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Empty hands and solitude: A grounded theory study of begging in Mashhad

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The aim of this study is to identify the conditions which encourage some people to start begging using a grounded theory approach. As such, 23 beggars in a city called Mashhad were selected through theoretical sampling in 2020. The data collection techniques included participatory observation and in-depth interviews. Rejection by family and the weakening of social networks were the main conditions underlying the resort of individuals to begging indicating that beggars turn to panhandling as they know there is someone out there to help them. The duality of values in society, such as the culture of giving and the interdict of begging, which in turn has changed the style of panhandling, provides the ground work for growth of begging. The religious culture (Islam) in the community made it obligatory for every Muslim to give alms (In form of Zakat and sadaqa) and it does not in any way support begging; also, it is treated as a crime in the eye of the law. The research findings show that beggars resist the term begging!

Key words: Begging's, religious culture, in-depth interviews, participatory observation, grounded theory.

INTRODUCTION

Islam provides principles, procedures and modalities on how one can earn a living. These are supported and authenticated by the Holy Quran with proper interpretations of Hadith of Holy Prophet (SAW). It is clearly provided, accepted and acknowledged in Islamic economic system that earning a living is only through lawful and legitimate use of available resources in decent ways. The system does not accept dependency act by any able but lazy and effortless person on others for livelihood (Mudanssir, 2010).

On the other hand, in the Islamic Republic of Iran (the city mashhad), researches show that most beggars come

from divorced families with family disputes, suffering from a lack of social supports especially financial and emotional support of friends and relatives. Social ties in the family of begging are extremely shaky. Thus, any one of the factors mentioned above can prepare the ground for the financial need of beggars, rendering them vulnerable to begging.

A study of theories in sociology, such as Hirschi (2002)'s social control theory, Lemert (1999)'s labeling theory, Merton (1993)'s anomie theory and a number of other theories indicate one-dimensional nature of these theories, which can only explain one aspect of the

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begging in the society, and thus enables us to provide an all-inclusive justification of a whole range of factors associated with the phenomenon of begging.

Also, by studying the researches that have studied the phenomenon of begging and in accordance with the culture and values of the statistical population of the present study, the following structural factors are presented: migration, war and economic crisis (Fathi and Abbasi, 2001). Unequal economic opportunities and the lack of financial support from government agencies and charity organizations (Motlagh, 2002) as well as a significant relationship between age, marital status, family size, place of birth, supervision and health of family, poverty, migration, friends and begging (Ismaili, 2011). In these studies, social and cultural aspects of the begging have been understudied or overlooked. This article studies all aspects of begging, including the ultimate conditions underlying it, plus the spread of begging, strategies and tactics adopted by beggars to solicit money and the consequences of begging. The grounded theory can help to shed light on the underlying causes of begging and also help to understand the factors that drive beggars to solicit aid from people.

METHODS

In this study, a qualitative research method was adopted, as it offers a proper path to achieve the objectives of this study. As such, grounded theory is an inductive methodology that provides systematic guidelines for gathering, synthesizing, analyzing, and conceptualizing qualitative data for the purpose of theory construction (Strauss and Corbin, 1990).

Grounded theory research

- 1) Multiple stages of collecting, refining, and categorizing the data (Strauss and Corbin, 2008).
- 2) Constant comparisons and application of theoretical sampling (Creswell, 2007; Locke, 1996; Strauss and Corbin, 2008; Taylor and Bogdan, 1998).
- 3) Data collection and theory gathering that are regarded as two parts of the same process (Glaser and Strauss, 2009) and are deliberately fused so that initial data analysis can be used to shape continuing data collection.
- 4) Data collection that requires increasing the density and saturation (no new information) of recurring categories as well as following up on unexpected findings.
- 5) Constant comparison that involves methods to develop concepts from the data by coding and analyzing at the same time (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998). It "combines systematic data collection, coding, and analysis with theoretical sampling in order to generate theory that is integrated, close to the data, and expressed in a form clear enough for further testing" (Conrad et al., 1993:280), while integrating categories, delimiting the theory, and writing the theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967:105).

In grounded theory research, coding methods include open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Strauss and Corbin, 2008), which require the researcher to continuously draw comparisons and ask questions about what is and not understood. Axial coding involves making connections between categories possible by

means of the inductive and deductive thinking processes of relating subcategories to a category (Strauss and Corbin, 2008).

