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# Empowering Communities: Sustainable Solutions To Reduce Begging In Pakistan Through Social Entrepreneurship

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## Abstract

Begging is a persistent socio-economic issue in Pakistan, rooted in poverty, unemployment, social exclusion, and weak policy enforcement. Despite anti-begging legislation such as the Vagrancy Act 1954, the practice remains widespread and, in some cases, organized. Vulnerable groups—including women, children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities—are often exploited or forced into dependency due to a lack of sustainable livelihood opportunities. This study uses a qualitative, descriptive, and analytical approach to identify the root causes of begging and explore social entrepreneurship as a sustainable solution. The research draws on literature review, policy analysis, and proposed semi-structured interviews with policymakers, social workers, and community leaders. Guided by the Capability Approach and Social Capital Theory, the paper links poverty alleviation with empowerment strategies. Findings highlight that begging is driven by interconnected psychological, social, economic, and political factors. Addressing it requires an integrated model involving government policy reform, skills training, community engagement, and NGO–private sector partnerships. Key recommendations include enforcing anti-begging laws, targeted welfare for genuine cases, skill development initiatives, and public awareness campaigns discouraging direct almsgiving to professional beggars. The paper advocates shifting from punitive measures to empowerment-based interventions that promote dignity, inclusion, and long-term community resilience.

**Keywords:** Begging, Social Entrepreneurship, Poverty, Community Empowerment, Pakistan, Vagrancy Act.

## 1. Introduction

Begging, broadly defined as soliciting alms in public spaces, is a pervasive phenomenon observed across cultures and geographies. It has existed for centuries, embedded in historical narratives, religious traditions, and socio-economic systems, yet it continues to evolve in both form and visibility in the contemporary world (Kennedy & Fitzpatrick, 2001; McIntosh & Erskine, 1999). While begging can be framed as an act of individual need, it is increasingly recognized as a complex socio-economic challenge intertwined with poverty, unemployment,

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social exclusion, and, in some cases, organized criminal activity (Waugh & Pidd, 2014). The global expansion of technology has also given rise to new modalities such as "digital begging," where individuals solicit financial support through online platforms—a trend particularly visible in livestreaming environments, where algorithm-driven exposure can amplify both genuine need and exploitative practices (The Guardian, 2025).

In low- and middle-income countries, begging often thrives in the context of underdeveloped social protection systems and weak law enforcement. Governments may enact anti-begging laws, but without consistent and equitable enforcement, these legal measures can have limited impact. In some contexts, legislation has been criticized for conflating homelessness with begging, criminalizing survival behaviors rather than addressing root causes (Harsh Mander v. Union of India, 2018). Consequently, interventions remain fragmented, with charitable responses failing to offer sustainable alternatives, and punitive approaches often exacerbating marginalization.

Pakistan presents a particularly urgent case in this global landscape. Estimates suggest that nearly 38 million individuals—over 16% of the population—are engaged in begging, generating as much as USD 42 billion annually, equivalent to more than 12% of the national GDP (Times of India, 2024). Such figures indicate not only the scale of the problem but also the degree to which begging has become embedded as an informal economic activity. The issue has gained international visibility, with more than 5,000 Pakistani nationals deported from foreign countries in 2024 for their involvement in begging (Economic Times, 2025). These deportations underscore the transnational dimensions of the problem, revealing organized networks that transcend local jurisdictions.

Social perceptions further complicate the issue in Pakistan. Cultural and religious norms often normalize or even encourage almsgiving (sadaqah, zakat) as a virtuous act, leading many citizens to give to beggars regardless of concerns about fraud or exploitation (Riaz, 2019). A Gallup Pakistan (2025) survey found that 63% of respondents felt a moral or social obligation to give money to beggars, with women and younger people reporting even higher levels of perceived pressure. While such generosity reflects deep-rooted traditions of compassion, it can inadvertently sustain professional begging and impede efforts to direct resources toward structured social support programs.

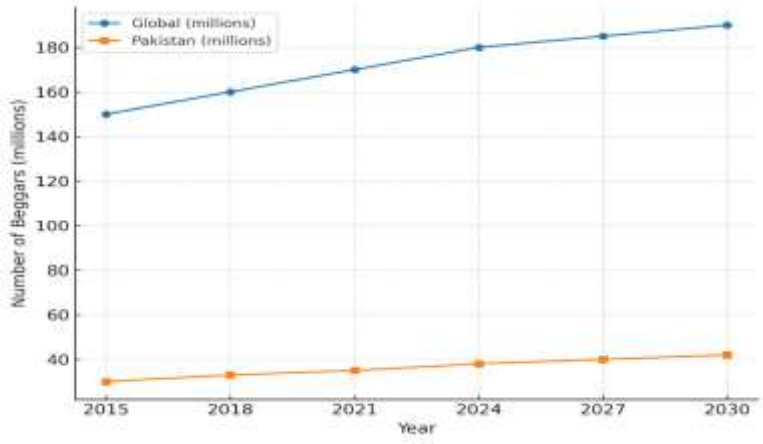


**Figure 1: Global and Pakistan Context of Begging (Trends & Projections)**

Efforts to address begging in Pakistan have long been codified in legislation, most notably the Vagrancy Act of 1954, which criminalizes certain forms of solicitation. However, the implementation of this law has been inconsistent, often failing to distinguish between individuals who beg due to extreme necessity and those engaged in organized networks. The principle of "manifest arbitrariness," recognized in constitutional jurisprudence, critiques such indiscriminate application of laws, emphasizing that legislative and enforcement actions should be proportionate, rational, and clearly justified (Pathak & Muralidharan, 2022). In practice, the absence of a targeted, nuanced legal approach means that punitive measures may penalize vulnerable populations without addressing systemic drivers of poverty.

The persistence of begging is linked to a constellation of factors. Economic drivers include unemployment, underemployment, and the absence of adequate vocational training programs (Febianti & Nurkholim, 2024). Social factors range from family breakdown and domestic violence to exclusion based on gender identity, particularly affecting transgender individuals who face widespread employment discrimination (Aliyu & Kayode, 2024). Psychological and generational influences also play a role; children born into begging families often internalize the practice as a viable livelihood, perpetuating intergenerational dependency. Health-related vulnerabilities, such as disability or chronic illness, further exacerbate the inability to participate in formal labor markets. These factors are mutually reinforcing, creating cycles of marginalization that resist simplistic solutions.

Against this backdrop, social entrepreneurship has emerged as a promising alternative framework for addressing the structural causes of begging. Defined as the application of entrepreneurial principles to achieve social objectives, social entrepreneurship offers a means to integrate marginalized individuals into productive economic activities while maintaining a focus on community welfare over profit maximization (Suriyankietkaew et al., 2022). International examples demonstrate how skills training, microfinance, and cooperative business models can generate sustainable livelihoods for populations traditionally excluded from the formal economy (Wahyuni et al., 2021). In Pakistan, such approaches remain underutilized, but they hold potential for fostering self-reliance, reducing dependency on almsgiving, and strengthening community resilience.

