

## ***Begging among Physically Healthy Adults in Addis Ababa? Commonness and Daily Income***

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**Abstract:** *Beggary is taking a new dimension recently. It is being considered as a profitable business. Those who are physically fit enough and able to take on formal economic activities are joining the field. This study explored how common begging is among physically healthy adult beggars and their daily income in three sub-cities of Addis Ababa. Qualitative data were collected through a questionnaire, interview, and focus group discussion from 23 purposely selected physically healthy adult beggars. Three key-informants from Labor and Social Affairs Bureau of Addis Ababa City Government and 12 randomly selected non-beggars were also included. Thematically analyzed data revealed that the number of physically healthy adult beggars is increasing and that begging is becoming a common way of earning a living. The findings also indicated that beggars earned far better daily income than many other government employees. The researcher recommends that, to stop or minimize begging, internal migration needs to be controlled and alms givers have to discriminate between healthy and other beggars.*

**Key Words:** *Begging; Perceived Prevalence; Physically Healthy*

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## **Introduction**

Globally, and more specifically in Africa, urban growth is becoming critical and unchallenged problem (Horn, & Cooke, 2001; Sireen, 2017). A remarkable rise in urban population has been the outcome of urban growth. Accordingly, the Central Statistics Agency of Ethiopia reported that the number of people living in urban areas is increasing (CSA, 2020). The total population of urban areas of the country who are residing in conventional houses in 2020, excluding persons residing in collective quarters (hotels, boarding schools, prisons...etc) and homeless persons, was estimated to be about 23,081,127. The figure shows an increase in more than 6,000,000 people in the last four years. According to this report the increase was mainly attributed to an increase in rural-urban migration. Woubshet (2005) reported that huge numbers of people were being drawn to urban economy due to drought, political crisis, war, debilitation of natural resources, and search for employment opportunities. Similarly, Ashenafi and Getnet (2012) found that farmers who had land and cattle were moving to urban areas.

Addis Ababa is expanding in all directions and its population is increasing from time to time in an alarming rate. The expansion of the city along with poor infrastructural development has created many problems on the inhabitants including high competition over scarce resources. According to Ahamdi (2010) an increase in the number of people living in urban areas resulted in social problems such as unemployment, illicit works, and beggary.

Begging, in Ethiopian context, has been defined in a variety of ways based on the type of people engaged in the activity and its purpose. Different definitions have been given by different experts in the field. A definition given by inter-ministerial committee formed by Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs of Ethiopia for the purpose of assessing the socially uprooted sectors of the society in August 1980 was read as "...Begging is a method of earning ones living from the income obtained by other sectors of the society using age, health, and economic conditions as a means for gaining sympathy...". It is an activity emanated from poverty and destitution. It is a behavior practiced to obtain from others what one is unable to get by oneself (MOLSA, 1992, p. 2). Begging is a request directed to the rest of the society to bring oneself out of misery and poverty. But the committee was unsatisfied with the definition given above due to the fact that the definition was not comprehensive and does not include those individuals who beg

temporarily, not being totally dependent on begging for survival, but engaged in the activity due to some unexpected incidents. And, hence, the inter-ministerial committee gave the following definition which relatively seems comprehensive. “Begging is an act of asking alms that is essential for survival, for solving temporary problems, or for fulfilling some cultural and religious commitments” (MOLSA, 1992, p. 2). Adriaenssens, & Hendrickx (2008) defined begging as an informal economic activity in a public space, consisting of a receiver asking for a non-reciprocated gift.

When begging actually began globally is unknown. Historically, references to persons who beg appear as early as the written word itself. Similarly, in Ethiopia, the time when the practice of begging started is unknown. However, it is known from oral reports that the practice has existed for centuries especially around religious temples and in some rural areas.

Concerning the nature of begging behavior, MOLSA (1992) revealed that three different categories of beggars exist in Ethiopia. The first category is begging related to religious teachings and beliefs. This takes place mostly in churches, mosques, public places, rural villages, and on farms. The Orthodox and Muslim religions have been teaching their members that alms giving is sacred and that the alms givers will get the possibility of living an eternal life in the hereafter. The second category of begging is the one conducted by religious students and caste systems that relate to traditional beliefs. This kind of begging is based on a belief that moving far away from their home regions eases access to religious teachings and help them be smart learners. The third category of begging is related to a religious ritual service. It includes holly beggars like priests who carry sacred pictures and ask for charity to build new churches, to buy clothes for clergymen, etc. The other form of holly begging is the appeals made during religious holidays in order to get alms in the honor of one of the angels or saints of the Orthodox religion.

The traditional and original cultures of most Ethiopian ethnic groups are characterized by support and sympathy for one other and compassion for the economically poor. During that period basic needs for the needy were covered primarily by relatives, cultural and religious organizations, and clan groups (personal discussion with friends, September, 2016). The disintegration of traditional culture paves the way for the disappearance of informal support systems, which in turn created the occurrence of some social problems, begging for instance.