Selective coding refers to the process of identifying and choosing the core category, systematically connecting it to other categories, validating those similarities and relationships, and then completing categories that need further refinement and development (Strauss and Corbin, 2008). The grounded theory can emerge only after the process of crucial integration and weaving, and refining of all the major categories into the selection of a core category has been finalized (Strauss and Corbin, 2008). In grounded theory, research theories are defined in terms of propositions or sets of propositions, which are used to explain observations (Charmaz, 1990). The process continues until no new insights are revealed into these relationships in terms of the core idea. Only then can a new theory be defined. Once a theory has been arrived at, the process itself is complete. No testing of the theory is required to confirm its status, as validly grounded (Strauss and Corbin, 2008). Above all, one of the hallmarks of the transformative component of grounded theory is that the theory arrived at needs to make positive contributions in the lives of the research participants concerned (Morse et al., 2016).

Data collection instrument

Participatory observation and narrative interview

Since the beggars resort to deceitful and mendacious strategies to solicit aid from people they do not trust, on the other hand dreaded by the verdict of judge, beggars imprisoned in the Green House are of apprehensive honest confession. Therefore, they refused to be interviewed and observation technique was used in the form of interview. Using several strategies and techniques, the researcher under the disguise of health authority managed to gain the confidence of the beggars. So that they can retell their life story to him, and according to the data, solutions were made for their release from the Green House.

As discussed earlier, the researcher and her colleague mingled with patients in the Sanatorium (both women and men); introducing themselves as healthcare officials with an identical biography. They used different strategies and tricks to attract the attention of the beggars. They went to the Green House under the disguise of health officials and with the assistance of the psychologist of the Green House and composed a biography of the beggars. For this purpose, the researcher, as the person in charge of the health issues of the Green House, monitored the hygiene and cleanliness of help seekers and the center. Also, he was introduced as someone with high school diploma whose father was a drug addict and was on the verge of separation from his wife with an income level significantly below the average. He appeared in shabby and old clothes looking like ordinary people living in one of the poor areas of the city. In the first two days, the researcher only used the observation technique to learn more about the beggars. Having established friendship with the beggars, he continued his chats with them for several days. The researcher adopted a number of techniques and tricks to communicate with the subjects, such as providing them with cigarette and sugar, taking them to the physician, having contact with their families. He pretended that he was an intimate friend of the psychologist in the Green House and had the power to hasten their early release. Apparently, all these were done secretly by the employees of the Green House.

Beggars usually react to questions like 'Where do you beg?' 'What made you to start begging?' 'Thus, the researcher used the following questions instead, 'Where were you when they caught you?' 'Where were you arrested?' 'Why did you ask people for help?' While observing the research ethics in Iran (the city Mashhad), the information was obtained by a voice recorder from beggars in the course of the research and the records were not delivered to any

organization to prevent any possible abuses. The researcher had the power to release the sample beggars earlier or increase their prison term under certain circumstances.

Study population and case selection

Since purposive sampling, also known as judgmental, selective, or subjective sampling is a form of non-probability sampling in which researchers rely on their own judgment when choosing members of the population to participate in their surveys (Merriam, 2002:1-17). Therefore, the target population consisted of all beggars who were held in the Green House (Green House: a Sanatorium in Khin Arab area in the city of Mashhad is a place the beggars were arrested by the police or the municipality officers and were kept for a period of one week to two months after their trial) in 2019. This research examines the motives driving the subjects to begging. In light of the fact that addiction can also lead to begging, the addicted cases were excluded from the target population in order to examine the process of begging in the subject under study. First of all, the researcher turned to young and professional beggars to access a set of items.

Why professional and young beggars? Professional beggars were likely to reach out to more categories found and young beggars question arises that despite being young; begging to earn money is not a job!

The next step was to reach out to unprofessional beggars, beggars who are modern in the way they beg, because beggars who traditionally beg are usually addicted. Finally, the addicted beggars were interviewed and an attempt was made to have the maximum variety in the selection of cases. There were 23 beggars who were interviewed narratively; 12 male beggars and 16 female beggars participated in this interview. The data were analyzed using open, axial and selective coding by MAXDA 10 software.

Reliability and validity of the research

Lincoln and Guba proposed four criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability as the measures of reliability in qualitative research (Bryman, 2015). Now through continuous observation and long-term presence in the research environment for a period of 40 days (from 08:00 in the morning to 15:00 in the afternoon), data were collected through narrative interviews, continuous observation of samples for several days, speaking with servants of the center, comparing their talks with the interview of begging, and examining carefully the beggars' profile (personal characteristics and the manner of their arrest). Through a revision and recoding of data and the comparison of coding in two stages, incorporating professors and experts' views about coding stages and using correct symbols with a view towards accuracy and sensitivity of data analysis, the credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability of data were established.