The scale, persistence, and complexity of begging in Pakistan make it a pressing policy concern that cannot be addressed through isolated or short-term measures. Effective interventions must integrate legislative reform, targeted welfare programs, vocational training, and public education campaigns to shift both behaviors and perceptions. Importantly, strategies should avoid stigmatizing individuals engaged in begging, focusing instead on pathways to empowerment and inclusion. This research contributes to these efforts by examining the root causes of begging, evaluating the limitations of current legal and policy frameworks, and exploring the viability of social entrepreneurship as a sustainable solution. The goal is to propose an integrated, multi-stakeholder model that balances enforcement with empowerment, thereby reducing the prevalence of begging while enhancing the dignity, agency, and social participation of affected individuals.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Global Perspective on Begging

Begging remains a multi-layered socio-economic phenomenon across both developed and developing countries. Studies emphasize that while it is most visible in low-income contexts, it also persists in high-income nations, albeit often linked to homelessness, substance abuse, or migration (Kennedy & Fitzpatrick, 2001; Waugh & Pidd, 2014). Across South Asia, poverty,

rural-to-urban migration, and limited employment opportunities are dominant drivers. In India, for example, socio-economic surveys indicate that over 90% of beggars cite chronic unemployment and lack of alternative livelihoods as the primary cause (Khan et al., 2016). In Zimbabwe, research by Nyoni and Nyoni (2019) associates street begging among children with systemic failures in child welfare provision, noting that absence of targeted support perpetuates generational cycles.

A recurrent theme in the literature is the overlap between begging and exploitation. Forced child begging is a documented form of human trafficking in several regions. In Senegal, so-called talibés—students of Quranic schools—are coerced by religious instructors to solicit alms, often under threat of violence (Human Rights Watch, 2019). Similar exploitation patterns are found in parts of Southeast Europe, where UNICEF (2015) reports that up to 13% of identified trafficking victims are compelled into street begging. These cases highlight how begging can function as both a coping mechanism for poverty and a site of organized abuse.

Policy responses differ widely. In the United Kingdom, local councils have used Public Space Protection Orders to restrict visible begging, but critics argue such measures criminalize poverty rather than address root causes (Johnsen et al., 2020). Conversely, Finland decriminalized begging in 1987, shifting toward welfare-based interventions, although debates continue regarding the effectiveness of these policies in reducing street visibility (Kärkkäinen, 2005). In Nepal, the Begging (Prohibition) Act of 1962 criminalizes most forms of solicitation but exempts certain religious practices, reflecting a legal framework shaped by cultural norms (Shrestha, 2018). However, lack of enforcement capacity has limited its impact (Shrestha, 2018).

The literature also examines intervention models that aim for rehabilitation over punishment. Anti-Slavery International (2009) advocates for a combination of public awareness campaigns, law enforcement training, and rehabilitation services to distinguish between voluntary and forced begging. Social protection schemes—such as Brazil's Bolsa Família conditional cash transfer program—offer indirect lessons, demonstrating that targeted income support can reduce street-level economic desperation (Soares et al., 2010). In Bangladesh, Begum and Sen (2023) evaluated a rehabilitation program for beggars in Khulna City, finding modest improvements in income but limited change in participants' motivation to leave begging, underscoring the importance of comprehensive, context-specific program design.

### 2.2 Pakistan Perspective

The Pakistani literature characterizes begging as legally proscribed yet resilient due to poverty, informality, and uneven enforcement of vagrancy-style statutes that date to the mid-twentieth century (West Pakistan/Punjab Vagrancy Ordinance, 1958). Analyses argue these laws historically conflate destitution, homelessness, and organized exploitation, producing cyclical arrests without durable exits (see comparative critiques in Johnsen et al., 2020; HRW, 2019, for analogous dynamics). City-level studies—often in Karachi and Lahore—profile beggars as disproportionately migrants with low literacy and intermittent disabilities/illness and highlight family-based participation and child accompaniment as economic multipliers within street economies (Pakistan-focused urban profiling studies; see Khan et al., 2016, for proximate Indian evidence used in regional syntheses).

Policy discourse since 2019 has centered on Ehsaas (and BISP scaling), with international assessments noting its potential to lower economic compulsion where targeting and payment systems reach the urban informal poor (ILO, 2022; IPC-IG, 2023). However,

persistent gaps—ID/documentation barriers, portability for internal migrants, linkage to disability services—limit direct substitution away from begging for many households (ILO, 2022). Human-rights-oriented commentators call for statutory triage that distinguishes coerced/child/organized begging (aligning with UNODC trafficking frameworks) from survival-driven solicitation, with commensurate responses: prosecution and victim assistance in the former; cash-plus, shelter, health, and employment services in the latter (UNODC, 2024).

Recent provincial discussions and media commentary point to a trend toward sharper penalties for organizers and for child/forced begging alongside proposals for rehabilitation and skills programs. The literature cautions that such enforcement must be coupled with credible service pathways (shelter, case management, vocational placement) to avoid displacement and recidivism. Where pilots link street outreach to welfare enrollment, disability certification, and market-oriented training, authors report stronger prospects for sustainable exits, particularly for women and persons with disabilities—groups over-represented in street solicitation but underserved by generic job programs (Suriyankietkaew et al., 2022; ILO, 2022).

## 2.3 Causes of Begging

### 2.3.1 Psychological causes

Research repeatedly links visible street begging to individual-level vulnerabilities such as untreated mental illness, neurocognitive impairment, substance dependence, and trauma histories. In high-income settings, systematic reviews show elevated rates of psychosis, major depression, and substance use disorders among street-entrenched populations, with symptoms impairing routine functioning and employability (Fazel et al., 2014). Although most studies examine homelessness rather than begging per se, qualitative work suggests similar pathways in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs): psychiatric morbidity, disability, and addiction intersect with poverty to narrow livelihood options, making public solicitation a residual coping strategy (Kennedy & Fitzpatrick, 2001; McIntosh & Erskine, 1999). Intergenerational transmission is also reported: children raised in households where public solicitation is normalized may internalize begging as an occupational script, particularly when schooling is fragmented and caregiving is unstable (UNICEF, 2015). Disability studies in LMICs further highlight how functional limitations (e.g., visual or mobility impairments) combined with environmental barriers (lack of assistive devices, stigma) increase the probability of reliance on alms (Banks et al., 2017).

### 2.3.2 Social causes

Across contexts, begging is embedded in social structures—family disruption, intimate-partner violence, child neglect, and weak community safety nets (Kennedy & Fitzpatrick, 2001). Urban ethnographies document household shocks (death of a breadwinner, chronic illness, debt) that precipitate rural-to-urban migration and street-based survival (Khan et al., 2016). Gendered exclusion is salient: women—especially widows, single mothers, and domestic-violence survivors—face barriers to decent work, while transgender persons experience routine discrimination in hiring and services, pushing some toward public solicitation (Nyoni & Nyoni, 2019). Child begging occupies a distinct sub-literature at the intersection of welfare failure and exploitation: in parts of West Africa, talibé children have been forced by instructors to meet daily alms quotas under threat of violence (Human Rights Watch, 2019), and in Southeast Europe a measurable share of trafficking cases involve children coerced into street begging (UNICEF, 2015). These studies emphasize that "begging" can be both a survival behavior and a site of coercion, making social diagnosis (voluntary vs. forced; adult vs. child) crucial for policy and protection responses.

### 2.3.3 Economic causes

Economic explanations dominate LMIC research. Surveys in South Asia consistently identify chronic unemployment, informalization, low educational attainment, and absence of vocational skills as proximal drivers of street solicitation (Khan et al., 2016). Macro-level shocks—price inflation, pandemic-related closures—tighten urban labor markets and depress casual earnings, increasing visible begging among new entrants lacking savings or social insurance. Evidence from social protection shows that reliable income floors reduce street-level coping behaviors when transfers are adequate and paired with services ("cash-plus"), though impact varies by program design and urban reach (Soares et al., 2010; ILO, 2022). Disability-related poverty is a reinforcing mechanism: functional limitations lower earning capacity while raising household costs, deepening income insecurity and heightening exposure to negative coping, including public solicitation (Banks et al., 2017). Importantly, economic analyses warn against treating "professional" begging as a homogeneous category; even where networks exist, most adults report immediate consumption needs (food, rent, medicines) as the motive for asking (Kennedy & Fitzpatrick, 2001).

