

**FEELINGS OF BEGGARS ON BEGGING LIFE AND THEIR
SURVIVAL LIVELIHOODS IN URBAN AREAS OF
CENTRAL TANZANIA**

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ABSTRACT

This paper is a result of the study conducted with the objective of examining street beggars and begging life in Dodoma and Singida Municipalities in Central Tanzania. The current paper examined the feelings of street beggars on begging life and their survival livelihoods in urban areas of central Tanzania. This study employed a cross-sectional research design. The population of the study consisted of street beggars and non-street beggars, municipal officials, councilors, business people and community members. This was done for triangulating and enriching data that were collected from street beggars. The study found that most of sampled beggars felt very bad towards begging life and saw begging activity as an immoral conduct. Street beggars obtained their basic necessities from different sources. Furthermore, it was found that begging flourishes because community tends to be generous to beggars. The study recommends that awareness programmes need to be conducted for the poor so as to help them realize how shameful begging is. Step towards banning, or discourage begging should be welcome. Families where beggars come from should be made aware of taking fore responsibility of taking care of their family members who are beggars.

Key words: Singida, Dodoma, begging life, livelihoods, Central Tanzania

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The problem of street begging in Tanzania and Central Tanzania in particular is associated with the growth of urban areas and aggravated by drought, famine and depressed economic activities. These factors have deepened the extent of poverty in Central Tanzania, and other urban areas in the country have been contributing to the phenomenon of street begging (Namwata *et al.*, 2010; Namwata *et al.*, 2011, Namwata *et al.*, 2012). Although poverty is said to be less acute in the urban areas of Tanzania, it is still a serious problem especially in urban areas other than Dar es Salaam. The highest incidence of poverty in Tanzania is found in the regions of Rukwa, Kigoma, Dodoma, Mtwara and Singida. These regions are either remote (Rukwa, Kigoma and Mtwara) or semi-arid (Dodoma and Singida), or both. From a bio-physical perspective the semi-arid areas are associated not only with low and erratic rainfall, but also in many parts being with poor soils and degraded environments. On the socio-economic front, large areas of these regions have minimal infrastructural development which impedes people's access to markets, health and educational facilities, safe water resources etc. (Morris *et al.*, 2001). This situation is subjecting people to poverty and in turn might lead to community members looking for alternative strategies for survival such as street begging.

According to Ahamdi (2010), begging is a social problem which has not only psychological consequences such as the development of inferiority complex in the beggars' family members and their network of kinship, but also problem of begging will affect, as an unpleasant problem, the geographical and social structure of the urban areas. Demewozu (2005) asserts that nowadays, in many urban areas like Addis Ababa, poverty and societal changes resulting from urbanization have produced more emotional and pressing social problems, of which begging is the most serious and a visible one. As such, begging, an almost unnoticed social event and problem, has become the means of livelihood for quite a large number of persons. It is a common and day-to-day experience for us to observe beggars of different sorts roaming around the streets, squatting on major church environs, swarming here and there. According to Ogunkan and Fawole (2009), sociologists developed theories to explain social phenomena like street begging. The

theoretical framework of this study is based on the two theories of *vicious circle of poverty* and *functionalist*.

The theory of “vicious circle of poverty” seeks to explain the persistence of poverty in the society and indicates that poverty as a subculture, passes from one generation to another and becomes institutionalized amongst the poor. It is one of the characteristics which prepare the ground for the phenomenon of begging. This theory emphasizes on people’s inability to manage risk rather than their attitude to risk as a way of breaking the vicious circle of poverty. Other attributes of poverty which make escape difficult are poor health, lack of skills, lack of self confidence or support mechanism, remoteness from market, lack of physical asset or borrowing power, malnourishments or combination of the above (Ogunkan and Fawole, 2009). As a result, the poor are trapped in the situation with little chance of escaping such that in a vicious process, poverty is maintained among the poor across the generations. Therefore, in order for the poor to meet their basic needs, they have to resort into begging. The vicious circle of poverty helps to explain the existence of begging across the generations (Jelili, 2006).