FINDINGS

In this research, all the participants are street beggars and they often beg in religious places such as shrines and religious times such as holidays and mourning ceremonies. Any begging can be divided into three groups in terms of:

(a) History of begging, (b) types of begging and (c) covert and overt begging.

(A) History of begging

- 1) Professional beggars, who have been begging for consecutive months.
- 2) Amateur beggars who have engaged in begging from time to time for various periods

(B) Types of begging

- 1) Modern begging, in which the beggars ask for money by explaining his/her problems. In other words, they intend to mask their begging by modern methods, trying to justify their begging as a kind of request for a short period of time.
- 2) Traditional beggars who solicit aid sedentarily by stretching out their hands; This technique of begging is typical of those who use drugs.

Traditional begging is performed in two ways:

- 1) Traditional beggars beg without tools: they ask for money without using any specific tool
- 2) Traditional beggars beg with tools: they ask for money using children, beads, tambourine, flowers etc. as an excuse.

(C) Covert and overt begging

- 1) Covert begging: a beggar who begs stealthy and secretly away from the eyes of their relatives.
- 2) Overt begging: a beggar who begs openly with at least one of their relatives knowing about their activity.

Types of begging

As for the history and background of begging, the female beggars were found to be more amateur and greater in number than male beggars. In contrast, male beggars were more professional outnumbering female professional beggars (Table 1).

Beggars attempt to remain anonymous to their relatives by begging covertly and keeping such anonymity among people (strangers) using traditional and modern begging styles. Female beggars do usually keep their anonymity using traditional begging methods (sitting at a corner and pulling a veil over their face). On the other hand, male beggars sought to maintain their anonymity through modern begging (to conceal their begging).

In today's metropolis, anonymity and concealed identity allow criminals to perpetrate their felons more efficiently. Both male and female beggars tend to hide their begging from relatives, though addicted beggars are not afraid of overt begging.

Considering the efforts of beggars to conceal their faces from their relatives (cover begging) and remain

Table 1. Types of begging.

Number gender	Professional begging	Amateur begging	Modern begging	Traditional begging	Covert begging	Overt begging
Male	4	3	5	2	12	4
Female	5	11	712	9	4	3
Total	9	14		11	16	7

Source: Author

anonymous in traditional and modern begging styles, it can be concluded that most beggars have a tendency to maintain their reputation and to keep their self-esteem. Female beggars can keep their anonymity in both traditional and modern begging, but male beggars can only remain anonymous in modern begging. Therefore, it seems that begging (by maintaining self-esteem) is exclusive to women rather than men.

Axial Category

To achieve a paradigmatic model, key statements were extracted from the interviews. These key statements contain 92 propositions as follows:

Beggars talk to each other in the sanatorium (Green House)

Two notable points in the beggars' conversations were the arousal of others' feelings.

Saeed said:

"I played the role of a disabled person for pedestrians, they helped me by giving me money and sympathizing with me, I learned this in my childhood games, I begged them to give me money. Before begging, I changed the color of my face with the sun. When I begged, I changed my voice so that they would think I was really needy and miserable!"

Since culture can impact the way in which people display emotion, a cultural display rule is one of a collection of culturally specific standards that govern the types and frequencies of displays of emotions that are acceptable (Malatesta and Haviland, 1982). Therefore, people from varying cultural backgrounds can have very different cultural display rules of emotion (Matsumoto, 1990:195-214).

Emotion is not only displayed through facial expression. We also use the tone of our voices, various behaviors, and body language to communicate information about our emotional states. Body language is the expression of emotion in terms of body position or movement.

Research suggests that we are quite sensitive to the emotional information communicated through body language, even if beggars are not consciously aware of it (de Gelder, 2006; Tamietto et al., 2009).

The beggars in the sanatorium advised each other. Maryam, who did not intend to beg after her release, told the other beggars:

"Instead of talking nonsense, watch TV a little; the social worker on TV is talking about strengthening your relationship with the community."

In this regard education does this by instilling a sense of social solidarity in the individual – which involves instilling a sense of belonging to wider society, a sense of commitment to the importance of working towards society's goals and a feeling that the society is more important than the individual (Durkheim, 1997).

Casual condition

a. Driving factors (financial needs and addiction to drugs)

There are two main reasons proposed for begging. Atefeh resorts to begging because she is in dire financial need: "To help my husband expenses, because his salary is about 500 dollars a month and is not enough to cover our expenditures. We have to pay 1000 dollars for home rent. This money barely extends until the tenth or twelfth day of the month, after that we only have bread to eat."

