

Socio-Economic Problems of Gypsies: a case study of Peshawar

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Abstract

Gypsies are always a unique group of people in the society. They have very poor image on society due to their poor and low living of standards, illiterate behavior, their firmness towards their unknown culture, their less opportunity towards noble jobs. The following research thus, aims to investigate the socio economic problems of the gypsies. Interview Schedule was designed to collect the data of 30 respondents (including 18 male and 12 female) from those gypsies who were willing to give interview, by using Convenience sampling technique. The services of trained female students were used for collection of the data. The main objectives of this study was to find out the socio economic status of gypsies. Problems being faced by them and the causes of socio-economic problems of gypsies. The relevant data was collected and analyzed with the help of SPSS, and then conclusions were drawn accordingly. According to the conclusion, Illiteracy, poverty, laziness and their loyalty to their own culture were the main cause of their present status in the society. In addition the main source of income was beggary which is mostly done by their females. And prefer to live a self-centered life. One of the main problems being faced by them was that People distrust and avoid them because people usually associate them with either music and dance or theft.

Keywords: Gypsies, Peshawar, Nomadic Life, Beggary

Introduction

The world is divided on the basis of religion, culture, language, color, cast and creed. Each group have their unique way living and standard of living. Their uniqueness not only differentiate them from other, but sometime makes them limited to their own socio-economic conditions and problems (Facer, 1981).

Gypsies are an ethnic group, the one of the low class people around the world. They are poor and are the victim of socio economic, political and health problems. Gypsies speak a language (Romany) that is related to Hindi and are believed to have originated in South Asia. Though the origin of the Gypsies have been the subject of controversy throughout the centuries, but according to the modern time researches gypsies originated in Northern

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India, from where they spread throughout Europe and the Middle East (Acton, 1997; Forray, 2012; Kenrick, 2007).

Over the years, with groups becoming isolated from one another, various distinctive groupings have developed, with their culture and social organization. They still tend to keep themselves to themselves and regard contact with non-Gypsies as polluting and a danger to their traditions and customs. Their language has been a major unifying force as they have kept Romani as their own, although dialects have developed and their own language has been affected by the language of the nation within which they live (Kenrick, 2007).

Generally Gypsies are skeptical about collecting fixed assets. Their lifestyle is provisional, highly characterized by low savings and high current consumption. This hand to mouth existence is a consequence of poverty, as well.

The traditional occupations are horse-trading, peddling and door to door trading, blacksmithing and metalworking, fortune-telling and healing, small scale craftwork such as wood carving, and music and entertainment. And on the other hand unfortunately their image is also bad as they are famous for criminal activities like thieving, gambling and immoral activities. Their main profession is beggary and low standard professions (Facer, 1981).

Gypsy life is still very firmly based on the primacy of the family with the elderly being revered and respected. Bride-price is still paid to the father of the bride to compensate him for the loss of a daughter or exchange of female.

Gypsies in Pakistan

Gypsies are the part of our society and can be found almost everywhere in Pakistan. They are known by different names such as *Khanabadosh*, *Changaaryaan*, *Bazigaars*, and *Banjaras*. Gypsies provided recreation and dances in villages everywhere and move about in search of livelihood from place to place along with their tents (Shashi, 2006).

The gypsy families that inhabit the area continue to live life as they did years ago. Against the backdrop of a tattered and shabby hovel which they call their home. These nomads travel the countryside carrying their belongings and pitching tents wherever they stop. It is a deliberately chosen way of life.

So this study tried to explore the actual situation of this segment of society in Peshawar. The main focus was to dig out about their lifestyle, culture and their interactional patterns with the larger society as a whole. this study was guided by the following objectives.

Research Objectives

1. To find out the socio economic status of gypsies;
2. To find out the type of problems they are facing; and
3. To find the cause of socio-economic problems of gypsies.

