

## The Phenomenon of Begging and its impact on Algerian Society

ظاهرة التسول وتأثيرها على المجتمع الجزائري

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### Abstract:

The phenomenon of begging is a social phenomenon and an uncivilized manifestation that threatens all societies and distorts the image of cities all over the world, as the phenomenon affects national security, increases crime rates, raises the unemployment rate, and leads to intellectual and moral decay through many beggars using and promoting drugs to individuals. Despite the existence of many deterrent laws, the phenomenon is increasing and spreading, which requires study and analysis to limit its spread and intensify government and community efforts to provide radical and sustainable solutions.

Keywords: Begging, Society, Influence, Algeria.

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## **An introduction:**

The phenomenon of begging is one of the social issues that has been widespread since ancient times in many countries around the world, both developed and developing, although the rate of begging is increasing in third-world countries, including our Arab and Islamic countries. In every country, one finds individuals appealing to others and begging for their humanity through various means and methods. With the passage of time, beggars have started to innovate new ways and several techniques for begging. As for the phenomenon of begging in Algeria, it is one of the most complex, intertwined, and perplexing issues for anyone trying to examine it, study it, or turn it into media content, due to the innovation of beggars in developing new means and various methods of begging. So what is the concept of this phenomenon? What are its causes? And what is its impact on Algerian society?

### **I. First, an overview of the phenomenon of begging:**

#### **A. Definition of the phenomenon of begging and its relationship:**

With other social phenomena Begging is defined as the act of requesting money or food, especially in the street. There is a close relationship between begging and homelessness, as studies estimate that more than 80% of beggars are without shelter. Beggars are considered the most vulnerable group in society, suffering mostly from poverty and deprivation. They are also more susceptible to dangers. Begging is observed in the streets of many countries. Research conducted by the University of (Glasgow) found that begging is associated with greed, as some beggars beg not because they are homeless and hungry, but to buy drugs and alcohol, and often, the beggar comes from families suffering from unemployment and drug addiction, and they often experience a severe lack of self-esteem. Many beggars find themselves victims of violence and harassment from people.

#### **1- Categories of Beggars:**

Beggars exploit many aspects for the purpose of begging, including the following:

- **Need:** This is the largest category of beggars, who beg due to poverty and unemployment, and eventually become professionals in it.

- **Religion:** Beggars know that all religions encourage providing assistance to those in need, so they go to religious places and wait for worshippers to exit, then they swarm around them and ask for alms. Religious beggars are also known to hide behind a facade of religious beliefs.

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- **Mental and Physical Disabilities:** This category includes individuals suffering from mental and physical disabilities and psychological disorders.

- **Illness:** People in this category suffer from chronic malnutrition or any physical ailments or weakness in vital organs.

- **Children:** Some people exploit children for begging and may or may not pay them for it, as children can easily attract the sympathy of others. The forms of child begging vary, including asking for money from passersby, selling physical items, washing car windows at traffic lights, selling flowers, and other goods.

## **2- Types of Begging:**

Begging takes multiple forms, which include:

- **Individual begging:** This can either be direct or indirect begging.
  - **Direct begging:** This involves the beggar approaching people and asking for money or food directly.
  - **Indirect begging:** Here, the beggar offers simple goods such as tissues or small toys with the aim of earning money through their sale.
- **Family begging:** In some cases, entire families beg together, which increases their impact on passersby and raises the likelihood of receiving donations
  - Or exploiting children in begging to invoke people's sympathy and increase chances of obtaining money.
- **Organized begging:** This can take the form of:
  - Gangs, where beggars are organized under the supervision of individuals or groups who exploit them, and beggars are distributed in certain locations with profits divided between them and their leaders
  - Or seasonal begging: This type spreads during specific seasons such as holidays or religious occasions, where there is an increase in people's willingness to donate.
- **Electronic begging:** This involves using social media and websites to request financial help by sharing compelling stories or claims of needing money urgently. (Karrar (27/06/2024))

## **3- Methods of begging:**

Beggars adopt various methods to evoke sympathy from people in order to obtain money from them, some of which are traditional and some modern, as the

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methods used by beggars to request money have changed over time. Among those methods we find:

