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Countering the menace of begging

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Beggary is the clear indicator of failing society for Pakistan, this issue is instigated by widespread illiteracy, economic predicaments, problematic social behaviors, criminal activities and evil of active begging; however, this menace can be sorted by provision of quality education, increased economic activity, supporting welfare programs and efficient policy making and implementation.

The essay

Ayesha, 12 years old, ruffles through the streets of Urdu bazar, Lahore. She carries a scratched cup to receive coins tossed towards her out of pity and disgrace. While her peers are getting pencils, erasers and sharpeners to write and refine their future, Ayesha is begging, sadly, on the streets. She must have also gazed at the towering clock tower of GCU Lahore, yearning to become the architect of her life, but she cannot, like her family and millions of others. It is beyond anyone's comprehension that markets are stuffed with food and clothes, pharmacies are flooded with medicines and Urdu bazar is overwhelmed with books and stationery, but people are still on the roads begging for their dear souls. Ayesha is not just a kid begging around the city; she is the indicator of a deteriorating

society, a failing political system and a failed economy. Begging is the menace which has encompassed a large portion of Pakistani society. It is caused by widespread illiteracy, bad economic situation of nation, problematic social behaviors, criminal activities and evil of active begging. However, these causes are neither divine nor unsolvable. Provision of quality education, stimulation of economic activities, poverty alleviation programs and efficient policy making and implementation can resolve this issue. With the hope of proper identification and redressal, this essay will explore the underlying causes of begging and provide possible counter measures for the menace.

The principal reason of begging in Pakistan is lack of education. Education inculcates essential skills in an individual for living a better life and growth in economic sphere. In Pakistan literacy rate is stuck around 60 percent on average and situation for rural areas is even worse. Also, the education provided is not up to the mark and leaves gaps in personal and professional development of students. As per WB poor quality education of Pakistan is causing itself around 5.4 percent of GDP annually. 77 million of 10 years old children cannot read a text properly in Pakistan [world bank]. Efficiency and relevance are paramount to surviving in modern economic system. Without education social mobilization of poor class is impossible that forces them to stay under the line of poverty. Pakistan spends only 0.8 percent of its GDP on education system that must manage around 1400 million people [economic survey of Pakistan 2025]. Consequently, education system fails to provide across the board and quality education which results in large percentage of uneducated or unskilled workforce. This workforce struggles to find economic opportunities and end up doing petty jobs or no jobs at all. This grim mechanism promotes hopelessness and financial constraints. These factors create a conducive environment to grow for the ills like beggary. If people are not seen in educational institutions, they are going to be seen on roads, begging most probably. It is obvious if a finger cannot trace letters on paper, it will trace dry lips. Therefore, it is concluded that lack of proper quality education results in people begging on streets, instead of working in offices and industries.

Besides lack of education, economic predicaments are a major factor for forcing Pakistanis into beggary. In Pakistan work force is expanding rapidly, but work is nowhere to be found. Population growth rate in the country is 2 percent annually; contrarily economic growth is struggling around 1.7 percent. These facts give birth to many economic evils, which increase beggary across the country. Firstly, rising unemployment has compelled a great many Pakistanis to beg for survival. AS per labor force survey Fy 2025, unemployment

ratio has risen to 7.1 percent, which is highest in 21 years. Secondly, inflation rate in Pakistan is surpassing the incomes of a huge chunk of population. It has become impossible for the lower middle class to meet their expenditures in a respectful manner. Though in 2025 inflation dwindled to single digits, its trickledown effect is yet to be seen. Unfortunately, hunger and thirst and falling health do not wait for government policies to be realized at the grassroots, which makes it inevitable for poor parents to beg for their children's appetite, and for children to beg for their parent's medicines. Thirdly and more importantly, heavy taxation is also a cerebral assassin for helpless poor. According to FBR statistics, most of the tax collected is through indirect taxation, which puts equal burden on super rich and imploring poor. 70 million Pakistanis live on the monthly income of less than 8480 [as per official statistics of 2023-2024 released in 2026]. Keeping in view such a low-income capacity and mounting taxation pressures, figures which show Pakistanis begging on streets start making sense. Last but not the least is the elephant in the room, according to world bank, 16.5 percent of the population of Pakistan lives in extreme poverty. People already living under the poverty line have no choice but to beg for their survival because minimal or average income will not resolve their entrenched trouble. International heroics will remain meaningless, if Pakistanis will keep on showing up on streets with cups in hand due to economic woes. Therefore, it can be safely concluded that economic challenges of Pakistan's population are forcing them to beg on streets, railway stations and airports.