### 2.3.4 Political causes

Political economic accounts are located within governance and rights frameworks. Vagrancy-style statutes that criminalize visible poverty without distinguishing coercion from survival tend to cycle people through arrest, fines, or committal, with limited impact on underlying drivers (Johnsen et al., 2020). By contrast, jurisprudence de-emphasizing criminalization (e.g., Delhi High Court's 2018 ruling) reframes begging as a welfare and rights issue, encouraging investment in services rather than penalties (Delhi High Court, 2018). International child-protection and anti-trafficking standards underscore state obligations to identify and assist victims of forced begging while prosecuting organizers (UNODC, 2024; UNICEF, 2015). From a capabilities lens, weak provision of public goods—education, health, disability support, safe housing—constrains substantive freedoms and pushes households toward street economies; expanding these goods, alongside fair labor regulation and accessible identification/registration systems, is therefore political as much as technical (Sen, 1999; ILO, 2022). Finally, social norms shape policy space: in many Muslim-majority contexts, deeply rooted almsgiving norms sustain informal transfers to individuals rather than to structured programs; scholars argue that aligning zakat/sadaqah with verified service channels can reorient incentives away from street solicitation while preserving religious intent (McIntosh & Erskine, 1999; Kennedy & Fitzpatrick, 2001).

## 2.4 Social Entrepreneurship and Community Empowerment

Across development scholarship, social entrepreneurship is framed as the pursuit of opportunities to create social value through innovative, business-like methods, often blending market logic with mission-driven goals (Dees, 1998/2001; Zahra et al., 2009). Two theoretical strands explain why such ventures can matter for reducing street-economy dependence, including begging. First, the Capability Approach recasts poverty as a deprivation of substantive freedoms—the real opportunities people have to lead lives they value—so interventions that expand skills, assets, health access, mobility, and agency directly enlarge capability sets and change the opportunity cost of public solicitation (Sen, 1999; Nussbaum, 2011). Second, Social Capital Theory emphasizes how networks, norms, and trust enable cooperation and access to information, jobs, and support; by strengthening bonding ties within groups and bridging ties to markets and services, social enterprises can lower coordination and search costs that trap households in precarious livelihoods (Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 1993; Woolcock, 1998; Narayan & Pritchett, 1999). Read together, these lenses predict that mission-

led ventures will be most effective where they both enhance individual capabilities and embed people in supportive, opportunity-rich networks.

Empirical literature broadly supports this prediction but stresses design. The most influential causal evidence comes from the "Graduation" approach pioneered by BRAC and tested across six countries: a multifaceted bundle (productive asset, technical training, coaching, savings facilitation, and temporary consumption support) produced sustained gains in earnings, assets, and food security years after program end, suggesting durable transitions out of extreme poverty and low-return coping (Banerjee et al., 2015). The mechanism aligns with capabilities (skills, confidence, liquidity) and social capital (regular coaching, group processes), rather than credit alone. By contrast, the first generation of randomized microcredit expansions shows mixed average impacts on business scale and income; meta-analytic work confirms modest effects with substantial heterogeneity by borrower characteristics and product design (Banerjee et al., 2015, AEJ Applied; Meager, 2019). This evidence base has shifted practice toward credit-plus or enterprise-plus designs—exactly the space where social enterprises often operate—bundling finance with training, mentoring, market access, or insurance.

Studies of collective and cooperative models add a complementary channel. Classic work on member-owned associations (e.g., the SEWA family of cooperatives) documents improvements in women's earnings, market participation, asset accumulation, and leadership, driven by peer support, federated structures, and negotiated access to buyers and services—findings consistent with both capability expansion and the accumulation of bonding/bridging social capital (Putnam, 1993; Woolcock, 1998; Narayan & Pritchett, 1999). Importantly, these models also function as platforms that help poor workers navigate bureaucracies (IDs, registrations), reduce exposure to predatory intermediaries, and pool risk—barriers frequently cited in qualitative research with households engaged in street economies.

Pakistan-specific mapping studies describe a nascent but growing social enterprise ecosystem concentrated in education, health, and services, with persistent constraints in early-stage finance and market linkage (British Council & SDPI, 2016). Although rigorous impact evaluations within Pakistan remain fewer than in some neighboring countries, several strands align with international findings. Community-embedded, interest-free microfinance demonstrates how leveraging local trust and religiously anchored repayment norms can reduce transaction costs and stigma; evaluations of analogous credit-plus programs indicate stronger gains when lending is paired with training, coaching, or insurance rather than offered as stand-alone credit (Banerjee et al., 2015; Meager, 2019). Health-oriented social enterprises that connect home-based female professionals to underserved patients via digital platforms exemplify capability expansion beyond income—improving access to care, freeing time, and enabling women's workforce re-entry—while simultaneously building networks that can be mobilized for referrals, placements, or group enterprises. Education-led social ventures that expand girls' enrollment and completion contribute to medium-run earnings potential and agency, which the capabilities literature links to lower reliance on precarious coping strategies.

The literature also clarifies what not to expect. Social enterprises are not a substitute for social protection or legal safeguards; rather, they complement them. Where households face immediate consumption shortfalls, disability-related costs, or care burdens, cash transfers and cash-plus services remain essential to stabilize well-being so that enterprise opportunities become viable choices (Banerjee et al., 2015; Sen, 1999). Likewise, in contexts where begging is coerced or controlled by organized intermediaries, the appropriate analog is not entrepreneurship but protection and prosecution; here, social ventures play a different,

downstream role in rehabilitation and reintegration once safety is secured (Woolcock, 1998; Nussbaum, 2011). A consistent theme across reviews is that durable exits from street economies require bundles: immediate relief and case management, capability investments (skills, health, assets), and social-capital-building institutions that connect participants to buyers, employers, and services.

Taken together, the theoretical and empirical literatures converge on a practical design logic for a begging-reduction agenda. Interventions that combine income stabilization with enterprise-plus pathways and intentional network-building are the ones most likely to change the feasibility frontier for households at the margin of public solicitation. The Graduation trials demonstrate that multi-component packages can shift trajectories at scale; the microcredit evidence cautions against credit-only solutions; cooperative and platform models show how to institutionalize support and market access; and capability/social-capital frameworks explain why these pieces must be assembled together. For Pakistan, where social enterprises already operate in education, health, finance, and food security but face ecosystem constraints, the literature suggests focusing on integration: braid social ventures into referral flows from shelters and social protection, fund coaching and placement functions (not just training), and measure success by capability gains and networked inclusion (employment, enterprise survival, access to services)—the outcomes most predictive of sustained exits from street-based coping.

## 3. Theoretical and Legal Framework

Pakistan's contemporary response to begging lies at the junction of provincial vagrancy statutes, constitutional social rights, Islamic welfare instruments, and international human-rights obligations. The core positive-law lineage derives from mid-century vagrancy legislation—most prominently the Punjab/West Pakistan Vagrancy Ordinance, 1958—which empowers arrest, short detention, and committal to welfare homes, thereby treating visible street solicitation primarily as a public-order problem rather than a poverty or exploitation problem (Government of Punjab, 1958). In recent years, provincial divergence has appeared: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa enacted a bespoke Vagrancy Restraint Act that updates powers of search, arrest, and referral to rehabilitation, signaling reform within, rather than a departure from, criminal-law management (Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 2020). Read doctrinally, these instruments risk conflating survival-driven alms-seeking with organized coercion, unless paired with clear triage and welfare pathways.