According to Parsons (1975), structural functionalism is a broad perspective in sociology and anthropology which sets out to interpret society as a structure with interrelated parts. Functionalism addresses society as a whole in terms of the function of its constituent elements such as government, family, religion, economy, education and culture. Based on this theory, it is clear that street begging is a result of the problem in the functioning of some social institutions responsible for human welfare. Therefore, failure of these institutions to meet their roles, objectives and responsibilities; we are witnessing impacts like, conflicts at family levels, divorce, poor national economic performance, lack of stable markets for community produces, poor social services [all of which depict poverty], wars and other social disorders which in turn produce living challenges like street beggars. Nevertheless, with the exception of few studies, which restricted themselves to the emergence and historical aspects of begging, there is little data on the feelings of street beggars on begging life and their survival livelihoods. To this effect, a coordinated effort of concerned researchers was felt important to bridge this gap.

2.0 THE LOCATION AND METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

This study was conducted in Dodoma and Singida Municipalities in Central Tanzania. These municipalities were selected as case studies as they are known to be big urban areas in Central Tanzania. The beggary problem in the Central Tanzania has a lot to do with climate change, poverty and failure of social institutions to address social disorder like street begging.

This study has been done by employing a cross-sectional research design. This design allows data to be collected at a single point in time without repetition from the target population. The population of the study consisted of street beggars and non-street beggars such as municipal officials, councilors, business people and community members. The inclusion of different groups of non-street beggars in this study aimed at triangulating and enriching data that were collected from street beggars.

The primary data were collected using structured questionnaire (which was complemented by face to face interview with each of a sample people which was done by trained interviewers), focus group discussions (FGDs), key informant interview and observation. Primary data were collected from street beggars found in any public area begging for alms; using convenience or accidental sampling method. Since the street beggars keep on moving from here and there, it would have been very difficult to prepare any sampling framework, out of which to select the desired sample by applying principles of random method. Instead, selection of the interviewee was based on their easy accessibility or their availability on the streets. In total the study collected data from 130 street beggars.

Data were also collected from 60 focus group members and 30 key informants from municipal officers (such as Councillors, Streets focal leaders (in Swahili commonly known as *Mtaa*), Ward Executive Officers, Social Welfare Officers and the community (both street beggars and non-street beggars). Purposive sampling was employed to collect data from key informants. The focus groups were stratified into men adults, women adults and youth group. Each group consisted of 5-8 members separately from the municipal authorities and the community. In total, 12 focus groups (6 FGDs in each municipality) were established for discussions.

Secondary data were derived from the findings stated in published and unpublished documents related to the research problem. These were based from the recent literatures related to street begging and the concepts cited by the respondents. The secondary data were collected from various documentary sources such as journal papers, internet materials and other documents relevant for the study.

Qualitative and quantitative data were analyzed separately in order to complement and supplement each other. Qualitative data obtained from observation, focus group discussions (FGDs) and interview with key informants were analyzed through themes and contents. Subsequently, responses from questionnaires were coded, summarized and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics was used to obtain frequency and percentages of coded responses.

3.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results and discussions of the findings of this study are presented in two sub-sections: feelings of beggars on begging life and their survival livelihoods on the streets in Central Tanzania.

3.1 FEELINGS OF BEGGARS ON BEGGING LIFE

Table 1 shows the distribution of street beggars by their feelings in begging life. The results show that most of all sampled beggars (72.3%) feel very bad towards begging life and saw begging activity as an immoral conduct. Likewise, 60% of beggars from Dodoma and 34% from Singida argued that it is very bad to get engaged in begging activities. On the other hand, 35.4% of all sampled beggars argued that begging life is bad in which 52% from Singida and 25% from Dodoma agreed the same. On the contrary, 14.6% of all sampled beggars asserted that begging life is a normal life in which 15% were from Dodoma and 14% from Singida.

