

Article

Livelihood pattern of elderly street beggar in Dhaka city

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Abstract: Begging is one of the major social problems. There are some certain changes as the result of urbanization. The people used to beg as they are losing the social security's following the breaking up of the joint family. The begging has expanded all around in Bangladesh. The beggars are in bus, markets, roads, houses in different places. General objective of the study was to know the situation of the old aged people engaged in bagging in Dhaka city. Specific objectives were to know the family background of the aged-beggars, to understand the socio-economic factors those are responsible for old age begging and to know the quality of life/ life style of old age street beggars. It was a qualitative study has used to explore causation in order to find situation of the old age beggars and their condition, situation as well. After analyzing the cases, it is seen that the majority are in begging because of they are not having assets and income securities. The male cases are widower, females are widow or abandoned. Some issues are also serious including the medical, food and habitat which are very important indeed. Every older person wants to be active in later life. By which he or she takes a part of development for the country and nation everyone should be aware to fulfill their daily needs. We should take some necessary steps in individuals, family, society, country as well globally for the well being of elderly street beggar in various places.

Keywords: livelihood pattern; elderly; street beggar; Dhaka city

1. Introduction

Dhaka, the capital city of Bangladesh, is a city of 12 million people and world's 11th most populated city and expected to reach 20 million to be the world's 3rd largest city (World Bank, 2006). Because of having centralized administrative system, hundreds and thousands of people, apart from rural migrants, do visit this city on daily basis and introduce this city as 'megacity' to the world (Hossain and Shahadat, 2006). Among many problems of this over populated city, people living in this city are irritated facing the street beggars, who are believed to be more than 300,000 in rural areas of Bangladesh (Rashid and Mamun, 2005) and 100,000 only in Dhaka city and can be of different kinds like occasional/seasonal, disabled, men, women and children(Huda, 2010). Begging is one of the major social problems. There are some certain changes as the result of urbanization. The people used to beg as they are losing the social security's following the breaking up of the joint family. The begging has expanded all around in Bangladesh. The beggars are in bus, markets, roads, houses in different places. In a survey in 1970s the more than 70% beggars have come to Dhaka after having the

farming occupation and so on (Faruk, 1996). In both in countryside and in city it is usually seen that the beggars are physically challenged, divorced, widows either they are fit in all mean. In a report it has seen that more than 62% of the total beggars are over aged (The Daily Inqilab, 11 October 2011). The report have also discovered that the main reasons for begging are reduction of physical capabilities following over age, natural disaster and loss of earning member of the family. Now-a-day in the city area, the begging is going to be a stalked work. The survey shows that, more than 45% people are in under the level of poverty in Bangladesh. Lot of people is that's why involving in different occupation; when they are not in productive age, physically challenged or socially isolated, they start. Moreover, lots of Child is not taking care of their aged-parents. So, the aged cannot but will have to engage in begging. The gender discrimination and the pattern of the family are also related with this regards begging. The ageing process is of course a biological reality which has its own dynamic, largely beyond human control. However, it is also subject to the constructions by which each society makes sense of old age. In the developed world, chronological time plays a paramount role. The age of 60 or 65, roughly equivalent to retirement ages in most developed countries is said to be the beginning of old age. In many parts of the developing world, chronological time has little or no importance in the meaning of old age. Other socially constructed meanings of age are more significant such as the roles assigned to older people; in some cases it is the loss of roles accompanying physical decline which is significant in defining old age. Thus, in contrast to the chronological milestones which mark life stages in the developed world, old age in many developing countries is seen to begin at the point when active contribution is no longer possible. Elderly is having association with poverty. Beside of it the poverty is also having association with retirement and physical ability.