Another reason for begging is obtaining drugs, according to Zahra:

"I was begging to get drugs and cover the expenses of my child. Influenced by my sister in law, my husband told me to either give back the child to my ex-husband or, send him to work!"

A begging turns to begging for two main reasons (family and friends): between blaming the individual for their predicament or seeing them as the victim of wider social forces - a tension that recalls Wright Mills' (2000) enduring distinction between 'private troubles' and 'public issues'. Therefore, the following examples were studied

together.

Interventionist condition

b. Statements associated with the family

1) Family crises

Sedighe fights with her husband because her mother in law was interfering in their life:

“We lost our house, so we have to go and live with my mother-in-law. She always interfered in my life with why you did not give birth to a son, or proposed to her son to divorce me and remarry in order to have a son!”

Zahra explains her dispute with her husband as such: “My husband tried to show off and pass himself as the good one. I really didn't like my husband. I'd grown up in the city but he was brought up in a village.”

Since as whether with your spouse or your children, arguments can seriously raise tensions in the family. Depending on the severity of the disagreement, they can even permanently damage relationships. Therefore, it is critical to handle arguments with care, not allowing heightened emotions to get the better of you (<https://www.betterhelp.com>).

Cultural stereotypes in the family

The prevalence of certain customs and traditions in the family of beggars such as prejudice and discrimination makes life difficult for them: For Samira, this prejudice was deterring her from obtaining her rights.

“When my husband died, he left a house for us, but my father in law took the house and gave it to his other sons. The house was mine, but he did not give it to me, I didn't complain because he was my uncle. I became the victim of their cowardliness. They displaced me!”

Mina also says that she felt embarrassed in front of her children for marrying again:

“I was embarrassed to talk to my children about my second marriage with my cousin. My son, having a high school diploma, is mature enough to understand these things. When he realized that my cousin had proposed me, he became angry and said to him, 'You are a mean person!' I tried to tell him that he was proposing me to protect him and to cover our expenses.”

The discriminatory treatment of her mother had irritated Raha!

“My mom took side with my brothers and didn't pay

attention to my sister and me. When my sister escaped the house, they said I was not much different from her. I was a naughty girl and I did not care about it, but my pain was that I had been forgotten.”

However, studies have discovered that discrimination may cause severe mental and physical health disturbances. It is not uncommon for such children at the receiving end to show signs of anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorders and personality disorders. It can also make them prone to illnesses like high blood pressure, heart disease and diabetes later in life.

Discrimination can cause severe and permanent damage to a child's psyche. Children who are subjected to prejudice, ridicule and emotional trauma develop negative coping strategies. They are at an increased risk for developing issues with aggression, depression, anxiety, issues with self-esteem and in forming and sustaining relationships (<https://indianexpress.com/5429663>).

Presence of delinquents in family

Iman also says how his friend encouraged him to commit a crime: “One of my friends suggested to me to buy and sell drugs in Sarafrazan marketplace. Although I earned less money than I did in begging, I was proud of selling drugs and I kept doing it for about 4 years.”

This point shows that the social learning theory focuses on learning through social modeling (Bandura, 1977). In other words, environmental influences help determine how our behavior is learned. Social learning occurs in many ways. It can occur through direct reinforcement, observation, environmental, or through cognition (Patock-Peckham et al., 2001).

Preferring begging to prostitution

In some cases, beggars prefer begging to prostitution, because they are too proud to soil their reputation and honor by engaging in disgraceful activities like prostitution.

For instance, Aram says: “I prefer to beg, not to be a prostitute, as I want to keep my reputation!”

Zahra feel guilty to be a prostitute: “Some (of my friends) say that they will turn to prostitution, but I tell them that I don't want to play with someone else's life.”

Freshteh also justifies her engagement in begging: “Being a prostitute, you will be at risk of various illnesses, such as AIDS and other infection diseases. So, I decided to beg instead!”

Preferring begging to stealing

Farhad, dismissing stealing as a despicable act, prefers

to be beg instead: "After one hour of begging, you can go home. It is not like you are a thief! I mean, you like to give me money, but it is not like I am stealing from you!"

Maintaining social status

Sara is a decent woman and she does not like seeking help from her children. She believes that: "I do not like to take money from my children. I am upset with calling them and asking for money. How long will I ask them for money? I want to make money myself!"

Ehsan, who worked as a house cleaner, says that his children complained that his job was below the family status.

"After my wife died, I worked as a house cleaner for 7 months, but my children thought it was not suitable for me, so I had to abandon it."

Rejection by family

Hemat says he was rejected by his family: "Rejected by family, I had to spend the first week in a desert while putting my stuff under a tree!"