In addition to educational and economic factors, social contributors also give a major push to spreading beggary in Pakistan. The social fabric of Pakistani society is deteriorating rapidly, poor social indicators gauged by international observers are the strong evidence in this regard. Pakistani society is dealing with various challenges, and beggary is one of the most pressing of them. It is caused by family disruptions, ostracization of marginalized groups and generational begging. In many low-income house-holds parental disputes, family feuds, separation and divorce are matters of routine, which result in broken families. As per trends and volumes 2023 -2024, divorce rate in Pakistan has increased to 35 percent. Children of these broken families do not receive proper care and education, which makes them more likely to fall prey to begging to cater to their needs. Similarly, disadvantaged communities like disabled and transgender face exclusive marginalization from the society. For instance, blind individuals come every year to Maal road Lahore to protest their economic exploitation in different departments, but their issues are still not fully resolved. The Plight of transgender is even worse, there are very few schools, colleges and institutions for their socio-economic mobilization. Devoid of economic opportunities and social inclusion, such communities are forced to lose their dignity and indulge in acts like begging to fill their empty stomach. Due to lack of rehabilitation centers, beggars run in

the generations of beggars, and the evil of begging gets engrained in society. Many children start begging because their parents could not break out of the cycle of dehumanization. For consideration, there is only 1 beggar's house for millions of beggars in Punjab.

Unfortunately, intestines and brain do not work in collaboration with each other. If intestines do not find anything to grind, they start grinding human dignity and value. Hence, it can be concluded that social contributors like broken families, marginalization of disadvantaged and generational begging cause increase in begging across the country.

Lack of education, economic problems and social contributors do not exhaust the list; forced begging in Pakistan has also increased begging throughout the nation. Criminal elements are always there to exploit the weak links in society. In Pakistan various organized criminal activities are undertaken to worsen the situation related to begging. In this context, kidnapping and human trafficking are top of the list criminal modus operandi in the country. Firstly, kidnapping ratio has rapidly increased throughout Pakistan in recent times; most of these kidnappings are done by begging mafia. As per BBC, many children in Pakistan are kidnapped and traded amongst gangs with final stop at holy shrines, signals or markets where almsgiving by public is very high. These groups kidnap vulnerable women, children and make them to beg, sometimes by introducing a physical disability, for deception to gain sympathy. As per UNICEF, there are 112 million street children in Pakistan; most of them are involved in begging. Secondly, Seasoned export network also facilitates transfer of beggars to foreign countries through human trafficking. Since 2024 5400 Pakistani citizens have been deported from gulf countries under the allegations of illegal activities including begging. This international humiliation shows the scale of menace faced by the country. Nations should be known by their characteristic expertise not their expert criminals. Resultantly, it can be said that forced beggary has a fair share in promoting beggary in the nation.

Along with all the factors mentioned above, active begging by individuals also complicates the issue of beggary in Pakistan. Active begging refers to begging without any significant external coercion; it is generally a voluntary choice. The escapist mindset of some individuals encourages them to beg for their living instead of facing hardships in life. In 2025 3.5 million beggars earned more than 136 billion rupees in Pakistan, making it a lucrative profession for those who do not want to fight hard and smart enough in the face of difficulties. There is no doubt that living is extremely challenging for poor in Pakistan, but shortcuts and escapes are not a viable solution. Moreover, there are over 5 million drug addicts in country, and many of them are found begging to fulfill their addiction, specifically in the cities like Lahore, Karachi and Islamabad. As per Social welfare and Bait Al-Maal Punjab, more than 50 percent drug addicts are involved in begging across the province. Similarly, in the year 2025 hundreds of thousands of Pakistanis were expelled while

begging from the countries like Spain, KSA and Singapore. Many Pakistanis, who leave their country for pursuing better lives, indulge in begging due to the work force saturation, lenient laws and welfare systems in the host country. For instance, millions of Pakistani national beggars were deported from KSA only in 2025. These facts show that people resort to beggary in order to meet their goals very easily. Begged remittances are no better than low remittances, underdeveloped should not mean less dignified. Reasons discussed in this paragraph highlight the relationship of active beggary and growing begging industry in Pakistan. In the end, it can be concluded that active begging is nevertheless a major contributor in associating Pakistan with beggary.