As, It is know, the ageing is the process which makes the people less productive, returning back from the productive age and also reduce the physical stability to run a business, so we can say that, the elderly people usually have to face lot of problem to run his/ her family because of his/her non-productive life and back from work. And, with this circumstances situation above, it is also being to be necessary for such people to engage in begging considering their economic status. The begging is the occupation engaging the people to seek money, food or other things to live better because of the poverty. Most often, the begging is more common when the people become invalid, disable or aged. These all are having association with the poverty itself. The low income countries of the world experience several problems without adequate solution, including poverty, malnutrition, and unemployment. Bangladesh is no exception. Beggary, an issue associated with these problems, has become the source of grave concern in Bangladesh, especially in the city area. Increasing population in the capital creates various problems such as increasing traffic jam, growing number of slums and acute pressure on utility services. On the other hand, pedestrians and passengers are regularly annoyed by the increasing presence of beggars. Various government agencies said that the number of beggars in the capital and other major cities will be no less than one million and it is increasing in an alarming rate. Street beggary has become a socio-economic and policy issue for the Bangladesh government which has planned to eradicate begging in the next five years. Population ageing is one of the major concerns in our country. Poverty and unemployment are the other important issues in this regards. The ageing is associated with these too. Bangladesh is not having enough and equal social security, and safe and comfortable livelihood for its senior citizens Begging is a social problem associated with the above circumstances above. So, a study which can cover the all aspect related to the issues circumstances.

The general objective of the present study was to know the situation of the elderly people engaged in bagging in Dhaka city. The specific objectives of the present study were-

- a) To know the family background of the aged-beggars;
- b) To understand the factors behind old age begging;
- c) To know the quality of life of elderly street beggars;

2. Materials and Methods

The present study was qualitative type of nature. Case study method was adopted. The researchers went to six point of Dhaka city where there is availability of elderly beggars. The Selected areas were Newmarket, Azimpur, Lalbag, Bokshibazaar, Gulistan Golap Shah mazar and Dhaka University Cruzan Hall area. All elderly street beggars were target population and each elderly beggar was sample unit. Purposive sampling technique was used in this study. Data collection had carried out by directly interviewing the respondents. The data were collected by non-structured questionnaire. Before filling up the schedule the purpose of this study had explained to the respondents. It means that data had collected by the face to face open-ended questionnaire and non-structured questionnaire. Data had analyzed by the in depth analysis. By critical case analysis for the descriptive part has done. Then all the major points were discussed.

3. Case presentation

According to the general and specific objectives investigators were collecting sufficient information from the cases. From the specific format the investigators have taken some common information of the elderly beggars. After having the question, the aged beggars have given the sufficient information. These every interview tape has checked by hearing over and over and translates and interpreted these carefully. Here, to keep the confidentiality, code numbers are used.

Case 1:

Case 1 is a 90 years old lady. She is illiterate. She is a widow. She is having three sons, two daughters. She is living with one of them. She doesn't know where the others live. She has been begging for a long. She cannot do another thing but begging. She is not getting old age allowance from government.

She said in replying her cause of begging that, "*I cannot do another thing but begging*". This indicates her physical problem is one of the major causes of her begging.

Here, we can see that this lady is widow and her sons are not taking care of her. She is not educated and following that she was not intellectually earned people. Moreover, she informs us that she cannot do anything but beg.

She said, "*I don't know where my family members live*", it indicates that she is not having family attachment with her Childs.

In this situation mentioned above, this lady is not able to run her without begging. It is also clear to us that she is not having strong family ties. Another thing is that, as she is not getting old age pension, it is really be difficult for her to manage all of her basic requirements only by begging. So, if she can get proper housing, family supports and compensation from the government, she can be better than before.

Case 2:

Case 2 is a 70 years old man. He is illiterate. He has two sons and five daughters. He has been begging for 13 years. His children are majorly detracted from him. He has no land/ property. He has not getting the old age allowance. He wants to do work. He doesn't want to beg. He is having eye problems. He wants to have a shop. He needs a support to have the shop. His relatives are not keen to support him.

Here, we can see that, the children are detached from him and his relatives are also giving him support. He has some physical problems. Moreover, he has no assets of his own. So, without begging it cannot be possible for him to run himself.

Another thing is that, that he is not getting any old age allowance. He added that it will need illegal financial transaction to the concerns to get it. He said, "*No, I am not getting old age allowance, because I will never give it*". But beside of these problems, he wants to have a shop and wants to do duty there.

