

PP 08 - Beggar's Impact on Sociological Development in Colombo District, Sri Lanka

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Background: During the past decade, the beggar population in Sri Lanka has been increasing at a rate of nearly 1,000 a year. By 2002, two thousand seven hundred child beggars could be identified and it has inclined to 2800 by 2006 especially in Colombo area. Beggars seem to have a negative impact to the country such as increasing the poverty of the country, reducing individual income, negative impact on the tourism industry and increase the rate of drug abusers in Sri Lanka. Hence, assessing their impact on sociological development in Colombo district is significant.

Objectives: To assess the beggar's impact on sociological development in Colombo District, Sri Lanka.

Methodology: A descriptive qualitative study was done on 13 beggars until the point of saturation was achieved in Colombo district using convenience sampling through one to one interview with the participants.

Results and conclusions: Majority of the beggars had at least a minor amount of literacy. However some had never been schooled due to lack of enrolment or bunking school. The vast majority have been begging at least more than three years. Moreover, most of the beggars are unaware of the conditions they have regarding health. Certain respondents however, have diagnosed as having phlegm, asthma hyperlipidaemia, hypertension and vision problems. Majority of participants refuse to take free government health services currently, though they have been using those services at the initial stages. Major amount of the participated beggars earned an income to spend on the medicine and their other basic needs via begging. A few of them had other sources of income such as part-time jobs or support from family. Respondents were earning money ranging from Rs. 100 to Rs. 2000 per day. Furthermore, most of the respondents stated that public perception towards begging is irrelevant.

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