

Social Issues Around Beggary and Disability (Perspectives from Disabled Beggars)

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Abstract

About 10% peoples of Bangladesh are disabled. The incidence of absolute poverty is 40%. Poverty has a co-relation with disability and disability with poverty. Most disabled people face financial difficulties. According to the national policy of Bangladesh the country has adopted 10% quota for employment of the disabled people, as employment is a matter of economic survival for disabled. But the law of '10% quota' is not being implemented and disabled people are excluded from paid employment.

The research aim was to explore different issues that led to begging from the perspectives of disabled beggars. The study has also tried to find out their needs for vocational training whether the lack of it a factor in becoming a beggar.

Eight disabled beggars were recruited from the Dhaka city by purposive sampling. Selection was based on some typical characteristics.

The study findings indicate that participants came into begging to meet their basic human needs. They are beggars because through this they are getting some means to survive. They are not getting suitable mobility aids, transport, jobs etc. Where he /she has to maintain a family it is done by begging. Capital is usually needed to begin self-employment. Beggars want to begin self-employment but capital is not available. They want to be introduced to vocational rehabilitation. The study showed that that more research is needed around implementation of vocational rehabilitation. Various other themes emerged from the research and these are also discussed further.

General Context of the study

Paid employment is a matter of economic survival for disabled people and their families (Turmusuni 2001). However, due to misconceptions, disabled people are excluded from paid employment (Momin 2002). Disability has associations with sources of income. When sources of income decrease disability increases (Abedin 2000) and most disabled die from premature death due to starvation and lack of treatment.

Bangladesh Government adopted a policy of 10% quota for employment of disabled people

The policy of getting 10% job has yet been not implemented, therefore until today less than 1% of disabled people are involved in paid employment (Farashuddin 1996). The situation is difficult for disabled women. About 28% of the disabled women are begging (Hossain 1999).

However the need for occupation in the field of disability in Bangladesh has to take much greater priority. At present, there is no existing social welfare system that can help dis-

abled people either directly or indirectly. In this sense, disabled people have to be independent in order to survive as most of them live in extreme poverty. So they search for an occupation. However they find that adapted working environments as well as their job opportunities are very few. Thus, excluded from productive work and unable to lead a quality life they exist by begging.

Understanding disability

Oliver (1993) presented the social model of disability as follows: "Disability is all things that impose restrictions on disabled people; ranging from individual prejudice to institutional discrimination, from inaccessible public buildings to unusable transport systems, from segregated education to excluding work environment and so on"

Understanding Poverty

To identify the definition of poverty is very difficult. The poverty debate has long been narrowly focused on two competing definitions of poverty.

The absolute definition:

Related to a notion of the lack of basic necessities for life.

The relative deprivation definition:

Based on not being able to live in accordance with customs and values of the society in which the person is located (Beresford 1996) Beresford 1996 criticized both definitions. He said, "It does not take adequate account of individual, occupation, cultural or ethnic differences."

Beggars as an extension of the problem of poverty:

Beggars could perhaps be identified as those who were defeated in their battle against poverty and live mainly on charity. They try to get sympathy by showing their physical, mental and economical incapability (Ahsan 1996). According to Marxist social class analysis-Beggars are included in the category of human proletariat who are defined as unproductively employed social layers outside the working class (Siddique-1993).

Poverty and disability

In poorer societies, disabled people are among the most destitute (Barnes and Mercer 1995) Destitution mostly depends on the economical level of a disabled person. But disability imposes a multitude of extra and hidden cost on those who have impairment, so that they may easily fall into severe financial difficulties (Rock, 1981 Berthoud, 1991 Berthoud et al 1993)

Whether Beresford (1996) argues, "Differential access to the benefits of work and education means that world poverty is a key issue for disabled people".

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Methodology

Choice of Methodology

The major aim of the study was to answer the question "What are the issues around beggary from the perspective of disabled beggars"? - This question pertains to values, beliefs, motivation a person's environment, interactions, human behavior and meanings. Quantitative methodologies are clearly inadequate and qualitative methodology is the best method to fulfill research objectives as it includes disabled beggars' knowledge, views, understanding, interpretations, experience and interactions.

Participant's selection

People who were disabled beggars were recruited from the Dhaka city to participate according to purposive sampling. The samples were collected from Dhaka city because various kinds of disabled beggars come from different geographical areas in Dhaka and they were accessible for the study. All participants were provided with a full explanation of the research project and what was involved for them. Also further explanations were given during and after the interviews and the participants were free to withdraw at any stage and refuse to answer any questions.