Methodology

The study was conducted at Gulberg No 2, Peshawar Cantt. The study focused on causes of socio economic status of the gypsies and other related problems. Only those gypsies were interviewed who were willing to give interview. 30 Gypsies including 18 male and 12 female were interviewed by Convenience sampling technique. The services of trained female students were used for collection of the data.

Results

Gypsies of Peshawar

The Gypsies of Gulberg No 2 were living in tents and on railway track since last 24 years. They have their own kind of Romani language but they also learn the native languages of the place i.e. *Urdu*, *Pashto*, and specially the *Hinko*. (Mother tongues of all the respondents were Saraiki, beside this all the respondents could also speak Urdu while 33% of the respondents could also speak Pashto). They have a special dress with embroidery which not only shows their recognition but also shows their loyalty to their own culture.

The gypsies of the area had no permanent land for living, in fact they were living on railway tracks in unhygienic area, no sanitation and bathroom system, having lack of basic services like electricity, gas, medical and houses, shortage of food and clothing, don't have proper place to sleep, number of kids, naked children play in the dirt, a woman actively digs something out of the ground and a man sits idly enjoying the sunshine. However this scene is not confined only to specific areas in Peshawar.

Gypsies are always been unwanted people in our society. They have very poor image on society due to their poor and low living of standards, illiterate behavior, their firmness towards their unknown culture, their less opportunity towards noble jobs.

Their children's feet rarely cross the doorstep of a school. The men usually spend their days sleeping, nights in gambling and other immoral activities. The women are often seen

collecting twigs to burn or engaging in “entertainment” work and in beggary. And people usually associate them with either music and dance or theft. As a result people distrust and avoid gypsies whenever wherever possible.

One of an old gypsy, Shafi Mohammad shared this views that,

“I don’t know why people look at us arrogantly. We are happy and satisfied with our lifestyle. We take meals three times a day and we rarely sleep on an empty stomach,”

Gypsies have very unique culture as there is no universal gypsy culture but there are attributes common to all gypsies everywhere, like family loyalty, close affinity to the ethnic group, certain culture standards and norms etc. Even sometime government or social organizations attempt to “help” these gypsies to settle down, get them educated and conform to society’s norms, but ultimately fail because the gypsies themselves choose to continue the nomadic and primitive traditions that have been passed down by their ancestors.

They work little and earn and spend all the money in a day. ‘In Gypsy culture there is an amazing philosophy that, a ‘millionaire’ is not a person with a million in his bank account, but someone who has spent a million, though he might now be a pauper. This philosophy is very much true about gypsies. They really don’t have worries about tomorrow.

“I have done what I wanted to do and there is nothing more to worry about,”

These views were shared by Said Shafi Mohammad to explain why he don’t work.

There is much burden on gypsy women as mostly work is done by gypsy women as compare to their men. Man also work but on very low paid jobs and very rarely, as they not willing to work so they adopt easy way for earning.

Shafi told that,

“our youngsters work as labor in SabziMandi, GadhaGari, Kabari, Mochi and any kind of easy mazdoori.

On the other side, gypsy women not only take care of their kids and work at home but also go outside for earning money. While they are mostly famous for music and entertainers and are mainly engaged in beggary.

Some of witty mind gypsies use to fool people by telling false predictions about future and they are expert in black magic as well.

Usually they do interfamily marriages in early age in a very simple way with no demands from both sides and the reason behind interfamily marriages is that non-gypsies will never mix with them and the gypsies also keep a distance in such relations.

One of the gypsy women, Rani told that,

“Gypsy men give less attention to their wives, due to which they face many problems in their marital relationships”.

Funerals take place very well, and crowded. They do respect for their corpse. Men and women are separated there. In the funerals, women support family members. They buried the aged member in the ancestor graveyard (Multan) and young ones are buried to the near graveyard.