The problem of beggary is affecting many parts of the world. It is not an issue of only developing countries, though, it is more pronounced in the third world countries (Adedibu, 1989; Ebenezer et al., 2018). This is true of Ethiopia where different categories of beggars are noticeably found in parks, worshiping areas, market and commercial areas, road junctions, traffic lights, tourist destinations, on the streets, on buses and trains, and at cash points in Ethiopia.

The International Labor Organization (ILO) conducted assessment in 2009 on beggars and reported that beggary is essentially an urban phenomenon. This is true of Ethiopia where the majority of them are migrated from rural areas. The expansions of cities and towns have helped beggars freely move to different corners of cities and practice the behavior without being known by other people. According to Groce, et al. (2014, p. 13) “People in urban areas tend to be more isolated, know less about their immediate neighbors, and little or nothing about people who live in other parts of the city.”

Addis Ababa is becoming a city where different categories of beggars (child beggars, disabled beggars, old ages beggars etc) are increasing in number. It is not uncommon to observe people from different ages and ethnic groups on the streets of Addis Ababa earning their living from begging. In the past years, beggary was mainly practiced around religious areas. But in today's Addis Ababa, one can easily notice beggars everywhere on streets of the city.

Research works conducted so far in Ethiopia evidenced that begging is one of the most widespread and multifaceted social problems with great magnitude in the country (Fireyihun, 2011; MOLSA, 1992; Negese, 2008; Tatek, 2009; Woubshet, 2005). Elshaday (2007) described that begging has drastically increased in Ethiopia. At least 50,000 people from rural areas were engaged in begging in the city of Addis Ababa alone.

It is important to say that the increasing incidence of healthy adult beggars in Ethiopian urban areas is not only due to poverty, illness, and physical disability but also due to the fact that the majority of them are satisfied with the job and see it as a profitable business (Antehunegn and Abduselam, 2019; Groce, et al., 2014; Jelili, 2006). That is why this research was based on the principle of Operant Conditioning, a major theory in psychology. The theory states that behaviors are learned through reinforcement. As

individuals' receive pleasant stimuli as reinforcement for their behavior (begging, in this case) they keep on exhibiting the behavior. Finally the person will form association between the behavior and the outcome (Skinner, 1948). Therefore, begging behavior is associated with the amount of money or the quantity of materials collected.

Some earlier studies focused mainly on portraying the practice of begging by individuals whom the public considers deserving, such as, disabled beggars (Groce, Murray, et al., 2013; Groce, et al., 2014); old age beggars (Fireyihun, 2011; Kerebih, et al., 2007); and child beggars (Abebaw, 2003; Lucas, 2007; Tatek, 2009). Other researchers described the issue in relation to destitute people (e.g., MOLSA, 1992; Teweldebrhan, 2011; Woubshet, 2005). The current study dealt with begging behavior among physically healthy adults who were making a living from begging where, in fact, alternative means of economic activities were available for them. Furthermore, the problem of able bodied adult beggars has not been a subject for an in-depth scientific inquiry. There is no independent research work focusing on begging among physically healthy groups. An increase in the number of healthy beggars on the streets of Addis Ababa along with absence of research works on the issue made the researcher believe that the problem deserved more academic and policy makers' attention. Therefore, the objectives of this study were to assess the commonness of physically healthy adult beggars and their daily income in three sub-cities of Addis Ababa. In assessing their daily income, it was planned to see whether participants were satisfied with their daily income or not. The study was also aimed at exploring whether participants were practicing begging as a full time job or they were engaged in other business along with begging. Likewise, how long the participants were involved in begging behavior was also investigated.

## ***Methods***

**Design of the Study:** the study employed descriptive research design since it mainly aimed at interpreting and making sense of participants' experiences. It provided a detailed understanding of the behavior and experience of physically healthy beggars through qualitative method of data collection and analysis.

**Research Setting:** Addis Ababa is located in the foothills of Entoto Mountains and stands 7,726 feet above sea level. Unlike many other African capitals, the foundation, growth, and development of Addis Ababa were not rooted in colonization (Bahru, 2001). It is a city where almost all the Ethiopian ethnic groups are represented (PEFA, 2008). The capital city covers 527 square kilometers from Ethiopian total area. The population

density is close to 5,165 individuals per square kilometer available. According to CSA (2020), the current Addis Ababa's population is estimated to be more than 4.5 million people. Addis Ababa has emerged as a city that has both national and international significance. It serves as a seat of various international organizations and embassies. The city is often called the African Capital due to its historical, diplomatic and political significance for the continent (Gebre, 2008). Three sub-cities, namely; Arada, Lideta, and Kirkos were selected due to the fact that the behavior under question was commonly practiced in some selected areas of the sub-cities.

