days in a week. Another study conducted in Tanzania by (34) showed that 57.7% of the street beggars used to beg alms for the whole week, 6.8% were beg 4-6 days and the rest 35.4% were begged 1-3 days.

Causes of Begging¹

Table 5: Percentage distribution of beggars by the causes of begging

Variable	Category	Response		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
Causes of begging	Poverty	122	45.4%	64.9%
	Homelessness	14	5.2%	7.4%
	Loss of Property	3	1.1%	1.6%
	Unemployment	26	9.7%	13.8%
	Health Problems	47	17.5%	25.0%
	Death of both Parents	8	3.0%	4.3%
	Physical disability	30	11.2%	16.0%
	Lack of old age security	3	1.1%	1.6%
	Divorce	1	0.4%	0.5%
	Lack of caring relatives	11	4.1%	5.9%
	Considering begging as a job	4	1.5%	2.1%
	Total	269	100.0%	143.1%

Source: Field Survey, 2020

Various scholars from the field of Economics, Sociology, Anthropology and Psychology have given different possible reasons based their empirical understanding on the nature, causes, extent, consequence of begging in different part of the social world and have designed their own preventive mechanisms. There cannot be one sole cause of

begging; rather it is a holistic and cumulative effect of a number of factors (15). Begging is the most striking social problem affecting the large portion of the world's population and is mainly caused by poverty (10). As the findings of the quantitative data showed that out of 188 respondents, 122(64.9%) of the respondents were involved into begging due to poverty and economic hardships. This survey data indicates that poverty and lack of income were the major causes for begging. In substantiating this, one female participant has expressed her main reason for her final involvement in begging activity in the following manner:

I am 46 years old women and mother of two children. I came to Dessie city in 1983 E.C. I was displaced from Eritrea. From that time, I am living in Dessie for the last 30 years. My husband was died; and he had not a pension. After my husband was died, I am working in Dessie city as a clearer with a monthly salary of 780 birr. The amount of money I have received from this work is not adequate to sustain my life. It can say I am living with poverty for the last 30 year. Economic hardship and poverty was the major reasons I drifted me into begging.

As the above life experience of the informant revealed that poverty and economic problems are the major factor that leads people to begging from the alms givers. The amount of money she has received is not sufficient to support her and her families. Therefore, she had resorted to begging as an alternative income generating activities.

The health conditions of beggars are the most essential and even sometimes social approved reason to participate in begging activity in different ethnic group. The health problems such as sickness, disease, disability, impairment etc are considered as fundamental reasons for begging (35). In line with this literature, the current survey data indicated that 25.5% of the respondents were involved into begging due to health related problems. Moreover, the qualitative data from in-depth interview revealed that many beggars were come to Dessie due to health related problems. In support of this argument, one of the respondents reflects the reason why he had joined begging in the following manner:

I am thirty six years old. I came from Meket wordeda, North Wollo of Amhara Region. I came to Dessie city due to illness. I came to Dessie for the purpose of getting holy water. I could not get money for medication. I was involved into begging due to lack of adequate medical services and food. I did not have the capacity to engage in labor work because waist illness.

In supporting this notion, another respondent has narrated his life experience as follows:

I was born at Daunt Woreda, North Wollo Zone of Amhara Region. I was a farmer before I came to Dessie. I and my family's livelihood was dependant on farming.

¹ Respondents were allowed to indicate more than one option. As a consequence the sum of the percentages is not 100.

Unfortunately, I became ill because of cold. I do have all of my property for medical services but I could not cure it. Therefore, I made a decision to engage in begging activities to cure from the disease.

Many causes and conditions can impair mobility and movement of people thus has contributed to other socio economic problems. As the survey data shows that 16% of the respondents were joined into begging activities due to physical disability. According to the view of the informants people with physical disability are deprived of access to different services including education, vocational training, employment, transportation and housing. In supporting this idea, one 45 years old man stated his lived experience as follows:

"I was born in Daunt Woreda. I am disabled by leprosy (Hansen's Disease). I came to Dessie city before 7 years. The main reason for migration is the stigma and discrimination associated with the disease. My parents and neighbours unfavorable treatment based physical disability was the key reason to escape and engage into begging activities as a livelihood."