Table 01: Marital status and number of kids of the gypsies

Marital status	F	If Married, Number of child(ren)		
		1-3	4-6	7-9
Married	29 (97%)	06(20%)	18(60%)	05(17 %)
Unmarried	01(3%)	-----	-----	-----
Total	30	06(20%)	18(60%)	05(17 %)

Table 01 shows the marital status and number of kids of the respondents. According to the present data, majority 29 (97%) of the respondents were married while 01 (03%) was unmarried. The table further shows that among the married respondents 06 (20%) were having 1-3 kids, 18 (60%) were having 4-6 kids, 05 (17%) were having 7-9 kids.

Table 02: Gypsies attitude towards birth control

What is your attitude towards birth control	Respondents	Percentage
Its ALLAH's will and gift to us	26	87%
In favor of birth control	04	13%
Total	30	100%

Table 02 shows the attitude towards birth control of the respondents. The data indicates that 26 (87%) of the respondents were of the view that its ALLAH's will and gift to us, While only 04 (13%) respondents were in the favor of birth control.

Table 3: Gypsy daily earning and working hours

Daily Earning	Respondents	Working Hours		
		5-6 hours	7-8 hours	9-10 hours
100-200	16(53%)	10(63%)	04(25%)	02(12%)
300-400	09(30%)	07(78%)	01(11%)	01(11%)
500-600	05(17%)	05(100%)	-----	-----
Total	30	22(73%)	05(17%)	03(10%)

Table03 shows the daily earning and working hours of respondents. The present study shows that majority i.e. 16 (53%) of the respondents were having daily earning of 100-200, 09 (30%) were having daily earning of 300-400, 05 (17%) were having daily earning of 500-600. While on the other hand the table further shows hours they work, 22 (73%) work for 5-6 hours, 05 (17%) work for 7-8 hours, 03 (10%) work for 9-10 hours on daily basis.

Table 04: Educational status and language of the gypsies

Educational status	F	Do you want your children to get education	
		Yes	No
Literate	-----	-----	-----
Illiterate	30(100%)	18 (60%)	12 (40%)
Total	30	18 (60%)	12 (40%)

Table04 shows the educational status and Languages of the respondents. According to the table all the respondents were illiterate.

Table further shows the response towards children education. According to the table 18 being 60% of the respondents wanted their children to get a good level education, while remaining 12 being 40% didn't wanted their children to get education.

Table 06: Gypsies occupation

Occupation	Respondents	Percentage %
Beggary (Female)	12	40%

Own shop	03	10%
Working in SabziMandi	07	23%
Cobbler (Mochi)	03	10%
GadhaGari, Kabari	05	17%
Total	30	100%

Table 06 shows the occupation of the respondents. The study found that 12 (40%) of the respondents were beggars and all of the them were female, 03 being 10% were having their own shop, 07 (23%) were working in *Sabzimandi*, 03 (10%) were cobbler (mochi), 05 (17%) were working as *kabari* and *gadthagari*.

Table 07: Gypsies relationship with their own gypsies neighbors

Relationship with your own gypsies neighbors	F	%
Good	17	57%
Normal	07	23%
Bad	06	20%
Total	30	100%

Table07 shows the relationship of gypsies with their own gypsy neighbors. According to the table 17 (57%) of the respondents were having good relations with their own gypsy neighbors, 07 (23%) were had normal relations with their own gypsy neighbors, while 6 being 20% had bad relations with their own gypsy neighbors.

Table 08: Gypsies response towards the non-gypsies

Feel hard in keeping relationship with non-gypsy	F	%
Yes because they don't trust us	25	83%
No because we don't care about them	5	17%
Total	30	100%

Table08 shows the response towards non-gypsies. The table shows that majority i.e. 25 (83%) of the respondents feel hard in keeping relationship with non-gypsies because people don't trust them, while remaining 5 (17%) don't feel hard in keeping relationship with non-gypsy because they don't care about them.