Case 3:

Case 3 is a 63 years old lady. She is a widow. She has four daughters. She cannot do work. She is not having money for medicine purchase and thus she got enough motivated to beg. She is not having any habitat. She is not getting old age allowance. People usually make misconduct behavior with her. She doesn't have land or property.

Her cause behind her begging is differently diverse following the death of her husband. She said, "*What will I say, he died, for the betterment of my children I could not but come to Dhaka and start begging*".

She added, "*I don't have the money for medicine it has make me well motivated to beg*". This indicates her economic problem is one of the causes of their begging.

This lady is a widow and not having any son. She has no property. It needs to have medicine, so, she cannot but beg. This lady has also not having any place to live.

It is clear from her situation that, her husband had not taken any security for her. So, as she has all daughters, so this is another thing of our society that, the daughters are not taking role to take responsibilities to their parents after their marriage.

She has also frustration onto her. In this continuation she said, "*Those people who have something, people will follow them, but people who are not having anything will not followed by anyone*".

Case 4:

Case 4 is 74 years old man. He is illiterate. He has no property of his own. He has three sons and two daughters. He is detracted from the family members following family conflict. His family members behaved roughly with

him. He had fracture on the leg. He uses walking stick as walking aid. No sons look after him. He has nothing that's why he is denied by the sons, people chit with him during border crossing.

He said, *"However I lead life, it's not the problem, I never tell to my sons or daughters about me"*. This indicates that, he is detached from the family.

He has been begging for five years. Doctors and family members are not looking after him. He has no National ID card or Beggars ID card yet. He hopes to go India as he is not getting proper shelter and adequate food here. His son physically assaults him ones more. He wants to have a shelter. He has not deposited any money for his future. His three rickshaws had stolen. People used to cheat with him. He doesn't know where he can get the different benefits. He needs lot of money for treatment purpose. People do not get him work saying that he cannot do work. People says invalid if he went anywhere for work.

He has sought the national ID card and concerning authority behaved roughly with him. He said that he protests it by saying, *"I am also the citizen of Bangladesh.....why I will not get it.....?"*.

Here, we see that, the person has no property on his account and he has no relationship with his family. No doubt, family conflict pressures him for beg. Moreover he got an injury. So, he cannot but beg. There are some misconduct with him from family members and others. He also informed us the doctors are also behaving roughly with him.

People cheat ones more with him we have also seen it. So because of his age and physical weakness the people and family members misused the issues.

As, he got injury and as he is aged, so people are not giving him job. But, he informed us he needs lots of money for his treatment purpose. So, if he got shelter, support and money- he can be lead his life better than before.

Case 5:

Case 5 is a 65 years of age-old man. He has three daughters. He has also a son who is vagabond. Mr. E was farmer. He has been begging for three months. He cannot run him by other mean. He has injury on his leg. He has not getting old age pension. People reduce social interaction with him. Relatives not take over of him. People misbehaved with him because of his age. He wants to do business.

This person have faced problem while arranging marriage of his daughter, said, *"They demand fifty thousand taka as dowry"*.

Here, we can see that his only one son is vagabond. He is unable to run him by any other mean. So, he has been begging for couple of months. Moreover he is not getting any old age pension. So, economic challenges are keen with him.

On the other hand, the peoples and relatives reduce the social interaction with him. They used to misbehave with him. This make him more disappointed- no doubt.

He is not getting any compensation, so economic safety and social security are required here.

4. Results and Discussion

According to the general and specific objectives all of cases are critically discussed. There are many major finding from the cases. The major findings are discussed by the following heading.

4.1. Health status

Almost every respondent have informed us that their physical status are not good. They also added that due to it, they cannot but beg. As, his old age are having association with the reduction of the normal body function and capabilities, researchers have seen this circumstances in every relevant study. Their physical inabilities and disabilities are also the major cause of their engagement in begging.

The older peoples have to face lot of physical problems in there later period of life. In the later age there are some physiological and biological changes occurred. In this study we have found that the old age street beggars have also these kinds of problems. Some of them have eye problems, some are weak, and some are physically challenged. There poor economic status has leaded this situation doubt. Moreover they are not having medical and health care. So usually they are being weak and ill. They don't have nutritious food so, they remain unhealthy and unfit.