**Population and Participants:** the population of the study was adult beggars, 18 to 40-years-old, who were thought to be physically healthy as measured by observation and screening tool developed by the researcher. Twenty three physically healthy beggars of whom 10 were females and the remaining 13 were males were selected through purposive (being physically fit) and convenience sampling techniques from the selected areas of Arada, Lideta, and Kirkos sub-cities. Megenagna, Filwuha, Piassa, Ras Mekonnin Bridge, Biherawi, Mexico, and Legehar were the major areas from which the samples were taken. Three officials (a female and two males) from Labor and Social Affairs Bureau of Addis Ababa City Government (LSAB-AACG) and 12 non-beggars (four females and eight males) of whom 5 were PhD students at Addis Ababa University were also included in the study through purposive and convenience sampling techniques respectively. The purpose of including officials from LSAB-AACG was that the bureau is among the organizations closely working on vulnerable groups and those who are living in streets. The remaining 12 non-beggars were included to get information about the rising in the number of physically healthy beggars in the city. Furthermore, data from the non-beggars were used for the purpose of triangulation. Therefore, a total of 38 participants of whom 15 were females and 23 were males took part in the study.

**Tools for Data Collection:** since this research was qualitative, semi-structured open-ended sets of questionnaire developed by the researcher, by relying on existing literature, were used. The only structured tool used in this research was the screening tool that was meant for identifying beggars as physically healthy. The screening tool was developed by relying on research works of medical professionals. The items of the screening tool mainly focused on major diseases inhibiting individuals to engage in various forms of businesses. Pilot study was carried out to test trustworthiness of the instruments. In doing so it was attempted to avoid bias, ambiguity, and leading questions.

**Observation and Screening Tool:** since the participants of the study were the so called physically healthy adult beggars, the purpose of the observation and screening tool were to differentiate physically healthy adult beggars from others. Initially, the beggars were observed by relying on the observation checklist. Therefore, the observation checklist was used for inspection purpose. Then the researcher administered the screening tool to see if the beggars fulfilled the criteria sought in the observation checklist. The observation checklist consisted of four items (e.g., "Does the person walk properly?", "Is he/she an adult?").

The screening tool was constructed from 9 items. The tool focused on major diseases like diabetes, hypertension, and heart disease (e.g., “I have never diagnosed with heart disease.” “There is no wound and/or injury on my body that inhibits me from participating in formal economic activities.”, “I can see and recognize a friend at a distance others can see.”, “I can hear a sound at a volume others find acceptable.”). Each item has two response alternatives: ‘YES’ or ‘NO’. It was when the beggar answered ‘YES’ for all the 9 items that he/she was considered as a participant. If one of the items was answered ‘NO’ then the beggar was considered as physically unhealthy and rejected from the study. The items were initially developed in English language by the researcher based on the available literature and translated into Amharic language by a language expert in Addis Ababa University and by the researcher himself. It was the Amharic version that was lastly administered.

**Interview Guide:** the interview guide was of two types. The first guide that had two parts was filled out by beggars. The first part of the first guide began with demographic variables such as age, sex, and level of education. The items of the second part of this guide were constructed from open-ended questions. This part had five items eliciting responses on different themes (e.g., “How common and prevalent begging is among physically healthy adults?”, “How much money do you get on ‘Good’ and ‘bad’ days?”, “Do you have additional job?”).

The second type of the interview guide was meant for non-beggars and officials from LSAB-AACG. The main purpose of this guide was to assess the prevalence of the so called physically healthy adult beggars in the city. It consisted of 3 items such as “How common is begging among physically healthy adults?”, “Do you think that there are physically able beggars who totally depend on begging?” The items of the interview guide were developed in English language by the researcher was translated into Amharic language by himself and a language expert from Addis Ababa University. Finally, it is the Amharic version that was administered.

**Focus Group Discussion:** While interviewing participants, it was suspected that some of the interviewees would conceal information especially about their daily income and whether there were participants who totally depend on beggary or engaged in different economic activities along with beggary. The focus group discussion /FGD/ mainly aimed at seeking information on these two points. It was constructed from four items (“What is your daily income in terms of money and other items like food?”, “How much money do you get on good and bad days?”, “How many days do you begin a week?”, “Do you have extra job?”).

Two FGDs were conducted. The first FGD was conducted at Piassa, Jegole Square. Three females and 2 males were participated. The second FGD was carried out around Filwuha which similarly consisted of 5 participants of whom 4 were males and 1 participant was female beggar. Therefore, a total of 10 participants took part in the FGD. Likewise, the participants who took part in the FGD were also participated in the interview. The items of the FGD were developed in English language by the researcher

and translated into Amharic by himself and a language expert from Addis Ababa University. While administering the Amharic version at Piassa, two participants were found unable to fully explain their idea in Amharic. They came to Addis Ababa from Gimbi, West Welega. The researcher translated the items into Afan Oromo immediately during data collection period so that they could explain things in the language. Each FGD lasted for about 7 to 10 minutes. Though the FGDs were carried out with consent, the main challenge faced while conducting it was that the participants were unhappy with the time spent on discussion since it was held during their working (begging) hours. It was found impossible to conduct FGD at times other than their working hours.

**Data Analysis:** beggars who took part in the study filled out the screening tool after being observed by the researcher for identification purpose. It was after the identification as physically healthy and able bodied adult that a beggar was allowed to take part in the research. Data were analyzed thematically. In using thematic analysis, a deductive approach was employed. The researcher began the analysis by having some themes at hand, before beginning to go through the data, which were expected to occur in the data. Familiarity with data was obtained through a thorough overview of all the data collected.