Table 1: Beggar's Feelings in Begging Life

Feeling	Municipality		Total (n=130) % (N)
	Dodoma (n=80) %(N)	Singida (n=50) % (N)	
Very bad	60 (48)	34 (17)	72.3 (94)
Bad	25 (20)	52 (26)	35.4 (46)
Normal	15 (12)	14 (7)	14.6 (19)
Total	100 (80)	100 (50)	100 (130)

Even though a large number of street beggars reported that they feel very bad towards begging life, they are still involved in begging activities as a major means of livelihood. However, those engaged in begging say "it's a harsh necessity that is humiliating, demeaning, degrading and frustrating" (Hindu, 2005). One of the key informants from Dodoma Municipality was quoted saying: *"In the absence of any means of livelihood, more and more people were driven to begging life, some temporarily and some permanently. Today, as a result, begging activities has assumed enormous proportions of people. It is a means of earning livelihood in urban areas of Central Tanzania"*.

One beggar was quoted saying that: *"Begging is just a normal economic activity like any other economic activity. I have been running my life since 1986 based on begging and I do not see any problem with begging, because all my relatives and neighbours know that I am a beggar, and they do not despise me, they do not embarrass me, sometimes they come to borrow from me, so I am in opinion that begging is a normal duty"*

Focus group discussions (FGDs) were also done to confirm the validity of the responses gathered through survey. Below is a summary of the responses from one of the members of FGDs.

"I have been begging for over past 5 years. I have a feeling that people have different labels on me. I know that people who knew me before

used to label me as a mad woman. Others labeled me as a lazy person but all in all, I'm disabled and my family is tired of my dependency! My family looks at me as non productive and over-demanding on what I'm not producing. This puts me off that is why I resorted into begging”
said a woman in Dodoma

3.2 SURVIVAL LIVELIHOODS OF STREET BEGGARS

This section discusses the survival livelihoods of street beggars and their families. This section is further divided into four sub-sections: understanding survival livelihoods of street beggars, frequency of begging on the streets, amount of money collected by street beggars and the way street beggars spend their income from begging.

3.2.1 Understanding Survival Livelihoods of Street Beggars

According to Rakodi (2002), understanding livelihoods in any context must be the analysis of social relations between people and the communities they belong to. Therefore, pursuing a livelihood depends on street beggar's personal experience and social relations. Analyses of the understanding survival livelihoods of street beggars are based on physical observation, interview with key informants and focus group discussion. On these bases, the study found that survival livelihood strategies of street beggars are complex, interrelated and context specific. This section attempts to shed light on how these street beggars survive or meet the basic needs of life.

How Street Beggars Obtain Daily Meals

During interview with street beggars it was observed that getting a day's meal remains the major priority for many street beggars in Dodoma and Singida municipalities. They normally obtain their daily meal requirements and that of their family from different sources. It was reported that most of the street beggars got their daily meals as leftover food (*makombo*) from hotels, restaurants, markets, garbage bins, dump sites and

individual residential areas. These seem to be major sources of daily meals for street beggar's themselves and their families or people staying with them. Sometimes street beggars get *makombo* from hotels or restaurants or individual residential areas in exchange of emptying garbage, carrying loads, gardening, cleaning and washing dishes. Other street beggars bought their own food using their income or small amount of money collected in a day. They buy foods usually from small tea houses, street café's and food vendors. The last source of meals for street beggars is from good Samaritans, NGOs, church yards, individual residences and other business community though not common.

Shelters of Street Beggars

As it was learnt during physical observation, shelters of street beggars are scattered across the urban areas of Central Tanzania. However, street beggars do shelter themselves in areas where they feel that it is safe. These places among others include church yards, public offices, bars, abandoned buildings, restaurants, banks where there are night guards and other areas with nightly activities. This study further revealed that street beggars usually face problems of accessing water (to take shower and wash their cloths), shave, toilet and other livelihood prospects.