Fariba also talks about her loneliness: "I rarely go anywhere, I mean no wedding, no ceremony and ... If I go, I have to spend money, so I neither go to anyone's house nor like anyone comes to my house. I mean, they should not expect me to pay their expenses. For few years I've been alone without any friends."

Since social exclusion is important, therefore, it must be said that: Social exclusion or social marginalization is the social disadvantage and relegation to the fringe of society. The outcome of social exclusion is that affected individuals or communities are prevented from participating fully in the economic, social, and political life of the society in which they live (Nevile, 2007: 249-255).

"Background conditions"

Characteristics of begging

An analysis of interviews with the beggars revealed that begging has two main characteristics:

Merit of begging

One of the distinctive features of begging is that it allows earning money easily and without any concern. Manizheh discusses this advantage: "I went to my daughter's home (you do not know what may happen). My grandson insisted to take him to my house, but I refused. Instead, I went to the junction and began begging. No one dislikes free bread and making some money!"

Studies show that a significant stressor in many family's lives, financial troubles can add significant tension to any household. Money problems can be dealt with in various ways, including a change in the way we look at money and material possessions. In some situations, families may benefit from setting a budget and making money management a priority (<https://www.betterhelp.com>).

Development of begging

Begging is learned from other beggars

Samira says: "I learnt begging from a woman, who gave me opium. When I asked about her frequent absence, she told me the secret of her begging. Then, she taught me how to go about begging."

Ehsan also learnt begging from his brother in law: "My brother in law was the guardian of the park. Once he said to me, 'Come on man, 'wish the drivers at the crossroads good health, they will give you some money!' I complained that this was a kind of begging, but he believed that it was not perceived as such in the city of Mashhad. I accepted his offer because I had no other option (I had no other job)."

The mentality geared toward begging which can be manifested by a temptation to beg, as was the case with Sima:

"One day my daughter said: could you give me some dollars? I want to go to Ghouchan. I replied humorously 'how do you expect me to earn that money? From begging?' Then it hit me on the head that I could start begging!"

Also, the mentality geared toward begging, if faced with emergency and compulsion, one may be forced to seek help from people; Payman is not an exception to this rule: "When I was alone there, I went about stealing every other night. When I couldn't walk, I pulled myself out of that hole and went under the bridge. I stretched my legs and passerby gave me some money."

"Interaction/Strategies"

Strategy of seeking help

One significant thing about all the beggars is their awareness of the fact that people would help them if they asked for it. So they turned to begging and utilized a couple of strategies in their work.

Samira used this strategy: I'm all alone. "I would go to Koohsangi for begging. I would stand in a corner and said to people 'Please help me', and they helped me. I told

them I am all alone without family or friends.”

Sedighe took advantages of her child's disability: “At crossroads when cars were behind the red light, I approached the cars, cried and pleading that I have a disabled child, please help me.”

Roqiye rationalized her begging by saying that people helped beggars willingly. As such, she had a rationalization of her begging which can be considered as a strategy: “How should I take care of my two starving children? Should I prostitute for some extra cash or ask people for help?”

Manizeh had convinced herself that begging is not a crime. This could be seen as another strategy of begging. “I didn't know this (begging) was illegal. I went about begging in streets, thinking that anyone could do it; someone introduced me to the police!”

Also, it is a 'gift' that sits uneasily within the obligations of gift-exchange as it is a gift that the giver does not expect to be returned (Mauss, 1954).

“Consequences”

Consequences of begging

The lingering effect of begging is that it fosters begging habit and it may last for a long time:

Mozhgan says: “I have been begging for about 8 years, we cannot afford our living expenses. Since my daughter (Sahar) has grown enough, I take her with me as well.”

One of the consequences of begging is that the beggars sometimes react to the begging. The beggars hide their face because they are ashamed of it.

For Hemat, begging was a humiliating act: “I don't beg during daytime, because I hate this job; it just fills me with a sense of humiliation and shame!”

Saeed also hid his begging from his family: “While here (in prison in the Green House), I didn't inform my family and told them I was in another city looking for a job. When I was begging, I didn't tell them because I felt ashamed; instead, I told them I worked as a broker!”

Our finding is consistent with Brittany's theory that says: shaming is “all social processes of expressing disapproval which have the intention or effect of invoking remorse in the person being shamed and/or condemnation by others who become aware of the shaming” (Braithwaite, 1989: 100).

Process description in the grounded theory

The beggars get help when they know that there is a

giver. The development of such reactions is the result of social contexts that generate a sense of pity in givers, and religious beliefs that a spiritual reward awaits those who assist needy people. It strengthens the spirit of charity and aid in the society, consolidating the tradition of donation and charity in the people.