Phrases, sentences, and expressions that had relevance with the themes were highlighted with various colors to create codes. Codes were created in such a way that each code described the ideas expressed by the participants. Some of the codes developed were: Undeserving Beggars, Strong Beggars, Beggars that Seem Healthy, Street Dwellers, Being Uncertain, 24 hours, incidence, profitable business, well-known job, ‘Qifela’, ‘Yegile’, ‘Derash’, ‘Teqetari’ etc. After looking at the codes thoroughly, patterns leading the researcher to the themes were identified. Irrelevant codes were discarded and some unusual Amharic terms used by the participants were changed to commonly understandable terms (for instance the term ‘Qifela’ was changed to begging; ‘Teqetari’ to full time beggar). Based on the codes, each theme was defined and named (e.g. ‘Undeserving Beggar’ was named as ‘Physically Healthy Beggar’). Finally, the themes developed were Physically Healthy Beggars, Commonness, Incidence, Full Time Beggar, Attractive Daily Income, Profitable Job, yegile (many years of experience).

Some of the interviewees were audio-recorded with permission. The recorded materials were transcribed precisely and put under each theme. Data obtained from Afan Oromo speakers were also translated into Amharic and put under themes identified.

**Ethical Considerations:** The data collection instruments including the tape recorder were accompanied by informed consent form and participants were informed that participation in the research was voluntary. Moreover, the respondents were identified by a self-generated letters and numbers for confidentiality.



## Findings

**Characteristics of the Respondents:** there were 23 physically healthy beggars who took part in the study, of whom 10 were females and the remaining 13 were males. A female and 2 male from LSAB-AACG as well as 4 female and 8 male non-beggars were also participated. Therefore, a total of 38 participants participated in the study. Concerning the birth place of beggars, 5 were born in Addis Ababa and the other 18 were born outside the capital city. So it was obvious that the majority of the beggars who took part in this study was migrated to the capital and began leading their life through begging. Additional characteristics of participants are depicted in the following table and in the subsequent paragraphs.

**Table 1: Characteristics of Beggar Respondents**

	Age in Years		Level of Education		Number of Children			
	Freq.	Per.	Freq.	Per.	Freq.	Per.		
< 20	2	8.7	Illiterate	3	13	No children	6	26.1
20-30	14	60.9	Elementary	11	47.8	One child	12	52.2
31-40	7	30.4	High school	7	30.4	Two children	5	21.7
			Certificate and above	2	8.7	Three children and above	–	–

An incredible result from the above table was the level of education presented in the second column. The data showed that there were participants who made a living from begging after having completed their education from higher education institutions. As depicted in the table, two participants have gone beyond secondary level education and had their Bachelor of Arts Degree from Mekele and Wachamo Universities. It was also clear, from the table that almost half of the participants were those who dropped out of elementary schools and 7 participants were dropped out of high schools. This means that the majority of the participants (18) were those who dropped out from schools for various reasons.

## Commonness of Physically Healthy Adult Beggars

The results obtained from observation, interview, and focus group discussion revealed that the practice of begging by physically healthy individuals was so common in Addis Ababa. There were many physically fit enough and able bodied adult individuals who were earning a living from begging on streets of the capital. Data obtained from beggars, officials, and non-beggars plainly revealed that the number of the so called physically healthy individuals who were leading their lives through begging was increasing. In the past, it was common to see disabled beggars and individuals who beg in the name of religion. The specific areas where begging was practiced were also well known. But nowadays there are many people who are joining the practice including those who are healthy and physically fit. According to the data, these people are those who are able to engage in other legitimate forms of economic activities. The areas where begging is

being practiced is also changed from religious institutions to streets, market areas, and to any place where people are largely found.

The results of the interview conducted with non-beggars showed that the practice of begging was so common in Addis Ababa. The first woman PhD student at Addis Ababa University /AAU/ interviewed inside Graduate Library in October 2019 said,

Begging has become a common practice in our community. It is our day-to-day experience of seeing children, young, and adult people who appear healthy but spend their life by begging in streets of Addis Ababa. I usually see physically healthy individuals begging in streets each day I walk to different areas. The feeling I used to experience before few years when I saw physically healthy beggars and my current feeling are totally different. Currently, I won't get surprised by an increase in their number. Truly speaking, the problem is becoming serious; hence, measures from all concerned bodies are required. (Non-Beggar No. 1, 28-years-old)

A male participant of age 37 who was interviewed at AAU indicated the prevalence of physically healthy adult beggars as follows:

...it is common to find healthy people who beg at every short distance in main streets of the city. Nowadays begging is becoming a profitable business making strategy among those who could engage in legitimate economic activities. Various newsletters and government officials are reporting that beggary is a profitable job (I don't know whether it is a job or not) where significant numbers of people, including educated ones are getting attracted toward it. (Non-Beggar No. 5, October, 2019)

Similarly, the other interviewee contacted at Megenagna area in the month of October 2019 narrated that:

I think the issue of beggary is not something new. This problem is well known and noticed by all concerned government and non-government organizations including Mayor Office of Addis Ababa City Government. Seeing beggars at every areas of the city is not amazing. What is amazing is that beggary is becoming a profession even by individuals seemingly healthy. We are observing beggars begging in various forms. Some of them use religious images and others tell us sob stories. Recently I heard that those who are educated and possessed material (wealthy) are coming to the field. (A male Non-Beggar No. 8, 26-years-old)

The following interesting quote was taken from one of the non-beggars whom the researcher met at Yeka Sub-City Administration Office in October 2019. The interviewee seemed disappointed with people who beg while they are healthy.