As of now, different causes of increasing begging have been explored in this essay. Following paragraphs will discuss the possible solutions of the menace.

Provision of quality education will significantly mitigate the problem of increasing beggary in Pakistan.” Classrooms decide the future of nations” is rightly said by Benjamin Franklin. Education imparts necessary life skills which are important to face troubled water. An educated man possesses the fundamental qualities like confidence, self-belief and problem-solving ability that are essential to live a successful life. Reports including that of IJEKS have suggested that a literate individual has greater chances to secure a respectable livelihood than an illiterate individual. It means an educated individual is less likely to indulge in begging because he can find out other ways to fight his financial and social difficulties. In Pakistan literacy rate is stuck around 60 percent that means almost 40 percent of the population in the country is completely unaware of modern education and skills. Government should expand its educational infrastructure inclusively and comprehensively to educate the illiterate population. Moreover, government should also improve the quality of the education it is already providing. To turn the corner around the education, government should increase its education related spendings from 1.7 percent to standard 4-5 percent of GDP. Another area in which improvement is required is vocational training. As per NVTTC [national vocational training commission] only 8 percent of youth acquire technical knowledge which is paramount to survive in new market. Government needs to intervene, by budget allocation and super-vision, in this sphere to restore the balance. China has pulled hundreds of millions of its population out of poverty through technical education since 2010. Because of low poverty rate in China, ratio of begging individuals is also manageable there, Pakistan should also follow the same path. Similarly, attention is required in the division of special education, there are only 6 special education schools for 5 hundred thousand special children in Lahore [special education department Punjab]. Provision of proper education to special children can convert them into assets from liabilities. Otherwise, differently abled children and individuals will keep on showing up as beggars and helpless creatures on the streets. Likewise, education for elderly should also be promoted to prevent them from hopelessness and destitution. Therefore, it can be asserted that focus on education can prevent people from begging and help them to become more productive.

Along with provision of quality education, increase in economic activities can also significantly decrease begging in Pakistan. People resort to begging mostly due to economic hardships. For example, in a country where poverty rate has risen to 44 percent, social evils like begging become inevitable. To curb the menace of begging, Pakistani state should enhance employability, industrialization and business incentives. First of all, government should create employment opportunities in public and private sectors. For

instance, there are 230 million out of school children in Pakistan and thousands of educated unemployed youngsters who can teach them, only thing which is missing is a suitable platform. Government needs to connect such possibilities with strategic investments and public private partnership to produce favorable results. Similarly, creation of green employments is another avenue to be explored, Indian administration generates around 1 million jobs annually in the fields of solar tech-development and precise farming. Pakistan can also take a clue from such examples to resolve its own predicament. Secondly, state should shift its focus from agriculture to industry development, many populous countries like Pakistan, which include China, Malaysia and Türkiye have decreased poverty and unemployment, which are prime movers of beggary, significantly over the last 15 years through increased industrialization. Last but not the least, ease of doing business must be ensured to alleviate poverty and reduce begging from the country. As per Pakistan Business forum, starting business in Pakistan is 34 percent more expensive than its regional peers. Government should remove taxes and provide easy loans to encourage business and trade activities. For example, Grameen bank in Bangladesh has provided entrust free loans to poor individuals that has helped millions to come out of poverty since 2009. Human nature is to grow and explore not to relinquish its dignity and grace. Solutions discussed in this paragraph can make an environment where people can realize their innate nature. Consequently, it can be put forth that boosted economic activities can notably prevent begging in the country.