Constitutional guarantees push the analysis beyond public order. Article 25A establishes the right to free and compulsory education (ages 5–16), which, if realized, reduces the child-labor supply to street economies by increasing school retention (Government of Pakistan, 1973, art. 25A). Article 38(d) in the Principles of Policy commits the state to provide basic necessities—food, clothing, housing, education, and medical relief—for those unable to earn a livelihood, furnishing a normative basis for income support, disability services, and rehabilitation rather than custodial sanction as the default (Government of Pakistan, 1973, art. 38[d]). In practice, these provisions argue for linking any enforcement activity to social-protection gateways (eligibility screening, cash-plus services, health and disability support) so that coercion is deterred while survival cases are stabilized.

A complementary policy foundation arises from Islamic welfare principles. Statutorily, the Zakat and Ushr Ordinance, 1980 created a national machinery for assessing, collecting, and disbursing zakat through multi-tier councils (Government of Pakistan, 1980). The textual authority—Qur'an 9:60—specifies eight eligible categories (e.g., the poor, those in debt, and wayfarers), overlapping with profiles often visible in public solicitation (Qur'an 9:60). Contemporary Islamic social-finance scholarship emphasizes that zakat and waqf can move from relief to empowerment when integrated with training, health, and asset-building—an

approach congruent with "cash-plus" models that reduce the opportunity cost of begging by expanding capabilities (Sen, 1999; Nussbaum, 2011).

Judicially, regional constitutional doctrine supplies a rights-sensitive check on overbroad criminalization through the concept of manifest arbitrariness. In Shayara Bano v. Union of India (2017), the Supreme Court of India held that a law may violate equality guarantees if it is capricious, irrational, or disproportionate. Applying this logic to street solicitation, the Delhi High Court in Harsh Mander v. Union of India (2018) invalidated beggary provisions in the capital for failing to distinguish survival behaviors from coerced exploitation, effectively reframing begging as a welfare and rights issue rather than a status offence. While not binding in Pakistan, these decisions illuminate a proportionality test relevant to local reform: rules that penalize the visibility of poverty, without welfare off-ramps or a carve-out for victims of coercion, are constitutionally suspect (cf. Government of Pakistan, 1973).

International law further clarifies state duties. By ratifying the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), Pakistan accepted obligations to progressively realize the right to an adequate standard of living, social security, and the highest attainable standard of health—rights that counsel expansion of income support, food security, shelter, and health access as structural responses (United Nations, 1966/1976). For children, the Convention on the Rights of the Child mandates protection from economic exploitation and hazardous work, anchoring the treatment of child begging as harmful child labour that requires withdrawal, rehabilitation, and reintegration (United Nations, 1989, art. 32). Where begging is coerced or organized, international criminal-law instruments apply: the Trafficking in Persons Protocol to UNTOC recognizes forced begging as a modality of exploitation, supporting a dual approach—prosecute organizers, protect victims—alongside the ILO Convention No. 182 on the worst forms of child labour (United Nations, 2000; International Labour Organization [ILO], 1999).

These strands can be synthesized into a dual-track policy frame. For survival-driven begging, constitutional social rights (arts. 25A and 38[d]), Islamic social-finance instruments (zakat/waqf), and ICESCR collectively justify prioritizing income stabilization, school retention, health and disability services, and employability supports, with vagrancy rules used narrowly to manage specific harms (e.g., aggressive solicitation) and always paired with referral to assistance (Government of Pakistan, 1973; Government of Pakistan, 1980; United Nations, 1966/1976). For coerced/organized begging, CRC, the Trafficking Protocol, and ILO C182 require victim identification, non-penalization, child-sensitive protection, and targeted prosecution of controllers (United Nations, 1989; United Nations, 2000; ILO, 1999). The manifest arbitrariness lens disciplines both tracks, requiring that any restrictions on public solicitation be precise, proportionate, and demonstrably connected to legitimate aims—and accompanied by accessible welfare pathways—to avoid punishing poverty itself (Shayara Bano v. Union of India, 2017; Harsh Mander v. Union of India, 2018).

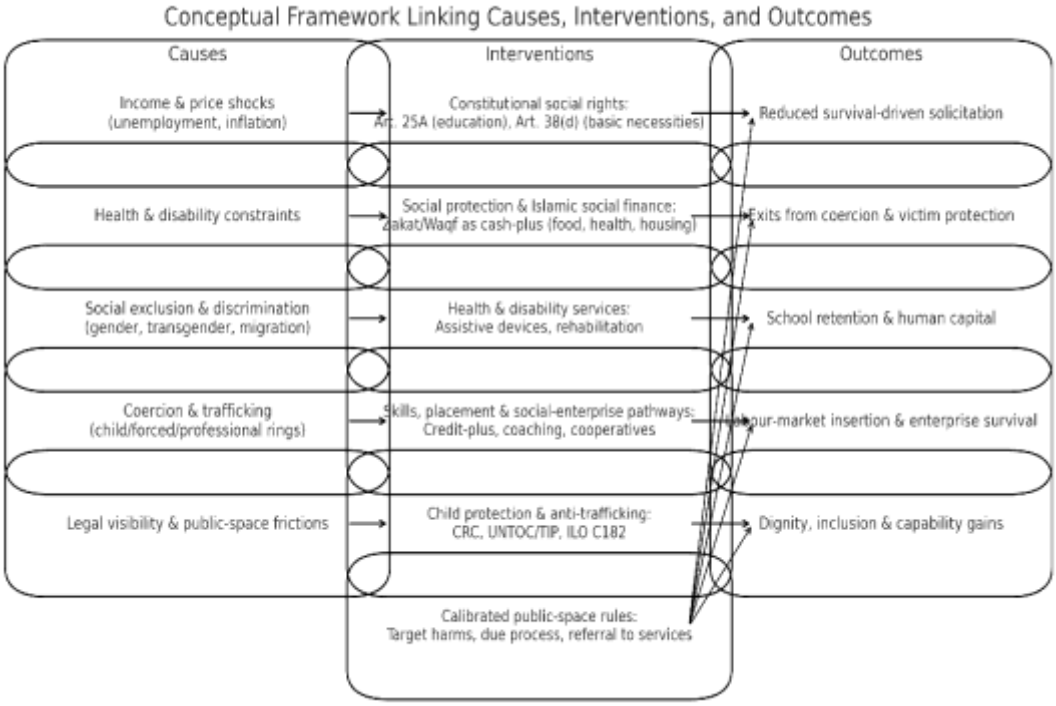


**Figure 2: Conceptual Framework Linking Causes, Interventions, and Outcomes—should map: (a) drivers (income shocks, disability/health, social exclusion, coercion/trafficking, legal visibility); (b) interventions (arts. 25A/38[d] social rights; zakat/waqf cash-plus; health/disability services; CRC/UNTOC/ILO C182 protections; calibrated public-space rules); (c) outcomes (reduced survival-driven solicitation; exits from coercion; school retention; labour-market insertion; dignity/capability gains).**