Focus group discussions with street beggars revealed that mobility of street beggars between places often depends on the availability of income, weather (season), experience of begging life, harmony/disharmony with families/relatives, relations made with friends and circle of contact with other people. Street beggars with rural origin have no families in the urban area where they can return during the nights. One of the street beggars from Dodoma municipality had this to say: *"I sleep on the street together with four to five of my friends. We normally shelter ourselves along the walls of the CCM headquarters buildings. I ever sleep in the middle. This is due to the fact that sleeping in the middle is warmer than sleeping on the side. During rainy season the situation of our shelters is very bad and terrible as we have no cloth to cover ourselves for the nights"*.

Generally significant numbers of beggars do not have shelter and those who have shelter are living in very poor houses. Below are pictures showing an abandoned house occupied by a beggar and locations where beggars who do not have shelters to sleep spent their

nights. This means that begging is not relevant in improving beggars' wellbeing in terms of managing a decent shelter.

Picture 1: House Occupied by a Beggar in Mnada wa Zamani Dodoma



From the beggars shelter it was observed and learned that, shelters owned by street beggars are to a large extent located on the outskirts of towns. It was further noted that beggars shelter themselves in areas where they feel that they are secure.

Picture 2: Location where Beggars Sleep at Kuu Street in Dodoma



This beggar sleeps at the shop corridor and during the night works as watchman.

Clothing

Through participant observation, it was observed that street beggars do not have neat or sufficient clothes to suit changing weather conditions and are usually bare footed. Most of them use one and same clothes during the days and nights. An Interview with street beggars indicated that street beggars mostly assume that if they wear better clothes they wouldn't be successful while begging for alms.

3.2.2 Frequency of Begging on the Streets

Frequency of street begging among the young and old determines the extent to which begging is a major means of livelihood and survival as well. Table 2 below shows the frequency of begging on the streets in a week. The results show that 57.7% of the encountered street beggars used to beg alms for the whole week. However, the study found that the frequency of street begging on the streets for the whole week is relatively high in Dodoma (77.5%) than Singida (26%). This suggests that majority of street beggars in Dodoma municipality have simply found begging as a good means of earning a living than their counterparts in Singida municipality.

Table 2: Distribution of Days Spent by Street Beggars Begging on Streets in a Week

Frequency of Begging in a Week	Municipality		Total (N=130) % (N)
	Dodoma (N=80) % (N)	Singida (N=50) % (N)	
The whole week	77.5 (62)	26.0 (13)	57.7 (75)
Six days	3.8 (3)	4.0 (2)	3.8 (5)
Five days	2.5 (2)	Nil	1.5 (2)
Four days	2.5 (2)	Nil	1.5 (2)
Three days	5.0 (4)	4.0 (2)	4.6 (6)
Two days	2.5 (2)	4.0 (2)	3.1 (4)
One day	6.3 (5)	62.0 (31)	27.7 (36)
Total	100.0 (80)	100.0 (50)	100.0 (130)

On the other hand, the study found that a large percentage of sampled street beggars (62%) in Singida municipality as opposed to 6.3% in Dodoma municipality, used to beg for alms only once per week particularly on Friday. Through observations, on one Friday we found a number of beggars shuffle for space in front of mosques and other public spaces especially around shops and market places main entrances. Focus group discussions revealed that most people usually fall prey to these beggars as they believe that giving money to someone who begs or don't have is a charitable art.

3.2.3 Amount of Money Collected by Street Beggars

Table 3 presents the distribution of street beggars by the amount of money collected. The results show that the majority of street beggars (50%) were given money only, 47.7% were given both money and food and the rest 2.3% were given food only. The study found that that a large population of street beggars get only money in their begging

activities.