There is no society whose members do not understand the language games of economic exchange and of gift exchange. Thus we create a historical fiction when we separate gift economies from exchange economies on the ground that the former is primitive, primordial or paradisaic; while the latter are modern, individualistic and rational (O'Neill, 1999: 131-145).

It is in such a structure and culture the needy people resort to begging, either by learning or with the help of a mentality geared toward begging. As they succeed in earning money in this way, they keep at it until the begging turns into a habit: “At first, I was addicted and I had to beg to get drugs. I've been begging for two or three years and I spend the money on my disease, foods and drugs. Even after I abandoned drugs, I continued begging! I had got used to it!”

The attitude of beggars towards begging is also formed in the same culture of donation characterized by motivating a sense of pity in the helper.

People help beggars willingly: “After one hour begging, ones comes back home. It is not like I am a thief. I mean, you like to give me money willingly, but you don't like me to steal your money!”

Beggars trigger a sense of pity in the helper: “I told them, May God give you a healthy life. I have a sick daughter at home. She got diabetics in her husband's house and now she is all skin and bones. Now the cost of my daughter's treatment is with me!”

Beggars' adjustment of management techniques in response to situations

The beggars use a variety of strategies in keeping with the temporal and spatial circumstances and seek to manage their begging style. The beggars are especially active in places where they receive more aids, such as religious places (mosques, shrines, etc.), or in special occasions (such as Religious festivals, mourning rituals, holidays) and use spiritual tools to fulfill their goals.

A beggar uses spiritual tools such as prayer to receive help: “Ever since I had a 25-year-old boy and paid for his chemotherapy, I've been begging, not the begging you think. I sat on the street corner and I performed religious rites, people paid for it themselves, I was ashamed to beg at all!”

Beggars ask help from pilgrims in religious sites: " My job was to sit in holy and religious places from 8 am to 12 noon, sometimes praying to passersby and wishing them good health, and people would give me money."

Analysis of the paradigmatic model of begging

At first, consistent with the research objectives, the concepts were broken down and classified based on the extent of sensitivity to each concept (granting meaning to the concepts). It allowed a comparison of concepts so that the corresponding concepts could be assigned to the same categories. As such the categories were shaped with an abstract title that encompassed all concepts. Meanwhile, the data were continually compared with concepts and categories and after establishing the relationship between a category and its sub categories, the open and axial coding was performed. Following the axial coding, a series of relationships was found between categories and the main categories, leading to the establishment of a model of relationship between the main categories and selective coding categories.

The central categories were classified into paradigmatic models with respect to their features. In this process, begging represents an interventionist condition that drives beggars to begging. It, however, occurs at two stages in form of primary and secondary interventionist conditions. Under such conditions, the person faces financial stringency and in case of addiction, resorts to begging as a means of obtaining drugs.

Background situations, as inherent features of this phenomenon, comprise the development of begging phenomenon or interaction between donor and aid seeker. In this context, beggars adopt certain strategies to seek help from people, which could bring about specific results for their begging (Figure 1).

DISCUSSION

Begging as a social problem

After being rejected by their respective families or losing of social ties with relatives, beggars experience a diminishing of the Hirschi's social control (2002) exerted on them by these people, and thus become prone to begging. In the wake of the fact that the culture of our society is rooted in religious beliefs, it encourages the culture of help and assistance of the poor. On the other hand, the religious culture in the community disparages the offer of help to beggars as it is treated as a crime in the eye of the law.

Religion recommends people to help those who are really in need of help. Beggars can refer to certain institutions for help.

Given the complexity of social problems in any society, it seems that the existence of such a dichotomy of value in society and lack of awareness of people about the real needy prepare the ground for the growth of beggars.

Therefore, according to Giddens' theory of duality (of structure):

Structures are enabling and constraining agency, but they also exist only by agency. Structures do not have a consciousness; they do not exist outside agency and are no system of interaction (Lippuner and Werlen, 2009).

The dominant structures in the Islamic Republic of Iran provide an opportunity for the expansion of a culture of giving (In form of Zakat and sadaqa), or the growth of panhandling, and at the same time eliminate the chance of gaining dignity and respect for beggars . This leads to the development of a sense of humiliation in beggars.

As noted above, the duality of values in the society and the dominant ideology of the society, such as a tendency to make easy money in society, which is the root cause of social indolence in certain group of people in the society, are compatible with characteristics of begging or the habit to earn easy money.