In supporting the above expression, another 35 years old man narrated his life experience as follows:

I was born in Ambasel South Wollo Zone of Amhara Region. I came to Dessie due to health related problems before 12 years. I have physical disability because of leprosy. I could not move up and downs in my birthplace. The topography is not suitable for physically disable people including me. Besides, I have also suffered from illness associated with leprosy. Now, I am living in Dessie city. Living in Dessie city allows me to get drugs easily in a nearby place at Boru Meda Hospital."

The qualitative data shows that physically disable people particularly related to leprosy were discriminated and stigmatized. They have limited social interaction with parents and neighbourhoods. Other respondents also mentioned that the inaccessibility of leprosy drugs for patients were another cause of migration. In general, Leprosy patients were runaway from their birth place due to stigma, discrimination and inaccessibility of leprosy drugs. However, after they reached in the place of destination, they were involuntarily engaged in begging activities as an alternative coping mechanism.

In addition to this, unemployment is one of the main factors which forces people to indulge in begging activities. As the above table shows that 13.8% of the respondents were engaged in begging activities as a result of unemployment. In complementing the survey data, the interview data shows that lack of employment opportunity is one of major root causes of begging. Above and beyond, in the absence of job, it is difficult for beggars to get food, cloth and shelter. This is the reason why they were forced to stretch out their hands towards alms-givers.

Moreover, the above survey data shows that people were entered into begging activities due to homelessness, loss of property and lack of caring relatives. Consequently, 7.4% of the respondents had begged due to homelessness, 1.6% had begged due to loss of property and the remaining 5.9% had begged due to lack of caring relatives.

Consequences of Begging

Table 6: Percentage distribution of beggars based on consequences

Variable	Categories	Response		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
Consequences of Begging	Sexual violence	19	6.3%	10.2%
	Accident	32	10.5%	17.2%
	Physical assault	28	9.2%	15.1%
	Victim of crime	30	9.9%	16.1%
	Harsh weather	28	9.2%	15.1%
	Verbal abuse	46	15.1%	24.7%
	Harassments/ municipal officials & police	23	7.6%	12.4%
	Harassment from fellow beggars	31	10.2%	16.7%
	Discrimination and stigmatization	16	5.3%	8.6%
	Problems of shelter and food	51	16.8%	27.4%
	Total	304	100.0%	163.4%

Source: Field Survey, 2020

The act of begging has negative repercussions on both the human dignity and image of the nation. Begging has many impacts on the life of the people who beg and other non-beggars in a given society. Economic, cultural, political, psychological, social and other health related problems are some of the consequences of begging (14).

In line with this, the above table shows the various consequences of begging on the overall life of beggars. As the above table shows that 27.4% of the respondents had the problems of shelter and food; and at the same time 15.1% of the respondents were suffered from harsh weather (cold and sun). In supporting this notion, the majority of the informants ensured the absence of shelter and accommodation and its associated problems. As we understand from the interview session most of the beggars were living on church yards, public spaces and abandoned buildings. Most of the beggars were not properly dressed their cloths. They are vulnerable to extreme cold or sun. Beggars were confronted with chilly weather

conditions, rain in the summer season and sun in the daylight which makes their life on the streets of more difficult. The rain and cold environment may cause different types of weather-related diseases.

In addition to this, 24.7% had verbally abused by the public. In line with this, the majority of the informants stated that some alms-givers and passersby were embarrassed and insulted us using derogatory words. In confirming this finding, the study conducted by (14) also revealed that beggars have been insulted, mistreated, violated and neglected from all affairs of societal involvements in both their birthplaces and begging sites.