Besides working on structural issues like education and economy, diversified and transparent welfare activities can also help to assuage begging in the country. Pakistan aspires to become a welfare state as per her constitution, and this aspiration can help to control the growing trend of begging in the country as well. There are significant welfare activities already taking place in the country, but they are fragmented and isolated, diluting their efficiency. Additionally, state-sponsored welfare activities involve complex procedures and corruption. Firstly, there should be coordination between private philanthropists and state welfare machinery to improve the efficiency of welfare drives. For example, in 2024 Pakistanis contributed around 619 billion in Zakat including formal and informal donations, yet millions of Pakistanis still beg. It is due to lack of integrated and strategic planning and execution of welfare programs. Resources from private sector, accurate data from public and private bodies and state work force under the supervision of independent entities can uplift thousands if not millions from poverty and protect them from begging. Similarly, existing state welfare activities like BISP and Ahsas program are complex to subscribe and corrupt in delivery. For example, difficult Zakat allocation procedures and complicated scholarship conditions render many needy people unable to access them. Access to welfare programs should be made easier and distribution of funds

should be more transparent. These objectives can be achieved through procedural reforms, administrative modernization and accountability mechanisms. Evils of begging and poverty can be eradicated from the nation through inclusive and precise welfare programs, which require combined effort, expert administration and accountable institutions. Countries like Norway and Sweden have demolished poverty following the same path. Hence, it can be concluded that appropriate welfare activities can significantly diminish the menace of begging from Pakistan.

The quintessence of all the solutions discussed above is encapsulated in efficient policy making and implementation. Epitome of modern states is identifying complex socioeconomic issues and discovering medicines to palliate the effect. Pakistan should also follow the track. Principally, comprehensive legislation and rehabilitation mechanisms are required to cater for the issue. Unfortunately, Pakistan does not have anti-beggary laws in place to provide the fundamental framework to deal with the matter. Pakistan should put in place a strong legal structure to prevent forced and active begging with punitive measures. It will help prevent the manipulation of socioeconomic vulnerabilities. For example, in UK vagrancy act of 1824 is present to prohibit criminal begging and Scotland has legislated against using children for begging with penalties. While legislating on begging, sufficient constitutional safeguards should be provided for deserving unemployed individuals and other marginalized communities. Besides hindering the path of active and criminal begging, rehabilitative mechanisms should be articulated to eliminate social and economic drivers of begging as well. Rehabilitation centers can also restore active and existing beggars back to normal life by mitigating their psychological challenges. In Punjab there is only one professional beggar home in Lahore which points to the inadequacy of rehabilitative infra-structure in the province, and situation in smaller provinces is even more deplorable. There should be a beggar rehabilitation center in each division to suffice the requirement and fill up the gap. Moreover, existing welfare activities should be implemented with greater consistency and efficiency. Indeed, a collective and consistent effort is required to counter the menace, which is possible with timely policy making and implementation. Conclusively, it can be determined that efficient policy making, and implementation is the principal solution to the growing menace of begging across the nation.

To sum up, it can be stated that menace of begging in Pakistan is entrenched and multifaceted, which has cost Pakistan heavily both at national and international levels. However, prompt attention and sincerity can alleviate the pain. Various economic, social and policy level loopholes have reinforced the menace, but reformist approach augmented

by welfare schemes and legislative support can improve the status quo. Evils like begging surface when societies fail to address the scourges beneath the surface; however, such issues are not new and unsolvable. Promising societies fight effectively with them, and weak ones suffice merely for resolutions and formalities. Many developing nations like Pakistan, including Bangladesh, China and Malaysia, have dealt efficiently with such problems. Pakistan should also come out of its period of dormancy and actively confront the menace. Historically, Pakistanis have shown the capability of conquering even greater challenges. For instance, it has defeated all the bad fates to preserve its existence at the time of its inception and later improved its economy and literacy. Similar resolve is required with strategy and willingness of action to emerge from the quagmire known as begging. If a nation can break the shackles of slavery, it can also throw away the begging bowls as well. Pakistan only needs to realize its potential and materialize it into action to pull off the victory against the menace of begging. Only the semblance of determination which Pakistanis have already exhibited in the past is required, and indignation of begging will be destroyed forever.