Old age problems may occur from the age of 40, but it all depends on the overall health of a person in youth. Happy young people can grow happy in old age, but it is one of the hardest truths to believe that life does not give a chance.

This consequence is same with another findings- "Deterioration of one's physical well being is a natural part of ageing and is a major concern of old age. In old age some of the most common health problems in Bangladesh are stomach ache and diarrhea, followed by asthma, peptic ulcer, blood pressure, diabetes, cardiac, dental and

eye problems. They also suffer from geriatric-urinary disease, mental disorder and malnutrition. Blood pressure, diabetes and cardiac disease are more common chronic health conditions among urban elderly where as pain, rheumatism, anemia, and respiratory problems are more common in rural elderly. Failing eyesight is prevalent overall and many suffer from insomnia (Kabir, 1994). A general survey reports that about 79% of older persons suffered from some of these health conditions if not others, because of the ageing process and the lack of available health care facilities (Rahman, 1991). The ESCAP survey data reveal that health of overwhelming majority elderly is fair, arthritis followed by back pain are, among others, the major chronic diseases among the elderly. Old-olds (age 70+) compared to young olds (age 60-70 years), females compared to males, rural elderly compared to urban elderly have great problems with functional activities like crouching, lifting, walking etc. and also the problems of activities of daily living (ADL) like walking, clothing, taking to bath and / or going to toilet, preparing medicine and so on. With regard to selected emotional condition more elderly not co-residence with child and spouse have specific emotional problems of restlessness, worry and other strain than that co-residence with child and/or spouse. The overall health status of the elderly is good and/or somewhat poor and male elderly have more problems with ADL than female elderly (Samad and Abedin, 1998)."

4.2. Housing and shelter

The elderly beggars are not having their own properties, so housing problems are major concern from them. Some of them are leaving under the sky, some are in slum.

The major number of Elderly Street beggars are living in mess (separated with family). It indicates that, they are not having care or other support in their old age. The more than half of them have lived self, and self depended in living. The few of them are with the family. The rest of the others lived in mosque or under the sky/without any shelter.

4.3. Assets/ Property

The respondents of the study have no assets in major cases. And they added that due to it they are not having income security.

The majority of the beggars have come from the poor families they are not literate and that's way they had no intention to deposit money for future. So, the oldest beggars are not having property and assets. This scenario is inconsistent from BBS report 2015 (BBS, 2015).

4.4. Old age allowance

The most of the elderly street beggars are not getting any old age allowance scheme. Only few are getting so. For the reason circumstances, they have said that there are lots of logistic problems to get these allowances. It is actually impossible them to collect it through a slow and process like it.

The respondents seek to the concerning authorities to reduce the existing harassment to get to old age allowance. But, most of them are not getting it and many of them don't know that they have such kind of beneficiary support from the government.

In Bangladesh, the people of poor socio economic status have been getting old age allowance for last couple of years who are aged. But there are some problems in selection and distribution process in this regards. In majority cases, we have found that the poor aged are not getting old age allowance. Moreover, many of them are facing lot of problems in this regards.

According to the BBS report November 2015 this consequence is relatively different. The study forecasts that Bangladesh Government needs an amount of 170.2 million BDT for old age pension in the year 2015, 342.83 millions in the year 2020 and 646.11 million BDT for the year 2025. However, if the amount required is adjusted for CPI, then the revised amount would be 313.39 million, 697.82 million and 1456.69 million BDT respectively (BBS, 2015).

4.5. Food and nutrition

Many respondents have informed us that they are not getting proper and adequate food. Their nutritional statuses are also poor. As they have to fight to manage their basic needs for their livelihood. So, they are not getting so. This consequence is same with another article of "Nutritional and Micronutrient Status of Elderly People Living in a Rural Community of Bangladesh" (Das *et al.*, 2012).

4.6. Family attachment

In lot of cases, there were found the male beggars are widower and the female are widow in this regards. Many of them are detached. Some of them have abandon by their family members. There are some old age beggars who are having conflicts with their family members. These all have made them isolated from the family care.