Table 3: Distribution of Street Beggars by Mode of Payment

Mode of Payment (Item (s))	Municipality		Total
	Dodoma	Singida	
	% (N)	% (N)	% (N)
Money	61.3 (49)	32.0 (16)	50.0 (65)
Food	1.3 (1)	4.0 (2)	2.3 (3)
Both money and food	37.5 (30)	64.0 (32)	47.7 (62)
Total	100.0 (80)	100.0 (50)	100.0 (130)
Money Collected in a Good Day			
(Tshs)			
0-4,000	20.0 (16)	50.0 (25)	31.5 (41)
4,001-6,000	28.8 (23)	26.0 (13)	27.7 (36)
6,001-10,000	25.5 (20)	20.0 (10)	23.1 (30)
Above 10,000	26.3 (21)	4.0 (2)	17.7 (23)
Total	100.0 (80)	100.0 (50)	100.0 (130)
Money Collected in a Bad Day			
(Tshs)			
Less than 1,000	67.5 (54)	74.0 (37)	70.0 (91)
1,001-2,000	10.0 (8)	2.0 (1)	6.9 (9)
2,000-4,000	5.5 (4)	Nil	3.1 (4)
I don't remember	17.5 (14)	24.0 (12)	20.0 (26)
Total	100.0 (80)	100.0 (50)	100.0 (130)

Regarding the amount of money collected in a good day, the findings in Table 3 show that a large population of street beggars (31.5%) got as much as Tshs. 4,000/= a day, while about 28% got between Tshs. 4,001/= and 6,000/=, 23.1% got between Tshs. 6,001/= and 10,000/= and the last group (17.7%) got above Tshs 10,000/= . However, variations in the amount of money collected a day varied between the study municipalities. On the other hand, during bad days majority of street beggars (70%) got as much as less than Tsh.1,000/=. Bad days were referred to as days when it heavily rains, weekends and public holidays where only few people move around town. On bad days findings suggest that a great percentage of street beggars got a small amount of money to the extent that it cannot suffice their basic needs and that of their families. In addition to begging, some of street beggars take to pick-pocketing and engage in petty thefts as reported by members of focus group discussions.

5.5.5 How Street Beggars Spend the Income from Begging

The vast majority of street beggars (72.8%) reported that they spent their money on food expenses (Table 4). About eight percent (8.1%) each reported that they spent their money on school and medical expenses while 6.5% spent it on buying clothes for members of their households and the rest spent on paying house rents, energy and drinking alcohol. Experience through focus group discussions showed that most people who are begging on the streets simply pretend to be beggars so as to raise money for unnecessary purposes like alcohol and drug consumption.

Table 4: Distribution of Street Beggars by Expenditure Items

Expenditure Item (s)	Municipality		Total
	Dodoma	Singida)	