The beggars awareness of temporal and spatial situation of panhandling has also contributed to its development. Such awareness, nonetheless, has its origin in religious beliefs and ideas. The beggars are more active in religious holy sites and on religious occasions. As posited by Schenk and Holman (1980)'s theory, objects feature meanings within themselves and individuals formulate their activities in the direction of their evaluation of themselves and also people and objects around them.

Beggars resistance against the term begging based on research findings

In our religious beliefs, upholding the honor and social status is of paramount importance so much so that it is recommended that you shall not humiliate yourself before others. In other words, one should not feel disparaged or mortified !

The beggars influenced by such beliefs in the society are to somehow observant of this religious belief, but in a society in which the beggars have been brought up to avoid a sense of pity and total dependency on others, they go to great lengths to save their face and honor in front of their relatives. In other words, they are afraid of stigmatization, knowing that fingers are pointed at them. Thus, they try to hide their panhandling from others, with the justification that they are soliciting aids from people not begging (the feeling of embarrassment and secrecy about panhandling applies to non-addicted beggars) and

Paradigmatic model: begging

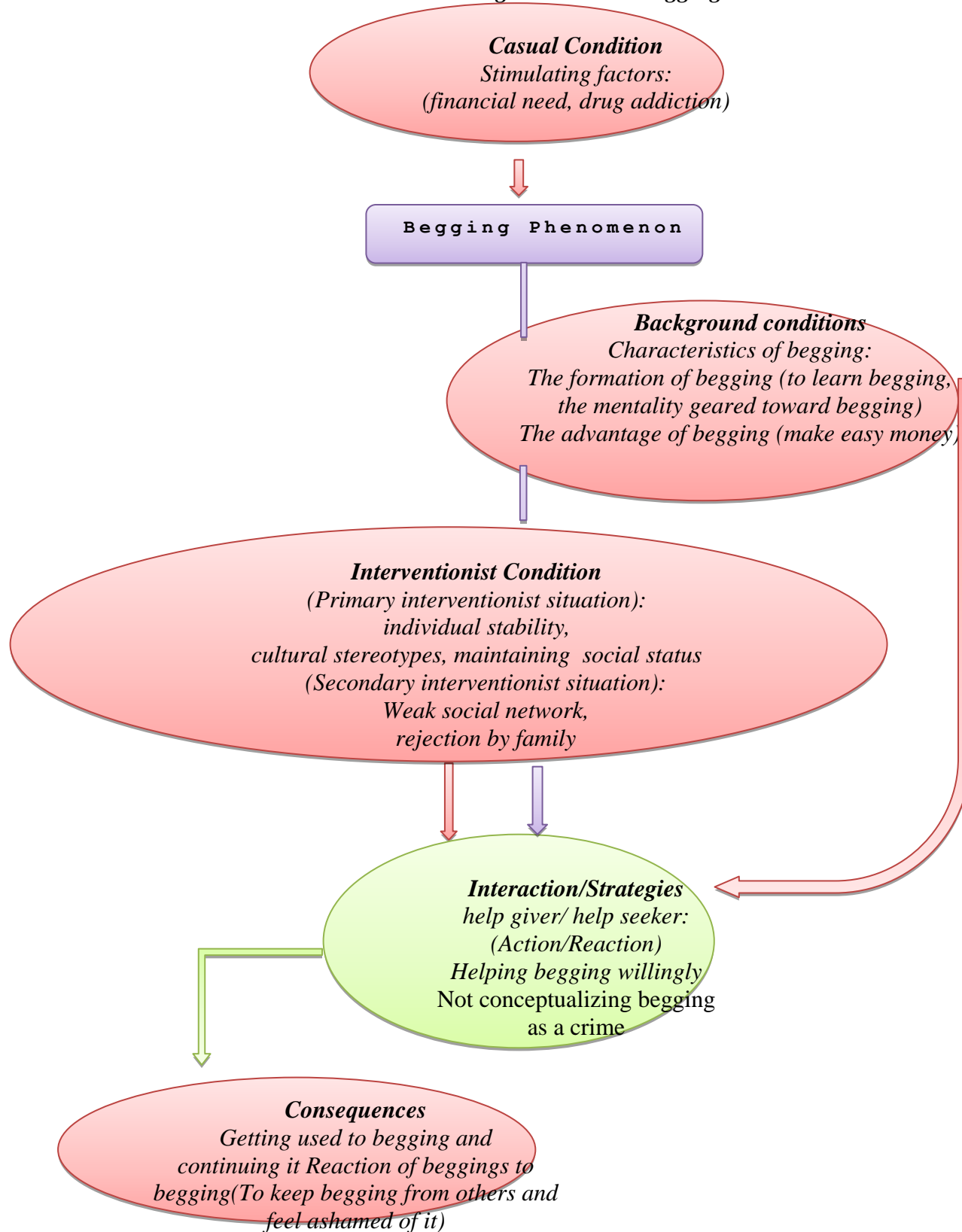


Figure 1. Strategies for beggars to seek help from people.

plan to continue it temporarily. But the comfortable and pleasant taste of easy money makes them fond of this line of work. As a result, they turn to secrecy to avoid the shame associated with begging.