...yes, there are beggars who are physically strong enough. I don't understand how they are able to stand in front of people to beg for money.

I think these guys are mentally not healthy because I cannot imagine that mentally healthy people get the courage to beg. Of course, you may beg once or twice in your life during emergency. But spending the whole life on this unreasonable behavior is inexcusable. (A female Non-Beggar No. 11, 22-years-old)

In the same vein, data obtained from the interview conducted with the beggars showed that there were many physically healthy individuals, like the participants themselves, who were getting money from begging in Addis Ababa. For instance, a 23-year-old participant who was interviewed at Piassa Jegole Square said,

I began begging 6 years ago. At that time there were disabled beggars begging around religious areas and in streets during holidays. Today there are many people who are leading their lives by begging although they are healthy. Don't ask me why I beg while I am physically fit and be able to look for various jobs. We are frequently asked this kind of question... (Beggar No. 10, 23-years-old, November, 2019)

The other participant interviewed around Tikur Anbessa Hospital said that she noticed an increase in the number of physically healthy adult beggars in the city. According to this participant, the increasing presence of healthy beggars was visible to everyone living in the city. What amazed the participant was the competition of beggars for territory rather than their increase in number. Her response showed that those who beg around Piassa were not allowed to go to other areas of the city to beg, especially if the areas were occupied by other beggars. She said that there were specific areas identified as territory of certain groups of beggars.

...you see healthy beggars at various locations of Addis Ababa. Some of them beg around churches; some others beg in streets; some others are found in public and government organizations like hospitals (she begs in hospitals); and again others stay on specific areas. Most of the time, we (beggars) fight against each other on areas where to beg. Some locations in the city are reserved for specific beggars. Nobody can beg at those reserved places. For instance, the area of Ras Desta Bridge is kept for some known individuals. I can't stand for an hour and beg around that area. Similarly Filwuha area is kept for few identified beggars (A female beggar No. 12, 29-years-old, November, 2019).

Likewise, an interview conducted at Filwuha area with a 26-years-old man showed that the number of adult beggars who were physically healthy was increasing from time to time. The participant further explained that beggary was attracting many new comers from rural areas of the country.

Years before, I used to observe people who have the right to beg. You know that there are individuals who need help from people around them. These beggars were those who had injury/disability on their body. They

were those who lost their sight, hand or leg. There were beggars who would beg because they were very old and some of them were sick. I will not be surprised if I see these groups of people begging. They had socially accepted reason and the society gave informal permission for them to beg. But, begging by healthy individuals like me is becoming a common way of earning a living, though it is unacceptable by our society. I know able bodied individuals who have recently begun begging around Kality ... (Beggar No. 14, November, 2019).

Data obtained from a female participant interviewed near Menilik Hospital clearly showed that the practice of begging among physically healthy adult people was eye-catching. According to her response begging among the so called healthy people was increasing because they are getting relatively sufficient amount of money. Below is the quote taken from the interview conducted with her.

...Very recently, the competition beggars against one another is high. We are competing on location and on whom to ask. This is because our number (beggars) is escalating. I invited my friend to beg with me because I'm collecting money and food by exerting minimum effort... There are beggars who were called up on by their friends and relatives and remained famous beggars. I'm telling you about healthy beggars, not disabled beggars... (Beggar No. 2, 23-years-old, October, 2019).

As mentioned in the method section, three officials from LSAB-AACG were interviewed and audio recorded. Among the many available employees working in the bureau, the officials chosen for the interview were those working directly on street dwellers and vulnerable people. Data obtained from them revealed that begging behavior among physically healthy people was so common in Addis Ababa. The interviewed individuals in LSAB-AACG clearly mentioned that the problem is knocking the door of all individuals and organizations concerned. The bureau tried its best to minimize the number of beggars and ultimately stop beggary. The data revealed that attempts to minimize beggary, specifically begging by healthy individuals have been made at various times though the attempts were unsuccessful. The quote taken from an interview conducted with LSAB-1 is given below.

The problem of physically healthy beggars is well understood by our organization. There are a number of individuals who are physically fit enough but who are making money from begging. I can say you that these beggars can work more than ten hours a day because they are physically fit and strong. Some of them beg by hiring cars and large speakers to publicize that they need large amount of money for treatment inside or outside the country. Some others use children as begging agents. What is amazing here is that those who have no children pay more than 2000. 00 birr per month for parents of the children. They beg during day time having children with them to court public attention. They send the children back to their parents

each day after using them as a begging tool. Simply put, these guys are earning a good deal of wealth from begging. (PI, December, 2019)

An interview conducted with LSAB-2 revealed that there are adults who seem physically fit but beg using various eye-catching techniques.