## 4. Research Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative, descriptive–analytical desk review design; no human participants were interviewed. Evidence was assembled from primary legal texts (constitutional provisions, provincial vagrancy ordinances, notifications, parliamentary records), policy documents (e.g., social protection/Ehsaas and zakat/waqf guidance), international instruments and reports (ICESCR, CRC, UNTOC/UNODC, ILO), peer-reviewed scholarship on begging, trafficking, and social entrepreneurship, and high-credibility program evaluations (e.g., Graduation trials), supplemented by reputable statistical and news sources for legal/policy developments. Following integrative-review guidance, searches were conducted in Google Scholar, Scopus, Web of Science, PubMed, and SSRN (English/Urdu) using Boolean strings combining terms for begging/panhandling, vagrancy, child/forced begging, social protection, and social entrepreneurship, with a temporal focus on 1999–2025 to capture contemporary jurisprudence and program evidence (Snyder, 2019). Inclusion criteria prioritized relevance to Pakistan or comparable LMICs, explicit methods or official provenance, and policy applicability; exclusion criteria removed duplicates and advocacy pieces lacking verifiable methods. A PRISMA-style log recorded identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion counts (Page et al., 2021). Data were extracted into a structured matrix (source, year, jurisdiction, method, key findings, legal stance, intervention type). Analysis used reflexive thematic analysis to code texts against a deductive frame (causes → interventions → outcomes) while allowing inductive elaboration (Braun & Clarke, 2006); findings were synthesized with matrix-based comparisons across jurisdictions and intervention families (Miles, Huberman, &

Saldaña, 2019), and a brief comparative-law analysis mapped elements of criminalization vs. welfare orientation. Source credibility was appraised with CASP checklists for qualitative/observational studies and AACODS for grey literature (Critical Appraisal Skills Programme, 2018; Tyndall, 2010), and legal documents were verified against official gazettes or authoritative repositories. Ethics were straightforward: as secondary research using publicly available materials, the study qualified for IRB exemption; nonetheless, data-minimization, accurate attribution, and fair-use principles were observed. Limitations included reliance on reported rather than primary data, heterogeneity of measures across sources, and potential publication bias; these were mitigated through triangulation across legal texts, international standards, empirical studies, and program evaluations and by explicitly noting where evidence remained contested.

## 5. Findings and Discussion

### 5.1 Root Causes Identified

This section synthesizes secondary evidence (laws, official statistics, international reports, peer-reviewed studies, and reputable program evaluations) to identify the principal drivers of begging in Pakistan. Because this study did not conduct primary interviews, the "thematic breakdown" below aggregates findings from published interviews and field studies by others, triangulated with macroeconomic and legal data.

**Table 1: Thematic summary of causes identified in published studies and official reports**

| Theme | Evidence highlights (APA in-text) | Policy-relevant note |
|---|---|---|
| Economic shocks & poverty | CPI peaked ~38% (May 2023) then eased to 11.8% (May 2024) (Reuters, 2024; PBS, 2024); poverty ≈25–26% (national line) and 42.3% ($3.65/day) (World Bank, 2025a, 2025b). | Cash-plus support reduces compulsion to beg during price shocks. |
| Disability & illness | Functional difficulty 9.64%; disability 3.1% (PBS, 2024); access barriers documented in social-protection profiles (ILO, 2021). | Disability-sensitive services and assistive tech reduce exposure to street economies. |
| Social exclusion | Exclusion of women/trans communities and precarious migrant work increase entry risk (ILO, 2021; World Bank, 2025a). | Targeted placement, safe-work policies, and skills programs. |
| Child coercion & trafficking | Forced begging recognized as trafficking (UNODC, 2024a, 2024b); Pakistan TIP profile notes vulnerabilities and prosecutions (U.S. Department of State, 2024). | Identify/protect victims; prosecute organizers. |
| Legal visibility & policing | 2025 amendments target organized overseas begging/trafficking (Ahmad, 2025). | Pair enforcement with welfare pathways to avoid criminalizing survival behavior. |
| Almsgiving incentives | ≈63% report pressure to give to beggars (Gallup Pakistan, 2025). | Route zakat/sadaqah into verified pipelines. |
| Exit pathways | Graduation programs show sustained gains (Banerjee et al., 2015); Ehsaas Amdan scaled assets/trainings (NEC & UNDP, 2024). | Invest in enterprise-plus bundles and market linkage. |

Pakistan's recent inflation spike sharply eroded real incomes, pushing fragile households toward visible coping (e.g., public solicitation). Headline CPI peaked near 38% (May 2023) before easing to 11.8% (May 2024), per the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics and contemporaneous reporting (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics [PBS], 2024; Reuters, 2024). Poverty estimates tell the same story of widespread vulnerability: the World Bank places national-line poverty near 25–26% in FY24–H1 FY25 and lower-middle-income poverty at 42.3% in FY24 (World Bank, 2025a, 2025b). In combination, elevated prices and thin buffers among informal workers increase the probability of entering begging as a short-run survival strategy when cash or food support is delayed.

New census evidence clarifies the scale of functional difficulty: PBS reports 9.64% of the population with at least one functional difficulty and 3.1% reporting disability (PBS, 2024). In lower-income settings, functional limitations raise out-of-pocket costs and reduce feasible work hours, increasing exposure to street economies absent accessible services and assistive devices (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2021). Pakistan's administrative and survey sources thus support disability-sensitive explanations for street solicitation, including cases where caregivers beg to finance health needs (PBS, 2024; ILO, 2021).

Gendered constraints (e.g., single mothers facing care burdens) and discrimination against transgender and gender-diverse people limit formal hiring and safe work options, a pattern repeatedly described in national program documents and social-policy briefs; exclusion raises the expected return to informal survival strategies, including begging, when shocks occur (ILO, 2021; World Bank, 2025a). Internal migrants with low literacy also cluster in precarious, low-buffer work, heightening entry risk during income or health shocks (World Bank, 2025a).

International law and monitoring bodies explicitly recognize forced begging as a form of trafficking for forced criminality; UNODC's 2024 Global Report on Trafficking in Persons documents this modality, and the U.S. TIP Report details Pakistan-specific vulnerabilities and enforcement data (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2024a, 2024b; U.S. Department of State, 2024). These sources justify a prosecute-organizers / protect-victims approach for a coercive subset of visible begging, distinct from survival-driven solicitation.

Legislative developments underscore the organized-exploitation channel: in March 2025, Parliament passed amendments to strengthen penalties for human trafficking and overseas organized begging, reflecting concern about coercive rings and cross-border activity (Ahmad, 2025). Such measures target controllers but do not, by themselves, address non-coerced adult begging driven by poverty/disability—hence the need to pair enforcement with social protection.

Public opinion data indicate strong social pressure to give to people asking on the street: a Gallup Pakistan survey reported that about 63% of respondents felt pressured/obligated to give (Gallup Pakistan, 2025). Redirecting zakat/sadaqah into verified "cash-plus" channels can preserve religious intent while lowering the relative payoff to kerbside solicitation (World Bank, 2025a).

Internationally, the Graduation approach—a bundle of asset transfer, training, coaching, savings, and temporary consumption support—has sustained income and consumption impacts across multiple countries (Banerjee et al., 2015). Pakistan's Ehsaas portfolio adopted analogous tools: public documentation notes ~79,000 assets transferred and ~27,000 trainings delivered under Ehsaas Amdan as part of a graduation-style strategy, illustrating cash-plus/enterprise-plus pathways at scale (National Economic Council & UNDP,

2024). Implementation gaps (urban targeting, market linkage) remain, but the direction of effect aligns with the global evidence (Banerjee et al., 2015; National Economic Council & UNDP, 2024).

