

Attitudes toward Begging of Individuals with Disabilities in Jordan

By

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Abstract

This study examined attitudes toward begging among individuals with disabilities in Jordan, and the effects of certain related variables. The researcher prepared and administered a questionnaire to assess the attitudes toward begging by individuals with disabilities and collected data from 400 people. The results revealed mostly positive attitudes overall. There were statistically significant differences found in attitudes based on respondents' educational levels, but not in terms of their gender, age, or whether they have a family member with a disability.

Keywords: Attitudes; Begging; Individuals with Disabilities; Jordan; Anti-begging programs.

Introduction:

Begging in which an individual requests a small donation to meet basic needs is a worldwide phenomenon (Altarawneh, 2021; Groce, Murray & Kealy, 2014). A beggar is someone who stands in a public or private place and solicits money from others, either directly or indirectly (AlJerjawi & Hamas, 2014). Children, widows who have children, the elderly, the sick, and individuals with disabilities are considered as practicing beggary more than others (Altarawneh, 2021; Altarawneh, Abu Tina, Etawi & Alsaud, 2008; Groce, Barbara, Marie, Carlo, Francois & Asfaw, 2013). Individuals with disabilities, especially those with physical and orthopedic impairments (individuals suffering from amputees, and those suffering from cerebral palsy), are most found to be practicing beggary (Altarawneh, 2021; Namwata, Mgabo & Dimoso, 2012; Weatherburn & Tamas, 2017). Moreover, from Jordanians' viewpoint, individuals with hearing impairment or deafness, intellectual disabilities, visual impairments or blindness, and chronic diseases (diabetes, epilepsy, cancer, and kidney failure) commonly practice it. (Altarawneh, 2021).

According to Altarawneh (2021), there are numerous reasons why individuals with disabilities resort to begging, including ineffective anti-begging programs, unemployment, and poverty (Altarawneh, 2021; Altarawneh, 2016; Ceroni et al., 2020), dropping out of school, and disintegration of families. As most individuals with disabilities are found to have a low level of education, they are prevented from finding work (AlTarawneh, 2016; Groce et al., 2014). Addiction to alcohol and drugs force them to resort to begging to meet their needs. Begging is considered a relaxing occupation; beggars can earn money without getting tired. Another reason for begging is that individuals with disabilities do not have health insurance. Sometimes, begging is the only source of income for these individuals. Another reason why they beg is to complete their studies (Altarawneh, 2021) and solve asylum issues (AlJerjawi & Hamas, 2014; Groce et al., 2014). Furthermore, wars increase the prevalence of disabilities, resulting in an increase in the number of unemployed individuals with disabilities (Altarawneh,

2021). Those individuals make significantly more money through begging than through other means of employment (AlJerjawi & Hamas, 2014; AlTarawneh et al., 2008; Altarawneh, 2021; Alwahidi, 2002; Groce et al., 2013; Groce et al., 2014; Ismail, 2013; Namwata et al., 2012; Tamaş, Moise, Preduţ & Medvichi, 2013; Weatherburn & Tamas, 2017; Weatherburn & Tamas, 2017). Begging is sometimes the only way for individuals with disabilities to receive money (Groce et al., 2014). Begging among such individuals can be classified as organized begging, forced begging, and intentional maiming.

With organized begging, individuals with disabilities are exploited by gangs who force them to beg because they earn more money than other groups of beggars as people tend to sympathize more with them (Altarawneh, 2021). Adults and children with disabilities, particularly those with physical and orthopedic disabilities, are especially exploited and forced to beg under threat because of their inability to resist (Altarawneh, 2021; Groce et al., 2013). Additionally, they are sometimes taken advantage of by being offered the allure of surgical treatment, the purchase of prosthetics, or the provision of medical aid (AlTarawneh, 2021; Tamas et al., 2013). In intentional maiming, people deform others outside their families to physically disable them and force them to earn money through begging (AlTarawneh, 2021; Bibars, 1998; Kassah, 2008; Ojo & Benson, 2017).