The modern form of begging or the justification of seeking help from others and the concealment of panhandling for the lack of sympathy in most help givers demonstrate that beggars are also sensitive to their self-esteem. Therefore, to refrain from being labeled as a liar in the eye of others, beggars use various means of deceit or strategies through which they solicit help from others.

This strategy is characterized by arousing the emotions of citizens. One of the cultural paradigms in Iranian society, namely offering assistance to the needy people, who are seen as a valuable act, has affected beggars so that they employ strategies that pass them off as the real needy in the society. As Hochschild (1979) says: It is a deep acting, where a person works to place his or her private emotional state into one that is in line with what is socially acceptable for a given situation.

Conclusion

In the process of begging, interventionist conditions appear in two stages: external conditions imposed on individuals such as lack of technical skills and education, cultural stereotypes and family tensions. Meanwhile, the existence of certain traditions in the family, such as discrimination and prejudice against female beggars and family interventions in male beggars, income barriers and lack of foresight as well as unlawful activity of spouses or friends can be considered as the origin of beggars' problems (primary interventionist conditions). All of the aforementioned problems lead to the rejection to begging by family and weakening of their social networks. The weakening of social network associated with friends and relatives and establishment of social status are two intertwined points. In other words, given the weakness of social networks, beggars attempt to maintain their social status in the eye of their relatives and thus refuse from asking for help. Also, in an attempt to maintain their social status and prevent people from knowing about their poverty, they reduce their communications with relatives to the minimum level.

When social cohesion and connection of people with society is loosened, the possibility of committing a crime, and here begging, will grow accordingly. Hirschi (2002) argued that criminal activity occurs when an individual's attachment to society is weakened. This attachment depends on the strength of social bonds that hold people to society. Thus, a person is driven to begging when faced with severe financial crises. Financial needs to provide living expenses or obtain drugs are the starting point that pushes people to begging. That is, financial need is the driving factor that turns beggars from a quasi-beggars (people prone to begging) into real beggars. Hence, to solicit aids, beggars use a variety of tricks and

strategies revolving around their life concerns, such as disabled child, solitude, etc. to seek help from people. However, in spite of their financial needs, beggars usually leave no stone unturned before resorting to begging.

According to Merton's anomie theory (1993), most people strive to achieve their goals. A state of anomie develops when access to these goals is blocked to an entire group of people or individuals.

Faced with insurmountable obstacles with legitimate ways of making money, people are forced to turn to begging, using different gesture, posture, symbols, and more importantly language to solicit aids from people. Action and interaction between the help seeker and help giver take place in the context of cultural structure of the community, especially the culture of donation and charity. The main advantage begging has over having a job is to make money quickly and easily which heightens people's motivation for begging.

With respect to the increasing number of beggars and forms of begging, consistent with Sutherland's theory (1992) of learning, people learn to become offenders from their environment. Through interactions with others, individuals learn values, attitudes, methods and motives for criminal behavior (Sutherland et al., 1992).

Therefore begging is fostered when beggars are encouraged by those around them to do so, tempted to beg, or faced with difficult conditions that provoke them to seek help from people. Here, according to Habermas theory (1985) of communicative action, begging is the interaction of at least two people who seek to reach an understanding about something so that they can coordinate their interpretation of a situation and their plans of action by way of mutual agreement. So a kind of understanding is established between the help seeker and the help giver, with the former seeking to earn money and the latter intending to achieve spiritual values.

As a result of begging, the help seeker develops a propensity towards begging and it turns into a habit. However, the reiteration of beggars depends on the feedback they receive from help givers, and according to Lemert's labeling theory (1999), secondary deviance occurs when a person's self-concept and behavior begin to change after his or her actions are labeled as deviant by members of the society. It can encourage the repetition of this action by beggars. An interesting point here is that most beggars, particularly non-addicted beggars (about 70% of the study sample) practice begging stealthy and are ashamed of what they do. In a sense, they still maintain their self-esteem and try to justify this act under the assumption that they are seeking help from people, not begging!

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CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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