- **Traditional methods**, where begging involves:
  - Pleading with words, as beggars use impactful and emotional words to gain people's sympathy, such as claiming hunger or the need for medical treatment their assistance other ways that include
- **Modern methods:**
  - Claiming an urgent and immediate need for money to solve an emergency problem, such as buying medicine or paying rent
  - Using children and women to increase the impact of the begging, as their appearance attracts more sympathy from people. In this approach, beggars invent new methods such as.
- **Creative methods:**
  - situations or show creative displays like playing music or performing acrobatic movements to attract attention and obtain money. Or beggars carry written signs explaining their difficult financial situation or their need for help, which may impact the feelings of passersby
- **Forceful begging:** This type of begging takes on violent forms such as:
  - Intense and repeated insistence on passersby to obtain money.
  - Or forms of subtle threats, where it may escalate to indirectly threatening passersby or using intimidation tactics to get money. **(Karrar (27/06/2024)**

#### **4- Causes of the begging phenomenon:**

The reasons for begging are many; people may beg for several reasons, the most important of which are:

- ✓ The high rate of poverty and unemployment in society.
- ✓ The spread of societal pressures along with the high cost of living.
- ✓ Considering begging a profitable trade for some instead of working.
- ✓ High medical expenses push many to beg.
- ✓ Addiction to drugs is a contributing factor to this phenomenon.
- ✓ The mental illness suffered by some individuals.
- ✓ Taking begging as a hereditary profession from ancestors.
- ✓ Wars that have increased cases of migration and famine. **(Al-Hayyari, (15-12-2021)).**

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## **5- Dimensions of the phenomenon of begging:**

### **5.1 The Sociological dimension:**

Beggars represent a social segment of the lower urban class and are part of the social structure in most third-world countries, especially those suffering from severe urban crises. They fall within the framework of rapid, random urban growth, resulting from poor economic performance and the stalling of development patterns in those countries.

Many Sociological Studies have attempted to link begging to social pathology at times and to view it as a social profession and social role at other times. Hence, some scholars have classified beggars within the ragged proletariat and the marginal pole, while others tend to consider them victims of exploitation and inequality.

According to a study by **Ismail Gira**, the marginal pole can be divided into two categories: the first engages in informal economic activities as a source of livelihood and the second falls within the concept of social modernity made up entirely of individuals who are marginalized by capitalism, as it does not create value and does not provide wages for them. (**Khrouf et al (1999), p199**).

### **5.2 The Empirical Dimension:**

The phenomenon of begging has raised concerns among many researchers, as the interest in the begging community revolves around whether begging represents deviant behavior and social disintegration, or if it reflects mechanisms to explain the alternative means of survival that live on the margins of organized formal work evaluation. This, in turn, raises several questions reflected in empirical analyses, which focused on two main issues: the first relates to begging and social welfare programs, and the second is linked to what beggar's experience in terms of harassment and prosecution, and being placed in social protection shelters without consideration for their roles and family responsibilities. This has led to the emergence of several empirical studies on the phenomenon, where researchers differ regarding the nature of begging.

Some see begging as a social problem and deviant behavior, while others point to the heterogeneity of the begging community and its connection to poverty, illness, lack of education, lack of guidance, family troubles, unemployment, and some believe that beggars do not exploit the charity of philanthropists to improve their living conditions and forge a socially distinctive community, and that there are lenient attitudes among people and the development of positive behaviors towards begging. (**Gira, March (2005), 140**).

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## **6- Theoretical approaches that dealt with the phenomenon of begging**

### **6.1 The functional structural approach:**

This approach of social pathology and views relies on the notion begging as a social problem linked to individual deviance (deviating from societal norms) or social disintegration (the collapse of the network of values and social norms). Thus, proponents of this approach see the beggar as an individual who behaves socially unacceptably due to their inability to adapt to the environment in which they live. When an individual becomes outside the scope of society, they behave immorally because they have become isolated from the group and there is no one to control them; hence they might resort to homelessness, in the streets. Additionally, family disintegration leads some children to homelessness and then begging, due to the deterioration of social; Family problems may also be a cause of the phenomenon; when

Therefore, social workers attribute begging to being a social problem resulting from system imbalance; the unmet material needs, weak social assistance systems, pressures from personal goals and aspirations and the lack of sufficient opportunities to achieve them, weak social cohesion, poverty, illness, unemployment. (Al-Samari, 2004, p 26)

### **Theory Evaluation:**

Theory In their focus on the social aspect of the phenomenon and attributing it as a problem related to individual deviation or social disintegration, they neglected some other aspects that contribute to this phenomenon such as economic and psychological factors and other dimensions. They emphasized that the beggar acts in a socially unacceptable manner, but they did not address the reasons that led them to this state or how society views them; thus, they only highlight the social aspect of .this phenomenon.