Moreover, the survey data also shows that 17.2%, 16.7%, 16.1% and 15.1% of the respondents were victims of accident, harassment (fellow beggars), crime and physical assault respectively. This study was congruent with the study of (36) beggars were at risk of car accident and sexual harassment at the night time. Similarly, another study conducted by (29) showed that elder beggars are exposed to physical attack. According to him elder beggars are attacked by intoxicated persons, young beggars and security officers who control street living. In addition to this, (37) found that street beggars have faced with different consequences of begging such as harassment from fellow beggars, victims of crime, accidents and sexual abuse. Likely, the informants of the current study pointed out that intimidation and bullying were the common problems of beggars from their colleagues and drunker people especially during the night time.

The above table shows the prevalence and magnitude of beggars' harassment by the municipal officials and police force. Accordingly, 12.4% of the respondents were harassed by municipal officials and police. Likewise, the qualitative data received from the informants revealed that sometimes they were harassed by police and porter men's. Some of the respondents also added that they were assaulted by the churchmen. The churchmen ordered the respective body's to expel the beggars from the churchyards especially during the holidays. In consisting this finding, (37) in his finding showed that street beggars were harassed by the municipal officials and police.

Discrimination and stigma is everyday experience of beggars at Dessie city. As the story of the informants revealed that they were discriminated as well as stigmatized from the mainstream economic, political, cultural and social activities. In substantiating this idea, the survey data shows that 8.6% of the respondents were suffered from discrimination and stigmatization. Another study by (29) also found that the negative social consequences resulted from begging includes discrimination, marginalization, segregation, prejudice, isolation, conflict, and limited social relationships and interactions.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

This study has tried to assess the socio economic causes and consequences of begging in Dessie city, Amhara National Regional state. Hence, the leading causes that force individuals to begging is the wide spread poverty and economic problems of families, health problems (illness) and physical disability. Besides, the findings of this study recognized the causes of begging are associated with homelessness, loss of property and lack of caring relatives. Furthermore, death of parents (orphanage), lack of old age security and divorce were also another significant factors contributing to begging life as found in this study. In addition to the preceding factors, this study indicated that people could also engage in begging by considering it as an alternative job. Thus, it is possible to conclude that there are no single factors for the causes of begging in Dessie city. There are manifold pulling and pushing factors for people to join into the begging activities in the study area.

Moreover, the study found that beggars' faced multidimensional problems like social, psychological, health and physical problems. Beggars are suffered from lack of shelter and food, harsh weather conditions (sun and cold), verbal abused by the public, car accident and harassment from fellow beggars. Harassment by municipal officials and by police is another common problem for beggars. In addition to this, discrimination and stigma is everyday experience of beggars at Dessie city. They were discriminated as well as stigmatized from the mainstream economic, political, cultural and social activities. Hence, from this it may conclude that beggars' are faced a wider range of challenges and immeasurable exploitations and sufferings while they were begging and living on the street, public places and churchyards.

Recommendations

Based on these major findings of the study, the following are recommended:

- The wide spread poverty and economic problems is the leading causes begging in the study area. Therefore, the government should strive to curb the wide spread of poverty and economic problems at the place of origin of beggars by creating an alternative job opportunities and employment. It is vital to provide entrepreneurship training and jobs for beggars thus enable to support themselves and their families.
- To decrease the prevalence of begging, government and non government organization should work collaboratively to reduce the major causes of begging like homelessness, disability and health related problems by providing

alternative houses, provision primary health care services and provision social protection services.

- The beggars are recognized loss of property, lack of caring relatives; death of parents (orphanage) and lack of old age security as contributing factors to begging. Therefore, the government of Ethiopia should strengthen the social protection system to provide the necessary support to the needy people specifically beggars to keep them away from begging activities.
- Moreover, beggars are suffered from lack of shelter and food, harsh weather conditions (sun and cold), verbal abused by the public, car accident and harassment from fellow beggars. Harassment by municipal officials and by police is another common problems beggar. They are also marginalized and stigmatized section of society. Therefore, goverment organization, non governmental organization, civil society organizations, and faith based organization as well as community based organizations should work to protect the rights of vulnerable groups including beggars to curb the adverse impacts of begging.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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