Table 09: Gypsies marriages with non-gypsies

Whether in favor of Marriages with non-gypsies	Respondents	Percentage %
Yes	03	10%
No, Not at all.	27	90%
Total	30	100%

Table 09 shows whether they are or they are not in favor of marriages with non-gypsy. The 03 (10%) of the respondents were in favor of marriages with non-gypsies while 27 (90%) of the respondents were not in favor of marriages with non-gypsies

Table 10: Gypsy celebrates occasions pattern

Celebrate occasions (wedding/funeral)	Respondents	Invite non-gypsy in your occasions(wedding/funeral)	
		Yes	No
Yes	30(100%)	-----	30(100%)
No	-----	-----	-----
Total	30(100%)	-----	30(100%)

Table10 shows whether they celebrate occasions (wedding/funeral) or not. According to the table all of the respondents celebrate occasions (wedding/funeral). The table further shows that all of the respondents don't invite non-gypsy in there occasions (wedding/funeral).

Table 11: Invited By Non-Gypsy On Their Functions

Whether Invited by non-gypsies on their functions	Respondents	Percentage %
Yes	03	10%
No	27	90%
Total	30	100%

Explanation: The above shows that whether gypsies are invited or not invited by the non-gypsies on their functions. According to the table 3 (10%) of the respondents were invited by non-gypsies on their functions while majority i.e. 27 (90%) were not invited by non-gypsies on their functions.

Table 12: Hospital and attitude of doctors towards gypsies

Hospital do you visit	F	Attitude of doctors towards you		
		Insulting and ignoring	Normal	Good
Cantonment board hospital	22(73%)	15(68%)	05(23%)	02(9%)
CMH, LRH	03(10%)	-----	02(67%)	01(33%)
We don't visit	05(17%)	05(100%)	-----	-----
Total	30	20(67%)	07(23%)	03(10%)

Table 12 shows that which hospitals they visit and attitude of doctors towards the respondents. According to the table 22 (73%) of the respondents visit cantonment board hospital, 3 (10%) visit CMH and LRH, 05 (17%) don't visit hospital. The table further shows the attitude of doctors towards them, 20 (67%) doctors attitude were insulting and ignoring, 7 (23%) doctors were having normal attitude while 3 (10%) doctors were having good attitude.

Table 13: Gypsies decision maker in the house

Who is the main decision maker in the house	Respondents	Percentage %
Females	27	90%
Males	03	10%
Total	30	100%

Table 13 shows that who is the main decision maker in the house. According to the table 27 (90%) of the respondents were females that say last word in the house, 03 (10%) were males that says last word in the house.

Table 14: Happy Being Gypsy

Whether Happy being gypsy	Respondents	Percentage %
Yes	22	73%
No	08	27%
Total	30	100%

Table 14 shows that whether they are happy being gypsy or not. According to the table 22 (73%) of the respondents were happy as being gypsy while 08 (27%) were not happy being gypsy.

DISCUSSION

Gypsies still face many obstacles in their lives. Women often play a very significant economic role and decision making and also in relative independence. Its women who mainly provide the family's daily needs (food, clothing).

Family Planning: Clear majority (84 % of the respondents) were having no concept of family planning. In fact majority were not only against birth control but also believed that large family is ALLAH's will and blessing and gift to us. And this is the reason majority of the respondents were having 4-6 kids.

Family Life: there is a correlation between the per capita income and the assessment of the family's purchasing power. Majority of the respondents' income were insufficient for their family. As majority of the respondents were having daily earning of Rs100-200 per day with 8-9 persons depend on their income.

Educational status: Though all of the respondents were completely illiterate but majority i.e. 60% of the gypsies were in the favor of education as they wanted their children to get a good level of education if the basic services and facilities are provided to them by the government. Though they want their children to get education but on the other hand they also don't want to lose their identity and values.