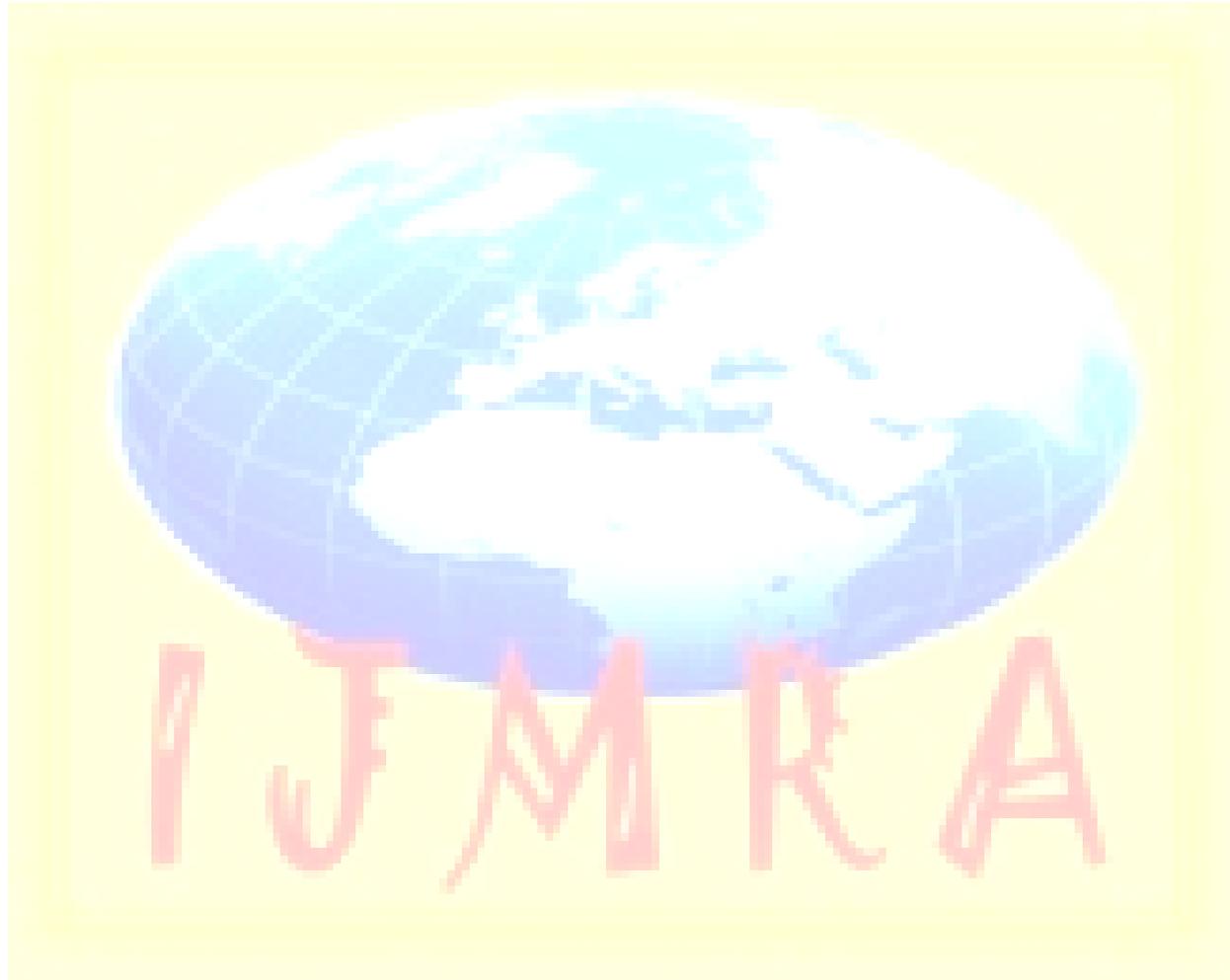
	% (N)	% (N)	% (N)
Food expenses	72.9 (78)	72.5 (45)	72.8 (123)
School expenses	7.5 (8)	8.1 (5)	7.7 (13)
Medical expenses	6.5 (7)	8.1 (5)	7.1 (12)
Buying clothes for members of household	9.4 (10)	1.6 (1)	6.5 (11)
House Rent	0.9 (1)	1.6 (1)	1.2 (2)
Energy(electricity/charcoal/kerosene)	2.8 (3)	6.5 (4)	4.1 (7)
Drinking alcohol	Nil	1.6 (1)	0.6 (1)

During the interview with street beggars it was learnt that it was very difficult for beggars to recall exactly the amount of money they spent on various expenditures. Through focus discussions it was revealed that beggars of the street mainly spent their earnings on themselves mainly for purchasing food and a very little amount on buying their own clothes. Also, majority of the beggars on the street and those who slept both at home and on the streets reported that they spend their money mainly on meeting family expenses.

4.0 CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The study found that a large number of street beggars feel very bad towards begging life; still they are involved in begging activities as their major means of livelihood. Begging flourishes because people tend to be generous. When people give money to them, why should they bother to work? Awareness programmes need to be conducted for the poor to help them realize how shameful it is to beg. Steps should be taken to enforce the ban. Any step towards banning, discouraging or discourage begging should be welcome. When doing so, the authorities concerned should try to rehabilitate beggars. Educational programmes to highlight ill-effects of begging should be conducted. This can be done at community level or using mass media. People should be made to recognize the

importance of self-respect and the efficacy of will power. Families where beggars come from should be made aware of taking a fore responsibility of taking care of their family members who have disabilities. Taking disabled people to rehabilitation centre could help to build their capacities to self reliant citizens. Policies focusing at addressing issues related to people with disabilities and old people should seek to provide sustainable solutions pushing disabled and old people into begging life.



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