### 5.2 Impact of Begging

Street-level begging has community-wide effects that go beyond individual hardship. In Pakistani cities, the scale and persistence of economic stress—with CPI spiking through 2022–2023 and only easing to 11.8% year-on-year in May 2024—has enlarged the pool of households at risk of visible coping, which many residents then confront in markets, transport nodes, and outside mosques (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics; Reuters). This visibility interacts with social norms of almsgiving: people feel both compassion and social pressure to give, channeling support to the street rather than to verified providers, which can unintentionally sustain kerbside solicitation and make community pushback more contentious (see §6.1). Classic urban studies also show that signs of physical and social disorder (e.g., encampment, aggressive solicitation) raise fear of crime and reduce use of shared spaces, even where actual crime rates are flat; the mechanism is perceptual—residents infer weak guardianship and withdraw from streets, undermining cohesion and informal control (Sampson & Raudenbush, 1999; Skogan, 1990). In Pakistan's context, these dynamics are magnified for disability-affected households—now better documented after the 2023 Census produced the first modern, disaggregated disability dataset—because functional limitations increase some families' reliance on public solicitation and others' discomfort with visible hardship (PBS). In short: communities experience moral strain (wanting to help) and civic strain (perceived disorder), which together create polarization around enforcement vs. welfare solutions: street crackdowns may briefly clear spaces, but without referral to social protection and disability services, they often relocate need rather than reduce it.

The economic footprint of begging is indirect but material. First, macro stress raises the baseline: the World Bank estimates lower-middle-income poverty at 42.3% in FY24 and national-line poverty around 25–26% into FY25, indicating a large share of households one shock away from negative coping (World Bank). Second, resource allocation shifts at the margin: spontaneous alms are compassionate but weakly targeted; by contrast, routing zakat/sadaqah through verified "cash-plus" channels (food, shelter, health, skills) measurably improves welfare and employability (see §4 and §6.1). Third, visible begging can divert retail footfall in district centers where aggressive solicitation is concentrated: consumer research links street harassment/disorder to lower patronage intentions and shorter dwell times, affecting micro-enterprise revenue (Rosenbaum, 2020; Millar et al., 2017). Finally, the opportunity cost for those who would prefer work is high: international program evidence shows that when extremely poor households receive asset-plus training and coaching, they reallocate time to higher-return self-employment and casual work, with sustained gains in income and consumption (the "Graduation" literature summarized in §3.4/§6.1). For Pakistan, the policy-relevant takeaway is that visible begging signals a mismatch: households need liquidity, services, and job links; public spaces need harm-reduction rules and referral; markets need footfall—bundled "cash-plus" and enterprise-plus solutions meet all three.

Public safety concerns arise along two distinct channels. The first is coercion: UNODC identifies forced begging as a form of trafficking for forced criminality, and Pakistan features in regional analyses of exploitation risks—a justification for non-penal protection of victims and targeted prosecution of controllers (UNODC; U.S. TIP Report). Parliamentary action in March 2025 to tighten penalties on human trafficking and overseas organized begging reflects this shift toward supply-chain disruption of exploiters (Law Library of Congress). The second channel is street-level harm: aggressive solicitation, windshield-cleaning at intersections, and

the involvement of children increase incident risk (near-misses, collisions, disputes). Comparative practice indicates that calibrated public-space rules—focused on specific harms (obstruction, endangerment, child involvement) rather than status—paired with on-the-spot referral to services, reduce harm without criminalizing poverty. The safety baseline matters too: Pakistan's general security environment has improved unevenly across time and place; the presence of tourist police units in major cities is one example of risk-management that can be leveraged to channel interactions toward services rather than confrontation.

Tourism outcomes are shaped less by any one encounter and more by the accumulated experience of safety, hassle, and dignity in public spaces. Pakistan's tourism potential is substantial, yet system constraints show up in global diagnostics: in the WEF Travel & Tourism Development Index 2024, Pakistan ranked 101st of 119 economies—an improvement from 2019 but still low on enablers such as infrastructure and services that mediate visitor experience (WEF; Business Recorder). A large empirical literature across destinations—Jamaica, Turkey, Egypt, Mediterranean islands—shows that tourist harassment (including persistent selling and begging) reduces satisfaction, destination image, and revisit intention (Alrawadieh et al., 2019; Çetinkaya, 2024; Ramadan, 2024; McElroy et al., 2007). The mechanism is intuitive: repeated, unwanted solicitation signals weak visitor management and institutionalizes an economy of pity, which some tourists interpret as civic neglect, even when communities are generous. For Pakistan, where the sector's GDP and jobs contribution is still below potential (WTTC country factsheets), the policy implication is to decouple visitor experience from visible hardship through hotspot management (clear signage, shaded service kiosks, staffed referral points), tourist-police liaison, and faith-consistent donation routing (QR-enabled zakat to vetted providers), so that generosity flows to capability-building pipelines while sidewalks and heritage sites remain welcoming.

Begging's impacts are multi-channel and partly self-reinforcing. Economic shocks and disability constraints increase survival-driven entry; visible solicitation then alters community behavior (fear/avoidance), dampens retail demand, and, in a small subset, intersects with coercion, which warrants a policing response of a different kind. The international tourism and consumer-behavior literatures make clear that visitor harassment—which often conflates vendors and beggars—has measurable costs for destination image and repeat visitation. Meanwhile, macro data show why the pressure won't ease quickly without systematic social protection: even with inflation easing in 2024, poverty rates remain high, leaving many one shock away from the street (PBS; World Bank). The solution set therefore mirrors the problem: (1) cash-plus stabilization (food, shelter, health, disability supports); (2) enterprise-plus pathways (assets, skills, coaching, placement, market access); (3) rights-compliant public-space rules focused on harms with referral; (4) anti-trafficking enforcement for coercion; and (5) donation redirection to verified pipelines that honor religious intent while reducing kerbside incentives. The net effect, where implemented with fidelity, is to raise community comfort, support commerce, reduce safety incidents, and improve destination experience—without criminalizing visibility or poverty.

**Figure 3: Impact of begging on communities, the economy, public safety, and tourism. The diagram summarizes channels identified in the literature and policy evidence and highlights harm-reduction and capability-building responses.**

### 5.3 Role of Social Entrepreneurship

Social entrepreneurship addresses the root causes identified in §6.1 by expanding people's capabilities (skills, assets, health access) and opportunity networks (market links, mentoring, group enterprises), thereby changing the calculus that makes street solicitation a short-run survival strategy. At the core is evidence that bundled "enterprise-plus" designs—combining a productive asset or working capital with training, coaching, savings facilitation, and short-term consumption support—produce sustained poverty exits, unlike credit alone (Banerjee et al., 2015). Pakistan's National Poverty Graduation Programme (NPGP), aligned with Ehsaas Amdan and supported by IFAD, operationalizes this approach at scale through asset transfers, interest-free loans, skills training, and social mobilization, with government supervision updates detailing financing and implementation across 20+ districts (IFAD, 2022; 2023; Ministry of Poverty Alleviation & Social Safety, 2023). In parallel, interest-free microcredit delivered via local trust networks (e.g., mosque or community venues) has shown high returns to capital for microenterprises in a randomized field experiment in Pakistan, indicating that when liquidity constraints are eased without usury, microenterprises expand inventory and profits—an essential bridge away from low-return coping (Khan, 2022). These results speak directly to §6.1's macro-poverty channel (inflation shocks → negative coping): enterprise-plus bundles stabilize consumption and raise earnings, reducing the incentive to beg.