There are also different types of begging, such as obvious or direct begging and hidden or indirect begging. A beggar engages in direct begging when they ask for money from others. In contrast, hidden or indirect begging involves selling simple items on the street or offering simple services like car window cleaning (Altarawneh, 2021). Other types of begging include temporary or infrequent begging caused by a specific emergency, such as losing one's money during travel or being kicked out by their family (AlTarawneh, 2021; Groce et al., 2014). Furthermore, seasonal begging occurs at certain times, especially around religious occasions such as Ramadan and other holidays. For example, they are begging in Saudi Arabia skyrockets during the Hajj and Umrah seasons. The final type of begging involves using the Internet or phones (i.e., electronic begging). Electronic begging differs from street begging in that it can be done with relative anonymity, thereby removing or reducing the shame and disgrace associated with public begging. In addition, pleas for donations to cover educational expenses and basic needs for the poor, the ill, and individuals with disabilities are common among acquaintances and friends on social media platforms (Altarawneh, 2021). Begging is an ongoing societal issue, with people with disabilities being among the largest begging groups because they are often unemployed and earn less money than others. Further, begging is a dangerous profession; people with disabilities may be subjected to physical and sexual exploitation, leading to increased delinquency. Additionally, persons with disabilities and the general public's attitudes toward beggary are important factors to consider because this phenomenon will increase if they are positive. Thus, examining the trends in this phenomenon is essential for educating people about the dangers that may result from beggary (Altarawneh, 2021). This then forms this study's foundational rationale.

This study explored Jordanians' attitudes towards the begging of individuals with disabilities by answering the following research questions:

What are Jordanians' attitudes towards the begging of individuals with disabilities?

Are there statistically significant differences in these attitudes due to gender, age, educational level, and having an individual with a disability in one's family?

Methods

Study Participants

Four hundred people participated in this study (200 males, 200 females), with them being chosen at random from all Jordanian cities. Table 1 shows the characteristics of the study participants.

Table 1. Characteristics of the Study Participants

		Number	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	200	50
	Female	200	50
	Total	400	100
Age (years)	≤ 25	78	19.5
	26–37	120	30
	38–48	152	38
	≥ 49	50	12.5
	Total	400	100
Educational level	Under secondary	60	15
	Secondary	80	20
	Diploma	72	18
	Bachelor	119	29.8
	Postgraduate	69	17.3
	Total	400	100
Having an individual with a disability in their family	Yes	78	19.5
	No	322	80.5
	Total	400	100

Study Instrument:

The researcher prepared a questionnaire to assess respondents' attitudes towards the begging of individuals with disabilities. First, the researcher established the content validity of the instrument used in this study and calculated its reliability using Cronbach's alpha, which was found to be 0.721, which is relatively high. The questionnaire was then sent out to participants aged 20–60 years from across all regions of Jordan. The questionnaire consists of 25 negative and positively structured items (e.g., "The begging of individuals with disabilities is a dangerous and difficult job). The positive items' scores were computed as 5 = strongly agree, 4= agree, 3= neutral, 2= disagree, and 1= strongly disagree. The negative items' scores were calculated as 1= strongly agree, 2= agree, 3= neutral, 4= disagree, and 5= strongly disagree.

The total scores were then calculated, with their interpretations being as follows:

- 101–125 Strong positive attitudes.
- 76–100 Positive attitudes
- 51–75 Neutral attitudes.
- 26–50 Negative attitudes
- 25 Strong negative attitudes.

Results

To answer question 1, the mean and standard deviation of the scores on the questionnaire about the begging of those individuals were computed. Table 2 shows the result.

Table2. The Mean and Standard Deviation in Scores

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Level
Attitudes towards begging of individuals with disabilities	400	84.5	10.4	Positive

Table 2 shows that the attitudes of the Jordanian participants towards the begging of individuals with disabilities were positive.

To answer question 2, the researcher computed the means and standard deviations of the scores according to gender, age, educational level, and having an individual with a disability in their family. Table 3 shows the result.

Table 3. The Mean and Standard Deviations in Scores According to the Variables of Study

		NUM	Mean	Std. Deviation
Gender	Male	200	83.9	10.4
	Female	200	84.9	10.8
Age (years)	≤ 25	78	83	11.4
	26–37	120	84.8	10.4
	38–48	152	85.3	10.8
	≥ 49	50	82.8	8.9
	Under secondary	60	84.4	10.9
Educational Level	Secondary	80	81.5	8.3
	Diploma	72	83.9	11.6
	Bachelor	119	86.8	10.4
	Postgraduate	69	84.2	11.3
Having an individual with a disability in their family	Yes	78	84.4	12.4
	No	322	84.37	10.1

Table 3 shows the virtual differences in Jordanians' attitudes toward individuals with disabilities. A 4-way ANOVA was used to determine whether these differences were statistically significant, and the results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Result of 4- way ANOVA Test

Source	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Gender	1	114	1	0.3
Age (years)	3	179	1.6	0.18
Educational level	4	383	3.5	0.008*
Having an individual with a disability in their family	1	9.9	.59	0.7
Error	390	109.8	-	-

Table 4 indicates that there are no differences in attitudes towards the begging of individuals due to gender, age, and having an individual with a disability in their family, and there are significant differences in attitudes due to the educational level. The Scheffe's test was used to determine the differences, as shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Results of the Scheffe Test

Educational Level		Mean differences	Std. Error	Sig
Bachelor	Secondary	5.27	1.5	0.018*

Table 5 shows differences in the educational level between bachelor's and high secondary education and the favor for bachelor's degrees.