### **6.2 The Conflict Approach**

Advocates of this approach see the poor and the beggars as victims of exploitation and inequality within a single society, which is divided into completely different classes The upper class does not recognize the weak in society and believes that they have the right to live and enjoy full rights. Hence, this approach rejects the notion of value consensus, that is, that everyone is equal in values and only believes in the prevailing values, and that there is variability between societies, where the upper class seeks to strip the rights of the poor and control them as a racial class, while the poor and beggars are merely weak and oppressed communities. They propose, in contrast, the notions of dominant values, change, diversity, and conflicts

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of interest (Al-Samari (2004), p29)

Marxists also emphasized that the structural conditions of the existing system between society and the division of classes within it are primarily responsible for the misery of the poor and for their social alienation and marginalization. The prevailing economic and social situations have significantly contributed to the deterioration of the poor class's conditions by allowing excesses in these situations and by promoting inequality in the system and the detachment of its members from the rest of society, which has marginalized within the same society, there are the beggars and the poor who suffer greatly from these divisions present in their community. According to their opinion, if the classes were equal, there wouldn't be a difference in balance.

**Theory Evaluation:**

It is not necessarily the case that the phenomenon of poverty and begging arises from exploitation and inequality. As beggars and the poor have rejected the terms of change in values, the variation and contradiction of interests is the reason for their situation. There are social, cultural, and economic conditions, but they agreed to analyze some terms such as equality, isolation, marginalization, and exploitation; this is a reality in all societies, so there is some truth in their analysis, similar to other analyses imposed on this subject.

**6.3 The Anthropological Approach**

It is concerned with the value system and the typical features of the culture of poverty. Based on these aspects, urban anthropology has (Gira (1996), p55)

It sees begging as the only outlet for the poor, which they find as a means of survival. Additionally, anthropology has heavily focused on studying humans and their relationship with behavioral patterns among individuals within the, which often leads to begging.

**Theory Evaluation:**

The anthropological approach has focused significantly on values, relationships, and adaptation within society, connecting it to the economy and identifying a related factor, which is poverty, and found that it is the primary factor for begging. From this, we can say that we cannot consider begging to be linked solely to this factor; rather, there are more serious and greater factors than this that cannot be confined to this framework. Instead, it must expand to study all aspects, including social, cultural, and political dimensions. Furthermore, it has focused on behavior among individuals and how this often leads to begging, while there are other causes and factors that contribute to begging.

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**6.4 Entry into the Culture of Poverty:**

Entry is based on This: Characteristics of culture (lack of participation, prevalence of authoritarianism, lack of privacy, feelings of surrender and fatalism, absence of awareness, low level of education, widespread among poor communities, and they have concluded that the poor are the most affected by a decline in cultural level. One of the features of this culture is that it creates itself; its characteristics are transmitted from one generation to the next, and it represents an independent way of life with common features that we encounter wherever it exists. This means that the behavioral patterns related to poverty, begging, homelessness, and delinquency, once they come into existence, tend to perpetuate themselves and transfer from generation to generation due to their impact on children. Over time, children from shanties who are six or seven years old become absorbed in the basic values and facilities of their subculture and are not psychologically prepared to fully benefit from the changing circumstances available to them in their lives (Gira (1996), p55). Children initially think of it as just games they engage in. Being children, they don't grasp the meaning of the actions they perform. However, when they acquire a high culture, they become addicted to such behaviors, which leads to them being considered homeless, deviant, and even beggars.

**Theory Evaluation:**

We cannot consider culture as the reason that leads to this, because we find some people who lack culture but do not beg. They have overlooked other aspects that lead to homelessness and begging, such as economic and social factors, among others that can lead to deviance. For example, an individual can be fully cultured but may still beg if they are suffering from one of the aforementioned issues. It is also incorrect to say that individuals' behaviors are entirely learned, as some people engage in these behaviors to gradually eliminate them, while others cannot abandon them. Additionally, sometimes behaviors that are transferred from one person to another do not necessarily lead to deviance, homelessness, or begging.