...they are observed to a large extent in places where the practice of begging is mostly conducted. Churches, traffic lights, bus and train stations, and near ATM machines are some of the areas where they spend their time. You see them equally begging with those who are injured and disabled. Let me give you very interesting information. Artificial injury models which are meant for the purpose of begging are being produced at Merkato. Beggars pay certain amount of money to fix the model on their body so that they can easily be a focus of alms givers. By the way, they are so smart that the method they employ to get the attention of passers is a result of creative thinking. I began thinking that it would have been so important for our country's development if the ability of beggars to create ideas that help them collect money was properly cultivated and used. (PI, December, 2019)

Among the three officers of LSAB-AACG participated in the study, the final interviewee was the manager of the organization. She focused mainly on the measures taken by the bureau to curb the problems of people who lived in streets including beggars. According to her response, though the organization led by her frequently tried its best to reduce the number of people living in streets and ultimately create employment opportunities, it was not successful due to various reasons. The major reason was that beggars found the job (beggary) profitable. She further explained about the commonness of physically healthy beggars as:

The bureau, together with Addis Ababa city administration and other concerned non-government organizations, is working to improve the city. In doing so, our primary concern is to clean up the city from street dwellers because there are many crimes associated with street dwelling. It is estimated that there are more than 50,000 people living in streets of Addis Ababa. Of course we do not know the number of people involved in begging. We believe that the majority of them are beggars. We prepared 8 sites in 8 different sub-cities. By the way, there are only two sub-cities which have no site at present, Addis Ketema and Gulele sub-cities. In a single night we displaced about 3000 street dwellers and relocated them to these sites (the researcher was not allowed to visit the sites. (PI, December, 2019)

## **Begging As a Full or Extra Time Job**

One of the questions the participants were asked through interview was whether they were engaged in economic activities other than begging or simply relied on beggary as source of revenue. Accordingly, the majority of them (17) replied that they were practicing beggary as a full time job. These participants were earning a living from beggary and considered it as a permanent job. For instance, a 22-years-old woman interviewee believed that the only job available for her in this world was beggary. She remarked that the world was unfair and discriminatory.

Begging in Addis Ababa is not an easy task. It is full of hardship. But I choose it as a way of life. I do it day and night. Some people insult you and humiliate you. My goal is to survive. I have to feed my son. Therefore, I have to strongly move from one corner to the other corner the whole day. Begging is everything to me and to many others who have no one to hire them. Getting hired in organizations or to get job you need to have money or you have to have a close family member who is appointed at higher position. (Beggar No. 11, 23-years-old, November, 2019)

The other woman explained that she had no chance of getting another job except begging. The following paragraph was quoted from her response.

...I'm not educated. I know that those who are well educated are also not getting employment opportunities. Great deals of people living in streets of Addis Ababa are those who did not get employment opportunities though they possess certain kind of skill. Today, it is time for competition. You need to be fit enough to survive. Many of my friends are healthy and they could be successful if got the opportunity of employment. Since there are no employment opportunities we are leading our life by standing in front of people (begging)... We are happy but we might not happier than others. (Beggar No. 8, 33-years-old, October, 2019)

The mother of two children interviewed around Mexico in November 2019 was also among full time beggars together with her children. She was begging from Legehar area up to Torhailoch. According to her responses she spent much of her time begging in and around Torhailoch train station.

In the morning I beg around Legehar and Mexico. In the afternoon I go to Torhailoch train station because you meet many people inside and around the station. Have you ever seen the queue? It is too long. By the way that is my peak time (afternoon). Sometimes I collect about 200.00 birr in half a day although some people are not happy because as you see me I look healthy... Being healthier is not sufficient to make money from various activities. (Beggar No. 17, 30-years-old)

One of the tools used, in this research, to collect data was focus group discussion. Accordingly data from it revealed that the practice of begging among physically healthy beggars in Addis Ababa was widespread on traffic lights, market areas, religious places, and very recently on trains and near train stations. The number of people who was considering beggary as a major livelihood strategy, though tiresome, was rising. These street dwellers beg 7 days a week to earn a living. The FGD showed that it was impossible to think of other jobs besides beggary due to the fact that the practice of begging required physical strength and standing for hours in streets. The discussants further added that standing or sitting across major streets had many challenges including rain, temperature, and blowing dust.

Discussant number 2 of the FGD conducted at Jegole Square, Piassa, in December 2019 explained that

Most of us beg all the days that are found in a week. I think there are few beggars who are engaging in other jobs. But I, including my friends, have no other job. By the way it is unthinkable to participate in other jobs simultaneously due to the difficult nature of the behavior.

The other discussant (number 5) said

... I have to move from one place to another or I have to stand or sit on the same street for many hours to feed myself. Begging requires huge energy and power. Since it is so tiresome, I can't do other economic activities.

