

# BEGGARY AS A MEANS OF EMOTIONAL EXPLOITATION: A QUALITATIVE INQUIRY INTO THE BEGGARY IN SIVAS

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## ÖZET

Dilenme davranışı, yaygın bir şekilde ve tarihin her döneminde var olmuştur. Dilencilik, çalışmadan, emek sarf etmeden maddi kazanç elde etme davranışıdır. Bu davranış, hem insan gücünün değeri olmamasına, hem de insan onuru denilen duygunun köreltilmesi ve insani ve dini bazı temel duyguların istismar edilerek, beşeri ve sosyal yapının doku zedelenmesine uğramasına imkân tanımaktadır. Bu nedenle dilencilik, mücadele edilmesi ve çözümü için uğraş verilmesi gereken psiko-sosyal bir problem olarak önümüzde durmaktadır.

Bu araştırmada niteliksel araştırma yöntemi kullanılmış ve veriler ilgili dökümanlardan toplanarak analiz edilmiştir. Araştırma için Sivas ili model olarak seçilmiştir.

Sonuç olarak elde edilen veriler, psikososyal ve din psikolojisi eksenli bir yaklaşımla değerlendirilmiştir.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Dilencilik, istismar, dini duygu.

## ABSTRACT

The act of begging has commonly existed in every period of history. Beggary is the act of making profit with no actual labour or work. This act forms the source for labour disrespect decrease of human respect and damage of social and individual structure through violation of a number of humanitarian and religious feelings. For that reason, beggary stands before us as a psycho-social problem that has to be fought against and solved.

In this research, it is used the method of qualitative research. The datas are collected from the related documents and are analysed. The model city chosen for the research is Sivas.

As a result, the datas are evaluated in a psychosocial and religion of psychology approach.

**Key words:** Beggary, Emotional Exploitation, religious emotion.

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### Introduction

It is well observed that beggary is growing phenomenon in Turkey today. Several measures taken to solve the problem so far have failed.<sup>1</sup> It does not seem to be so easy to tell that the beggary occurred as a result of factors such as poverty, lack of education, social changes and degeneration. Above all, beggary has existed in every period of history, usually in an organized way. Besides, police records reveal that not many of the people conducting beggary are begging because they are poor. Nevertheless; there might be other reasons for beggary in general. Examining these reasons based on a rather socio-psychological basis shall be the most proper way of discussing the issue on a proper platform.

Beggary is the act of making profit with no actual labour or work. This act forms the source for labour disrespect decrease of human respect and damage of social and individual structure through violation of a number of humanitarian and religious feelings. Beggary is often encountered at times and places of particularly intense religious feelings. These frequent periods of beggary could be Ramadan month, Fridays and holy nights; whereas the common places of beggary are often cemeteries, shrines and courtyards of mosques.<sup>2</sup> Here people try every possible way to make money. Namely, beggary by its very nature requires an opportunist character.

The act of begging has commonly existed in every period of history. However, an explanation on this common and long existence of beggary due to the ever-existing poverty naturally would enable us to see the most innocent dimension of the case. Yet one of the basic aspects of beggary that should not be

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<sup>1</sup> Bkz. Bayram Ali Çakıroğlu, *Belediyeler ve Türkiye’de Dilencilik Boyutları*, www.zabita.com, 09.03.2009.

<sup>2</sup> See. Zülfi Güler, A Focus on Baghdadi Ruhi’s Terkib-i Bend Regarding The Social Psychology (Bağdatlı Ruhi’nin Meşhur Terkib-i Bendine sosyal Psikoloji Açısından Bir Bakış), A Journal of New World Sciences Academy, Volume 3, Number 1, Article numb., C0034, 2008, pp. 34-35; Par Julien Damon Serserilik ve Dilencilik, trans. Derviş Kara, [www.egm.gov.tr](http://www.egm.gov.tr), 18.4.2008; Yusuf Doğan, Meşhur Arap Edibi Amr b. Osman Cahiz’in El-Buhala adlı Eserinde Abbasi Dönemi Dilencilik ve Dilencileri, paper presented at “Bir Kent Sorunu Dilencilik, Sorunlar ve Çözüm Yolları”, İstanbul, 18-19 October, 2008, İstanbul;

ignored is that it is an abusive means of profit<sup>3</sup>. Furthermore, both the research and observations we have conducted, and various status reports, files and limited number of academic works conducted with related institutions indicate that the issue exists more on this basis. From this point of view we can conclude that beggars beg for two reasons. Yet when the first of these two, poverty, is in question, beggars somehow have difficulty and often quit begging when they can or when official or civil institutions provide financial aid. This type of beggary is almost non-existent because most of these people who beg find it disturbing so they do not beg voluntarily. Such people can actually be considered as “poor” but not “beggar”.