Social entrepreneurship also targets health and disability barriers that limit employability. Pakistan's telehealth social enterprises (e.g., Sehat Kahani) documented large-scale use of nurse-assisted e-clinics and telepsychiatry serving low-income communities, including women who face mobility and care constraints; studies report clinical load, usability, and pathways that reconnect home-based female clinicians to patients (Aga et al., 2023; Khurram et al., 2024). Health access and time savings are capability multipliers: when care is

available locally or virtually, households can reallocate time from crisis management to work or training, a necessary condition for exit from street economies.

On social exclusion, women-focused and gender-responsive social enterprises reduce barriers that push households toward public solicitation. Kashf Foundation's "microfinance-plus" model combines individual lending with financial literacy, business skills, and micro-insurance; third-party assessments report improvements in women clients' business outcomes and economic participation, illustrating how credit + capability services outperform credit alone (Kashf, 2017; 2019). At the ecosystem level, mapping studies by the British Council/SDPI show Pakistan's social enterprises are concentrated in education and health—sectors that directly enlarge women's capabilities and reduce reliance on precarious income (British Council & SDPI, 2016; 2017). These local experiences line up with global cooperative models such as SEWA (India), where member-owned social enterprises and unions link low-income women to markets, childcare, and financial services—an institutionalization of bonding/bridging social capital that underpins durable livelihood shifts (ILO/SEWA briefs; WIEGO/SEWA).

For the coercion/trafficking channel, social entrepreneurship is not a substitute for protection and prosecution; rather, it supplies rehabilitation and reintegration options once safety is secured. International anti-trafficking guidance identifies forced begging as exploitation; after rescue, skills, coaching, and group enterprise are appropriate to restore agency and earnings, echoing the Graduation evidence cited above (UNODC, 2024). Globally, woman-focused graduation/social-enterprise programs—Village Enterprise in East Africa and BOMA in Kenya—have been tested through independent RCTs and outcome-pay DIBs, showing gains in consumption, assets, and business income; these are credible reintegration platforms for survivors once casework is complete (IDinsight/Village Enterprise DIB; BOMA/UC Davis).

**Table 2: Linking causes to social-entrepreneurship interventions (Pakistan & global examples)**

| Cause identified (from §6.1) | Social-entrepreneurship mechanism | Pakistan example(s) | Global example(s) | Evidence |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Macroeconomic shocks / income poverty | Graduation-style asset + training + coaching + temporary support; interest-free working capital for microenterprises | NPGP/Ehsaas Amdan (assets, IFLs, skills, social mobilization) | BRAC/CGAP Graduation (6-country RCTs) | IFAD supervision & MoPASS yearbooks; Banerjee et al. (2015, Science). |
| Liquidity constraints for small firms | Interest-free microcredit embedded in community trust; coaching | Akhuwat (Islamic, interest-free microfinance) | — | Pakistan RCT shows 8.6–11.9% monthly returns to capital among treated microenterprises (Khan, 2022). |
| Health/disability barriers | Telehealth + referral (capability gains, | Sehat Kahani network (nurse-assisted | — | BMJ Open/BMJ General Psychiatry |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | time savings); inclusive hiring | clinics; telepsychiatry) | | studies on Pakistan e-clinics and telepsychiatry. |
| Gendered exclusion | Women-focused microfinance-plus, micro-insurance, skills; cooperatives and market linkage | Kashf Foundation (finance + training + insurance) | SEWA cooperatives (India) | Kashf third-party assessments/briefs; ILO/WIEGO & SEWA documentation. |
| Coercion/forced begging | Post-rescue enterprise-plus reintegration (after protection/prosecution) | (To be piloted with child-protection/anti-trafficking partners; NPGP components adaptable) | Village Enterprise (East Africa DIB/RCT); BOMA (Kenya RCTs) | UNODC guidance on forced begging = trafficking; IDinsight RCT/DIB; BOMA impact/evaluations. |
| Almsgiving incentives / public-space frictions | Verified donation channels to SE providers; harm-focused rules + referral | Pakistan SE ecosystem in education/health as trusted channels; municipal routing to services | — | British Council/SDPI landscape and policy recommendations. |

Finally, social entrepreneurship offers pragmatic solutions to public-space frictions and almsgiving incentives. Landscape studies argue Pakistani social enterprises "fill the gap" where public services do not reach, providing trusted, verified channels for zakat/sadaqah to fund cash-plus and capability-building rather than kerbside transfers (British Council & SDPI, 2016/2017). When municipal partners add harm-focused rules (targeting obstruction, child involvement) and on-site referral to these providers, cities can reduce conflict without criminalizing survival, while donors see religiously consonant ways to help that do not sustain street markets. Where the cause is income/asset scarcity, enterprise-plus bundles work; where the cause is health/disability, health social enterprises unlock participation; where the cause is gendered and identity-based exclusion, women- and transgender-responsive enterprises plus cooperatives build capability and networks; where the issue is coercion, social enterprise is the post-protection pathway; and across the board, social enterprises provide credible channels to redirect generosity into structured support—together shrinking the space for street solicitation.

## 6. Proposed Solutions and Implementation Framework

Pakistan's evidence base points to a dual problem: (a) survival-driven begging under macro stress, disability, and exclusion; and (b) coerced/organized begging that amounts to trafficking for forced criminality. Accordingly, the implementation framework below combines welfare-plus and enterprise-plus responses for survival cases with protection-and-prosecution for trafficking, while aligning with constitutional duties (Arts. 25A, 38[d]), Islamic welfare instruments (zakat/waqf), and international law (ICESCR; CRC; Trafficking Protocol) (Government of Pakistan, 1973; Government of Pakistan, 1980; United Nations, 1966/1976, 1989, 2000). The approach also operationalizes best evidence from Graduation programs (asset

+ training + coaching + temporary support) and from Pakistan's Ehsaas/NPGP portfolio (Banerjee et al., 2015; National Economic Council & UNDP, 2024; IFAD, 2023).

### 6.1 Government-Led Interventions (policy enforcement, welfare programs)

1. Adopt "harm-focused" public-space rules with referral, not status offences. Provincial and city bylaws should target specific harms (e.g., obstruction, aggressive solicitation, child involvement) and embed mandatory referral to on-site service desks—cash/food assistance, shelters, disability assessment, and ID/registration—so survival cases are not criminalized (cf. proportionality and manifest arbitrariness reasoning; Harsh Mander v. Union of India, 2018). This keeps enforcement consistent with equality norms while maintaining order (Government of Pakistan, 1973).

2. Codify non-penalization of victims and upgrade trafficking enforcement. Standard operating procedures for police and child-protection units should specify victim identification, non-penalization, and priority referral for anyone subject to forced/child begging, while concentrating investigations and prosecutions on organizers (UNODC, 2024; U.S. Department of State, 2024). Parliament's March 2025 amendments targeting human trafficking and overseas organized begging should be paired with specialist investigators, digital case tracking, and victim-witness support (Ahmad, 2025).

3. Scale and urban-adapt "cash-plus" and "enterprise-plus." Building on Ehsaas/NPGP and provincial social-protection authorities, government should expand rapid cash/food/shelter support plus graduation-style bundles (productive asset or working capital, skills training, coaching, savings facilitation, job placement)—with urban targeting (e.g., market-linked skills and last-mile payment channels) (World Bank, 2025; National Economic Council & UNDP, 2024; IFAD, 2023; Banerjee et al., 2015). For disability-affected households, integrate assistive devices, rehabilitation, and inclusive hiring incentives (ILO, 2021).