**6.5 Proponents of the Ecological:**

The ecological approach school view poverty in its various forms as a consequence of the nature of the place (poor popular neighborhoods) because it stems from propositions concerned with studying the impact of ecological variables on social organization and explaining social phenomena within a purely physical framework. Therefore, it can simply be said that poverty is the result of specific locations, considering the perspective that spatial location exerts an independent influence on social data (Friedman, July (1996), 19). This is because the place where an individual lives, whether in poor

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neighborhoods or popular areas, is characterized by poverty, and anyone living in these areas are considered poor. Their social relationships are interconnected, as they share the same standard of living, unlike those living in urban or .who do not suffer from poverty.

**Theory Evaluation:**

The proponents of the ecological approach focused on the nature of place and that anyone living in poor urban neighborhoods is poor because there are those who find these areas better than advanced neighborhoods due to their proximity, for example, to their workplace, or that they cannot live in major cities because of the noise and congestion, preferring comfort in poor and popular areas because they are less crowded and noisy. Additionally, the advocates of this approach emphasized that their social relationships are interconnected, but this does not mean that they share the same living standards; rather, there are some who possess high cultures unlike others, so it is impossible to categorize individuals' relationships and levels based solely on the nature of the place.

**6.6 Introduction to Marginality:**

This introduction is related to an interest in studying patterns of poverty in light of concepts such as social isolation, traditional culture, fatalism, indifference, submission and obedience, injustice, as well as the perspective of social deprivation that views the poor, beggars, and the hungry as social groups that fall outside the realm of enjoying human rights. Consequently, social deprivation was analyzed in light of the collapse of social ties, social isolation, deprivation of resources and consumption, leading to the conclusion that begging results from the position of beggars within the social structure and their exposure to various forms of rejection. As a reaction to increasing poverty and isolation, the poor and beggars devise strategies for survival and forms of adaptive culture that interact with the changing environment. (Friedman, July (2016), p19)

**Theory Evaluation:**

There are previous studies and theories that contribute to this topic, and it is not necessarily the case that the phenomenon of poverty is linked in light of concepts they have addressed. There are historical accumulations that have contributed to the creation of the phenomenon of poverty, which is produced by social structures and the economic and political system.

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**II. Secondly, the phenomenon of begging and its impact on Algerian society**

**1- The reality of the phenomenon of begging in Algerian society:**

Begging is a social phenomenon present in both rural and urban areas in Algeria, so much so that some specialists view begging as a urban phenomenon resulting from weak integration and primary social control, and the prevalence of urban mentality and superficial, temporary, utilitarian relationships. It thus appears clear that urban society provides a conducive environment for deviance, whether it manifests as begging, homelessness, or sexual deviance. A recent study titled "Algeria is Sick with its Beggars" has illustrated the methods used in begging, the phrases repeated by beggars, their ecological distribution, their types, and the professional techniques responsible for their misery and suffering. There is tangible evidence that Algeria is among the countries where poverty continues to grow.

Perhaps the most important conclusion of this study is the identification of begging methods in the context of Algeria's transition from one production pattern to another, with reasons including poverty, the closure of many units and institutions, the unemployment crisis, tourism, and massive rural migration due to terrorism. In light of this situation, the authorities' neglect of the begging issue will widely open the door to the spread of prostitution, delinquency, theft, and the formation of gangs. The significance of these results becomes clearer when compared to the findings of two other studies conducted on begging in the cities of (Tizi Ouzou and Tlemcen), which determined the culture of beggars in connection with the legitimacy of begging relating to empathy for family circumstances, health status, and the physical ability of individuals, economic hardship, blocked opportunities, and structural imbalances.

The phenomenon of begging in Algeria is considered one of the most complex issues, due to the division of beggars into categories, if we may say so, and it is not easy to classify every beggar into the appropriate category. There are professional beggars and occasional beggars, and its widespread nature, as it has become for some an easy way to live. Moreover, its methods and approaches have evolved to include vulnerable groups in society such as children and infants, whose guardians see in them an opportunity to exploit and gain the sympathy of citizens. Throughout the seasons, they lay on the ground in streets, markets, shopping centers, mosques, and more. Additionally, it has also come to include women and young girls whom we see in the street with an infant, begging, escaping home, which makes them vulnerable to a harsh reality. The inevitable result is assault, illegal pregnancy, and single mothers who gradually become beggars.

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This phenomenon has begun to escalate significantly within Algerian society across all states without exception, and it has become necessary for the authorities to take effective intervention and strict deterrence against such behaviors that have turned our streets and the doors of our mosques into a stage for them.