The second factor for begging is seen as the real reason that should be focused on. This type of beggary stands before us as a psycho-social problem that has to be fought against and solved. If people beg as a profession, that means they blinded the human honour inside them<sup>4</sup>. This feeling of honour would prevent begging and demanding in any case. Every individual has the instinct to protect his/her moral existence. Also known as “self esteem”, this feeling has to do with one’s loving/respecting himself/herself.<sup>5</sup> Losing this very feeling will eventually make the individual act negatively as if a natural thing. Those who lose this feeling and conduct beggary as a profession aim at one thing: ripping off anything, in any way possible. Most often women and children are abused in this respect. Letting them off to streets and abusing is seen as nothing inconvenient as in time they internalize learned behaviours and expressions and have no trouble applying the roles for beggary which they think is a profession. Many beggars who later in time get used to various risks and problems of street life and sometimes to conditions of prison temporarily and reach the level of losing sensitivity on these issue, move along to the point impossible to cure as a social wound. Even an increase in the socio-economic welfare status may not lead to abandonment of acts of beggary. In the research I have conducted, besides having encountered many such incidents, I have also witnessed

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<sup>3</sup> www.dogancüceloglu.net, 6.7.2008.

<sup>4</sup> www.dogancüceloglu.net, 6.7.2008.

<sup>5</sup> Hüseyin Peker, *Din Psikolojisi*, Çamlıca Yayınları, İstanbul, 2003, p. 105.

such news on TV and newspapers. Without doubt it is not easy to cure this necrosis-like wound in society. A systematic and well organized struggle bringing individuals, state and civil institutions together to this end has to be realized. However, the fact that it is impossible to achieve this solely with detective methods, without creating awareness on the issue is an inevitable reality.

Beggars, when evaluated on the Sivas scale, can be classified into two categories relatively within itself. Those in the first category are apparently innocent at first sight because they are poor members of poor families. Yet even individuals and families detected as poor and in need of support do not have the understanding of making a living with a proper work to overcome poverty. Thus, in the research we have conducted in Sivas, it was observed that such families did not give up begging occasionally despite being supported adequately on cash, food, and coal/wood for heating and educational expenses. Under the circumstances it is understood that beggary cannot be solved solely through a social solidarity mechanism. Without doubt, this mechanism should be maintained in any case because no one can ignore the fact that it mitigates beggary at a certain extent. In order to prevent certain poor and unemployed family members from becoming beggars, family support is as crucial as discouraging beggars from begging.

As to the beggars in the second category, these are the ones continuing beggary despite being over a certain socio-economical welfare level. This is the type of begging the society usually stands against. Considering the general opinions, beggary by poor people is seen legitimate and even supported by the reactions whereas beggary of the non-poor is condemned. However; such evaluations made through details will not demolish beggary, but shall be misleading instead. In a way, we assist them just by considering their moral and religious sides. If the begging person is poor, we happen to be encouraging him/her by letting him/her abuse our moral / religious feelings; if not, we would be giving him what should be given to the poor. Superficial approaches ignoring these points will eventually cause an increase in poverty even when charity and solidarity support is provided. Then, what is the cure for this social wound? Should the detective measures be totally abandoned?

How and by whom should the struggle against beggary be conducted? What could be the solution focus of the problem? Before making evaluations on the answers to these questions, it shall be proper to talk about the struggle to mitigate beggary with several methods and their existing status. Within this framework, we believe it shall be useful to evaluate the findings of the research we have conducted on beggary and the struggle against it within Sivas.

### **Method**

In this research, it is used the method of qualitative research. The datas are collected from the related documents and are analysed. The model city chosen for the research is Sivas. While deciding on the city, the facts that Sivas is better-known to us and that it has taken steps in fighting against poverty beggary with important projects have been effective. Furthermore, it was assessed that understanding the status in a mid-size Anatolian city for beggary which is common rather in metropolitan / larger cities.

As of 2008, much data and documents were provided on the level of success of struggle against beggary in Sivas and a number of interviews/meetings were held with related institutions and people. These information and documents were received from Sivas Municipality Social Welfare Directorate, the District Social Affairs Directorate, Sivas Municipality Police Directorate, Sivas Commerce and Industry Chamber, Police Department Juvenile Section. The beggars were also wanted to interview but they rejected this interview.

In this respect data on beggars recorded in Municipality Police Department between 2004 and 2008 are evaluated as research examples. The total number of these beggars is 110. The actual number of beggars is 4 or 5 times more than the average on special days such as Friday, holy nights, etc. It is understood from the data of the police records<sup>6</sup> that especially during the holy Ramadan month there is a flux of beggars in the city, which can be understood from the police records and our

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<sup>6</sup> Data on this issue was received from Sivas Municipality Police Captain Nazır Yıldız whom I am thankful for sharing his experience on beggary in Sivas, explaining specific cases and providing any document I needed.

personal observations. The individuals whose names listed in records and who are apparently conducting beggary frequently and systematically shall be adequate to form an opinion on beggary in Sivas and also in similar sized and smaller Anatolian cities and towns if supported by research.