Occupation: Gypsies work at the same kinds of jobs as do other lower class people do in their daily life like as shop keeper, as cobbler (*mochi*), as *kabari*, work in *sabzimandi*, and run *gadhagari*. But beside all this, it's a depressing picture that majority i.e. 40% of the respondents were beggars. (Reference table 06) as according to them people don't trust them. All of female were involved in beggary. Majority i.e.73% of the respondents spent from 5 to 6 hours daily at work. (Reference table 03). Clear majority i.e. 87% of the respondents were willing to work if good opportunity is given to them.

Relationship: 57% of the respondents were had good relations with their own gypsy neighbors, 23% were having normal relations with their own gypsy neighbors, while 20% had bad relations with their own gypsy neighbors. 83% of the respondents feel hard in keeping relationship with non-gypsies because people don't trust them, while remaining 17% don't feel hard in keeping relationship with non-gypsy because they don't care about them. In addition clean majority i.e. 90% of the respondents were not in favor of

marriages with non-gypsies. Beside this it's also the fact that Gypsies depend economically on non-Gypsies as customers for their services, so they cannot afford to totally isolate themselves physically from non-Gypsies.

Celebration: All of the respondents celebrate occasions (wedding/funeral). They have a self-centered life. They don't like to mix-up with non gypsies and also don't want non gypsies to interfere in their personal life. They keep their life and activities secretly. And this is the reason they don't invite non gypsies on their functions and clear majority of the gypsies were also not invited by the non-gypsies on their functions.

Attitude: Majority i.e. 40% were of the complaint that people have affront behavior with them. Majority i.e. 67% doctors affront and ignore. Which was because of their illiteracy, negative behavior and poor image. Majority i.e. 83% of the respondents feel hard in keeping relationship with non-gypsies because people don't trust them. Majority i.e. 90% of the respondents were not in favor of marriages with non-gypsies. And they don't want to keep relation or mingle with non-gypsies.

Decision Making: The study found that it is usually women who handle administrative dealings and have the power of decision making. Clear majority i.e. 90% of the females gypsies say last word in the house.

Family Loyalty: Unfortunately they were having double standard, as on one hand they were of the view that nothing is impossible regarding the solutions to their problems but when government gave proper attention towards them, they even don't try to change their selves and their standard of life as they are very much satisfied with their life style. As clear majority i.e. 73% of the respondents were satisfied and happy being gypsy.

Conclusion

The study concluded that the socio economic problems of the gypsies of Peshawar were same as the problems of other poor people of Peshawar.

In general illiteracy, poverty and laziness is the root cause of every problem. It play the major role to increase their depression, basic facilities of life are out of the access. Due to the large family they are not able to fulfill their basic needs of life. The number of dependents is more than earning members. They want to live the life as their ancestors lived. They don't want to vanish the culture of gypsies.

The Gulberg No 2 gypsies are living a normal life on a railway track with congested family members, their main source of income is beggary mostly done by their females, they all are illiterate and all belongs from Multan Khanaywaal. They have a self-centered

life, they don't invite non gypsies on their functions and some of their males do get invitations from masjid side if there is any Nikkah ceremony. They don't like to mingle with non gypsies and also don't want non gypsies to interfere in their personal life. They keep their life and activities secretly, they lie a lot to non gypsies, they also don't participate in government activities but they want facilities and services from government and neighbors.

One of the main problems being faced by them is that People hardly trust them. People don't rent them a house. They want a facility of Sui gas and electricity which is not provided to them. Their living condition is very unhygienic and germey. Their kids hardly wear full clothes and hardly take a bath. Since birth they bear such condition so they are used to such condition and environment.

Despite material difficulties, insufficient earnings, large family members, lack of basic needs, their loyalty to their own culture and family was strong enough. Though gypsies were not in favor of change in their culture while getting education but it is the quality of education which automatically brings positive change and if they are given chance and facilities of getting education hopefully we will be seeing positive changes in their future life's, which will also bring positive changes in their existing culture.

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