**A. The phenomenon of begging in Algeria laws:**

Traditional laws of humanity have considered the phenomenon of begging a crime in itself, and it is classified as a crime that aligns with modern scientific theories in criminal law, as it is a situation that indicates the social danger of the individual and their lack of harmony with society, as well as their disregard for laws and their inclination to secure their livelihood, even if it is through means that contradict the law and religious principles. Article 195 of the Algerian Penal Code states: "Any person who habitually engages in begging in any place shall be punished with imprisonment from one month to six months, despite having means of living or the ability to obtain work by any other lawful means". (Sadik (1997), p67)

**B. The phenomenon of begging in Islam:**

Islam places great importance on work and rejects begging, unemployment, and idleness. Islam calls on Muslims to work and strive to do so. Allah, the Almighty, says: *“And say, ‘Work, for Allah will see your deeds, and His Messenger and the believers will see them too.’”* (Surah Al Tawbah, verse 105); He also says: *“I do not waste the reward of the doers of good ”* (Surah Al-Kahf /Verse 30).

As for the oppression in the context of divinity, it manifests in begging and seeking help from others instead of God, which is a form of servitude. Thus, it misplaces the issue and brings it to those who are not worthy of it, thereby oppressing the oneness of God, reliance on Him, and contentment with His decree. It shows dependence on asking people instead of asking Allah, the Almighty. As for the oppression of the one being asked, it is because he finds himself in a situation where he is obliged by being asked for a right that he does not have over the asker, and he exposes himself to the hardship of giving or the blame of withholding.

The Almighty said: *“O you who believe, when the call to prayer is made on Friday, hasten to the remembrance of Allah and leave trade aside. That is better for you, if you only knew. And when the prayer is finished, spread out in the land and seek Allah's bounty, and remember Allah often, that you may succeed”.* (Surah Al Jumuaa/Verses 9-10)

**C. Impact of the Phenomenon of Begging on Algerian Society**

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This phenomenon is one of the aspects that affects Algerian society in multiple ways including:

**- The Impact on Social Security:**

Begging affects security in Algerian society individuals or residents to live in confusion and anxiety, especially since beggars target all areas and population gatherings, such as: neighborhoods and street sidewalks, markets and commercial centers, bridges, health and religious centers, parking lots, traffic signals, and intersections.

**- Increased Crime rates in Society:**

Begging is associated with rising crime rates in Algerian cities, with theft of shops and pick pocketing being among the most .prominent crimes linked to begging.

**- Exploitation of Children in begging:**

Children are one of the most vulnerable groups subjected to exploitation in begging activities. This exploitation deprives the child of their most basic rights and can serve as a gateway for children into the world of organized crime or drug trafficking, or illegal activities, posing a future threat to national security

**- Deterioration of Health Conditions in Society:**

Beggars live in poor health conditions, increasing the likelihood of spreading diseases and epidemics. This in turn puts pressure on the health system and poses a threat to the overall health of the population.

**- Impact on Domestic Tourism in Algerian Society:**

The phenomenon of begging is considered one of the factors that negatively affects the country's image and distorts its appearance before foreign visitors, thereby reducing the appeal of these areas as tourist destinations; it leaves a bad impression on tourists during their first visit, leading to their decision not to return, and thus affecting the national economy.

**- Impact on the Economy:**

It creates a burden on the local economy by increasing the number of individuals who rely on donations instead of working, which contributes to higher unemployment rates and lower individual productivity in work.

**-Conclusion:**

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The phenomenon of begging is considered a social issue that has escalated in Algerian society, distorting the image of cities, streets, and even roads. Its causes have varied and its forms have multiplied, taking on new shapes and appearances. It is no longer limited to men and those with physical disabilities; all segments of society, including girls, children, and infants, are now engaged in it. Among these groups, some beg for genuine help, while others practice begging as a means of quick profit. There are also those who feign begging as a disguise to hide their deviance, crime, and addiction.

**-Practical Suggestions:**

Here, it is necessary to call for the establishment of several mechanisms and means that contribute to addressing begging, most notably:

- 1) Providing job opportunities by the Algerian authorities suitable for every needy or poor person so that they do not resort to begging in society.
- 2) Activating the role of the mosque in the community to encourage young people to work and emphasize its value in Islam.
- 3) Supporting centers, charitable organizations, and civil society institutions to assist this group and socially integrate them.
- 4) Working on imposing penalties on anyone who resorts to begging.

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