### **Findings**

The results of qualitative interviews and observations show that beggars in Sivas can be grouped into two: the first group includes those people who live in Sivas, mostly in houses or tents. The second group consists those who come to Sivas on a daily base from neighboring provinces just for the aim of begging. Most of the beggars in the police records live in Sivas.

According to the research findings, 82.8 % (91 people) of the individuals in the research were female and 17.2 % were male – a rate showing the male/female overall rate difference. Furthermore no men reported among the individuals who were arrested for illegal beggary in 2008. In this respect, findings of the research conducted by VatandaŐ (2002) on beggary containing data on a wider base show that the number of male beggars in other Anatolian towns are rather high.<sup>7</sup> The high number in the number of female beggars in Sivas can be explained by the structure of families begging and the less-properly organized beggary system. Women begging in Sivas include those who mostly married to unemployed husbands or whose husbands sentenced to prison. It is usually their husbands who encourage them to beg and they therefore do not leave begging despite every kind of financial and social support. Kids who are 2-3 years old are brought for begging by their mothers and are abused to turn beggary into a more profitable and less risk action. In general Turkish society considers beggary of women more tolerable than men. Furthermore, a woman begging with a small kid next to her is seen as a sole status of despair. In families who have such an understanding, men tend to leave the small kids who have no experience of life out on streets for begging as well as their wives who are mostly uneducated. In our opinion, here women are abused and

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<sup>7</sup> Celalettin VatandaŐ, *Dilenciler ve Dilencilik - Sosyolojik bir AraŐtırma (Beggars and Beggary – A Sociological Research)*, Afyon Kocatepe University, Social Sciences Journal, C. IV, Issue 1, Afyon, 2002, p. 179.

children are made to adopt the same social character at a very young age because kids growing up in such families in question tend to lose certain humanitarian feelings towards self-questioning. As a result of the socio-economic structure they come from and the individual-psychic structures, this lacking social character does not change. According to Erich Fromm, the social character leading individual perception and behaviour can be more dominant than many of the innate instincts.<sup>8</sup> Such a growth experience based on such a social character is apparently focusing on a trick that is positive for individual ego designs.

It was understood that all beggars except for the kids are married and ladies with children. When a classification on growth periods and ages is made, the look is as follows:

4.5 % (5 people) of the beggars are between 12 and 15 years old (childhood period), 10 % (11 people) are between 15 and 18 (adolescence), 59.1 (65 people) % between 18-40 (youth and adulthood), 20 % (22 people) are between 41-60 (mid-aged) and 6.4 % (7 people) are over 60 (old-aged). When the age and development period of the sample beggars are concerned, it is understood that begging is not an obligatory act due to despair since 93.6 % (103 people) of the beggars in question are not considered as old aged. Furthermore, many conditions including being aged does not necessarily mean that one should feel despair and cannot work.

When the residential locations are considered, it is observed that most of the beggars in question are migrants from other cities, although they live in Sivas. Accordingly, beggars here prefer to conduct begging outside their hometowns. When the fact that most of them have migrated and faced expenses / challenges just for begging, it is understood that begging is more than a despair act, but a professional area of work.

All of the beggars in questions are uneducated. It is thought-provoking to see that they even did not receive any obligatory primary school education. All data we acquired on the issue show that some of them do not even have basic identity records or documents. In a period when Turkey fully implements

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<sup>8</sup> Erich Fromm, *To Have or To Be*, Puhlised by Abacus, London, 1979, ss. 133-138.

address-based population registration system, how could people with no such registration record be provided education? We believe authorities and those in responsibility need to undertake necessary tasks on this issue. Above all, moving from the correlation between being uneducated and beggary onwards, one can conclude that educating these people should contribute to prevent beggary.

Upon the observation interviews and research we have conducted, we concluded that every individual and family in need of vital materials in Sivas is provided financial and social support. The “Life Tree Association” center founded within the Sivas Municipality being in the center of these activities; all charity organizations provide coordinated and professional help service. This social support done with the motto “The receiving hand is more superior to the giving hand” includes every aspect of social help such as food, coal and wood to burn, health, clothes, house ware, residential support, rental support, etc. The biggest complaint and problem of the people working in this service area is the existence of people who do not give up. According to the data they have provided; the monthly income and expenses of such beggars are much more than those of a bureaucrat. These authorities finally had no other option but to cut off the support provided to these people.<sup>9</sup>

The Life Tree Association has been endeavoring to mitigate beggary to a lesser degree and poverty to a considerable degree. According to the association, through opening vocational courses especially tailored for ladies, great achievements can be obtained on this matter. Considering that almost all beggars in question are women, this turns out to be an opportunity for those in such a need. However; the fact that there is no one willing to benefit from this opportunity shows that different precautions and solutions need to be applied against beggary.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