As mentioned in the first paragraph of this section, the majority of the participants were those who relied totally on begging. Their single source of revenue was beggary. On the other hand, 6 participants were found doing other jobs along with beggary. These participants beg for some hours in a day and shift to other economic activities during the remaining hours of each day. Among the types of jobs these beggars do along with beggary are selling small items, shoe polishing, serving as guard at private residents, prostitution, and cooking food on different occasions. For instance, a 29-year-old woman replied, "I usually prepare food on ceremonies like wedding and holidays through payment. You don't see me in streets around the month of January because there are lots of weddings. You know I am a famous cooker (Beggar No. 12, Tikur Anbessa Hospital, November, 2019).

The other participant who was earning a living both from begging and selling tissue paper, gum, biscuit, and similar small items was interviewed at Megenagna. He reported that the money he collected from begging was some times more than the money he earned from selling small items mentioned above.

Previously, I divided my day time into two. If I spent selling objects in the morning I used to beg in the afternoon. Through time I learnt that begging is more productive early in the morning and in the afternoon. From my experience I can tell you that if you beg from 7:00-9:00 AM in

the morning and from 4:00-5:30:00 PM in the afternoon you will never and ever go back to your home without having certain amount of money in your pocket. The remaining hours of a day are spent on selling goods. (Beggar No. 6, 21-years-old, October, 2019)

### Daily Income and Work Experience:

Concerning the experience of participants, more than half of them (19) had been begging for more than three years, whereas the remaining participants were making money from begging for the last seven and above years (see table 2 below). The table also shows the amount of money participants collected through begging.

Table 2: Daily Income and Work Experience

For how long have you been engaged in begging?			Daily Income					
			On Bad Days			On Good Days		
	Freq.	Per.		Freq.	Per.		Freq.	Per.
< a year	2	8.7	No income	2	8.7	No income		
1-3 year	9	39	Less than 50 birr	6	26	< 50 birr	1	4.4
4-7 year	8	34.8	50-100 birr	8	34.8	50-99 birr	2	8.7
8-10 year	3	13.1	Above 100 birr	2	8.7	100-200 birr	6	26
Above 10 year	1	4.4	No bad days	5	21.8	201-300 birr	8	34.8
						Above 300	6	26

As can be seen from the table, five of the research participants reported that there was no bad day in their begging life. Each day yields sufficient amount of money for their daily consumption. These participants believed that it is the person (beggar) that makes his/her day good or bad. A 34-years-old participant narrated:

There is no ‘Bad’ day in my begging life because it is I who is going to make my day good or bad. I usually begin begging here (Filwuha area). I always begin begging here at about 7:30 AM. I ask as many people as I can very quickly. If I get money it is ok but if I don’t I have to immediately go to other areas to continue begging... in most cases I earn up to 200.00 birr in a single day (A male Beggar No. 7, October, 2019).

Similarly a female beggar number 4 interviewed around Biherawi in October 2019 underlined that all days in a week are equal. It is the time at which someone begs that matters more than the day itself. She said,

I beg seven days a week. All the days are equally important. Of course Sunday is unique. You may not get as equal money as the other six days. On Sunday you have to go to special areas like church, hotels, and places where wedding ceremonies are celebrated. You don’t have to remain in streets. If you ask for money on weekends in streets the day will never be good. Any way I usually collect from 150.00 to 200.00 birr on weekends and more than that on week days (24 years old).



On the contrary, the amount of money a female participant would collect even on good days was not more than 100.00 birr. She would also get food from others only once in 2 days. She further added that there were many days in which she returned to her plastic house having nothing in her hands. She said, “I am not lucky as my colleagues. I go back to my sleep area (house made of plastics) with nothing earned. I didn’t understand whether the problem is with me or that I am created to suffer a lot” (Beggar No. 5, 21 years-old).

To collect the amount of money indicated in the table and paragraphs above, beggars were expected to work hard. They have to reach as many people as they can. Interview results showed that on the average participants received alms after getting nothing from eight consecutive trials. This means that they got money on the ninth person on average. A male participant interviewed in the month of November explained:

.... I do not ask each and every individual I meet in street. You have to be selective. You have to be smart enough and able to identify those who would probably give you. There are people who insult you, curse you, and disregard you. So, if you are smart enough you will get good response may be after 10 trials. (Beggar No. 13, 26 years old)

A 30 year-old male beggar explained:

As a beggar, I don’t have to refrain from begging so as to survive. I keep on asking whether I get or not. Ask, ask, and ask. Beg, beg, and beg again... Most of the time I get money after visiting 12-15 people, but sometimes I receive money even after 3 or 4 attempts. (Beggar No. 3, October, 2019)

In the same vein the other participant narrated that she was earning about 350.00 birr each day on average. Together with her children (she had two children) the amount of money they earned was more than 400.00 birr.