Data Analysis

Depth interviews were taken in Bangla. Each participant got about half an hour to speak. The interviews were conducted using different issues of begging identified in the literature review as a guide. Beggar partners were also asked relatively same questions. Interactions were recorded by an audiotape. Field notes were completed after finishing each interview. The researcher re-listened to interactions and made a transcript. Then data was converted into English and checked to see if the expression was relatively accurate (by other persons). The researcher documented the views expressed around questions by coding. Then he found different issues of begging by collecting supporting views. After that theme have emerged on the basis different issues of begging.

Result

Reason for becoming disabled from questions analysis.

Disease or accident, unsafe working environment, inappropriate treatment, no financial compensation for injury.

Reasons for becoming a beggar by the beggars and their partners when questioned

No job, no capital available, income decreased but expenditure increased, associated impairment with incapability, poor education/socio - economical status before having an accident which caused impairment, no available vocational rehabilitation, attitude of society is negative towards including the person with society, easy life little effort needed, capacity for manual works is decreased due to impairment, poverty and inadequate accessibility e.g. Transport, Mobility aids etc
Emerging theme: The following themes have emerged from the interviews:

Theme-1. Failure to recover social position after impairment

The meaning of this theme is "The disabled beggars did not

get complete rehabilitation because of social issues. Social issues were too strong and pushed the rehabilitation towards backwards direction and they were failure to recover the social position."

Theme-2. In search of a new income source.

The meaning of this theme is "Participants had future plan. They were begging to implement their future plans i.e. They were begging to support the families as just now their families has no source of income. But when family will be able to support the beggars; then he/she will introduce with a new work."

Theme-3 Structural inequality and unable to change these obstacles

The meaning of this theme is "Existing structural environments are not fitted to allow to work e.g., businesses etc. Indeed, it is too difficult to over come these obstacles in e.g., transport, Buildings and to do a job"

Theme-4. Total change in life circumstances

The meaning of this theme is "Everything has altered after their disability. e.g., alteration of possible life course, alteration of income and expenditure, alteration of level of work ,alteration of their social status .Now their aim in living is to survive"

Theme : 5-Precarious existence and securing protection from danger.

The meaning of this theme is 'the life of the disabled beggars are very precarious but they want to survive and they need some securities to survive. Begging at least protects them from danger e.g. Fear of starvation and gives them security. They try to address basic needs'

Theme: 6. Shrinkage of opportunity

The meaning of the theme is "The opportunity of the disabled beggars have collapsed. Everything is negative for them."

Discussion

Bangladesh accepted the UN proclamation of 22 standard rules for equal rights, opportunities and full participation. It also adopted the policy of 10% quota for employment of disabled people (Bangladesh national policy for disabled 1995, employment section-ChaP8). All participants in the study were not aware of the government job quota for disabled people. But, disabled people who are aware about this "job-quota" felt that this declaration will not bring any change in the job market for disabled people because there is no legislation for violation of the government declaration (Momin 2002).

The findings of the study illustrate the huge vulnerability of disabled women. They got less opportunity than disabled males due to different socio-cultural issues and strong social stigma. Their issues of begging were relatively different they were expelled from family as they had impairment. Hossain (1999) argues, "Women disabled are more disadvantaged because 98% of them are economically inactive. Among them 70% are involved in house hold work and 28% are begging in Bangladesh".

But gender issue was not elaborated, as the study aim was only to explore issue behind begging. Impairment and poverty were the main issues to all respondents. Impairment and poverty have influenced their whole life style not only after disability but also poverty was main causes of their disability.

After disability all participants income were decreased and their expenditure were much increased. As a result they had to fight for survival due to social and economical deprivations (UPIAS 1976, Rock 1981, Mercer and Barnes 1995). Disabled people are given limited opportunity from society (Priestly 2001, UPIAS/Disability Alliance 1970, Priestly 1988, Thomas 1999 and stone 2001). They are identified as social model of disability (Oliver and Barnes Cited in Drake 1996 and Oliver 1993).

Conclusion and recommendation

The finding of the study indicates that participants came into begging to meet their basic human needs. They are beggars because they are getting some means to survive and continue living but they not getting suitable mobility aids, transport and jobs. By begging he/she to maintain a family expenditure and little effort is needed. A minimum capital is needed to start self-employment. They are not given any vocational rehabilitation after injury. So to start self-employment is challenging. On the other hand, there is a law about paid employment for disabled but it is still waiting implementation and participants don't know it.

The researcher's attitude changed to wards a disabled people and the needs of vocational training through the research project. The disabled beggars are not complete rehabilitated. So, the following recommendations can play a vital role in order to provide their complete rehabilitation.

Every health care professional should consider the needs of vocational training for disabled people. The disabled people should be referred to the appropriate place for their vocation rehabilitation.

Vocational rehabilitation should be evidence based. So further study is required how to implement a vocational rehabilitation programmed for the disabled beggar.

They should be given micro-credit support so that they can be able to lead independent living.

Information regarding jobs, training etc, should be accessible to all disabled people.

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