4.7. Rights as a citizen

Lot of elderly beggars are not having 'beggars ID' card, national Id as well. So, he is not getting the assistant for the backward group who are getting different assistance from the government.

4.8. Leisure and cultural attachment

The researchers have not found a single one who is attached in cultural and leisure activities. They are fighting for survival and busy in arrangement of basic needs, so recreation and leisure are not important for them- they thought.

4.9. Ageism

On the other hand, the peoples and relatives reduce the social interaction with the elderly. They used to misbehave with them. This make them more disappointed- no doubt. People do not get them work saying that they cannot do work. People says invalid if they went anywhere for work.

4.10. Elder abuse

In several cases there was seeing that elderly beggars have shared their bitter experiences of cheat by the people. The abuse of elders by caregivers is a worldwide issue. In 2002, the work of the World Health Organization brought international attention to the issue of elder abuse (Cook-Daniels, 2003).

4.11. Psychological condition

There was found in major cases the beggars were disappointed and depressed. They have blamed their misfortune for their begging. They were not having the hope. So, for their healthy mental status it is required the fulfillment of their basic needs.

5. Conclusions and policy recommendations

The older section of the population is increasing much faster than the total population, their vulnerability multiplying the dimension of the problem. Most of them are seriously suffering from some basic human needs related challenges, viz. lack of minimum income and employment opportunities, extreme poverty, senile diseases accompanied by absence of proper health, medical care, food, nutrition and comfortable living arrangements, isolation, exclusion, loneliness, negligence, psychosocial and cultural complexities, etc. Bangladesh, historically the upholder of Asian, Indian, Hindu, Buddhist and Islamic culture, addressed its older people basically through family, kin, community and religious support system. Every older person wants to be active in later life. By which he or she takes a part of development for the country and nation. Today older person's begging is neglected in the society. They have no dignity and honor. Everyone should be aware to fulfill their daily needs. They are the most experienced persons in the society. It should give the special honor of elderly bigger who have physical and mental disorders. Beggars are also the citizens of nation. No one should abuse and neglect them. There should take some necessary steps in individuals, family, society, country as well globally for the well being of elderly street beggar in various places. The following policy recommendation may be done for the well being of elderly street beggars-

- a) Policies are needed to be developed for collection of age, gender, region of residence disaggregated data on people 60 years and over. Local government may be given the responsibility to register older people. Policy formation is required to be made at a local level, at least, at the district level. Spatial mapping of the district and gender disaggregated elderly proportion is needed to be taken under consideration.
- b) Public programs, including pension schemes and the national healthcare systems are needed to be enhanced both in terms of size and coverage. The access to the old age allowance may be increased in accordance with the projected elderly population and target a number of 13 million people in 2020. The old age allowance is needed to be increased to an amount of between 500 to 1000Taka per month in year 2015 and about 1500 Taka per month by the year 2020. Improvement of the allowance distribution systems may also be looked into to reduce issuing problems and delays.

- c) Needs are felt for research on forecasting ageing, growth and structure of family pattern and care and living arrangements of the elderly.
- d) There seems to be need for policy reform that encourages the elderly who are still capable to remain in the work force. The GOB initiatives to re-set the retirement age of some Government jobs to 65 years are a timely one. Retirement age of other Government jobs can be accordingly increased. Side by side the elderly people may be encouraged to be involved in self-employment in sectors other than Agriculture. Increasing access to interest-free micro-credit for older people at both GOB and NGO financial institutions are desirable.
- e) Institutions and systems that support high levels of personal saving with higher level of benefits may be catered for the elderly people with greater emphasis. Even a tax rebate or lower level of taxation for elderly investment may keep a larger number of elderly people active and indulged in income generating activities.
- f) Subsidized healthcare and medicine for the older people on presentation of ID card may be initiated with a long run target of providing free healthcare and medicine for the elderly.
- g) Specialized doctors with expertise in geriatric issues in increasing number are also a necessity.

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Conflict of interest

None to declare.

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