4. Data, IDs, and measurement. At hotspots, deploy intake kiosks to check CNIC/B-forms, register households in the National Socio-Economic Registry, and issue temporary service cards. Monitor outcomes beyond arrests: exits, 6/12-month non-recidivism, school retention, job/enterprise survival—a learning loop needed for policy credibility (World Bank, 2025).

### 6.2 Community-Driven Interventions (committees, youth engagement)

1. Ward-level social support committees. Under district administration, form mixed committees (women, traders, imams, teachers, youth) to co-manage hotspot etiquette, identify at-risk households, and co-sign referrals into government and NGO programs. This builds bonding/bridging social capital that lowers coordination costs for exits (Coleman, 1988; Narayan & Pritchett, 1999).

2. Redirect almsgiving to verified channels. Given strong social pressure to give, communities need faith-consistent pathways (zakat/sadaqah) to fund verified providers instead of kerbside transfers (Gallup Pakistan, 2025). Districts can post QR codes and donation counters at mosques/markets that feed cash-plus pipelines (Government of Pakistan, 1980).

3. Youth engagement and service learning. Recruit and train youth/volunteers to staff service kiosks, support disability screening, escort to shelters/clinics, and mentor on

basic digital/financial literacy. This reduces stigma, increases placement take-up, and strengthens local ownership (British Council & SDPI, 2016/2017).

### 6.3 NGO and Private-Sector Role (skills, jobs, enterprise)

1. Deliver enterprise-plus at scale. Contract experienced SE/NGO partners to provide asset/loan + skills + coaching + placement. Pakistan has credible platforms—Akhuwat (interest-free working capital), Kashf Foundation (women-focused microfinance-plus), Sehat Kahani (telehealth for capability gains), Rizq/food security partners, and education actors (TCF)—that can be braided into municipal referral flows (British Council & SDPI, 2016/2017; Khurram et al., 2024).

2. Job creation and inclusive hiring. Offer wage subsidies and recognition to firms that hire from the referral pipeline, with attention to women and transgender jobseekers and to PWD-friendly workplaces (ILO, 2021).

3. Reintegration for survivors. After protection/prosecution, NGOs should run trauma-informed reintegration with small-group enterprise, apprenticeships, and ongoing coaching—mirroring Graduation logic that has sustained results in RCTs (Banerjee et al., 2015; UNODC, 2024).

### 6.4 Integrated Model (combining stakeholders)

- **Entry points & triage:** Hotspot outreach, helplines, tourist-police and municipal staff bring people to intake desks. A short protocol screens for coercion, age, disability/health, documentation, and immediate needs. Cases split into Path A: Survival-Driven and Path B: Coerced/Organized (UNODC, 2024; Government of Pakistan, 1973).

- **Path A—Survival-Driven:** Provide immediate stabilization (food, shelter, cash, medical/rehab). Start case management: obtain IDs, enroll in Ehsaas/zakat, and refer to disability and social services (World Bank, 2025; ILO, 2021). Move to enterprise-plus: asset or interest-free loan, market-aligned training, coaching, savings, and job placement via private firms. Provide aftercare for 6–12 months, including market access support and troubleshooting to reduce recidivism (Banerjee et al., 2015; National Economic Council & UNDP, 2024).

- **Path B—Coerced/Organized:** Prioritize protection: remove from controllers, place in safe shelter, and offer medical/legal aid; do not penalize victims (UNODC, 2024). Police/prosecutors focus on controllers under trafficking/child-labour laws, supported by digital evidence chains and victim-witness services (Ahmad, 2025). Reintegration then uses the enterprise-plus track or wage placements, with psychosocial care (UNODC, 2024).

- **Measurement & learning:** A city dashboard tracks exits, non-recidivism (6/12 months), school retention, job/enterprise survival, and donation volumes redirected to verified channels. Quarterly reviews with district, NGO, and business partners iteratively adjust targeting, training menus, and enforcement posture (World Bank, 2025; British Council & SDPI, 2016/2017).

## 7. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study finds that "begging" in Pakistan is a dual-track phenomenon: the larger share is survival-driven—rooted in price shocks, income volatility, disability and care burdens, weak urban safety nets, and exclusion from formal work—while a smaller but critical share is coerced or organized, including the exploitation of children; treating these as one problem has historically yielded enforcement churn without durable exits. The social costs are multi-domain: communities experience moral fatigue and polarization around whether to give or enforce; retail areas and transport nodes see reduced comfort and footfall when aggressive solicitation concentrates; traffic-side interactions and the involvement of children generate safety risks; and destinations with unmanaged visible hardship suffer in visitor satisfaction and image. The legal and normative frame also points to a split response: constitutional guarantees (such as the right to free education and the state's duty to ensure basic necessities), Islamic welfare principles (zakat and waqf), and international obligations on social rights, child protection, and trafficking together support welfare-plus and protection-first approaches, while cautioning against broad status offences that criminalize visibility rather than harm. Accordingly, the first recommendation is to operationalize a simple intake and triage model at city hotspots and through helplines that routes each case into one of two pathways. Path A (survival-driven) begins with immediate stabilization (food, shelter, cash, health and disability services), continues with documentation and enrollment in social protection, and then offers an enterprise-plus bundle—productive asset or interest-free working capital, market-aligned skills, coaching, savings facilitation, and job placement—followed by six to twelve months of aftercare focused on market access and problem solving. Path B (coerced/organized) prioritizes victim safety and non-penalization, delivers medical and legal aid, targets investigations at controllers under trafficking and child-labour laws, and provides trauma-informed reintegration through the same enterprise-plus or wage-placement options once safety is secured. The second recommendation is to redirect generosity so that almsgiving strengthens verified pipelines rather than kerbside transfers: districts, zakat councils, mosques, and vetted social-enterprise providers should offer visible donation channels (including QR codes and counters at markets and heritage sites) that fund cash-plus and capability-building services for children, persons with disabilities, women, and other high-risk groups; clear public messaging can frame this as faith-consistent stewardship that helps more, and helps better. The third recommendation is to institutionalize measurement and learning: cities should track exits, six- and twelve-month non-recidivism, school retention, and job or enterprise survival on a public dashboard; commission rapid learning briefs; and use performance-linked contracts so resources follow verified outcomes. The long-term strategy is to embed this dual-track architecture inside provincial social-protection systems and city management: scale urban-adapted graduation and interest-free microfinance-plus programs; expand telehealth, rehabilitation, and assistive-technology access to remove health and disability bottlenecks; introduce inclusive-hiring incentives so firms place women, transgender people, and persons with disabilities; maintain narrow, harm-focused public-space rules linked to on-the-spot referral; and strengthen specialist anti-trafficking units and victim-witness support to disrupt controllers. Finally, the research agenda should move beyond debated national headcounts toward city-level enumeration and cohort tracking; run pragmatic trials of donation-redirection mechanisms; test cost-effectiveness of enterprise-plus variants (asset size, coaching intensity, and placement services) in urban Pakistan; evaluate disability-specific interventions (assistive devices, workplace accommodation) and gender- and SOGI-responsive employment pilots; and conduct criminal-network mapping of coercive rings, including digital facilitation. Taken together, these steps align compassion with capability, public order with rights, and generosity with verified impact—shrinking the economic space for survival-driven solicitation while ensuring that people coerced into begging are protected and able to rebuild dignified livelihoods

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