Beggary seems to be indispensable for those making a living out of it. The most important factor that makes it indispensable is the society members who give them money with their bona

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<sup>9</sup> Data on this issue is provided by Sivas Deputy Major Erdoğan Tunç and Ahmet Eyce, responsible for the Food Bank in Sivas Municipality Social Assistance Affairs



fides and feelings of pity. The biggest income source of beggars is the moral and religious feelings of people. We believe that the problem can be solved through developing means and methods that can overcome this form of abuse. In this matter, the first target could be not those who are begging, but the members of the society who support them in a number of ways. In this case, there is a strong need to evaluate the behavioral reasons of those who tolerate beggars. Many points can be considered as related to such an evaluation. However, although it is not based on a statistical research, the following issues could be listed as reasons for helping beggars, based on the cases encountered on several occasions by related associations and on our personal experiences: Feeling of pity, the wish to protect those in need or despair and to support such people, the feeling of worry in case of refusing a request for such a help, the belief of one's relief upon such a help / support. Furthermore, the central function of religious feelings of individuals within a society on such issues is a critical point. These could be stated as the most outstanding reasons. Accordingly, the begging of women with their children increase the pity felt towards them. Claiming that pity is the purest social feeling, Adler states that people want to identify with others through this feeling.<sup>10</sup> The abuse of such a bona fide feeling is yet too easy. It is well known that the unfair situation in income distribution in Turkey is a major problem in Turkey. A number of examples revealed through media force the feeling of pity to make us move. Such programs broadcasted maybe with bona fides but frequently lead us to supporting beggars. However; the poor people we watch on such programs are not beggars. The wish to help that we start to feel upon being touched over such programs is usually directed towards beggars whom we often encounter and feel pity for.

A number of similar programs that include mystical / mysterious cases unfortunately contributed to beggars and beggary. The aim of such programs may not be creating such an effect, yet the public perception causes this contribution because people watching such programs end up giving money to beggars instead of those in need, thinking that they may face trouble if

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<sup>10</sup> Alfred Adler, İnsanı Tanıma Sanatı, Dergah Yayınları, 5th Publ., İstanbul, 1997, p. 232

they do not conduct such charities. Some sellers selling stuff on benches have told that they intentionally kept coins by the side of their bench for beggars, referring to those programs they have watched on TV. As stated above, this situation shows how people motivated for bona fines are directed to a wrong means.

The following purposes can be listed as outcomes of the research and observations conducted:

1. Since beggary is a form of abuse, the status of the indirectly abuse-supporting TV programs should be reviewed. These programs may not be abolished but be directed towards a more positively motivating way in helping people out. Particularly working on the good sides of helping the poor, the programs may reflect beggars outside of this category of needy people in an understandable and clear way.

2. Beggary is the abuse of religious feelings as well. In this respect, the fact that helping beggars out is also raping the right of others in need should be underlined strongly on Friday pray preaches, continuously for a certain period if necessary.

3. Municipal and social support institutions should be conducted in a systematic and coordinated way as in the Sivas case, which will enable safe delivery of support to those in need. Those willing to help should be directed to such means. It is usually hard for people to bring small savings to charity organizations and say "let only those in need of benefit". However, it is possible to leave small amounts of money, just like in Sivas, to the small money boxes of social charity associations placed in many institutions and shops in the city. This will increase the safety of the charity work and help decrease beggary.

4. Beggary is against human dignity. Therefore by means of discouraging people from giving money to beggars shall help eliminate beggary. However, people should be able to help by means of related authorities, municipalities and other social charity associations, with the help of media, to those who are in need, to avoid moral and social discomfort. Otherwise people might continue giving money directly to beggars.

5. Most of the beggars in Sivas are women. These women are married and usually abused. Non-governmental organizations providing service to the state and to women also have

responsibilities in this respect and need to conduct awareness-creating and educational activities to support them.

6. The fact that the beggars have little or no education at all make it a bigger obligation for the state to be more active on this issue, especially during a period when education is encouraged. As education levels increase, the problems are anticipated to decrease gradually.

7. In terms of social control, education and economic support to prevent women's abuse, the address-based population system recently adopted in Turkey should be used more efficiently. The fact that many beggars are not listed in these registration lists and that this is usually confirmed officially by the civil registry offices is meaningful. Yet if the problem is due to misinformation conducted by beggars to civil registry offices, serious and deterrent measures need to be applied.

8. By increasing the opportunities and authority of the municipal police, the cause should be supported. A low amount of fine and detention of the beggars for a while will not be long-term solutions, which actually are examples of existing applications of police service against beggary can be replaced by conscious support and exchange of solutions for a reasonable way of struggle.