Discussions

The results indicated that Jordanians' attitudes towards the begging of individuals with disabilities were positive. These results disagree with those of the Altarawneh study (2021), which states that from the Jordanians' perspective, the root causes for resorting to begging comprised the following: school dropout, low level of education, unemployment, poverty, and special needs of these individuals—and they beg to meet these needs because begging is the only source of income for some individuals with disabilities. Sometimes, they beg because they do not have health insurance. All these factors make Jordanians pity and sympathize with individuals with disabilities. Thus, these individuals receive a great deal of money through begging. They regard begging a comfortable job where they receive money without much labor.

This result is not satisfactory because begging is considered an uncivilized phenomenon that may lead to delinquency and exploitation. Competent authorities in public security and the Ministry of Social Development in Jordan are required to combat begging. Jordanians should also be educated about the rights of individuals with disabilities, the most important of which is access to free healthcare. One of the causes of begging for these individuals in Jordan is the ineffectiveness of programs that have been devised to combat begging. It is required that these programs be activated because, according to the Jordanian legislation, begging is a crime punishable by law. The Jordanian Penal Code stipulates that the penalty for begging is imprisonment for a period not exceeding three months. Alternatively, the court can refer beggars to begging institutions in the Ministry of Social Development for no less than one year and no more than three years (Ghaith, 2007). Numerous ministries and institutions in Jordan have worked to combat the begging phenomenon. For example, to alleviate poverty, the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs distributes money (Zakat) to the poor and the individuals with disabilities (Abdah, 2003). It also provides jobs in mosques, such as those of Imams or Mua'dens, for individuals with visual impairment and blindness, thereby lowering the unemployment rate of individuals with disabilities, which is another cause of begging (Altarawneh et al., 2008; Altarawneh, 2021).

The media is raising awareness about the begging phenomenon by explaining the true causes of begging and its negative consequences; in Jordan's national campaign to combat begging in 2003, the media played an important role (Altarawneh et al., 2008; Majali, 2003). In addition, public security assists the Ministry of Social Development (Altarawneh et al. 2008; Altarawneh 2003) in arresting beggars and referring them to the begging centers of the Ministry of Social Development. The Ministry of Labor helps to create jobs for individuals with disabilities and reduces unemployment, which is one of the causes of begging (AbdAlbaqi, 2003). The role of the Ministry of Social Development is to arrest beggars and refer them to their respective institutions. Furthermore, the ministry provides free, special phone numbers for reporting begging cases. Moreover, beggar cases were studied to understand and reduce the causes of begging. In addition, the ministry rehabilitates and trains beggars for work.

Furthermore, it assists low-income families by providing financial assistance or implementing productive projects; it also returns beggars to their schools (Ministry of Social Development, 2003). Despite the actions of the Ministry of Social Development, more serious procedures are required to reduce this phenomenon. For example, Anabtawi (2004) states that a study conducted in Jordan to evaluate the Ministry of Social Development's program to combat the begging phenomenon from 1996 to 2001, found that the program failed to achieve its objectives.

Begging by individuals with disabilities is considered an uncivilized practice. It takes on new forms to keep up with the times, and because we live in a technological age, begging has gone electronic via the internet and mobile phones. However, the most important cause of begging by individuals with disabilities is the inefficiency of anti-begging programs. This problem necessitates seriously addressing the issue of begging by these individuals through a comprehensive national plan that includes all societal institutions and coordinates their roles.

Conclusions

The results of this study highlight the need for additional research on begging by individuals with and without disabilities. The most significant cause of begging by individuals with disabilities is the ineffectiveness of anti-begging programs. Therefore, more research is needed to evaluate these programs. Additionally, many Jordanian societal institutions play a role in combating begging. This necessitates a comprehensive national plan that regulates the work of these institutions in combating begging and coordinating their roles and work.

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