Sometimes I collect about 200.00 birr in half a day although some people are not happy because as you see me I look healthy. I earn more than 250.00 birr each day and my children come back to home having more than 100.00 birr. But if God is not with us (bad day) we get less than 100.00 birr... Nevertheless, my children come to home with food in many cases. (Beggar No. 17, 30-years-old)

The results obtained from focus group discussions similarly revealed that the participants earned adequate amount of money and items such as food and cloth. The data obtained from the discussants of the FGD revealed that the amount of money they earned each day depended on the place and time at which begging was practiced. Their response showed that the first three hours of the mornings (6:00 AM to 9:00 AM) and the last two hours (4:00 PM to 6:00 PM) of the afternoons were appropriate time for getting reasonable amount of money. The other determinant factor of the amount of money earned was holidays. Data showed that participants collected more than 600.00 birr on average on holidays. The first discussant of the FGD conducted at Filwuha clearly

underlined that they were too much happy with holidays.

We love holiday's especially religious ones. We celebrate each and every holiday better than any other people, because a single holiday is celebrated as double... we pray for more holidays to be added to the existing ones. I get not less than 800.00 birr during Eid holidays.

Discussant number 4 explained:

We beg either individually or in a group. Being in group yields better money but it has its own problem while distribution. On one occasion we (a group having 3 members) collected 1700.00 birr. I earned 740.00 and 450.00 birr the last x-mass and Epiphany respectively... I earn about 200.00 birr in other days.

The other objective of the study related to satisfaction of the participants with their daily income and the job itself. The participants were asked whether they were satisfied with begging behavior and the amount of money they earned each day. Accordingly, 17 of the participants said they were more satisfied with their daily income than the job. They were forced to stay in streets due to the fact that the money they earned motivated them to stay in streets and lead their life through begging. Four participants reported that they were unsatisfied with both the amount of money and the job itself. The remaining two participants explained that they were really happy with the amount of money they collected and they also love to lead their life through begging.

## ***Discussion***

Researchers have found that the number of beggars in Ethiopia is increasing from time to time. Many research works evidenced that begging is one of the most widespread and multifaceted social problems with great magnitude in the country (Fireyihun, 2011; MOLSA, 1992; Tatek, 2009; Woubshet, 2005). It was clearly indicated that the practice of begging by individuals whom the public considers deserving such as disabled beggars (Groce, Murray, et al., 2013; Groce, et al., 2014), old age beggars (Fireyihun, 2011; Kerebih, et al., 2007), and child beggars (Abebaw, 2003; Ebenezer et al. 2018; Lucas, 2007; Tatek, 2009) is becoming a common means of survival. In addition, beggary among adult individuals who are physically fit enough to engage in other economic activities is being observed in urban areas of Ethiopia and in the streets of Addis Ababa (Elshaday, 2007; Ashenafi & Getnet, 2012; Groce, et al., 2013). The findings of the current study similarly illustrated that the number of the so called physically healthy adult beggars was increasing in Addis Ababa in an alarming rate.

Previously beggary was seen as ridden by poverty or disability. But today there are many people who consider beggary as a profitable business or profession. According to Ebenezer et al. (2018), Groce, et al., (2013), Jelili (2006), and Ogunkan (2009) the increasing incidence of physically fit productive age beggars was not associated with poverty and other socially accepted reasons but to the fact that the majority of them were satisfied with the job. It was because beggary was producing a good daily income

and becoming a kind of income generating mechanism that people preferred it from other type of jobs requiring high competition. The findings of this study revealed that the majority of the participants were satisfied with the begging because of their daily income, which is by far better than of many government employees. In other words, the finding suggest that the income from begging was far better than the income from many other legitimate sectors. As already indicated in the second table, eight participants earned from 200.00-300.00 birr each day which was equal to or greater than graduate assistant teacher's income while 6 of them earned above 300.00 birr a day, which in turn was equal to or greater than the income of assistant lecturer at government universities.

### ***Conclusions and Recommendations***

In Ethiopia, these days, begging has become a major means of earning a living for quite a large number of people. The field is currently attracting many individuals from various groups. Children, youngsters, able and disable bodied, old men and women, etc are joining and enjoying the field. What should be noticed here is that beggary is becoming a mainstay for a number of undeserving population, those who are physically fit and economically active. Any person living in Addis Ababa may witness that a significant number of physically healthy people rely on beggary for their daily consumption. This happens due to the fact that people in Addis Ababa are more isolated and know one another very little, if any, as compared to other urban areas of the country. As discussed in the 'findings' section, the majority of the participants of the current study were totally dependent on begging. It was indicated that only 6 of the participants were simultaneously occupied in other economic activities.

On the basis of the findings, the research recommends that internal migration needs to be controlled in some way by organizations concerned because the majority of the participants were those who migrated from rural areas. People who do not deserve to beg (named as "physically healthy" in this research) were taking advantage of a system intended for the very needy in the country. Therefore, those who give alms need to differentiate the needy (disabled and may be old-age beggars) from others. The majority of the participants of the study were those dropped out of school. Therefore, all individuals and organizations concerned need to work on factors leading to drop out. Finally, as the field is attracting many physically healthy people, law enforcing agencies and other organizations concerned should show genuine interest in curbing the problem.

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